Birds in Gilded Cages
by graveyardwitch

Summary

There is a hotel in London where beautiful young men and women are kept like birds in a gilded cage, prisoners bound to satisfy your deepest darkest desires....

After being kidnapped as a teenager, Harry Styles was forced into high-class prostitution by the evil Mr Cowell. Louis Tomlinson is heir to his father's corporation, set to inherit millions...But engaged to a woman he doesn't love and deeply unhappy. When they meet at a party sparks fly and they embark on a passionate and dangerous relationship...But can it ever be true love when one of you is being paid? And can Louis ever rescue Harry from The Bird Cage Hotel?

Warning-This story is about prostitution so there will be a LOT of sex. I do not own One Direction etc etc. I do ship Larry but I don't care if it's real or not, I just like reading and writing the fanfic.
Chapter 1-The Bird Cage Hotel

Harry was roused from a shallow and unsatisfying sleep by the incessant ringing of his mobile phone. He reached for it, scrabbling about blindly before his fingers closed on it, and then sat up and flipped it open. A text message:

I’M TEN MINUTES AWAY.

He rubbed his eyes with a groan as what seemed like a full rhythm section began to pound inside his skull. Too much red wine last night…But then, that hadn’t been his choice-Nick was one of those clients who liked to pretend it was a date; dinner, wine, romantic music, and then… He winced at the burning pain at the top of his left shoulder blade, remembering…shit….

A nose nuzzled the back of his neck and an arm encircled his waist, pulling him back against a warm chest. Hot breath on his face, lips tickling his ear…

“Come on Haz, how about a morning quickie…hmmm?”

He ignored the kiss on his cheek, too busy constructing the mask once more. When he finally spoke he was what they all wanted again: The confident, charming little shit that didn’t care.

“You only paid me for the night.”

“I paid enough; you’re not a cheap fuck. Come on Harry, suck me off at least. I love your mouth.”

He sighed. He was tired…But as a famous Radio Host Nick Grimshaw was an important client. He had to keep him happy. “O.k.”

He reached over to the bedside table again, to the little wash-bag he always carried with him, and tugged out a condom before wriggling beneath the sweaty duvet. Nick was already hard, and he balanced the condom on his lips and sheathed him with it using only his mouth, a trick that always made the clients moan with pleasure. He set to work, suckling and lapping, drawing Nick deep into his throat with all the expertise of a true professional. He wasn’t surprised when the duvet was tugged away from him and tossed off the bed. Nick always loved to watch him, got off on seeing the beautiful tanned youth crouching naked between his legs, plump pink lips wrapped around his cock. There was a tug on his hair.

“Harry, look at me.” He obeyed, raising his eyes upward as he moved, fighting not to choke as Nick caught fistfuls of his hair and held him still so he could thrust into his throat. He knew what was coming. Sure enough. “You like that hmmm? You like the taste of my dick? Sure you do, you love it you filthy little slut…You dirty little whore…” He cringed inwardly. Nick wasn’t really like that at all…But for some reason he really needed to talk dirty to get off. Harry fought not to roll his eyes. “Would you like me to shove it in you hmmm? Hold you down and fuck you into the mattress, split that tight little arse of yours in two?! Oh! Oh FUCK!”

He sat back on his knees and wiped the nasty artificial strawberry flavoured lube from his lips as his phone beeped again.

I’M DOWNSTAIRS. IF YOUR NOT OUT IN FIVE I’LL ASSUME SOMETHINGS WRONG.
“I gotta go. My Handler’s waiting for me. If I’m late there’ll be trouble.”

He stood and turned to look at the man in the bed who was watching him with a smile on his face and drooping eyelids. Nick, unlike most of his clients, was young—only in his late twenties, and quite good-looking, with nice brown eyes and cool hair. Rich and successful he could have any man he wanted but found hiring Harry for the night easy when work meant he had no time for a relationship. After all Harry was good at his job, and very discreet.

“Look Nick, it was a pleasure…As always.” He began padding about the room, picking up items of clothing—underwear, jeans, t-shirt, socks—putting them on as he found them. Finally he shoved his feet into his boots and shrugged on his leather jacket with its fleece collar, ignoring the stinging burn from his shoulder. “Book me again, yeah? Don’t fall asleep mate. You have to pay my handler at the door.”

“Harry?” He turned to find Nick staring at him carefully, brow furrowed as he considered him. He’s nice. He reflected Treats me well. We have a laugh. Maybe if we’d met…before…or in other circumstances, we could have been friends. He’s definitely nicer than most other punters, and not weird either—no ‘specials’…What had happened last night, well…that had just been the excitement…

“Yes?”

“How old are you? I mean…” He almost laughed at that. None of the others had ever asked.

“Don’t worry mate. I may be a baby-face, but I’m twenty.”

“Oh. Harry?” And now the man’s expression changed to concern, which frightened him more than lust or rage ever could. It was so much easier to pretend he didn’t care when no one else did either. “How old were you when you started…working?”

He bit his lip, avoiding Nick’s gaze. “Old enough.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“Well, it’s all you’re gonna get. Look Nick, it’s not a big deal.” He reached for his bag on the nightstand…And Nick caught hold of his arm, brown eyes searching his face. “How old were you Harry? I want to know.”

“A teenager…If we don’t get downstairs Liam’s going to think you’ve murdered me or something and he’s gonna break in…” He tried to shrug Nick’s hand away but he held on fast.

“I want to…I—I mean…this job…Were you trafficked?”

The question threw him and he suddenly found himself blinking away tears. “No…No…It wasn’t like that at all.” That, at least, was the truth. As far as he knew people who were trafficked were lied to, tempted, told that there would be proper jobs waiting for them. For him there had been no coercion, no promise of a new life, no talking at all really…All they’d done was ask him his name…Then they’d kidnapped him.

“Then how…?”

But he was already out of the bedroom, and running towards the front door.
Liam was standing waiting for them in the lobby of exclusive apartment block, official looking in his black guard’s uniform. The minute they got out of the lift he reached to take hold of Harry’s wrist in a grip so tight he winced. He was already forgetting what it was like, Harry thought, glaring at him out of the corner of his eye as Liam ignored him, instead turning to Nick. “Was the service provided to your satisfaction, Sir?”

“Yes. Very much so.” Nick leaned over to kiss his cheek. “Thanks to Dirty Harry here.”

He turned away as the money changed hands. He knew what he was, and he knew that a night with him cost upwards of five thousand pounds…But still it didn’t seem like enough for what he had to do.

“Thank you Sir. Come on Harry.” Liam led him towards the door and out into the cold morning.

He slid into the black SUV and listened as the central locking clicked into place—as if he’d try to jump out of a moving car. In the front seat Liam picked up his radio as it crackled into life. “Yeah, I got him and the fee…twelve thousand, yeah…Should be back in an hour, depending on traffic.” He hung up and twisted in his seat to look at him. “Jesus Haz, you look like shit. Did you take something last night? What’s one of the first things they tell us huh? Don’t get high on a John’s supply. You could have woken up in a bath full of ice with no kidneys, or in a box under his bed!”

“Oh fuck off Liam, I’m not thick. I’m just a little hung-over, that’s all.” He cradled his aching head.

“Then you’ll be needing these.” He passed him a Styrofoam cup and a paper bag—Steaming coffee and a hot sausage roll. Harry curled up in the leather seat and gulped coffee as they pulled out into the London traffic. He knew he was lucky. When Pete left he could have gotten anyone; some of the other handlers were cruel and sadistic, breaking the rules and abusing their positions in order to take advantage of their charges…Not Liam though, he saw his role as being one of Carer as well as Jailer…After all, he knew what it was like—Being one of them. And that was what he had been…One of them, just another one of Mr Cowell’s ‘Little Birds’. Until, that is, he started sleeping with Sophia, one of the Handlers over on the girl’s side. Then suddenly she’d gotten him a job as a Handler, suddenly he was the one escorting them from client to client, supervising them in the Dining Hall, tying them to their beds at night…And then Pete had left and Liam had been told to fill in for him until they could find a replacement…It had been a month but the betrayal still stung.

After all, before he’d been his guard Liam had been his friend. Now Harry found himself watching him for signs that he’d changed, become one of Them. So far he was still Liam, still kind, and funny, and a bit too sensible for his own good. He even bent the rules a little for all of them; sneaking in cigarettes and chocolate, and sometimes even a few beers, and sitting with them talking until lights out, like they always had. Unlike the other guards who barked orders at them, he still talked to Harry like they were mates, and the leather crop they all carried stayed firmly clipped to his belt…He hadn’t raised a hand to him yet. But still Harry found it hard to trust him. He guessed they’d see how native he’d gone when Liam got a charge all his own.

“Phone.”

“Here.” Harry tossed it onto the front seat.

He gazed out through the tinted windows as he ate his sausage roll, watching out for familiar landmarks as they left Primrose hill and began to travel through central London. Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, The London Eye, Harrods, Buckingham Palace…Even now, after everything that had happened since they’d brought him to the capital, the sight of them still gave him a thrill. But that thrill began to ebb as they turned onto the wide streets of Chelsea, lined with luxurious white Victorian townhouses. An extremely affluent and prestigious area…and home. After all, the rich
still have vices…It’s just that they have more expensive taste. Liam turned off King’s Road into a narrow half-forgotten street and there it was, looming up to his right…

The Bird Cage Hotel

It consisted of three of the six-floor high white Victorian houses knocked into one. The house to the left was known as the ‘Tom House’ because it housed the boys and men, the house on the right was the ‘Cat House’ because it contained the girls and women, and the house in the middle had the dining hall, offices, gym, pool and rooms for entertaining clients. He didn’t like it…but it wasn’t like he could escape it.

Liam pulled into a space in the underground car-park and unlocked the car door for him, taking a firm hold of his wrist again in the lift on the way up. They were met at the door by another Handler, who caught him roughly by the shoulder and turned him round the face the wall. The sharp, stinging pain made him wince.

“Ouch! Fucking hell!”

“Oi! Careful!” Liam glared at him but the other Handler ignored him, all his attention focused on Harry.

“Right boy, you know the drill; spread ‘em, hands on your head. Hurry up!” Harry did as he was told, putting his hands on his head and standing with his legs apart, waiting to be searched for any weapons, drugs or other items he could have stolen or been given by his client. But the Handler didn’t pat him down. Instead he moved to stand in front of him, taking his chin in his hand and inspecting him carefully, a mixture of fascination and lust in his eyes. “So this is the famous Dirty Harry. Well, they weren’t wrong. You’re a sexy little bastard aren’t you? Don’t know how you can control yourself around this one Liam. I’d have him on his knees for me every night.”

Harry knew better than to say anything. Instead he just glared. Then suddenly Liam was between them, shielding him with his muscular body as he scowled at the other man. “That’s enough. I’m his Handler; I’ll take it from here.”

For a moment they seemed to silently square off against one another…Then the other Handler smirked. “Oh yeah I forgot, you two used to be friends. That’s why nobody trusts you. You can wear the uniform Payne…but at the end of the day, you’re still a whore.

“Suit yourself.” The man watched, the smug smirk still on his face, as Liam patted Harry down, his hands ghosting up his legs and across his stomach. “He’s clean.” He stood and held out his hand to the other Handler. “Now give me the fucking scanner.”

He handed it over and Liam moved behind Harry. “At ease.” Harry lowered his hands and shifted into a more comfortable standing position. “Show me your barcode, boy! NOW!”

The bark made Harry jump. Liam sounded just like every other handler giving orders. He’d never barked at him like that before. And Harry knew the other Handler had hit a nerve.

“SIR! YES SIR!” He reached back to gather his long chocolate curls into his fist, lifting them out of the way, and ducked his head to reveal the barcode tattooed into the back of his neck. The scanner beeped.

“There. I know what I am and I know what he is. He’s not my friend, he’s my Charge. I’m not soft on him. I do my job.” He knew Liam was just posturing for the sake of the other man, but still his
words stung more than Harry would ever admit. He heard the other guard snort in derision.

“I’ll believe that when I see you take the whip to him.” His footsteps echoed down the corridor as he walked away. For a few moments they stood in silence, then Liam touched his arm gently.

“Haz…”

He spun round to glare at him, fighting the urge to punch him. “Don’t call me that! I’m not your friend, remember?! May I go now…Master?” His voice dripped sarcasm.

Liam avoided his gaze. “Yeah, yeah go ahead…”

“Well thank fuck for that! I thought you were going to make me kiss your boots or something first!” He turned and made to march off down the corridor.

“Ha…Harry…” When he turned back Liam was staring at him guiltily. “Go to The Doc, ok? Get whatever’s wrong with your shoulder sorted. I know you’ve hurt it.”

“Fine.” He turned his back on him again, feeling Liam’s stare burning into his shoulder blades as he walked away.

The Doc had always been something of an intriguing mystery to Harry. A qualified and extremely skilled physician he could have had a glittering career and indeed, considering his old age, possibly had at some point, but now he worked for one of the most powerful and notorious pimps in London…So what the hell had happened? Unlike some of the Handlers he’d never shown any sort of interest in his young patients beyond pity for their situation, so that wasn’t it, and the only addiction he had that Harry could see was to Earl Grey tea, and so the mystery remained…Just what did Mr Cowell have on him? Whatever it was he wasn’t telling, not that that stopped Harry from asking. He jumped the last couple of steps down to the basement and knocked on the door.

“Come in.”

The room that served as The Doc’s infirmary had once been a storeroom; now it was immaculate, with shelves and cupboards full of equipment and books, filing cabinets containing files full of whatever information he could get from his patients, treatment couches and a row of neat beds separated by screens. The old man looked up from his desk, his wrinkled face creasing into a smile as Harry entered. From his first night at the Bird Cage, when The Doc had wiped their tears and been the only one to show him and Zayn any kindness, Harry had always seen The Doc as a sort of port in a storm, and his room as a sanctuary.

“Hi Doc.”

“Harry.” He glanced at the computer screen in front of him before struggling to his feet. “I see you were…working…last night. Man or woman?”

Harry glanced over to the beds. That morning one was filled with a petite red-haired girl, the porcelain skin of her cheek stained with purple bruises, her lips swollen and cut. Her blacked eyes were closed and a drip hung by her bed.

The Doc followed his gaze and sighed sadly. “Father came home and found her with his son. Was furious that he’d hired a prostitute and took his rage out on her. Of course, if he’d raised him to respect women he wouldn’t have bought one. Like father, like son. Every one of her ribs is broken, along with her right cheekbone. She spent all night crying for her mother. And do they care? Of
course not, they just want to know when she can work again.” He wrinkled his nose in disgust. “Don’t worry about her lad; she’s too exhausted to hear your business.”

“If you hate them so much, why don’t you help us?” He looked down at the old man pleadingly. “Tell someone. Tell anyone. The only people who even know about this place are the clients. One word from you…”

The Doc fixed him with a look of deep sadness and regret. “Harry, you still have that spark of defiance I saw in you when you were sixteen. Hang on to it. Oh Harry, you don’t think I wouldn’t if I could? You’re not the only prisoner here. And I do help you, I help you all…They break you and I put you back together…It’s the only way I can sleep at night.” “But Doc, why are you…?”

He cut him off. “Man or woman, Harry?”

And Harry knew that the conversation was over. “Man.”

“Ah”. The Doc nodded sagely. “I see. Did you use protection?”

“Yep.”

“And did he…hurt you in any way?”

Harry caught his meaningful gaze and shook his head. “Not like that. But he did…hurt me.”

The Doc sighed and motioned for him to come closer to one of the couches. “Right lad, let me see.”

Harry sat down and winced at the burning pain as he shrugged off his jacket and lifted his T-shirt over his head. The Doc stooped to inspect the wound on the point of his shoulder and shook his head in disgust. “He bit you.” Harry nodded. “And he broke the skin. Oh for goodness sake! Mouths are one of the dirtiest things out there!”

He rummaged through a cupboard, lifting out bottles of antiseptic and cotton wool pads, and began to clean the teeth marks gently. Harry, as usual, tried to fill the silence with questions. “Doc, where do you come from? Were you ever married? Do you have children?”

As usual the old man ignored him until his work was finished. He pressed an adhesive bandage over the bite mark and then gently squeezed his other shoulder in a gesture of affection. “There you go. Now stop bothering an old man and go get some sleep. I’m sure you need it.”

Harry knew better by now than to argue. Instead he gave The Doc a grateful smile, muttered a thank you and pretended not to notice the sorrow in the old man’s eyes as he watched him leave.

The floors of rooms originally frequented by rich holiday makers and businessmen now housed Mr Cowell’s ‘little Birds’ as he referred to them. They had to share, two or three to a room, but were permitted to decorate them how they liked and encouraged to think of them as ‘theirs’. Harry wasn’t fooled though. They were still prison cells…The bars on the windows and the bolts and padlocks on every door tended to give the game away. He stopped in front of room 301-Home sweet home. He turned the door handle and stepped inside.

Once they’d been there a while Pete had been instructed to go into town and get them whatever
posters they’d wanted to decorate their room. Harry had said he didn’t care, hadn’t wanted posters of the same bands and football teams he’d had at home because they would only remind him of the life he’d been stolen from. But Zayn had asked if, instead of posters, he could have cans of spray paint. To their amazement his request had been granted, and Harry had sat on his bed and watched in awe as Zayn had set to work, covering their walls with his paintings, his own messages to remind them who they were…Both their full names and birth dates as tags on brick walls…A cityscape to represent Bradford, his home town, and a few tiny houses huddled together surrounded by green fields to represent Harry’s village Holmes Chapel…A microphone to represent how Harry used to sing in a band and their shared loved of singing, theatre masks to represent his own love of acting, a spray can spritzing out a rainbow of colour across the wall to represent his love of art…A crescent moon and star to represent his Muslim faith—even now he still prayed though Harry couldn’t understand why…Portraits of his three sisters and their names alongside a portrait of his parents—Harry always found those pictures extremely sad, not just because Zayn would probably never see his family again, but also because he was unable to paint something similar for Harry. Instead he’d spray-painted his parent’s names, painted an Iced Gem biscuit because it had always been his sister Gemma’s nickname…But it wasn’t the same. He tried so hard every day, but his memories were growing hazy, their faces fading—and the pain was indescribable. Then there was Zayn’s representation of the night they’d been taken…Two teenage boys bound and gagged, huddling together in a darkened room as dark shadows towered menacingly over them. Beneath he’d written the words- “KIDNAPPED! WE DON’T BELONG HERE! YOU DON’T OWN US! WE WILL ESCAPE!”—in a defiant banner. He still had hope…But Harry’s had long faded. It didn’t matter how much their families looked; Mr Cowell had many important contacts ensuring all his birds stayed hidden away in their cages.…And beside that there was a new painting….A fairy with long wavy blonde hair and striking blue eyes, slender and beautiful. Beneath it Zayn had painted the name ‘PERRIE’ in wavy script. Harry didn’t like it but he hadn’t the heart to say anything…He knew Zayn’s love for the girl kept him going, gave him hope…He didn’t see that she was just another client spinning him lies about how she loved him, how she was going to rescue him and then they’d be together. He scowled. ‘Pretty Woman’ had a lot to answer for. He knew he just had to be there for his friend when she eventually got bored and moved on to another Rent Boy, or for when Daddy found out what his precious little girl was blowing her massive allowance on and cut her off.

Zayn’s bed was nearest the window so that he could smoke through the bars. He didn’t get up when Harry entered, instead smiling at him from over the magazine he was reading.

“Mornin’ slut.” It was their standard greeting. After all, they knew what they were now and they didn’t have any other option but to own it.

“Mornin.”

Zayn watched him as he made his way toward the ensuite bathroom. Harry could see why they’d chosen him; Back when he was sixteen—before they’d damaged him so much he’d lost all interest in any of it—he’d been pretty open about liking both boys and girls, and a boy like Zayn would have turned his head. He was strikingly handsome, with his razor-sharp cheekbones, caramel skin, a strong jawline and deep brown, almost black eyes…If only he’d been ugly, if only they’d both been ugly…

“Everythin’ o.k?”

“Yeah, punter bit me…That’s all.”

“Shithead.”
Once in the bathroom Harry turned the tap until the water steamed, before stepping into the shower and scrubbing until his skin was red and puffed, and all the kisses, all the touches he hadn’t wanted, were washed away. He went back into the bedroom to towel himself down—after all, he and Zayn had been made to perform together on many occasions, they knew every inch of each other by now—changed into pyjama bottoms and slid beneath the cool sheets of his bed, ignoring the cuffs that hung from the headboard and the muzzle that rested on the bedside table. Just before he drifted off to sleep he heard Zayn whisper, as he always did.

“We’ll get out of here Haz, I know we will. We’ll escape…Or they’ll find us. They’re still looking for us, and they’ll find us.”

It had been four years…And he wasn’t sure so anymore. Still, he gave the same answer he always did. “Sure mate. We’ll get out of here.”

It was a wonderful dream, a glimmer of hope in the dark….

*Flashback*

Sixteen—He remembered thinking he was so grown-up at that age; that he knew it all. Sixteen years old in his school uniform and beanie hat, listening to SUM 41 on his headphones as he’d headed home from band practice in his friend Josh’s bedroom…

He’d turned his coat collar up against the rain, sheltering beneath a shop awning to text Gemma.

Gem, can you come pick me up? It’s pissin down.

Almost immediately his phone had beeped with a reply.

No chance pond scum. Walk.

Immediately he’d texted back.

Mum said u cud only have the car if u picked me up

*BEEP*

Don’t giv a shit. Im busy so walk. Tell an I’ll tell mum bout u getting drunk an pukin at Megan’s party.

Fuck u Gem

*BEEP*

Enjoy the walk little bruv x

He’d glanced about the deserted street. It was more than dark now, it was pitch black. That was the problem with living in the country—No street lights. Although he’d never admit it out loud, he’d hated walking home on those dark winter nights. It was …spooky.

Sisters! He’d get her back. Maybe it was time their mother found out about the condoms she kept hidden in her bedroom drawer…

He’d been too busy plotting revenge as he’d walked to notice the black SUV as it pulled up beside him.

“Harry Styles?”
He’d turned, taking off his headphones. “Yeah?”

He’d just had time to take in the HUGE men standing behind him, clad entirely in black, their faces covered by black balaclavas…And then they were on him. His phone had fallen from his hand, bouncing on the pavement and breaking into pieces.

One had wrenched his backpack from his shoulder and tossed it to the ground while the other had clamped a huge hand over his mouth, muffling his shocked yell. He’d struggled and kicked, clawing at the hand that had gagged him…Then he’d felt a short, sharp pain in the side of his neck and the world had gone dark…

When he’d woken the floor had been moving beneath him. He’d screwed up his eyes against the bright white light and struggled to push himself upright. Everything had been spinning. A wave of nausea had washed over him and he’d rolled, vomiting across the floor. Suddenly he’d felt a hand rubbing his back.

“Shhhh, there it’s o.k. It’s the drugs they gave you. Make you sick.”

He’d struggled to push himself upright, but his arms had felt like they’d been made from rubber and had slid out from underneath him. Then hands had caught him, keeping him from falling and he’d found himself looking up into deep brown eyes.

The boy who’d knelt in front of him, holding him upright, looked Asian. His skin was sallow, his hair black as coal and his eyes a deep chocolate brown and fringed by long jet-black lashes. He was a bit older, Harry had guessed, and wore tracksuit bottoms and a hoodie. One of his ears was pierced, a square shaped stud in it, and a ying-yang tattoo poked out from his sleeve.

“I’m Zayn.” He may have looked Asian but his accent was definitely northern. “Think you can sit up now?”

“I-I think so.” The boy had pushed him gently back onto his knees and he’d looked around him, his head thumping. They’d seemed to be in some sort of metal box. Above their heads a florescent strip light buzzed and he’d squinted up at it confused. “W-what…Where are we? I-I need to get home, I told my mum…”

“What’s your name?”

“Harry.”

“What age are you?”

“I-I was sixteen two weeks ago…” His head had felt like it had been filled with cotton wool, he couldn’t think, struggled to focus. “I need to go…I promised her I’d be back before tea…”

The Asian boy, Zayn, had taken hold of his shoulders and shaken him gently. “Harry, mate, look at me.” His tone was firm but kind. He’d obeyed and had been shocked to see that the other boy’s face was streaked with tears. “Harry, you can’t go home. Don’t you remember? Two big blokes grabbin’ ya?”

“Ummm…” Yes, it was coming back to him, the feel of the strong hand on his mouth, how he’d fought.

“There was a needle-prick, yeah?” Oh, so that was what the pain had been. He’d nodded slowly. When Zayn had spoken again his voice had been trembling. “H-Harry…I-I think we’ve been
Kidnapped.


And then Zayn had suddenly looked really frightened. “I’m seventeen. Why do YOU think people kidnap teenage boys?”

And his stomach had churned as he’d remembered every joke in the playground, every primary school safety class, every warning…Don’t stray away from your mother’s side, don’t talk to strangers, don’t walk home alone in the dark…Or the bad men will take you away…

And then he’d turned, vomiting across the floor again.

There had been a sudden jolt and the floor had stopped juddering beneath them. Then with a metallic screech the doors behind him had been wrenched open and Harry had realised that they were in a van…Just as two hulking figures clad entirely in black had filled the doorway. They’d shrunk away from them, huddling against one another, and Zayn had flung an arm protectively over Harry’s shoulders.

“Urgh, filthy little bastards have thrown up everywhere!”

“Well I told you not to drug ‘em! That’s what happens when you drug ‘em!”

That’s when Harry had noticed that they were wearing black uniforms, like Security guards.

“They’re sweet ain’t they?” One of them had crouched down in front of Harry, tilting his head as he inspected him. “Look at this one, he’s a real baby-face.” He’d reached toward him with a leather-gloved hand and Harry had moved quickly out of his reach, pressing himself closer to Zayn.

“Don’t touch me!”

The man had laughed at that. “Gutsy little shit aren’t ya? Tell me kid…You a virgin?”

“Course he is…That kid’s probably not even sixteen.” The other man had knelt down behind Zayn, reaching to stroke his hair as he’d trembled beneath his touch. “This one’s pretty too, a very pretty little Paki. Oi Paki, do you speak English?”

Zayn hadn’t replied, just bit his lip, tears shining in his eyes. The man behind Zayn had shrugged off the rucksack he’d been wearing and had reached inside, pulling out two sets of handcuffs, two pieces of cloth…and two black hoods. “Here.” He’d pushed them toward his partner. “Tie him up.”

Harry had yelped in pain as he arms were yanked roughly behind his back, the handcuffs clicking into place around his wrists.

“Open your mouth boy! Now!” He’d obeyed and the cloth had been stuffed between his lips, and bound behind his head, gagging him. He’d watched, terrified, as Zayn had struggled and strained against his gag like a horse with a bit. Then he’d been plunged into darkness as a hood had been put over his head. Strong arms had lifted him, carrying him out of the van. He’d never been so afraid.

He’d struggled and kicked as they’d carried him, but it hadn’t mattered. Doors had slammed, there had been distant voices…Then a strong smell of disinfectant.
“Got two more here for ya Doc. Both boys.”

There had been a world-weary sigh. “Fine. Set them both on the couch.”

“A curly-haired baby, and a little paki.”

He’d been set down on a padded surface and the hood had been lifted away…

He’d stared around him, blinking in the harsh light. The room he’d found himself in was white and clean, and full of beds and screens just like a...hospital? Why were they in a hospital? He’d turned to look at Zayn where he’d perched beside him, trembling as he took in the room with wide, frightened eyes…Then beyond him to where an old grey-haired man in a white coat was stooping over a bed on which sat a teenage boy with floppy sandy-brown hair.

“There you go Liam. Just come back tomorrow to get the dressing changed, ok? There’s a good lad.”

“Sure Doc. Thanks.” The boy had climbed painfully down from the bed and, as he did so Harry had stared through his tears at the strips of white gauze that covered his bare back. The old man had helped him put his shirt back on and then he’d made to walk past them, before pausing. He’d turned to look at them, and his handsome face had been sad, his big brown eyes filled with pity.

“What d’ya think yer lookin’ at whore?” One of the men had raised his hand as if to strike the boy, who’d dodged out of his way. “Get back to your Handler! Now, before I take my whip to you too!”

The boy had swallowed and looked up at him, obviously scared but determined to stand his ground. “But…They’re so frightened. It in’t right.”

“I TOLD YOU TO PISS OFF WHORE!” The man had snatched something long and black from his belt, catching the boy by the arm. He’d raised it and the boy had cried out in fear…Then suddenly the old man was behind him, catching hold of his arm.

“That’s quite enough of that thank you. I’m not patching him up again tonight.” The man had turned in surprise, releasing the boy as he did so. “Go on Liam. Go back to your room.”

The boy had given him a grateful nod before running from the room and the old man had released the man’s arm before turning to look at Harry and Zayn where they’d sat crying hard, their sobs muffled by the gags. “He’s taking them younger and younger…I mean, Christ!” He’d pointed at Harry. “That child is wearing a school uniform! What did you do, snatch him from playground at lunchtime?”

The other uniformed man had shrugged. “Younger ones are easier to train.”

“Be that as it may, it’s still barbaric!” He’d shot them a look of unbridled disgust. “Get those cuffs off them.” The men had moved behind them, unlocking the handcuffs, and they’d wrapped their aching arms around their bodies, hugging themselves as they’d cried. “Now, get out of my surgery. I’ll take it from here.”

For a moment the two men had looked like they were going to protest, then they both shrugged and stalked from the room, clipping the handcuffs onto their belts as they’d gone.

The old man had watched them go, his wrinkled face twisted in fury. But when he’d turned back to them his expression had softened, his watery blue eyes becoming sad. He’d moved towards Zayn
first, producing a tissue from his pocket and gently wiping his tears.

“Shhh, it’s alright. I won’t hurt you.” He’d reached to guide the gag gently from his lips. “I’m so sorry about my colleague’s language. I’m afraid they’re not hired for their brains. “You’re mixed race, aren’t you?” Zayn had nodded slowly and the old man had picked up a clipboard. “What’s your name? Your full name please lad.”

“Zayn Jawaad Malik.”

“And how old are you Zayn?”

“I’m seventeen. Have…Have we been kidnapped?”

“I’m afraid so.” The old man had reached toward Harry, getting wiping the tears from his cheeks. “Shhh little one. You really are so young, aren’t you?” He gently pulled the gag away. “Was I right? Did they take you from school?”

And Harry had kicked out at him. “LEAVE ME ALONE!”

To his surprise the old man had chuckled. “You have spirit!” Then his eyes had become sad again. “Don’t let them take it away from you. What’s your name, little one?”

Harry had scowled at him, even through his tears. “Harry Edward Styles. I’m sixteen.”

“Doing your GCSE’s.”

“Yes.”

The old man had shaken his head again. “Far too young.” He’d written it all down before turning to look at them both. “Now boys, I need you to tell me all about your health- if you have any conditions, any allergies, if you’re on any medication-and I need you to be honest. Then I’m going to do a short medical examination on each of you… I will also take a blood sample. I won’t hurt you in any way. However, if you don’t co-operate I will have to have you restrained. Understand?”

They’d both nodded silently. Then Zayn had taken a deep, juddering breath.

“Are they gonna hurt us?”

The old man had hesitated…And then nodded. “Yes. Yes, I’m afraid that they will hurt you a lot. I’m so sorry. I wish this hadn’t happened to either of you.”

Harry had stared at him, wondering why he’d looked so upset when he was obviously one of the kidnappers too… But then he’d thought of the men’s uniforms. Maybe they were police? Maybe this was some sort of detention centre or prison? “W-what did we do?”

And when the old man had turned to stare back, Harry had been surprised to see tears shining his eyes. “Oh no little one, no… You didn’t do a thing to deserve this. You were stolen away by a twisted, evil man and no matter what happens to you both in this terrible place, no matter what they make you do, don’t you ever, for one second, think that it’s your fault or that you deserve it.”

“But…W-what are they going to do to us?”

The Doc had set the clipboard carefully down and turned to look at them, his expression full of pity and pain. And what he’d said next had made Harry’s blood run cold and his head spin with terror.

“I’m so sorry…They’re going to rape you.”

*End flashback*
He awoke with a jolt, tears damp on his cheeks.

Rape. Now it was just part of life, something that came with the job—hell, it was the job...He’d been trained to perfection, but no matter how much he smiled and laughed, how much he moaned and gasped, no matter how much he pretended he wanted it, it was all an act to conceal how much he hated what they forced him to do. If, even for a moment, that act faltered and he showed how frightened he really was, how disgusted...Then it would get back to Mr Cowell who’d deal out one of his inventive punishments. Even if they weren’t tying him up or holding him down, even if they didn’t have a knife to his throat or a gun to his head, even if he wasn’t kicking and screaming— it was still rape every time.

He sat up to find Zayn standing at the window, smoking out through the bars. “You o.k? You were cryin’ in your sleep.”

“Yeah.” Zayn held out his cigarette and he got out of bed and crossed the room to stand with him, taking it from his fingers and taking a drag before passing it back. “Just a nightmare.” Zayn nodded. After all, he had them too. “Are you working tonight?”

“Yeah...This rich couple in Kensington. They’re really into S&M. Like having a slave to punish.” His hand was shaking as he raised the cigarette to his lips once more. “They, um...They really hurt me Haz. I don’t want to go.”

“I know.” He squeezed his shoulder in a gesture of comradery and comfort. Then they stood in silence, smoking and watching the sun set between the buildings, two beautiful creatures gazing out from their cage.

Trapped.
Chapter Summary

Louis Tomlinson looks like he has it all, but appearances can be deceiving....

Chapter Notes

There is a depiction of self-harm in this chapter. You have been warned.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 2-Louis

“I love you. You know that, don’t you?”

Fuck, he’d actually done it…Louis turned to look at her, forcing a smile as a wave of guilt washed over him. He’d set out to make her do just that and one look at her expression, so adoring, told him that he’d been successful. She loved him completely… and he loathed himself for his success, because he didn’t-couldn’t-ever feel the same. Eleanor Calder was beautiful, even he could see that…Slender and doll-like, with sweetheart lips, huge brown eyes and long wavy brown hair like a mermaids. And she was also sweet, funny and kind…Somebody’s dream…Just not his.

“I know. I love you too.” He muttered, loathing himself for lying to her…He wasn’t a naturally cruel person, hated deceiving her like this. After all, none of this was her fault- she was just a pawn in a game she was too naïve to even be aware of, just collateral damage. She tilted her head toward his expectantly, lifting her mouth to his and he kissed her mechanically.

“So you’ll come to the company party as my date?” He pulled away and she smiled at him.

“Oh course. After all, you’ll need your girlfriend by your side for moral support. Is it black tie?”

“Yeah. You know my dad.”

“I do. I’ll wear my Chanel. What time will you pick me up on Saturday?”

“I’ll come in the limo for around six. We need to walk the red carpet.” He rolled his eyes and she laughed.

“Can we photobomb people?”

He couldn’t help but smile at that. She really was a great friend, funny, smart and kind…And as reluctant heir to her father’s PR company they had a lot in common…It would all be so much easier if he could just love her. “Not on the red carpet…But later when we’re drunk? Absolutely!”

He kissed her cheek, before opening the cab door for her. He watched as it drove away, disappearing down the long drive.
Back inside the mansion it was dark and cool. He closed the heavy oak front door and slumped miserably against it, rubbing a weary hand over his face. He was beginning to wonder how long he could keep this up…And then his father’s voice reverberated around the vast entrance hall reminding him that he didn’t have a choice.

“Well done Louis.”

He looked up to the sound of clapping. Mark Tomlinson stood at the bottom of the sweeping oak staircase, his lips pursed in his usual calculating smirk as he narrowed his eyes at his first born son, coolly assessing him for any cracks, any signs of weakness, or worse, defiance.

“Eleanor Calder is a good choice.” Vincent Blake, his father’s assistant and chief sycophant, clad in a long black wool coat and his usual black leather gloves, perched on the step above his father like a raven at his shoulder. “Only at the start of her career, but still a model, and at least she comes from money. Her father’s company will be a welcome addition to the Corporation. Such a pretty… girl.”

Ah, the Corporation-TommoCor-The largest corporation in the U.K and worth billions. His family had owned it for generations, handing it down from father to son, each generation adding to its success. One day he would own it…whether he wanted it or not-Although lately he’d began to wonder if they really ran the corporation at all anymore, or if it ran them. Certainly he felt like nothing more than a cog in the machine. Everything for TommoCor, his father had always said…Including him…

“I glad you approve Vince.” He shot the young man a look of pure contempt that was met with one of equal venom. It was no great secret that Vincent thought of Louis nothing but an irritation, a spoilt little rich kid who wasn’t worthy of the honour of inheriting the role of Corporation President, and a danger to the Corporation’s reputation that he had to control. Louis thought he was an arse-licking wee twat…though he’d hand over his position of heir to him in a second if he thought his father would agree to it.

He pushed past them and marched purposefully to his room, conscious of their stares burning between the blades of his shoulders.

Upstairs he slumped amongst the tangled sheets of his unmade bed and stared about his room as if he’d never seen it before. Certainly it seemed like it belonged to someone else. The furniture and wallpaper had been picked by an interior designer from Harrods; the flat-screen, wall-mounted television, computer and sound system were so state of the art that he had no idea how to work them; the designer suits that hung in his wardrobe had been tailored to fit but still made him feel like a little boy playing dress-up in his father’s clothes. It made his stomach ache to look at them. Most twenty-two year olds didn’t even own a designer suit…But, then, he wasn’t most twenty-two year olds.

He lay back against the pillows, and tried to rub the exhaustion from his eyes. He’d been having the nightmare again, over and over, always the same one- It was dark, he was in a stone room, tiny, too tiny, so small that he couldn’t even stand up properly. Claustrophobia would seize hold of him and he’d panic, hyperventilating, pounding the walls, the ceiling, searching for a way out…Then he’d see it, a chink of light in the pitch black, and he’d crawl desperately towards it, calling for help to the person he knew was above him…But just as he reached the small gap the person above would slide the two final stones into place, plunging him into darkness, burying him alive…
He’d wake up screaming. In the past he’d found himself crawling on the floor, he’d even broken windows trying to escape the stone prison from his nightmares. His father’s private doctor had diagnosed anxiety and REM sleep disorder and prescribed him beta-blockers and sedatives, but he couldn’t bring himself to take them. For some reason he couldn’t fathom, they felt like control.

His bedroom door creaked open and he felt his mattress sink under his father’s weight as he sat down.

“Honestly Louis, this room is a tip. I can’t understand why you won’t let the maids come and clean it.” There was an edge of suspicion to his father’s tone, as if he actually had any secrets left to hide from him. There was no room for privacy in TommoCor.

“They hide my things.”

“I just wanted to congratulate you again on your relationship with Eleanor. She’s the perfect match for you.”

“For TommoCor, you mean.”

“Don’t be a brat Louis.” Anger shot through his veins at that. A brat! He wasn’t a child…But his father was definitely a controlling bastard. “You’ve been dating for almost a year and she’s just graduated from university so now ‘s the right time…”

A sense of dread crept through his veins, ice cold, and his heart began to sink. “Right time for what?”

“For you to propose of course. At the party on Saturday, I think. The Dorchester is a beautiful hotel. I’ll book you a room, have champagne on ice when you arrive…How could she refuse? You are going to inherit billions, after all. A Spring wedding I think. Then I’ll discuss mergers with her father. Of course, you’ll take over the Corporation when I retire…”

Louis gaped at him horror. And there it was—his whole life mapped out for him, from cradle to grave, just as it had been the moment his mother had found out she was expecting a son…And God forbid he should think he had any sort of a say in it. He sat up, a sudden surge of hatred giving him courage, making him hiss through his teeth. “Well aren’t you just the fucking puppet-master?!

Pulling all our strings!”

For a moment he thought his father was going to hit him. Instead he caught him by the back of the neck and pulled him close, pressing his face into his so that he could see the rage in his ice-blue eyes.

“No, you listen to me Louis, you will marry that girl! I have worked my fingers to the bone to make TommoCor what it is, and I will not allow you to destroy it! This isn’t just about you. It’s about your family, the corporation’s investors, its workers, their families. Reputation in business is everything and I will not let you destroy the impeccable one I and generations of the Tomlinson family have built up. You will marry that girl, you will inherit the corporation, and I will do my fucking best to forget that…that unpleasantness from last summer. Am I making myself clear?!

WELL?!”

Last summer…The mere mention of it made any courage he’d had at that moment dissolve away. If only he hadn’t been taken in, if only he hadn’t been so stupid, if only he hadn’t trusted Oscar—that manipulative, conniving, twisted little bastard, if only…

“WELL?!”
He found himself nodding, his cheeks burning.

“Good.” His father released him and stood, turning to throw one last frosty look in his direction. “And Louis?”

He swallowed. “Yes Dad?”

“I expect grandchildren. There will be grandchildren, won’t there? The survival of TommoCor depends on it.”

Suddenly he felt so ashamed. He nodded again, tears pricking the corners of his eyes.

“Y-yes Dad.”

His father’s eyes narrowed, and there it was again, that look of repulsion…As if he was some sort of abomination.

“You have fucked her, right? You can fuck her?”

He nodded. “Y-yes.” If he got ridiculously drunk, if he didn’t look at her, if he imagined she was someone else….

Good. Now, take your medication and get some rest. I know you haven’t been sleeping.” He lifted his medication and tossed it at him before leaving the room, slamming the door after him with a bang that seemed to echo through the whole house…So cold and silent since his mother had taken his sisters and left. She’d taken him too, and for a while they’d been free, living back up in Doncaster far away from the clutches of TommoCor…But then his father had tracked them down, his heavies meeting him outside his school one day and coercing him into a waiting car…They should have known he wouldn’t let his only son go so easy…Not when it put the future of the company in jeopardy. Of course, by the time his mother had realised what had happened he’d been half-way to London where his father was waiting with a team of expert lawyers. He’d gotten custody so easily it had been a sick joke…Kidnap sanctioned by the courts. He missed his family so much it was a constant ache-His mother with her tinkling laugh, her warmth and kindness, who knew his dark secret and loved him anyway…His little sisters, his princesses-he doted on all four of them. Now that he was twenty-two he wasn’t watched as closely by Vincent and his father’s security, and sometimes when he was away on business he was able to sneak back up North to that wonderful warm, crowded little house full of laughter and comfort and fun. But his mother had recently remarried, given birth to twins…And suddenly it felt as if he didn’t really belong there anymore, like they were moving on and becoming a new family without him.

He was so exhausted. Suddenly he wanted nothing more than to shed all this pain and shame and grief and guilt and just be numb.

Louis bent to lift the pill bottles where they’d landed on the floor by his feet, rolling them between his fingers and examining the labels. Not for the first time, he thought about taking them all at once.

The only reason he didn’t was the sense that…somehow…if he did then his father would win the war that had been raging between them since he’d stolen him away from his family. But he had to do something to ease this pain, this panic, this pent-up rage that crawled beneath his skin…

He yanked open the drawer in his bedside table with a trembling hand and felt around inside until his fingers closed on the razor blade, wrapped in tissue paper. He drew it out and rolled up his sleeve to reveal the spot on the inside of his upper arm, above the tattoos he kept collecting mostly to piss his father off. He chose a spot above the other silvery scars and placed the edge to his skin.
The pain was immediate…and exquisite. He sighed in satisfaction at the release, watching in morbid fascination as the blood oozed from his flesh and traced silent lines down his white skin.

He pressed the tissue paper to the cut and flopped back onto the bed.

It was funny…But when he made himself bleed it was the only time he ever felt like he had any control over anything.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much for reading and please leave kudos and comments...They feed my muse!
Chapter 3-Helpless

Chapter Summary

Harry is selected to be 'entertainment' at a party...And Louis recieves an unwanted heirloom.

Chapter Notes

WARNING: This chapter contains sexual assault, depictions of violence, racist language and abuse. If sensitive, don't read!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 3-Helperless

“And this is Harry, one of our most popular products.”

Harry stood, naked and trying not to shiver. The study was cool, lit dimly by table lamps so that shadows danced around its edges. He tried not to look at the man who was circling him, his beady black eyes taking in every inch of his exposed flesh, pausing once or twice to cup a buttock or run a finger over his cheek, inspecting him as merchandise. Instead he watched the cigarette smoke curling in grey wisps towards him from behind the heavy oak desk at the far side of the room.

“Yeah, the legendary Dirty Harry. ‘Course I’ve heard of him.” Harry bit his lip. He hated that nickname. “First time I’ve seen him though. Christ he’s sexy. Looks like the love child of Michael Hutchence and Mick Jagger with a bit of Bowie thrown in, proper little rock star. Love the hair…And the birdies.”

He reached to touch the two large swallow tattoos that adorned his chest. Harry hated those damn tattoos...As well as their barcode each new ‘Product’ was tattooed with a bird as Mr Cowell’s stamp of ownership. Most, like Zayn, got away with a little Swallow tattoo on their hand or hip, or on the inside of their wrist. But Harry had fought and kicked so fiercely when they’d brought him to the tattooist that he’d had to be tied down and gagged. And Mr Cowell had chosen the biggest, most painful tattoos as punishment.

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“Yes, I thought he’d suit long hair.”

The man stepped closer and, instinctively, he slid a hand between his legs, covering himself. There was a mocking laugh.

“Ahh ahh, don’t you go playin’ the blushing virgin, boy. I need to see.” A big hand brushed his roughly aside and he bit down harder on his lip as he was examined. “Nice big cock, the women will like that.” The man moved behind him and slid a strong arm around his waist, holding him in place. “Now, let’s see…C’mon now. Open those legs.” A knee was pushed roughly between his
thighs and his feet were kicked apart. Thick fingers prodded between his cheeks…He let out a small yelp of pain as they pushed inside him, his eyes wide. In the opposite corner of the room, Zayn shot him a look of sympathy before turning his face to the wall. Behind him, he heard Liam’s sharp intake of breath…But no one moved to stop the man’s assault.

“Hmmm, he’s good and tight. Didn’t expect that.” The man released him and produced a handkerchief from his pocket, wiping his hands as he looked him up and down one final time before turning back to where Mr Cowell was seated behind his desk. “He’s clean?”

“You know my standards-H.I.V and S.T.D tests every month, general medicals every two months. Drug use is strictly forbidden.”

“And who is he for?”

“All my little birds are trained to be used by both men and women-Harry is no exception.”

“And what will he do?”

At that moment Mr Cowell leaned forward in his chair, fingers steepled and elbows resting on the desk, catching Harry’s gaze and glaring at him intently. He arched one eyebrow slowly. An unspoken instruction passed between master and slave and Harry found himself nodding to show he understood.

Time to put the mask back on, time to play the role…

He straightened up to his full height and pasted on a sexy smile, licking his upper lip and arching his eyebrow suggestively as he stepped forward and slid a hand down over the man’s crotch, rubbing expertly with the heel of his palm until he could feel him stirring beneath the fabric of his suit trousers. He pressed his long, lean, naked body against the man’s clothed bulk, pressed his lips to his ear.

When he spoke his voice was a husky, seductive whisper.

“I’ll do anything they want… Anything you want…”

For a moment the man seemed to relax into his touch, then…

“Urgh…Filthy little bastard!” He caught him by the arms, pushing him roughly away.

“You liked that…You like me. It’s o.k.” He smirked at him. “We’re very discreet.”

For a moment the man looked like he couldn’t decide whether he wanted to hit him…or push him to the floor and fuck him. Then he blinked the rage and desire away and turned to where Mr Cowell was lighting another cigarette.

“I like him. I think he’d be popular.”

The older man took a deep drag, blowing smoke luxuriantly in their direction, and nodded.

“Good. Now for the next one…Zayn?”

Harry moved to stand by Liam and watched as Zayn took centre stage, shrugging off the robe he wore to reveal the tanned, toned body beneath. The man circled him, running his hand over his mouth and nodding appreciatively.

“Umm hmm, he’s really somethin’ ain’t he? He’s like a fucking model. Those cheekbones could cut glass…” He reached, running the back of his hand down one of Zayn’s cheekbones. “Pretty little mouth too.” He pressed his fingers to Zayn’s lips. “Come on kid. Open up.” Zayn parted his
lips and he pushed his fingers inside and smiled as Zayn sucked on them, his gaze lowered to the floor and his cheeks flushing red. “Good boy.” He removed them and reached down between Zayn’s thighs. “And another big cock…That’s good.” He released him and stepped back, looking him up and down curiously. “So what is he then? A Turk or something?”

Behind Harry Liam winced, hissing through his teeth as Zayn’s head snapped up and he glared at the man, eyes burning with fury.

“I’m English! I’m from Bradford, you racist piece of…”

“ZAYN!” Mr Cowell’s bark frightened Zayn into silence, just as his handler, Trev, came up behind him and smacked him sharply across the back of his head.

“Hold your tongue whore! Sorry about that Sir.”

“Good…See that you punish him later.”

“Yes Sir.”

Mr Cowell turned back to the other man who was watching it all with a look of wry amusement.

“Zayn is, in fact, mixed race. English and Pakistani. Is that a problem?”

“No…It would be good to have something a bit exotic.” The man saw Zayn flinch at that and grinned in satisfaction before moving to stand behind him. “This is a nice little arse, very toned.” He squeezed Zayn’s buttocks before pinning his arms to his sides and kicking his feet apart. “Now let’s see…” Harry turned away, Zayn’s pained gasp ringing in his ears. “Umm hmm, he’s nice and tight too. What will he do?”

“Whatever is required…He is however, quite gifted with his mouth. Zayn? Why don’t you show our guest how sorry you are for your rudeness?”

“Yes Sir.” Zayn sank obediently to his knees and reached for the man’s flies, his handler crossing the room silently to drop a condom in front of him. Harry kept his eyes firmly fixed on the floor until he heard the man grunt. Then he looked up in time to see Zayn scramble to his feet, his cheeks burning as the man tucked himself back in and zipped up his trousers once more. “Well…That is a talented little mouth.” He tossed the condom casually in the bin and winked sleazily at Zayn, who avoided his gaze.

Mr Cowell crooked his finger, beckoning him over, and Harry moved to stand beside Zayn, sliding an arm across his shoulders and pulling him close. He tilted his head to whisper in his ear. “You ok?”

“Yeah.” Zayn whispered back. “I’m gonna get the whip later though.”

“No you won’t. I won’t let him.”

“Like you can stop him.”

They both turned back to where Mr Cowell was looking casually at the man, one eyebrow raised.

“Well? Do you want either of them?”

They both knew how much it mattered to Mr Cowell that he chose them both—More whores meant more money for him…And neither of them particularly wanted to go to this party alone. Zayn laid his head on Harry’s shoulder and they stared at the man seductively, as bare and beautiful as
nymphs in a classical painting. It worked.

“I’ll book them both.”

“Good. They are both extremely popular so their going rate is £900 an hour for Harry and £700 an hour for Zayn. Harry is £12,000 for the night and Zayn is £9,000. I’ll give you them both for 19000.”

“What about £16,000? I’m using a lot of your whores and you’ll make more money off of them at the party. Surely we could work something out?” Harry cringed at that. Who knew human beings could be hired in bulk for a discount?

“£17,500 is as low as I’ll go for these two.” The man seemed to hesitate. And Mr Cowell’s voice became velvet smooth and coaxing. “Such beautiful nubile young flesh, they’re barely out of their teens… There would be so many who’d be thrilled to see them as part of the… ‘entertainment’… for the night.”

The man considered this, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. “Well Mark Tomlinson always has politicians and members of the Aristocracy at his do’s… And you know what they’re all like. They’d want them…”

TOMLINSON?! MARK TOMLINSON?! Harry spun to stare at them in shock. Of course he knew the name, Mark Tomlinson was the richest man in London!

“Sir?!”

Mr Cowell caught his eye and placed a finger to his lips in a warning. He ducked his head, but kept his ears pricked, listening.

Fine, it’s a deal. Now, he wants ‘em all in black tie. They gotta fit in with the other guests, y’know?”

“Of course I do. This is not the first society party I’ve provided for. I promise you they will be suitably attired. Now, can I interest you in anything else?”

“Nah, think we’ve got enough. Payment upon delivery, as always. I’ll be in touch tomorrow.” The man gave a respectful nod, and left the room, sending a furtive glance Zayn’s way as he passed by. Mr Cowell waited until the door closed after him before nodding at them both.

“You can get dressed now.”

They both snatched up their robes and shrugged them back on, wrapping them tightly against the cold, before turning back to face the man who’d just traded their bodies so casually—their master.

Rumour had it that Mr Cowell had more power and influence than any other ‘businessman’ in London in his line of work. The Doc said he had more than even The Kray Twins back in the day, although Harry wasn’t a hundred per cent sure who they were. And it showed… It showed in his slicked back hair and perfect tan, in his Dolce and Gabbana suits, his crisp white Ralph Lauren shirts, and his handmade Italian leather shoes. He wasn’t a man to be trifled with. In all his dealings with them he was detached, courteous and business like…but all the while he exuded an aura of quiet threat. He was quick to punish, dictating how many strokes of the whip their Handlers should give them… But for more serious transgressions where he didn’t see a beating as being quite enough he could get darkly creative. He particularly enjoyed thinking up scenarios that involved acute humiliation, just to remind them what they were and who was boss. Harry was happy to admit that he was terrified of him.
“T-this party Sir…Is it really Mark Tomlinson’s party?”

Mr Cowell nodded, assessing them both coolly. “Yes. Now boys, what do I expect from you?”

“Professionalism, attention to detail, and discretion all times.” They rhymed it off carefully and in perfect unison, as if they were reciting their times tables.

“Precisely.” Mr Cowell smiled, but there was no warmth in it. “There will be celebrities at this party-do not let your head be turned by that. You will be paired with a girl in order for you to blend in. Act like a couple at least until you get inside. Stay within sight of your handler unless you are working. If a client approaches you take them straight to your handler to negotiate a price. The party is taking place in a hotel, and rooms 601 to 625 have been provided for you to entertain clients. Once you have reached the room use the room phone to contact your handler and tell them where you are. Make sure you are paid before you begin. Once finished return immediately to your handler and give them the money. You will be offered alcohol…Do not consume it. Drink only water. And only water you have seen poured…Rich men get rich by using every trick in the book not to pay for things, remember that.”

“Yes Sir.”

“Yes Sir.”

“As always, you will be provided with protection. Insist that they use it. I have no time for sick whores.” They both nodded. “Now,” Mr Cowell turned to where Liam had gone to stand beside Trev, and Harry noticed how Liam had started to hold himself like a Handler now, shoulders back and hands clasped behind him, chin jutting forward almost arrogantly, exuding an air of authority. “It’s late. Take them to their room. Trevor, give Zayn six strokes for his rudeness earlier. Show him that’s not how we speak to clients.”

Six strokes? Surely what he had made Zayn do had been punishment enough?

Harry turned to gap at him, eyes wide. “But Sir…!”

One look at Mr Cowell’s steely eyed glare and his protest died on his lips. His aggression was so immediate it was terrifying.

“TRY TO TELL ME WHAT TO DO HARRY AND I’LL HAVE YOU KEPT IN SILENCE FOR A MONTH, LOCK UP THAT PRETTY LITTLE MOUTH SO YOU CAN’T SAY NO!” And then, just as suddenly, like the flick of a switch, he was completely calm again. “Understood?”

“Yes. Please don’t Sir.” Harry hung his head, biting his lip again as Liam stepped forward to take him by the shoulder. Trev caught Zayn by the arm and marched ahead, dragging him from the room as Harry and Liam followed.

Trev barely waited for the door to close behind them before smacking Zayn across the back of the head again. “WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT?! HOW DARE YOU EMBARRASS ME LIKE THAT!”

“But Trev, he…”

“I DON’T GIVE A SHIT! YOU DON’T ANSWER BACK!”

“Here!” Liam rushed forward to catch his hand as he raised it again. “Steady on mate! That guy was being a racist prick!”
But Trev shrugged him off. “Don’t tell me how to handle my Charge Payne!” He shoved Zayn towards the staircase. “GET UP THOSE STAIRS! GO ON! NOW!”

“STOP IT! LEAVE HIM ALONE!” Harry ran forward to stop him, but Liam caught his arm.

“Haz, leave it!”

He kept a firm hand on him, holding him firmly back as Trev shoved Zayn up the stairs, kicking him every time he stumbled. “Get up, you useless little fuck! GET UP!”

Zayn took every punch, every kick, in silence, but by the time they’d reached their room he was trembling from head to foot. And Harry hated to see him so afraid…Zayn was quiet and introverted, shy, he never gave any trouble…Why should he be punished for the first and only time he’d ever stood up for himself?

As soon as they were inside Liam released him. “Get ready for bed…both of you.” He caught Trev by the shoulders, steering him into a corner. Zayn and Harry watched out of the corners of their eyes as they changed into pyjama bottoms. Trev was older, in his mid-thirties, and built like a brick shitthouse…But Liam had been hitting the gym hard. At a push, Harry reckoned he could hold him back, for a while at least.

“Trev look at me! Look. At. Me! You need to calm the fuck down!”

“I’m takin’ the whip to him Payne, Mr Cowell’s orders, don’t you dare try to fucking stop me!”

“I know, and that’s fine…But if you don’t calm down, you’ll bloody kill him! And if you do, you know he won’t just fire you…He’ll fucking end you!”

At that moment Harry couldn’t work out whose side Liam was even on. He sat down on his bed and glanced to where Zayn perched on his, gaze lowered to where his hands rested in his lap. He looked so frightened that it made Harry’s heart ache. He got up and crossed to sit beside him, resting a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“Liam will talk it him out of it. And even if he doesn’t, it doesn’t hurt so bad—you know that. He won’t hit you too hard, he can’t—You have to be healed in time for the party on Saturday.”

“It’s not that Haz…It’s the fact that he can hit me at all for what I said…You hear what they call me in here every day; ‘Paki’, ‘Half-breed’, ‘Mongrel’, ‘Turk’…Even the other whores look down on me…”Cause I’m only half-white. And I’m just expected to take it…It’s not fair.”

“I know…It’s not.”

He turned to watch Liam who’d pressed his face close to Trev’s, his voice deliberately calm.

“I’m takin’ the whip to him Liam! You try an’ stop me and I’ll just take him and do it somewhere else!”

“Look mate, why don’t you take a walk, take some time to cool off and I’ll tie them up.” Liam stepped back from him. “Just take a few minutes.”

At first Trev looked as if he was going to argue…Then he shrugged and marched from the room. Liam let out a sigh of relief and turned to where both boys sat huddled together on Zayn’s bed.

“Harry, come on mate. I need to tie you up.”

His expression was so full of obvious regret that Harry couldn’t hate him. Instead he moved to
perch on the edge of his bed, leaning to lift his muzzle from the bedside table and fiddling with it absent-mindedly. They hadn’t been tied down when they’d first arrived, but then two dumb newbies had spent their first night banging their bedroom door and screaming for help from through the bars of the windows. The newbies had disappeared after that, something Harry tried not to think too much about, and Mr Cowell had decided that they needed to be kept quiet. He’d experimented with many different gags and restraints with varying results; Rope was cheap but had left rope burns, while tape, though also cheap, had ripped the skin from their lips. Handcuffs had bruised and cut into their wrists. Ball gags—though easy to clean—hadn’t been very efficient in silencing them and had led to them drooling all over themselves and ending up with chapped mouths and chins. The padded leather cuffs with their chains threaded through the slats of the headboards, though more expensive, were durable and left no marks, and so he’d chosen them. Then he’d discovered the muzzles…

Harry turned his over and over in his hands, examining it. It consisted of a thick, oval-shaped strip of black leather with a strap and buckle at each end, complete with rings through which a padlock could be threaded, the key to which was kept by their Handlers. From the inside of the oval protruded a thick padded leather plug that went between their teeth, filling their mouths and pinning down their tongues. With the muzzle on it was impossible to make a sound let alone speak. When Harry had first been made to wear it he’d hated it, hated the way the straps had dug into his cheeks, how the plug filled his mouth, loathed the sensation of the leather over his lips…But now he was so used to it that he was unsure he’d be able to sleep without it, sucked and chewed on the plug at night while he lay in the darkness thinking. It was somehow…comforting…Like a baby with a pacifier. But there was one thing he could never get used to…

The effectiveness of the muzzle and the fact that it could be locked had inspired one of Mr Cowell’s favourite punishments, particularly for those who spoke out of turn, cried too much or—the worst crime of all—said ‘no’ to a client. To be put ‘In Silence’ meant to be locked into your muzzle for a set time, with it only being removed to enable you to eat or drink—At your Handler’s discretion of course. The humiliation factor was high as everyone could see you and guess what you’d done wrong, and having your voice taken away made even the most defiant whore feel like an object…And then there was the fact that you couldn’t cry out for help if you were attacked, scream if you were hurt…Couldn’t say ‘no’. Anyone put ‘In Silence’ became vulnerable and completely helpless, and some of the Handlers took full advantage of that…After all, it’s not as if they were capable of telling anyone what had been done to them. Being defiant and quick to speak out, Harry was often put ‘In Silence’. Each time Liam had guarded him like a hawk for the entire week to make sure nothing happened, but he’d still felt terrified right up until that moment when Liam unlocked the little padlock and released him. He was almost glad Mr Cowell had chosen for Zayn to be whipped instead.

He looked up as Liam approached them, turning his head to look at Zayn guiltily.

“Sorry Zayn.”

“It’s o.k.” Zayn shrugged, avoiding his gaze.

“Look, when he gets back he’ll be calmer, he won’t…”

And then the bedroom door was flung open, the bang making them all jump and whip round.

Trev stood in the doorway, visibly shaking with rage as he glared at Zayn.

“ON YOUR KNEES, THAT’S AN ORDER! COME ON! NOW, YOU LITTLE PAKI FUCK!”

Zayn scrambled off his bed and dropped to his knees at the end of it, face pressed into the mattress
and arms stretched out in front of him, his back bare and ready for the crop that Trev was tugging from his belt as he marched toward him.

Liam gaped at him. “Trev, what the fuck?!”

“Bumped into Mike and Dave and they’d said they’d heard what happened, heard that I couldn’t control my Charge! I’m gonna mark the little shit so good everyone will fucking know who’s in charge of him!”

“NO! DON’T FUCKING TOUCH HIM!” Harry leapt up, lunging toward him…But Liam dived for him, catching him by the waist and slamming him bodily back onto the bed.

“HARRY DON’T! HARRY LEAVE IT!”

“LET ME GO! HE’S GOING TO FUCKING KILL HIM! LIAM, GET THE HELL OFF ME!” They wrestled, grappling with each other, but, while Harry was taller, Liam was stronger. He managed to catch Harry by the shoulders, straddling him, slamming him back down onto the mattress and pinning him down…Just as the first smack of the whip hitting flesh echoed round the room, quickly followed by Zayn’s cry of pain. “Liam, let me go! I have to stop it! Shit Liam, he’s hurting him! He’s screaming! He’s our friend! What the fuck is wrong with you?! Jesus Liam, please!”

*WHACK!*

“AAAAHHH!”

“LIAM! HE’S OUR…” Then Liam snatched up Harry’s muzzle in both hands and forced the plug between his teeth, clutching the straps in his fists and pressing them down into the pillow until Harry couldn’t move his head. He struggled and kicked beneath him, fists pounding desperately against Liam’s back as he leaned down to whisper in his ear.

“I know what I’m fucking doing! If I try and stop him he’ll just take him to another room and I won’t be there to stop it getting out of hand! He could kill him! Understand me?!” He had no choice but to nod silently as behind them the whip whistled through the air again and Zayn let out another agonised yelp. “That’s three strokes. He’s halfway through and I’ll stop him going any further. I swear Harry, I’ll stop him.” He buckled the muzzle tightly behind Harry’s head before catching his wrists and forcing them gently but firmly into the cuffs that hung from the headboard, buckling them tightly. “He can’t have me punished…But he can have you punished. So stay out of it.”

He climbed off him, tossing the sheets over him, and Harry watched as he made his way over to where Trev towered over a kneeling Zayn, blood oozing from the cuts across his bare shoulders and trickling down his back.

“STUPID LITTLE WHORE!”

*WHACK!*

“AHHH!”

“How dare you let me down like that!”

*WHACK*

“OW!”
Harry struggled and fought with all his might, but the cuffs held firm.

“LITTLE NIGGER WHORE!”

*WHACK*

And then Zayn turned to look up at him, and Harry was amazed to see defiance and rage burning in his dark eyes.

“I’M NOT A NIGGER! AND I’M NOT A FUCKING PAKI, YOU RACIST FUCK!”

Trev flushed red with rage and he raised the blood-drenched crop again...And then Liam moved calmly in front of him, shielding Zayn with his body.

“That’s enough Trev. You’ve given him six strokes, you can’t give him any more.”

“Get out of the way Payne!” He tried to push past him but Liam stood firm, catching his shoulders and shoving him backwards away from Zayn.

“I SAID BACK OFF TREV!” Liam glared at him, reaching for the radio that hung on his belt and holding it up to him in a threat. “I don’t want to have to call back-up.”

Trev glowered at him, but stepped away from Zayn, sliding the whip into his belt once more.

“Fine...Don’t give a shit anymore anyway. You need to pick a fucking side Liam, and stick to it.”

He stalked across the room towards the door...And stopped as his gaze fell on Harry. Harry’s heart dropped like a stone as Trev crept towards his bed until he was towering over him, his hungry gaze taking in the cuffs around his wrists, the muzzle that gagged him completely. His lips twisted into an evil grin. He crouched down so his face was level with Harry’s, so close that Harry could smell the stink of cigarettes on his breath. He ran his fingers through his hair, tugging it painfully. Harry glared up at him, determined not to give him the satisfaction of seeing his fear.

“Such a beautiful boy, such thick brown curls...But he hasn’t fucked you once. What a waste.”

Harry turned to where Liam knelt beside Zayn, examining his wounds. But his back was to them...And to what was happening. Trev caught his chin, pulling his face back round so he could look into his eyes. “He still thinks he’s your friend...Or maybe it’s more than that. Maybe he’s in love with you. Either way...” One hand kept stroking Harry’s hair...while the other slid slowly down beneath the bed sheets, creeping down his flat stomach, down beneath the cotton waistband of his pyjama bottoms. Trev’s fingers were cold. “…If he’s going to interfere with my Charge...Then I’m going to interfere with his.”

He began to stroke and pinch...“You like that, hmmm?” Harry turned his head away, screwing up his eyes in disgust as Trev ran a slimy tongue up the side of his face and pressed his mouth to his ear. “…As soon as his back is turned I’m gonna get you, and I’m going to hold you down and fuck you til you bleed boy...I’m going to do what he’s never had the guts to do himself. He thinks he can keep you safe...I’ll prove him wrong. And if you even think of telling him what I’m planning...” He caught what was between Harry’s legs in his fist and twisted, and Harry screamed, his body arching off the bed as the muzzle muffled his cry of agony. “Not only will I fuck you...But I’ll beat the shit out of Zayn, and I’ll make you watch. You got that?”

Harry nodded, his vision blurring with tears. “Good.” He let go of him and placed his huge hands not to give him the satisfaction of seeing his fear.

And Harry struggled in his grasp as he pressed his mouth to his, the leather of the muzzle the only thing between their lips. He released him with a laugh and strode from the room.

“Ok mate...Take it easy.” Harry turned to where Liam, completely oblivious, was draping a bed
sheet gently over Zayn’s bleeding back and helping him up. “Right, let’s get you to The Doc.” He pulled Zayn’s arm across his shoulders and helped him towards the door. “Harry, I’m just taking Zayn…” He stopped when he saw the tears that shone in Harry’s eyes. “Hey Harry, it’s ok. He’s going to be o.k.”

Zayn followed his gaze, confused. “Yeah Haz, I’ll be fine.”

He nodded silently and watched them leave, before rolling as much as the chain on his cuffs would allow and pressing his face into his pillow. It had probably just been an idle threat. Trev was angry, he’d just wanted to take it out on someone. He’d never hurt Zayn like that so why would he hurt him? Any handler who raped a Product would face dire consequences-Mr Cowell had made that perfectly clear. Trev wouldn’t dare…Or maybe he would…

Around his wrists, the leather of his cuffs creaked, the chain clinking against the metal slats of the headboard. Liam had buckled his muzzle too tightly and the straps dug into his cheeks. The plug filled his mouth. He sucked on it thoughtfully.

He felt completely helpless…And there was no way to escape…

***

THUD!

Louis landed on his bedroom floor with such force that the air was knocked from his lungs. He arched his back, gasping, as the stone walls from his nightmare faded and his room swam back into focus.

He untangled himself from his bed sheets and sat up, running a trembling hand over his eyes. That panic, that sense of being trapped…He couldn’t take it anymore.
He needed a smoke.

He snatched his pack and his lighter from his bedside table and made his way down to the kitchen. Dawn was only just beginning to seep through the clouds, diluting the inky black night sky as he stepped through the French windows out into the garden. The morning dew was cold on his bare feet as he lit a cigarette, blowing smoke out into the already polluted city air. All around him he could hear the sounds of London waking up; the twittering of birds, the roar of traffic, the screech of sirens…And the sound of people already making their way to work, college or school-Men, women, children, tall, short, black, white, Asian, Chinese, straight…And gay.

He’d always resented the men and women he’d seen who were like him; envied how they could just go to clubs and meet people, could walk down the street hand in hand with their lovers, envied their freedom. Society may have moved on…But TommCor hadn’t. Its heir simply couldn’t be gay.

He finished his cigarette and tossed the butt into the ornamental fountain his father had spent thousands of pounds installing, before going back into the kitchen and starting to make himself a cup of coffee, a task made ridiculously long and complicated by the state-of-the-art coffee maker. As he fiddled around with it he allowed himself to drift into his favourite daydream, one where he wasn’t in this vast, cold mansion, but in a messy, bohemian little flat somewhere like Camden, making coffee and toast in the cluttered little kitchen while his lover slept in their bed upstairs. In his dream he’d carry the tray to the room they shared and set it down on the floor before climbing back into bed and kissing the handsome youth who slept there awake. He’d be long and lean, with
beautiful eyes—Louis had a real thing for beautiful eyes—and a sort of feral wildness to him that was intensely sexy…

He finished making his coffee and moved to sit down at the kitchen table…

In the dream they’d eat breakfast together, chatting and reading the morning paper to each other. Once they’d finished he’d kiss his lover’s cheek, whispering the lyrics to a thousand love songs into his ear, overwhelmed by a sense of loving and being loved…Then he’d kiss his mouth deeply, pushing him back onto the mattress and…

There was a soft clink as he set his coffee cup down on something that was already sitting on the table’s surface. The cup tipped and fell, smashing on the white marble floor and spilling coffee across the table’s surface…and across the note and black velvet box that had been placed there…

“Shit!”

He ran for some kitchen paper and mopped up the mess before gathering up the shards of smashed porcelain and tossing them into the bin.

Only then did he lift the note and read it. It was on TommoCor headed notepaper. Everything his father wrote needed to be, apparently.

Louis,

I want you to use this when you propose on Saturday. It was your grandmother’s. In addition to its high sentimental value, it is from Tiffany and is extremely expensive. Don’t lose it. I look forward to seeing your fiancé wearing it by the end of Saturday’s party.

Your father.

He lifted the ring from the box with trembling fingers. It was a large heart shaped blue diamond, set in white gold and edged with smaller diamonds—The sort of ring most women would kill for. He knew Eleanor would love it. But it wasn’t just a sparkly bauble…It was a handcuff, binding him to her and to TommoCor until his death.

He felt completely helpless…And there was no way to escape.
So please, please comment, leave kudos and tell me what you think! Thank you sooooooooooooooooo much for reading!
Chapter 4-Parties and Punishments

Chapter Summary

Louis and Harry meet for the first time when Louis rescues Harry from a dangerous situation, Mr Cowell deals out a harsh punishment to his most popular 'Product'...And Liam finds himself having to make a horrific choice.

Chapter Notes

WARNING- Violence, humiliation and abuse. I write dramas not fluffy fairytales.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 4-Parties and Punishments.

“Every girl’s crazy ‘bout a sharp dressed man!” Harry’s voice echoed through the function room where they were all getting fitted for their suits, causing a ripple of laughter to spread throughout the crowd of boys and men, and the tailors who were dressing them.

Zayn turned as Harry came to join him in front of the full-length mirror, shooting him a look of admiration. “Shit man, you should have been a rock star. Your voice is sick!”

“Yeah well, at least I look like one…We both do.” He took hold of the lapel of Zayn’s long mandarin style black jacket. “This is ace!”

“I dunno…But it’s not like we get to choose, right?”

“Oh come on.” Harry flung an arm around his shoulder and turned him to face the mirror. “Admit it Zayn, we’re sexy as fuck!”

Zayn laughed at that. “I guess.”

“Wow Haz, talk about the man in black!” They both turned to see Liam striding towards them, already suited and booted. “Here, what do you reckon?”

“Hmm.” Harry stepped back so he could take in his black suit, crisp white shirt and thin black tie. “You look good…Like a sexy mafia Don.”

Zayn burst out laughing but Liam just shrugged. “Cool. I’ll take that. Harry, have you had your hair done yet?”

Yeah…” He reached up to run a hand through his unruly curls. “But you know it has a life of its own and they won’t cut it.” He jerked his head over to where Louise, The Bird Cage’s resident stylist, was fussing round a tall blonde man, trimming his beard carefully. “Louise tried her best, put stuff in it…But when she pulled out the straighteners I ran away.”
“Fair enough. Then you need to go join the line to get your picture taken.” He pointed to the far side of the large room, where a photographer was taking pictures of each man or boy in turn as they stood against a white background.

“What’s it for?” Zayn asked suspiciously. Liam just shrugged.

“The website, I think.”

“To advertise us ‘Products’.” Liam caught the look of annoyance Harry shot Zayn and reached to tap him on the shoulder.

“Look, just don’t do anything Harry, ok?”

“Like I would.” Harry turned to look at the men and boys standing obediently as their handlers hovered just out of shot, their hands behind their backs, still as statues, faces expressionless as the flash went off…And he felt the devil stir within. Yes they owned him now, and they could advertise him for rent on the internet if they wanted to…But that didn’t mean he was going to make it easy for them. “C’mon Zayn. Let’s get our picture taken…After all, we got all dressed up.”

Zayn went before him, standing still and silent beneath Trev’s watchful gaze as the photograph was taken…Then it was Harry’s turn. He spotted Liam across the room, talking to Louise the stylist. He wasn’t looking. He got into position.

“Hands behind your back boy…Now look up right into the camera, that’s it.”

Harry waited, watched as the photographer’s finger rested on the button…Then, just as he pressed it he wrinkled his nose and stuck out his tongue.

“Oh for fuck’s sake!”

The entire line cracked up laughing.

“Sorry!” Harry smirked at the photographer, who scowled back at him.

“Cut the bullshit kid, and stand still or I’ll get someone to make you.”

“So sorry.” Harry put his hands behind his back and made his expression completely blank.

“Perfect…Right…” The photographer bent over his camera again…

This time Harry did a star jump, just as the camera clicked.

“Seriously stop it, you little bastard! I don’t have the fucking time for this!” The photographer growled, his voice barely heard over the laughter of the others. Harry looked up to see what seemed like every Handler in the room start to make their way towards them. He turned to see Liam marching over with a face like thunder. He didn’t have much time…He swallowed his laughter and pouted at the photographer. “I’m sorry. I’ll be a good boy.”

“You better be.” The photographer stooped over his camera again.

By the time Liam reached them Harry was grabbing his crotch, one leg in the air, teeth bared in a sexy snarl as the others cheered him on. He grabbed him by the shoulders, yanking him away from the photographer and slamming him against the wall with a painful thud.
“Ah! Fuck Liam! What are you doing?!”

Liam’s eyes were burning with anger. “No Harry, you idiot, what the fuck are you doing?! Are you trying to get yourself punished?!”

And suddenly Harry was furious—At Liam, at the photographer, at the Handlers, at Mr Cowell, at everything. “I’M LETTING THEM KNOW THAT THEY DON’T CONTROL ME! I’M NOT A SLAVE, I’M NOT SOME PRODUCT TO BE ADVERTISED AND SOLD! I’M A FUCKING HUMAN BEING!”

Harry’s voice was very deep…And when he got angry it got very loud. It reverberated through the now silent room, bouncing off the walls. Liam clamped a hand tightly over his mouth and pressed his face to his. “What the fuck is wrong in your head that you have to keep making things worse for yourself?!”

Harry glared at him. And then, from behind them, one of the other Handlers spoke.

“Looks like you don’t have a choice anymore Payne…You’re going to have to take the whip to him for this. A beating is the very least his Highness will want.”

Liam looked Harry right in the eye as he nodded. “I know.”

He released his mouth and Harry stared at him in hurt bewilderment. Liam had never hit him, Liam wouldn’t hit him…he was his friend.

“Liam?”

He caught him by the shoulders, twisting him round and slamming him against the wall. Harry winced as Liam clicked the metal handcuffs he normally carried on his belt into place around his wrists. He pressed his mouth to his ear. “I don’t have a choice anymore Harry. You took it away when you decided to act like a dick. You’re not the only one who’s made to do things. I don’t want to beat you…but it looks like I’ll have to.” He dragged him over to the photographer and when he spoke again it was in a Handler’s bark. “STAND STILL BOY!” Harry was so shocked that he obeyed. The camera clicked. Liam then dragged him into a corner. “ON YOUR KNEES! FOREHEAD AGAINST THE WALL! NOW! I GAVE YOU AN ORDER, WHAT DO YOU SAY?!”

“SIR, YES SIR!” Harry dropped to his knees, pressing his forehead against the expensive wallpaper.

“Now don’t fucking move until I say!”

“SIR, YES SIR!”

Harry knelt in the corner until everyone was ready, all the photographs had been taken, and his knees and back ached. Then Liam helped him to his feet and removed the cuffs from his wrists. He avoided his gaze as he spoke. “The other Handlers have already told Mr Cowell what you did. He’s going to decide your punishment when we all get back. He’s proper furious Harry.”

Harry shrugged. “Don’t care.”

“Yes you do…And I do. You’ve been paired with Taylor as usual. You need to go to the Cat House to get her.”
“Is that an order?”

“Yes.”

“Fine…SIR! YES SIR!” Harry spun on his heel and marched away determined to make Liam feel guilty…even though he knew, deep down, that it wasn’t his fault.

Taylor-One of Mr Cowell’s highest earners in the Cat House, darling of the London party scene… And queen of the Red-Top kiss ‘n’ tell, though that only seemed to make the punters love her all the more-had always confused Harry. Yes, she was American, but apart from that he was pretty sure her story was the same as his; kidnapped as a teenager and forced into prostitution. He guessed she’d probably been sold to Mr Cowell sometime after that. But, unlike the rest of them, Taylor didn’t seem upset at her situation…Indeed, she seemed to revel in the attention, flourish in the role of a Courtesan, somehow working out how to use her popularity and earning power to demand better treatment and perks in a way that Harry had never figured out. While the rest shared rooms, Taylor had her own suite, while the rest were bound to their beds at night, Taylor was apparently allowed to sleep freely on her silk sheets and duck feather pillows. Still, her life wasn’t all perfect…She had one hell of a Handler to deal with. Mr Cowell always put them together for big events, his two highest earners, believing they represented the best The Bird Cage Hotel had to offer. There was also no denying that they looked good together-The beautiful blonde and the tall, dark, handsome youth-His premiere products. Taylor had made it clear she found him attractive, had tried to seduce him more than once, but although she was nice enough, she had a cold, calculating edge to her that Harry found difficult to stomach. Every time she looked at him he could almost see her working out how being around him could benefit her. Simply put, he liked her…But he sure as hell didn’t trust her.

The corridors of the Cat House were empty, the excited voices of the girls and women drifting up from the conference room where they were trying on gowns for the night. Harry climbed the stairs to Taylor’s penthouse suite slowly, his new leather shoes pinching his feet with every step. He reached the door and was just about to knock when…

“So tell me…Who do you belong to?”

That voice, hissing through the door from the room beyond. His blood ran cold. And suddenly he couldn’t breathe. He slumped against the wall, gasping, tears pricking his eyes. Suddenly he was back there, in that room, with them…with HER…

*FLASHBACK*

He could taste blood, sharp and salty on his tongue…He was lying on a stone floor, naked, cold, shivering…It was dark, he couldn’t see…They’d put something on him, a hood? He tried to touch his face, feel what it was, and sharp metal dug into the skin of his wrists, chains clinked…The pain was mind-numbing, it felt as if every inch of his body was bruised black…They were going to kill him…he’d never been so frightened…

“HE GOT IT WRONG! AGAIN!” Her voice, shrieking. He was trying, but everything he did only seemed to make her angrier.

“I’m sorry! P-please, please stop. I-I’ve never done this before. I’m only sixteen. I’ve never done any of this…I’m sorry! I don’t know what to do!” His voice sounded muffled. He felt as though he
might suffocate. Silence. Floorboards creaked. Suddenly her voice again, right by his ear, sneering.

“You think I don’t know that? You’re just a sweet little virgin aren’t you? And it’s our job to fix that, train you up…So here’s what’s going to happen. I’m going to take off the hood and you’re going to do everything you’re told, and try your fucking hardest to please me and my colleague Ben here, or we’re going to make the last beating you got look like a fucking picnic, understand? UNDERSTAND?”

“Y-yes Miss…”

Laugher, cold as ice. “Such manners…it’s Miss Caroline to you.”

*END FLASHBACK*

No! He shook his head violently, shaking the darkness away. He wouldn’t think about that, couldn’t think about that. Not now. Not ever. He pressed his ear against the door.

“Ah fuck! Mr Cowell! Jesus, get off me you crazy bitch!”

“Just making sure you know your place princess.”

He stepped back from the door seconds before it was wrenched open. And then suddenly SHE was standing in front of him in her guards uniform, the first woman he’d ever been with…the first woman who’d ever abused him-And still the worst. Her deep brown eyes flickered over his body and she smirked, clearly savouring his fear.

“Harry…Well, don’t you look delicious…” She reached for him and he flinched away from her touch, avoiding her gaze.

“I-I’m just here t-to see Taylor…For the party.”

“Ummm…Lucky her. Y’know Harry, it’s been a long time…I’m sure you’ve grown…Y’know, I think I’ll ask Mr Cowell if I can have you again. See if you remember everything I taught you.”

And then she was gone, pushing past him and down the stairs. He took a deep shuddering breath, pushed open the bedroom door and went inside.

Taylor was sitting at her vanity table, painting her lips the same scarlet as her gown. She barely looked up when he entered.


The scarlet gown was backless, and clung to her every curve. Her long blonde hair had been gathered up into a twist and a large ruby necklace sparkled at her throat.

“Beautiful.”

She smiled at that and came to stand beside him, one hand on his shoulder, draping herself over him and turning him so that he could see their reflections in her full-length mirror. Harry stared. The girl in the mirror was the perfect all-American beauty, with her slender figure, golden hair and deep blue eyes. The boy, by contrast, was swarthy, dark and dangerous looking, his dark hair hanging in a curtain over his handsome face, his eyes a startling green. He didn’t recognise himself.
“See baby? We’re the prettiest whores in this whorehouse.”

“Lucky us.” He turned his back on the mirror to look at her pointedly. “Have you got security?”

It was a code word they used for the items they brought to functions just in case things got really out of hand. “Of course, I’m not a fucking idiot.” She rested one high-heel on the chair and lifted her skirt to reveal the pink Taser tucked into her stocking. “You?” He nodded and twisted, lifting his jacket and shirt to reveal the flick knife taped to his lower back, within easy reach of his right hand. “Good. Come on Harry, it’s show time!”

She grabbed her clutch bag in one hand and his arm in the other, and hurried from the room, dragging him behind her like he was just another accessory to complete her outfit.

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Louis hovered nervously in the doorway of the hotel room. In front of him Eleanor was bouncing on the king-sized bed in her bare feet, gown hitched up to reveal her long slender thighs, laughing her head off. She looked so beautiful, so happy…

Oh my God! Louis, look at this place! I can’t believe you brought me to a hotel like this! Phew!” She flopped down onto the bed, breathless, cheeks flushed, and reached for him. “You look so sexy in your suit. Come here and let me kiss you.”

He obeyed, crossing the room, taking her tiny hand in his and kissing her gently, trying to ignore the wave of guilt that washed over him. “And you look gorgeous in your dress.”

“Thanks.” She pulled away and flashed him a smile that was full of mischief before pointing over to the magnum of Champagne and two glasses that had been placed on the far table. “Why don’t we neck all of that and get completely shit-faced? It would make this party a whole lot more interesting!”

And it was so tempting….But he was acutely aware of the ring-box in his pocket, weighing him down. And he knew he had to do it now, now when the adrenaline was pumping, now before he had any more time to think. He took a deep breath.

“Yeah, sure…But I have to ask you something first.”

“Ooh,” She teased. “Sounds serious…And here I was thinking we were just away for a dirty weekend!”

“It is. I, umm, I’ve got something to give you.” He lifted the box out of his pocket and set it down on the duvet between them.

She looked from it to him and back again, panicked. “Oh my God, is that what I think it is?! Louis, what the hell are you doing?”

Making a huge mistake; that much he knew…But he was going to go through with it, no matter what. He opened the box with trembling fingers to reveal the ring. “Eleanor Calder…will you…will you marry me?” There, he’d said it.

For a few moments they both sat in silence staring at the ring and he began to hope that she’d say no. Then…”YES! HOLY SHIT!” She flung her arms around his neck and knocked him backwards onto the mattress, kissing him hard. “Of course I’ll marry you!” She sat up, snatching up the box and pushing it into his hands. “Put it on me, go on!” She looked delighted.
They sat up and he lifted the ring from the box, sliding it carefully onto her finger. They both sat staring at it, as it sparkled in the light. Then she looked up at him, her eyes shining with happiness. “I love you, Louis Tomlinson.”

“I love you too.” He pulled her into his arms, pressing his face into her hair so that she wouldn’t see the guilt on his face or the tears in his eyes.

The photographers on the red carpet noticed the ring, just like he knew they would, and he smiled, and laughed and posed for pictures, all the while fighting to ignore the feeling of dread in the pit of his stomach. As soon as they entered the function room he spotted his father, sitting at the top table and glaring at him pointedly. He nodded and placed his arm around Eleanor’s waist, ready to steer her through the crowd towards him…When a familiar voice, public-school posh and oily as hell, stopped him in his tracks.

“Hello Louis…I hear congratulations are in order.”

He turned, his heart sinking.

Oliver stood behind him, grinning wickedly. Oliver had been a pain in Louis’ ass since his first day at Harrow when they were fourteen, when he’d made fun of Louis’s Yorkshire accent and Louis had punched him in the mouth. It had been war ever since, apart from that fateful summer when he’d convinced him to call a truce, that they could be friends…And then betrayed him in the worst way possible. Oliver was everything that was wrong with the Aristocracy condensed into one nasty little human being. He would have been handsome, if it weren’t for the fact that he was odd-eyed-One deep brown and the other light blue-but he was also spoilt, snobbish, vindictive and cruel, a selfish entitled brat who saw it as his right to take whatever he wanted and leave other people to deal with the consequences. Louis loathed him. He watched, disgusted, as he reached for Eleanor’s left hand, stooping to kiss it just so he could get a look at the ring. “And this must be your new fiancé…Miss Eleanor Calder of Calder PR I presume? Stunning. Lord Oliver Huntington-Cambridge. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Er yeah. Thanks. You too.” Eleanor was too smart to be impressed by his title. She turned to arch her eyebrow at Louis and mouthed ‘help me!’ He stepped between them.

“Thanks Oliver. Look, if you’ll excuse us, we need to join my father at our table.”

He steered a grateful Eleanor away from the smirking man and made to follow her, but Oliver reached out and caught hold of his wrist. He moved close, pressing his mouth to his ear. “I’ve seen many men with ‘beards’ Louis…But you’re the first I’ve seen marry his. Tell me, does she know?”

He shoved him hard and Oliver stumbled backwards, that shit-eating grin still on his face.

When Louis spoke again his tone was dangerous. “Just fuck off Ollie. Come near me, or my fiancé, again… And I’ll kick your head in.”

Oliver laughed. “You can take the boy out of Doncaster…Seriously though Louis, I want to talk…”

“Yeah, well I don’t want to listen.”

He turned his back on him and made his way over to the table where his father was admiring the ring that rested on Eleanor’s finger. “It was my mother’s, y’know, six and a half carats…But then you’re worth every one. I’m sorry she never got to meet you. She’d have loved you.” He looked up as Louis approached and flashed him a smug smile.
“Congratulations son! I’m proud of you. I think a bottle of champagne to celebrate?”

“Oh, umm, that would be lovely. Thank you!” Eleanor, already pretty tipsy from the bottle they’d drank in their hotel room, smiled.

“Yeah sure, whatever.” Louis flopped down into the chair beside Eleanor as his father clicked his fingers and a bottle of Dom Perignon appeared at the table, complete with a waiter to pour it into lead crystal champagne flutes. His father pressed theirs into their hands before lifting his own.

“A toast to the happy couple…May they have a long and successful marriage.” Louis looked up at that, to find his father glaring at him pointedly. Their glazes locked and his father raised his glass. “You’ve made me proud today son.”

And Louis knew exactly what that meant…He’d obeyed…

And suddenly he felt sick, the room was spinning…

“Excuse me a minute.” He stood and stumbled towards the bathroom, where he vomited until his back spasmed.

He just needed to calm down, get it together…He twisted the tap until the water ran ice-cold and splashed it over his burning cheeks in an attempt at shocking himself out of his panic. He clutched the edge of the sink so tight that his knuckles went white and glared at himself in the gilt-edged mirror.

“Come on Tommo…You need to do this, you don’t have a choice.”

He took a deep, breath and straightened up, adjusting his suit jacket as he turned toward the bathroom door…And bumped right into the person who’d just stepped through it.

“Oof! Shit, sorry mate!” He looked up…and froze.

The youth that stood in front of him was tall and lean and clad entirely in black. His tight black trousers clung to his long legs and snake hips, while his black jacket fit snugly over his broad shoulders, nipping in ever so slightly at his narrow waist. His jawline was strong, his chin slightly pointed and his pouting lips full and pink, like a younger, more handsome Mick Jagger. He had the most incredible eyes-almond-shaped and almost feline, and the deepest emerald green fringed by long black lashes. He was tanned and dark as a Romany gypsy in a folk tale. In stark contrast to his immaculately tailored suit, his deep chocolate hair was wild, wavy and unkempt, falling to the tops of his shoulders like a lion’s mane. In fact, that’s exactly what the boy reminded him of—a lion, beautiful and majestic…but also primal and wild. As Louis stared the boy smiled at him, a lop-sided grin, upper lip curling ever so slightly, dimples slicing into each cheek. It was beautiful…And sexy as hell.

“That’s okay. Don’t worry about it.” His voice was very deep and very Northern. “Umm, can I get past you? I need to…y’know…”

He jerked his head towards the urinals and Louis felt his cheeks grow hot.

“Oh yeah, sorry.”

He stepped aside and the boy brushed past him…Jesus, he even smelled incredible. He was followed by another youth, also handsome, but with a more muscular build, short-cropped dark hair and designer stubble, who paused beside Louis, watching him curiously as he stared at the
beautiful long-haired boy who was unzipping mere feet away from him now. Then he leaned close and whispered something extremely odd.

“You like my boy there? If you do, come over to me outside and I’ll sort you out mate.”

He glanced at him, confused. “What?”

But then the tall boy finished and he watched as the other one moved behind him as he washed his hands, before taking him by the elbow and gently steering him from the bathroom. As the boy passed he turned to stare at him curiously, and Louis felt his stomach flip as he looked into those incredible green eyes.

…And then he was gone, the door slamming behind them. Louis stared after them, bewildered. What the fuck had that been about? Sort him out with what? A threat from a jealous boyfriend maybe? But it hadn’t felt like a threat, instead it had felt more like…an offer? He ran a shaking hand through his hair and stared at the ceiling in despair. One thing was for certain…He was DEFINITELY gay…And he was DEFINITELY going to get ridiculously drunk. He took a deep breath, steeling himself, and made his way back out to the party.

The champagne was flowing like water and Louis knew he was wrecked. Eleanor was worse, and he laughed as she kicked off her shoes and twirled beside him before falling into his arms and kissing him sloppily, smearing her lipstick across his mouth. “Umm, I love you so much babe.”

“Yes, me too.” He mumbled, trying to hold her upright as she swayed and pressed her mouth to his ear.

“…And I want to fuck you so bad.”

He tried to think of an answer to that as she kissed her way down his throat…And then that boy from the bathroom, that beautiful boy, appeared as if from nowhere, the muscular boy at his elbow-The lion and his keeper. The world went into slow-motion, all sound suddenly muted. Louis couldn’t take his eyes of him, but he wasn’t the only one. The wild-haired boy had a kind of aura that caused everyone in the room, man or woman, to stare, and a magnetic intensity that ensured those stares stayed fixed on him and only him. As he moved through the party the crowds parted before him like Moses and the Red Sea. Glasses and canapés paused half-way to mouths and conversations trailed off to nothing as people turned to watch him, mesmerised. Louis felt his breath hitch in his throat as he passed by. He turned his head, pushing his lions mane back with his long fingers…And their gazes locked.

Louis felt his heart pounding in his ears. He really was the most beautiful boy.

The boy nodded at him and then disappeared back into the crowd…And suddenly it was like someone had hit ‘play’ again. The noise of the party rushed back, filling his ears.

“Louis? Louis!” He blinked. Eleanor was looking from him to the space the boy had left. “Do you know him?”

“Uh…no.”

But he wished he did.
He’d just finished putting Eleanor to bed and was making his way back to the party to get even more wasted when a muscular bodyguard type suddenly appeared at his elbow. “Excuse me Mr Tomlinson, but Lord Huntington-Cambridge requests your presence.”

Louis was tempted to tell him to get fucked…But then he was just drunk enough to be able to punch Oliver and get away with it. “Fine…Where is the little twat?” The bodyguard led him into the lift and punched the button for the top floor. They emerged into the lavish hallway of the Dorchester’s Penthouse suite. “So where is he?”

From the door beyond there was a thud and what sounded like a muffled shout that was swiftly cut off. Wordlessly the bodyguard led him down the hall and into the room…And Louis froze, suddenly sober, gaping in horror at the scene in front of him.

The room was trashed, furniture knocked over and various items such as lamps and glasses broken and strewn across the carpet, almost as if there had been a struggle…And in the centre of the room knelt the beautiful lion-like boy, two huge bodyguards standing behind him, twisting his arms painfully back, holding him still. Blood dripped from a cut on his forehead, and trickled down his chin from his split lip. Oliver was crouched down in front of him, cramming a wad of torn bed sheet into his mouth. As Louis watched he took off his tie and bound it over the cloth and behind the boy’s head. “There we go. That’ll shut you up.” He petted the boy on the head like a dog and looked up. When he saw Louis in the doorway he smiled.

“Louis!” He rose and strode over to meet him, slapping him congenially on the shoulder. “So glad you came! Look, I know there’s been some bad blood between us, but I want to make amends.” He steered him over to where the boy knelt, struggling against his captors. “Look! I got you a present!”

He stared from the boy to Oscar and back in disgust, bile rising in his throat. “What?! This is for me?! Oliver, what the fuck?!”

“I saw you staring at him earlier, saw how you wanted him…So I got him for us for the evening. I have some good Columbian too, and enough booze. I thought we could share him, have a little party.” And Louis felt even more sick as the implication of Oliver’s words sank in. He took a step backwards, heart pounding. “Oliver, Jesus! I’m not raping him with you!”

“No Louis, Louis it’s o.k….It’s not rape when it’s someone like him. It’s just not paying for a service.” He moved to stand over the boy again, reaching down to stroke his hair as he struggled. “You do have impeccable taste Lou, he really is exquisite…” He suddenly caught a fistful of the boys curls and yanked his head backwards so he could look into his face.

“MMMMM!”

“You’re going to be good to my friend and I, aren’t you? And you’re not going to tell anyone…Or I’ll have you killed.” He turned to look up at Louis again, smiling. “This isn’t a set-up this time Louis, no cameras…After all, I’d be framing myself too. It’s a peace offering. Simply put, my family needs links to your Corporation. Come on, let us bury the hatchet by fucking the boy…Don’t worry, my men will hold him down so he can’t move an inch. They go still after a while anyway, like dolls…Then you can move them wherever you want, make them do whatever you want…It’s funny.”

Louis stared at him, shaking his head in revulsion. “What the fuck is wrong with you? You’re a fucking psychopath!”
“Louis relax…Get him on the bed.”

The two bodyguards dragged the struggling boy to his feet, trying to steer him towards the bed as he dug his heels into the carpet and fought against them. And suddenly everything was so dark, so surreal and horrific at the same time, and Louis was seized by panic. He didn’t know what to do… All he did know was that he had to get out of this situation, and fast. “I-I’m not doing this! I’m not a fucking rapist! This is fucked up! I’m not going to be a part of it!”

He turned, hurried toward the door.

“FINE! BE FUCKING BORING THEN!” Oliver shouted after him. He reached the door, wrenched it open. Then…

“MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM! MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!”

Louis turned.

The boy was staring at him, eyes wide and pleading. He looked so young, and so terrified…

…And Louis knew he couldn’t live with himself if he left him.

He swallowed, a plan forming in his mind. He’d always been a good actor. When he turned back to Oliver it was with a sleazy grin. “On the other hand…If we make sure he doesn’t tell anyone… Then it’s not exactly rape, is it?”

“No.” Oliver grinned at him conspiritually. “Of course not.”

“Hey…Why don’t we do a few lines first? Y’know, to get us in the mood?”

Oliver laughed. “I like the way you think. Benson? Could you..?”

One of the body guards nodded. “Of course, my Lord.” He shoved the boy into the other body guard’s arms and went to fetch the coke…Which only left one. Louis took his chance. He snatched up one of the fallen lamps and ran at the remaining bodyguard, smacking him hard across the back of the head with it. He released the boy with a bellow of pain.

“RUN!” Louis yelled at him and he bolted forward.

The first body guard ran at him, punching him in the face, the blow so hard that it knocked him off his feet. He straddled him, raising his massive fist again…

“STOP!” Oliver’s yell caused them all to turn.

The tall boy had him pinned against the wall. The blade of a flick knife glinted at his throat. The body guards rose and Louis scrambled up after them, all three of them watching the boy. He reached up and tugged the tie away from his mouth, spitting the cloth out and pressing his face close to Oliver’s, bearing his blood-stained teeth in a snarl. He looked positively feral. When he spoke it was in a dangerous hiss.

“I’m so fucking sick of spoilt little pricks like you!” The two body guards made to move towards them…And the boy turned to them with a growl. “NOBODY FUCKING MOVE!” He caught Oliver by the shoulder and twisted him until he was pressed against his chest, the knife still pressing into his neck. “Now, here’s what’s gonna happen. You’re going to let us walk out of here…Or I’m going to cut Lord Shithead here’s throat from ear to ear.”
“You little…”

The boy pressed the blade tighter to Oliver’s throat, just hard enough to draw blood. “Shut up, you bastard!” He looked up at Louis. “Are you coming or what?”

Louis blinked. “Yeah.” He ran to the boy’s side as he dragged Oliver backwards towards the door. “Louis, you son of a bitch! I swear to fuck I’ll get you for this! I’ll fucking ruin you! I’ll…”

“Oh, shut up Oliver!” He yanked the door open behind them. The boy placed his foot to Oliver’s backside and kicked him back into the room.

“COME ON!” He caught Louis’ arm and they both ran for it.

“Thanks love.” The boy took the bag of frozen peas from the bemused waitress and pressed it to Louis’ eye as he winced. “Here. You’re gonna have one hell of a shiner.”

Louis glanced around the empty passage they sat in. “Think he’ll tell anyone..?”

“That I pulled a knife on him ‘cause he was gonna rape me, and you thumped the guy who was gonna help him with a lamp?”

“I guess not…Are you o.k? You’re bleeding.”

The boy wiped at the cut on his forehead with his sleeve. “I’ll live.”

“And-and you almost…y’know…”

To his amazement the boy shrugged. “Occupational hazard. I’m ok.” What?! “You’re Louis Tomlinson right?”

“Yeah. What’s your name?”

The boy wiped the blade of the knife on his trousers before flicking it closed and shoving it into his pocket. “I’m Harry.”

“Oh.” Harry- It seemed almost too posh and proper a name for this wild kid.

“Come on. There will be people looking for me.” Louis set down the peas and followed him back to the function room. They stopped just inside, the boy-Harry- scanning the crowd until his gaze came to rest on the muscular boy who’d been with him earlier. He was standing by a table having an animated discussion with the older dark-haired man who sat there, surrounded by a harem of brunette women. The man spotted him watching and crooked a finger at him, beckoning him over, his face grim. “Shit.”

Louis followed his gaze. “Is that your dad?”

Harry snorted with laughter. “Does he look like me?”

“Umm no…” He seemed a bit old but…”Your boyfriend?”

“Urgh no! That’s my pimp!” He saw Louis’ look of shock and rolled his eyes. “Look.” He turned, lifting his curls to reveal a barcode tattoo on the back of his neck. Then he turned back and opened the neck of his shirt, spreading it wide to reveal a crucifix necklace…and a large pair of swallows
tattooed across his chest. “I’m from The Bird Cage.”

“I-I don’t know where that is…Are you a Rent Boy?!”

Harry nodded. “Yeah. “ He shrugged as if it was the most normal thing in the world. “Your dad’s Mark Tomlinson, the guy who threw this party, right?” Louis nodded. “Well, your old man hired a load of us as ‘Entertainment’ for the guests. Hang on a sec, I better go talk to him. He’s going to be furious when he finds out I pulled a knife on some posh wanker.”

He watched as Harry crossed the room to crouch down by the man’s table. The man reached out with a napkin to dab at the cut on Harry’s lip as they talked, then he suddenly drew his hand back and slapped Harry across the face. No one at the table batted an eyelid. He then turned to look directly at Louis, beckoning him over. As Louis crossed the room he began to notice barcode tattoos everywhere…On the pretty blonde at the next table flirting with a man at least twenty years her senior, on the handsome Asian boy who was kissing a young model in the corner, on the red-headed girl who was holding the hand of a famous actress as she led her from the room…Even on the muscular boy who now stood watching him curiously as he approached.

“Yes?”

“Simon Cowell. I know your father, Mr Tomlinson.” He held out his hand and Louis shook it reluctantly, aware that the eyes of all at the table were on him. “Harry here tells me that you helped him out of a situation that could have cost me a lot of money tonight.”

“Cost you..?” And then the implication of his words sank in and Louis felt sick again. “Oh, I see.”

“Harry.” The man clicked his fingers and Harry rose to his feet and moved to stand beside him. “I am very grateful. I can see that you like him. Please, take Harry for the night as thanks. He’s very good.”

“I-I’m not…”

“We’re very discreet. Please, I insist.” Harry was staring at him seductively now. He moved towards him and pressed himself close, so close, the long fingers of his left hand tracing their way slowly up the inside of his leg. He smiled at him through his split lip. “Take him. Be good to Mr Tomlinson, Harry. Do whatever he wants.”

“Yes Sir.”

And it was just too much weird shit for one night. He took hold of Harry’s shoulders and pushed him gently away. “Look, I’m not interested. I have to go.”

He ran from the room.

“LOUIS!” He stopped in the corridor and turned to find Harry running after him. “LOUIS WAIT!”

He skidded to a halt in front of him and held out a card. “He said to give you this, in case you change your mind.”

Louis took it and examined it carefully, taking in the bird in a cage logo. Then he looked up at Harry. And for the first time he saw through the wildness and the sexiness to the vulnerability beneath. In the shadows of that lonely corridor Harry was still beautiful…But he also seemed
heartbreakingly fragile…And so young, a little boy lost. He took a deep breath. “Harry, you don’t have to pay me with sex just because I helped you. Can’t you even see how messed up that is? I save you from being raped…So he makes you have sex with me?”

And suddenly Harry’s eyes were shining with tears in what seemed to Louis to be a silent S.O.S. “I do…But thanks for seeing it too. And thanks for not leaving me in that room.”

He hesitated…And then he ducked his head, catching Louis’ lips with his in the softest of kisses. For just a moment, Louis tasted blood…Then Harry was gone, running away up the corridor, leaving him breathless.

He stumbled back up to his room, past Eleanor where she snored in bed, and to the bathroom where he masturbated furiously while thinking of that beautiful boy and then sank onto the cool tiles and cried, still thinking of him.

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Harry could feel all eyes on him as stood on the stage at the far end of the dining hall. It had been a long night of hard work and they were all tired. But Mr Cowell had still had them brought there to see Harry being punished, hoping his humiliation would serve as a warning. He glanced down to where Zayn sat at their usual table, Trev standing behind him ready to grab him if he tried to intervene. He was glaring past Harry to where Liam stood awkwardly at the side of the stage, his Handler girlfriend Sophia at his side. His disgust at Liam’s betrayal was plain to see. As for Harry, he couldn’t even bear to look at him though part of him hoped that his kind, caring friend was still in there somewhere, and that he’d come through for him.

Mr Cowell addressed them all. “Harry here doesn’t seem to know his place. In fact, I’ve been told he announced earlier that he wasn’t a slave. Is that right Harry?”

Harry knew better than to try and lie. “Yes Sir.”

Mr Cowell’s voice was calm, but with a razor sharp edge to it. “Well Harry, a slave is EXACTLY what you are. I’m just kind enough not to treat you like one…Perhaps I should start. Firstly, slaves don’t normally get to wear clothes, never mind designer suits that I pay for. Take it off! All of it! NOW!” Harry undressed quickly with trembling fingers, tugging off each item of clothing until he was standing in front of them all naked. “Secondly…slaves wear collars, don’t they?” He stepped behind him and Harry bit his lip as he placed a leather dog collar around his throat and buckled it, not tight enough that it choked him but tight enough that he was acutely aware of the cool leather against his skin. Mr Cowell reached round to stroke his fingers slowly across Harry’s full lips. “Such a beautiful mouth…What a pity you can’t seem to keep it shut. Tell me Harry, what is the only thing a slave like you should use his mouth for? And here’s a clue, no one gives a shit about what you have to say.” Harry swallowed. “For sucking cocks and eating pussy, Sir.”

There was a titter from Mr Cowell’s harem where they hovered at the side of the room. “Exactly. The rest of the time it should be stopped up. Liam?”

Harry turned to find Liam behind him. Wordlessly he caught his shoulders, forcing him back round to face the others. Liam’s hand appeared in front of him, holding his muzzle. The plug was pressed
against his lips.

“Open your mouth Harry. Go on.” Liam’s voice at his ear, heavy with guilt. Harry obeyed and the plug was pushed inside. He ducked his head as the straps of the muzzle gag were buckled tightly, and winced at the click of the padlock. Then Liam appeared in front of him. Avoiding his gaze he caught hold of his wrists, buckling a pair of leather cuffs round them and yanking them upwards so that he could hook the chain between them onto the hook that hung from the ceiling for such occasions. Harry listened as his footsteps echoed across the wooden stage, heard the creak as he began to turn the crank. His arms were yanked upwards until he was standing on his tiptoes. He struggled, his bare feet scrabbling for purchase as Mr Cowell approached him again, reached to stroke his long back, down to his buttocks…

“I can’t do this.” Liam’s whispered words echoed from the far corner, making a glimmer of hope spark into life in Harry’s chest. Then…

“You’re a Handler Liam. You have to. It’s your job.”

Out of the corner of his eye Harry watched with a sinking heart as Sophia tugged the whip from Liam’s belt and pressed it into his hands. The room was so silent you could have heard a pin drop as everyone waited with baited breath to see if Liam would actually do it-Everyone knew what it would mean. As Liam approached, Harry turned to look over his shoulder at him, pleading silently with him.

“Liam please! Liam, what are you doing? You’re supposed to be my friend! Please don’t do this!”

Mr Cowell continued, aware of the tension in the room and savouring it. “Thirdly, when slaves are impertinent they are whipped. Ten strokes, I think Liam. And make them good and hard. I want him marked. Spread out the blows. I want to see stripes on his shoulders, back, arse and thighs.”

“Yes Sir.” Liam stood behind him now, his gaze fixed on the whip as he played with it nervously. “Sir…”

“I GAVE YOU AN ORDER LIAM!”

Liam looked up at him, mouthed ‘I’m sorry.’ Then suddenly he was a Handler again, barking orders. “TURN AROUND BOY!”

Harry did.

SMACK!

The first blow was so hard that it knocked the air from his lungs. And then the blows were raining down on him, white hot slaps landing across his shoulders, down his back, then onto his backside and thighs. The pain was horrific, breath-taking, his skin was on fire. Soon he was screaming against his muzzle. He could just see Zayn through his tears, struggling and fighting against Trev as he held him back, muffling his shouts of protest with his huge hand. Slowly he became aware of a wetness on his skin. He looked down, noticed droplets of red falling onto the wooden floorboards…Blood…his blood.

By the time the final blow hit he was limp, slumped forward, the chain the only thing keeping him upright.

“Jesus Christ.” Liam’s voice behind him, full of shocked disbelief at what he’d just done. He sounded almost afraid.
“Thank you Liam.” Mr Cowell moved in front of him and reached up, undoing the cuffs. Harry fell in a heap at his feet, where he curled up into a ball. Mr Cowell leaned down and caught a fistful of his curls, dragging him upwards. “ON YOUR HANDS AND KNEES HARRY! NOW!” Harry scrambled to obey and Mr Cowell crouched down in front of him, pressing his face to his as he shrank away from him. “And finally, slaves are objects…Domestic appliances, farming tools or…in your case Harry…ornaments. That’s what you are Harry, nothing but a pretty little ornament, a decoration.” He reached into his pocket and produced a long dog leash. He clipped it to Harry’s collar and then straightened up, tugging at it and glaring down at him in mock annoyance. “Well come on slave! Heel!” Harry crawled behind him across the floor, cheeks burning with humiliation, until they’d reached the side of the stage, the laughter of the harem and the Handlers ringing in his ears. Once there, Mr Cowell tied the end of the leash to a nail on the wall, making sure it was so taunt that Harry could neither lie down nor stand without strangling himself, but had to remain on his hands and knees. “And so for the next few days you will be displayed up here-A silent object, an ornament…” He turned to look at all the others who were watching in shock. “And a warning to anyone else who thinks they might want to step out of line!” He turned back to Harry, smiling as he cowered beneath him, trembling with fear and pain He was clearly enjoying debasing him so thoroughly. “Oh don’t worry, you’ll be fed and watered…From a dog bowl.” He stood up and made to walk away before stopping. “Oh wait, there’s something I’ve forgotten…Liam?” Liam crossed the stage, shame-faced, and handed him a plastic basin. Mr Cowell crouched down behind Harry, slapping the inside of his thighs. “Come on Harry, spread your legs.” He obeyed miserably, shuffling his knees apart, and Mr Cowell placed the basin pointedly on the floor between them. “There you go…You can piss and shit in that.” The harem of brunettes and the Handlers roared with laughter. Harry looked up just in time to see Liam turn away in disgust.

Mr Cowell turned back to the watching crowd. “THE REST OF YOU HAVE WORKED HARD SO GO TO BED, GET SOME REST! GO ON!” As they all filed out of the hall he crouched back down to laugh in Harry’s face. “Goodnight, slave.”

As Liam passed him he caught his eye.

“Harry.” He whispered. “Harry…I’m so sorry.”

Harry ignored him. His apology didn’t mean a thing.

Harry knelt on his hands and knees in the dark, shivering. His back still burned, the blood from his wounds crusting and cracking on his skin. His muscles ached and he shifted on the wooden floor, trying and failing to find some relief. He was cold, so cold…And he needed to piss so badly that it hurt. At least no one was around to see him. He let go, cringing at the sound of urine hitting plastic. Suddenly a slow clapping rang out and a switch was flicked, filling the hall with light. Harry ducked his head, screwing up his eyes against it. When he opened them again Mr Cowell was standing in front of the stage, still clapping. “Good boy! We’ve finally got you house-trained! Oh no, don’t stop on my account.”

And Harry couldn’t. He hung his head in shame, cheeks hot, as he pissed into a basin in front of his owner. Mr Cowell waited until he was finished before coming to sit cross-legged in front of him. “Harry, Harry, Harry…” He shook his head. “Why is it that my biggest earner is also my biggest pain in the arse, hmm? Why do you keep fighting me? I punish you and I punish you and none of it ever sinks in. So I’ve decided to switch tactics…Here.” He tugged a brown envelope from under his arm, opening it and pulling out a pile of photographs, setting them out carefully on the floor in front of him. They were all of the same girl; sitting on a park bench, talking on the phone and drinking coffee from a paper cup; climbing out of a car, her arms weighed down by Tesco grocery
bags; standing clutching textbooks as she chatted with friends; peering out of a window in red plaid pyjamas... Mr Cowell reached behind his head to unlock the muzzle, pulling it from his mouth. “Recognise her?”

He nodded, his eyes filling with fresh tears. The hair was different, and she looked slightly older… But she still had their mother’s smile.

“Gem.”

“Yes, that’s right. Gemma Anne Styles, born December 3rd 1990. Currently residing at 11 Bloomfield Lane, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire with her mother and stepfather. Your sister really is quite beautiful. Not quite as striking as her younger brother, but still…She’d make a nice little earner for The Bird Cage.”

Harry looked up at him in horror, shaking his head desperately. “No…”

“Oh course she’d have to be trained first. But then I’m sure Ben and Caroline would do a thorough job. Tell me Harry, do you love your big sister? Do you miss her?”

“Y-yes.”

“Would you like her to come work alongside you here? Be a whore like you?”

“No! No Sir, please..!”

“Then you need to behave and you need to obey, because believe me Harry I am always watching, and I can have her snatched and brought here like that!” He clicked his fingers, making Harry flinch.

“I will! I’m sorry Sir, I’ll do anything…Just please leave Gemma alone!”

“That’s more like it.” He pushed the muzzle between Harry’s teeth and locked it into place again. Then he began to gather up the photographs, snatching them away from him as he tried to grab at them, desperate to see his sister’s face one final time. “I don’t know why you’re so desperate not to forget her…They’re all starting to forget you.”

The words cut him like a knife…But it couldn’t be true…Could it? Four years was a long time to search for someone…Perhaps they’d given up on him.

He waited until Mr Cowell had left him alone in the dark, locking the door behind him…Then he cried hard, the muzzle muffling his sobs of misery.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you soooooooooooooo much for reading and please, please leave comments and kudos so I know what you think.

NEXT TIME- Louis makes a phone call....And The Bird Cage gets a new resident/product.
Chapter 5- Niall

Chapter Summary

Harry learns a secret about Liam, Louis makes a phone call...And The Birdcage gets a new resident.

Chapter Notes

Thank you sooooooooo much to everyone who's been reading and commenting so far! I know this chapter was a day or so late but I've been sick. So sorry I made you all wait!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 5-Niall

Three weeks later Louis clicked Send on what was probably his hundredth email of the day and sat back on his chair, swivelling it round so that he could look out through his office’s floor-to-ceiling windows at the skyscrapers of London’s financial district. God, he was bored. But as Vice-President and heir of TommoCor this would be his job for life-Holding down the fort while his father was away, dealing with contracts he had no interest in, chairing meetings he didn’t quite understand, pushing paper and answering emails until his head ached and he wanted to scream in frustration. This WASN’T him. He remembered when he used to have dreams of drama school...

An irritating buzzing noise cut through his thoughts and he reached for the phone.

“Hello?”

“Your fiancé is on line one Sir.”

He sighed. Eleanor had been phoning every day with some new wedding idea and it was really beginning to wear him down. But every tinge of irritation he felt was softened by guilt. As far as she knew, she was marrying a man who loved her, having her dream wedding-He couldn’t hate her for being caught up in the lie. “Put her through please. Thanks Claire.”

“Hello? Louis?”

“Hi El. What is it now? Flowers? Favours? Can’t get the right colour of chair backs?”

He heard her sigh down the phone. “I wish. We got a call from the New York office, one of our major clients over there is threatening to pull out…And Daddy asked me to fly there and see if I could smooth things over. Baby I’m so so sorry, I know we were supposed to look at venues this weekend, but this contract is worth big money and they like me…I can’t let Daddy down.”

“It’s ok sweetheart.” He tried to sound upset while inside he was elated. “I’ll miss you…But I get it, you’re doing it for your dad. I can change the appointments. We’ll go next weekend.”
“Oh you’re such an angel! What did I do to deserve you?! Also, since I’m headed to Manhattan, I was thinking...maybe...of calling into Vera Wang for my dress? My mum’s going to come!” She was almost squealing with excitement.

“Brilliant! Make it into a girly weekend! You might as well!”

“Exactly...” There was a long pause, then...”I can’t wait to marry you Louis Tomlinson.”

“I can’t wait to marry you Eleanor Caldor.” The lie slipped out so easily it shocked him.

“Right, I have to go, but I’ll see you when I get back. Love you, ‘bye.”

“‘Bye.” He hung up, smiling to himself. Eleanor in New York, his father in Japan...He had a whole weekend of freedom-A rare and beautiful thing. And he knew exactly where he was going to spend it; Back in Donny, surrounded by his family. He reached into his pocket for his mobile phone...

A small rectangle of cardboard fluttered to the floor. He stooped to pick it up, turning it over and over in his fingers as he took in the caged bird logo, light flashing off the gilt lettering...

The Bird Cage Hotel

Of course he’d thought about that wild-haired boy...In fact he couldn’t stop thinking about him. He thought about him while he spent sleepless nights knocking back shot after shot of whiskey in the hope it would block out the nightmares; while he typed yet another email to some business contact of his father’s;...He thought about him when he was in bed with Eleanor, thought about the way his dark hair curled around his ears and brushed his shoulders, thought about his piercing green eyes fringed by long dark lashes, thought about his deep voice, thought about his honey skin, his narrow hips, the feel of his mouth- just so he could get hard enough to fuck her...He wanted to see him again...And now he had the freedom to...

...But did he dare?

****

“OH! OH! OH GOD! SHIT, I’M COMING!”

Thank Christ for that, Harry’s legs were beginning to ache. He pressed one hand against the wall for leverage and caught hold of her thigh with the other, lifting her leg up over his hip and angling himself so he hit her clit just right. She reached up, tangling her fingers in his hair as he thrust into her hard.

“I’M COMING! I’M COMING! OH FUCK!”

Her scream of passion bounced off the walls. He finally allowed himself to come. It was next to nothing, just a necessary release that gave him no real pleasure. After all, underneath all the play-acting, the ‘come-to-bed’ looks and seductive smiles, he didn’t actually like sex. It was just something he was made to do.

He stepped back, tugging off the condom, binning it and doing up his jeans as she slid her panties back on and adjusted her pencil skirt. Kate was another one of his regulars. He guessed she was in her late forties, knew that she worked for some accountancy firm in the city because she was
always moaning about it. He didn’t mind her though. She was nice enough, was always bringing him expensive presents-mostly gadgets such as i-phones and tablets-that he wasn’t allowed to keep. He guessed she was just lonely. After all, why else would she visit a high-class brothel on the way home from work and pay 900 quid to have sex with a twenty year old? She finished smoothing her blonde bob in the mirror and came over to run her hands down his chest, playing with the buttons on his shirt.

“Maybe next time I can see that stunning body of yours.”

“Sorry, but when I saw you, you looked so sexy that I had to fuck you fast.”

She was too smart to fall for that, but she didn’t push it, shrewd enough to know that the real explanation for why he didn’t take his clothes off this time was probably dark enough to ruin her fantasy.

“Thanks baby, that was incredible.”

She moved to kiss him and he turned his head so that her lips landed on his cheek.

“I don’t do kissing.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot. Sorry.”

He knew it was a cliché but…It was the only thing they didn’t force him to do. And it was more than that…Harry had had no experience of sex before he’d been brought to The Bird Cage, but he’d kissed…and every kiss, from those first hesitant pecks with his first girlfriend and boyfriend that had quickly developed into passionate snogs, down to the kisses on the cheek that he gave his mother and sister every day before leaving for school, had been to show someone that he loved them, the kisses he received in return proof that they loved him. Love didn’t come into what happened to him every day in The Bird Cage. So he refused to kiss, preferring to keep that one intimate act sacred…

But he’d kissed that boy at that party…

He still wasn’t quite sure why he’d done that. Oh he’d been extremely good-looking, with his deep blue eyes, high cheekbones and great smile, and he’d basically saved him when it would have been easier to just walk away…But he didn’t love him, didn’t even know him. Yet he’d had that overwhelming longing to feel his mouth against his….

“Here baby.” Kate reached for her Mulbury handbag and fished about in it before pulling out a wad of cash and holding it out to him. “Same time tomorrow?”

“I’ll look forward to it.” He took the money before winking at her sexily as she left the room. He waited for a few minutes before following her.

Liam was leaning against the wall in the corridor, waiting for him. He handed him the money wordlessly before turning his back on him and making his way toward the stairs. As he walked he heard the thump of Liam’s boots echoing his own, and clenched his fists in annoyance. Part of him wanted to just swing round and put all his rage and hurt at his friend’s betrayal into one good hard punch that would knock him out…But he couldn’t bear to even look at him…And of course he’d be punished for hitting a Handler. So Liam got the Silent Treatment-No matter how much he apologised, no matter how much he begged forgiveness Harry barely uttered a word to him, none of them did. He’d proved he wasn’t one of them, not any more.

Harry reached the medical room and knocked on the door.
“Come in.”

“Hi Doc.” The Doc was already arranging screens around one of the beds when he entered. He greeted him with a nod and a smile before glancing behind him in surprise.

“Oh, hello Liam.”

“Hi Doc. I just…err…I just wanted to see how Harry was doing…Y’know, how he was healing.”

Harry made his way silently over to stand by the screened bed, watching as The Doc bustled about gathering his equipment. Liam hovered awkwardly by the door, hands behind his back, squirming beneath Harry’s accusing stare when it landed on him.

“I’m sorry Liam, but I try and keep my patients information confidential, and any examination is private.”

“I-I know but…I just want to make sure he’s o.k.”

“Go away Liam.” Harry said quietly.

They both turned to look at him, Liam chewing his lower lip, his expression heavy with guilt. He sighed.

“Harry I just…”

“LEAVE!” Harry’s bark echoed round the large room. For a moment they both stared at him, taking in his barely contained fury. Then The Doc turned to Liam. “I think it’s best if you go.” He said gently.

“Fine.” Liam shot Harry a hurt look. “Harry, I’m so sorry.”

Harry turned his back on him, pushing his way between the screens towards the bed. He placed both hands on the crisp, white sheets, clenching them in his fists as his whole body shook with rage. And suddenly The Doc was by his side, rubbing his shoulder soothingly.

“Shhh, calm down now.”

Harry spoke through clenched teeth, tears of hurt and frustration stinging his eyes. “He’s a bastard!”

“Shhh, I understand why you’re angry. You trusted him…And he let you down. He was your friend, on your side…And then he abused you, just like everybody else.”

And, as usual, The Doc was able to get right to the heart of the matter. Harry kept his eyes on the white sheets.

“I want to go home.” He whispered. He’d given up saying it years ago, but now it just slipped out.

“I know.” The Doc said sadly. “I wish you could.”

Harry sniffed and wiped his tears from his eyes with his fingers. “But it doesn’t matter, does it? Doesn’t matter what I want. Sorry Doc. I’m fine now. I’m fine.”

The Doc nodded in understanding. “You know the drill by now-Undress and lie down on your stomach. Give me a shout when you’re ready.”
And then he left Harry alone, pushing the screens into place to give him some privacy, the only person in The Birdcage who ever allowed him any privacy or dignity. He undressed slowly, wincing, before climbing carefully onto the bed and lying down on his front, resting his head on his folded arms.

“Ready!”

He listened as The Doc squeezed between the screens, shivered as his fingers ghosted over the wide strips of gauze stuck over the top of each thigh, over each buttock, over both shoulders.

“Does that hurt?”

“Aches a bit still.”

“Hmm.” He pressed his face into the pillow, cheeks burning, as the old man peeled the bandages away and examined the bruises and wounds beneath. “These are almost healed…And the bruises are fading…but I’m afraid you’ have a few scars. Here…” He touched Harry’s right shoulder, tracing the tip of his finger across the angry red marks. “And here.” He touched Harry’s left buttock. “Still, you were there two days before they let me treat you. You’re just lucky there was no infection.”

“Can I work over-nights again?”

“I’ll lie a little on the report, get you another day or two.”

“Thanks Doc.”

He began to clean the wounds carefully. “You know it was Liam who fought for them to release you, Liam who carried you here to me. You were barely conscious…”

“If it weren’t for him there would have been nothing to treat.”

“I think you’re being too harsh on him.”

“WHAT?!” Harry turned to glare at him and The Doc pushed him gently back down.

“Don’t give me that look Harry. Do you seriously think Liam enjoyed hurting you? He didn’t have a choice. If he’d refused he would have been stripped of his Handler status, punished, forced back into prostitution…And you would have been beaten anyway, just by someone else.”

“He did have a choice…and he chose to become one of them.”

“And can you honestly tell me that, given the opportunity, you wouldn’t have made the same choice? I see all you coming in as terrified teenagers, watch as they break you and turn you into ‘products’. I know that no matter how long you’re working here, each client is a new low, a new fear, a fresh violation. Can you blame Liam for seeing an opportunity to get out and grabbing at it with both hands? Normally I wouldn’t tell you this, but I want you to understand…He’s ill Harry.”

“What?!” Surprised, Harry tried to twist to look at him and was pushed gently down again.

“Umm hmm. Liam was taken before it occurred to Mr Cowell to do thorough health checks on the victims he selected. A friend saw Liam singing at a festival, took a picture and sent it to him, and Mr Cowell had him kidnapped that very night…What he didn’t know was that Liam was born premature. His immune system is next to none and he is in partial renal failure—he has only one partially functioning kidney. When I reported all this to Mr Cowell he was going to have him killed…”
“No sick whores…”

“Exactly. But I managed to persuade him that I could look after Liam, make him fit enough to work. Still he found the work exhausting, became sick frequently…”

“Oh, yeah.” Harry remembered all the time Liam seemed to spend in the Infirmary. Why had it never struck him as suspicious before?

“That Handler woman seems to care for him, she’s a former product herself. He needs to be loved. Y’know Harry, I remember the first night you and Zayn spent here. I remember Liam coming down here and sitting between the both of you holding your hands as you cried, trying his best to comfort you. You’ve been thick as thieves ever since. He adores you Harry, admires you for your confidence, your rebelliousness. Do you really think he’d have hurt you if he’d had any choice in the matter?”

And Harry didn’t know how to answer that. So he pressed his face into the pillow and lay still as The Doc finished cleaning and dressing his wounds.

Zayn was waiting for him outside the infirmary. He held up two sports bags.

“Here mate, we’ve got to do an hour in the gym.”

“Urgh.”

He fell into step beside him as they made their way upstairs, glancing at him, concerned. “So, what did The Doc say?”

“I’m healing o.k, but I’ll have a few scars.”

Zayn swung an arm over his shoulders. “Aww that’s shit man…Still can’t believe Liam did that to ya. He’s a two faced son of a bitch.”

“Yeah.” Harry muttered…Although after his conversation with The Doc he wasn’t so sure anymore.

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

Back in his father’s mansion, Louis sat at the kitchen table, his mobile and the card sitting in front of him, and poured himself a drink for courage. He knocked it back and dialled the number with shaking fingers, steeling himself as the dial tone droned in his ear.

“Good afternoon, you have reached The Bird Cage Hotel. How may I help you?”

We he had NOT been expecting that. The receptionist on the other end of the line was well-spoken and professional.

“Umm…Hello, I’d like to…umm…”

“Hello Sir.” The receptionist’s tone became breezy and reassuring and he realised that she probably dealt with nervous callers all the time. “Would you like to make a booking? Please let me take the time to reassure you that we at The Bird Cage provide a professional service that is the epitome of discretion.”
He took a deep breath. “Y-yes…Yes I’d like to make a booking.”

“Group or individual Sir?”

“Er…”

“Is this booking for yourself Sir, or for a corporate event?”

“Oh, individual.”

“Home or at the hotel Sir?”

“Home.” He had a free house, he might as well make use of it.

“Certainly. So will you be requiring a male or female Sir?”

“Male.”

“Certainly, Sir. Do you require a specific type? Hair colour, eye colour, race, height, weight, age…”

He coughed nervously. “Actually, I’m looking for someone specific.”

“Alright. Do you know his name Sir?”

“Umm…I don’t know his surname. His first name was Harry, I don’t know if that helps or…”

The receptionist cut him off. “Ah yes, Harry Sir. He’s one of our premium products.” Products? “His fee is very high, Sir, £12,000 for the night, Sir, beginning at 6p.m and ending at 8 a.m the next day. His hourly rate starts at £900. Both these prices do not include ‘Specials’.”

“Specials?”

She reeled them off like she was reading a grocery list. “BDSM, threesomes, rimming, water-sports, airplay, bondage, spanking, role-play and scenarios…” Jesus!

“NO! Umm, no…” he rushed to reassure her. “There will be no ‘Specials’.”

“Alright Sir.”

“I’d like to book him for the full night.”

“Certainly Sir. Would you like him dressed in a specific way? For example, a suit or…”

“No. Just-just whatever he wants to wear. Like, his normal clothes.”

“Ah, I see. You want the ‘Boyfriend Experience’ Sir. That’s fine Sir. Can I take your name please?”

“Tomlinson. Louis Tomlinson.” He waited for the gasp of recognition but there was none. Then he realised that this woman must deal with calls from the rich and famous every day.

“Alright, Mr Tomlinson. And when will you be requiring Harry’s services?”

“Saturday.”

“Certainly. Now, I just need to inform you of our terms and conditions. All our products are trained
to our own extremely high standards and are the epitome of discretion at all times. Unless otherwise required you will find all our products submissive and keen to follow orders and to please. All our products are screened monthly for S.T.D’s and H.I.V and have a clean bill of health-Certificates to support this are available upon request. All our products are provided with condoms, dental dams and sex toys for their own personal use. Use of protection is mandatory for them and for you. Refusal to do so will lead to termination of the appointment, their handler will be contacted to collect them and they will leave. Do not harm our products in any way. If you do there will be consequences…”

“What, you’d kill me?” He hadn’t meant it to come out like that, he was just so nervous. He cringed. Urgh, he sounded like a psychopath now.

The receptionist did not sound amused. “No Sir…We will ruin you. We have many contacts in the financial sector, the legal sector and, above all, the media…”

“Oh, I understand.”

“Good. Now, the product will arrive at 6pm in a black S.U.V with his Handler. Handlers are necessary to ensure the safety of our product and the quality of service for you so please allow him inside. Once he is satisfied that the product will come to no harm he will leave. He will return promptly at 9 am the next day, please ensure the product is ready. He will take payment then. We accept all major credit cards but, for your sake and ours, prefer cash…”

“That’s fine.”

“What is your address Sir?”

He rhymed it off, heart still pounding.

“Right, that’s your appointment made Sir. Thank you for choosing our products. Enjoy your evening with Harry Sir. Goodbye.”

He hung up the phone and stared at it in bewilderment. Had he really just ordered a human being to be delivered like you would order a pizza?

Not just a human being…A prostitute.

Not just a prostitute…That boy. That tall, lean boy with the piercing green eyes. That boy with the full, pink lips. That boy with the mane of curls, who looked as wild and majestic as a lion, was coming to his house. He wasn’t even quite sure what he would do with him once he arrived…The obvious thing seemed seedy…No, he wouldn’t have sex with him, it would be enough just to be able to talk to him…As long as he could resist him.

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

“Oh man, you should see her eyes. My Missis has the most incredible blue eyes…So anyway, we were just lying there, in her bed, and she looks up at me with those amazin’ eyes and says she loves me! Just like that!”

Zayn stopped at the foot of the stairs, beaming at him, but Harry couldn’t smile back. Zayn looked so happy…And he hated that Perrie girl; not for using Zayn-after all, Harry knew that’s what they were paid for…But for lying to him. He kept his tone gentle. “Look, I’m sorry but…Mate, we’re the whores. We’re supposed to make them fall in love with us, not the other way round.” He
reached up with his towel to wipe the beads of sweat from his face.

“It ain’t like that. She loves me as much as I love her…”

“So, she loves you. So…what? You’re, like, going to get away from here and you’ll get married? Only way that’ll happen is if her daddy buys you for her, mate. And Mr Cowell’s not selling.”

Zayn opened his mouth to reply but was interrupted by the ding of the Car Park Lift and the metallic whoosh of its doors opening.

“UMMM! UMMMM!”

At the sound of the muffled cries they both turned.

Two burly Handlers stepped out of the lift, closely followed by Liam. The pitiful creature they held between them barely looked human. It was skeleton thin and coated head to toe in filth. Torn rags clung to its bony limbs. Its hair was long, scraggly and matted with dirt. Its hands had been cuffed behind its back and a cloth gag bound across its mouth, but it still snarled and struggled, bare feet slapping against the floor as they dragged it down the hall.

“What the fuck you two lookin’ at?!” One of the Handlers snapped as they dragged it towards them with difficulty.

“Nothin’ Sir. It’s cool.” Zayn caught Harry by the elbow. “Come on Haz. The last thing we need is to get into more trouble.”

Harry shrugged him off. “No. I want to see.”

The Handlers passed them, trailing the thing between them, and as they passed it looked up at Harry…And he saw that it wasn’t a thing at all, but a boy of around his age, his deep blue eyes shining out from his filthy face, his tears tracing lines through the dirt. Harry’s heart sank.

“Oh God.”

He turned to where Liam was following them. As he passed he reached for him, grabbing him by the shoulders and slamming him up against the wall as Zayn gaped in horror. “Shit, Harry! What the fuck are you doing?”

But Harry ignored him, glaring at Liam. “So you’re kidnapping people now?!”

Lima glared right back at him and Harry was thrown when he saw the tears shining in his eyes. “I didn’t kidnap anybody! It was more like a fucking rescue!”

“UUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!”

“Urgh little fucker! Grab his legs!”

“UUUUUUUUUMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM!”

“Get up, you little bastard! Get up! LIAM!”

Liam shoved him out of the way and Harry and Zayn turned to watch as he ran over to where the boy was sat on the floor now, kicking out at the two Handlers every time they tried to lift him up.

“GET UP YOU LITTLE SHIT!” One of the Handlers kicked out at the boy with his boot, catching him in the side and causing him to curl up into a ball on the floor, shaking.
“STOP IT! CAN’T YOU SEE HE’S TERRIFIED?!” Liam dropped to his knees beside the boy and reached to untie the gag and gently tug it from between his lips. “Take it easy, mate…”

“AAAAAAAAAAGGGGGRRRRHHHHHHH!” The scream that came out of the boy was gut-wrenching, like the cry of animal in pain. Liam reached to gently stroke the matted mess of hair.

“Shhhhh, Niall…Is that your name? Shh Niall, I know that you’re scared. But you’re out of there now. And this place is better.” He lay down beside the boy on the floor, so that they were face to face, pushing his hair out of his eyes and cradling his face in his hands. “Hey, hey look at me.” The boy did, biting back his sobs. “Hi. My name’s Liam. It’s my job to take care of you now. I’m not going to hurt you. Shhhh, it’s o.k. First I’m going to get you to a doctor, legit, the real deal. Then you’re going to get a nice hot bath. Then, once you’re clean, we’re going to give you something to eat and a nice, warm bed to sleep in. A bed all your own.”

“A-an’ then I’ll have ta do the dirty stuff with ya.” His accent was strange.

Liam shook his head. “No, no you don’t have to do any of that with me. I promise.”

“P-please Master, please…None o’ that dog food. It makes me awful sick.”

“I’m not your master. But we will give you proper food. No more dog food on the floor. Now, I bet it hurts to walk, after so long chained up. That’s why you’re struggling.”

The boy sniffed. “Me legs hurt. They won’t do what I tell ‘em.”

“I’ll help you.” He got up and moved behind the boy, unlocking the handcuffs.

“Liam!”

Liam shot the other Handlers a warning look. “He’s my Charge. I’ll do what I like.” He turned back to the boy. “Here, shhh now.” He gathered his skinny body up into his arms and lifted him gently. “Shhh, Niall. It’s o.k, I’ve got you.” The boy tucked his head under Liam’s chin as he stood, pushing his dirty fingers into his mouth and sucking on them like a baby. His teeth were chipped and broken…From beatings, Harry guessed. “You’re light as a feather, you poor thing.”

“You’re his Handler?”

He cradled the boy in his arms, looked up at Harry and nodded. “Mr Cowell says I’m too soft on you, that we’re too close. He’s looking for someone new for you…In the meantime, I’m looking after you both.”

He turned and carried the boy off down the corridor towards the Infirmary.

“Fuckin’ hell!” Zayn turned to him, eyes wide with shock. “Did you see that kid?”

Harry nodded. “I guess there are worse places than here.”

They shared a shudder at the thought.

Chapter End Notes

As always, let me know what you think. Comments and kudos earn my eternal
devotion. Now, onto the next chapter!
Chapter 6- A Little Bit of Kindness

Chapter Summary

Louis has his first appointment with Louis...

Chapter Notes

So here we go again...Warning, there is a bit of sexiness in this chapter. But I think you're all big enough to handle it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 6- A Little Bit of Kindness.

“Umm…Porridge maybe?”

“That’s it. I give up.” Zayn lifted a spoonful of whatever it was they’d been served for breakfast and let it fall wetly back into the bowl. “What it is, is fucking rank!”

Harry took a bite of limp toast. “Do you remember pizza?”

Zayn’s eyes lit up. “God yeah, with extra cheese…And Chinese. I used to love a Chinese.”

“Yeah, we used to get one every Friday night…Hoi Sin Duck, Chicken Chow Mein…”

They both sighed longingly.

“And chips…” Zayn prodded the mystery goop again with his spoon. “Like, would it kill them to let us have chips, just once?”

Harry jerked his head at the crowded tables in the dining hall, indicating all the men and boys eating. They were all toned, lean. “Nah, ‘cause God forbid any of us lot get fat.”

“Hi, lads.” They both looked up at the sound of Liam’s voice to find him standing at the far end of the table…And he wasn’t alone. The boy who cowered at his elbow was rail thin, his skin now clean and milky pale. He was baby-faced and his once matted and filthy hair had been washed, cut into a fluffy style and bleached blonde which made him look even younger. He stared at them with china-blue eyes wide as saucers. He’d been dressed in jeans and a blue hooded sweatshirt that hung from his scrawny body. “This is Niall. He’s new here. Niall, this is Harry and Zayn. Now, you sit down with them and I’ll go get you some breakfast.”

“Yes Master.” The boy sat down in the seat between Zayn and Harry, hugging his arms to his chest.

“I’m not your…” Then Liam sighed and gave up, turning his back on them and going to fetch his food. Left alone, the boy ducked his head and started to tremble. Harry and Zayn looked at each
other and then Harry reached out to gently touch the boy's arm.

“Hey, it’s ok. We’re not going to hurt you. We’re Products, same as you.”

The boy fixed them with a curious stare. “Did youse say ya were gonna tell?”

And Harry realised why he’d sounded so strange the night before-He was Irish, his accent not a soft Dublin lilt but a thick country brogue.

“What?” Zayn glanced at Harry, who shrugged.

“You know, tell what they were doin’ to ya. I told Father Heeley I were gonna tell. He was startin’ on the wee ones, y’know? I had to do somethin’ so I told him I’d tell on him if he didn’t let them alone. Next night I was waitin’ on me lift home from the youth club when they grabbed me. I guess they needed to keep me quiet. They kept me chained in a room wi’ no windows an’ they took turns. I was their slave, see.”

Zayn’s eyes narrowed suspiciously. “Who’s slave?”

The boy-Niall- looked surprised by the question. “The priests, o’ course. Then one day they came in an’ said I’d got too old. They made me take pills. I woke up in a van wi’ my new master an’ some others an’ they said I’d been sold.”

Harry eyed him suspiciously. “Niall…How old are you?”

The boy looked thoughtful. “One of them men said they tol’ him I was twenty-one.”

Twenty-one…That was older than him…And yet Niall still looked like a kid.

“Here you go, mate.” Liam reappeared and set a tray of food down in front of the blonde boy who stared at it longingly…But didn’t move an inch. They watched him curiously as he sat staring down at the food in silence, as if waiting for something. Finally he looked up at Liam appealingly.

“Please Master…Please may I eat? Please Master, I’m starved!”

And Harry felt his heart break as Liam nodded and Niall dived for the tray.

“Niall, we’ve been through this…I’m not your master. You don’t have to wait for my permission.” Liam turned to look at Harry and Zayn. “I know you’re both still pissed off at me…But I need you to look after him. He’s been through hell.” Obviously. They both nodded. “Harry, you’ve got Kate today and you’re on an overnight tonight-Some V.I.P. You need to go down to Lou after breakfast so she can dress you, then I’ll meet you in your room. Mr Cowell says you’re to be prepped.”

“I can do that myself if you give me the stuff.” He kept his tone ice cold.

Liam shook his head wearily. “Handlers prep Products, that’s just how it’s done, you know that. I have my orders. I’ve done it before. You know I won’t hurt you.”

“Well, we all know that’s a lie.” Zayn glared at him, his expression nothing less than hostile. Liam opened his mouth to protest and then gave up, spinning on his heel and marching off to join the other Handlers at their table, because he wasn’t welcome anywhere else anymore.

They both watched him go before turning back to where Niall was shovelling food into his mouth with his hands ravenously as if he hadn’t eaten in days, which…Harry realised with a sinking heart…Was more than likely. They met each other’s gaze over Niall’s stooped head…Then, by
unspoken mutual agreement, they pushed their trays of food towards him.

Harry stood, clad in nothing but skinny jeans, and watched Louise as she rifled through the rail of clothes, her brow furrowed in thought. Louise, at least, wasn’t a mystery. Mr Cowell had taken her on fresh out of fashion college. In exchange for her silence he’d given her a successful career, an almost unlimited budget, free rein to dress them like her own fashion dolls…And…lately…Harry or Zayne whenever she wanted them, usually whenever she’d fallen out with her husband.

She turned to him, a shirt in each hand, and called him over in her thick Newcastle accent “Right, come here pet.” He obeyed and she held first one, then the other, against his bare chest. “Hmmm, black or white? Which do you like best?”

He shrugged. “Don’t care. Can’t I just wear a hoodie or summit?”

She sighed, exasperated. “You’re not a little kid anymore Harry! I’m doing a whole new look for you; less college jail-bait, more young Johnny Depp. Hmmm…” She held the white up again. “Californian Hipster…Or…” She held up the black. “Sexy as fuck rock star?”

“Umm, I like the white.”

“Ok, cool.” She handed it to him and watched as he shrugged it on. “If you’re doing the hipster thing then that crucifix is going to have to go. Hipsters aren’t religious.” She reached for it.

“NO!” He caught hold of it with one hand, slapping her hand away with the other. She gaped at him in shock.

“Ok relax! Shit! What? Is Jesus really your homeboy or something?”

Harry stared at her, eyebrows raised in disbelief. “You seriously think I still believe in God after four years in this fucking hell-hole?”

“Then why are you being so weird? Give it to me!”

This time he caught her by the wrist. When he spoke it was through gritted teeth. “Louise, I haven’t taken this off since I was thirteen. Please…”

She wavered, shocked by the pleading in his eyes. She may be working for a notorious pimp and taking a prostitute into her bed every time her marriage hit the rocks…But she wasn’t cruel. “Okay pet, if it really means that much to you.”

“Thanks.” He released her.

She turned back to the rail, tossed shoes over her shoulder as she searched through a plastic box. “I found these amazing brown suede boots for you down in Camden Market. Damn it, what did I do with them? Give me two minutes.”

He waited until she’d left before reaching to finger the crucifix, the silver warm to his touch, her words echoing in his memory…

*FLASHBACK*

“You’re a teenager now, growing up…I know you don’t believe it baby, but I need to think that there’s something out there looking out for you when I can’t. It’ll protect you. Promise me you
won’t ever take it off.”

“I won’t.”

*END FLASHBACK*

It hadn’t protected him in the end... But he still hadn’t broken his promise. After all, he liked to think it linked them somehow. He raised it to his lips, kissed it like he did every night, hoping, against all logic, that when he kissed it she’d somehow feel it and know that he was still alive, that he still loved her, still missed her, that she’d feel it and not forget him.

“Found them!” Louise bustled into the room again and he let it fall from his fingers to hang once more against his heart. “Here, put these on.” She tossed a pair of boots at him and he tugged them on. Then she snatched up a comb and began to rake it painfully through his hair, frowning in irritation as he wriggled. “Stand still! You suit it longer, but honest to fuck it tangles easily…”

Harry twisted his head away from her reach... And noticed an old brown fedora hat sitting on top of the dusty wardrobe.

“Then why don’t I cover it?” Quick as a flash he snatched it down and plonked it on his head, turning to her and running his fingers over the brim with a devilish smile.

“Harry, quit messin’ about! We don’t have time…Actually, wait…” She took a step back, assessing him. Then she smiled. “Fuck, you actually make that look hot! Keep it on!”

He turned to look in the full-length mirror... Just in time to see the door open and Mr Cowell enter the room. He froze, watching in the mirror’s reflection as he approached, a predatory smirk on his lips.

“My, my Harry, don’t you look well? Just one thing…” He stopped just behind him, the devil at his shoulder, and Harry bit his lip as he reached round and undid the top buttons on his shirt, opening it and spreading it wide to reveal his toned chest... And the bird tattoos. “I think we need to show off my brand. Remind everyone who you belong to. Now, I wanted to have a word with you about tonight. Louis Tomlinson obviously liked you.”

“Louis Tomlinson? Is that who I’m going to?” The handsome boy from the party... That stung more than he’d ever admit. Somehow, he’d thought he’d been different, that he’d seen him as something more than a body for hire... As a human being. So much for that dream. Maybe he’d just saved him because he couldn’t stand the thought of that odd-eyed bastard fucking him first.

“Yes... Louis Tomlinson... Son of the richest man in London. You could make me a fortune... IF you can make him one of your regulars. So here’s what I want you to do, Harry. I want you to go above and beyond, to do everything he asks you to do and more, to use your mouth on him and spread your arse for him until he physically can’t come anymore. To be precise, I want you to fuck his brains out, to be the best lay he’s ever had. Am I clear?”

Harry swallowed. “Yes Sir.”

“Good boy. Don’t let me down or there will be consequences... And we’ve already discussed what they will be.” Mr Cowell slapped him sharply on the backside and left, his warning trailing in the air behind him. Harry stared at his reflection once more. He HAD to get this Tomlinson guy to book him again... He had to protect Gem. For her he’d put the mask back on, for her he’d play the role.
It hurt. He shifted uncomfortably in his seat and the butt-plug moved wetly inside him, the stainless steel stretching him painfully.

“You o.k?”

He looked up to find Liam watching him in the rear-view mirror. “You made me lie down, stuck your lubed fingers up my arse and then replaced them with 4 inches of cold, hard metal that you’re currently making me sit on. What do you think?”

At least Liam had the decency to look embarrassed. “Fuck Harry, it’s not like I got off on it. And that was the one I was ordered to prep you with.”

“I told you I couldn’t take it.”

“Well you did. Look, we’ve all had to wear one at some point, and it’s not your first…It’s just bigger than what you’re used to. Just rock back and forth on it a bit. It’ll open you up more so it doesn’t hurt as much.”

“And so I’ll be nice and ready for this dickhead to fuck me as soon as I come through the door.”

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence, then… “I wish you didn’t have to fuck him at all. I wish I could stop it Harry.” Liam’s voice was sad.

“What?” Harry stared at him in surprise. Liam kept his eyes on the road.

“Look…What I did to you…That was the worst thing I’ve ever done to anyone, and I wish I could take it back, but I can’t. And I understand why you hate me…You were my best friend…you were my best friend and I beat the shit out of you just because I’m a coward…And I can’t take it back. I know you don’t believe it…But I AM sorry, Harry. Truly sorry.”

And for the first time Harry believed him. He shrugged. “I suppose it’s not like he gave you a choice, right? He was determined it was gonna be you. Just one thing…If I’m your best friend, then why didn’t you tell me you’re sick? I had to hear it from The Doc.”

There was a sharp intake of breath, then. “Because I was scared…If you’d let it slip and someone heard…Then I’d get a bullet in the back of the head, and dumped in some shallow grave. If I’m alive then there’s still the chance that maybe, one day, I’ll get to go home.”

And Harry couldn’t blame him anymore. He turned to look out the window, staring out at the pristine streets lined with huge mansions and townhouses behind high walls and locked gates. “Where are we?”

“Primrose Hill.” Liam pulled up outside a set of wrought iron gates, rolling down his window as a security guard approached him.

“What’s your business?”

“Delivery from the Bird Cage Hotel. Mr Tomlinson’s expecting us.” The guard checked a clipboard he held and then waved them on through. The long drive swept up towards a vast Victorian style mansion set back from the road, dazzling white in the early morning sun, and nestled in immaculately maintained gardens. Liam pulled up outside the front door and twisted in his seat to look at him. “You ready?”

“Yeah.” Harry reached for his hat…
…And when he stepped out of the car he was Dirty Harry, London’s premiere Rent Boy, cocky, beautiful, dangerous…And hot as hell. He put the hat on and tilted it down over one eye, fixing Liam with a sexy smirk. “Showtime!”

Louis stared into the mirror. Designer jeans, clean trainers, an expensive black sweater…He smoothed his quiff into place and sighed at his reflection, wondering why he was so worried about how he looked anyway. This wasn’t a date, he didn’t need to impress anyone, and getting laid was pretty much a given…That is, if that was what he wanted…And a small part of him did…But then a bigger part remembered that frightened, lost boy in that shadowy corridor, his green eyes shining with tears…No, all he wanted to do was see Harry again, make sure he was alright.

The buzz of the doorbell made him jump out of his skin. He hurried to open it.

The muscular boy with the short cropped hair stood on the doorstep, dressed like some sort of security guard.

“A delivery from The Bird Cage Hotel for you Sir.”

“Yes, yes come in.” He stepped aside and the muscular boy entered…And at his back was Harry. Louis felt his breath catch in his throat.

He looked like a Gypsy King. His jeans were skin-tight, showing off his long legs, narrow hips and pert ass. His white shirt contrasted with his caramel skin and was open almost to his navel, revealing a tantalising glimpse of his toned, muscular chest, those pirate-like swallow tattoos, and a silver crucifix. His dark hair tumbled from beneath a brown fedora hat, his emerald green eyes watching him from beneath its brim. He was sex personified. He saw him staring and fixed him with that lopsided smirk, upper lip curling, and Louis could barely breathe…

“…So can I Sir?”

He blinked and turned reluctantly away from Harry to look at the muscular boy. “Sorry, what?”

“I’m Liam sir, Harry’s Handler. May I have permission to check the house to ensure that you are the only occupant?”

He stared at him. “Why?”

“It’s necessary to ensure Harry’s safety sir. Obviously this is your property so you can refuse…But doing so would lead to termination of this appointment.”

“Oh, o.k.” He watched as Liam disappeared upstairs, before turning back to where Harry stood, watching him silently. There was a hungry intensity in his gaze that was both deeply unsettling…And extremely erotic. As Louis watched he bit down hard on his lower lip, pulling it slowly through his teeth…Then he raised his thumb to his mouth, poking out his tongue to lick the tip before running it slowly, tantalisingly down his chin, down his throat, down his chest, smirking the whole time…When he spoke it was in a seductive whisper.

“I’m so glad you changed your mind Sir…”Cause I couldn’t stop thinking about riding you.”

Jesus!
“W-what?”

“Clear!” Louis jumped as Liam’s voice rang out and he spun to watch him descend the stairs. “Here.” He shoved a small black rucksack at Harry, who took it, and then unhooked what looked like some sort of scanner from his belt. “Barcode.” Harry turned his back and Liam waved the scanner over the back of his neck. There was a beep. “Now, if you could just sign here Sir to confirm delivery.” He produced a form and a pen. Completely confused, Louis signed his name. “Enjoy Harry Sir. Be good for the gentleman Harry.”

“Oh I will.” Harry’s voice was a husky purr.

And then Liam was gone without looking back, the front door slamming behind him. Louis swallowed.

“Right, well that was weird.” He turned. “Anyway…”

And Harry was on him, slamming him up against the wall, his fists twisting in his sweater and tugging him close so he could press his lips to his ear. “Thank fuck he’s gone, I thought he’d never leave!” And then he was nuzzling at him, nipping his skin with his teeth, lapping at his face, his neck, with a hot sandpaper tongue as his hands roved all over him, up underneath his sweater, down the back of his jeans, and the only thing Louis could hear above the pounding of his blood in his ears was Harry’s husky seductive voice. “So what do you want to do to me Daddy? Do you want to put your cock in my mouth? I can take it all, suck you hard. I look so pretty on my knees with a dick between my lips. I love the taste of cock.”

His hand moved down between Louis’s legs, cupping him, rubbing him until, despite his best efforts, he could feel himself getting hard. “I know you want to fuck me Daddy, and I WANT you to fuck me. I’m all slick and ready for you, got a plug in spreading me for you but I don’t want it, I want your cock. I want you to fill me up Daddy, up to the hilt, and fuck me hard. I want you to do me until I’m begging you to let me come. I know you said no ’specials’ Daddy, but I don’t mind…I’ve packed props just in case. You can play filthy games with me all night. I’ve been told I look gorgeous all tied up. You could tie me up with my legs spread wide, teach this dirty little cock slut a lesson. I’ll be a slave for you Daddy.”

‘And for everyone else who pays your pimp…Because you don’t have a choice.’

The thought came out of nowhere and shocked Louis back to reality immediately…And suddenly the whole situation was just so seedy, and dark and WRONG. He stared down in horror to where Harry had dropped to his knees in front of him, setting his hat aside, and was busy unbuttoning his flies. “What the hell are you doing?!”

He looked up at him with a devilish grin, a male Lolita… “I’m going to suck you til you’re hard.” And then he was reaching in, and Louis could feel his fingers against his dick, and his head was spinning and his chest was heaving, and if he didn’t say something right that minute he’d end up pushing him to the floor and using him just like everyone else did, just like he said he wouldn’t…

“WAIT! W-wait, hang on…do you…do you want a cup of tea first?”

He couldn’t help it. It had been the first thing that had popped into his head.

Harry stopped. He sat back on his heels and looked up at him, the most hilarious look of disbelief on his beautiful face. “Are you seriously offering me a brew?”

Louis flushed red. “Uh…yeah.”

“Actually…I’d fucking love one!”
And suddenly they were both laughing. Louis helped Harry to his feet, before doing up his flies and leading him into the large kitchen. Harry leaned against the kitchen cupboards and watched him curiously from beneath his hat as he busied himself with filling the kettle and setting out two mugs. “Do you take milk?”

“Yes.”

“Sugar?”

“I’m sweet enough.”

“Here.” He handed Harry a steaming mug and lifted his own, watching as the other boy blew on his softly before taking a sip. “So…What was all that back there?”

Harry looked confused. “All what?”

“All that porn star talk. I mean, ‘daddy’? I’m practically the same age as you mate.”

Harry stared down into his mug, biting his lip. He shrugged. “I don’t know…It’s just…What people usually want me to say.”

“Well I don’t.”

“O.k, so you’re not into dirty talk…But you like me…I can see it when you look at me. And I know you want to fuck me.” And Louis didn’t know how to answer that. “So…How do you want to make it?”

“I-I don’t…” He watched as Harry drained his mug, before reaching out to take it from him. He turned to the sink and started rinsing both mugs out. “I mean…yeah…I’ll admit it, I think you’re hot but…”

“You’re shy. I get it. It’s your first time with a prostitute. But you needn’t be. It’s easy really; I’m here to please you so just tell me what you want. I know I’m expensive Louis…So let me earn it. This is a nice kitchen table…”

“That’s not why I booked you for tonight Harry. I’m not like that. And what’s the table got to do with anything?” He turned back. “JESUS CHRIST!”

Harry was bent forward over the edge of the kitchen table, his back towards him…And he was completely naked from the waist down, his shirt scrunched up to reveal his pert, tight backside. Louis felt his mouth go dry…It was simultaneously the most sexy and shocking thing he had ever seen. He stepped towards him, his heart pounding, and Harry raised himself up onto his elbows, smirking over his shoulder at him. “There’s condoms in my bag. Look, you just need to let yourself relax and have fun. Trust me; this isn’t the first table I’ve been fucked over. You’re obviously wound a bit tight about the gay thing Louis…But wanting me’s no sin.” He turned away again, laying his cheek on the table and waiting for…What? Louis to just start ramming into him like he was some sort of sex toy?

Louis stood over the prone, beautiful boy, bile rising in his throat as he noticed the silvery scars that marked his golden skin. “Yes.” He muttered, half to himself. “Yes it is a sin.”

He reached to touch one, tracing the line of it where it stood out in sharp relief across his left buttock. Misinterpreting his touch, Harry shifted, spreading his strong thighs further apart to reveal the cleft between his cheeks…And a strange little oval of metal that nestled there.

“What’s that?”
“What’s what?”

“That thing inside you.”

“Oh. That just opens me up so you can get your cock in easily. Don’t worry; it comes right out when you pull on it.”

Louis could barely keep the disgust out of his voice. “Did you seriously put that in yourself?”

“No, my handler did.” And at his words Louis felt a wave of nausea wash over him. “I can’t believe you’ve never seen a butt-plug before. Shit Louis, you’re so innocent.”

“And you’re so fucked up. Get dressed Harry.” Louis snatched his jeans up from the floor and set them on the table beside him before marching off into the living room and collapsing onto the sofa. Maybe this hadn’t been such a good idea after all. He lit a cigarette and leaned forward, covering his face with his hands. When he removed them Harry was perched on the sofa opposite him, pixie-like, his legs crossed, fiddling with his hat where it rested on his lap. And Louis was surprised to see that he looked on the verge of tears.

“Did…Did I do something wrong?”

“No!” Louis rushed to reassure him. “No…I just…I don’t want to use you like that.”

“Then what way do you want to use me? I’m here to make you happy. Please, just tell me what you want me to do and I’ll do it!” He was frantic, desperate…The mask slipped and the boy behind it looked so young, so frightened. Louis got up and came to sit beside him, reaching out and taking his hand gently.

“You want to know how to please me?” Harry looked up at him and nodded, biting his lip. “I want you to go to the bathroom down the hall and take out that fucking thing they put inside you. Then I want you to come back in here and spent the evening with me, y’know…Just hanging out-No sex involved.”

“Just hanging out?”

“Yeah…Y’know, get a take away, watch a couple of DVDs, maybe play some X-box…Hang out.”

“And that will make you happy? What, are you lonely or something?”

“Yeah, a bit.” He admitted. “I just wanted to see you again after what happened at the party; make sure you were o.k. And this was the only way. So,” He lifted the hat and set it gently on his head. “Do you fancy it?”

For a few moments Harry sat silently, mulling it over. But when he raised his head to look at him his green eyes were shining with hope.

“Can we get a Chinese?”

X-Factor, je ne se qui, that special something…Whatever it was, Louis reflected, Harry had it. Yes, he was beautiful, but it was more than that…He was an intriguing mix of cockiness, charm and vulnerability, street smarts and endearing naivety. Cheeky and charismatic, every time he smiled his crooked grin, showing his dimples and bunny teeth, Louis couldn’t help but smile back.
“You can’t use a fork! Using a fork’s cheating!” He leaned across the table and snatched Louis’ fork from his hand, tossing it casually over his shoulder.

“Hey, I need that!”

“Tough. Here, look…” Harry moved to sit beside him, lifting his hand and a chopstick. “First you hold this one like a pen.” He twisted his fingers gently into place. “Then you take the other and hold it between these two fingers and your thumb…” He showed him. “See how you can move them like pincers? Now, lift.” Louis lifted a piece of chicken carefully, concentrating hard.

“Oh yeah…That’s cool.” And then, quick as flash, Harry snatched the chicken between his teeth. “OI! I was eating that!”

Harry laughed. “Well, now you’re not!”

Louis ate the rest of his meal with chopsticks, under Harry’s approving gaze. Once finished, he led him into the living room again, cosy with dimmed lights and a fire burning in the grate. This time when he sat down on the sofa Harry sat down beside him, so close that their arms were touching, their thighs pressed together…And there was something about the heat of his body against him that made Louis’s head spin. He reached for the remote. “So…What do you want to watch?”

“Dunno…I don’t watch much T.V, so whatever you want.”

Harry lolled back against the cushions as he flicked casually through the channels. Then he suddenly sat up. “Hang on. Stop!”

Louis stopped flicking. It was a music channel. A dark-haired singer was playing acoustic guitar on a dimly lit stage. Beside him Harry started to sing along. “…I’m a bad boy because I don’t even miss her, I’m a bad boy, for breaking her heart….And I’m free, free-falling…” His voice was gorgeous…Rich and strong, with a slight rocky edge. He saw Louis staring and smiled, embarrassed. “Sorry…That’s my favourite song.”

“Your voice is great.”

“Thanks. I was in a band with my mates at school. We won a Battle of The Bands competition once.”

And Louis wondered how he’d gone from a high school band to a brothel. “So you’re into music?”

“Yeah. Like, mostly rock and acoustic stuff…Kings of Leon, Coldplay, The Script, Snow Patrol…AND a lot of old stuff…I mean…like…you can’t beat Springsteen, can ya?…” The River’ is…like…a classic…” He went on and on, and Louis sat listening curiously. His accent was definitely Northern, but he had an oddly slow, precise way of speaking, pausing as if choosing his words carefully and then enunciating them perfectly-‘Don’T’, ‘sing-ING’, ‘AND’-that struck Louis as distinctly middle-class. Definitely not the broad Yorkshire lilt of his native Doncaster, nor the urban street slang of Bradford. No, this boy was Posh North, from somewhere more refined, a county full of pretty middle-class villages filled with expensive houses bought by ex-Londoners, somewhere picturesque…

“Harry…Are you from Cheshire?”

Beside him Harry stiffened. “No.” And Louis knew he was lying.

“Then where are you from?”
Harry fixed his eyes on the T.V, avoiding his stare. “Nowhere.”

“Your accent’s Northern.”

“Then North of Nowhere.”

Louis knew he shouldn’t ask any more questions, but Harry’s evasiveness intrigued him. “Harry… What’s your last name?”

“Don’t have one. It’s just Harry…Like Madonna.”

“Harry…” But he was away, marching across the room and flopping down where Louis’s X-box sat on the carpet in front of the T.V. “Ask me no secrets and I’ll tell you no lies.” He lifted a controller and turned to look over his shoulder at him, that pirate smirk on his face. “You got any Assassin’s Creed?”

Louis gave up and went to join him.

They played for hours, and Louis couldn’t believe how relaxed it was…How easy. If he didn’t know better he could easily be fooled into thinking that Harry was a normal guy. He was a little quiet, sure, and some of the language he used was so overtly sexual it shocked him…but he was also funny, with a quick, dry sense of humour that cracked Louis up every time. He found himself wishing they’d met somewhere else, in some other reality where he wasn’t a billionaire’s son and Harry wasn’t a prostitute…Some other reality where they were just normal…In that reality they could be friends…Or something more. He sat up and stretched.

“Do you fancy another cuppa?”

Beside him Harry lay on his stomach, propped up on his elbows. He yawned, kicking his bare feet before crossing them at the ankles. “Yes please, if you’re making.”

He got up and went back to the kitchen. By the time he returned, a mug in each hand, Harry was asleep, curled up on the rug by the fire like a little kitten. He set the mugs down on the coffee table before kneeling beside him and gazing down at him. Asleep and free from the whole sexy tease act he looked even younger, innocent, his pouting pink lips slightly parted, his dark curls falling into his face. As Louis watched his long eyelashes fluttered like butterflies wings at some dream. He reached reluctantly to shake his shoulder. “Harry, Harry wake up.”

“W-what? Where...?” He sat up, rubbing his eyes, and looked about him, disorientated. Then his gaze fell on Louis. “Oh.”

“It’s time for bed Harry.” He hadn’t meant anything by it, but Harry’s expression became a mixture of fear…And resignation.

“Oh…O.k. I just need to get my stuff.” They went into the hall where Harry picked up his backpack, then Louis led him upstairs to the guest bedroom he’d had the maids prepare with fresh sheets that morning. Once inside, Harry looked about him in wonder at the expensive furniture, the wall-mounted T.V…Then his gaze fell on the king-sized bed.

“I left out some towels.” Louis pointed to the pile of fluffy towels on a chair by the bed. For a moment Harry looked confused. Then he nodded.

“Oh…I get it…To put underneath us so we won’t stain the sheets. Good idea.” And as Louis
watched, stunned, he tugged back the duvet and lifted a towel, laying it carefully over the sheet beneath and smoothing it out. “But you still have to wear a rubber. And ‘cause I’m not wearing the plug I’m gonna need lube. You can do it, if you want.”

And then Louis realised what he meant. “No! No Harry, the towels are just for you to use in the morning. There’s a bathroom in there.” He pointed to a door on the far side of the room. Harry’s cheeks flushed pink.

“Oh.”

“Sure, I told you there would be no sex involved, didn’t I? This room is yours for the night, to sleep in, nothing else. You’re safe in here. No one will come in and harm you, not me and not anybody else. I promise.”

“Oh…Thank you.”

“Goodnight Harry.”

“Goodnight.”

He went to the door, then…

“Louis?” He turned. Harry stood by the bed. He looked so lost and confused…It struck Louis as dreadfully sad. “Why are you being so kind to me?”

And Louis had to bite back tears. “Because Harry, somebody should.”

And then he left him and went to bed.

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

The bed was warm and comfortable, the pillows soft, but Harry couldn’t sleep. Instead he lay beneath the duvet, waiting for the footsteps he just knew would come sooner or later. Sure enough…The pad of bare feet on wooden floorboards….Harry sighed. He’d known this was all too good to be true. As long as he wasn’t made to do anything too weird…But there was no creak of the door, no hand pulling the duvet away from him. Instead the footsteps continued past the room and echoed on down the landing. He listened as the stairs creaked. For a few moments there was silence…Then a sudden, loud crash made him sit bolt upright in bed, heart pounding. What the fuck? Had someone broken in or something? Well, he wasn’t going to sit and wait for them to get him. He scrambled out of bed and searched through his backpack until his fingers closed on his flick-knife. He flicked it open and tip-toed towards the door, opening it carefully and peering out into the dark landing.

“Louis?” He whispered. “Louis??”

Silence…No, not quite. There was something, far off, almost as if someone was…Crying? He crept out into the darkness. A light shone up from below. He crept down the stairs, holding his knife at his side just in case. The crying had stopped now, to be replaced by…muttering? He reached the hallway. Light spilled from the kitchen doorway. He crept cautiously toward it, and peered inside.

Amber liquid oozed across the white marble tiles. Louis knelt on the floor in pyjama bottoms and bare feet, surrounded by broken glass. He was trying to gather it up with his fingers.
“Shit! Shit, shit, shit… FUCK!”

Had he cracked or something? Harry hid his knife behind his back, just in case, and stepped cautiously into the room. “Hey mate, are you o.k?”

When Louis looked up at him his cobalt eyes were ringed with red…But somehow beautiful in their vulnerability.

“Yeah…Yeah I’m fine.” But he was shaking, speaking through gritted teeth. “I-I just…I don’t sleep well, and then every time I do sleep I get these nightmares, and I’m just so fucking exhausted, but I just can’t fucking sleep so I thought I’d have a drink y’know? Just one drink. But my hand was shaking so much that I dropped the fucking bottle and the glass, and they smashed everywhere and I just…” He went back to trying to pick up the glass.

And suddenly Harry wasn’t frightened anymore, any fear he’d had overtaken by pity. He picked his way through the glass shards towards him.

“Hey, don’t pick that up, it’s sharp! Look, you’ve cut yourself!” He snatched up a tea towel and crouched down beside the shaking boy, catching his wrist and wrapping it carefully around his bleeding hand. “It’s o.k mate, it’s o.k…”

“NO IT’S NOT!” His shout made Harry flinch, but he stood his ground.

“What do you mean?”

“I-I’m a terrible person. I’m lying to someone who doesn’t deserve it, and I’m being everything he wants me to be, and I just can’t do it anymore! I feel like I’m fucking drowning, I-I can’t sleep… I’m so tired but I can’t sleep.” He swallowed and looked up at Harry, all sharp cheekbones and strong jawline, like the tragic hero of a film noir. “I’m sorry, Harry, I’m so sorry. Bringing you here was a mistake.”

“Why?”

“Because you just remind me of everything I can’t have.” And there was a heart-breaking longing in his eyes. He tugged his bleeding hand out of Harry’s grip and turned away. Harry reached to place a comforting hand on his shoulder. He didn’t shrug it off.

“You’re not a terrible person Louis. Not everyone who books me is cruel…But I’ve never had anyone be as kind to me as you. Doesn’t matter if they don’t hurt me, I’m still a whore to them… You’re the first person who’s ever treated me like a human being.”

Louis looked up at him, guilt in his eyes. “But…But I want you. I- I mean, I don’t want to hurt you but…I WANT you. And I know it’s wrong, perverted, sick…but…”

“Wow, somebody really messed you up, didn’t they? We don’t live in Biblical times, it’s not wrong for a man to like other men. There are lots of men out there just like you…Just like me…” Louis eyes widened at that and Harry gave him what he hoped was a reassuring smile. “I like both…I’m greedy that way. But it’s o.k. You’re not hurting anybody…”

“Yes, yes I am.”

Harry sighed. “Well, whoever they are, they aren’t here right now and what they don’t know won’t hurt them.” He stood and held his hand out to him. “Come to bed with me. I share a room normally; I find it hard to sleep alone.”
Louis looked up at him, his expression conflicted. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

“And I know that you won’t. I trust you.” Harry led him from the kitchen, up the stairs to the guest bedroom, led him towards the bed…He turned to take in the handsome youth standing beside him, looking so unsure, and he knew that he had nothing fear from him. “Get in. Go on.”

Louis slid beneath the covers and he put his knife back into his rucksack and flicked off the light before sliding in beside him. The only light in the room came from the table-lamp, which cast a peach glow over them. Louis turned to him, his expression a conflicted mixture of panic…and yearning.

“I-I don’t want to make you do anything you don’t want to.”

“It’s o.k.”

“No, no it isn’t. I’m not going to have sex with you but…Can I…Can I just see you? I-I want to see all of you.”

“Sure.” Harry reached down, wriggling off his boxer shorts, and raised his arms above his head. Louis pushed himself up onto his knees and peeled the covers back. He sat back, his eyes drinking him in.

“You’re so beautiful.”

“Thanks.”

He reached down, touching the two little pink marks on Harry’s chest with the tips of his fingers.

“What are these?”

“Oh…umm…It’s kind of gross but…Those are my nubbins.”

“Your..?”

“Extra nipples. I was born with them.”

“Oh…cool.” For a moment Louis smiled, and Harry was struck by how beautiful his smile was…Then he became unsure again. “Can I…Can I touch you?”

And it was so hesitant, and so different from what Harry was used to that he had to fight not to laugh. “Yeah, of course you can.”

And then his fingers were ghosting over Harry’s chest, his stomach, softly, so softly, and Harry was surprised to find himself shivering at their touch.

“Could you..?”

Harry rolled over, pressing his cheek against the cool pillow, and then Louis’ fingers were stroking his skin again, caressing his shoulders, trailing their way down his spine, pushing against him…

“Is this o.k?”

“Umm hmm.” The fingers disappeared and then returned warm and wet…Without quite realising what he was doing Harry spread his legs. The fingers pushed inside, a moment of pain, and then…Suddenly Harry could feel his heartbeat in every inch of his body, his breathing quickening,
suddenly he felt dizzy... And there was something else... A familiar rush of blood, a less familiar aching... He was shocked when a moan escaped his lips... There were butterfly kisses on the side of his neck, the point of his shoulder, as the fingers moved inside him, hitting a red-hot spot somewhere deep within he'd never even known existed... Then the fingers were gone and a hand was gently rolling him onto his back once more. He glanced down at himself and was surprised to see that he was hard. Normally it took him ages to get hard, sometimes even a pill or injection... And then Louis was above him, his eyes shining sapphires in the dim light. He leaned down, brushing his nose against his in an Eskimo kiss. Then he took his face in his hands... Harry pulled away.

"W-wait... Wait, I don't..." But Louis's eyes were roving over his face, drinking him in, and Harry was surprised to find that he wanted to... He suddenly wanted to feel Louis's mouth on his more than anything. "N-never mind." And then Louis kissed him, hesitantly at first, and then deeply, parting his lips with his own so that he could push his tongue inside. And he tasted delicious, warm and whiskey sweet. Another moan escaped Harry's lips as he felt a hand stroke its way up his inner thigh, so close... The ache was almost unbearable now. Louis pulled away, looking at him hesitantly.

"Is it o.k if I...?"

"Yes." He was panting now, suddenly hot, his mind foggy with need. "Yes... Please..."

At that first touch he couldn't help but gasp... And then with each stroke there came the oddest sensation, the feeling of something building with delicious urgency, and suddenly it was as if he had no control over his body. He felt his back arching, his hips moving of their own accord, and Louis was kissing his neck, his chest, his mouth... He felt as if he was teetering helplessly on the edge of a cliff... And then, without warning, he fell....

Afterwards he sat up, shocked. His hands flew to his mouth... What WAS that? Had he-did he just...?"

"Harry? Harry are you alright?" He turned to look at Louis who was sitting beside him, staring at him, concerned. He nodded and Louis reached pry his hands away.

"Then why do you look so worried?"

He swallowed, tried to put his thoughts into some kind of order. "I-I... What did I do?"

Louis chuckled. "Nothing... You just came. Here, let's get you cleaned up." He reached for the box of tissues on the bedside table and began to gently wipe at Harry's stomach. Came? Harry had came before, a lot... Or at least he thought he had... But never like that. An orgasm? Was that an orgasm? He didn't know... It wasn't exactly something that had been covered during his training. But there was something his training HAD taught him... And that was that, whatever it was, he had to pay for it.

"Your turn." He reached between Louis's thighs... And was even more confused when he pushed him away.

"No, no Harry... You don't have to. I don't even want you to. It was enough just to be able to touch you."

"But..." And Louis silenced his protests with a kiss, reaching up to stroke his hair.
“Shhh, it’s o.k. Harry. It’s o.k.” He lay back, pulling Harry into his arms and Harry curled up against him, burying his face in his shoulder to hide his confusion…

Because it wasn’t o.k…He’d never came like that with anyone, never mind with a client…And he was scared what that meant.

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

The rosy fingers of dawn crept through the curtains, teasing Louis awake. He sat up with a yawn and turned to look down at Harry where he lay beside him. It struck Louis that he slept oddly-on his back with his arms above his head, his wrists crossed almost as if bound…But then he was so distractingly handsome that he didn’t give it much thought, instead carefully lifting the duvet away to reveal the long, lithe body beneath. Christ, he was stunning, so toned and muscular, almost too beautiful to be real…A dark-haired Adonis straight out of a Greek myth.

“I wish I could keep you.” He whispered. It was an intoxicating fantasy…but just that, a fantasy…Still, they had a few hours before reality crept back in.

He wriggled between his spread thighs, leaning over him, his fingers stroking his curls away from his face. “Time to wake up Harry.” He planted feather-light kisses on his cheeks, his forehead, even the tip of his nose, until Harry’s eyes fluttered open. “Morning.”

“Morning.” Harry tilted his head, catching his lips with his and kissing him softly. He sat back on his heels and Harry stretched, arching his back and yawning wide. “What time is it?”

“Don’t worry, we have time for breakfast.”

Harry sat up with a smile. “Great…I’m starving!”

Louis leaned against the kitchen cupboards and watched as Harry devoured his fourth bacon sandwich, red sauce dripping down his chin. Christ, for someone so lean the kid could really eat. He moved to sit down opposite him, taking a gulp of his tea and analysing him thoughtfully over the rim of the mug.

“I want to see you again. Can I book you whenever?”

Harry stopped eating and looked up at him. He looked pleased. He wiped his mouth with his sleeve. “Yeah! Yeah, I mean you normally have to book at least…like… A few days in advance, ‘cause I’m pretty popular…But I know they’ll make an exception for you ‘cause of who you are…Especially if you…y’know…make it a regular thing?”

“I think I might.” Harry beamed at that, as if he’d won a prize. “I won’t force you to do anything you don’t want to…It’ll be like this was…I just…I like your company.”

“Cool.”

“Just one thing…”

“Oh yeah?” Harry finished his sandwich, licked his fingers and reached for his mug of tea. He didn’t want to ask the question, but he knew he needed to hear the answer-now, before he got in too deep.
“How did you become a prostitute? How did you end up working at The Birdcage?”

And it was like a wall went up between them. Harry’s gaze darkened and he sat back in his seat.

“I didn’t know anyone when I came to London and Mr Cowell offered me a job and a place to stay. I like money and I like sex so I said yes. Mr Cowell is good to me. I’m not being forced.” His tone was almost robotic, like he was reading from a script.

“Who said anything about being forced?” Harry avoided his gaze, biting his lip. “Harry, where is your family?”

“Don’t have one.”

Harry was many things…But a good liar wasn’t one of them. Louis leaned towards him across the table.

“Harry…”

And then the doorbell rang.

“There’s my handler. I gotta go.” Harry stood up, snatching up his bag and plonking his hat on his head. He made for the door, before stopping. “I forgot.” He came back to lean over Louis, reaching to rest his hand on his jaw, his green eyes burning into his. “Thank you for last night…I had a great time. You should know…I don’t normally kiss, but …for some reason…you’re the exception.”

He leaned down and kissed him deeply before running for the door. Louis followed with a sigh of frustration.

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

“So…How was it?”

Harry looked up to where Liam was watching him in the rear-view mirror. “It was…Weird.”

Liam frowned, his brow furrowing with concern. “What do you mean weird? What sort of kink did he have? Was it something really messed up? Bastard didn’t pay for any extras. Haz? What did he make you do?”

Harry shook his head. “No…It wasn’t like that. We didn’t even fuck. He was nice…He asked me how I ended up working for Mr Cowell though, and where my family was. I gave him the standard answer they told us to say…But I don’t think he believed me.”

“Doesn’t matter, as long as that’s all you told him. Wait, what do you mean you didn’t even fuck?”

“Just that…We didn’t fuck.”

“Well what did you do?”

“We…Well we watched T.V. Played some X-box. He fingered me a bit, tossed me off…”

“And that’s it?” Liam shook his head in bewilderment.
“Yeah. He was a bit messed up about being gay an’ that but… really nice…Really kind.”

“Well, the important thing is…does he want to see you again?”

“Yeah.” Harry hugged his knees to his chest and rested his cheek on his arm as he stared out of the cars tinted window, watching the buildings flash by. He didn’t think he’d ever been so confused...The only thing he knew for certain was that he wanted to see Louis again. And that thought scared him. He’d never felt that way about a client before.

Chapter End Notes

So I'll have the next chapter up hopefully next weekend. I've already had a wonderful, beautiful lady make me a collage for this that I adore but I was wondering if there was anyone handy with video editing software who would be willing make me a youtube trailer to advertise this fic? I'd give you my soul, it's only slightly tarnished? As always, thank you all sooooooooooooo much for reading and please leave comments and kudos as they feed my muse!
Chapter 7-From Pornos to Shakespeare

Chapter Summary

Louis takes Harry to dinner and they grow closer...Which leads to some surprising revelations. And Zayn welcomes Niall to The Birdcage in his own way.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is rated R for violence and sexual situations. There is also a mention of the making of child pornography-You have been warned! The Irish phrase used in this chapter is completely authentic-I am Irish, born and raised in Ireland and my grandparents were native Irish speakers so I heard this phrase a lot growing up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 7-From Pornos to Shakespeare

It had been a week since their appointment and Louis knew now that what he was feeling about Harry was...Not love; it couldn’t be love...could it? No, it was more like a sweet addiction, a constant craving only sated in quiet alone moments at his desk, in the back of a chauffeur-driven car, or lying on his bed. Then he could collapse into recollections of the sensation of Harry’s hair between his fingers, the taste of his mouth, his goblin smile, how he’d looked at the peak of his release, head thrown back, eyes screwed tight shut, and the noise he’d made...The most exquisite keening sound. Sometimes he’d even allow himself to daydream about that alternate universe in which they were just a normal couple, doing everyday things like shopping for groceries, cooking meals together, going the cinema...If only he could hide in that imaginary universe forever. But soon enough he’d be yanked back to reality by the buzz of his office intercom or a phone call from Eleanor gushing over some new wedding venue. At least being on the other end of a line from New York made it easy to seem interested. Yet no matter how sweet his memories and daydreams were, they were always quickly followed by waves of crushing, sickening guilt. Not only because of Eleanor, but also because he was now pretty sure that Harry was being exploited, was absolutely sure that his booking him supported it...And yet he still wanted to book him again, more than anything. And there was no one to blame for any of it but him...If he wasn’t such a horrible, selfish, twisted person then neither of them would be hurt. And so he punished himself...

He lifted his arm and drew the razor blade slowly across his flesh. Scarlet blood dripped onto the crisp white bed-sheets. The pain made him gasp.

Suddenly the door behind him swung open. “Mr Louis, your father wants to see you.” He spun round, hurriedly yanking the sleeve of his jacket down to conceal the cut, but the look of shock on the maids face told him she’d already seen it. “Are you...Are you alright Sir?”
He avoided her gaze. “Yes, yes I’m fine…”

“Are you sure? I thought I saw blood. Did you hurt yourself? I could go get the first aid kit?”

“LEAVE IT!” The minute the snarl left his lips he regretted it. “I-I mean thank you for your concern Kate…But that won’t be necessary.” He kept his tone cold and emotionless. He rolled the sleeve of his jacket back down and stood, trying to keep his expression impassive and depressingly aware that he sounded just like his father. “You were saying..?”

For a moment she stared at him, confused. Then she blinked and ducked her head. “Your father is demanding to see you. He’s in his study.”

“Thank you Kate.” He could feel her gaze burning into his back as he left the room.

His father was at his desk when he entered, mobile phone clamped to his ear. He snapped his fingers at him and pointed at the chair in front of them. Louis sat, gritting his teeth in irritation, and flung his feet up onto the desk between them, crossing them at the ankle and smirking at his father’s scowl.

“Yes, yes…As usual some idiot’s fucked it up and I have to go sort it. The way things are going I might as well fucking move to Japan and be done with it.” If only, Louis thought wistfully. “Right, so make sure you forward me those contracts…Yes…Talk Monday.” He hung up the phone and turned to look at him, his lips curling in disgust, as if his only son was something the cat had thrown up. “Feet!” Louis lowered them reluctantly. “Christ Louis, why do you keep insisting on wearing those bloody football jackets? You look like a chav.”

“We’re not in the office Dad. I’ll wear whatever the fuck I want to.” His father rolled his eyes. “This rebellious teenager act is getting old Lou, but suit yourself…I have bigger problems. I’m needed in the Tokyo office immediately and I want you to keep things ticking over here in London. Think you can manage it?”

“I have so far.” Louis fought to hide his delight. “So how long will you be away for?”

“A couple of days…Could be longer.” Oh please God be longer! Louis’ thoughts immediately turned to the Bird Cage business card hidden in his bedside drawer…He could book Harry for tomorrow night. He could justify it if he kept everything like last time—all about Harry, No sex, well….maybe, maybe just touching…and kissing…and… “Just one thing…I’m supposed to be meeting the presidents of Dark Horse publishing for dinner at The Ivy tomorrow night to discuss the takeover. You’ll have to go in my place.”

Shit…

He fought to hide his disappointment. “Yeah, sure.”

“This deal’s important so don’t fuck it up. Make sure they sign on the dotted line.”

“I will.”
“You’d better.” His father turned toward his computer, waving a hand at him dismissively, as if he were a servant. “That will be all. Off you go Louis.”

And it took everything Louis had not to jump out of his seat and punch him. He marched toward the door, shaking with anger. He’d been so close, so close to seeing Harry again, and now, instead, he was going to have to spend his first night of freedom talking business with a couple of old literary farts…Unless…

A rebellious little idea began to form in his mind. These people were bound to bring friends, they always did…Why couldn’t he bring a friend too? It wasn’t as if they’d guess, or his father would ever find out…And deep down he had to admit that there was a certain devilish thrill in the thought of bringing a prostitute to one of his father’s most important meetings. Yes, having Harry there would be the perfect ‘fuck you’ to his father, to them all…

He took the stairs two at a time and ran to his room, snatching the card from his drawer and punching the number into his mobile, his heart pounding with a mixture of fear and excitement.

“Good afternoon, you have reached The Bird Cage Hotel. How may I help you?”

This time he didn’t hesitate. “Hello, this is Louis Tomlinson. I’d like to book Harry for tomorrow night.”

“Certainly Mr Tomlinson.”

“And could you have him wear a suit, please? He’s accompanying me to an important dinner.”

*********

Zayn leaned in close, so close that Harry could see the flecks of gold in his kohl ringed brown eyes. He reached for him, his intense gaze never leaving his face as he ran his fingers down his bare chest, pinching his nipples hard between his fingers and smirking as Harry hissed through his teeth at the pain. He looked incredible, stripped to the waist to show off his narrow yet toned torso, his long legs clad in skin-tight black leather.

He prowled around Harry like a panther, rubbing his chin thoughtfully as he assessed him, before stopping behind him, leaning in so close that Harry could feel his breath hot on the back of his neck. He twisted his fingers in his hair, yanking his head back against his shoulder with one hand while the other slid beneath the waistband of Harry’s own leather jeans to take hold of his cock, pushing his flies open so they could see. He growled into his ear.

“Well, my tall beauty…Are you going to help me break her in? I know you want to, I can already feel you getting hard, you slut.”

“Yes Master.” Harry fought to keep a straight face.

Zayn released his hair and untied the rope binding his wrists before leading him by his cock over to the bed. They both stared down at the petite pretty Chinese girl where she struggled against her bonds, her eyes wide. They waited…And waited…And waited…Finally Harry leaned over her, one hand moving to play with one of her small breasts as a decoy as he whispered in her ear.

“You o.k Jia?”

“No…” She whispered frantically in her soft Scottish accent, trying to keep her voice low so that it wouldn’t be picked up by the mic overhead. “My feet are all pins n needles, I need a wee and I
forgot my bloody line again!”

But her voice hadn’t been low enough.

“CUT! OH FOR FUCK’ S SAKE!” The director marched over to them, his face twisting in rage. He was middle-aged and fat, his dark skin wrinkled and lined, a strutting peacock of a man who clearly savoured having power over others. He glared down at Jia with piggy black eyes. “It’s just one line you stupid bitch! Just one fuckin’ line! How hard can it be?” He raised his fist…And then Harry was between them.

“Oi! Didn’t your mum tell you not to hit girls? Leave her alone, we’re not bloody actors!”

The director stood, glaring at Harry…Then he smacked him across the face so hard his ear rang. He turned and spat blood onto the carpet. But the older man wasn’t finished yet. Before Harry even had time to straighten up he was on him, laying into him with his fists.

“I (SMACK) KNOW (SMACK) WHAT (SMACK) YOU (SMACK) ARE (SMACK), YOU (SMACK) DIRTY (SMACK) LITTLE (SMACK) WHORE!” Harry ducked, sinking to his knees and gritting his teeth, arms over his head in an attempt to protect himself from the blows that rained down on him. The worst part was that he knew he could take this bastard, could punch him into next week, but he wasn’t allowed to raise a hand to him- even to defend himself. Around them the crew watched impassively, sipping coffee as they waited. But Jia and Zayn were yelling.

“HARRY! HARRY! STOP IT! LEAVE HIM ALONE!”

“GET OFF HIM YOU SON OF A BITCH! GET THE FUCK OFF HIM! STOP!” Zayn dived between them, shielding Harry, one arm out towards the director in supplication. “Stop mate! Think! You mark him and everyone who watches this is gonna know we’re bein’ forced! Makin’ porn ain’t illegal…But forcing people to do it is!”

“Yeah Vic!” Called one of the crew. “And if you black the kid’s eye it’ll really fuck with the continuity!”

For a moment he seemed unsure…Then he lowered his fists. “Fine…” He turned his attention back to the crew. “Ok, places again everyone!”

Zayn crouched down beside Harry, pushing his hair out of his eyes. “Hey man, you o.k?”

His face hurt but…“Yeah, I’ll live.” He let Zayn help him to his feet and then made his way over to where Jia lay bound to the bed. “Hey, princess.” He sat down and took hold of her feet, gently rubbing the blood back into them as Zayn did the same with her hands.

“Thanks for that Haz.”

“Don’t mention it. Look Jia…”

She gave them both a wry smile. “Don’t worry boys, I may not be able to remember my lines…But I’ve read the script. And I know that it’s them doing it to me really, they’re just using you to do it. They get off on forcing us on each other, but fuck them; the trick is not to care.”

Harry smiled at that. “Exactly.” He looked up at Zayn. “Fuck them, right Zayn?”

“Sure mate, whatever.” But as Zayn turned away Harry just caught the sheen of tears in his eyes.

“Right, get back into position!” They both scrambled to their feet as the director marched toward
them. “Now, you were standing there…grab his dick again, that’s it. And you…you had your hand on her tit…Tilt your head…No too far…Yes, that’s it…Now, twist just a little so that we can see your chest…” He posed them like dolls before stepping back behind the camera. “You with the hair! Look up when I say-ACTION!”

Harry lifted his head to face the camera’s lens, which watched them impassively like a cold mechanical eye. He glared into it defiantly, silently praying that his mother would never see this film or, indeed, any of the others they’d forced him to make.

“So…” Jia purred into Harry’s ear in a fake American accent as he gave her a piggy-back through the hotel’s winding corridors toward the Cat House. “What have you got for me, Big Boy?”

He played along, affecting a fake American accent of his own. “Want me to stick my big, fat dick into your pussy, do you baby?”

“Oh yeah, baby! Do me hard! Ride me like me like a pony!”

They both dissolved into a fit of giggles. Harry turned to Zayn, who was shaking his head at them both. “I get that its porn, but the dialogue is fucking terrible…They need to get some decent writers, right ‘Master’?” He smiled at him.

“Yeah.” Zayn smiled back, but Harry noticed that it didn’t reach his eyes.

They reached the corridor that led to the Cat House and Zayn helped Jia down from Harry’s back, holding her gently upright until she was steady on her feet again. “You alright?”

“Yeah, no more pins and needles. Just once I’d like not to be the one who’s tied to the bed though…”

“You got to sleep between takes.” Harry pointed out and she smiled at him.

“Ah Harry, the eternal optimist.”

“So, what’s it like over on the girl’s side?”

She shrugged. “The usual. Taylor prancing about like she’s better than the rest of us…Miss Caroline ruling the place with a whip hand-literally-Even the other handlers are afraid of her.” Harry shuddered at the thought. “Right, pals, see you later?”

“Yeah.” Zayn smiled back, but Harry noticed that it didn’t reach his eyes.

They watched her disappear up the corridor before starting to make their way back to their room.

“Y’know,” Zayn said quietly as they walked. “I used to want to be loads of things growin’ up…Artist, singer, footballer…Never thought I’d end up a porn star.”

“We’re not porn stars….Porn stars get paid.”

“Harry, stop it. Don’t you ever…y’know…wonder who sees those films? Like, if they’re on the internet for everyone to watch? I have sisters…”
The internet…Harry had never really thought about it…He remembered the first film they’d made him do, how they’d dressed him in a school uniform and forced him to suck off an older Product who was pretending to be a teacher, how they’d zoomed in on him crying…If Gem ever saw it…No, he couldn’t think about that.

“The only people who watch those films are old pervs Zayn. Besides, we’re missing persons…They wouldn’t risk putting us on the net where we could be recognised.”

“I guess…”

They reached their room and went inside…Only to be met by the sight of Liam and Trev hauling a mattress onto a newly constructed bed that had been squashed in between the ends of theirs and the wall.

“No fucking way Liam! There isn’t enough room for the two of us in here as it is without some fuckin’ newbie…”

“Haz…”

Liam turned to look at him and his eyes widened. “Shit Harry, what happened to your face?”

“Got hit. Don’t change the subject. There’s over two hundred rooms in this place, why do we have to share ours?”

“Haz!” Zayn reached to squeeze his shoulder. Harry turned to look where he pointed…Niall sat on Harry’s bed, hugging his knees to his chest and watching them all with an expression of shell-shocked bewilderment in his huge baby blue eyes. He looked so small, and so young and so frightened. And Harry instantly regretted his anger. He went to sit beside him. “Oh…sorry. Hi mate…”

“You’re Harry.”

“Yeah.”

Niall glanced down at himself and at the small bundle of clothes he held. “They gave me all this stuff, clothes an’ that. Do I have to pay for ‘um? I’ve got no money.”

And Harry didn’t know what to say to that, didn’t know how to tell him that the cost of the clothes, along with the cost of the food he ate and the bed he slept in, would be paid for with every piece of his innocence, every shred of his dignity.

“No…No, it doesn’t work like that.”

“Oh…That’s nice of ‘um.”

He raised a shaking hand to his mouth to chew his nails and Harry saw the deep mauve bruises that ringed his wrist. Without quite realising what he was doing he reached to wrap his arm around Niall’s skinny shoulders. “So, how are you feeling?”

“Better…That doctor fella’s really nice.” Then, to Harry’s surprise, he looked up at him with a grin that revealed his snuggle teeth. “An’ it’s amazin’ what good a proper feed’ll do for ya!”

“And they say I’m optimistic.” Harry looked up to find Zayn watching them, his mouth set in a concerned frown. He turned to Liam, who was now helping Trev make up the bed with fresh
sheets.

“So are they gonna make him work now? He can’t! Look at him man, he’s skin an’ bone!”

Liam shook his head. “No, he’s being given a couple of weeks…Then he’ll start his training.”

“I thought he was already workin’ before Mr Cowell bought him?”

“He was bein’ fucked, you idiot.” Trev rolled his eyes at him. “There’s a difference between bein’
fucked and knowin’ HOW to fuck. That’s what he needs to learn.”

“An’ I never been wi’ no women.” Niall piped up helpfully.

“Exactly…” Trev smirked as he saw Harry and Zayn share a horrified look. “He needs to go to
Caroline.”

“Who’s she?” Niall glanced from Harry to Zayn and back again, confused. Trev laughed.

“Don’t worry Irish. She’s a nice lady, who’ll make a man out of you. Just you lick whatever she
tells you too, ok?”

“Shut the fuck up Trev.” Liam finished and stood.

“Just letting him know what he’s in for.” Trev followed him from the room. As he passed Niall he
stuck his tongue out at him, wiggling it in an obscene gesture. The door slammed behind them.

“Fucking wanker.” Zayn growled after him.

“She’s gonna hurt me isn’t she?” Niall was looking from Zayn to Harry again, desperate for
reassurance. “Make me do dirty things?”

“Yeah.” Harry nodded sadly. “Just try and do everything she says.”

“Oh, o.k.” Niall turned to look at his new bed. He pointed to the new set of cuffs that dangled from
the headboard and the muzzle that rested on the pillow. “What are them things?”

“Muzzle goes over your mouth to keep you quiet at night. And those are handcuffs.” Zayn
shrugged. “They’re soft though, so they won’t hurt you.”

“I’m not stupid…Chains is chains.”

And Harry knew he was right. He rubbed his arm in a gesture of comfort because he didn’t know
what else to do. For a moment Zayn seemed lost for words…Then his eyes lit up.

“What’s your name?”

And Harry knew exactly what he was planning.

“Niall. I tol’ youse that.”

“No, your full name.”

Niall looked unsure. “The big boss man said I had to forget it, that I had no last name ‘cause I don’t
belong to my family no more, I belong to him.”

“Well he’s not here now.”
Niall turned to look at Harry, who gave him a reassuring nod. “It’s o.k. It’s not a trick. Go on.”

“Niall James Horan.”

“And when were you born?”

“September 13th 1993.”

“That’s all I need…For now.” Zayn disappeared underneath his bed only to reappear with the backpack he kept his paint cans in.

Harry stooped to whisper in Niall’s ear. “Wait ‘til you see this!”

“What is he doing?”

They watched, fascinated, as Zayn put on a dust mask and got to work, brow furrowed in concentration as he shook each can and sent a jet of spray paint across the white wall. “He’s rebelling. We all have our little ways. Me, I talk back, give them cheek…Liam, your Handler? He tries to act as a buffer…Protect us from them when he can. Zayn does this.”

An hour later Zayn stepped back and turned to Niall, pulling his mask from his mouth. “Now you’re on the wall you’re one of us mate. I’ll add to it when I have more time and we can talk, but I wanted to get it started. What do you think?”

Niall stared, his mouth hanging open in amazement. The mural now spilled across an extra wall. Niall’s full name and birthdate was tagged across it in green, white and gold, along with a shamrock. Beneath it Zayn had painted a phrase in a language Harry had never seen before. Niall read it out, the words warm and earthy to the ear.

“Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine.”

Zayn smiled. “My mum’s half-Irish. Her nan taught it to her. Did I spell it right?”

Niall nodded, impressed.

“What does it mean?” Harry asked him.

“Under the shelter of each other, people survive.”

Zayn nodded, sitting down beside Niall and laying a hand on his arm. “Me an’ Haz will look after ya. You’re not alone.”

The door opened and Liam came back in, carrying a set of pillows. He stopped and turned to look at the wall. When he turned to Zayn his expression was a mixture of annoyance and admiration. “It’s amazing Zayn…But they’re going to go apeshit when they see it.”

And this time when Zayn smiled his eyes lit up.

“Smashed it!”

By the next morning one side of Harry’s face was black and blue and aching. He stood in Louise’s dressing room holding it and yawning as he watched her search through an overflowing vanity case. He was exhausted. Niall suffered from horrendous nightmares and had kept them both awake with his thrashing around, his screams loud even beneath the muzzle. Eventually Liam had given
up and cuffed him into bed beside Harry in the hope that having someone next to him would keep him calm. It had worked; he’d fallen into a deep sleep...And somehow managed to elbow Harry’s already badly bruised cheek twice. Harry had spent the rest of the night with his throbbing face against the pillow while Niall slept like a baby beside him, his freezing cold feet pressed against Harry’s legs. Tonight it was definitely Zayn’s turn.

“Found it!” Louise turned back to him, frantically rubbing a sponge into a make-up compact before lunging towards him with it.

“Heyyy!” He ducked out of her way. “What are you doing?! I’m not a girl!”

“I know that but if this Tomlinson bloke sees them bruises he might not want to book you again, and we can’t have that now, can we? So stand still or I’ll put lip-gloss on you too.”

“Louis Tomlinson?”

“That’s the one. Why, is he not nice to ya? Do you not want to go?”

“I do.” And that’s what scared him. The truth was that he hadn’t been able to stop thinking about that beautiful, haunted man with the electric blue eyes, who’d been so funny, and so kind, who’d treated him like he was more than just a whore...Like he was a person...Who’d given him such pleasure and asked for nothing in return. He’d lain awake at night remembering his touch and that incredible wave of passion that had taken his breath away, wondering why he refused to kiss anyone else...But wanted to kiss him, why the sensation of his lips still lingered...He didn’t want to feel this way, couldn’t feel this way...Still as he’d lain in the darkness chewing on his muzzle he’d imagined himself back in that bed with him, their limbs entwined beneath the duvet, his ear pressed to Louis’ chest so he could hear the comforting thumping of his heart as he’d kissed his forehead and stroked his hair. In that bed for the first time in a long time, he’d felt safe. He’d never been in love, and wondered if that was what this strange new yearning was...The very idea terrified him because he knew that this was no fairy-tale, that if it was love then there would be no happy ever after. Only hurt. But that still didn’t stop the excitement that fluttered in his chest at the thought of seeing Louis again.

“So,” Louise turned him to face the mirror. “What do you think?”

He examined his face, amazed. It was as if the bruises had just vanished. Then he turned his attention to the black and red pinstripe suit he wore. “I look like Beetlejuice.”

“Yes, but a hot Beetlejuice. That suit’s Lanvin Harry and you can pull it off. Remember, you’re an accessory-you need to look good.” An accessory—at least he knew his place. That’s what he was, an accessory, a toy, to be used by those rich enough to afford him...Like Louis. It was a welcome reality check. She held out a long black wool coat and he shrugged it on. Right, time to go look good on someone’s arm...

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Louis flipped the collar of his beige Burberry trench up against the biting wind as he waited on the pavement outside The Ivy’s iconic crescent moon window. Rich theatre-goers and various members of the London glitterati walked past him and inside, the men dressed in designer suits and the women in revealing dresses and Louboutin heels, diamonds glittering on their fingers and at their throats. He took another drag of his cigarette and turned...Just in time to see a black SUV pull up a few feet away from him and Liam get out, moving to open the back door...
“Jesus!” Louis breathed the word out with the smoke. Harry was walking towards him now, long black coat billowing behind him. And he looked like a model, his long limbs clad in a black and red striped suit and black button-up shirt, his wild curls brushing his shoulders. When he saw him staring he smiled a smile so full of cheer and trouble that Louis couldn’t help but smile back.

“Hi.” He flicked his cigarette away. “Nice suit.”

“Well you said I needed to dress up.”

And then Liam appeared at his elbow, pressing a form into his hands. As he signed it he watched Harry standing with his hands in his pockets, snapping his gum and looking up at The Ivy’s façade, totally oblivious to the admiring stares of the people walking past him.

“Thank you Sir. Have a good night.” Liam passed Harry a leather holdall and left them.

“So, you’re taking me to dinner? Are we pretending it’s a date or something? ‘Cause just so you know…” He leaned in close, his lips brushing Louis’ ear and causing a delicious shiver to shoot up his spine. “…You’re gonna get lucky anyway.” He pulled away, running the tip of his tongue along his teeth in a way that made Louis want to slam him up against the nearest wall and rip that suit off his body. But he couldn’t, so instead he affected a disapproving stare.

“Behave yourself. I wish it was a date. I have a business dinner and want you to accompany me, my treat. We just need to get it out’way and then you can come back to mine and we can hang out, have fun…Like last time.”

Harry nodded and turned his attention back to the restaurant. “So this is the famous Ivy. Louis, I know you’re rich but are you…Posh?”

Louis burst out laughing. “With this accent? Are you kidding?! But my father’s trying to buy posh and ‘cause this is London I have to mix with a load of poshos for business. Look, don’t worry, I’ll keep you right.”

To his surprise, Harry rolled his eyes at him, his lips curling into that crooked smirk. “I know how to play posh Louis…I’ve slept with half the House of Lords.” And with that he spun on his heel, one hand on the lapel of his jacket, and strutted right past the security guard and into the restaurant as if he owned it.

Louis made to follow…

“Excuse me Sir.” The security guard reached out a hand to stop him. “But do you have a reservation?”

From the doorway, Harry laughed.

Black Horse Publishing was HRM approved, family-run, and pretentious as hell. As the publishers of most of the textbooks on the Cambridge syllabus they had a big turnover and would be a profitable addition to TommoCor…But Louis hated dealing with them. As usual, it wasn’t going well.

“…So as you can see, a merger would greatly improve your company’s global visibility and…”

“Yes but, you see Mr Tomlinson…” Their chairwoman peered contemptuously over her glasses at him. With her pencil skirt, wrinkled cats-bum mouth and steel grey bun she reminded him of a
school librarian. “I just don’t feel that you personally have any real interest in, or passion for our product.” Well that was true. Louis had never been much of a reader. She turned back to the conversation beside her, where a balding man in a tweed jacket was debating Shakespeare with a middle-aged woman in twinset and pearls.

“…Personally, I subscribe to the argument that Shakespeare’s depiction of Iago’s sabotaging of Othello represents the time’s deep-rooted fear and mistrust of the ‘noble savage’ archetype…”

“I disagree. I argue that in Iago’s use of blatantly sexual language we see an obvious homosexual subtext.”

“Actually, I disagree with both theories.” As one, the table turned. Harry looked up from where he’d been carefully constructing a swan from a napkin. “Personally I agree with the critic Hargrove’s argument that in Iago Shakespeare depicts the shadow side of us all, the id that savours causing suffering in the lives of others just for the joy of it. Through him, we as the audience become sadists as we share his joy at inflicting pain on Othello and watching him suffer before we find our humanity again in his final exposure and punishment which reminds us of our own self-imposed moral code.”

Louis gaped at him as the chairwoman arched her eyebrows in surprise. “Interesting point. I don’t believe we’ve met. And you are?”

Harry barely batted an eyelid. “Harry Cox, Louis’ P.A.”

“Let me guess, Oxford English degree?”

“Cambridge, actually. Graduated early.”

“Hmm, handsome AND educated.” The chairwoman looked at Harry the way a cat looks at a mouse. “Come sit by me.”

Half an hour later and Louis was walking out of the restaurant with a signed contract under his arm, Harry at his side.

“So…Shakespeare?”

“Yeah,” Harry mumbled to himself. “From porno to Shakespeare…funny, innit?”

“What?”

“Nothing. Yeah…I was really into English at school. I was Miss McCauley’s favourite pupil. I got an A star in my Shakespeare assessment, was predicted to get an A star in my GCSE English lit.”

“Oooh get you.” Louis raised his arm to hail a taxi. “Any other hidden talents?”

“Well,” Harry turned to him with a twinkle in his eye. “I can juggle.”

“That’s…random.” A black cab pulled up and they both got in. Louis gave the cabbie his address.

“And I have been to Cambridge…On a school trip when I was twelve. I got a T-shirt and everything.” Harry frowned as he stared at him. “What?”

“Nothing, you’re just…really interesting. Seriously though, thanks for what you did in there. I couldn’t have closed the deal without you. It was amazing.”
Harry shrugged. “People think that just ‘cause I’m a prostitute that I’m thick, but I was good at school. They said I was going to get all A’s and B’s in my GCSE’s. I was going to go to college…”

“Then why didn’t you? What happened?”

And immediately Louis could see Harry’s guard going up. He turned away to gaze out the window at the twinkling city lights. “Stuff.”

Louis nudged him in the ribs. “Hey,” Harry turned back to fix him with his intense green gaze. “I’ve been wondering…Do you like…y’know…it? Or is it just your job? And don’t lie to me.”

Harry looked at him guiltily. “Most of the time? Well, it’s just…just something that happens to me. Just…work…But the last time I was with you…That was different.”

“Yeah, right.” Louis made to turn away and Harry reached out and caught his jaw, turning him back round; his emerald eyes searching his face. And Louis was surprised to see that there was no flirty glint in his eye, no smirk. Instead he looked almost afraid.

“No, I mean it. I-I’ve come but…I’ve never felt like that before. What did you do to me?”

Louis reached to push his hand away. “Would…would you like me to make you feel like that again?”

Harry nodded, his cheeks flushing red. “I’ll be good to you after. I’ll do…”

“No.” Louis reached into his lap, catching his hands in his and threading his fingers through his.

“No, you don’t have to do a thing. Just let me show you…Let me show you that it can feel good.”

“O.k.”

Back at the mansion Louis ran them a bath. He planted a soft kiss on the freckle at the side of Harry’s mouth before undressing him, slowly peeling his clothes away layer by layer to reveal the creamy skin beneath until he stood before him naked and beautiful in his vulnerability. He stripped off his own clothes and stepped into the warm water before reaching out to Harry who stood watching him cautiously. “Get in. It’s alright.”

Harry climbed into the vast tub and he pulled him down until he was sitting between his legs, his back to his chest. For a moment he pressed his face into his curls, savouring his scent. Then he lifted a tube of shower gel, squeezing some into his palm and rubbing it into suds between his hands before starting to massage Harry’s shoulders. For a moment he felt the other youth tense against him. Then Harry relaxed, leaning back against his chest, his head against his shoulder.

“Does that feel good?”

“Umm hmm.”

“Good…If you want me to stop just say.” He moved his hands slowly down over Harry’s chest, marvelling at the feel of his muscles beneath his skin, down to his dusky brown nipples, teasing them gently to attention as he planted kisses on his cheek. Harry was hard now, the swollen deep pink tip of his cock just visible above the water. Louis moved his lips to his ear. “Spread your legs for me, just a little.” Harry obeyed and Louis soaped his hand and reached down, down through the damp coarse curls to take him in hand. Harry gasped, his cock twitching in Louis’ grasp, and he wrapped his fingers firmly round the base, squeezing just enough. “Shhh, easy now. Not yet.” He
slid his other hand down, nestling his fingers between his cheeks, stroking them teasingly along the silky skin between his balls and entrance. Harry moaned luxuriantly, his eyes closing. He let his little finger tease the tip of Harry’s cock, smiling to himself as he felt the sticky pre-come. He kept every stroke torturously slow, wrapping his arm around Harry’s slender waist and holding him still when he tried to thrust up into his hand.

“Please…oh please…Harder…”

“Shhh, not yet.”

Soon Harry was limp against him, helpless with need, head hanging over his shoulder, legs spread wide against the sides of the bath. Occasionally a long, low moan escaped his lips and he’d try to thrust, only for Louis to catch his hips and hold him still before pinching the base of his cock gently but firmly. “Please…please…I need, I need…”

“Alright pretty baby, shhh….I’ll give you what you need.” Louis could feel how swollen he was, how rigid…He picked up the pace of his strokes, releasing his waist so that Harry could thrust up into his hand, which he did with such force that water spilled over the edge of the tub. He flicked his wrist so that the palm of his hand brushed against the swollen tip of Harry’s cock…

….And Harry saw stars.

Afterwards Harry was floating, drifting. He felt so blissfully content, so wonderfully spent and numb. He wanted to feel like this forever. Somewhere far off he could hear Louis’s voice whispering soothing nothings into his ear, the slow splash of water against ceramic. Something warm and damp was being gently wiped over his skin, over his face…

“Oh my God!”

At Louis’ cry of shock his eyes snapped open. He turned to see the flannel hovering in his eye-line, the white stained beige with make-up. Shit. He sat up, and twisted to look at Louis, who was gaping at him in horror.

“It’s nothing!”

“No it’s not! Let me see.” Louis caught hold of his chin, and he bit his lip as he turned his face this way and that, inspecting the bruises that bloomed across his cheekbone like black roses. “Harry, what happened?”

“Nothing. I just…I fell. Me and my mate Zayn were messing about and I fell, whacked my face off a door. It was stupid…”

“That’s a lie. Who hit you Harry?”

“No one, I fell. I’m sorry. Look I’ll ring Liam to come get me.” He climbed out of the bath and reached for a towel.

“Wait!” Louis climbed out after him, catching him by the arm. “Why are you leaving?”

Harry shrugged him off. “It’s o.k, I get it. The bruises put you off. The Birdcage might be able to send someone else for you…”

“No, I don’t want someone else.” To Harry’s surprise Louis moved to wrap a comforting arm around his waist, reaching up to cup his face with his hand. He pressed his forehead to his, staring
into his eyes. “I want YOU Harry. I just…I wish you’d tell me what really happened.”

Harry shook his head. “I can’t.” The sadness in Louis’ gaze confused him. Why did he care so much? He was a whore and whores got hit-It was just a fact of life. Then Louis kissed him tenderly, and Harry found himself kissing him back. He stood still as Louis used thick, fluffy towels to dry him before taking him by the hand and leading him from the room.

In the bedroom Louis pushed Harry back onto the bed and kissed him deeply, parting his lips with his so that their tongues could meet. He tasted delicious and suddenly Harry’s head was spinning again, his heart seeming to pound in every inch of his body. Louis was between his legs, their cocks rubbing together, the friction an exquisite torture that made Harry moan into his mouth as he felt that familiar rush of blood and realised he was getting hard again. He ground himself against him and Louis laughed.

“Shhh, patience Harry, patience.” He slapped him teasingly on the thigh, just a small chastising tap but Harry was shocked to feel his cock twitch and swell at the sting. He pulled away and disappeared from Harry’s eye-line, and then Harry felt his fingers digging into his hips as he pulled him across until he was lying at the edge of the bed, his legs hanging down.

“Louis?” He tried to sit up but Louis placed a hand on his chest, pushing him gently, but firmly back down.

“It’s o.k, just relax. This is all about you, remember?” He looked up at the ceiling as hands slid between his thighs, spreading his legs…Then his eyes grew wide as he felt something hot and wet lapping at his entrance, probing…The sensation was odd, not unpleasant but…”Do you like being penetrated?”

“What?”

“Do you like having things put inside you?”

He remembered how those probing fingers had felt. “N-not normally but what you did last time…I liked that.”

“Good.” And then he felt fingers pushing against him, stiff and slick, gasped as they breached him, the sensation just on the edge between pleasure and pain. They moved inside him, seeking…Then they found that same red-hot spot as before, tickling and teasing it until he was groaning with pleasure and need, wriggling down onto them as his cock hardened even more. He felt himself being swiftly sheathed in latex…Then his cock was enveloped in the most incredible heat as Louis took him into his mouth, sucking hard. He’d had blow jobs before and had only pretended to enjoy them, but this! This was completely different. The fingers thrust inside him and Louis tongue teased his length, his tip, until he was keening softly, arms above his head and legs spread wide, helplessly trapped between two different forms of pleasure and prisoner of both. And Louis was a cruel taskmaster…Every time he thought he was going to come Louis would pull away, the fingers inside him stilling, and pinch the base of his cock firmly as he whimpered like a child.

“Please Louis, please!”

“I know you think I’m being harsh…But trust me, it will feel better if I make you wait.” And then he’d wait until Harry was completely still before taking him deep into his throat again, his fingers working away inside him, rubbing his G-spot mercilessly. Finally Harry could take no more. He came with a primal scream, his back arching off the bed.
After the high had faded, he opened his eyes to find Louis lying beside him, stroking his face gently. “Come back to me Harry, come back.”

He looked up at him, frightened. “I’m sorry! I know I shouldn’t have done that, that you didn’t give me permission…Please, please don’t punish me! I’ll do whatever you want…”

He thought Louis would be furious…But instead he just looked sad. He gathered him, trembling, into his arms, taking his face in his hands. “Oh no, pretty baby, no. You didn’t disobey me, and I’m not going to hurt you…I’d never hurt you.”

And Harry found that he believed him, the first time in a long time that he’d believed anyone who’d said that to him. So he leaned forward and pressed his lips to Louis’s in a kiss.

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

The next morning Louis lay watching Harry as he examined the tattoos on his arms, tracing the ink outlines lazily with his fingers. “I like the tick-tack-toe board…And the stag is cool. I always planned to get tattoos as a kid, thought I’d be covered in them by now…”

“You have three.”

“Yeah.” Harry avoided his gaze.

“What else would you get?”

Harry smiled, taking hold of his wrist and turning it gently so he could trace the rope tattoo there with the tip of his finger. “An iced gem.”

It was such a strange choice Louis couldn’t help but chuckle. “That’s weird. Why?”

“To remember someone by.”

“Who?”

“My sister Gemma.”

“Why? Did she die?” He immediately regretted asking the question when Harry’s eyes filled with tears. “Sorry, you don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to.”

“Thanks.”

“I really wish you’d tell me how you got these though.” He bent to gently kiss each bruise on Harry’s cheek. Harry pulled away and took hold of his wrist, turning it and running his fingers over the silvery white scars on the inside of his arm.

“Only if you tell me how you got these.” And it was Louis’s turn to look away, his cheeks flushing red. “Well, I guess we both have secrets, huh?”

“Yeah…” Louis turned back to him, reaching to push a strand of hair out of Harry’s face. “…And you’re one of my favourites. Look Harry…I…I like you…A lot more than I should.”

The moment the words left his mouth he regretted them. They were true, of course they were…but saying them left him feeling too vulnerable, too exposed. And Harry was staring at him now, shock in his eyes.
“Louis, I…”

“Never mind. I shouldn’t have said that.” He kicked the covers away and stood, suddenly wanting to get out of the situation. “I’ll go make us breakfast, I’m sure you’re starving. Stay here and I’ll bring it up.”

“Louis wait!”

But he didn’t turn back.

He was arranging tea cups on a tray when he heard the soft pad of Harry’s bare feet behind him.

“How are you feeling?” He turned. Harry stood in the doorway, leaning against the door frame and watching him, full lips pouted in thought. His hair was soft, fluffy and tangled from sleep, his cheeks creased from the sheets. He wore tight white cotton boxers and a white flannel nightshirt, which grazed his thighs and fell open to reveal his bird tattoos and the crucifix Louis found so ironic but hadn’t the guts to ask about. In the pale, cool morning light he looked strangely cherubic and innocent.

“What you said up there…”

Louis pulled a kitchen chair out from the table and sat down, putting his head in his hands. “…I shouldn’t have said. I’m sorry. I know it puts you in an awkward position, that this is just your job…”

He heard Harry’s feet padding across the tiles, then. “Louis, look at me.” He raised his head. Harry crouched down in front of him, his eyes searching his face. “I-I like you too. I-I think I could really love you…Even if I wasn’t being paid to.” And then he was kissing him. Louis reached up, tangling his fingers in those curls and pulling him closer so he could kiss him more deeply, and then Harry’s hands were in his boxers, pulling out his cock, his long fingers stroking him expertly to hardness…He pulled away.

“Wait, wait…What are you doing?”

Harry let go and stood in front of him, looking nervous but somehow determined. “You’ve been so kind to me. I want to give you something.”

He saw a flash of foil and then Harry was on his knees in front of him, sliding the condom down his length.

“Harry, Harry you don’t have to…”

Harry stood again, biting his lip. “No…I want to.” As Louis watched he slid his boxers slowly down his thighs, stepping out of them and towards him. “I want you.” And with that he straddled him, lowing himself slowly into his lap, hissing through his teeth as he took all of Louis into his body. Louis gasped as he was enveloped in his heat. For a moment they just stared at each other, forehead’s pressed together, Harry’s hair falling in a dark curtain down either side of Louis’s face …And then Harry took his cheeks in his hands and kissed him. They kissed fiercely, passionately as Harry moved, sliding himself slowly up and down his length until Louis was dizzy with want, mind hazy with passion…He reached between them to catch Harry’s cock in his hand, stroking and twisting as Harry arched his back, his fingers digging into his shoulders hard enough to leave marks. Louis leaned forward to kiss his exposed throat, his arms wrapping around his back, and then Harry’s mouth was on his again, kissing him so hard his lips ached, then moving away to kiss
down his neck, down to the tip of his shoulder, and all the while he was moving, the tight molten warmth of his body turning Louis to liquid...He looked up and their eyes locked in an intense stare-Sapphire and emerald. Then they came together, their cries of ecstasy melding and ricocheting off the walls.

*****

“At ease.” Liam finished patting Harry down and straightened up to face him. “So it all went ok then?”

Harry swallowed and tried to keep his expression blank. “Yeah, it was fine.”

“Did he fuck you this time?”

“Yeah.”

“And do you think you did him good enough that he’ll want to book you again?”

“I think so.”

“Good. That’ll keep Mr Cowell happy...” And then Liam’s expression became guilty. “Look Harry, he heard about you talking back during that film shoot yesterday. He wasn’t pleased...” As he talked he reached into his pocket and Harry felt his heart sink as he pulled out his muzzle.

“How long have I got?”

“A week. I’m sorry Harry.”

“It’s not your fault.”

“He says he’s got you a new Handler, is just waiting ‘til he gets here.”

“Oh.” Harry didn’t care much either way...Most of the Handlers were the same and at least it wouldn’t be as awkward as having Liam as his handler had been. “Good, you can concentrate on Niall.”

“Yeah.” Liam moved behind him and he opened his mouth so he could guide the plug inside. The straps were buckled tightly and the padlock clicked into place and then Liam was back in front of him. “Everyone’s in the Dining Hall. Come on.”

He followed him, tugging the hood of his sweatshirt up over his head. But the whispers still started as soon as he stepped through the dining hall doors.

“Wow, look at Harry’s face! Someone gave him a right hiding!”

“Here, who beat Harry up?”

“Dunno. He’s been muzzled again so he won’t be tellin’.”

“Dirty Harry’s in Silence again! Wonder how long for this time?”

“Harry’s been put in Silence again! Look!”

“Well he needs to stop shootin’ his mouth off, doesn’t he?”
He followed Liam to their normal table and sat down beside Zayn who shot him a look of sympathy before leaning to whisper in his ear. “Niall’s getting The Speech.”

They both turned their attention to the stage.

Niall knelt, hands cuffed behind his back, his sobs muffled by his muzzle as his tears rolled down his cheeks to drip off his chin onto the floorboards. Mr Cowell loomed over him authoritatively, his voice booming round the now silent hall.

“...If you try to escape I WILL find you, I will hunt you down and bring you back and you will be beaten to within an inch of your life! Disobey me or any of my staff and you will be severely punished! Make me angry enough and I will not hesitate to put a bullet right between your eyes, put you down like a dog! DON’T YOU THINK FOR A MOMENT THAT YOU ARE NOT DISPOSABLE! And don’t you forget that I chose you, I found you…And I know where your family are. Try to run back to them and believe me I’ll make it so you have no one to run back too! YOU ARE NOTHING NOW BUT A PRODUCT, A WHORE, A SLAVE! YOU WORK FOR ME BOY! YOU BELONG TO ME! CROSS ME AND I WILL FUCKING END YOU!”

They’d all heard The Speech when they’d first arrived at The Birdcage, and then again every time a new Product arrived, but it never became any less terrifying…Or any less true. Harry ducked his head and tried to tune it out.

That night while Niall cried himself to sleep beside him Harry comforted himself by replaying Louis’ words in his head;

‘You’re just…really interesting’ ‘I’d never hurt you’ ‘I like you…A lot more than I should.’

And Harry knew now that he liked Louis a lot more than HE should. Even picturing his face, with its beautiful smile and deep blue eyes, made everything seem that little bit more bearable. But was it love? He was starting to think it could be. He knew that he should tell Zayn- he was his best friend after all, and he knew what it was like to fall for a client-but he didn’t want to. Instead he wanted to keep it a wonderful secret, hold it close to his chest like a child with a precious gift. In his shadowy world filled with monsters this growing love was like a candle flame, flickering in the darkness.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading, for your comments and for being so patient while I have been ill-you are all amazing! Please take the time to leave comments and let me know what you think of this chapter!
Chapter 8-Signs

Chapter Summary

Niall starts his training, Louis reveals the truth about his life to Harry, and Harry reveals a hidden talent...And makes a startling declaration.

Chapter Notes

WARNING- The beginning of this chapter is pretty harrowing, please don't read if easily offended. Warnings-bondage, sexual abuse, violence.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 8-Signs

Of course, just because Harry was being kept in Silence didn’t mean he couldn’t work. He could still be used by a certain kind of client who enjoyed the sight of a beautiful boy gagged-Like the rich BDSM couple from Kensington who’d hired him for a dinner party, the grand finale of which was him lying on the dinner table so that they and their guests could eat dessert off his naked body, or the middle-aged heiress who’d hired him as an anniversary present for her husband so they could pretend he was a college student they’d snatched off the street and decided to keep as their sex slave. Harry had been forced to play out so many dark fantasies over his four years of captivity that hardly anything shocked him anymore, except… maybe…someone being nice to him…Like Louis.

But Louis would be horrified if he turned up to his house locked into a leather muzzle. So instead he was hired out to those whose desires were so dark they got off on it. And he could still be used as a teaching tool…

Harry wriggled, moaning in pain behind his muzzle as a cramp started in his foot. His legs had been spread wide and bent back, thick rope binding his ankles to the headboard. Cuffs secured his wrists firmly to either side of the bed. His hips ached, his shoulders burned, the rope cut into his ankles…But his discomfort didn’t matter. A sharp slap fell across his thighs.

“Lie still!” Ben turned back to Niall who cowered at the other side of the bedroom, staring at how Harry had been displayed with a mixture of horror and fear, his cheeks streaked with tears.

“I-I don’t wanna hurt ‘im.”

“Never you mind that, Irish. He’s just a body for you to practice on. Get over here!” Ben caught Niall by the arm and dragged him over, forcing him to his knees and pushing his head between Harry’s thighs as he struggled. “Now they may call this boy here Dirty Harry but I broke him in an’ trained him and trust me, he’s fucking frigid. But by the time I’m finished with you you’ll have him moaning and begging for it. Stop that crying or I’ll smack you around again...”
“I-I don’t like lads…”

“You think any of us gives a shit?! You’ll be doing men whether you like it or not, and I’m going to give you a shot that will make you hard anyway. Now pay attention or you’ll get the whip!”

Harry sighed and turned his attention to the ceiling trying to ignore the hands that began to examine him, though he could still tell which were Niall’s from the way they trembled. “Now, I’ve shown you how to suck him off but not enough people know how to give a good hand-job. Grip firmly but not too firmly, that’s it…And make sure you cup the tip at the end of each stroke…Good…Now, I didn’t prepare him because you need to learn how. Most clients will want to fuck you but sometimes you’ll get one who wants to be fucked…”

“H-how will I know.?”

“Because the ones who want to fuck you will shove their cock in your arse and the ones who want to be fucked will just show you their arse—quit being thick. Now, first you need to lube him up…warm it in your hand first…then all round the hole…Now, push one finger inside…Then add another.” Harry bit down on his muzzle and kept his gaze upward, concentrating now on counting each crack in the ceiling. “What does it feel like?”

“Disgustin’.”

Ben laughed at that. “Is he gripping you?”

“Umm hmm.”

“That means he needs opened up. Move your fingers like they’re a pair of scissors and you’re opening and closing them.”

“Is this hurtin’ ‘im?”

“Doesn’t matter. Do what you’re told or I’LL hurt YOU.”

Harry kept his eyes on the ceiling cracks, counting them over and over, doing maths problems in his head based on them…Anything so he wouldn’t have to think about what was happening.

Niall took a deep shuddering breath. “H-he isn’t grippin’ me like before.”

“Good. Now, normally that’s all you’d do to get them open, but sometimes you’ll be short on time. For those occasions you’ll need to use a toy—you’ll be given your own supply. Now, remember to put a rubber on it before you use it, slid it on…good…Now you lube it up…That’s it…Now, push it in him…Well? What are you waiting for? I GAVE YOU AN ORDER!”

Harry looked down. Niall stood between his spread legs, chewing his lip as he stared at him. Up close Harry could see the red hand-shaped marks across his cheeks, the trickle of blood that crusted under his left nostril, his split lip. In one shaking hand he held a large black dildo.

“The-the priests put things like this in me…It hurts…It’ll hurt ‘im.” His voice was small. Behind him Ben sighed… then he reached out and smacked him hard across the back of the head.

“Stop fucking looking at him.” He crossed the room and began rummaging in a drawer. Niall moved to stand by Harry’s head, reaching out to take hold of one cuffed hand.

“I-I’m sorry Harry…I’m so sorry…I don’t want ta hurt ya, I don’t…”

And Harry wanted to yank his hand away, to yell at Niall to stop talking to him, that it would just
make it worse for both of them—but he couldn’t. Instead he shook his head furiously, trying to warn him with his eyes.

“I TOLD YOU NOT TO LOOK AT HIM!” Suddenly Ben was beside Niall, yanking him away and throwing him hard against the wall. He pointed to Harry. “SEE WHEN HE’S TIED UP LIKE THAT? THEN HE’S NOTHING! AN IT! JUST A COCK AND AN ARSEHOLE THAT YOU NEED TO LEARN HOW TO WORK!” He crouched down beside Niall where he’d fallen; grabbing a fistful of his hair and dragging him back across to the bed. “GOT THAT?!”

“AHHH! Y-yes Sir. Sorry Sir.”

“Here, maybe this will help you concentrate.” And suddenly he was leaning over Harry, who shrank away when he saw what was in his fist. “C’mere you little bastard!” Harry tried to struggle, but he was completely pinioned. Ben caught hold of a fistful of his hair…And then he was plunged into darkness as the leather hood was shoved over his head, the straps buckled tightly around his neck. “There. Now you can’t see him.”

Harry whimpered into his muzzle, fighting to control his rising panic, as wave after wave of claustrophobia rushed over him. He hated being hooded more than almost anything else they did to him. He hated not being able to see, always felt like he was going to suffocate, hated the feeling of being so thoroughly dehumanised and objectified. He could hear Ben’s voice, muffled now.

“Right...Now push the toy in him...That’s it...Slide it in an’ out, faster, don’t be gentle...” The sting brought tears to Harry’s eyes. He moaned against his gag. “Right, let me see...” The dildo was removed and he felt Ben’s fingers jabbing into him. “Yep, he’s open enough...”

“W-what do I do now?”

“Now you’re going to fuck him.”

And at those words Harry screwed his eyes tight shut and tried to imagine himself out of this nightmare. He wasn’t here, this wasn’t him gagged, hooded and bound, no...no he was back with Louis, curled up beside him on the couch while they watched TV, looking up at him...Harry worked hard to picture every detail of Louis’ face—His strong jawline and high cheekbones, his perfectly straight nose, the way his lips twisted when he smiled as if at some private joke, his piercing electric blue eyes fringed with dark lashes, his fluffy mahogany hair gelled up into its quiff, his soft creamy skin with the merest dusting of dark stubble...

He was in the middle of imagining himself back in Louis’ bed, his body warm and comforting against his own, when the bedroom door slammed...And at the sound of a muffled but terrifyingly familiar voice his blood ran cold.

“Having a party are we Ben? How come I wasn’t invited?”

“Piss off Caroline, you’ll get your turn. He’s almost done. Keep fucking, Irish, pull out a bit then ram in...That’s it.”

“I thought we were waiting to start his training?”

“Nah, boss didn’t want to waste time so he changed his mind, figured he could learn while he was getting fit.”

“That suits me. Jesus, this is hot.” Harry flinched as the tips of long nails dragged across his chest. “I know who these birdies belong to...hello Harry. Christ, he looks incredible all spread and tied. The boss should display him like this in the foyer for all the clients to see as they come in...Most
of them would come in their pants at the sight of him! I’m going to take off the hood; he can still lick me out as the Irish fucks him.”

“You know the rules babe, no messing with his majesty’s precious Products unless it’s for training purposes. Besides, he’s been put in Silence. But you’ve got hours of the Irish eating you out ahead of you.”

“I suppose…Every cloud…” And then Niall came with a startled yelp. “Aww Irish, you just lose your virginity?”

He listened to their laughter and Niall’s sobs, hating them with every fibre of his being. Then he heard the door creaking open.

“Yeah we’re finished with him now.” Ben’s voice, dismissive. “You can take him.”

And suddenly nimble fingers were unknotting the ropes from round first one ankle then the other, gently guiding his aching legs down onto the mattress. “Shhh Haz, it’s o.k mate.” The hood was unbuckled and pulled from his head and he found himself looking up into Liam’s kind brown eyes. “It’s o.k.” He moved to unbuckle the cuffs and then lifted Harry’s boxers, socks, shoes and jeans from the floor, dressing him carefully as he rubbed the feeling back into his arms and hands. “Do you think you can walk?” He nodded. Liam helped him carefully off the bed and he stood…Only for his numb legs to collapse beneath him. “Woah, careful!” Liam wrapped an arm around his waist, pulling Harry’s arm over his shoulders. He met Harry’s grateful look with one of sympathy. “Right, let’s go.”

He tried to steer him from the room but Harry dug his heels into the carpet, jerking his head toward the corner.

Niall knelt cowering at Caroline’s feet. He was naked, shivering…And he was crying, sobbing hard. And Harry decided at that moment that could be no more heart-breaking sight in the world than Niall crying, his white cheeks flushed red and blotchy, his lower lip quivering while big fat tear drops fell from those baby blue eyes. As they watched, Caroline reached down to run her fingers through his fluffy blonde hair before circling him like a bird of prey, an evil smile playing on her lips.

“Aww don’t cry sweetheart…Mama’s gonna teach you how to make all the ladies scream.” She unhooked the whip from her belt and used the tip to lift Niall’s chin so he could look at her. “And every time you get it wrong, she’s gonna hurt you so bad that you’ll never get it wrong ever again.”

Liam turned to him with a regretful expression. “There’s nothing I can do Haz, you know that. We’ve all been through it with her.”

And Harry knew he was right, even as he hated it. He let Liam half-steer, half-carry him out into the corridor, Ben slamming the door behind them with a sickening thud.

They had almost reached their room when they met Trev leaning against the wall outside one of the guest rooms. He straightened up as they approached, nodding at Liam, before his gaze slid past him to Harry. He smirked. “Aww Harry, still all picture and no sound?”

“Leave it Trev.” Liam shot him a warning glare.

“Hey, Harry…Do you remember what I said to you?” Harry looked up and their eyes met. Of
course he hadn’t forgotten…He’d just been hoping that Trev had. He nodded miserably, trying and failing to control his fear. “Don’t you forget…I’m still waiting.”

“What are you on about?” Liam stepped between them, eying Trev suspiciously but Trev just shrugged and lied smoothly.

“Told him I couldn’t wait for the day he learned to hold his tongue.”

The door to the guest bedroom opened and Zayn stepped out, doing up his jeans…Only to be pulled back and slammed up against the wall by the man behind him, who crushed his lips to his in a violent kiss, before pulling away and turning to Trev. He was young, in his late twenties Harry guessed, Middle Eastern and well dressed in a bespoke suit and handmade shoes. When he spoke it was in a foreign accent. “Tell your boss I will up my offer by half a million for him. Tell him to call me.” He pressed a brown envelope stuffed with cash into Trev’s hands and then turned back to Zayn. When he spoke this time it was in a language Harry didn’t understand, but Zayn certainly did judging by the way hurt flashed in his dark eyes. He said something back to him in the same language but the man only laughed in his face before turning on his heel and walking away.

“Who’s he?” Liam asked Trev as they made their way upstairs. Trev shrugged.

“Some rich Arab’s son. Wants to buy Zayn, but Mr Cowell won’t sell.”

Behind them Harry fell into step beside his friend, reaching over to touch his arm to get his attention. He raised his hands…And Zayn caught them, pushing them back down.

“Don’t!” He hissed at him. “If they find out you can do that they’ll probably keep you cuffed too!”

He had a point.

Harry waited until they were alone in their room. He’d taken a few Sign language courses at school just for something extra to put on his application for sixth form college, had never thought he’d ever really use it…but now it had become a lifeline. He raised his hands and began to sign.

‘Are you o.k? What did he say? Tell me.’

Zayn hesitated, then…”He said that I might as well go with him because I’d committed haram-sin- brought shame on my family…That even if I did escape I’d have no home to go to. They wouldn’t want me there.”

‘That’s not true.’

Zayn shrugged. “I know but…Harry…If we ever do escape…I don’t want anyone to ever know what they made me do here; Not my friends, not my sisters, not my Imam, not my father…And definitely not my mother.”

‘So we don’t tell them.’

“…If we ever escape.” And for the first time since their abduction Harry could hear a shadow of doubt haunting Zayn’s words. Zayn-The one who’d always been so certain that they’d be found, who’d sat and told him stories he’d heard about families who never gave up, who kept searching for five, ten, twenty years until they’d found their kidnapped children; Zayn who’d been so sure that there was a huge police investigation going on into their disappearances, who swore there was probably a special police task force set up specifically to find kids like them who would discover The Bird Cage, raid it and rescue them; Zayn, who, despite everything, still believed in a loving, caring god who would save them from their suffering if only he prayed hard enough…Was
beginning to lose hope. It was both frightening for Harry who’d always latched his own hope to Zayn’s…And desperately sad. He couldn’t say anything…But then, what would he say if he could? He didn’t know…So instead he reached for his friend, pulling him into his arms. For a moment Zayn resisted, then he gave in, pressing his face to his shoulder, and Harry felt his shirt grow wet, as if from tears. Then Zayn pulled away, wiping at his eyes with his fist, embarrassed. “Sorry man. It all just…gets to me sometimes.”

Harry nodded and signed. ‘It’s o.k.’

“So…What did Ben make you do?”

‘Used me for Niall to practice on.’

“Are you all right?”

Harry shook his head. ‘No…But I’m more worried about Niall. He is with Miss Caroline.”

Zayn watched his hands as he signed the words, growing pale as the meaning sank in. “Shit…Poor bastard.”

Harry and Zayn were getting ready for bed when Liam brought Niall back. He helped him into the room and guided him onto his bed before looking up at them sadly.

“He’s been down to The Doc, got a few stitches. He’s not good. I’m going to go see if I can get his next training session put back a few days.”

Zayn nodded. “…We’ll take it from here.”

Liam left, shutting the door carefully behind him, the bolt thudding into place. They both turned to look at Niall where he sat huddled on the bed, hugging his knees to his chest and rocking gently. It was a pitiful sight. He’d been badly beaten. One eye was blacked and swollen, one side of his face purple with bruises. A series of deep cuts on his cheek that looked more like claw marks were held together with paper stitches. Blood seeped through the wide strips of white gauze used to bandage his back, dying his sweatshirt red. They both crossed the room to sit down beside him and he turned to look at Harry guiltily.

“I-I’m so sorry Harry, I’m so sorry! He-he kept hittin’ me an’ an’ I was so scared…But I shouldn’t have done them dirty things to ya. I’m sorry I hurt ya, what with you bein’ so nice to me an’ all. I’m sure ya hate me now.” Harry shook his head. He reached over Niall to touch Zayn’s shoulder.

‘Will you translate?’

Nail watched him, confused. “What’s he doin’ wi his hands?”

Zayn smiled. “Haz is smart...They keep trying to shut him up an’ he keeps finding ways to stop them. He knows sign language, taught it to me too.”

“Can you teach me?”

Harry nodded and began to sign. Zayn translated. “He says sure, if you teach him Irish. He says…I’m not angry at you. I don’t blame you. I did it too, and so did Zayn-They made us do it to each other. They force us to do horrible things because they’re bastards. I know who my enemy is-Them, not you. I hate them, not you. We know you were with Miss Caroline. She is the worst.
How are you?”

Tears welled in Niall’s eyes and he sniffed. “I-I thought this place would be better, ‘cause they give you real food and clothes an’ that…But all that means nothin’, ‘cause really it’s just the same. I still get beaten, I still have to do dirty things ‘cept now there’s more of them to do, and it’s hard, and there’s women too, an’ I don’t really know what I’m doin’ an’ when I get it wrong I get hit. I’m still chained up…An’ I’m still a slave. I was thinkin’…An’ I can’t even remember a time when I didn’t belong to nobody but me. What’s the deaf sign for slave?” Harry made his hands into fists and then placed one on top of the other, as if bound together. He moved them slowly in a circle. Zayn and Niall mimicked him. “That’s us-slaves…I hate bein’ a slave!”

He burst into tears, the force of his sobs causing his skinny body to shake. Harry and Zayn wrapped their arms around his narrow shoulders, trying to comfort him as best they could.

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“Your mouth is bruised.”

At Louis’ words Harry turned to look at him, startled. Louis reached out to touch his soft full lips, laying the tips of his fingers on the small bruises, purple against the pink. Harry brushed his hand away.

“It’s…”

“Nothing, right? Let me guess…It was accident, you were just messing around…”

“Exactly.” Harry avoided his stare, turning away to gaze out of the car window. And Louis couldn’t help but sit and admire him. He looked gorgeous, as usual. He wore a royal blue sweater and navy pea coat, his long legs clad in skinny jeans and tan boots, a skull patterned scarf slung casually around his neck. His long hair had been tied back into a messy bun, showing off his strong jawline and giving the impression of an off-duty model or Hollywood star…An impression rather ruined by the bruises across his mouth and chin. “Where are we going? Is this The West End?”

Louis gave up. For now Harry was obviously determined to keep his secrets to himself, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t going to keep trying. “Yes. It’s a surprise.” Worry flashed in Harry’s bottle-green eyes and he rushed to reassure him. “A good one, I promise.”

“Oh ok.” He turned back to the window, leaving Louis wondering what dark surprises Harry had experienced before. The car pulled up outside the theatre and Louis got out, watching as Harry climbed out after him and turned to look up at the theatre billboard. He moved to stand beside him, reaching up to wrap an arm around his shoulders as he read the display.

“Shakespeare’s Othello.”

“You got an A star in it…I figured you might want to actually see it.”

“Cool! I’ve never been to the theatre before.” Harry smiled, his face lighting up, and it struck Louis that he’d move Heaven and Earth just to make Harry smile like that. Then the smile faded, and he turned to him, suddenly endearingly unsure. “What do I do?”

The ushers led them to their box and Harry craned his neck to look up at the ornately painted ceiling before peering over the edge at the crowd below, snapping his gum as he watched the audience file in.

“Wow, these are some really great seats.”

“It’s my father’s box.”

“What, like, he owns it or something?”

“Something like that. Like I said, he’s trying to buy posh.”

The lights went down, the curtain went up and the play began. Soon Louis was bored- he’d always loathed Shakespeare at school- so instead of watching the play he turned his attention to the boy beside him-After all, it had been a whole week since he’d been able to gaze at him and during that time he’d craved him like a junkie with a fix. Harry was perched on the edge of his seat with his arms balanced on the edge of the box, chin resting on them as he watched, completely mesmerised by the actors below. A cultured Rent Boy- it seemed like such a contradiction…But then Louis was beginning to find that Harry was a fascinating mass of contradictions-Sexy yet innocent, cocky yet shy, poised yet goofy, mature yet charmingly childlike, savvy yet naïve…An intriguing yet disturbing mystery that part of him wanted to solve, and another part wanted to leave well alone for fear of what he might find…

Soon they reached the final scene and Harry leaned so far over the edge of the box to watch that Louis reached out quickly and twisted his fist into the back of his sweater, frightened he would fall. The lights went out…

“So…” He leaned across the whisper in Harry’s ear. “What did you think?”

Harry sat back with a satisfied sigh. “It was incredible. Thanks Louis.”

And then he twisted, catching Louis lips with his. Louis hesitated, surprised, before kissing him back…Just as the lights came up. The couple in the box opposite gawped at them in shock and Louis pulled away, cheeks burning. He thought Harry would be embarrassed too but when he turned to look he was glaring across at them, chin tilted upward in cocky defiance. He wiggled his eyebrows and ran the tip of his tongue along his upper lip, laughing at their disgusted glares.

“What the fuck are they starin’ at? Some people are gay, get over it.”

“Ok, that’s one thing you SHOULDN’T do in the theatre.” Louis caught his arm and began to steer him hurriedly toward the stairs. “Let’s go get a drink.”

He marched from the theatre, head ducked and collar turned up against any disapproving stares, trailing Harry behind him. That was great, just great. All he needed was for one of his father’s bloody business associates to have seen him and the shit would really hit the fan…

“Louis…Woah Louis wait! LOUIS!” Suddenly Harry’s arm was wrenched out of his grip and Louis turned to find him staring at him in shock. “What’s wrong?”

He stood there on the rain-soaked pavement, his primal, wild beauty a stark contrast to the modern ordered city around him, and Louis wanted to scream in frustration…Because he was everything he’d ever wanted…And everything he could never have. And so he took his frustration out on him, shoving him away. “WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU WERE DOING BACK THERE HUH?!?”
“What? I…”

“You kissed me! You kissed me in public, where everyone could see!”

“So you’re angry ‘cause…what? ‘Because I’m a whore?…Or ‘because I’m a man?’” And he was so calm that Louis suddenly had nothing to fight against. He turned away, running a weary hand over his face.

“I just…I can’t be gay.”

And then he felt Harry’s hand on his shoulder. He turned back to look into those incredible eyes. When Harry spoke his voice was soft. “But you are. And I’ve told you…There’s no shame in it. Look, why the fuck do you care what some posh twats think anyway? You’re not one of them.”

“It’s…complicated.”

“Well tonight it doesn’t have to be.” And then Harry grinned his Cheshire cat grin, eyes shining with fun and just the faintest hint of trouble. “With me, most people pay for the fantasy…How about tonight we play out your fantasy? How about tonight we pretend I’m not a whore and you’re not in the closet? We could play at just being normal blokes out for a drink. I could be your boyfriend…” Louis felt his heart hitch at that. If only… “And maybe in playing pretend you could get to be who you really are for the very first time.” He arched an eyebrow at him. “How does that sound? Come on Lou, this preppy posh straight guy isn’t you.”

Lou…He liked that. He nodded. “Actually, that sounds pretty good.”

“Great!” Harry caught his arm and marched off, yanking him along the pavement behind him, so full of enthusiasm and excitement that Louis couldn’t help but laugh. “Now sod those boring rich bars, let’s go find a decent pub!”

The pub they found was the sort of place his father would have deeply disapproved of, a rough and ready indie dive, full of hipsters in plaid shirts, Steam Punks in top hats and students knocking back aftershocks. Classic rock blasted out from the speakers and the air inside was thick with the scent of stale beer and weed. Louis loved it…Almost as much as he loved the way Harry hooked his finger into the belt-loop of his trousers as they weaved their way through the crowd towards the bar.

“What do you want?…Oh wait, I forgot…You don’t drink when you’re working.”

Harry furrowed his brow in mock confusion, pouting. “What are you talking about? I’m not working. We’re just on a night out. I’ll have a Corona.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot.” He smiled at him before turning to lean over the bar and shout his order into the barman’s ear. He didn’t notice Harry’s hand slipping from where it had been resting on his lower back, didn’t notice he was gone at all until the Emo girl standing beside him nudged her friend.

“Jesus Jade, look at that guy!.. Over there, on the dance floor…The one with the top knot!”

“Where? Oh, wow! He’s fuckin’ gorgeous!”

“I just wanna lick him!”
Curious, Louis turned to look.

Harry was in the middle of the dance floor, jacket tossed aside. Guns N Roses cover of ‘Sympathy For The Devil’ by the Rolling Stones was blasting and he was dancing with all the sex appeal of a rock star, strutting and moving his narrow hips in time with the beat with all the charisma and confidence of a young Mick Jagger. He saw him watching and met his stare, his lips curling in a sexy snarl…Then he leaned back, thrusting his hips forward and shaking them at him, hands out, beckoning him over.

“Oh!” He turned to find the two Emo girls watching him curiously, trying and failing to play it cool. “Is that your friend?”

“And is he single?”

For a moment he hesitated…Then he remembered, tonight he was living the fantasy.

“No. He’s my boyfriend.”

“Urgh lucky you.”

“Jealous!”

He grabbed their beers and pushed his way through the crowd until he was in front of Harry, who pressed himself close, so close, grinding against him as he stared intently into his eyes. “Fuck, you’re hot when you dance.”

“Thanks.” Harry smirked and leaned forward, kissing him and catching his lower lip between his teeth in a playful nip…And at that moment Louis didn’t care who saw.

An hour later he set his empty beer bottle down on the sticky table and turned to where Harry was watching a live band setting up, tapping him on the thigh to get his attention.

“Hey, I’m gonna go for a quick cigarette.”

“Do you want me to come with you?”

“Nah, you get the next round in. Here.” He pressed a ten pound note into his hand and made for the door.

When he returned Harry was still at the bar. He sat down to wait, watching him.

There was a petite girl with cropped blonde hair standing beside Harry, trying and failing to get the bar tenders attention. Suddenly the crowd behind them began to push and the girl was knocked forwards. Harry noticed and dived towards her, catching her just before she crashed to the floor. He pushed her in front of him, shielding her from the jostling crowd with his body as he leaned down to talk to her, frowning at her as she seemed to point at her ears …Then something strange happened. As Louis watched, Harry began to move his hands in slow precise shapes perfectly coordinated with the movement of his lips as he spoke. And then the girl began to do the same back. It actually took Louis a few minutes before he realised what they were doing…They were signing. Harry was signing! He watched in amazement as Harry waved the barman over and ordered drinks, translating the girls order carefully before paying for their beers.

Harry noticed Louis’ grin as soon as he sat down. “What? Why are you looking at me like that?”
“I didn’t know you could sign!”

“Yeah,” Harry reached for his beer. “I’m full of surprises, me.”

“I guess you are. You’re really something Harry.”

And Harry froze at that. He turned away. When he spoke it was half to himself. “Something…Not nothing. To you, I’m not nothing.” He sipped his beer thoughtfully as Louis watched him, confused.

“Harry, what are you talking about? Of course you’re not nothing!”

He turned back to him and when he spoke again he sounded almost desperate. “Then tell me again. Say it again Louis…Please?”

It struck Louis as strange but he didn’t mind indulging him. He took his beer from his hand and set it on the table before taking hold of his shoulders and looking deep into his eyes. “You, Harry. I don’t know your last name ‘cause you won’t tell me, are smart, funny…and completely fascinating. You, Harry, are really something.”

Harry stared at him, biting his lip. Then he pushed his hands away and sat back. As Louis watched he raised his own hands. He pointed his thumb at himself and crossed his fists over his chest before pointing at Louis. Then he pointed to himself again, patting his hand on his chest once, and then curled the tips of his fingers in, dragging them down the front of his sweater. He pointed back to himself, then at Louis, and then finally put his two hands together, knuckles to knuckles over his heart, bending his thumbs. Louis frowned in confusion. “So what does that mean then? Do you want a hug or something?”

Harry laughed. “It means…” And then he paused, seeming to change his mind, his smile fading. “It doesn’t mean I want a hug…But I would like a kiss.”

“I can do that.” Louis smiled and reached for him, pressing his lips to his.

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Harry couldn’t remember the last time he’d been this drunk. He struggled out of the taxi, tried to take a step and stumbled, his long legs twisting around each other until he fell over himself and landed in a heap in the driveway. Behind him Louis burst out laughing.

“Honest to fuck, it’s like watching a baby giraffe learn to walk!”

Harry sat up. It felt as if the ground itself was lurching beneath him. He put his head in his hands.

“Oh God, I’m SO drunk!”

“Yep, you’re wrecked.” He lifted his hands away to find Louis crouched down in front of him, grinning a court jester grin. “…On a grand total of five beers!”

He cringed at that. “I’m sorry!”
“Don’t be, I like a cheap date. Good thing you didn’t go head over heels in a tumble though, it would have been like watching The London Eye!” He stood and moved behind him, sliding his arms beneath Harry’s armpits. “Right, let’s get you up. One…Two…Three…Ooff!” He tugged him upwards as Harry struggled to get his feet securely beneath him. “Y’know from now on I’m calling you Bambi-All big eyes, long, gangly legs and fuck all co-ordination! There we go. You o.k?” He made sure Harry was steady on his feet before releasing him. “Right Bambi, let’s go get you some coffee!” He took his hand and pulled him toward the house as Harry giggled.

Inside Harry flopped down onto the sofa with a contented sigh, pressing his face into the cushions.

“Oi you, don’t fall asleep. I’d never manage to carry you up those stairs.” Louis leaned down to shake Harry’s shoulder before stooping to tug off his boots. “Are you hungry?”

“Ummm.” Harry rolled over onto his side, looking up at him with a sloppy smile. “Something… sweet?”

“Sure.” Louis stood and went toward to kitchen. “I think we have some ice cream.”

“Ummmff…Not allowed ice cream normally…”

“So is that a no then?”

“No…I mean yes…I mean…Love ice cream!”

“Ha ha, oh ok then!”

Harry pressed his face back into the pillow. He felt warm, and fuzzy, and safe…And numb. It was nice to feel numb. There was a soft tap on his shoulder.

“Harry? You wanted ice cream?” He turned to look up. Louis stood above him, holding a tub of ice cream and two spoons. “Sorry we only have vanilla, but it’s Green and Black’s, the good stuff.”

“I like vanilla.” He sat up woozily, his back against the arm of the sofa and Louis sat opposite him, kicking off his shoes and swinging his legs up so his feet touched his. Harry stared at the tub. Ice cream…It had always been his favourite. He’d always had a terrible sweet tooth, loved the creaminess, the sensation as it warmed on his tongue. When he was little his mother had had to hide it right at the back of the freezer otherwise he’d steal it, go to the tree house at the bottom of the garden that was his hiding place and eat it all in one sitting. But junk food of any kind was banned at The Bird Cage… “Blurry love ice cream.” He reached clumsily for the tub and Louis held it out of his reach.

“No way mate! You’ll get it all over yourself and the sofa! Here…” He dipped a spoon into it and held it out to him. Harry leaned forward and let him feed him, savouring the cold milky sweetness. It tasted like childhood and happiness.

“Ummmm…Nice.”

Louis took some himself, licking it off the spoon as he watched Harry carefully. “Yeah…I bet the cold feels soothing on your sore mouth.” He reached to lay the cool spoon over Harry’s bruised lips. “Does that help? Seriously, no more lies. How did you get those bruises? And the bruises before? Who’s hurting you Harry?”

And Harry was suddenly sober. He stared at him…And then dived forward, snatching the ice
cream tub and spoon from his hands and settling back into the cushions. “No one. How come you get to ask all the questions, Louis Tomlinson? Who decided that huh? Well, it’s my turn now… What happened to YOU?”

The distraction worked. Louis gaped at him, confused. “W-what..?”

“What happened to you? Who messed you up so much that you drink yourself into oblivion every night just so you can sleep, so much that you’d rather pay thousands to a pimp for one of his prostitutes than go out and get a boyfriend…Who made you so fucking ashamed that you slice the hell out of your own arm…All rather than admit to the world that you’re gay?”

For a moment Louis simply gaped at him, his face ashen, and Harry worried that he’d gone too far. Then he swallowed. When he spoke it was barely above a whisper.

“My father.”

“Why? Is he religious or summut?”

Louis shook his head. “No…But he still sees being gay as something disgusting, embarrassing. He’s ashamed of me. Now give me that fucking ice cream.” He snatched the tub back and took a spoonful. Harry reached to touch his foot with his own and he looked up.

“When did you…y’know…know?”

Louis shrugged. “I guess I always kind of knew. I told my mum when I was thirteen and she was fine with it…But then my dad got custody…”

“Why, what did your mum do?”

“Nothing…He, umm, he…sort of… Took me…”

“Like…kidnapped you?”

“Yeah…Sort of. From school…But then he got a court order to say he could keep me…It’s complicated. Anyway…As a teenager it was just another way to rebel. I had a few boyfriends at school, but I didn’t come right out and tell him…”

Harry took back the ice cream. “So, how did he find out?”

Louis sighed. “Well…Do you remember that shithead at the party?”

“Odd-Eyed Short-Arsed Rapist Bastard? Yep…”

“Well…We went to school together. He used to bully me an’ that, we were always getting suspended for fighting…Until he found out I was gay. Then he was suddenly my best mate. I just thought it was ‘cause turned out he was gay too. Last summer he had this huge party at his family’s country estate. He invited me, gave me booze, drugs, got me completely rat-arsed. He-he introduced me to this lad…And we ended up having a shag…But it was a set-up. Oliver secretly filmed the whole thing and emailed it to my father.”

“Shit.”

“He went ballistic. Told me I was a disgrace to him and to the Corporation; that I was letting everyone down…That I had to change because it would kill the corporation’s reputation if I didn’t. That when I became president it had to be with a wife at my side and sons to inherit.”
Harry frowned at him. “But…Do you even want to inherit?”

“Fuck no!”

“Then why don’t you just leave?”

“I CAN’T!”

At his shout Harry jumped. For a few moments they stared at each other. Then Harry took the ice cream from him and put it down before reaching to take his hand, giving it a gentle squeeze of comfort. “Why not?”

Louis bit his lip. “He—he made me sign this contract. I was thirteen years old, he’d basically kidnapped me, I hadn’t seen him since the day he’d broken my mother’s nose in front of me and she’d decided she had to get me and my sisters away from him…He told me that if I signed it he’d let me go home…I just wanted to go home.”

Harry was confused. “So? A contract’s just a piece of paper.”

Yeah…A piece of paper that could get me jailed. The contracts complicated, but basically, if I stay with him, work at the Corporation and then take over when he retires then I get a generous salary…But if I leave at any time then I have to pay back everything…Including my school fees and my keep for the past ten years. I’m in massive debt to the Corporation…And to him. And if I leave and don’t pay up, which I can’t afford to, I’ll end up in prison.”

“Shit.”

“And that’s not all…In the contract there was this thing called a ‘Lifestyle Clause’. Basically, I signed a piece of paper that says I can’t be gay, that I have to marry and produce children, and if I don’t then I’ll be in breach of that clause and, again, could end up in prison…This time for fraud.”

“Jesus.”

“I have a fiancé…”

Harry didn’t know why, but those words cut like a knife. He released his hand and sat back. “What? Why?”

“He kept setting me up with these girls…El was nice…”

“But you don’t really like her, right? I mean, she’s a gold-digger, just after your money. She’s a total bitch, right?” He didn’t know why he was so desperate for some reassurance that this wasn’t a love match, that it was just business. After all…Wasn’t that just what he and Louis were? Business? Louis shook his head and Harry’s heart sank.

“No…I wish. She’s…She’s really cool. She’s like my best friend. She’s smart, and funny and beautiful and if I were straight…”

“But you’re not.”

“I know I’m not. But the most fucked up part is that she’s actually in love with me! And she’s so bloody happy and excited. She thinks she getting married to a man who wants her, …And I WANT to want her…but instead all I want it is you!”

Harry gaped at him, simultaneously shocked…And elated. “Wait…you want..?”
But it was like a dam had burst and Louis was in full flow. “So I’m trapped in this job that I hate, with a father who I fucking loathe and none of that is El’s fault and yet I’m forcing her to be a part of this fucked up situation by marrying her and I know I’m going to ruin her life and she’s a good person, she doesn’t deserve this and I’m so pathetic, I’m such a fucking coward! And I don’t know what to do! I’m trapped Harry.”

“And you think that slicing yourself to ribbons is going to fix it?”

Louis avoided his gaze. “I don’t know why I do it…It’s just…When I start to lose it a bit, it brings me back y’know?”

“But can you not see how fucked up that is? Stop taking this out on yourself! This wasn’t your fault!”

“Well then how do I fix it?”

Louis stared at him appealingly, as if he could come up with some magic solution to his impossible situation, and Harry suddenly felt awkward. He looked away, shrugging.

“Haven’t a fucking clue. Marry her but still hire me?”

“Yeah, ‘cause it’s not cheating if you’re shagging a guy. I’m sure El would be just fine with it.”

Louis sighed and changed the subject. “So that’s my fucked up sob story…When did you know?”

“Know what?”

“That you liked boys?”

Harry shrugged. “I was fifteen and this new kid, Josh, joined our school. I just figured I’d be nice to him… I was pretty popular so it would make life easier for him…But he was cool, we became best friends…Then one night we were round at his playing PlayStation…His brother had got us some beer…I can’t remember how but suddenly we were kissing. I was so freaked out when he said he was gay, like, was I gay too? I’d had girlfriends, I’d liked kissing my girlfriends…But I liked kissing Josh too. Soon I was round at his most nights…And we’d kiss and fool around…His brother was friends with my sister. He told her he’d seen us through the door…Y’know kind of a ‘Tell your little brother to stay the hell away from my little brother’ sort of thing? When Gem confronted me I cried, I was so scared she’d tell our mum…But she was brilliant. She just listened, told me I wasn’t a freak, that I wasn’t messed up, that there was a word for it…Bisexual. That it was ok…”

Louis reached to lay a comforting hand on his shoulder. “Your sister sounds amazing. I’m so sorry she died Harry.” And Harry felt so guilty for lying. He ducked his head and bit his lip, his cheeks flushing pink. He could feel Louis’s gaze boring into him. “Wait…She’s not dead, is she?” He shook his head, tears stinging the corners of his eyes. “So…what? You’re parents found out and kicked you out? Said you could never come back?”

“No…My mum and my step-dad…I never told them.”

“Then why can’t you see her? What happened to you? Harry, you’re intelligent, middle-class, educated…How the hell does someone like you become a prostitute?”

Harry looked up at him…And he was so beautiful, sitting in the soft peach light spilling from the table-lamp, the only light in the room, his expression so kind, and he’d said he’d wanted him, that he was something…Suddenly all Harry wanted to do was tell him everything and cry, beg him for help…But that was just it…Louis couldn’t help him, no one could. Mr Cowell’s words echoed in
his mind- ‘I will kill you and I will go after everyone you have ever loved’, I will torture your friends and I will make you watch’, ‘Would you like your sister to be a whore like you? Because I can bring her here like that.’-No, it wasn’t worth the risk. He’d probably kill Louis too.

“Harry?”

He bit back his tears. If he lied Louis would know…. “I-I want to tell you…But I can’t. So please Louis…Stop asking.”

“Harry…”

“I CAN’T!”

For a few long moments they sat in silence, staring at each other, and Harry could see the worry etched on Louis’ face. Then Louis reached for him, threading his fingers through his. Harry looked down at their joined hands, savouring the comforting feeling of Louis’s fingers against his even as it caused a treacherous tear to drip down his cheek.

“I know something horrible happened to you, might still be happening to you. Harry, please…I just want to help.”

Harry swiped the tear from his face with his free hand and looked up at him. “You want to help me? Then keep booking me.”

Louis looked surprised. “Why? Do you need the money?”

Harry nodded. “I need to earn…But it’s not just that. I like being with you. You’re nice and funny…And you make me feel safe.”

For a moment Louis looked like he wanted to ask more questions, then his expression became a mixture of sadness and defeat and he nodded. He released Harry and stood, before holding a hand out to him once more.

“It’s late and we’re both drunk. Let’s go to bed.”

That night there was no sex. Instead they hid beneath the duvet like children seeking refuge from a nightmare, arms and legs entwined, clinging desperately to each other as they lay in the dark.

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“Oh! Oh!”
Louis watched in fascination as, beneath him, Harry came beautifully undone, cheeks flushed, head thrown back and eyes squeezed tight shut, pouted lips forming a perfect ‘O’. The sight hastened his own release and he caught hold of his hips and thrust deep into him, his entire body shuddering as he reached his peak, coming with a guttural cry.

Afterwards he pressed his mouth to Harry’s, planting a petal soft kiss on his lips before taking his face in his and looking into his eyes, the perfect mix of emerald and jade.

“You o.k?”
Harry swallowed and nodded, looking up at him hopefully. “Wanna go again?”

Louis sighed. “Yeah…But I don’t think we have time. Come on, let’s go get breakfast.”

He made to pull out and Harry quickly wrapped his legs more tightly around his waist, crossing his feet at the ankle. “No…I like the feel of you in me…I like being this close. Can we…can we just lie like this for a while?”

“O.k.” Louis leaned down and kissed him deeply, parting Harry’s lips gently with his own so he could slide his tongue inside, savouring his taste. Harry sighed into his mouth and reached up, tangling his fingers in his hair and pulling him closer…

Suddenly the early morning silence was shattered by the ringing of his mobile phone.

“Urgh shit. Sorry!” He disentangled himself from Harry and dived across the bed, searching down the side for his trousers and yanking his phone from the pocket, before flopping back onto the pillows. “Yeah?” He answered it as Harry wriggled up beside him to plant a kiss on his collarbone.

“Hi babe!”

Eleanor.

He froze. Beside him, completely unaware, Harry curled up against him, his head resting on his shoulder. He swallowed. She wasn’t in the room, she couldn’t see. All he had to do was act normally…

“Hi…What’s up?”

“Guess where I am?” She sounded overjoyed about something.

“New York?”

“Yeah…But not for much longer! I did it babe, I managed to talk those clients out of leaving us. I’m at JFK literally right now! Baby, I’m coming home!”

And suddenly a wave of guilt came crashing down over him. “Really? Wow…That’s—that’s brilliant news…”

“I know! Urgh, I missed you so much!”

“Umm, yeah. Me too.” Beside him Harry moved to kiss his cheek before reaching over and taking his wrist, turning it so he could see the face of his watch.

“Shit. Liam’ll be here in, like, ten minutes. I better get dressed.” He clambered from the bed and reached for his rucksack.

“What was that? Where are you? Is someone there?”

“No! No love….I’m just in the house on my own. You must be hearing the telly…So, when does your flight get in?”

There was a tap on his shoulder and he turned to see Harry dressed in jeans and a grey hoodie. He picked up the envelope full of cash from the bedside table, pointed to the door and mouthed the words “I’m going to go.” At the other end of the phone, Eleanor talked on.

“…So my flight lands at Heathrow at 6:30. Will you come pick me up?”
“Sure.” Louis watched Harry as he made to walk from the room and then paused in the doorway, turning back to stare at him intently.

“Great! I’ve missed you so much Louis! And guess what? I’ve ordered my wedding dress!”

“Oh…that’s great El.” As he watched Harry raised his hands and slowly began to sign at him, the exact same signs from the night before. Then he gave him a sad smile…Just as the shrill ring of the doorbell echoed through the house. Louis felt his heart lurch as Harry gave him a wave and ran from the room…He hadn’t even gotten to say goodbye. “It’s so beautiful! My mum cried when she saw me in it! And you better cry too, Louis Tomlinson, when you see me walking down that aisle!”

Guiltily he tried to focus all his attention on her voice. “I probably will…Look El, I can’t wait to see you. When you land I’ll be waiting.”

“Thanks…I’ve missed you so much.”

“I’ve missed you too.”

“Look, I have to go to the gate. I love you Louis.”

“Love you too. See you at half six.”

She hung up and he stared at the phone, feeling like an absolute bastard…And then at the empty doorway where Harry had once stood. Suddenly curious, he turned back to his phone and clicked on the internet icon.

An hour later and he’d finally managed to translate Harry’s signs. He stared at the words he’d hastily scribbled on the back of an envelope with a leaky pen…

I LOVE YOU. I WISH YOU WERE MY BOYFRIEND.

That wild, green-eyed, lion like boy actually loved him. He didn’t know what to feel…Horrified…Or overjoyed? But there was one thing he knew for certain. He turned to look at the empty doorway.

“I love you too.”

He whispered it quietly to the space Harry had left behind.

Chapter End Notes

Wow, the chapters to this story just keep getting longer! But then sleep is for pussies, right? Thank you all so much for your lovely comments and for reading at all! Please leave kudos and comments to let me know what you think!

Next time.............Liam becomes suspicious, Eleanor arrives home, and Harry meets
his new Handler.
Chapter 9-The Man Jack

Chapter Summary

Liam starts to suspect something, Harry talks to Zayn, Louis introduces Eleanor to his best friend...And The Birdcage gets a new handler, a dark individual who has his own unique set of skills...

Sorry that’s short but I don’t want to give too much away!

Chapter Notes

Again this chapter has some disturbing elements and there are references to BDSM practices so please don’t read if easily offended!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 9-The Man Jack

Liam turned as the back door of the SUV opened and Harry scrambled in, tossing the mobile phone and the usual envelope full of blood money onto the front seat beside him.

“Hey.”

“Hi.”

Well at least he’d gotten a response. These days if Harry even bothered to speak to him at all then he was winning. Liam watched his friend—if he even dared call him that anymore—through the rearview mirror as he curled up on the back seat, folding his long legs underneath him and turning to look out of the window. Even after everything that had happened to him here, London still held a fascination for the country boy and Liam wished he could have seen it in different circumstances. He put the car into gear and drove off down the drive.

Harry had always struck Liam as Mr Cowell’s cruellest experiment. The youngest they’d ever taken, Harry’s kidnapping had been a test to see if Products could be broken more easily if they were abducted earlier. It might had been successful too…If they’d chosen someone else. But even from that first night Liam had known Harry would be different. Most Products spent their first night in a paralysed state somewhere between terror, shock and disbelief, doing everything they were told in the mistaken hope that it would somehow lead to their release…But not Harry. Yes, there had been tears…But Liam had also watched in amazement as the pixie-faced sixteen year old with the mop of curly hair had fought for everything he was worth; kicking, snarling and snapping at the Handlers like a wild animal as they’d manhandled him from the Infirmary, to Mr Cowell’s office, to the tattooist and then to the room that would be his prison. Throughout everything that had happened afterwards—the auctioning of his virginity to the highest bidder, his training, his first clients—Liam had kept waiting for Harry to break, for the spark inside him to be snuffed out…But it
hadn’t happened… If anything, Harry had, over time, grown more defiant. And Liam admired him for it. They were all behind bars…But Harry was the only one who rattled the cage. He’d grown protective of him, viewing him almost as a younger brother, and had promised himself that he’d look out for him. He’d fought to be his Handler specifically so that he could shield him from the worst brutality The Birdcage had to offer …Had never, ever thought he’d be capable of hurting him the way he had. The fact that his friend now bore scars he’d made haunted him at night, and he knew that there was no going back, no way to redeem himself. But that didn’t mean he was going to stop trying…

Liam glanced into the rear-view mirror again. Spark or no spark, sessions with clients always threw Harry a little. Usually afterwards he’d be quiet, pale and withdrawn…But not this time. Instead, as he watched, Harry’s eyes seemed to light up at some private happy thought, his full lips twisting into a secret smile…

“What’s up with you?”

The smile disappeared.

“Nothing. I’m fine. Keep your eyes on the road.”

But whatever it was, it was far from nothing…And this wasn’t the first time Liam had noticed. Every time he’d come to pick Harry up from his sessions with that Tomlinson man he’d seemed different, happier…Almost…Almost as if he’d enjoyed himself. But no, he told himself, that couldn’t be it. Harry was too smart for shit like that…

…Harry was too smart to fall for a client.

Joseph was waiting for them when they arrived back at the hotel, just as Liam knew he would be. He stood by the lift, head on one side, his beady eyes roving over Harry’s body as Liam patted him down. Liam often heard the other Handlers talk about which of the Products they’d fuck if only they had the chance…But most of the time that’s all it was-talk. Not with Joseph though. He took great pride in describing what he wanted to do to Harry in front of Liam, palming himself through his trousers as he sat in the locker room and regaled them all with disgusting boasts of how he wanted to screw the famous Dirty Harry over and over, force his cock down his throat, come all over his pretty face, how much he wanted to make him scream…And the worst of it was that Liam knew the only thing standing in the way of Joseph actually doing it was him.

He finished searching Harry and waved his scanner at the back of his neck, listening for the beep before stepping away. “At ease. O.k Harry, that’s you done.”

“Good.” Harry made to walk up the corridor, only for Joseph to block his way with his huge bulk. He caught Harry’s arm in his fist.

“Wait there boy.”

Harry stiffened. “Sir, yes, Sir.”

Joseph turned to Liam, a sleazy smile playing on his face. “So Payne, how much?”

“What?”

He reached to run his fingers down the side of Harry’s face, ignoring his venomous glare as he wrenched his arm from his grip.
“How much for Dirty Harry here? Not to fuck him, I know that’s not allowed…But if he were to get down on his knees right now and give me a quick blow job, then who’s to know? You’re not going to be his Handler much longer…Why not make a bit of money on the side while you can? Come on, I’ll give you a hundred, right now, cash…”

Harry turned to look at him…And there was a fear in his eyes that made Liam’s chest hitch when he realised what it meant…For the first time since they’d met Harry actually doubted him. Well he wasn’t going to betray him again.

“Get the fuck off him!” He pushed his way between them, smacking Joseph’s hand away. When he spoke it was through clenched teeth. “I’m not his fucking pimp! I’m not going to let you lay a hand on him! You stay the hell away from him…Or I’ll beat the shit out of you. Go on Harry.”

“Sir, yes, Sir.”

They watched as Harry walked away up the corridor, glancing back over his shoulder at them. Joseph moved to whisper into his ear, his stinking breath on his cheek.

“You do a good job of protecting you’re little friend Payne, unless you’re beating him that is…” Liam flinched at that. “…To bad you won’t be able to protect him for much longer.” And Liam’s heart sank as he realised he was right.

A week later Harry and Zayn were in one of the hotels shadowy back corridors, leaning against the wall with their hands in their pockets as they waited, periodically checking the watch Liam had leant them.

“Think Angel will be able to get it?”

“Dunno.” Zayn sparked up a cigarette, the glow from the flame lighting up his handsome face as he leaned over his lighter. “But he said he’d try his best, and he hasn’t let anyone down yet.”

“Give us a drag.”

Zayn rolled his eyes but passed him the cigarette anyway. “Y’know Haz, smoking O.P’s is still smoking.”

“O.Ps?”

“Other peoples.”

Harry laughed at that as he took a drag and handed it back. “No it’s not. Zayn, can I ask you something?”

“No, you can’t have one. This pack an’ the one Angel’s bringin’ have to do me all week.”

“No, not that. Your girl…Perrie…How did you meet her? Like…Did she just book you or..?”

Zayn looked at him suspiciously. “Why d’you want to know? I’m not fightin’ about it with you again.”

Harry shrugged. “No, it’s not like that. I just…wondered. That’s all.”

Zayn’s dark eyes searched his face, looking for an ulterior motive. Finding none, he sighed. “Pez…She has this mental step-mum, proper controlling. She found out Perrie was a virgin an’ she didn’t
want her losing it to some bloke who didn’t know what he was doing, or who was only with her ‘cause her Dad’s minted…So she booked me as a present for her nineteenth birthday.”

“That’s…fucked up.”

“That’s rich people, man.” They shared a knowing nod. “Anyway, Pez was well freaked out, she didn’t want to do anythin’…But her step-mum wouldn’t let her out the room, wanted her to just get it over with…She actually thought I was gonna rape her! Once I got her calmed down we ended up talkin’ for a bit…An’ we got on…I really liked her. We didn’t, y’know…But then she booked me again…And it just kind of went from there. I know you don’t understand it but—“

“You really love her.”

“Yeah. Yeah, I do. An’ she loves me.”

“Have you told her? Y’know…About how you ended up here?”

Zayn nodded and Harry stared at him, surprised. “And she didn’t try to help, didn’t call the police?!”

Zayn rolled his eyes. “Of course she wants to help me, but I won’t let her. Fuck Haz, if she starts telling people about this place, if she calls the cops…Then Mr Cowell will find out and he’d hurt her! He’d probably fucking kill her just to shut her up! I love her, I won’t let that happen.” He turned away, taking another drag of his cigarette. “It’s enough just to get to be with her, y’know? When we’re together…It’s like, just for a moment, all this darkness goes away. But I had to tell her. I just-I wanted her to know…That I wasn’t always a whore, that I-I don’t WANT to be like this, I don’t WANT to do those disgusting things…that I’m forced to.”

“Oh.” Harry tried to keep his expression neutral.

“Seriously though,” Zayn held the cigarette out to him again. “Why d’you suddenly care? You’ve never liked me bein’ with Perrie. What’s changed?”

“No thanks.” Harry waved it away, before biting his lip. He wasn’t sure…he’d been so harsh with Zayn over falling in love with a client…But, then that was precisely why Zayn was the only one he knew who would understand. And he desperately needed someone to talk to about it all. “Well, the thing is…”

“Alright geezers?!”

They turned.

Angel was striding towards them carrying a large package wrapped in brown paper. At barely brushing five foot six he looked at least five years younger than his actual age of nineteen. He was skinny as a whippet, and pretty as a girl. His big blue eyes and the jaw-length white blonde hair that spilled from beneath his pork pie hat gave him a distinctly cherubic appearance—hence his nickname...Then he’d open his mouth and out would come the voice of a cockney gangster. The first time Harry had met him he’d been amazed to finally meet someone who sounded exactly like a character form EastEnders. Even before he’d been taken Angel had probably been wheeling and dealing…Then he’d been given to a Handler who everyone at The Birdcage knew liked his boys young, or at least to look young. It was a dark situation, made even darker by Angel himself—He now had his Handler wrapped around his little finger. If you wanted anything in The Birdcage and you had something to swop you went to Angel, and if he liked what you had to offer he’d go to his Handler and trade him sexual favours to get whatever you needed from the outside. It was sick…
But there was no other way to get things.

“Hi, little man.”

“Piss off Harry or I’ll climb ya to thump ya..” Angel flipped him the bird before propping the package up in front of him and fumbling in his pocket. He pulled out a pack of cigarettes and tossed them to Zayn. “’Ere ya go bruv…Ya gonna finish that mural for me, yeah?”

Zayn nodded. “I’ll get on it tomorrow. You get the other thing we asked for?”

Angel arched an eyebrow at him. “’Course I did, ya muppet! What ya fink this is? It ain’t fancy mind…An’ it’s nicked. Best Daddy could get though.”

Harry ignored that, even as his stomach churned. “So, what do you want for it? I’ll give you those wristbands of mine that you liked, and my grey beanie…and I’ve got a large bar of Galaxy Chocolate…”

“It’s for the Irish, yeah? To make it less shit for ‘im?” They nodded. “Then I don’t want nuffink. Fink of it as me blowin’ one for the team. Can I come with ya to give it to ‘im?”

“Sure.” Harry took the package from him and he followed at their heels as they climbed the stairs to leave it on Niall’s bed in their room before heading back down to the gym. As they walked Zayn reached down to touch Angel’s shoulder.

“Look seriously Jamie, thanks. You sure you’re o.k?”

Angel shrugged. “It ain’t somefin’ I’d ever like my mum to find out about, an’ I’m not o.k…But which one of us is? At least it might cheer ‘im up. I’d blow Daddy ten times over rather’n see that kid cry.”

They entered the gym…To find Niall watching Liam doing pull-ups, his expression one of complete and utter defeat.

“Yeah…There’s no way I’ll be doin’ that.”

“Sure you can mate.” And before Niall had time to protest Liam had dropped to the ground, grabbed him and lifted him up to the bar. “Grab hold, that’s it.” Niall did, Liam stepped back…And they all stood and watched as Niall hung there like a salami in a shop, kicking his legs pathetically.

“Well, this is just embarrassin’.” He looked at Liam, flushing red to his ears. “Pleeeease can we give up now?”

“Yeah Liam, can we take him?” Zayn gave Liam a meaningful look and he nodded.

“Alright then.”

Niall dropped to the floor, relieved, and Angel stepped forward to meet him. “Alright? I’m Jamie but everyone calls me Angel. I can’t do ’em pully-uppy things neither.”

“Niall…Or Irish, I guess.” They shook hands.

“You a Pikey?”

Niall frowned at that. “Er…Like, a Traveller? No.”

“Sorry. I fowt Haz was a gyp ‘cause he’s so dark until he started talkin’. Turns out he’s well
posh.”

Liam moved to stand beside Harry and Zayn, tilting his head towards them conspiritually. “You get it?”

“Yeah…Thanks to Angel.”

“Cool.” He turned to Niall. “Here mate…The boys have something for you. Go on.”

Curious, Niall followed them back upstairs.

With every conversation between them Zayn had added more detail to Niall’s part of the mural—Paintings of his parent’s and brother’s names, a pair of Irish dancing shoes, the Derby County football team badge, and an acoustic guitar now decorated the wall above his bed. The minute he entered the room his gaze fell on the large, brown, triangular package that lay there and he looked up at them, confused.

“It’s for you.” Harry grinned at him.

“Go on!” Zayn jerked his head toward it and Niall lifted it from the bed, ripping away the paper…To reveal the battered acoustic guitar beneath. His eyes lit up and he turned to look at them in amazement.

“Are youse ‘uns serious?”

They nodded.

“You said your guitar was the best present you’d ever had so…”

“And who knows? Maybe we could even get a band going or something…”

Zayn shot Harry a withering look. “Yeah right, Haz. And what would we call it? ‘Turning Tricks?’ ‘One Erection’?”

Harry cracked up laughing.

“Leave it out, ya muppets!” Angel turned back to where Niall bent over his new guitar, tuning it carefully. “Well go on Irish, giv’ us a song!”

Harry and Zayn sat down on Zayn’s bed to watch as Niall finished tuning and began to play the opening bars of The Eagle’s ‘Hotel California’, Angel dancing along with more enthusiasm than co-ordination.

“See that?” Harry nudged Zayn and pointed to Niall’s smile. “We did that.”

“An’ Angel too. Credit where credit’s due.” They leaned back against the wall. “You workin’ again today?”

Harry nodded grimly. “Got a few hour long sessions booked. You?”

want to know about me an’ Pez? You were going to tell me somethin’…” Harry bit his lip. “I know that look…What you hiding?”

Harry took a deep breath, he wasn’t even sure quite how to put it. “I…Well…There’s this punter I’ve been seeing…”

Zayn’s eyebrows shot up. “And what? You like them?” Harry glanced at him guiltily…and nodded. He expected Zayn to get annoyed, to point out how horrible he’d been to him over Perrie…But Zayn was better than that. Instead he just nodded in understanding. “Well, tell me about her. What’s she like?”

“It’s a he.”

A look of surprise ghosted over Zayn’s face for a moment and his eyebrows shot up, but he barely missed a beat. “Oh! Oh…okay…Cool man, that’s cool. So what’s he like?”

Harry sagged in relief-He was over the first hurdle. “He’s funny, and smart, and so kind. He’s really nice to me Zayn. He doesn’t treat me like the others do-like a robot to be shoved into positions, or a dirty slut that should be grateful to be fucked by them. It’s like…when he looks at me he sees right through the whole Dirty Harry thing and just sees me. He just laughed at the Dirty Harry act, didn’t buy it for a second…But he said I was really somethin’- Me, Zayn, just me. He acts like I actually matter.”

Zayn nodded. “And…do you fancy him?”

Harry felt his cheeks grow warm. “Yeah…It’s weird. I haven’t fancied someone in ages, I forgot what it felt like…But yeah, he’s really hot.”

“And the sex…?”

Harry hugged his knees to his chest. “That’s the thing…At first he didn’t even WANT to have sex…Then he just did stuff to me, didn’t make me do stuff to him. He didn’t fuck me til I wanted him to. And even then…I’m not like you…I hadn’t done it before they took me but…”

Zayn caught his eye. “It’s as different to what happens to you here as night an’ day.”

“Yeah…It feels good, really good. What I do with him…I actually like it Zayn.” He bowed his head in shame, cheeks burning, and Zayn slid a comforting arm across his shoulders.

“Oh our kid…That’s what it’s supposed to feel like. It’s not supposed to be frightening, it’s not supposed to hurt…But I guess you wouldn’t know that.”

“When I’m with him I’m happy, he actually makes me happy…He says I’m all he wants…And he’s all I want…But then he keeps asking me questions about how I ended up a whore and he sees right through my answers…”

“Do you think he’d do anything if he knew?”

Harry nodded. “He’s a good person so he’d try…”

“And then Mr Cowell would have him killed.”

Harry nodded again. “And Mr Cowell said if I stepped out of line again he’d kidnap my sister, bring her here. If I tell, he’ll hurt everyone I love.”
“Yeah, he would.” Zayn sighed. “My advice? Enjoy it for what it is…But don’t tell him. He’ll only want to rescue you and he can’t—No one can help us. What’s his name?”

Harry looked up at Zayn through his hair. When he spoke his voice was a whisper. “Louis Tomlinson.”

“FUCKING HELL!” Zayn gaped at him in shock.

“Umm, Harry?” They turned. Liam stood in the doorway, holding his walkie-talkie in one hand and looking sheepish. “Mr Cowell wants to see you…Your new Handler’s here.”

“O.k, I’m coming now.” Harry turned back to Zayn. “Don’t tell anyone ok?”

Zayn shook his head. “It dies with me mate.”

“Thanks.”

They shared a secret smile and then Harry got up and went to Liam, letting him lead him from the room.

**********

The man Jack liked this place. It had…potential. He could have a lot of fun here…If only they learned to do things a little more his way, of course.

He rested his elbows on the arms of his chair, steepling his long fingers and resting them on his lips as he fixed his cold, calculating stare on the man in front of him. He didn’t dislike him; hate was an emotion and most emotions were a waste of energy…energy he’d rather use on his pets. But he did look down on him. He was vain, foolish, too obsessed with money…And he obviously had no idea what he was doing.

“I saw some of them on the way up here. You don’t keep them collared.” It was more an accusation than a question.

In front of him Mr Cowell shook his head. “No.”

“They’d know their place more if you kept them collared. And choke chains can be useful…”

“We may be in roughly the same business Mr Dalton, but our trade is very different. I pimp whores, I don’t train and sell slaves. True, some of my clients would enjoy seeing a collared whore, but most like to delude themselves that the sex is, at the very least, consensual, that the person they are paying me thousands to fuck isn’t being forced. Helps them sleep better at night.”

“You don’t keep them bound.”

“They’re bound and muzzled at night.”

“They should be kept nude, bound, collared and muzzled when they’re not working. This particular one…Tell me about it. Male or female?”

“Male.”

“And you say he’s insubordinate?”
Mr Cowell nodded thoughtfully. “He’s submissive until something happens that he doesn’t like. Never knows when to mind his own business, always speaking out of turn, dares to argue back, inflated sense of his own importance…”

“Hmmm and how old is he?”

“Twenty. We took him when he was sixteen…”

He tutted at that, shaking his head. “And you couldn’t break him, even at so young an age?” At least the man had the decency to look embarrassed. Jack leaned back in his chair, grinning to himself as he crossed his long legs slowly. He was glad it was a boy…Oh he’d always had a taste for both and there was nothing like a girl’s scream…But there was a thrilling power play that came with breaking a boy…Particularly if he was tall. Please, let him be tall…” What was the family like? I’m assuming you did your research.”

“Of course. One sister—older—who he was very close to. He responds well when I make threats about her. Parents divorced when he was seven. Mother got herself a new partner who lived with them…”

“And the step-father didn’t beat him, molest him, didn’t interfere with him in any way?”

Mr Cowell shook his head sadly. “No...From what my spies saw he was fond of the boy, treated him like his own.”

“Pity. It’s good if they’ve been abused before, makes them easier to break. So what methods have you tried? I’m assuming you’ve beaten him?”

“Yes. He’s been whipped…Not as much as I’d have liked…”

“That will change. What about humiliation?”

“I lock him into his muzzle often. After the incident before the party I had him collared and displayed nude and on his hands and knees at the front of the Dining Hall for a few days-Made him go to the bathroom in a basin in front of them all, fed him from dog bowls…”

“And how did he respond?”

“Well he certainly didn’t enjoy it…but a few weeks later he was talking back to clients again. Still…It shook him.”

“Good. And what about stress positions, bondage, electric shocks, water punishments, concentration games?” Mr Cowell shook his head and Jack realised he had a lot of work to do. “What about forced orgasms?”

He shrugged. “I don’t give a shit if they come or not as long as they make the clients come. That’s what they’re here for.”

Jack leaned forward in his chair, running his tongue luxuriously over his thin lips. “Ah Mr Cowell, that’s where you’re missing a trick. There is nothing like a slave begging for your permission to come-Not because they want it, but because they NEED it; nothing like watching them weeping with shame and humiliation as their body betrays them. Of course the orgasm itself is simply biological, a response to stimuli, but because they don’t know that it has a powerful psychological effect on them, tricks them into thinking that somewhere, deep down in the recesses of their pathetic souls, they actually enjoy the abuse. It confuses the stupid creatures- If I don’t like what Master is doing then why did I come? Sometimes they convince themselves that they must enjoy it
and that their enjoyment obviously means that deep down they ARE disgusting sluts who deserve every punishment you deal out, just as you’ve always been telling them…And then, Mr Cowell, you have yourself a submissive slave—Although one you have to make come every so often, I’ll grant you that.” He stared at the look of shock on the other man’s face, confused. “Isn’t that what you want this boy to be, Mr Cowell? Submissive?”

“Well, yes…”

“Then I’m assuming I’ll be allowed to use all my usual methods?”

His new employer nodded. “With a few exceptions…If you plan to beat him then either use a method that doesn’t leave a mark or let me know in advance so that I can suspend his appointments and give him time to heal. No permanent marking—He’s one of my highest earners, I need him to stay pretty…And you’re not allowed to rape him.” He ignored his furious scowl. “It’s a rule I have for all my Handlers. My Products are hand-picked for their beauty; without meaning to a Handler could get over-enthusiastic…Then I’m stuck with a torn up Product who needs stitches and at least a week off work. And every day that they don’t work I’m losing money.”

“What about oral?”

“No. When they do it as part of work they’re in control. But forced deep-throating causes ulceration of the throat, loss of voice and, again, time off work.”

“And toys?”

“Toys are fine.” He conceded. “Just make sure it’s nothing too big for him to handle and that you slick it up well. Don’t make him bleed.”

Jack nodded, running a hand through his slicked back steel grey hair. “I’ll try to work his training sessions around his time with clients, but they won’t be regular…It’s better if he doesn’t know when they’re coming— it will keep him on edge. I also want him to think that this is our dark little secret. Make him aware that it’s been condoned by management and he’ll just see it as another thing to fight against. He’s used to institutional abuse. Something between us? That will throw him.”

“I see your point. Very well, the timing can be up to you.” There was a knock on the study door. “Here we go…Come in!”

They both turned as the door opened.

The first boy who stepped through was interesting enough—Muscular and strong, Jack would have taken great joy in forcing him to submit…But he wore a black guard’s uniform. Still, the boy that followed him more than made up for that small disappointment.

“Jack, this is Harry. Harry come stand in the centre of the room where we can see you.”

“Yes Sir.”

“Harry, this is Mr Jackson Dalton. He’s going to be your new Handler.”

“Hi Jack.”

Jack rose from his chair and moved to inspect him. The boy was strikingly good-looking, somewhere between boyishly pretty and classically handsome…and tall…Not as tall as Jack, who at six foot five still towered over him…but tall enough…And the perfect age, just on the cusp
between being a boy and being a man, teetering on the edge, but not there quite yet. He was lean, gangly and skittish as a young colt, his long mane of curly brown hair falling into his eyes as he twisted and turned, trying to keep an eye on Jack as he circled him like a wolf with its prey. He had the most beautiful eyes-big, almond-shaped and a striking emerald shade- but they shone with intelligence and that could be a problem…Because with intelligence came fight. Indeed Jack could already see the defiance in the boys frown, the tilt of his chin…Even as he assessed him, the boys piercing gaze assessed him right back.

“Who said you could look me in the eye boy?”

“What?” The boy up looked at him, surprised. He was chewing gum. He was actually chewing gum!

“EYES ON THE FLOOR!” It was a bark of authority.

The boy didn’t flinch.

“O.k, fine.” His tone was sulky. He lowered his eyes to the carpet.

No… No that wasn’t good at all. Jack longed to kick the boy’s legs out from under him and force him to his knees, hands behind his back and forehead to the floor-the position every slave should adopt when faced with their new master…but there was time. Better it be a shock for him.

“Such a pretty slut.” And then he saw it, out of the corner of his eye… it only lasted a millisecond but…yes…The boy flinched. He didn’t like being reminded of his station-interesting. “I bet he looks beautiful tied up and gagged.” There it was again, that tiny flinch. So he didn’t like to be bound either… He paused behind him and reached out to touch his back-just the lightest of strokes over his shirt…But still a shiver followed the path of his fingers as they traced their way down his spine. He looked up to find the boy staring over his shoulder at him. For a moment, just a moment, he saw the faintest flicker of fear in those green eyes…Then he was glaring at him defiantly again, in clear breach of the order he’d given him only seconds ago. It wasn’t much…But it was enough.

“It’s nice to meet you Harry.”

The boy didn’t answer, just stared, clearly un-nerved. Good. Mr Cowell rose from the desk and clicked his fingers at the muscular boy who stood waiting by the door.

“Liam, Mr Dalton and I still have some paperwork to sort out and Harry has a client waiting in room 214. Take him there for me.”

“Yes Sir. Come on Harry.” Jack watched, head on one side, as his new slave turned on his heel and made his way to the door.

“Goodbye Harry. I do look forward to getting to know you better.”

At the sound of his cut-glass English accent with its odd sing-song tone Harry paused, turning and shooting him an unsettled look before leaving the room. Jack sat back down in his chair, smiling to himself. Well, that had been…interesting. There was potential there.

“So?” Mr Cowell sat down opposite him again, looking at him curiously. “What do you think?”

And the man Jack smiled the excited smile of a child who’d just been given a brand new toy to play with. “I think…That Harry and I are going to have a lot of fun together.”
Louis held the taxi door open for Eleanor and helped her out, before taking her hand and leading her down the crowded Soho street. As they walked she pressed herself close to his side, sliding an arm around his waist. He flipped the collar of his shearling jacket up against the cold and wrapped a protective arm around her shoulders.

“So why did he want to watch the match here? You’ve got a massive T.V at home, Sky Sports, Surround Sound…”

“Nah, that’s not Stan’s style. He’s kind of allergic to rich…And he’s always said that if he ended up in the same room as my father he’d punch him in the face.”

“I’m liking him already…We share the same life goals.” She looked up at him from under her beanie with a mischievous grin and he laughed.

“Yeah we can all bond over wanting to beat the shit out of my dad.”

They arrived at the small traditional pub. Its outside was festooned with Red flags and Manchester United bunting. The customers standing around the door formed bright red huddles in their football shirts as they tried to fit in one last cigarette before kick-off. Louis made to push past them, only to feel Eleanor’s hand on his shoulder. He turned to look at her. She stood shifting from foot to foot, chewing her lip nervously, a look of apprehension on her china doll face.

“You o.k El?”

“Yeah, it’s just…Stan’s been your best friend since primary school, he’s practically your brother… What if he doesn’t like me?”

She looked so scared…And he was touched that she cared so much. “Don’t be so bloody stupid. He’ll love you because I do…” He reached out to her and jerked his head toward the pub. “C’mon.”

“I hope you’re right.” She took his hand and he pulled her close before flinging his arm across her shoulders and steering her inside.

It turned out Eleanor needn’t have worried…

“A player is in the offside position if he OR she- cause we women play football too believe it or not Stanley- is nearer to their opponent’s goal line than both the ball and the second last opponent. A player in the offside position is penalised if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by one of his team, he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play. And THAT Stanley Lucas is the Offside Rule…And you owe me fifty quid. Pay up bitch!” Eleanor leaned back in her chair with a triumphant smirk and snapped her fingers at him. Stan turned to Louis, his eyes wide.

“If you don’t marry her I will!”

Louis threw back his head and laughed. “Tough luck mate…I asked first.”

“Excuse me?” Eleanor held out her hand to Stan. “We had a bet?”
“Fine.” Grudgingly he handed over the cash.

“Thanks.” She held it up to her nose. “Smells like victory. I’m off to get the next round in.”

They both watched as she rose and tossed her long brown hair over her shoulder before heading toward the bar.

“Right, what’s the score? Red’s still one up?” Louis turned back to the screen…Only to feel Stan’s stare burning into him. He turned back reluctantly to face his friend. Stan looked worried, his lips pursed and his brows furrowed with concern.

“What?”

“So…She’s definitely your girl then? You’re really going to marry her?”

“Yes Stanley, I’m going to marry her. That’s why I gave her the fuck-off big diamond ring.”

“Right…It’s just…I know I haven’t seen you much since that bastard brought you down here but…” He paused, trying to think how to word it…And Louis knew what was coming. “But…I always kind of thought you were…y’know…”

Fuck. Well of course Stan would have guessed…He hadn’t come right out and said it during his summer trips home, but he sure as hell hadn’t regaled him with tales of all the girls he’d nailed. He decided to go on the defensive. He glared at him.

“What, Stan? You thought what? Come on; if you’ve somethin’ to say have the balls to fuckin’ say it!”

But Stan wasn’t intimidated for a second- he’d known him too long. “Oh knock it off Louis, you know what I mean.” He leaned across the table towards him. “We both do. That girl really likes you. What the hell are you playing at?”

“Nothin’! I changed my mind, ok?” Louis glared at him and reached for his pint.

When Stan next spoke his tone was gentle. “You’re my best mate Louis…I just want to make sure you’re happy.”

He frowned. “What do you mean, happy? El’s an amazing girl. She’s gorgeous, funny, she supports Man U…”

“Yeah mate, she’s an incredible GIRL…But do you love her?”

For a second the question threw him. He took a gulp of his beer. “Yeah sure… I love her enough.”

He turned to the screen. “Here, those Chelsea bastards have scored a penalty!”

“Louis…” Stan reached to rest a hand on his shoulder and he turned reluctantly back to face him. Stan leaned toward him, lowering his voice. “You’re gay. I’ve known you were gay since we were eleven and from what I understand it’s the way you’re born…You can’t suddenly just change your mind. So why the fuck is my gay best friend suddenly engaged to a woman? This is bullshit and it has your father written all over it. Come on Louis- just tell me what’s goin’ on.”

Louis gaped at him, his face a mask of guilt. Stan knew…Of course Stan knew, he knew him inside out…And he’d never told anyone. Suddenly he wanted to confide in him, tell him it all and ask his advice. After all, Stan was the one person he could trust.
He nodded, setting down his pint and taking a deep breath. He opened his mouth…. Just as Eleanor arrived back, carefully carrying a tray filled with drinks which she set down on the table.

“Phew! I’d make a crap waitress—I almost dropped that, like, three times! Here we go guys. Pint of Bulmer’s for Stan, voddie and coke for me…. And a Carlsberg for my fiancé.” She set Louis’s pint down in front of him and flopped down into his lap, leaning forward to plant a kiss on his lips. He kissed her back.

“Thanks love.”

She turned to look at the screen. “So what’s the score?”

“Two one to Man U.”

“Ace!”

Louis wrapped his arms around her and hugged her close…Avoiding the concerned expression on his best friend’s face.

Once the match was over they waved Stan goodbye as he headed back to his university digs and made their way down through the narrow cobbled streets, weaving through the bustling crowds of football fans, theatre goers, street artists and bohemian revellers.

As they walked Eleanor reached to take his hand in hers, threading her fingers through his.

“So he liked me?”

“Course he did El. He loved you.”

“Good…Think he’ll be your best man?”

“Yeah…He’s my oldest friend. And he’d do it just for the chance to organise the stag do!”

She smiled…Then grew serious. “Look Louis…I know I’ve been a little bit of a bridezilla, and I’m sure I’ve been driving you crazy. But I just want you to know—The dress, the venue, all of that doesn’t matter to me, not really…I’d marry you in a registry office in torn jeans…As long as I get to marry you.”

They turned down Sutton Row and into Soho Square. The trees in the garden were dressed with twinkling fairy lights and in the little black and white gardener’s hut a folk band played. People sat on blankets on the grass, listening. Louis turned to look at her and found her shivering.

“You’re cold. Here.” He opened his jacket and she wriggled inside. He wrapped it around them both and pressed his face into her hair as he thought. Enough…How much love was enough? He did love her…. But it was a comfortable, easy affection, not a craving, not a fire…She didn’t occupy his every thought, he didn’t ache for her when she wasn’t there…Not like he was aching now for…Someone else. “Come on.” He led her over to one of the benches and slid off his jacket, wrapping it round her shoulders as they sat down. “Do you remember the first time we met?”

She looked up at him with a smile and rolled her eyes. “Urgh, yeah….That bloody fundraising Gala! I was pissed, had just fallen over and ripped that sodding Chloe dress my mum insisted I wear!”

“And I’d been out the night before and was hung-over to fuck…Our dad’s dragged us over to meet
each other. And you said…”

“I said ‘Fuck mate, you look how I’m going to tomorrow!”’

They cracked up laughing at the memory.

“You Dad was furious!”

“I thought your accent was sexy. I insisted on buying you a Bloody Mary…”

“You were the only girl I’d ever met at one of those things who was actually any fun.”

“We gave them the slip, came down here….”

“…There was that festival on. We ended up getting totally twatted on X with a bunch of hippies.”

“You waltzed with me through Soho…And I just knew then that I was going to marry you.”

His smile stayed frozen on his face as the guilt hit him square in the chest. Of course that night
he’d loved her too…But that had been just the Ecstasy. He kissed her because he didn’t know what
else to do. She kissed him back, laughing into his mouth, before pulling away, her eyes searching
his face.

“You do love me right?”

“Of course.”

“Yeah off course you do. Y’know I’m so stupid…While I was away I was worried that…Nah,
ever mind. I was just being mental.”

“Worried about what?”

She bit her lip. “Look, don’t get mad but…I was worried that…maybe…you’d found someone
else.”

He stared at her, horrified. “El…I-I would never…”

“You didn’t answer a few of my texts…Missed a few of my calls. One day I phoned and I actually
convinced myself you were with someone, that I could hear someone in the background while we
were talking. But, like I said…I was just being mental. I’m sorry I ever doubted you.”

She leaned
up to kiss him deeply before gazing lustily up at him through long, dark lashes. “Louis…Take me
home.”

“O.k.” How the hell…? His heart was pounding in his chest. She knew. On some level, she
knew…Or did she? He swallowed and pasted on a smile that didn’t reach his eyes. They cut across
the garden and out onto Charing Cross. As they walked Eleanor laid her head on his shoulder,
whispering sultry nothings into his ear that were intended to turn him on but instead just left him
cold. They had just reached the junction with Old Compton Road when Eleanor stopped suddenly,
turning to look across the street.

“She’s in the wrong district for trade, isn’t she?”

Louis followed her gaze. A young woman huddled against a wall out of the icy breeze, hugging her
matted fake fur coat to her thin body. She wore sky-high heels, her skirt skin-tight and so short that
she had to keep pushing it down over her bare bruised thighs. Her hair was badly bleached and
furiously back-combed and her make-up caked on, obviously in a bid to make herself look older.
“Yep, there won’t be many blokes cruising for a woman round here.” Even as the words left his mouth a battered Ford pulled up and they watched as the woman-no, as she passed through the light of a street lamp Louis could see she was definitely just a girl—went to the window, leaning in to have a conversation with the driver. They seemed to come to some agreement and she wrenched open the passenger door and climbed inside. They watched as the car drove off. Eleanor shook her head.

“Poor girl…Imagine having to do that, imagine having to sell yourself to complete strangers.” He nodded, his thoughts suddenly filled with a certain green-eyed boy in the same profession. “I mean, think of the risks she’s taking…Attack, assault, disease. He could kill her. Do you have any idea how many prostitutes are killed by their punters? Or their pimps? …It’s so sad.”

He didn’t want to think about it, couldn’t think about it. Harry wasn’t at risk, he told himself, not like that. He had that guard, Liam, to protect him. His brothel had policies…But Harry still had bruises….

“How do you think she ended up like that? What makes a person do that?”

Eleanor shrugged. “She could be homeless, have no other way of making money. She could have been trafficked, be a sex slave…Or she could be an addict. A lot of the time it’s to do with drug addiction. She might turn tricks to pay for her habit.”

Trafficked…Sex trafficking…Could Harry have been trafficked? But that was something that only happened to people from other countries, right? He’d read the reports in the paper; they’d all featured Eastern European women promised jobs as Au Pairs by gangs who smuggled them into the country—Harry was British. Could Harry be on drugs? He’d never seen any needle marks and he’d touched every inch of him…But perhaps he smoked rather than injecting, and it explained why he couldn’t see his family—they could have thrown him out when his addiction became too much for them to deal with. He was so thin… ‘I need to earn’. That’s what he’d said—perhaps it was to pay for his habit. “Louis?” He looked down to find Eleanor staring up at him curiously. “You o.k?”

“Yeah…It’s just sad, that’s all.”

“I know. But there’s nothing we can do.”

“I suppose not.” But, maybe, with Harry, there could be…

That night in the dark while Eleanor slept wrapped around him, Louis stared at the ceiling, his thoughts going a mile a minute. He remembered the fear in Harry’s eyes when he’d asked him how he’d ended up a prostitute, his desperate shout when he’d begged him for an answer…’I can’t’…He needed to see Harry again…But didn’t know how or when. All he knew is that he wanted to help him…To save him.

His disentangled himself from his fiancé’s arms and slid from beneath the duvet, crossing the room to peer through the curtains. Beyond the window the bright lights of London shone like multi-coloured sequins against the night sky. He stared out at them, wondering which of the flickering lights belonged to The Bird Cage Hotel, if Harry was there, or if he was out servicing some client, what they could be doing to him…

…If he was safe…or not.
The man Jack was bored. The other bodyguards didn’t exactly provide titillating conversation and his protégé Caroline was too occupied with disciplining her blonde bitch to give him the undivided attention he expected…Seemed he’d have to find his own entertainment…And he knew just where…

He prowled along the corridor towards the room, unlocking the door with his key and creeping silently inside. The room was dark and filled with the sound of quiet breathing. Once his eyes adjusted he could see the three of them sleeping soundly in their beds- so innocent, so vulnerable. Like some monster from a nightmare he crept silently from bed to bed, standing over them with his head on one side, inspecting each of them in turn.

The little baby-faced blonde lay flat on his back snoring softly. As Jack watched he stirred, brow furrowing at some nightmare, his whimpers clearly audible even through his muzzle.

“Shhh.” Jack reached to stroke his soft cheek with the back of his hand, soothing him back to sleep.

By contrast, the Asian one had twisted in his cuffs until he’d managed to lie on his side and slept curled up into the foetal position, knees pulled up to his chest and head resting on his bound hands; Obviously someone who craved safety-Jack had always prided himself on being able to read people’s body language. He had the longest eyelashes Jack had ever seen on a man, and high razor-sharp cheekbones. They were both beautiful in their own way and he stared at them wistfully, wishing he could play with them too. But at least he had one…

He stepped toward the final bed and gazed down at his new toy. Harry slept on his back, head on one side. He’d obviously been wriggling in his sleep because he body was low down in the bed, his sheets tangled about his legs and the chain on his cuffs twisted and taint. He looked good muzzled, the black leather contrasting beautifully with creamy skin of his cheek. Jack sat down on the edge of the bed to gaze at him, taking in his handsome face, the way his dark curls spilled over the white pillow. He was shirtless, and Jack inspected the ink-work of the bird tattoos on his chest, touched the curious little pink marks on his ribcage with the tips of his fingers. Then he sat back and took hold of the waistband of his pyjama bottoms, lifting it carefully to peer inside…Oh yes- his lips twisted into a smile-yes, what nestled beneath those dark wiry curls was more than enough to play with. And Jack wanted to play…

He leaned forward, reaching out and flicking Harry hard just on the tip of the nose. The boy jerked awake, his eyes flying open, and Jack immediately clamped his hand down over the muzzle, holding his head still and leaning down to press his face into his. As Harry gazed up at him in shock, he raised a long skinny finger to his lips.

“Shhh…not a sound. We wouldn’t want to wake your little friends now, would we?” For a few seconds they simply stared at each other, Jack savouring the fear in the boy’s eyes, then Harry shook his head slowly. “Good boy. Now…It’s time to get up Harry.” He moved to unbuckle one of the cuffs, tugging the chain through the slat in the headboard and taking hold of Harry’s shoulder, pushing him up into a sitting position. “Hands behind your back.” Harry obeyed and he caught his free wrist, buckling the cuff around it once more. He caught the chain between the cuffs, twisting it in his fist, and tugged him upright and in front of him, before leaning down to press his lips to Harry’s ear.
“Come on Harry. It’s time to play some games.”

And then he caught hold of the back of Harry’s neck with his free hand and steered him from the room, the only sound Harry’s bare feet padding on the wooden floor…

Chapter End Notes

Again thank you so much to those of you who have already left kudos and comments, they feed my muse! You are wonderful people! Once again please leave them and let me know what you think! Right, I’m off to start the next chapter!
Chapter Summary

Stan gives Louis some advice he doesn't want to hear, Jack plays games with Harry....And Louis and Harry stick it to Louis' father in their own unique way.

Chapter Notes

Again this is very dark in parts, and also very sexually explicit. Please do not read if easily offended.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 10-Through The Glass

The weight of his guilt meant that Louis couldn’t sleep and 3am found him standing on the doorstep of Stan’s student flat, leaning hard on the bell as he shivered in the cool night air.

“Fuck’s sake!” Stan, clad only in his boxers and a T-shirt, wrenched the door open, ready to give whoever was standing there hell…And then froze, his words dying in his throat as he took in his friend’s pale face, the red rings round each of his eyes… “Louis? You o.k mate?”

“No Stan. No I’m not ok. Can I come in?”

“Yeah, sure.” Stan stepped aside and he stumbled through the flat’s cluttered hallway and into the messy kitchen, flopping down onto one of the picnic chairs that Stan had rescued from a skip on the way home from the pub and shoved around the kitchen table. “Did you guys keep drinking?”

Louis put his face in his hands. “She didn’t…I did.”

“Then by this stage it would probably be madness to stop.” Stan selected the least dirty mugs from the dishrack and a bottle of Jack Daniels from the worktop, before sitting down opposite Louis and pouring them both a generous measure. “You’re fucking lucky you didn’t wake the others. They’d have kicked your head in. So…” He pushed a mug across the table and Louis caught it. “What’s up? Not that I can’t already guess. Eleanor…You don’t love her, do you?”

Louis drained his mug in one gulp, the whiskey burning its way down his throat. He stared down at the table, feeling his cheeks growing hot. This was it…If he said it now he’d never, ever be able to unsay it…But he felt as if he was drowning under the weight of it all and, he was just so alone. All he wanted was someone to listen and give him advice or, failing that, a few words of comfort; to lie and tell him it all wasn’t as bad as it seemed, HE wasn’t as bad as he

“What?! Who?!”

Louis kept his eyes on the table, his heart pounding in his ears. This was it…If he said it now he’d never, ever be able to unsay it…But he felt as if he was drowning under the weight of it all and, he was just so alone. All he wanted was someone to listen and give him advice or, failing that, a few words of comfort; to lie and tell him it all wasn’t as bad as it seemed, HE wasn’t as bad as he
seemed…He took a deep breath…

“His name is Harry.”

The words hung in the silence between them. He looked up to find Stan staring at him, an odd look of pity in his eyes. As Louis watched he sipped from his mug thoughtfully. “Jesus Stan, say something!”

“Do you have a fag on ya?”

He blinked in surprise. “What? I-I thought you were going to quit.”

Stan leaned back in his deck chair and shrugged. “Yeah well, that was before all this shit kicked off.”

“Sure.” He reached into his pocket and tossed Stan his cigarettes and lighter, watching him as he lit up. “So,” He exhaled smoke thoughtfully. “Is this Harry your boyfriend or summit?”

Louis took the pack back and lit a cigarette himself to steady his nerves. “Not exactly…”

“Well come on then, talk me through it…”

And then it all came spilling out. Louis told him everything, shouting at some points, crying with frustration at others, and through it all Stan sat, and smoked, and listened. “And…And that’s it, all of it…I don’t know what to do. Help me Stan…I don’t know what the fuck to do!”

He put his face in his hands again. For a few moments there was silence…Then he felt a touch on his shoulder. When he looked up Stan was leaning across the table towards him, his expression so kind that part of him wanted to cry. “Louis…I’ve known you were gay for years and I don’t care…I just wish you could be who you really are. I hate seeing you so unhappy. What’s going on with your dad and the Corporation is a mess and I wish to God I had an easy solution to it but I don’t…All I know is that you can’t drag that girl into it. It would be beyond cruel…”

“I-I don’t hate her and I can provide for her…I mean, maybe, maybe if I really tried to keep her happy…”

“Then you’d spend the rest of your life miserable. You’d grow to resent her, and then she’d be miserable too. Cut the crap Louis. You’ve got to tell her.” He tried, and failed, to meet Stan’s glare. “And as for this-this prostitute…”

“Harry.”

“Whatever…Have you any idea what kind of risks you’re taking? I mean, what about disease…What about…”

“JESUS STAN, HE DOESN’T HAVE AIDS!” Louis reached for the bottle of Jack Daniels. “And we use protection. Anyway, it’s not like that. Shit Stan, you should see him…He doesn’t look like a prostitute…He’s just this kid, this tall beautiful kid with these huge green eyes. He’s nice, funny-You’d like him. I love him…And he says he loves me…”

Stan’s tone was deliberately sensible. “Yeah, well if you paid me thousands to give you one I’d probably say I loved you too. I know you think I’m being harsh, but this Harry is a professional…It’s his job to tell punters like you what you want to hear…”

Louis shook his head. “No, it’s not like that…”
“Louis, just listen to me…You need to walk away from him too….”

“I can’t do that.”

Stan sighed in frustration. “Why the hell not?”

Louis raised his head to look his best friend straight in the eye, his ice blue gaze burning into his.

“Because I think he might be in trouble.”

*****

Harry hung, suspended, his feet barely touching the floor. The tough leather of the cuffs cut into the skin above his wrists and his shoulders felt as if they were being wrenched out of their sockets. He stared at the inside of the black leather blindfold, his breath coming in terrified gasps as he strained to hear footsteps above the pounding of his heart… Too late…

*ZAP!*

His hip this time.

“UUMMMMMMMM!” He shot sideways, away from the source of the electric shock, his scream of pain muffled by his muzzle.

*ZAP!*

This time the sharp, singing pain hit his opposite side, and he shied away, half-swigging on the chains, his bare feet scrambling for purchase on the slippery floor.

*ZAP!*

He left buttock. He leapt forward. “UMMMMMMMM!”

His knees buckled and he slumped, exhausted, in his chains. His body felt as if it were covered in hundreds of throbbing, burning bee stings. Jack had been torturing him like this for over an hour now. For the past three nights he’d been taken from his bed, marched up to this room and forced to play Jack’s sick games-It had gotten to the stage he was frightened to go to sleep for fear of that flick on the tip of his nose…And the worst thing about it was that he didn’t know why.

Jack moved so silently that Harry didn’t realise he was beside him until he felt his huge hand tracing it’s way slowly down the back of his thigh, down over his calf, over his ankle…He lifted his foot quickly, throwing him off balance, making him hop to keep from falling…

*ZAP!*

The shock hit him on the sole of his foot and he screamed.

“UUUUUMMMMMMMM!” He kicked out and hopped away, straining against the cuffs that held his arms above his head. Jack’s cold laughter echoed around the room. And then he spoke in that odd sing-song tone that always caused a shiver to shoot down Harry’s spine.

“Oh little slut…I do like making you dance. You look so funny when you dance.” He sounded like an excited child.
Harry shrank way from the direction of his voice…There was a sudden intake of breath and then a sharp slap on the side of his thigh. “How dare you close your legs in front of me?! Open them right now! THAT’S AN ORDER!” He obeyed, shuffling his legs apart and biting down on the inside of his muzzle to muffle a sob as cold hands began to caress him. “Hmm, with a cock like this you were just born to be a whore weren’t you? Do you like that? Of course you do, you slut.” Then Jack’s hot breath was suddenly on the back of his neck, his sharp nails digging into his flesh as he squeezed his flanks, pulling them apart. “You’re not REALLY a person, are you? You’re just a mouth, a cock and a hole to be filled.” There were a few minutes of silence…And then he felt it, jabbing against him. He bit down on his muzzle again and forced himself to stay still as the slick butt plug was pushed inside him, stretching him uncomfortably. “There you go.” Jack patted him on the rear. “Slut’s always like being filled up. Aren’t I good to you? WELL?”

He nodded. He had no other choice.

Harry bit back tears as Jack reached up to unbuckle the muzzle. Once it was out of his mouth he swallowed, licking his cracked lips. He had to ask, needed to know so that he could make damn sure he never did it again.

“W-why am I being punished? W-what did I do?”

The stinging slap caught him off guard and he whimpered. “DID I SAY YOU COULD SPEAK, SLAVE?!”

“N-no…”

“NO WHAT?! WHAT HAVE I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME WHEN WE’RE ALONE? WELL?!”

“N-no, Master.” Harry bit his lip.

“Good slave.” And then there was the oddest sensation…Not painful at all but…ticklish? Harry had to fight to stop himself from wriggling as it crept slowly all over his body, his face…He could sense Jack moving around him, his big hands pressing down on his skin. He was humming to himself-an eerily happy little tune. “You haven’t done anything in particular Harry…You are being punished because it pleases me. I do very much enjoy playing games with you. This one is called ‘Can Dirty Harry read?’”

Jack moved away, and Harry heard a strange dragging sound. Then Jack was behind him again. The blindfold was unbuckled and he blinked, waiting for his eyes to adjust to the bright light, before looking around him.

While the rest of the Handlers slept in cramped bedrooms on the second floor, the man Jack had a large top floor suite all to himself…And he’d obviously made it his home. Alongside the usual items of furniture such as the Victorian Four-poster bed and dresser, were items that looked that they’d come from a torture chamber. A large wooden frame had been placed against the far wall, wrist and ankle cuffs hanging from its sides. On the opposite end of the room was a high narrow bench, its thin seat covered in black leather. At each side of it were two long, narrow shelves, also covered in black leather, from which hung a number of straps. The chains of his cuffs hung from a hook suspended from the ceiling. From a rack by the bed hung a vast array of handcuffs, gags, whips, paddles, blindfolds, hoods, ropes and some items that Harry had never seen before. He felt sick with fear at the thought that they might all be for him.

That sing-song voice again, excited. “Harry, look…”

He turned…to find himself facing an oval-shaped full-length mirror. He stared in shocked horror at
his reflection in the glass, tears blurring his vision.

His naked body had been crudely decorated with words written in marker pen, the black ink standing out starkly against his creamy skin. They covered his legs, stomach, chest, arms, face… He twisted in his chains… Yes even his backside had been covered, the same crude phrase scrawled on each cheek. He feel Jack’s stare burning into him as he watched, waiting to see what his reaction would be.

“Are you going to cry for me Harry?”

And there was something in the way he said it that irked Harry… Suddenly that dormant spark of defiance inside him flickered back into life. He turned to look at the tall, thin man towering over him— a grown man, in his forties at least, and ugly as a pantomime villain with his arched eyebrows, cold stare and skull-like angular face—and he thought; ‘I know you… You’re the little kid who pulled the wings off butterflies, who tortured and killed the family cat for fun; the kid who stalked the playground looking for younger, weaker kids you could play games with where they always ended up getting hurt just so you could see the blood… You’re the little boy who looked up the girls skirts… The arrogant teenager who refused to believe that no meant no, who liked to hear them beg you to stop… You’re a psychopath and a bully and if you think I’m going to cry for you then you can get fucked. I don’t care what you do to me… If that’s what you want the most then you are never, ever seeing my tears. You might be broken… But you’re not gonna break me, you sick, twisted son of a bitch.’

At that moment, battle lines were drawn.

He blinked his tears away and turned back to the mirror, careful to keep his face expressionless. He watched through the glass as Jack’s reflection frowned, clearly annoyed. “Well go on then… Show your master that you can read… If, indeed, you can. Start with this one here.” He pointed to the word scrawled in capitals across Harry’s high forehead.

Harry swallowed. “Slave.”

“Good! Now the rest.”


“That’s it… Now keep reading those, over and over… I just want to make absolutely sure that you know what you are.”

So he did, repeating the words over and over until his mouth was dry and his voice hoarse. But he didn’t think about them, refused to think about them… Instead he imagined himself away from that room and back to the last place he’d felt safe; he wasn’t really here, this wasn’t really happening to him… No, he was back in Louis’s arms, tracing the ink of his tattoos while Louis whispered love songs into his ear…

He was swiftly jerked back to reality when Jack moved in front of him and caught him by the jaw, tilting his head up so he could look into his face. “Tell me Harry, what are you?”

Harry lowered his gaze immediately to the floor. He knew by now that Jack often didn’t give the order in the hope that he’d forget and he could punish him for it. “A disgusting, filthy slut. A whore, a prostitute… A slave.”

“Exactly.” Jack reached up to undo the cuffs and Harry fell to the floor at his feet with a bruising thump. Jack reached down, tangling his fingers in his curls, and dragging him upwards, laughing at
his yelp of pain. “You’re trembling-good. Slaves should always tremble for their masters. Now I’m going to put your harness on. It’s time to play the card game again.” He smiled his manic skeleton smile, showing off his bone-coloured uneven teeth. “Aren’t you excited?”

Harry kept his eyes on the floor.

He went to the rack by the bed and Harry turned his attention to the overhead light, staring determinedly at it until all his tears were burned away. Soon Jack was back, holding up the black leather harness so he could see and smirking as he shrank away from it. It was H-shaped and consisted of a thick collar and two straps—one of which went around his waist while the other ran between it and the collar, connecting the two. Two cuffs had been fixed to the connecting strap, one on the top of the other. He stood with his head bowed, cheeks burning with humiliation as it was put on him, the collar placed firmly round his throat, the lower strap buckled tightly across his stomach. The cuffs were buckled round his wrists securing his arms at his lower back. Jack stood back and whistled through his teeth as he drank in the sight of him. “You suit restraints. If it were up to me, you’d wear this all the time. Come on.” He caught hold of his upper arm and dragged him over to the far wall. “Well, go on. Assume the position I taught you. You’d better not have forgotten, you stupid little shit.” Harry squatted down, pressing his face to the wall and glaring at the wallpaper determinedly. ‘I won’t cry, I won’t cry, I won’t cry…’ He repeated the words over and over in his mind, a silent chant of rebellion… Above him, jack laughed his high, eerie laugh. “Good boy Harry.” Then he crouched down in front of him, pulling a playing card from his back pocket and sliding it carefully between the tip of Harry’s nose and the wall. “Now what happens if you lose your balance and that card falls?”

“You’ll whip me ‘til I bleed Master.”

“Hmm, it seems even a stupid little creature like you can learn something.” Above him there was the click of a camera phone. “Just a little record of your submission for me to enjoy later. You haven’t earned the privilege of satisfying me yet. Now…Stay!”

Harry squatted, staring at the playing card-The Joker of the pack. The muscles in his legs, back and shoulders had gone from white-hot pain, to a dull ache and then to numbness…And he was frightened, so frightened…Because he knew that he wouldn’t be able to squat there much longer, that soon he would fall, and the card would drop…He almost gasped with relief when he felt Jack’s hand pat his head.

“Good slave.” Jack slid his arms beneath his armpits and pulled him up slowly, leaning him against his chest as he unbuckled the harness. “You did well.” He couldn’t help but moan in relief as the butt-plug was pulled from his body. “Now come on, let’s get you clean.”

The bath was already full when they entered the bathroom.

“Get in. Go on.” Harry obeyed, lowering himself in slowly and gasping as the ice cold water shocked the air from his lungs. “The cold will stop your muscles seizing.” He tossed a washcloth at him. “Here, clean yourself up—you’re disgusting.” With that parting shot he left, slamming the door behind him.

Left alone Harry slumped forward, wrapping his arms around himself in an attempt to stop himself from falling apart. He was panting, dry hacking sobs shaking his body. He couldn’t stop trembling, couldn’t think, couldn’t breathe. He felt like he was drowning, dying…But he wasn’t going to cry, no matter what he couldn’t cry…Instead he stuffed the washcloth into his mouth, and screamed.
Afterwards he looked down at himself; taking in the words that still decorated his body…He was so low at that moment that he almost believed them. But then a voice echoed in his mind…

‘You’re really something Harry…’

He lifted the wash cloth, wet it and began to scrub at his skin, noticing how the black letters disappeared with only a little water. These words could be wiped away so easily…But Louis’ never would be; these words were meaningless…While Louis’ meant everything. He finished cleaning the ink from his skin and sat back to think as the water numbed his aching limbs. He reached to finger the crucifix at his neck before raising it to his lips and kissing it…

“Mum.”

He whispered it quietly. She wouldn’t have forgotten him, hadn’t given up on him- he was sure of that. There were people in this world who loved him, who thought he mattered-His parents, his sister, his friends…Louis…And he loved them. He wasn’t going to let them all down by letting Jack break him-he couldn’t.

By the time Jack returned he was clean. He dried himself off and put his pyjama bottoms back on before standing silently as Jack buckled his muzzle into place. Then he let him steer him back downstairs to the dark room.

“Lie down, hands above your head.” He obeyed and Jack buckled his cuffs around his wrists before reaching down to stroke his cheek. “Now- the games that we play are our secret, remember? So keep those pretty lips of yours sealed…Or you’ll only make it worse for yourself. Understand?” He nodded. “Good slave,” Jack stooped to plant a kiss on his forehead before creeping from the room. Harry waited until he was sure that he was gone…Then he rolled over, pressed his face into his pillow, and sobbed.

Across the room, Niall hid beneath his duvet; wide awake and listening…

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

“I don’t give a shit what you’re father says, they’re your family…And they’re coming to our wedding. If he thinks I’m going to disappoint your sisters then he can kiss my arse.” Eleanor pushed the pile of bridal catalogues into his arms. “Now, I went with red as it’s the only colour they’d all agree on-There’s a fabric swatch in there with the exact shade. Tell the twins it’s ok, they don’t have to pick matching styles, and make sure Lottie doesn’t choose anything too short. Apart from that it’s up to them-It’s their day too. I want them to feel beautiful.”

He looked at her, effortlessly pretty in jeans and a midnight blue sweater, her wavy hair twisted up into a chignon. “You’re incredible. I don’t deserve you.”

She laughed. “Louis, don’t be weird! Of course you do.” She pressed her lips to his in a quick kiss before reaching for her jacket and shrugging it on. “Right, now I’d better go. My train leaves in half an hour and my taxi’s due any minute.”

“I could drive you there.”

“Don’t be daft—you’d never get back to the office on time.”

“I don’t want to be back on time.”
“Yeah but you’re the only boss the employees actually like. They need you Louis. And look on the bright side- you’ve Friday night to yourself since your Dad’s away. You should get Stan round, have a lad’s night. Y’know, drink beer and talk about boobs while watching football.”

“I suppose so.” He lifted her scarf from where it hung on the banister and wrapped it gently around her neck before stooping to kiss her forehead. “It’s cold out. Are you sure this isn’t some surprise hen do?”

“Yes…Lucy’s already planned that apparently. She’s my maid of honour so she has to have a girly wedding planning weekend. She’s even booked tickets to a bloody bridal show. You’d hate it…”

“But let me guess, you can’t wait?” She nodded, cheeks flushing pink with excitement as she smiled. “Then have a ball El…Just spare a thought for me stuck working late.”

“I will…” Outside, a car horn sounded. “Oh, that’s my taxi! Tell your mum I was asking for her, ok?” He followed her to the door, watching as she ran down the steps and climbed into the back of the black cab. She rolled down the window and blew him a kiss. “LOVE YOU!”

“LOVE YOU TOO!”

He waved and smiled until the taxi disappeared through the gates and out into the London traffic, then his smile faded and with a heavy heart he made his way to his car and drove back to work.

It was 8 PM and Louis was alone, the building dark and more than a bit eerie. He sat slumped in his chair in his father’s office, his face lit by the glow of the computer monitor as he turned the card for The Birdcage over and over in his fingers. Stan’s words echoed in his mind;

‘You need to get out of this Louis…These pimps, they’re dodgy people…They’re connected…That Harry kid will be fine…’

“I love him…”

“No you don’t. Listen to me Louis-Get.Out.Now…before it’s too late.”

But he couldn’t…He was in too deep…He knew that now.

A tapping on the glass wall of the private office made him look up…And his heart leapt to his throat.

Harry stood on the other side, one hand pressed against the glass, his intense emerald stare fixed on him. He wore his usual jeans, a white T-shirt and a red plaid shirt, his hair tied back from his forehead with a navy and red bandana…And he looked so out of place against the cold grey orderliness of the Corporation building-a street urchin, gorgeous and wild, who had managed to sneak in looking for someone to run away with…

Heart pounding, he got up and approached him, reaching out to place his hand over his on the pane. For a moment they just stared at each other through the glass…Then Harry’s lips twisted into that crooked smile and Louis felt his last shred of resolve melt away to nothing. He smiled back…Then his smile faded as, behind Harry, he saw movement.

The man who strode confidently towards them was the tallest Louis had ever seen…And the most unsettling. He was rail thin and all angles, his waxy white skin hanging like parchment from his jutting cheekbones and sinewy arms. With his paleness and steel grey hair he was almost colourless and put Louis in mind of a walking corpse form some horror movie. As he approached
Louis could see a cold, calculating intelligence in his grey eyes that was somehow deeply unnerving. He emerged from the darkness at Harry’s shoulder like a monster from a fairy-tale, his long, thin fingers with their sharp nails closing possessively around Harry’s arm. Louis hurried to open the door as the man pulled Harry towards it.

“The security guard on the door let us in. A boy for you, Sir.” He spoke completely without emotion as he yanked Harry into the room and steered him around to face him.

“Thank you.”

And Harry had changed…He stood silently now, hands behind his back, head bowed and gaze fixed on the carpet. He seemed… frightened?

“If you could just sign here for me.” He handed him the usual form. As Louis signed it he caught Harry by the hair, pushing his head roughly forward and running his scanner over the back of his neck. “If he’s disobedient in any way please let me know.”

“Um, yeah….Sure.” It was such an odd thing to say.

“Remember Harry…Obey.”

“Yes M-Sir.”

The man took the form, spun on his heel and marched off towards the lift without so much as a goodbye…He seemed almost annoyed at having to leave Harry with him. Together they watched him go.

“Who the fuck is he?”

Harry turned his gaze back to the carpet as if frightened to look at him in case he gave something away…But what? “New Handler.”

“What happened to Liam?”

“He got a new product so I got given to Jack. He’s a dickhead.” Then he seemed to compose himself. He looked up at him, that crooked smile playing on his lips again. “Look, forget him. He’s gone.” He leaned down to kiss him, taking his face in his hands, and Louis savoured the softness of his lips. “I’ve missed you. Take me home Lou.”

And he wanted to…Christ he wanted to, but… “Not yet. I’ve just got some work to finish; then we’ll go, o.k?”

“Oh o.k.” Harry pulled away, pouting. “I should have known you were in serious work mode… You’re wearing your sexy work glasses.” And before Louis could stop him, he’d snatched them off his nose and put them on. “Wow! You’re blind!” He stood, wide-eyed and blinking, and he looked so funny Louis had to laugh. He wandered out of the office and stood in the corridor, looking about him. “So this is where you work. Blurry…But fancy.”

“It’s our Corporation’s head office.” Louis followed him out, reached up and gently removed the glasses, putting them back on. “Think you can keep yourself occupied for half an hour while I finish up? The kitchen’s down there if you want to make yourself a cuppa or something.”

Harry peered down the corridor to the cubicles normally occupied by employees. “Can I go exploring?”
“Yes.”

“Can I steal pens?”

Louis sighed. “Sure, go nuts.”

He watched him walk off, hoping that he would keep his thieving to office supplies, then forced himself back to his desk and the flickering computer screen. He tried hard to concentrate on the spreadsheets, the data, the endless e-mails...But it was so hard knowing that Harry was out there, just waiting for him to take him home. He was busy compiling a power-point on quarterly investment growth for a meeting he couldn’t even be arsed going to when he was distracted by an odd squeaking noise making its way up the corridor towards him. He turned...

Harry sat in the doorway in a wheeled office chair, a grin of absolute devilment on his face...And a fire extinguisher in his lap.

“I’ve have always wondered if this really works... Haven’t you?”

“It does... I got suspended for doing it at school.”

“You’re bad to the bone, mate...” Harry spun round in his chair, inspecting the fire extinguishers pin. “Y’know, there’s two of these...” He looked up at him, arching one eyebrow. “Race ya?”

Louis looked from him to the charts on the screen and then back again...

Fuck it.

For the next three hours they created havoc in the empty office; racing office chairs, having staple gun fights, discovering what the employees kept in their desk drawers-Chocolate, spare knickers, a stash of pornography and a hipflask full of whiskey being particular highlights-printing out pictures of Justin Bieber and taping them all over the office of Vincent, his father’s brown nosing Assistant and supergluing all his supplies to his desk...And Louis was enjoying himself more than he had in years, laughing so hard his sides hurt, until...

The shrill, insistent ringing reached his ears and he jumped from the photocopier, yanking his trousers back up. “Shit!”

“What?” Harry looked up from the photocopier opposite, where he’d been gleefully photocopying his nipples.

“Fucking Phone!” He finished zipping his flies and bolted back to his father’s office.

He reached the phone just in time and snatched it up, slumping breathless into the desk chair.

“Yeah?”

“Louis?” His father sounded both surprised... And pleased. “Working late?”

“Uh yeah, I just had a few things to finish up...”

“Good. We’ll make a CEO of you yet.” Louis cringed inwardly. “Now, there’s been another almighty fuck-up. I need you to pull up all the details for our take-over of Haliday Industries,
As he talked the office door opened and Harry entered. He crossed the room to perch on the edge of the large mahogany desk in front of him, swinging one long leg up onto it and resting his elbow on his bent knee. He looked cool as hell. He chewed one of his knuckles thoughtfully. “Is that your father? Is this his office?”

He nodded.

“Who’s that?”

“No one Dad, just the security guard.”

Harry laughed at that, rolling his eyes.

“Ok, so I need you to send me the invoices for their last shipment to…” But Louis didn’t hear the rest…Because Harry was chewing on his knuckle again and staring right at him, that glistening spark of devilment in his eyes that always promised fun…And trouble. As Louis watched, transfixed, he slid his hand slowly down between his legs and began to palm himself through his tight jeans, slowly at first and then faster, face twisting in pleasure, until Louis could see his cock straining against his fly.

“I need you to check the transactions that took place on September 23rd…”

“Umm hmm.”

Harry lifted a foil square from his pocket and opened it with his teeth. “So I don’t make a mess…” He smirked sexily. Louis’s gawped, his mouth dry, as he slid his fly open, his cock springing out. It was long, thick and fully erect, its tip already leaking little pearls of pre-come…

“So once you get that sorted I want you to email it to myself and the CEO of Goodman and Sons…”

Louis could feel that familiar rush of blood, could feel himself stiffening. In front of him, inches away, Harry rolled the condom down his length and then took himself in hand, stroking himself slowly, luxuriantly, throwing his head back and hissing with pleasure through his gritted teeth. He leaned back, thrusting up into his hand, the occasional deep rich moan escaping his pouted lips…And the sight of that boy, that wild beautiful boy, legs spread wide, pleasuring himself with such sensuous urgency, with such total abandon, was the most intensely erotic thing Louis had ever seen. He swooped the phone to his other hand and reached down toward his own waistband. Harry saw him and stopped. He stared at him thoughtfully, licking his lips…Then he slid from the desk and before Louis knew it he was on his knees in front of him, nuzzling his crotch and looking up at him with lust-filled eyes. He reached down, trying to push him away, but Harry ignored his flailing hand.

“You’re right…You should be the one to come first. Here, let me show you another of my hidden talents.” When he looked up at him again he had placed a condom on his lips….And then, before Louis could stop him, he’d unzipped his jeans, pulled his cock out and slid it up his length using only his lips. He took him into his mouth. Louis gasped.

“Louis?” He father’s voice, irritated. “Louis are you getting all this?”

“Y-yeah Dad, of course I am. I’m DEFINITELY getting it. Go on.”
Harry's mouth was hot and wet. Louis fell back against the chair, legs spread so Harry could wriggle between them. His father droned on in his ear and Harry sucked on him hard, his tongue tracing its way down the back of his shaft to tease the tip. And Louis' head was spinning with lust; his father’s words just white noise behind the pounding of blood in his ears. He looked down to see Harry staring up at him, his lips wrapped around him. And there was something so beautiful and shocking, sinful and ultimately intriguing about the sight of him-For a moment Louis genuinely wondered who was in charge-Himself because he was the one paying…Or Harry because he could make him feel such a heady, intoxicating mix of love and lust. And he didn't want to come like this…He wanted to come inside him.

“…So could you do that for me before you go?”

Louis hadn't a clue what his father wanted…But he also didn’t care. “Yeah sure Dad, definitely. I’m on it. I gotta go. ‘Bye.”

He hung up the phone and pushed Harry away.

“I wanna fuck you.”

Harry nodded breathlessly and Louis caught hold of his shoulders, pulling him to his feet and twisting him round. With one sweep of his arm he sent the piles of files and papers that littered the desk crashing to the ground. Then he pushed Harry face down onto the polished oak surface. He peeled Harry’s skin-tight jeans down his strong creamy thighs, down his calves, before pushing his knee between his legs, spreading them apart. He paused for a moment to admire his ass. It was perfect- pert and tight. He kneaded the soft cheeks firmly before spreading them apart to reveal that tight, pink little hole…So pretty, so vulnerable. He crouched…lapping at the puckered entrance.

Above him Harry gasped and pushed back against his tongue. He licked until he was sure he was slick enough, until he was moaning, shaking with longing…Then he stood, caught hold of his quivering hips and thrust deep inside him. Harry cried out, lifting himself up onto his elbows and pushing back against him as he thrust hard. His hand snaked down over his hip and he took Harry’s swollen cock in hand, teasing him with long, languid strokes until he was keening beneath him, his back arched. Louis pushed him back down onto the desk, pinning him there with his body, chest to back. He kissed his shoulders, his back, the top of his spine…Then he moved his mouth to his ear.

“You like that, huh?”

“Oh…fuck yeah…Oh… Please Lou, please…” Harry’s words were a breathless moan. He sped up his strokes, twisting his fist around Harry’s shaft, thrusting deeper into his tight hole, the friction delicious…He was close, so fucking close…

“Shit, I think I’m going to…Lou, I’m going to…OH! OH! JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!”

Harry came hard, thrusting back onto Louis, and the spasming of his body hastened Louis’ own release. He came with a guttural cry, falling forward onto Harry’s back where he lay, chest heaving as he came down from his high.

“Jesus...That was fucking incredible.” He withdrew and rolled Harry over, gazing at him where he lay beneath him looking up at him with half-closed eyes, a lazy, satisfied smile on his lips.

“Ummm yeah…Like night and day.”

“What?”

“Nothing. It’s just…Sex with you…I actually enjoy it. That feels strange.” He pushed himself up
onto his elbows to kiss him. Then he glanced deliberately around them before flashing him a rebellious grin. “You just fucked me across your father’s desk in his office, you dirty bastard! Talk about the ultimate ‘Fuck you’!”

And Louis suddenly felt like a rock star. “Well it’s definitely something to think about the next time he calls me in.” He stepped back, tugged off the condom and tucked himself in before giving Harry a hand up. “Not that comfortable though. Come on.”

And then he took him home to his father’s mansion and into his large, soft bed, where they lay until the small hours trying and trying and trying to get enough of one other…

Chapter End Notes

O.k guys just wanted to explain a bit with this chapter. It was actually going to be a LOT longer but it was getting too long and I realised that I wasn't going to manage to finish it on time for today's deadline. I didn't want to disappoint people so I ended it there but I have already started the new chapter which will be up this Sunday coming. And it will have some lovely fluffy moments I promise! Again thank you all so much for reading this and for your wonderful kudos and comments! And to anticipate any complaints that Harry seems too o.k after his treatment from Jack...Trust me, he's not and I've handled it in the next chapter.

Next time....Harry and Louis take a road trip...There's an awkward meeting...And Harry discovers a devastating secret about one of the other Products...
Chapter 11-Dirty Harry

Chapter Summary

Ok, so this different to the chapter previously advertised, but I felt that I was rushing some things a bit so....

Johannah Poulston begins to suspect that all is not right with her son, and a chance encounter with a client leads to a touching declaration between Harry and Louis.

Chapter Notes

The song used in this chapter is "The Devil's Backbone" by The Civil Wars. And the Atlantis bookshop is a real, and pretty amazing, place. Check it out if you're ever in London.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 11-Dirty Harry

Exactly one week later and her son’s perspective mother-in-law was tap-dancing on Jay Poulston’s last nerve.

“So as you can see, the main dining area has a beautiful view over Kensington gardens.” The manager waved his arm expansively towards the large latticed windows.

“Yes, it’s really pretty.” Eleanor glanced nervously down at the notepad full of questions she’d brought with her. “Umm, would it be ok if…?”

As Jay watched, her mother stepped right in front of her, cutting her off. “My daughter would like to do the decoration of the venue herself. I trust that won’t be a problem?” Her tone suggested it had better not be. But to the manager, Fiona Calder was small fry—After all; this man had dealt with aristocracy for years and still managed to keep his head.

“Certainly-Up to a point. However, I must warn you that we do have a few rules for weddings- No red wine, no coloured flowers, guest list has to be perused and approved by the palace…And no turmeric.”

“Well there goes the turkey curry buffet, eh Mum?” Louis’ voice in her ear. She fought to stifle a giggle, before turning to him with a warning look. “Stop it you! Go support your girlfriend! Go on!”

She watched him go, so handsome and grown-up in a fitted navy suit…And her heart gave that now familiar twinge when she realised that he’d gone from boy to man without her. In that transition he seemed to have lost something…The boy she’d known had been so full of fun and life, but this young man had an aura of weariness to him, like the spark inside of him had been
snuffed out while she’d been too far away to stop it. She watched him as he moved to stand beside that beautiful girl, noted how he hesitated before placing his arm carefully round her waist…

“So, how much is the deposit? And is it refundable?”

“What…In case you leave me at the altar?” Eleanor was only teasing him but Jay was surprised to see that he didn’t laugh…Instead she saw, behind his stiff smile, a flash of…was that shock?…Almost like he’d been caught out. Then it was gone. He shook his head hurriedly.

“No, no of course not! I meant, like, if we pick another location or something.”

The manager frowned at that, looking him up and down in irritation. But Louis stood his ground, staring him down…. “The hire fee is £14, 000 with £5, 000 deposit, which is non-refundable.”

“Oh, right…Well thank you for your help. We’ll just look around, if that’s o.k?”

“Certainly.”

The manager left them alone and Eleanor’s mother swept over to her, her designer heels clicking on the tiles. “Well, what do we think?”

“Umm, well…”

“Let’s face it darling…It’s certainly not Claridges. They’re the best Art Deco venue in London. They have the private ballroom entrance…even the powder rooms are just divine!”

“Yes, but…”

“Right, I’ll just phone Claridges, shall I?”

She expected Louis to stand up for his fiancé…But instead he stared into the middle distance, his expression somewhere between distracted and bored. She’d have to do it herself. She moved to stand on Eleanor’s other side, pasting on a smile.

“Which has been your favourite so far? After all, Pet, it is your wedding.”

Eleanor looked up at her with a grateful smile, and Jay was once again struck by her youth…She was, in her opinion, far too young for marriage…They both were. “Actually, we really liked the Natural History Museum. Didn’t we love?” She reached up to paw Louis’ cheek, trying to get his attention. He blinked and turned to her.

“Uh yeah, yeah it was ace…”

She wrapped her arm around him as she spoke. “The great hall with the staircase is incredible, there’s more than enough room for all the guests, and Louis’ little sister Phoebe is going through this phase where she’s fascinated by dinosaurs so having dinner beneath the dinosaur skeleton would just be thrilling for her…”

Her mother snorted. “So you’re planning your wedding around the hobbies of an eleven-year old girl? Darling, don’t be ridiculous…”

As Jay stared Eleanor pressed her face into Louis’ chest, her cheeks burning, clearly embarrassed-A confident young woman brow-beaten into submission by her over-bearing mother. She turned to her son, waiting to see if he would notice her discomfort…But he was too busy checking his phone over her shoulder. She moved closer to her perspective daughter-in-law, jutting her chin in the air.
“Actually…I liked the museum. I think it’s a lovely venue. Really unique.”

Eleanor’s mother rolled her eyes. “Well, yes, it would certainly be…unique.” She looked her up and down, frowning at the Marks and Spencer shirt dress she’d spent so long pressing that morning, and making a point of smoothing her own Roland Mauret designer shift. I’m sorry, Johanna, but what is it you do again? Nursing or something?”

Jay glared at her. “I’m a Midwife. I bring new life into the world.”

“Well I’m in P.R. I think I know more about this than you do. My daughter is high society- she boarded at Marlborough with Princess Eugenie. And, despite his humble beginnings, your son is now one of the most eligible bachelors in England…”

“Mum!” Eleanor was mortified.

“Humble beginnings? Now, you hang on just a minute…”

“This wedding will be a media event…The guest list reads like a who’s who of London society. If they get this right the exposure for Calder P.R, will be invaluable…”

“But it’s not some media circus! It’s their wedding!”

Eleanor’s mother dismissed her with a wave of her hand. “Well that just goes to show that you have absolutely no idea! A cheap hall and a buffet with a few sausage rolls may be de rigueur up in Yorkshire but…”

“MUM!”

“Excuse me?! Who the hell do you think you are?!”

They squared up to one another, two matriarchs preparing to do battle, Eleanor flapping between them like a frightened bird.

“Really, I don’t know why you bothered to come at all…You should just leave the wedding planning to me…”

“I was invited by your daughter!”

“Just to be polite, I’m sure…”

“MUM PLEASE! I wanted Jay to come!”

“Well, your daughter must have gotten her manners from her dad…because she sure as hell didn’t get them from you!”

“STOP THIS NOW!” They all turned to find Louis glaring at them, blue eyes burning with irritation. “It’s EL’s wedding! HER day! She can have whatever SHE wants, hold it wherever SHE wants. Is that clear?!” And at that moment, he was his father to a tee…Assertive, cold and unmoving. It made Jay uncomfortable. They nodded. “Good. Now, if you’ll excuse me. I need some air.” He kissed Eleanor’s forehead quickly, almost as an after-thought, and marched from the room.

She found him on the terrace, back turned to wind as he stooped to light a cigarette.

“I thought you’d told me you were going to quit those things.”
For a moment he glared at her…Then he softened, became her Louis again, the shadow of his father melting away. He fixed her with the roguish smile she loved so much. “Yeah, I know. Sorry Mum.”

She shrugged. “Well, pass it over then.” He did and she took a thoughtful drag before holding it out to him. “It’s yours too, y’know.”

“What?” He took the cigarette from her fingers.

“The wedding.”

“Oh.” He shrugged. “Well I don’t really care, to be honest. As long as El’s happy.”

“You should care.” He shrugged again, turning to blow the smoke away from her before offering the cigarette once more. “As long as I marry El, nothing else matters.” It should have been a touching declaration of love, but the way he said it made it sound like a prison sentence.

“60:40.”

“What?”

“That’s what your grandmother told me on the day I married your father-60:40. She said it was the equation for the perfect marriage; that no marriage could ever be 50:50 when it came to love, the best you could ever hope for was a 60:40 split so make sure damn sure you’re the one that’s loved 60. But that’s crap…For a marriage to work, both partners have to love each other the same, 50:50…Because, believe me, there’s nothing more painful than loving someone 60 while knowing full well that they only love you 40…Or less.”

“I love El Mum.” He took the cigarette back and turned away, and she knew the matter was closed.

“Hey, sweetheart… Look at me.” She reached for him, stroking his fringe back from his forehead and turning him so she could gaze into his face. “The girls can’t wait to see you tomorrow. They miss you.”

And suddenly he looked so sad. “Yeah, I miss them too…Right, back to the monster-in-law.” He crushed the cigarette out underfoot and kissed her cheek before walking away. She watched him go, wishing for the millionth time that she’d fought for him harder.

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

In a shabby candle-lit venue in Covent Garden a crowd of students and folkie types sat on stools round beer barrel tables, watching a young couple on the small stage as they sang and played acoustic guitar…And at a table in the corner Louis watched Harry…

The candle-light played over his face, making toffee highlights dance in his hair and the gold flecks in his eyes sparkle. He was smiling, dimples slicing into his cheeks, lips moving as he whispered the words in time with the singers’ voices. And he seemed to Louis to be so full of childlike wonder, so full of life. He spotted Louis staring out of the corner of his eye and turned, flashing him a secret smile from beneath his wide-brimmed hat as he mouthed the words to him;

“Don’t care if he’s guilty, don’t care if he’s not…He’s good and he’s bad and he’s all that I got. Oh Lord, oh Lord I’m begging you please-Don’t take this sinner from me. Oh, don’t take this sinner
And Louis knew that he was a sinner, but if that meant that he could stay in this cozy basement bar with Harry resting his hand on his thigh beneath the table, with Harry smiling at him like he was the only person in the world who mattered, then he didn’t want to be a saint.

“So,” He leaned toward him. “Who were you before?”

“Before…?”

“You know…Before you came to London.”

Harry shrugged and turned his attention to his beer bottle, peeling the label off with his thumbnail. “Just a kid.” He deflected the question expertly. “What about you? Who were you before you became Louis Tomlinson, miserable millionaire?”

“Just a kid.”

“I know that your Dad hit your mum, so she left and took you up North with her, I know that he had you kidnapped and brought back here. But I don’t know about the in between. What was it like? What were you like? Were you happy?”

And Louis reflected that if he opened up then Harry would perhaps do the same, perhaps finally let him see beneath the mask. “He didn’t just hit her; he beat the shit out of her. He screwed around, but if she so much as looked at a waiter in a restaurant then he’d be on her the second they got home. I remember trying to pull him off her one night when he was dragging her upstairs by her hair, but I wasn’t strong enough…I was only six. He locked the door and I could hear her screaming…The next day her face was black and blue an’ I remember watching her covering it up with make-up. She wanted to work but he wouldn’t let her, wouldn’t let her have friends either. Outside the house he was so charming and so suave…You’d never guess, and we weren’t allowed to tell…It was like this private shame. Then one Saturday when he was away on business and she was pregnant with the twins, she came to my bedroom in the middle of the night, told me to pack my stuff. Next thing we were on a train up North to Doncaster to move in with my grandparents. It got so much better after that, we were normal. I went to the local primary school and it were brilliant. I wasn’t of those kids who hated school, it were all a big social to me. I love football, played for a few teams…We were happy, for a bit…But you know the rest…You like footie?”

Harry nodded. “Man U all the way. I feel like…with my knowledge and understanding of the football game, I should be a lot better at football…But I’m shit. Had the usual kickabouts with me mates though.”

Louis nodded sympathetically. “You’re too gangly. What about everything else?”

“Lived with my mum, step-dad and sister, went to the local Comp, had mates…Normal.”

“And when did it stop being normal?”

Harry turned his back on him and the question, nodding at the couple on stage who were packing up their guitars. “Looks like they’ve finished their set. Are we going now?”

And Louis knew better than to press him. He knocked back the last dregs of his beer.

“Yeah, come on.”

They ascended the basement steps and emerged out onto the streets. As they weaved through the crowds, Harry instinctively reached for him…but Louis resisted the temptation to take his hand.
Not here, it was too public; in London his father’s friends were everywhere, ready to see and report back…
They meandered along the narrow cobbled streets, ducking in and out of shops and occasionally stopping to watch one of the many street performers and musicians that plied their trade in the tiny squares and junctions. They were halfway down Museum Street when Louis realised Harry wasn’t beside him anymore. He turned back to see him standing staring up at the façade of an old-fashioned bookshop. As he got closer he could read the gold lettering that swirled across the top of the glass window.


“Cool!” Harry turned to him, his eyes shining. “Can we go in?”

And even though he’d always thought all that stuff was nonsense, he couldn’t refuse him. “Fine.”

Inside the shop was old-fashioned, shelves stuffed with rows and rows of books beneath signs such as ‘Witchcraft’, ‘Necromancy’, ‘The Golden Dawn’ and ‘Western Mysticism’. A glass cabinet to their left contained censers, strange statues of ancient gods, crystals and brass pentacles. Pictures of famous British Mystics decorated the walls, watching them with critical eyes. The air was heavy with the scent of incense and old books. Harry moved from shelf to shelf, lifting books and looking through them carefully, utterly fascinated.

“Two boys, four faces…And a whole lot of shadows.” He turned. A woman stood at the counter, a paper cup of green tea at her elbow. She was in her early thirties, with short brown hair and glasses and seemed almost too ordinary to work in such a shop…Apart from the deck of Tarot cards spread across the counter in front of her on a black silk scarf.

She took a sip of her tea and looked past him to Harry. “Hey you!” He turned to her and she smiled. “Gorgia boy with gypsy eyes…You sure you haven’t got any Romany in you?”

Harry approached her, shaking his head and staring down at her cards. “No, but I get that a lot. Can you read those?”

“Yes.” She gathered them up and held them out to him. “I could do a reading for you? Shuffle them, go on…”

Harry bit his lip. “I don’t have any money.”

“I’ll do you a reading for free.” She shrugged. “Go on, indulge me. We’ve had hardly anyone in all day and I’m so bored.”

“I’m not sure I want my fortune told.”

“Afraid of what it will be?” Harry shrugged, avoiding her gaze. “Well, contrary what people think the cards don’t tell fortunes…They tell you what is and what will be-yes-but how you react to events as they occur determines your fortune.”

“O.k then. What do I do?”

“Think of a question, and shuffle them.” He did so. “Then fan them out…And choose nine. That’s it. Give them to me.” Louis pretended to peruse the shelves, watching from the corner of his eye as she laid the cards carefully down on the cloth, straining to hear her voice as she lowered it to a whisper. “Hmm, a spread that runs high to swords…There is a lot of strife and trouble in your life. The signifier is the Queen of Pentacles reversed-Unusual for a man’s reading.”

“Why?”
“Because she’s a woman…A wanton woman…A Harlot. I don’t understand that.” She turned back to the spread. “The Ace of Swords-There is a lot of injustice in your life, a lot of people who abuse their power…The Knight of Wands reversed-a cruel, sly and controlling man-You know who he is…There is a power struggle there, keep fighting him or you will lose yourself. The Emperor…Yet another man who abuses his power, but this man likes money above all else…You know him too, I can tell by your face. He will bully you but he won’t harm you too much, you’re too valuable to him. He has a lot of power over you… The Four of Swords-You’re not ill, are you? No, you’re feeling trapped in your situation, confined…Two of Swords-” She smiled. “You’ve found an ally, a friend…Perhaps something more…They remind you who you are, make you feel valued. Hang on to them, you deserve to be loved. They will become your strength.
The Tower-Prepare yourself for a shock, a loss…You’ll be feeling upset and desperate but speak carefully; you could really regret making a confession to the wrong person. The Devil-Tyranny and enslavement, lust…A disaster or attack…” She looked up at him, shocked. “Umm…I don’t know how to advise you without knowing more about your situation.”

Harry’s expression darkened. “You don’t need to…This is bullshit anyway.” He turned his back on her. “Louis, you coming?”

“Sure.” They made their way to the door.

“Hey, gypsy boy! Don’t you want to know your final card?” They turned back to find her leaning across the counter, holding out to him. “The Star-Even in the darkness there’s light, hope for the future…Here, I want you to have it.” He crossed the shop and took it from her fingers. Something passed between them that Louis didn’t understand and she gave Harry a sad, kind little smile. “Keep it. And take care of yourself.”

“Thanks.” He nodded at her before marching from the shop. Louis hurried after him.

“What was all that about?” He asked as soon as he caught up with Harry in the street outside.

Harry shrugged. “Fuck only knows. She’s obviously mental.” But he tucked the card carefully into his back pocket.

“So where do you want to go now?”

He sighed, visibly troubled. “Home with you.”

“Ok. Come on, let’s get a taxi.”

They made their way up Long Acre looking for a taxi rank. As they passed the Opera house a group of older women emerged, clad in designer evening gowns and obviously drunk.

“Oh my God!” One of them suddenly shrieked. “It’s Dirty Harry!”

Beside Louis, Harry stiffened. “I’m so sorry Lou.” He shot him a look of embarrassed regret before turning…And as he did so a change seemed to come over him…He stood up straighter, head up and chin jutting arrogantly.

“Hi Jessica! You look amazing!”

“Harry, darling!” One of the women, her plump frame swathed in black satin and her dark hair streaked with grey, stumbled towards him, reaching for him with a claw-like hand, its fingers heavy
with jewelled rings. “I haven’t seen you in a while! I’ve missed you!” She draped herself over him in a way that made Louis cringe, her fingers playing with the buttons on his shirt. But Harry didn’t seem embarrassed…On the contrary, he wrapped his arm around her waist, leaned into her touch, smiling as she reached up to stroke his cheek…As Louis watched the sweet Harry he knew seemed to evaporate to be replaced by an over-confident, sultry male Lolita, radiating sexuality with every move of his snake hips, every lusty lick of his tongue along his pink lips, every glance from his piercing green eyes. The woman turned to her friends. “This is him ladies! This is the notorious Dirty Harry I’ve been telling you about! Isn’t he delicious?!?”

They all nodded, flocking forward to inspect Harry like he was a new toy.

“So handsome!”

“Very sexy!”

“You’re right Jessica…Delicious!”

“And…” They all giggled hysterically as she reached down to run her hand up his inseam… “He’s very ‘talented’!” Her hand brushed Harry’s crotch…Louis was shocked but Harry didn’t seem to be. Instead he made a show of throwing his head back, closing his eyes and moaning in fake ecstasy.

“Oh baby…Don’t tease me like that!” They all shrieked with laughter.

“You like older women, don’t you Harry?”

He spun her round and pressed his forehead to hers, staring intently into her eyes before turning slowly and fixing them all with a sexy smile. “I’m well known for my taste in Cougars…What can I say?” A cheeky arch of his brow. “.. I like being taken in hand!” He turned back to her. “And baby, I’d love for you to take me in hand again…I’m working right now, but you have our number.” He turned to survey them all, watching him with predatory lust in their eyes. “And if any of your hot friends are interested…I’m Dirty Harry, from The Birdcage Hotel. Book me when your husband’s out of town. I’m very discreet…And very, very good at my job.” He gave them all a wink and stooped to kiss the woman beside him on the cheek, before detaching himself from her and striding over Louis again. “Come on, let’s go.”

“What the fuck was that?” Louis hissed at him as they walked away. And suddenly all the sexy arrogance seemed to disappear.

Harry ducked his head, his cheeks flushing red.

“Jessica…She’s a regular client.”

“She’s old enough to be your mother! You have sex with her?!?”

“No Louis, I go to her house while her husband’s away and we sit and drink tea and watch Coronation Street…Of course I have sex with her! That’s what she pays me for!” They reached the taxi rank and Harry shoved his hands in the pockets of his jacket, looking up at him from beneath the brim of his hat, ashamed. “You know what I am Lou.”

A black taxi pulling up and they climbed in. Louis gave the driver his address before sitting down beside Harry.

“Yes, I know what you are…But what the hell was that act back there? That wasn’t you.”

“No…It was Dirty Harry.”
“Who?”

Harry looked down at his hands, chewing on his lower lip. “It’s, like, a nickname…My pimp made it up…Like the Clint Eastwood film…But ‘Dirty’ because…y’know…He thought it was funny. I get called it all the time there…”

“Do you think it’s funny?”

“No, I hate it but…After a while it became more than a nickname. It became, like, a persona…It’s like…When I’m working; it’s not me doing those things…It’s Dirty Harry. Dirty Harry is flirty, confident, insatiable. He loves sex, all kinds of sex…and he doesn’t care what they do to him. It’s hard to explain…”

“No, I get it. I just…Can’t believe that you have sex with that woman.”

“I have sex with a lot more people than her…Louis…Are you jealous?”

“No!” And he knew that he shouldn’t be…After all, Harry was right…He knew what he did for a living, had always known…But it was so much easier to know in the abstract. He’d never let himself consider the reality of it before, but the idea of that woman touching him, of anyone else touching him…Made him feel sick.

“Do you like it?”

“What?”

He turned to him, his eyes searching his face. “The sex you have with clients…Do you like it?”

Harry gaped at him. “What?! No!”

“Then why do you do it? Why do you sell yourself to people you don’t even like?”

Harry turned away to look out of the window. “I don’t…He does.” It was a whisper, just on the edge of hearing.

“What?”

“Nothing…Look, it’s like I said, I need to earn. They’re just clients.”

He stared at him. “…Then what does that make me?”

Harry turned back to him and he seemed suddenly so child-like, so vulnerable.

“You’re…Louis.”

“What does that even mean?”

“I…”

The taxi pulled up at his father’s house and Louis turned his back on Harry, paying the driver and getting out.

“Louis, wait!”

But he ignored him, marching ahead up the driveway. He knew that he was being unfair, but suddenly thoughts of Harry’s clients were haunting him like nameless, faceless ghosts and
jealousy, bitter and irrational, flooded his veins like poison.

Once inside he flicked on the corner lamps and he tossed his jacket onto the sofa.

“Louis!” Harry caught hold of his shoulder, turning him to face him. “Look, I’m sorry! I didn’t know she was going to be there!”

And he found himself suddenly scared to look at him, lest he could see their fingerprints on his skin. “I know you didn’t. Just…just give me a minute.”

He ignored the look of hurt in Harry’s eyes as he pushed past him and made for the kitchen. Perhaps he should listen to Stan’s advice, give Harry his money, call his Handler and never see him again…But the thought of that made him physically ache. No, that wasn’t an option. He knew that he had to stop this…He’d known Harry was a prostitute, had known he had other clients…He was being irrational. He stood for a few moments, taking deep shuddering breaths, before switching on the cold tap. He splashed the icy water on his face, the cold shocking him back to reality. There—he felt better, calmer. Now he could go and apologise…They could get on with the evening…

He made his way to the living room…and froze in the doorway.

Harry stood in the centre of the room, half in shadow, the golden light from the side-lamps highlighting his creamy skin. As Louis stared he finished sliding his jeans from his thighs and straightened up, clad only in his boxers.

“I know that you’re upset with me because I’m a whore…I’m sorry. Please, Louis, let me make it up to you.” He bit his lip and ran his hand teasingly down the front of his bare chest, down over his taunt stomach, down over the bulge beneath the tight black cotton of his boxers, before crossing the room to press himself against him, his hands massaging his chest as he sucked on his collarbone. He kissed a trail up the side of his neck before pressing his lips to his ear. “Because you’re so nice to me, I’ll be so good to you. Please Louis; I’ll do whatever you want me to. Just don’t be angry at me.” He reached for his belt…

And in that moment he was a little boy bartering with the tools of an adult, trading his body for affection…It was both shocking…and heart-breaking.

“Stop! Harry, stop it!” He pushed him roughly away, horrified. “Just stop with this Dirty Harry shit! Jesus!” He sank to the floor, his back to the sofa, and put his head in his hands. “Christ, you’re so fucked up!”

For a few moments there was silence, then…

“So…I’m not Dirty Harry to you?”

He turned to find Harry sitting on the floor about a foot away, his own back against the sofa, hugging his knees to his chest. He looked so lost.

“No! Don’t be ridiculous! You’re just…Harry.”

When Harry next spoke his voice was small.
Louis took it from his fingers and examined it. It was the Tarot card from the shop. He took in the picture of a naked woman filling two pitchers from a stream, a star shining above her.

“I don’t get it. A star?”

“To me, you’re everything she said it means…Hope…light…all of it. I look forward to your bookings so much; I love just being with you… I think about you all the time, you don’t know… Louis…I’m yours.”

“Don’t say that Harry, I don’t need to own you…You don’t belong to anyone but yourself.”

Louis felt something touch his hand where it rested on the carpet, and turned to find Harry reaching for him, his fingers brushing his. He held his arm out to him and Harry scooted across the carpet to wriggle beneath it. He kissed the point of Harry’s shoulder, his fingers stroking his soft curls.

“I think about you all the time too.”

“You do?”

“Yes…I can’t stand the idea of people using you in the way that they do. I lie awake at night worrying about you…Where you are, what you’re doing, if you’re safe…”

“You don’t have to.”

“I can’t help it…You matter to me.”

“I matter to you.” Harry echoed his words in a whisper, his voice full of awe.

“Yes…So much. Do you remember the last time you were here? When you signed to me?”

“Umm hmm?”

“Well I found out what those signs meant.”

“Oh.” Harry sat up, startled, fear in his eyes. “I’m sorry, I didn’t…”

But Louis held a hand up to silence him. “Harry, it’s o.k.”

He sat back and raised his hands. He pointed to himself, then clenched his fists and crossed them over his chest before pointing at Harry. It took a few moments to sink in…and then Harry beamed, his entire face lighting up, his eyes sparkling with delight as if he’d just been given the most precious gift.

“You mean it?”

Louis nodded. He’d said it so much lately but this was the first time he really DID mean it…And that scared him, because this was the one person he shouldn’t be saying—or even signing— it to, never mind feeling it for.

Harry leaned forward and kissed him, his mouth so soft against this own, before curling up against
him and laying his head on his shoulder with a sigh.

“I love you too.” He whispered.

Chapter End Notes

Ok, as always thank you all sooooooooooooooooooo much for reading and for your support, kudos and comments. Next time.....

Louis and Harry take a road trip and Harry finally begins to open up, Jay learns more about her son, and Harry learns a terrible secret about one of the other Products.
Chapter 12-Beneath Plastic Stars

Chapter Summary

Harry and Louis go on a road trip where Harry sees a whole new side to Louis, and finally starts to open up to him about his life...

Chapter Notes

O.k, everyone first of all I want to say thank you for the incredible support, comments and feedback from you all! THANK YOU! Now, this ended up being an absolute monster of a chapter and I ended up having to split it into two. The action continues on the morning after the events in chapter 11. The song lyrics used here are from 'Pretty Baby' by Vanessa Carlton and 'Just Another Old Love Song' by Joe Purdy. I’ve de-aged the girls a bit but I do like to make family members a bit more fictionalised.

WARNINGS- Language, violence, sexual abuse, descriptions of fetishes and deviant sexual practices.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 12-Beneath Plastic Stars

The next morning Louis woke to find Harry’s head on the pillow beside his. He lay on his side, his arm across Louis’ chest and one long leg flung across his torso, clinging to him in a way that Louis found deeply endearing. He reached to push his dark curls out of the way before examining his face in the pale pre-dawn light that crept in through the gap in the curtains. He was so handsome; his full pink lips softly pouted and his jet black eyelashes fluttering at some dream…Even his nose was pretty-Straight but with a cute little snub tip. Louis kissed his cheek softly but he didn’t stir.

“Hey Harry, wakey wakey.” He reached over and flicked the tip of his nose—just a gentle flick, just meant to be a joke…

“NO!” The silence was shattered by Harry’s scream. He leapt out of the bed, crashing to the floor in a tangle of limbs and bed-sheets. “NO! DON’T TAKE ME! PLEASE DON’T TAKE ME!” He shot backwards on all fours across the carpet until his back smashed against the wall where he cowered, arms over his head, shaking violently and gasping for breath like he was drowning.

“What the fuck?! HARRY!” Louis leapt from the bed and ran towards him, dropping to his knees in front of him and reaching out. But Harry seemed so blinded by terror that he didn’t recognise him. He swiped his hands away and lashed out at him, clawing, kicking and snarling, baring his teeth like a cornered animal.

“NO! NO! YOU GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME! I can’t take it! I can’t! Please! Please, don’t take me away!” He was ranting, raving, trapped in some nightmare, eyes wide and staring at
nothing, tears pouring down his cheeks. “Don’t take me to that room, please! I haven’t done anything! I obeyed! I was good, I’ve been good…I OBEYED!”

“HARRY!” But it was like he couldn’t hear him. As Louis watched in horror he slumped forward, hands over his ears, and let out a primal gut-wrenching scream, like the cry of an animal in pain. “HARRY!” Louis lunged forward, catching hold of his face. “HARRY, OPEN YOUR EYES! LOOK AT ME! LOOK!” For a few minutes Harry struggled against him, eyes screwed shut, almost as if he was afraid of what he might see, then he opened them and looked up at him…And it was like a veil had been lifted away. He stared at him, eyes widening with recognition. Louis gazed into those jade eyes, so wide and frightened. He spoke slowly, his voice calm and soothing. “Harry it’s me, it’s Lou. You’re ok; no one’s going to take you anywhere…” Harry’s eyes filled with fresh tears and he slumped forward into his arms, pressing his face into his shoulder, his entire body still shaking and his heart pounding against his. He clung to him like a little child. “Shhh, its o.k… You’re safe Harry, you’re safe.”

“Please don’t send me back there…Please…If you send me back he can get at me. Please don’t send me back. I want to stay here with you.” The word’s came out in a jumble between choked heart-breaking sobs. “Please…I’ll be good to you Lou, I’ll let you do whatever you want…Just please let me stay…Just for a few days…I can’t-I can’t go back, not yet…I need a break Lou, I just-I need a break.”

“Shhh…Harry please, please don’t cry.” Louis hugged him close, rubbing soothing circles on his back with his hands. “Shhh…” He released him and pushed him gently back onto his knees, before reaching to wipe away his tears with his fingers. Harry looked so scared, and so very young, his sobs slowing to choking gasps, his eyes ringed with red. “I-I’m sorry Lou. I’m so sorry…”

“Shhh…You’ve nothing to apologise for.” Louis reached to cup his soft cheeks. “Now, here’s what we’re going to do…You’re going to go back to bed and get some rest…And I’m going to get you a cuppa.”

“But…”

“Harry it’s o.k. I’ll sort it. Now come on.” He let him help him up and steer him gently back to bed. He climbed in and Louis gathered the sheets from the floor, laying them carefully over him as he pressed his face into the pillow. He stooped to kiss his curls before leaving.

Downstairs, he slumped at the kitchen table, his head spinning. He’d never seen anything like that before and it had shaken him to the core. Harry was deeply traumatised, that much was obvious… He didn’t want to go back to The Birdcage, and Louis was pretty certain he could guess why… ‘He can get at me’…Who was he? Louis didn’t want him to go back either, but he couldn’t think of a way to stop it…Still…he had an idea that could at least buy them some time. He reached for his mobile phone and punched in the number he now knew by heart.

“Good morning, you’ve reached The Bird Cage Hotel. How may I help you?”

“Hello, this is Louis Tomlinson. I have one of your products, Harry, with me at the moment.”

“Is there a problem Sir?”
“No, not at all. I am just phoning to ask if it would be possible for me to keep Harry. I am going away for the weekend and I’d like to take him with me.”
“I’m sorry Sir. Clients are not allowed to take Products out of the country.”

“No, it’s not a foreign trip, just up North.”

“Clients are allowed to take Products away with them within the U.K for up to a week. But I’m afraid Harry is booked up all weekend.”

“I see. That’s a shame. Anyway, hypothetically, how much would it cost for Harry to come with me for two nights?”

“Hmmm…that’s two nights and three days I take it Sir?”

“Yes.”

“Right…Let me see…That would be £36, 000 Sir.”

“I see…Well if you cancel all his other appointments I’ll pay double that.”

There was a long silence on the other end of the phone…then…”Could you hold please Mr Tomlinson?”

“Sure.”

She didn’t keep him waiting for long. “Hello Mr Tomlinson?”

“Yes?”

“That’s all Harry’s other appointments cancelled Sir. You may have him for the weekend. Can I have the address of the place you’re staying?” Calmly, he made one up. “Thank you Sir. Now, what type of trip is this?”

“Just a relaxing weekend away.”

“Fine, Harry’s bag will be packed to reflect that. Will you be requiring any ‘Specials’ or props or..?”

Louis thought of Harry’s usual bag of lubricants, condoms and sex toys- He’d have to hide that in the car when they arrived. “No, no ‘Specials’.”

“Certainly, Sir. Now we will require Harry back at the hotel for an hour just so that he can collect his things and be briefed. His Handler will be informed of the change of plan. He should be with you by 9 am. Harry will be returned to you no later than 10:30.”

“O.k, thank you.”

“Thank you for your custom Mr Tomlinson. Have a good weekend.”

He hung up and then sent a rather long text before putting the kettle on to boil and making two large mugs of tea. By the time he got back to the kitchen table the Message waiting icon was flashing on his phone.

THAT’S FINE-THE MORE THE MERRIER. LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING U :)


Harry was already dressed when he entered the bedroom, sitting on the edge of the unmade bed and looking down at his hands nervously.

“Here…” Louis sat down beside him. “Made you a brew. Tea’s good for the nerves. In Yorkshire it’s practically medicine.”

He pressed it into his hands and Harry looked up at him, his mouth set in a determined line… And Louis’ heart sank- He had the mask back on, there was no way he’d tell him anything now. “I’m sorry about earlier. It was just a nightmare.”

“Harry…”

“I get night terrors; have done since I was little. I’m fine now.”

Louis sighed, biting back his frustration. “Fine, have it your way…Still, I think you need a break from your work and from that place…And I’ve figured out how you can get one…This weekend.”

“Really?” Harry looked up at him in surprise.

“Yep…But there’s a catch.”

Harry took a sip of his tea and shot him a worried look. “Oh…And what’s that?”

Louis paused for dramatic effect, then…”You’ll have to put up with my mad family.”

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

Harry watched the woman from the Tech team as she fitted the electronic tag bracelet around his wrist. She was in her mid-thirties, plump, mousey and unremarkable-The type of person found in I.T departments across the country. ‘Was it you?’ He wondered idly. ‘Was it you who hacked into my school’s database and chose me out of over a thousand kids? Was it you who showed my picture to Mr Cowell and recommended I be kidnapped?’ Either way she seemed nervous of him now, avoiding his stare as she carefully sealed the tag closed. Why work for a pimp but be scared of a whore? Perhaps she just felt guilty…Maybe she hadn’t picked him, but she’d certainly chosen some of them-That’s what the tech team were for. He decided to make her squirm.

He leaned and whispered in her ear. “I can see you like me sweetheart. That’s o.k. For 600 quid I’ll put my head between your legs and make you come like a train.”

She flushed red and turned away, embarrassed, avoiding his gaze as she pointed to the bracelet. “This is waterproof so you can shower and swim with it. It won’t come off no matter how hard you try and if you tamper with it we will know. Is that clear?”

“Crystal.” He wriggled his eyebrows at her and ran his tongue over his teeth. She flushed even redder and he smiled, satisfied. It was a petty revenge, but it was revenge all the same.

Louise was running around the room snatching up clothes, tossing some items aside and carefully folding others into a small suitcase.

“Did he say what TYPE of quiet weekend Harry?” She asked, rummaging through a plastic box full of boots, shoes and trainers.
“Ummm, no…We’re going to Yorkshire, if that helps?”

“Yes…Sweaters. It’s bloody freezing up there right now.” She snatched a couple from a pile and tossed them into the suitcase.

“Well I suppose congratulations are in order Harry.” He looked up to find Mr Cowell standing beside him and immediately lowered his gaze to the carpet as Jack’s words echoed in his mind-He wasn’t allowed to look his betters in the eye. “This weekend you will earn me £72,000…The most any whore has every made for me with one client.”

“Oh…good. Thank you Sir.”

“I have to say, I’m liking your change in attitude.” Harry followed his gaze to where Jack stood at the other side of the room, watching them with arms folded and a scowl on his face. Harry had worked out by now that he didn’t like being made to share his toys. He knew that he’d be really for it when he got back, but that didn’t matter right now…Because first he was getting three days far away from Jack, far away from The Birdcage…Three days with Louis. “Mr Dalton, could you prep Harry for me please?”

“Certainly Sir.” Jack began to prowl across the room, grey eyes shining with anticipation.

“Urgh, no! I don’t need to see that!” Louise dashed for the door. But Harry knew she didn’t have to bother.

“He doesn’t like that Sir.”

“Excuse me?”

Harry kept his eyes on the carpet. “Me wearing a plug, Sir. He finds it…off-putting.”

“And do you use lubrication?”

“Yes Sir. He likes prepping me himself Sir.”

“Fine. It’s alright, Jack.” Mr Cowell shooed Jack away with a dismissive hand. Harry looked up just in time to catch the flash of irritation in Jack’s eyes before he turned away, and he couldn’t help but smirk.

Mr Cowell tapped him on the shoulder to get his attention before pointing his finger in his face. “Now Harry, remember this is NOT a holiday-this is a job. You need to stay professional at all times. Play the role, do everything he tells you to, act like the sun shines out his fucking arse. And don’t get any ideas just because you’re outside London…Remember to keep your mouth shut, and don’t bother trying to run back home because if you do then that bracelet…” He pointed to the black watch-shaped rubber bracelet on his wrist. “…will lead us right to you…And your family.”

“I’ve seen your sister’s pictures…She’s pretty…Like a doll.” That horrible sing-song voice made Harry’s blood run cold. He looked up to find Jack staring at him thoughtfully, his head on one side. “Tell me Harry…Does she cry easily?”

Harry felt sick…He swallowed and turned back to look up at Mr Cowell. “I won’t try to escape…And I won’t let you down Sir.”

“Good boy.” Mr Cowell gave Jack a nod. “You can take him now.”
The blow caught him on the cheek, sending the side of his head crashing into the car window with a bruising thud.

“AHHH!” He clutched his aching temple, turning to look at Jack. “What the…?”

“DON’T YOU DARE LOOK ME IN THE EYE!” Jack raised his fist again and he turned quickly back to stare out the tinted window at the people outside, totally unaware of what was happening in the black SUV that passed them. “And open your legs.” He did so, biting his lip as Jack’s hand appeared in his lap like a great white spider, unzipping his flies and reaching inside…Ah, so that’s why he’d been made to sit in the front seat. “I can’t believe that fucking idiot paid that much for a filthy stupid little slag like you. Well, you know what they say about fools and their money…” Harry kept his gaze fixed on the buildings that they passed, ignoring Jack’s probing touch, his cold fingers, his hissed insults…Because what he said didn’t matter…The only thing that would matter for the next few days would be Louis and what HE thought of him.

Louis was waiting for them when they turned into the driveway and Harry felt his heart leap at the sight of him. He was leaning against his black Porsche, dressed in jeans and a denim jacket with a shearling collar, casual and cool as a model in a car ad. When he saw them he straightened up, his lips curling into that sexy smug grin that made Harry’s stomach flip and his throat go dry. “Who do you belong to Harry?”

“Mr Cowell.”

“And who am I?”

“My Master.” But with him I’m free….

Jack removed his hand as they pulled up. “Zip yourself up, slut.” He did, smiling to himself when he realised that that was the last time Jack would touch him for three whole days. Louis came to meet him as he got out of the car. “Hi.”

“Hi.” He tried not to look too happy in case Jack would see and somehow put a stop to their trip, but he wasn’t looking. Instead he was getting his bag from the boot. He marched over and dropped it at his feet before nodding at Louis.

“Sir, if you could just sign this for me please.” He shoved the form at him before pushing Harry’s head forward and scanning his bar-code. “Any problems with Harry, please don’t hesitate to contact us.”

“Sure.” Louis held the signed form out to him and he snatched it out of his hands.

“Thank you Sir.”

They watched as he got back into the SUV and drove off.

“What’s his problem?”

“He doesn’t like to share.”

“What?”

“Never mind…” Harry finished shrugging on his brown suede jacket and eyed the Porsche. “That is one sick car!”

Louis chuckled. “It’s not a penis metaphor or anything, I swear!”
“Well I sure know that.” Harry gave him a wink and Louis laughed, embarrassed, his cheeks flushing pink.

“Well come on then. Let’s see if we can get up to Donny without me crashing it.” He opened the door for Harry who scrambled in; gawping in awe at the car’s interior as Louis went to put his bag in the boot. Harry waited until he’d gotten in and turned the engine on before suddenly ducking forward, elbows on his knees and hands on the top of his head.

“What the hell are you doing?”

“Brace position!”

“Piss off, you cheeky bastard!” But Louis was laughing.

Soon Harry grew bored of watching the jealous looks on driver’s faces as the Porsche sped past them on the M1. He sat back in his seat and began playing absentmindedly with the black bracelet.

“What’s that?”

He looked up to find Louis staring down at it, his nose wrinkled in distaste.

“Nothing’, just this wristband thing the hotel’s stylist made me wear.” He shoved the sleeve of his grey cable sweater hurriedly down over it.

“Some stylist. You should tell her it looks like an electronic tag bracelet. People will think you’re on probation.” Louis turned back to the road.

Harry stared at him, wondering if he knew how beautiful he was. He certainly didn’t act like it, always putting himself down. But he was…Handsome as an old-fashioned matinee idol, with his high cheekbones and angular jawline. He wore his caramel hair in a side-sweep and Harry had to sit on his hands to stop himself reaching up and pushing it out of his deep cobalt blue eyes. That morning he hadn’t bothered shaving and his upper lip and chin were covered in a light stubble that added an air of roguishness which Harry couldn’t help but find intensely sexy…

Louis caught him watching. “You’re looking at me weirdly. What’s wrong?”

Harry smiled. “Nothing’… You’re just fit…That’s all.” Louis laughed at that, his cheeks flushing slightly pink as he turned back to the road. “So, what’s happening again?”

“My Mum’s a midwife. She’s on night shift this weekend, and her husband’s got to go away for some business thing. They need someone to mind my little brother and sisters on Saturday night so I said I’d come up and babysit. I usually go up when my father’s away anyway. It’s the only time I can.”

“Oh…And what about me?”

“You, Harold, are playing pretend for the weekend.”

“And who am I pretending to be?”

“You are…Pick a fake surname you’ll remember…”

“Twist.”
“Fine then. You are Harry Twist, student friend of my mate Stan, who has just been dumped by his older girlfriend and kicked out of her flat. You turned up on my doorstep with nowhere to go and stayed the night before deciding to come up North with me hoping to visit family. Got all that?”

“Yeah, just one thing…How come I got dumped?”

“She found out you were shagging me.” Louis flashed him a cheeky grin. “Nah, just kidding. It was just to make my mum feel sorry for ya.”

“Oh, o.k…So I’m not your fake boyfriend then?”

Louis glanced at him. “No…I mean I did tell my mum I was…y’know…years ago. But she’s met El, knows I’m engaged…I think she thinks it was just a phase.”

“Yeah, maybe…” Harry saw the sadness in his eyes and decided to change the subject. “So, how many brother and sisters do you have?”

“I’m the eldest of seven.”

“SEVEN?!” Harry gaped at him and Louis chuckled.

“Yeah…Five sisters and one brother, two sets of twins. Youngest set are only twelve months old.”

“Your mum must be exhausted.”

“Nah she likes the noise I think.”

“Bet you miss them.”

Louis didn’t answer and Harry instantly regretted what he’d said. They sat for a few moments in uncomfortable silence, then…

“The little ones are into everything, so you know your bag of tricks?” Harry thought about the wash-bag full of the tools of his trade and ducked his head, suddenly ashamed. Louis saw his embarrassment and his tone softened. “Look, I know it’s not your fault you have to carry it everywhere. But just keep it hidden, yeah?”

“O.k. Lou, I know how much you paid for me for this weekend…How the hell can you afford it? Seventy-three grand? That’s got to be more than this car!”

“Well, from what I hear you are the Porsche of rent boys.” He shot him a cheeky grin before his tone became serious. “It’s only money Harry…”

“Yeah, money that you’ll owe. You’re paying for a weekend of freedom for me by making yourself more trapped. I’m not worth that.”

“Of course you are.” Louis let go of the gear stick and reached for Harry’s hand, and Harry watched curiously as he threaded his fingers through his, his skin so soft, his touch so gentle it was almost alien to him. He looked up to find Louis looking at him with such kindness that it made tears sting the corners of his eyes. “I meant what I said Harry…You need a break and I’m giving it to you. This weekend you’re not a prostitute, not one of their products. You’re just Harry…”

“I don’t really know who that is anymore…”

“Well maybe this weekend you can find out. Now relax, we’ve still got about an hour to go.” Louis reached over and turned on the radio. Harry leaned back against the seat and tugged his blue
beanie hat down over his eyes so that he could watch Louis from beneath it without him seeing. The raspy voice of a folk singer spilled from the car speakers accompanied by an acoustic guitar.…

“Come on in out of the cold, and lay your cares on me, cause when you’re here there’s nothing wrong you’re as far as I can see just another old love song comin’ down.”

*******

It was late afternoon, approaching evening when they turned into the quiet suburban street lined with sixties-style brown houses. Louis sighed happily as they pulled into the driveway of a house with a front garden littered with bikes, scooters and children’s toys.

“Home, sweet home.” He made to get out of the car and Harry grabbed hold of his wrist, suddenly “Just steer clear of ‘Hi, I’m Harry, I have sex for money and I’m doing your son’ and you should be fine. Besides, with our lot you’ll probably not get a word in anyway.” Louis gave him a cheeky wink. “Don’t worry about it, Pretty Baby, you’ll be fine.”

The front door burst open just as they reached it, yellow light spilling out onto the path. A shouting, laughing gaggle of girls of various sizes ran through it and dived for Louis.

“LOUIS!”

“WELCOME HOME LOUIS!”

“Does daddy know you’re here?”

“I missed you Louis!”

“MUM! THEY’RE HERE!”

“Did you miss us?”

“Did you bring us presents?”

Harry hung back, shy, as they clustered round Louis, hugging him close. He laughed trying his best to hug them all back before turning to him and pointing to each of them one by one.

“Harry, this is Fizzy…”

“FELICITE! I’M NOT A CAN OF COKE!” A sweet-looking girl of about fifteen with long dark hair scowled at him.

“She’s going through a phase…”

“O.k Felicite…Lottie…”
“Oh my God! He’s so fit! I haven’t even straightened my hair!” A pretty girl of about fourteen with huge blue china doll eyes began raking her fingers through her long blonde hair.

“Daisy.” A tiny pixie-faced girl of around eight with a baby blonde bob looked him up and down critically.

“Hi…I don’t think he’s fit. He’s got long hair like a girl.”

“Shut up Daisy!”

“…And Phoebe…”

“Hi.” A carbon copy of Daisy waved at him shyly-Twins.

“Umm, hi. I’m Harry.” Harry looked down at the four expectant faces, wondering what they were waiting for him to do.

“Oh, thank God you’re here!” They all turned as a smiling but flustered brunette woman emerged from the house, a bawling baby on each hip. “Hi, sweetheart.” She leaned over to kiss her son’s cheek. “Here, take Ernie. He’s been grizzly all day an’ I’ve got a banging headache.” She pushed one of the babies into Louis’s arms.

“Hey there little man.” Louis swung the baby onto his own hip as if he’d been doing it his whole life. “Harry, this is my little brother Ernie.” He bounced Ernie until he cooed and then pointed to him. “Mum, this is my friend Harry.”

“Hi love, I’m Jay. You any good with little ‘uns?” Without waiting for a reply she dumped the other bawling baby into Harry’s arms. “This is our Dory, Just jiggle her about a bit, and she’ll be fine. But don’t do it too much or she’ll throw up on you. Now, come on you lot! Dinner’s burning!” She disappeared back inside and Harry looked down at the baby.

“Please don’t throw up on me.”

Baby Dory promptly stopped crying, smiled sweetly…And shoved her finger up his nose.

“You’re a natural, mate!” He looked up to see Louis and his sisters laughing at him.

Inside the little house was warm, cosy and buzzing with life. They all squashed round the dinner table, the babies gurgling from their high-chairs at either end, and the girls talking and squabbling as they poured glasses of orange squash and fetched beers from the fridge for Louis and Harry. Jay, an oasis of calm in the chaos, ladled steaming stew into bowls and passed them around. Harry watched Louis chatting and smiling with his sisters and reflected that this was the first time he’d ever seen him truly happy.

“I got full marks on my spelling test Louis…Phoebe did too but she copied me.”

“You copied me!”

“Alright, alright…Don’t fight you two!”

“Fizzy’s got a boyfriend…”

“OH MY GOD! Lottie shut up! AND IT’S FELICITIE!”
“Really Fiz? Need me to go round there, find out what his intentions are?”

“Don’t you dare Louis!”

“Well no funny stuff, I don’t want to be an uncle.”

“Urgh, you’re so embarrassing! Mum!”

“Louis, stop teasing your sister.” Jay winked conspiritually at Harry as she passed him his bowl. And then, from her seat beside Harry, little Phoebe spoke.

“I don’t understand…Louis why do you have to stay in London with Daddy? Why can’t you stay with us? I miss you when you’re not here.”

There was a sudden uncomfortable silence. Daisy leaned across and punched her twin on the arm. “Shut up Pheebs! You know that upsets Mummy!”

“Daisy, don’t!” Louis turned to his little sister, his expression sad. “I work down in London with Dad. You know that Pheebs.”

“But you didn’t when you were littler…Lottie said he took you away. She called him a bad word…”

Jay moved to stand behind her daughter, reaching down to gently ruffle her hair. “Not now pet, we have a guest. We’ll talk about it later, ok?”

“O.k.”

Jay went back to serving dinner, passing round bread rolls. Around them the conversation started up again. Phoebe ducked her head, her lower lip wobbling. She began to sniff. Harry noticed and nudge her gently.

“Hey…” She looked up through her fringe at him. “Wanna see a trick?” She nodded, curious. He snatched up three bread rolls and juggled them before flicking one from his elbow onto her side plate. She burst out laughing. As the rest of Louis’ family burst into applause he leaned down to whisper into her ear. “I don’t get to see my big sister just like you don’t get to see your big brother. I know what it’s like to miss someone.” He gave her a wink and she smiled back.

“So, Harry…When you’re not joining the circus what are you studying at Uni?”

He looked up to find Jay staring at him expectantly while simultaneously wiping stew from baby Ernie’s hair. He thought fast.

“Physiotherapy.” Well that had been the plan anyway.

“Oh, good for you. How old are you?”

“Twenty.”

“So you have a few years to go. How are you finding the placements?”

“Um, they’re interesting…”

Louis came to the rescue. “So mum, how’s work been? Any interesting baby names lately?”

“Oh yes!” Jay laughed, her eyes crinkling at the corners just like her son’s did when he laughed.
“We had a bouncing baby boy called ‘Dude’ the other week…”

No longer the centre of attention, Harry tucked into his stew, which was delicious. Unfortunately, his peace wasn’t to last. He was just scraping the bowl clean when he felt something touching his leg…It wasn’t…Nope, it definitely was…Someone was playing footsie with him below the table, curling their foot round his calf. And Louis was too far away for it to be him. He turned.

Lottie leaned on the table on his other side, her chin in her hand, twirling a strand of blonde hair round her fingers in a way she obviously thought was flirty. “So Harry…Do you have a girlfriend?”

He frowned. “No…And you shouldn’t want a boyfriend. Try to stay a kid as long as you can. All that stuff is complicated. It can really mess you up if you’re not old enough for it.”

“Fine, whatever.” She turned away from him with a toss of her hair and he stared at her, thinking if only she knew, but at the same time so glad that she didn’t.

After dinner Louis washed the dishes and he dried, while Louis’ mother put the babies to bed. Then they all piled into the cluttered living room. Harry perched on the arm of a battered armchair and watched as Louis dragged his suitcase into the centre of the room, the girls crowding round excitedly as he unzipped it.

“O.k…Let’s see…Purple Beats headphones for Fizzy-I mean Felicitie.”

“Oh my God! Thanks Louis!” She hugged him close as he handed her the box.

“And for Lottie…Probably the most money I’ve ever spent on a bag in my entire life. Who is this Michael Kors bloke anyway?”

Lottie let out a squeal and snatched the parcel from him, hugging it to her chest as if it were her first born. “Oh Louis thank you! Everyone in school is gonna be so jealous!”

“Just make sure it doesn’t get nicked, yeah?”

As he rummaged about in the bag again Harry saw movement out of the corner of his eye and turned to find Phoebe curled up in the seat beside him. She leaned her blonde head on the cushion, gazing up at him thoughtfully, and he realised that for better or worse he’d acquired a little tag-along. He smiled down at her.

“You ok, kiddo?”

She nodded. “But Mummy isn’t.”

He followed her gaze to where Jay sat on the sofa opposite, Daisy in her lap, watching the proceedings with an expression somewhere between annoyance and grief.

“…And for Daisy…” At the sound of her name Daisy leapt from her mother’s lap to join Louis on the floor. “A silver charm bracelet with a daisy so you don’t forget your name. Don’t lose it, ok Dais?”

“I promise I won’t. Thanks Louis!”

“And last…But never, ever least…Our budding palaeontologist Phoebe. Here you go Pheebs.” He held out a parcel and she hopped down from the chair and took it from him, unwrapping it carefully…To reveal a book about Dinosaurs…And a box containing a scale skeleton model.
“Triceratops.” She gazed at it in awe.

“That’s your favourite, in’t it? From The Natural History Museum, that is. Thought you could get some practice in for the day you dig one up yourself and have to piece it together.” She stared at her brother…And then flung her arms around him, hugging him tight. “Aww Pheebs, glad you like it.”


“Tea please.”

“Milk? Sugar?”

“He just takes milk. Here Mum, let me give you a hand.” Louis jumped up and went with her.

Curious, Harry waited for a few minutes…Then followed.

Once out in the hallway he pressed himself against the wall and listened to their hushed voices as they talked.

“You shouldn’t go spoiling them with presents like that every time you come up.” Jay’s voice, annoyed.

“Why not? They’re my sisters.” Louis sounded hurt.

“They’ll come to expect it…And you know I can’t afford to keep up with that.”

There was a few seconds of uncomfortable silence, punctuated only by the sound of the kettle boiling and the clinking of cups. Then Louis spoke, choosing his words carefully.

“So…Has Dan heard any more about the redundancies?”

There was a deep sigh. “He’s being laid off.”

“Shit…”

“He’ll get redundancy pay…We’ll manage.”

“Yeah, about that; I’ve been thinking…I’d like to give you a portion of my salary each month, send it up, like…”

“What? No! Absolutely no way Louis…”

“But he doesn’t pay maintenance for the girls…Mum, you can’t raise six kids on a Midwife’s wage! It’s what he owes you; it’ll just be coming from me. I don’t need it.”

“And I don’t want it! It would be blood money…”

“Mum…” Louis’ tone was pleading.

“No! He…He takes you from me, keeps you virtually a prisoner, then you have to work for him to give me money for the daughters he abandoned? Absolutely no way Louis! Over my dead body!”
“But Mum, just listen…!”

“This is not up for discussion!”

The kitchen door creaked open…And Harry ducked back into the living room.

Later that night Harry looked round Louis’ tiny bedroom in amazement, taking in the Manchester United posters on the walls and the Thomas the Tank Engine curtains. “It’s so…ordinary. Hey, what’s this?” He reached for a tiny trophy in the shape of a football boot that had pride of place on the windowsill. “Under 14’s Most Improved…Oooh get you Ronaldo!”

“Here piss off, I earned that!” Louis snatched it from him as Harry laughed. “You sure you’re ok on the blow-up bed?”

“Yeah. It’ll be like sleepovers from when I were little.” Harry tugged his T-shirt over his head and reached into his wash-bag for his toothbrush.

Louis glanced at the bag. “I don’t know why you brought that anyway. You won’t be needing any of that stuff this weekend.”

“I won’t?” Harry stared at him, surprised, and Louis rolled his eyes.

“As if I’d have sex with you in my Mum’s house…Besides, this weekend you’re not a prostitute remember? You’re just Harry.”

“Oh yeah…So I take it we’ll just be stealing kisses like teenagers?” Louis winked at him. “That’s the plan, yeah.”

By the time he returned from the bathroom Louis was already in bed. The air bed squeaked and shifted as he lay down on it and tugged the duvet over his body. There was definitely a hole in it somewhere; he could practically feel it deflating beneath him. He looked up to find Louis peering down at him, frowning.

“You sure that’s comfortable?”

“It’s…Fine.”

“You’re lying. Hang on.” Louis kicked off his covers and crossed the room in just his boxers, lifting a desk chair from beneath a pile of junk and jamming it under the door handle.

“You do that as a kid when you were tossing one out?”

“Ha ha, yeah.” Louis slid back into bed and pressed himself against the wall, before pulling the covers back and jerking his head at him. “Get in.”

“There’s not enough room.”

“Sure there is. Come on, I’ll be the big spoon and you can be the little one.”

Harry sighed and climbed in beside him. Louis flicked off the bedside light and they squashed together beneath the duvet, Louis wrapping his arm around Harry’s shoulders, his fingers playing
with his curls. Above them a false night sky of plastic stars shone phosphorus yellow in the dark. “I used to have those too.”

“Then you were cool as a kid. Like me.”

“I really like your family. Your mum’s really nice. And your sisters obviously love you very much.”

“Well, I think I’ve lost Phoebe to you, to be honest. It’s nice to have you here, Pretty Baby. Even if I can’t kiss you as much as I’d like.”

Harry felt Louis’ kiss on the point of his bare shoulder. He bit his lip. “Lou… Please don’t call me that.”

“What?”

“Pretty Baby.”

“Why not? You’re pretty.” He kissed his cheek. “And you’re my Baby. Besides, it’s from a song.” He sang softly in his ear. “Pretty baby, don’t you leave me. I have been saving smiles for you.”

Harry took a deep breath. “It’s also the title of an old film… About a prostitute.”

“Oh… Sorry. I didn’t know.”

For a few minutes they lay still, gazing up at the glowing fake stars, enjoying each other’s presence.

“What’s it like?”

“What?”

“What you do… Having sex for money… What’s it like?”

Harry hesitated… But Mr Cowell, Jack and The Birdcage were a long way away… and he wouldn’t tell him it all. He considered the question. “Sometimes it’s boring, sometimes it’s horrible… And sometimes it’s weird.”

Louis knew he’d probably hate the answer, but morbid curiosity made him ask anyway. “ Weird how?”

“Like when they want ‘Specials’. S&M bloody hurts and I hate being tied up… and role-plays are just so embarrassing; some of the things they want me to do or say are just so stupid. And I hate water-sports. If they want me to pee on them then I have to drink loads before, so by the time I get to them I’m bursting, and if they want to pee on me then I usually get a shot in the face which is horrible and it gets in my hair… And I normally don’t get to shower ‘til I get home so I smell. Some of them want me to drink it but I won’t do that-Hygiene.”

Louis gaped at him, shocked. “That’s fucking disgusting… What’s the weirdest you’ve had?”

“Oh, that’s easy… Either ‘Spanky’ or ‘The Puppy Women’.”

What? “Spanky’?”

“Yeah, that’s what we call him. ‘Spanky’ creeps the fuck out of all of us. He’s this old guy, about sixty, and a Lord or baron or something. He lives in this HUGE spooky old manor house just
outside the city that’s like something out of a horror film. The routine’s always the same: You go in and upstairs to this dressing room where there will be an outfit laid out on a chair-Weird stuff, like an old-fashioned school uniform or a sailor suit; the girls say they get ballet and princess outfits a lot- he likes both girls and boys, see…So you put that on and go through a door into a bedroom and there he is, just sitting there on the edge of the bed, in front of this big gold full-length mirror. So you go into the corner opposite and toss yourself off…And he just sits there and watches. He waits till you come and then he calls you over, pulls your trousers down and makes you bend over his knee…And then he just lays into you, smacks the hell out of you for a half-hour straight. And he’s freakishly strong-No matter how hard you struggle and scream he just holds you down. And the whole time he doesn’t even look at you, just watches himself in the mirror. Afterwards you get up, pull up your trousers and you always have to say the same thing. You say “I’m sorry Daddy. I promise I won’t be dirty again.” Then he gives you the money and you leave-And the whole time he never says a fuckin’ word. It’s so creepy. We’re all convinced one day he’s going to pull a knife and stab one of us to death. I can’t sit for a week after a session with him, he’s brutal.”

And Louis hadn’t a clue what to say. “That’s…that’s…Wow, that’s fucked up.” For a few minutes they lay in silence while he got up the courage to ask. “And… ‘The Puppy Women’?”

“It’s…Have you ever heard of ‘Puppy Play’?”

“Uh…No…Unless, like, it’s a breast euphemism?”

Harry burst out laughing. “No! It’s, like, a fetish. It’s quite funny actually. It’s this bunch of women, again real posh, and they meet at different apartments and houses-I think they’re, like, a club or something. Anyway, they’ve taken to hiring me a lot because my hair’s long and it can be put into bunches-Like ears.”

Louis turned to stare at him, bewildered. “Ears?”

“Yeah, like a King Charles Spaniel or something. So I go there and they have this guy who prepares me. He does my hair and puts a dog collar on me, puts in this butt plug with a tail…”

And suddenly Louis’ stomach was churning. “Wait…So YOU’RE the puppy?”

Harry laughed at him again, rolling his eyes. “Yeah, of course! Messed up, right? It’s just ridiculous…So I get down on my hands and knees and this guy leads me in to them on a lead and they all start cooing over me; ‘Aww, look at the new puppy!’, ‘Isn’t the puppy just adorable?’ ‘Here, puppy!’- All that sort of shit. And I have to, y’know, act like a dog; Pant, bark, wag my tail, play fetch, lick their hands…And they pet me and feed me biscuits and stuff…”

“That’s so preverted.”

Harry giggled. “I know! Some people are such freaks! But that isn’t even the worst part…Soon I have to go to each of them and do what dogs do…”

Louis started to get a sinking feeling. “What?”

But Harry was still laughing. “Stick my head up their skirts…They don’t wear knickers…” He caught Louis’ eye and stuck out his tongue, wiggling it…And Louis couldn’t take it anymore.

“Jesus Christ! Harry, that’s not funny! They’re degrading you! Can’t you see that?! Why the fuck are you laughing?!”

Harry stopped laughing and his expression darkened. He turned back to gaze up at the ceiling.
“You think I don’t know that? You think I like being treated like an animal? I laugh because I fucking have to…”

“You don’t have to do it.”

“Yes I do. I need to earn and ‘Specials’ are extra.”

“You must hate them…Your clients.”

Harry frowned. When he spoke his answer surprised Louis. “Yeah, some of them…not all of them. Some of them just want no-strings sex, so they book me for the night or call into The Birdcage-It’s a business transaction to them and that’s fine by me. We fuck, they pay me and I leave-easy. Some are just lonely-Those are the ones who are always nice to me…They give me presents, talk for ages. Yeah I’m still just a whore to them, but I’m also company. I had this one old guy a few years ago- Gerry. He saw me at some function and came to get our card…because I looked just like his grandson. He and his wife had raised him after his mother died, then his wife developed Alzheimer’s and had to go into a home. Shortly after that his grandson killed himself.”

“Shit.”

Harry nodded. “His wife didn’t know and he hadn’t the heart to tell her. So he hired me to go with him to visit her every week, pretend to be their grandson. She never realised. I was even there when she died. After each visit Gerry would take me to a café for tea and cake and tell me all about her and their love story. He really loved her. And he was so nice to me. Gave me money to go home once…”

“And did you?”

Harry bit his lip. “No, it was…I lost it. So some clients are business-like, and some are nice, and some are weird…And then there are the ones who treat me like shit and call me names, do stuff like trying to slip it in without a rubber-they’re the ones I hate… And then there was this client… Just a bit older than me and with loads of ink… who was kind, and thoughtful, and funny…And more than a little bit beautiful. Who treated me like I was an actual human being…That was the one I fell in love with.”

He twisted his head and caught Louis’ lips with his own, kissing him tenderly, his hand cupping his cheek. Louis kissed him back, savouring his medicine-sweet mouth, marvelling at how when Harry kissed him the world around them seemed to grow silent. Once finished he pulled away to inspect his face with the reverence usually reserved for some holy idol. There was one question he desperately wanted to ask… “Harry…” But the very thought of it felt like a desecration and the words died in his throat as he realised he was too scared of what the answer would be. So he asked something far more banal. “Umm…How many clients would you have in a day?”

Harry considered the question. “Hmmm, around ten to twelve…More if it’s a group thing or a party. Less on a Monday usually. People are too tired for sex after work.”

“TWELVE!”

He shrugged. “That’s not too bad…The Birdcage does hour-long bookings, see? In some brothels the clients pay per act, so you end up servicing a lot more. There’s this one girl I work with, a Polish girl called Adrianna, who used to work in Germany. Over there they have these mega-brothels where men pay by the act. She was getting through forty maybe fifty a day.”

“Fuck.” To Louis it was a whole new world. And the way Harry talked about it- so casually, as if
he were talking about doing shifts in a supermarket-was chilling. “So you really earn your days off.”

Harry turned to him, his expression blank. “I don’t get days off. It’s not that kind of job. Even Christmas day sometimes. I end up being someone’s Christmas present.”

“But…You must be exhausted!”

He shrugged. “You get used to it. I get sore, but they give us glycerine gel to numb it. I get jaw ache from giving head for long periods, but the trick is to chew gum…Stops the muscles from seizing.”

“But how do you even…Y’know…ten times a day?”

“What? Get hard?” Louis nodded, embarrassed…Though Harry didn’t seem to be at all. “They give us medication.”

“Like Viagra?”

“Yeah, sometimes. And if we need to get hard real quick our Handlers carry this little syringe of stuff they give us a shot of, right in the ass. You get hard so fast it hurts. Then my handler puts a cock ring on me and I’m good to go.”

Louis tried again to ask his question. “Harry…” But when Harry turned to him, turquoise green eyes searching his face, he lost his courage again. “Umm…So do you ever get out to do stuff? Y’know like just go to the cinema or…” Harry shook his head, confused. “So, you just stay in that place?”

Harry nodded. “I live there, I work there, I eat there, my friends are there…I do get out…I go out with clients. But The Birdcage is my home. You should come for an hour some time.”

And Louis knew that there was no way he could ever set foot in that place. “Your home?! Sounds more like a prison! Harry, who’s ‘they’? You keep talking about ‘they’.”

“Management, the Handlers, Mr Cowell…I’m not a prisoner Louis. At The Birdcage I get food and shelter, protection…It wouldn’t be like that if I was working the streets.” But there was something in the way he said it that sounded rehearsed. And suddenly, terrified as he was of the answer, Louis still had to ask his awful question.

“Have you ever been raped?”

He felt Harry stiffen beside him. There was a long pause, then “…No.”

But he’d hesitated too long and Louis knew that the real answer had been in the silence. Harry rolled away from him, pressing his face into the pillow. Louis waited and then rolled over too, spooning him and reaching round to rest his hand over his own. He brushed his hair away so that he could kiss his cheek. “If anyone ever tries to hurt you like that I swear to God I’ll tear them limb from limb.”

Harry’s voice was a whisper, choked with sadness. “No you won’t. You can’t protect me Lou…But thanks for saying you’d try.”

And in a way Louis knew he was right. “I love you.”

“Thank you.”
And he didn’t know what else to say, so instead he held Harry close, stroking his hair until he fell asleep…Then he lay awake, listening to his breathing and thinking, haunted by his truths.

Chapter End Notes

O.k so as always please, please leave a review to let me know what you think and if you liked what you've read then please click that Kudos button!
Chapter 13-Numb

Chapter Summary

This chapter follows straight on from the last one. Jay has an incident with Harry that makes her suspicious...And notices that something's not right about her son and his 'friend'. And Harry discovers that one of his fellow Products at the Birdcage has a terrible secret...That isn't too different from his own.

Chapter Notes

WARNINGS- Language, sexual abuse, butt plugs, physical abuse that is sadomasochistic in nature. There is a rape scene in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 13-Numb

With a sweet half-touch the striker sent the ball flying into the back of the net and the crowd in the stands all lept the their feet, cheering.

“COME ON DONNY! YEEEEEEEESSSSS! GET IN!”

Harry turned to look at Louis. The youth beside him couldn’t be more different that the one he’d first seen at that party that night…Gone was the designer suit and bespoke leather shoes, to be replaced with trainers, tracksuit bottoms and a football suit. In place of the slicked back hair and clean-shaven look was a fluffy cowlick and stubble. He looked so much younger, the worry lines that normally creased his forehead now gone. And then there was the most significant change… Louis seemed actually, genuinely happy-He seemed to glow from inside out, as if a long dormant spark had been kindled back to life…Harry almost felt as if he was seeing him for the first time… And it was beautiful.

“That’s us one up...We’ve got this in the bag unless it goes into extra time.” Louis took a sip of his beer and turned to look at him. “What?”

“Nothing…They’re a good team.”

“Best in the league mate. My granddad used to bring me to every match. Only time I ever saw him cry was the day we got relegated. It were fuckin’ awful. They carried a coffin draped with the Rovers colours round the pitch…Pop cried like a baby. But we’ve gone from strength to strength since. And....And.....And we might just be about to fucking win…” The shrill shriek of the final whistle echoed round the small stadium. “YEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEESSSSSSS! COME ON THEN!”

He swung round and gave Harry a high five before jumping up and punching the air as the crowd
cheered around him. Buzzing on Louis’ energy Harry cheered too, whooping and clapping with him as the team did a victory lap of the pitch. The crowd began to file out of the seats.

“So where are we going now?”

Louis rolled his eyes at him as if he were dense. When he spoke it was in a cut-glass RP accent.

“We, Harold, are going to find ourselves an established purveyor of fine ales, liquors and spirits in which to get ourselves exquisitely inebriated, as one learned before getting oneself expelled from public school.”

“Y’what?”

“We’re going down the boozer to get fucking rat-arsed…” Louis made a face at him, crossing his eyes and Harry laughed.

“We’re supposed to be baby-sitting tonight remember?”

“Oh shit yeah…” Louis’ shoulders sagged in disappointment and then his eyes lit up. “But one won’t hurt, will it? Just to toast the victory?”

“I suppose not.”

“Course not. Come on.” He caught hold of his arm and Harry let him lead him down the steps and onto the stadium floor towards the exit.

“LOUIS!” They both turned at the sound of the shout to see a short middle-aged man making his way towards them, his football shirt stretched wide over his pot belly. “Knew it was you! How ya doin’ lad?!”

“Bobby!” He held out his hand and Louis took it before pulling him into a hug. “I’m good, I’m good.” He let him go and turned to Harry. “Bobby this is my mate Harry.”

“Hi.” Harry shook his hand.

“Bobby here gave me my first job, selling burgers here every match day.”

“Yeah for a tenner and free entry to the match…It were child labour though, he were only ten!”

And the thought of little Louis selling burgers so he could see the football for free was somehow so endearing. Harry smiled. “Really?”

“Aye, he were such a wee short-arse he could barely reach the counter to give ‘em their change!” The man turned back to Louis. “So you stayin’ with yer mam? She misses you somethin’ terrible you know.”

“Yeah…”

“Alright mate? Didn’t know you were home.” They were suddenly joined by a youth of around their age with jet-black spikey hair. He patted Louis on the back in greeting and Louis turned to gape at him, surprised.

“Stan! Alright mate? Didn’t know you were up either! You good?”

“Yeah, fine. Finished my coursework so I thought I’d come up for the match.” He turned to look Harry up and down. “So who’s this then?” His smile was warm, friendly.
“Uh this…”

“Hi I’m Harry. I’m a friend of Louis’.” Harry stepped toward him, holding out his hand…And the boy seemed to flinch. As Harry watched, confused, he looked from Louis, to him and back. He seemed…shocked? Then Harry blinked and it was gone….Still, he seemed to hesitate before shaking his hand quickly.

“Hi, I’m Stan, Louis’ best mate. We went to school together.”

“Oh, cool.”

“Yeah, Stan…Me and Harry are heading down the pub for a quick one if you fancy it?”

But the black-haired boy shook his head. “Nah mate, I’ve got to head on. Good seeing you home though.” To Harry it seemed that he stared at Louis a little too long before giving him a goodbye nod. He turned to look him up and down again, eyes narrowed.

“’Bye Harry.”

“’Bye. It was nice meeting you.”

“Hmmm.” And then he was gone, making his way through the crowd towards the gate. Louis watched him go before turning back to them.

“So…Drink? C’mon lads, I’m buying.” He gave Harry a wink that made his heart jump and led them both from the stadium.

It seemed to Harry that Louis knew damn near everyone in Doncaster, certainly it seemed like someone was coming to their table to speak to him every five minutes. Not that Louis seemed to mind. He was so relaxed, chatting and laughing, and Harry was happy to just sit, sip his pint and admire what he was like. But it wasn’t just Louis who had changed outside London…Harry could feel himself changing too. Usually in a situation like this he’d be in Dirty Harry mode—Brimming over with fake confidence, every look, expression and gesture designed to be alluring, flaunting himself for the crowd, making sure he looked good on his clients arm…But he didn’t need to here. Yes people stared at him as they entered the pub, but that was more because he was an unfamiliar face than anything else, and they were too far away from London to be potential clients, so he needn’t do anything except give them a friendly nod.

It felt…strange. He suddenly felt uncomfortable in his own skin, painfully aware of his height and gangly limbs, his messy curls so much longer than everyone else’s hair. He was shy and terrified in case anyone asked him his opinion on anything…Because he just didn’t know. He didn’t know world news, didn’t follow sport, hadn’t even watched T.V in years…He felt like he’d surfaced from a terrible nightmare and was seeing the world for the first time in forever…And he wanted back in, wanted to learn everything about it. He was safe here, with Louis. If only they could stay here, just like this, then he knew he could integrate himself back into the world, could go back and find out who he’d been before Dirty Harry, who he could have been if he hadn’t been taken…For the first time in a long time he felt like he could be a person again instead of simply Mr Cowell’s Product.

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There was nothing more humbling, Harry reflected, than being given a withering look by a twelve month old baby.
“I’m trying my best, ok?” But baby Ernest wasn’t interested in excuses. He began bawling and wriggling, making Harry’s job that much harder. “Shhh, just lie still!” He fought with the nappy tabs again.”Urgh, why won’t these bloody stick?!” A hot trickle of wee escaped the nappy leg and dripped down his hand. The door opened and he turned, expecting Louis to help him…but Louis had problems of his own.

“NO! NO! I DON’T WANT TO GO TO BED! I WANT TO STAY UP FOR MUMMY!” Phoebe bolted through the door into the kitchen dressed in PINK pyjamas, her socks slipping on the tiles and Louis in hot pursuit.

“Well you can’t Pheebs; she won’t be in ‘til late!”

“Don’t care!”

He lunged for her but she dodged deftly under his arm and disappeared into the utility room. Louis turned to him with a weary sigh.

“I don’t get it. Daisy went straight to sleep.”

“WE’RE NOT THE SAME PERSON YOU KNOW!” Came an irritated voice from amongst the laundry.

Harry wiped his hand with a baby wipe. “Maybe you shouldn’t have let Lottie and Fizzy go to that sleepover? We could have used the extra hands.”

“Nah, they’d have hated me. Besides, we’re grown men…We can handle a few little kids. How are you getting on?”

“Ummm.” But this time when he pressed down the tabs they seemed to stick. “Cracked it.” He lifted Ernest and turned to face him…Only for the nappy to fall off and flutter to the floor. They both stared down at it. “How the hell can women do this?”

“Because they’re better than us, apparently…Just don’t ever tell them. How about we swop? I’ll take him and you can try to put Pheebs to bed.”

“O.K.” Harry handed Ernest over and headed for the utility room. “Phoebe?”

“I’m staying up for Mummy.” A muffled, yet determined, voice issued from the cupboard beside the washing machine. He sat down in front of it with a sigh.

“Phoebe I get that it’s scary, being without your mum for the night…But Louis is your big brother, and look at me…” The cupboard opened slowly to reveal Phoebe sitting inside, cross-legged. She glared out at him. “I’m big, right?” She nodded. “Big enough to fight off anyone who tries to hurt you.”

“Even burglars?”

“Especially burglars.”

She considered this. “What about ghosts?”

He arched an eyebrow at her. “Fearless Dinosaur hunter Phoebe Tomlinson afraid of ghosts? I don’t believe it for a second. Ghosts aren’t real…But dinosaurs are. I wish I knew more about them though…”
She considered this. “You could read a book?”

He sighed. “Well, yeah I could…I’d still need an expert to explain stuff though.”

“I could read it with you?”

He pretended to think about it. “Yeah…That could work.”

She clambered out of the cupboard and reached for his hand. “Come on. I’ve got lots of books upstairs.”

Four dinosaur books later and Phoebe was flagging.

“I think it’s time for sleep now.”

“No.” But she didn’t protest when he lifted the duvet up over her. He turned on the night light and made his way toward the door.

“Harry?”

“Yes Phoebe?”

“What’s your big sister called?”

Even the mention of her stung. “Gemma. But I always called her Gem.”

“I bet she loves you very much.” She lay back onto the pillows with a yawn. “Gem’s lucky to have a little brother like you.”

“T-thanks.” He turned off the light and shut the bedroom leaning against it and fighting back tears. Was she? If she knew, would she think herself lucky to have a brother who was a whore? He doubted it. Maybe it was a good thing that he would never see her again, because he couldn’t stand the shock he’d see in her face, the disgust in her eyes…

Louis turned as he entered the living room. “Shhhh! I’ve finally got them to sleep!” He gestured to the travel cot in the corner…And then paused, staring at him. “You o.k?”

“Yes…” Harry sniffed and rubbed his hand over his eyes. “Just a bit homesick, that’s all. This trip’s just made me think about family, y’know?”

Louis nodded. “Well, I know you’re Northern. If you’d only tell me where you’re from maybe we could…”

And he’d have given anything to let Louis take him home…But he was acutely aware of the rubber bracelet around his wrist, transmitting his every move. “No Lou, absolutely not.” He shook his head violently. “No way.”

“O.k…That’s o.k.” Louis held up his hands. “Look why don’t we just relax. Watch a movie or something?” He went and flopped down on the sofa before holding his hand out to him. “Come on, Mum’s got Netflix.”

“What’s that?”
“You mean you don’t...?” Louis took in his blank expression. “Never mind. Just come here.” Harry sat down beside him and he slid his arm around him “Did you enjoy today?”

“Umm hmm.” Harry curled up on the sofa and rested his head on his shoulder. “I just…I wish this could be our lives, y’know? You and me, just ordinary people.”

“Me too.” Louis kissed his temple.

“I feel so safe here. Imagine if we stayed, got a little house…”

Louis decided to play along. After all, what was the harm in a little dreaming? “Maybe a little cottage out in the country somewhere nearby…”

“We could get a dog.”

“Yeah, why not? A German shepherd.”

“Or a husky.”

“Ok, whatever you want. You’d have to walk it every day though. What would we call it?”

“Ummm…dunno. Bruce if it’s a boy.”

“And if it’s a girl?”

“Barbara.”

Louis cracked up laughing at that. “What?! You can’t call a dog Barbara!”

“I don’t know! I had a mind blank!” Harry flushed pink and Louis felt guilty. But he couldn’t resist teasing him.

“Ok, ok we’ll have loads of pets with stupid names…A dog called Barbara, and a cat called Derek, a Fish named Fergus, a pigeon named Kevin…”

“A pigeon named Kevin?!” Harry sat up and stared at him, fighting to control his giggles.

“Absolutely.” Then Louis grew serious. “And there would be no Birdcage and no Dad…”

Harry nodded. “And when it’s sunny outside we’d walk the dog and then lie out in the back garden and listen to music…”

“And when it was cold and raining I’d make you breakfast and we’d stay in bed all day.”

“Ummm.” Harry rested his head on his shoulder again. “And fuck.”

Louis turned to him, reaching to place his fingers beneath his chin and tilt his face upward so he could look into his eyes. “No, not fuck…Make love. And there would be no more work for you, no more nasty freakish clients, no more humiliation, no more pain…I’d look after you.”

Harry nodded. “And for you there’d be no more fiancé, no more boring meetings in a job that you hate, no more hiding…I’d love you for you.”

Louis hugged him close, kissing his hair. “It’s a nice dream.”

Harry nodded. “I just wish it could be more than a dream.”
But they both knew how impossible that was.

What a night! Five births, one miscarriage, and two emergency C-sections…Jay was beyond exhausted. Still, she thought as she pulled into her driveway, at least the house was still standing. She loved her son, but Louis could be a bit feckless.

She let herself in, kicking her shoes off in the hallway and rubbing the balls of her aching feet. The house was dark, quiet…No…

She straightened up, straining to listen…Yes there it was again, just on the cusp of hearing-A strange whimpering sound…One of the girls? Were they having a nightmare? As she crept up the stairs the noise grew louder- muffled, short, high-pitched yelps, like that of a frightened animal. She reached the landing and looked about her. But every bedroom door was shut. She turned, still listening…To see the bathroom door hanging open, just a crack. As she made her way towards it the whimpers grew louder, accompanied now by quick, gasping breaths. She stepped inside and flicked on the light…

It was a harrowing sight. That friend of Louis’-Harry- sat with his back against the bath, curled in on himself, fists clenched at his chest. He stared into space, unseeing eyes shining with tears, his lower lip clamped so tightly between his teeth that a trickle of blood dripped down his chin. His entire body was trembling so violently that he looked on the brink of a seizure.

“UM…..UM…UM…UM…UM…UM…UM…” They were muffled yelps of terror.

Immediately her nursing instinct kicked in. She ran to him, dropping to her knees in front of him and taking his face in her hands.

“Harry?! Harry?! Harry honey, can you hear me? Ok honey, I need you to wake up.” She tapped his cheeks gently. “Come on now, wake up. Look at me, come on.” Slowly the glazed look in his green eyes began to fade. He gasped for air, as if breaching the surface after being trapped underwater…Then he surged forward. But she was prepared. She caught him, holding him tightly as he struggled against her, cradling his head with one hand. “Shhh, shhhh, it’s alright sweetheart, it’s alright.” Soon he grew still and she released him, guiding him gently back onto his knees and pushing his hair out of his eyes. “Hey, it’s me, it’s Jay, Louis’ mum, remember?” He stared at her suspiciously, then his gaze darted past her to the bathroom beyond. She reached to touch his cheek to get his attention. “Honey, it’s over. You’re safe. Here, let me see.” She tilted his chin, but he wouldn’t open his mouth for her, so instead she reached for his clenched fists, taking them in her hands and gently prying his fingers open. He’d been clenching them so tightly that his nails had cut into his palms, and beads of blood welled up from the cuts like rubies. “Right, I’m going to have to clean these. And I want to take a look at that lip, it might need a stitch. Come on.” He allowed her to lead him downstairs to the kitchen like a little boy, where he perched on the edge of a chair and watched as she filled a glass. “Here, drink this. It will help.”

He took a gulp and grimaced.

“What is it?”

“Gin. It will steady your nerves.” She lifted the First Aid box and went to sit beside him. “Ok, open
up.” He obeyed and she examined his bloody lip. “Hmmm, not as deep as I thought.” She cleaned it carefully before turning her attention to the cuts in his palms. He watched her as she cradled his hands in her own, cleaning them gently.

“I-I’m so sorry…I-I get nightmares…”

“Oh sweetheart, that was no nightmare. I may be a midwife but I did my time in the Psych Ward just like every other nurse…I know PTSD when I see it.”

“PTSD?”

“Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Night terrors and flashbacks are classic symptoms.” She looked up at him. He was a funny wee thing, she reflected, underweight for his height and pixie-faced, with a full mouth and huge sea-green eyes, extremely pretty but baby-faced…and so child-like. She’d noticed it from the second he’d arrived, hiding behind Louis and seemingly wanting the ground to swallow him up. Every word, every gesture, every look was that of a boy in his mid-teens, not a man of twenty-almost as if something had happened to him that had been so significant that it had left him frozen in time, forever a teenager. She found herself wondering where his mother was. And there was something else that was odd but she couldn’t quite put her finger on it. “Do you want to talk about it?” He shook his head, avoiding her gaze. He looked so frightened and lost. She pointed to the two sparrow tattoos on his chest. “I bet your mum hates those. The first time Louis got a tattoo I almost killed him!” It worked. There was a shy little smile. “She’s never seen them. But she’d be furious if she knew.”

“Where are you from?”

“Cheshire.”

“Do you get home often?”

He didn’t answer. “You should let him give you the money for the girls.”

“What?”

“Louis.”

She bit back a flash of annoyance. “That’s not really your business.”

“I know but…He needs to feel like there’s a point.” He may have been childlike, but he also seemed to have a child’s uncanny perception. “I know what’s going on, he told me. He’s trapped right? But he loves you and his brother and sisters. If you would let him give you money then it would give him a sense of purpose, make it easier.”

“I suppose…” She’d never even thought of that. “So you two are close?”

He turned away and pressed his lips together, the classic gesture of a little boy determined to keep a secret. She began to get a sinking feeling…“Umm hmm. Best friends. He’s good fun, proper nice.”

“I thought you were Stan’s mate.”

For a second Harry looked panicked. “Well yeah…Like…I met Lou through Stan, but then we became really good friends.”

“Oh, I see.” She didn’t believe him for a second. He was sweet…but, god, he was vulnerable.
Everything in her wanted to mother him. And there was that...something...still niggling at her.
“So...How are you feeling now?”

“Bit better. I’m really sorry for bothering you. Thank you for being so nice to me.”

“No, sweetheart, you were no bother at all. It wasn’t your fault.” Without thinking she reached to stroke his hair. He instinctively flinched away from her...The classic response of an abused child. “Shhh, steady on. I’m not going to hurt you.”

He flushed red, ducking his head. “Sorry, I-I just...Look, umm, is it ok if I go back to bed? It’s just...I’m tired...”

“Yeah, sure.”

“And...Could you not tell Lou about this, please? It’s kind of embarrassing’.”

‘Lou’-None of his friends ever called him ‘Lou’. “Sure. We’ll tell him you tripped sleepwalking, ok?”

“Yeah, that’d work.”

She watched him go...And then it hit her...The thing that had been so odd...She’d been so focused on caring for him that she hadn’t really noticed before, but...the whole time that she’d been treating him, sitting at the kitchen table talking to him, he’d been wearing only boxer shorts...And he’d made no attempt to cover himself in front of her. A terrible suspicion began to form in her mind- The PTSD, the way he’d flinched away from her, his child-like behaviour, his total lack of embarrassment at being semi-naked in front of a stranger-They were all textbook signs of sexual abuse. And suddenly she was just so tired.

She knocked back what was left of the gin and put her head in her hands.

The next day she cradled a strong cup of coffee and watched out of the window as they played football with the twins, her heart sinking more and more as she noted every look, every secret smile, every almost touch...How could she have not seen it before? Louis moved and Harry moved, as if they were connected by an invisible thread. She knew that she should be furious, that that girl back in London was planning for her fairy-tale wedding with what she thought was her prince, that he was being so cruel to her; but...she turned her attention to her son, her gaze following him as he ran across the grass...for the first time since he’d been stolen from her she could see a glimmer of the happy, bubbly, care-free boy he used to be, and it brought tears to her eyes. She recalled that night in the car, how he’d sat looking down at his hands, tears rolling down his cheeks. ‘Mum, I’ve got something awful to tell you...about me.’ He’d been so afraid. But she’d loved him more, not less, for being honest with her, for being so brave. When he’d first told her about Eleanor and the engagement she’d seen his father’s influence all over it. Then the girl had arrived and she was sweet, and he’d seemed to like her, and she’d thought that perhaps he’d changed his mind...But he’d never looked at that girl the way he was looking at Harry now. And would it really be so terrible?

As she watched the match seemed to draw to a close, and she couldn’t help but laugh as Harry did a victory lap of the garden, cheering, Phoebe clinging to his back like a monkey. The four of them burst through the French doors.

“MUMMY, ME AND HARRY WON! DID YOU SEE?!” Phoebe ran towards her.
“Yes, I saw.” She caught her in her arms and ruffled her hair.

“They cheated!” Daisy was incandescent with fury, stamping her feet. “It’s not my fault Louis was rubbish!”

“Cheers for that Dais.” Louis turned to Harry. “You all packed, mate?”

“Yeah, I think so. I’ll just go get my bag.” He left the room. Daisy poked Phoebe.

“I demand a rematch without boys!”

“You’re on!”

They both ran back outside. Jay glanced at Louis as he watched them go. He was starting to look more like his father, she noticed, the childhood softness melting away to reveal the exquisite bone structure beneath.

“Louis…What are you doing?”

He turned to her, confused. “What?”

“With that boy…”

Guilt flashed in his eyes. “He’s just a friend.”

“Just a friend…Then why do you light up every time he smiles at you? And why does he look at you like you hung the moon?” He turned away, avoiding her gaze. “You love him, don’t you?” He nodded, his face twisting in pain. “And does he feel the same?” He nodded again.

“I don’t need you to tell me that I’m a total bastard for doing this to El…I didn’t mean to…”

“You think I don’t know that? Hey…” She reached for him. “This isn’t the end of the world, y’know.”

He bit back desperate tears and she wanted to hold him tight like she used to when he was a little boy, but doubted he’d let her now. “Then why does it feel like it is? I can’t do this Mum. I never meant this to happen.”

She snorted at that. “You kids…You think love’s a choice. Can you ever imagine a day when you won’t need him?” He shook his head. “Then there’s your answer. But you need to tell Eleanor…And soon. Yes she’ll be hurt…but the longer you string her along the worse it will be.”

“And what about Dad?”

His question hung in the air. She sighed. “I don’t know. Perhaps he’ll give up, let you go and go father a new heir with a 22 year old model.”

“I wish.”

She took a deep breath. Part of her wanted to tell him what had happened the night before, about her suspicions…But she’d made a promise and it wasn’t her business to tell.

“Look, Louis…about Harry…Just…Be gentle with him, ok? That boy, he’s young for his age, fragile…”

“I know.”
She reached for his hand, giving it a squeeze and he smiled at her. “Thanks for having us Mum.”

“You know I love to see you honey…And next time? Bring Harry again.”

“I will. I love you Mum.” He gathered her up into a bear hug and she pressed her face into his chest, her tears soaking into his sweatshirt as she thought about how much she missed him.

With every mile that they grew closer to Primrose Hill and Louis’ house Harry could feel the knot of dread in his stomach growing tighter and tighter. By the time they pulled into his street his head was spinning with terror and he was struggling to hear Louis’ voice over the frantic pounding of blood in his ears. But it would be pointless to let Louis see…Because there was nothing he could do about it.

“So a weekend with my mad family wasn’t too painful?”

He swallowed the bile that rose in his throat and pasted on a smile. “No! No, I had a really good time. Thanks. Your mum’s brilliant.”

“She liked you too. And did you, y’know…Get a break?” Louis looked at him expectantly and he nodded. “Good. I just wish I could give you a more permanent break.”

He shook his head. “I need…”

“To earn. Yeah, I know.” He pulled up in the driveway and put the handbrake on before turning to him. “Can I ask you something?”

Harry pushed his hair back with his hand. He felt as if ants were crawling beneath his skin and everything instinct he had was screaming at him to wrench open the car door and run, run now…But he couldn’t. “Yeah, go ahead.”

“The other morning when you had that Night Terror thing…After, you said that you didn’t want back to The Birdcage because ‘He can get at me’. Who’s he?”

He pressed his lips together, feeling the roughness of the scab where he’d bitten through the flesh. “I…No one…It was no one. I was half-asleep, I was rambling…”

“Harry please…” Louis cupped his cheek with one hand. “Please, just tell me how you ended up there. I know you need help.”

He turned and kissed his palm. His blue eyes were searching his face, so kind, and he was so very afraid…maybe, just maybe…He could save him? He opened his mouth…

*WHACK!*  

At the sound of a hand smacking glass both of them jumped. Harry spun round, and froze in terror, his heart pounding in his chest like a drum…Because Jack stood on the other side of the car window pane, leering through the glass. Louis scrambled out of the car.

“What the hell do you think you’re playing at?! You could have smashed my bloody window!”
“Sir I’m on a schedule. I need to get Harry back by a certain time.” He yanked the car door open and Harry shank back into his seat as he reached over him to undo his seatbelt, his face inches from his own. He grinned his skeleton grin. “Did you miss me Harry?”

Thankfully he didn’t wait for a reply, grabbing him by the arm and dragging him painfully from the car before turning to where Louis was lifting his case from the boot. “Was Harry acceptable to you Sir? Did he behave himself?”

“Yes. He was perfect.” Louis handed him an envelope before turning to look at Harry. “I’ll see you soon, ok?”

He nodded, trying to keep his expression neutral. “Yeah.”

Jack’s long finger jabbed into the small of his back. “What do you say?”

“Thank you Sir.”

He could feel Louis’ stare burning into his back as he made his way to the black SUV, but he didn’t turn round in case he saw the tears in his eyes. He slid into the back seat and lowered his gaze to his lap as the engine purred to life and they pulled out into the street.

“So…Did you let him fuck you?” He looked up to see Jack watching him in the rear-view mirror and knew the truth would only lead to punishment for not doing his job.

“Yes. Lots.”

“And did you suck his cock?”

“Yes.”

“I bet you loved it. And why did you do that Harry? Tell me why you do those disgusting things and enjoy them?”

He gave the answer that was expected of him. “Because I’m a slut.”

“That’s right. And I’m your Master. Tell me Harry, if I’m your Master then what does that make you?”

And Harry could feel the invisible cuffs being strapped back on, the invisible collar being buckled back into place around his throat. He felt like he’d been taken to the top of a mountain and shown the world before being dragged back down into the pit. “Your slave, Master.”

“Exactly. And don’t you dare ever forget it. I’ve missed our games Harry.” They came to a stop in the hotel’s underground car-park and Jack fetched his case from the boot. Harry followed him miserably towards the lift, his feet like lead weights.

They were almost there when they heard it…The sound of quiet begging, punctuated by sobs.

“No…Please Daddy, please…Oh shit…Stop…Please, stop…I don’t want to. Just stop! No…NO! AHH! AHH!” The screams were promptly muffled. They turned a corner…

And there in a shadowy enclave, was Angel and his handler.

They were both on the ground. Angel’s handler was pinning him down with his huge bulk, one hand clamped over his mouth as he reached down between them to yank down his trousers and underwear. Angel was struggling and kicking, his scraped hands leaving bloody prints on the
concrete as he tried feebly to push himself up... But he was small and skinny, no match for his handler's muscular frame.

“Lie still you fuckin’ slut! Don’t pretend like you don’t want it!” His handler kicked his legs apart... And Angel arched his back and screamed out in agony against the palm that gagged him as he lowered his great bulk on top of him. And Harry knew then that everything he’d ever been told about Angel and his handler had been a lie... This wasn’t a deal, and it wasn’t a trade... This was a rape.

“JAMIE!” He ran forward, determined to stop it... Only to be swiftly yanked back by Jack, who held him still with an arm like iron across his chest, pinning his arms to his sides and clamping his hand down tightly over his mouth to muffle his shouts of protest.

At the sound of his real name Angel looked up, his big blue eyes wide with fear and pain, tears dripping off his chin onto the concrete. His handler released his mouth and he began to plead.

“Help me! Please, make him stop... Please help me...”

“SHUT UP!” He pushed his face down into the ground before turning to look up at them. Harry reflected that the bastard didn’t even look guilty.

“You’re not gonna rat on me, are ya? He likes it really. He’s just playing hard to get.”

“No. Far be it for me to dictate to a man what he should do with his property. How old?”

“Nineteen.”

“Very nice. Carry on.”

The handler fixed them with a sleazy grin before turning his attention back to Angel. Held fast despite his struggles, Harry could do nothing but screw his eyes tight shut and try to tune out the younger boy’s agonised screams. Then he felt Jack take his hand and guide it toward his flies.

“Since you were so good to Mr Tomlinson, I’ve decided you’ve earned the privilege of pleasing me.”

He gritted his teeth and did what Jack wanted.

Afterwards Harry opened his eyes to find Angel lying on the ground in front of them like a broken doll. There was blood splattered across the dusty floor, matted in his golden hair. His face was scraped and cut, and his eyes stared at nothing. He wasn’t moving.

“Subspace.” Jack’s voice was full of approval. “When you’ve broken them so thoroughly that they go to a psychological place of total submission.”

“Yeah, whatever. Need to get him to The Doc.” Angel’s handler lifted him and swung him onto his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. “The old fool accepts any old story about violent clients and titch here knows to keep his mouth shut.”

“Thank you for the show.”

They followed him towards the lifts.
Once alone in their room Harry turned to Jack, frantic. “Handlers aren’t allowed to rape Products! He’s breaking the rules! You need to do something! You need to tell Mr Cowell!”

Jack stared at him for a few moments, his head on one side, as if he were some sort of vaguely interesting insect…And then he was on him, knocking him back onto the bed, his hand closing around his throat. Harry gasped, struggling and kicking, clawing at his fingers as the air was choked from his lungs. Jack leaned down to hiss in his ear. “Don’t you DARE think you can give me orders, slave!” He flipped him onto his stomach and yanked down his jeans and boxers. Harry gasped, heart pounding—oh shit, oh shit, oh shit…Was he? Was he going to? He was almost relieved when he felt the cool leather tip of the crop tracing its way across his bare skin. “Now, I’m going to give you six strokes for your impertinence and I want you to count each of them. You can count, can’t you?”

“Yes.”

“YES WHAT?!”

“Yes Master.”

“Good.”

The crop whistled through the air. *SMACK!* the blow caught him across the top of the thighs. “One.” *SMACK* the second blow landed right on top of the first and he fought not to cry out at the stinging pain. “T-two.” *SMACK* The rest of the blows caught him right across his buttocks and he yelped in pain. “Three.” *SMACK* “F-four”.

“I CAN’T HEAR YOU!”

*SMACK* “FIVE! *SMACK* “SIX!”

“And now what do you say?”

He pressed his face to the sheets, determined not to cry. “T-thank you for punishing me Master.”

“Good boy.”

He heard Jack walk away and thought it was over, that he would be left alone…But then he was back, pulling his thighs apart. “You have a client and I need to prep you.” He felt his fingers at his entrance, slick with lube, and closed his eyes, thinking about lying in Louis’ bed beneath plastic stars, of the heat of his body against his own, his smile, the scent of his skin, like sandalwood… The cold metal of the butt plug shocked him back to reality and he tried not to whimper at the stinging pain as Jack pushed it in and out of him for a few minutes before leaving it in and catching hold of his shoulder, pulling him to his feet. He dressed him and marched him downstairs, stopping outside one of the client rooms.

“Holiday’s over…Now’s the time to earn your keep, whore. I’ll be waiting for you when you finish.”

Left alone he stared at the closed door through a blur of tears. He’d been kidding himself that he could ever be normal again, could ever be free, that he could run away and he and Louis could play house…God, he was such an idiot! No, no this was what he was—a whore. There was no escaping it. So he pushed down everything—all the joy, the fear and the pain—deep down as far as it would go.

When he pushed open that door he was Dirty Harry again, London’s premiere Rent Boy, confident,
sexy as hell…And completely numb.

Chapter End Notes

O.k please leave a comment and let me know what you think and if you liked what you read hit the kudos button. I'll have the next chapter up as soon as possible.

Next time...Jack's games get darker, Niall has his first booking, Eleanor begins to grow suspicious...And there's a tragedy at The Birdcage.
Chapter 14-Falling Angels

Chapter Summary

This chapter starts off right after the last.

Chapter Notes

Ok, this is a DARK chapter. Warnings-Sex, Sexual abuse, threesomes, sadomasochism, bad language, and scenes that may be triggering for some people. Please do not read if easily upset. Oh, and I know absolutely nothing about Chess so apologies to any experts if I've got something wrong. Everyone warned? Ok, lets continue...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 14-Falling Angels

If Harry were to write a list of sex acts he hated threesomes would probably be in the top five. There was just too much to concentrate on at once, too many people to satisfy, too many distractions…It was exhausting.

He slid two fingers deep into his female client’s sex, thrusting them in and out as he lapped at her folds. She moaned, spreading her thighs wider, one hand moving down to take hold of his head and push his face into her crotch, her pubic hair scratching his nose, her musky scent filling his nostrils and making his stomach churn…Everything in him wanted to pull away, but he couldn’t. Instead he turned his attention to her clit, circling it teasingly with the tip of his tongue, sucking softly on it until he could feel her wetness, hear her gasping above him as her orgasm began to build…She was close and he knew he could get her there…but it would have been a lot easier for him to concentrate without her husband yelling encouragement at him.

“Fuck that’s hot! Eat her out, that’s it! Lick her pussy! Go on, make her scream!”

Suddenly strong hands caught hold of his hips hard enough to bruise and his legs were kneed apart. He felt the tip of a cock pressing against his entrance, pre-come warm and slimy on its tip. He bit back his annoyance and turned to look over his shoulder, trying to keep his tone seductive.

“Hey, I can’t wait for you to fill me up, but you know the rules…No erection without protection. There are rubbers over there on the dresser. Hurry up and put one on…Then you can fuck me hard.” The woman’s husband scowled, anger flashing in his dark eyes, but he released him and stepped back. “Sorry baby, were was I?” Harry turned back to the woman and kissed her nether lips before parting them with his fingers and licking her clit slowly and luxuriantly. Soon she was moaning again. Then…

“Fuck that! I’ve seen the health check, I know you’re clean…” The man grabbed his ankles where
he knelt on the bed, throwing him off balance as he yanked his legs apart.

“I SAID NO!” Harry kicked him away and scrambled off the bed, turning to face him. “Try anything like that again and this is over!”

The man was probably in his mid-thirties, slightly taller than him, and arrogant as hell. He stepped toward him and jabbed a finger into his chest.

“You don’t give the orders! I think you’ll find we paid you for the full hour...That means we own you until that hour is up. So here’s what’s going to happen little boy—You’re going eat out my wife and then you’re going to fuck her while I fuck you...And I’m going to do you bareback because I don’t like rubbers. I’m going to fill your ass with my come and you’re going to act like you fucking love it.”

He obviously expected him to be intimidated, but Harry had met men like him a million times before. He was one of those executive types, used to giving orders and having people scuttle to obey him. But here in The Birdcage he wasn’t the boss. He narrowed his eyes at him.

“I know who owns me...and it isn’t you. Now, it’s up to you mate. Either you use protection and we keep enjoying ourselves or you refuse and I leave...” The man made to grab hold of him and he dodged deftly out of his reach. He pointed. “My Handler is waiting just outside that door. All I have to do is yell...He’s a big guy...”

“Oh for Christ’s sake Stefan, just put a bloody condom on!” They both turned to find his wife glaring at him. She was dark-skinned, long-limbed and glamorous...And obviously not patient. She rubbed herself frantically with her fingers, wriggling against the sheets with frustration. “I’m starting to come down.”

“Fine.” The man took one from the bowl on the dresser and tossed it to Harry with a sneer. “You put it on me.” Harry reached for him. “No, not like that...Use your mouth.”

He obeyed, ignoring the man’s mocking laughter and took one for himself, putting it on before climbing back onto the bed and between the woman’s legs, fingering her clit as he pushed himself inside her. Soon she was moaning again, gasping, her long nails digging painfully into his backside. She twisted her hand into his hair and looked over his shoulder.

“Come on baby, I want to see you riding him!”

Harry gasped as the man climbed on top of him, shoving his way inside him with one quick, deep thrust. He felt his hot breath on the back of his neck, the sting of his sweat on his skin.

“You like that don’t you? My big fat dick in your ass? Come on, tell me you like it!”

Nothing could be further from the truth...The lube on the condom hadn’t been nearly enough and the pain was bringing tears to his eyes. But it was his job to lie. “Oh yeah! Oh fuck, you’re so big! Please, do me hard!”

The man leaned over his shoulder to kiss his wife; catching hold of Harry’s hips so he could deepen his thrusts...And Harry knew that his part was essentially over. All he had to do was keep himself up on his elbows, so as not to hurt the woman beneath him. He didn’t even need to bother thrusting, the thrusts of the man behind him enough to push him into her. It was far from pleasant, being sandwiched between their sweaty, writhing bodies like this...But at least it was easy. As they kissed and whispered filthy nothings to each other he chewed his lip and watched the hands of the clock on the wall next to the bed as it ticked away the minutes until his release...twenty minutes,
fifteen minutes, ten minutes…

“OH JESUS CHRIST!” Beneath him the woman came with a scream, raking her long nails down
his back hard enough to draw blood-One down. Harry let himself climax, marvelling at how little
he felt compared with when he was with Louis, and then waited for the man to do the same. He
was definitely getting close, his breathing becoming shallow, his thrusts quickening…Any minute
now…

Then without warning the man withdrew and caught Harry by the shoulders, pulling him away
from his wife and flipping him onto his back. Before Harry had time to react he’d pinned him
down, his knee on his chest and one hand on his forehead, tilting his face upwards. He whipped off
the condom and sent a hot slimy spurt of semen straight into his face.

“Urgh! Fucking hell!” Harry couldn’t help it. He wrinkled his nose in disgust, struggling beneath
the man’s hand. Beside them the woman burst out laughing.

“God Stefan! You’re sick! The poor kid!”

Harry caught a fistful of bed-sheet and reached to wipe it away… Only for the man to catch his
wrists and pin them over his head. “What are you doing? You earned that.” He straddled Harry’s
chest and leaned down until they were practically nose to nose, his lips curling in amusement as he
fought.

“Get off me or I’ll call my Handler!”

“No. You see, I know how this place works. You’re the whore, I’m the client and I’m paying you.
So you do what I want. And right now what I want is for you to lie there, bollock naked and with
my come all over your face, so my wife and I can enjoy looking at you while we get dressed…Or
we’ll tell your Handler that you were disobedient and he’ll mark that arse of yours for you again.
Understand?”

He nodded and the man climbed off him. He lay still, staring at the ceiling and listening as they
dressed, talking about him as if he wasn’t there.

“I liked that one. He gives very good head. Not as good as the Paki one though.”

“He was more fun though, sexy and with a bit of fight in him-The whip marks on his arse were nice
too. I didn’t really like the Paki, he was too quiet, just did what he was told. Do you want to book
that one again?”

“Yeah, he has a nice cock and he knows how to use it…And I want to see you spunk on him again.
That was fucking hilarious!”

“O.k….But it’s my turn to choose next. I fancy a dark-haired girl this time.”

“They had a cute one on the website-Pixie haircut, small breasts…”

“Oh yeah, she WAS cute. Here,” An envelope full of money was tossed carelessly onto the bed
beside him; then they left without so much as a thank you-not that Harry cared. He grabbed the
envelope and sat up, wiping his face as best as he could the bed-sheet before dressing quickly and
making for the door. Jack was waiting for him in the corridor. When he saw the crusted slime on
his cheeks he smirked.

“Get a shot in the face, did you? You suit it. Perhaps we should make it part of our games.”
Harry handed him the money, his gaze firmly fixed on the floor, hating the fact that he had to ask permission. “Please Master…Can I go have a shower?”

For a moment Jack seemed to hesitate and Harry’s heart lurched…Then… “Fine. Off you go. I’ll meet you in the Dining Hall.”

“Thank you Master.”

He hurried back to his room.

He twisted the tap until the water was as hot as he could stand and stood beneath the shower jet, scrubbing his skin with a flannel until it was red and sore, the water washing away the tears of humiliation that spilled down his cheeks. Once finished he searched through his wash bag for that little tube of numbing gel and applied it liberally. He was sore…But it was early and there were still more clients to service. He towelled himself off and dressed quickly before snatching up the contraband he’d hidden at the back of a drawer and tucking it beneath his shirt.

As he hurried down the corridor cooking smells drifted up from the kitchen below and his stomach rumbled. He was starving…But this was more important.

The Doc was at his desk when Harry entered the Infirmary, glasses perched on the end of his nose as he peered at the computer screen in confusion.

“Oh blast! To err is human…But to really mess things up you need a computer.” He looked up at Harry with a welcoming smile. “Hello Harry. Are you alright? Don’t suppose you know anything about spreadsheets?”

“Umm no…I’m actually here to see Angel. How is he Doc?”

The old man’s expression became grim. “His name is Jamie, Harry, that’s the name his mother gave him. And you know I can’t discuss patient’s treatment…”

“Yeah, I know. I just wanted to know if he was going to be o.k. Come on Doc, he’s my friend.”

He sighed. “A couple of his ribs were cracked, I think, and he has cuts and bruises.”

“Any stitches?”

The Doc caught his eye and gave him a warning look. “Harry…”

“Oh come on Doc. We’re whores. We’ve been made to have sex with each other, it’s not like we have any secrets.”

The Doc winced at that. “Don’t. I hate to hear you lot refer to yourselves like that.”

“Well?”

He nodded sadly. “Yes, a few stitches…But I’ve seen a lot worse. I’ve managed to get him a few days off so he can recover. He’s such a tiny, frail little thing... I just don’t understand why anyone would want to hurt him like that, let alone pay for the privilege.”

“’Course you don’t…’Cause you’re a good person. Can I see him?”

The Doc nodded again and pointed over to a screened-off bed in the far corner. “Yes…But he might be sleeping.”
Harry crossed the room and peered around a screen. Angel was dozing, his skin as white as the pillows and sheets he lay on. Bruises covered his face like smudges of purple paint and his cheek was bandaged, his lip split and swollen. One hand lay on the bed cover, its palm bandaged...And tears of pity stung the corners of Harry's eyes as he remembered the bloody handprints on the concrete as Angel had tried desperately to crawl away. He reached out, touching his fingers gently with his own, and Angel's eyelids fluttered open.

"Hey...How you feeling?"

"Like crap." But he managed a little smile and tried to sit up, wincing.

"No, no stay still. You'll hurt yourself." Harry pushed him gently back down onto the mattress and went to sit on the edge of the bed. "Here, got you summit. Ta Dah!" He reached beneath his shirt and pulled out the big bar of Dairy Milk chocolate...Highly sought after contraband considering The Bird Cage's healthy eating policy. Angel's eyes lit up. "I had to kill a man but I figured you'd need a sugar fix."

Angel giggled at that. "Aww cheers Haz." He took it from him and set it on the bedside table. "Look...What you saw this mornin'...You 'aven't told anyone yet, 'ave ya?" He shook his head. "Good. Don't."

"How long has he been doing it?"

Angel shrugged. "Long as I bin wiv 'im. I can’t fight 'im off. An' I hate it. But if I keep my mouth shut, he gets me stuff from the outside. He’s not normally as bad; just don’t like it when I say no, so he roughs me up when I do."

"I'll tell the others to stop coming to you for stuff."

"No, don’t do that! Me gettin’ fings for people...That’s currency, that is. I’m little, but I’m useful...It means at least then there’s some sort of point to it, y’know?"

He nodded. "You know he’s not allowed to do it though, right? Jamie, you need to tell someone."

Angel shook his head. "I can’t. I tell an’ he says he’ll kill me, snatch our Joe and make him take my place. He says that no one would be able to tell. an’ they wouldn’t an’ all. I’m not lettin’ ‘im do to our Joe what he’s doin’ to me, won’t let our Joe be sold like they sell me.” The determined pout looked almost comical on his baby face.

"Who's Joe?"

And suddenly Angel was fighting back tears. "My twin. Totally identical, we are. Even our Mum couldn’t tell us apart-She used to put a plaster between my shoulder blades when we woz little, just where I couldn’t reach, so’s she could tell. They came for us both-Wanted themselves a matchin’ set.” Harry’s stomach churned as he imagined the things a set of twins could have been forced to do. “I knew they weren’t gonna stop ‘til they’d got at least one of us. I told ‘im to run. Get help…”

"Jamie..."

"Besides, you’re one to talk...I saw your Handler makin’ you toss ‘im off. And I’m guessin’ that ain’t all he makes you do. Am I right?” Harry avoided his gaze, praying he wouldn’t push him for answers...Because how the hell would he ever be able to put Jack’s torture into words? “Fowt not. We’re nuffink Haz. Less than human. No one gives a shit what happens to us.” He turned to look up at the ceiling. When he spoke again, his voice was small. “Know wot I wish?"

"What?"
I wish we’d never skipped school that day, me an’ Joe... I wish we hadn’t gone to the park. Made it easier for ‘em to get us. One fing I’ll never regret though is lettin’ ‘em catch me so Joe could get away. He couldn’t ‘ave handled it. Joe was always the quiet one, sensitive like. Two halves of one whole-That’s what twins are. We’d never been apart before, me n’ Joe. Not even for one night. First night here felt worse without ‘im. Felt like I’d been cut in two.” He shot him an embarrassed look. “I still feel ‘im. I know it sounds like some bullshit you see on the telly, but we always felt wot the other was feelin’. I felt all his fear an’ guilt after I got kidnapped. I still get waves of his feelin’s…More sad than happy now. And lots of guilt. He feels guilty every day for leavin’ me. Part of me wants ‘im to forget me so he won’t feel so bad…But it’s nice, feelin’ ‘im, knowin’ that he’s out there an’ he still misses me. Does that make me a bad person? I miss ‘im so much.”

“No.” Harry reached to take his hand in a gesture of comfort. Angel turned to look at him, his china blue eyes searching his face. “No, of course not. I think about my sister and my parents all the time. See this?” He showed him his crucifix. “I kiss it every night and I know my mum can feel it when I do. I know exactly how you feel. Mr Cowell threatened to have my sister kidnapped and brought here if I didn’t behave. I’d do anything to stop that happening.”

Angel nodded; then his expression became serious. “Haz, if I don’t make it…Find Joe an’ our mum an’ tell ‘em how much I loved ‘em, will ya?”

It was a strange thing to say. Harry wrinkled his brow at him curiously. “But you’re not dying Jamie. The Doc says you’ll be fine.”

“Promise me Haz!” He seemed suddenly desperate.

“Yes, yeah I will...Of course I will.” Harry rushed to reassure him. “I promise.”

“Good. I don’t want to go wivout havin’ someone to tell ‘em.”

“But Jamie, you’re not going anywhere. You’re not dying!” Angel didn’t answer him, just turned his head to gaze at the ceiling again. It didn’t make any sense, but Harry guessed that The Doc had probably put him on some serious pain medication. He sat with him, holding his hand until he fell asleep, before going down to join the others in the Dining Hall.

That night Harry lay back in bed and tugged the covers over his head, listening to the muffled voices of Zayn and Niall chatting as he waited for Jack to come and tie him up for the night. He liked hiding here, in his own little world beneath the duvet. It made him feel like a little boy again, back when things were simple, he was safe, and the only monsters he knew were in fairy-tales. It was peaceful...

“Here, shift over!”

“Oh for fuck’s sake! Can I not get five minutes alone?!” But he moved so that Zayn could clamber in beside him. He pulled the duvet back over them both and closed his eyes…Then came a voice close by his ear.

“Haz...Are you alright man?”

He turned to find Zayn lying on his side, his expression full of concern. He rolled over to face him and sighed. “Where’s Niall?”

“Having a shower.”
“Good. Look Zayn…This morning I saw something…Angel wasn’t raped by a punter.” And then it all came spilling out. Zayn listened, eyes wide. “I just feel so shit. I wanted to stop it but I couldn’t, and now I want to tell someone but I can’t.”

Zayn shook his head in weary disgust. “Jesus Christ, poor kid. But Angel’s right Haz…Nobody’s gonna care. And it’s not exactly your business to tell, is it?”

“I guess. But…”

“I get that you’ve appointed yourself Great Protector of Us All, but Angel’s not going to risk his brother being taken and it wouldn’t be fair for you to. All we can do is look out for him- Y’know, try to make sure his Handler can’t be alone with him, listen if he needs to talk, see if we can take on his punters if he needs a break.”

Harry nodded. “But you weren’t there Zayn, you didn’t see it. That bastard’s so big, and Angel’s so small. He was fighting hard but it didn’t matter. He kept trying to crawl away, but he just got pushed back down. He was screaming, begging me for help…Christ!” He pressed the heels of his hands into his eyes to push back the tears of frustration that threatened to spill over. “This place is so fucked up!”

“I know. But sometimes nice things do happen…Even to whores like us…” Zayn reached to gently lift his hands away and looked at him with a soft smile. “Let’s talk about them. You got a whole weekend with your boyfriend, right? Tell me about it. Was it good?”

Harry nodded. “Better than good.”

“So what did you do?” Zayn arched an eyebrow. “Besides the obvious, I mean.”

“That’s just the thing…I mean, I like sex with him…I REALLY like it…But we didn’t have any…because he took me to meet his mum.”

Zayn’s eyebrows shot up and he let out a long, low whistle. “Phew! Fuckin’ hell, it must be serious!”

Harry laughed and shoved him away. “It wasn’t like that! He needed to go babysit his sisters but he didn’t want me to come back here, so he brought me too. We pretended I was just a mate of his…Then we snogged whenever we knew no one could catch us.”

Zayn pointed at him with a smirk. “You’ve gone all red! You’ve got it bad, man!”

Harry blushed even redder, embarrassed. “It was just…nice. His mum’s really kind, and his sisters are adorable. We went to watch the footie, went to the pub…It was just…normal. For the first time in four years I felt like a normal person. More than that…It’s like…Here I’m just property…With him I feel human again. I told him that I was his and y’know what he said? He said he didn’t want to own me, that I didn’t belong to anyone but myself- How cool is that? And then I have to leave him and come back here, where everyone owns me but me…” He bit his lip. “I love him Zayn. It kills me every time I have to say goodbye to him.”

Zayn nodded. “It’s the same with me an’ Perrie. But look at it this way…At least we’ve got them. It almost makes it bearable. The bastards can call us Products all they want, but if we can still love somebody then they haven’t broken us, they haven’t won, kid…We have.”

The thought made Harry smile. “I guess we have.”

“What the fuck are you two little faggots doing under there?!”
Suddenly the duvet was whipped away and Trev was sneering down at them.

“Nothing, Trev. Just talking.”

“Yeah, well chatting time’s over!”

Harry sat up and watched as Trev forced Zayn’s muzzle down over his mouth. He dragged him from his bed and over to his own, shoving him down, yanking his arms roughly above his head and buckling the cuffs into place. Job done, he tossed the covers carelessly over him and left without a backward glance.

Niall emerged from the bathroom, rubbing his fluffy blonde hair dry with a towel, and Liam waited until he’d put his pyjamas on before gagging him and cuffing him to his bed. He tugged him in tenderly before checking to ensure that the cuffs weren’t too tight around his wrists…And Harry felt jealous. He’d found having Liam as his Handler almost unbearably awkward…Now he’d give anything to have him back. He hadn’t realised how lucky he’d been…

At the sound of fingers clicking behind him he jumped-A click meant an order. He turned to where Jack stood by his bed watching him carefully, one hand hovering over the crop on his belt as if waiting for an excuse to use it. He clicked his fingers again.

“Mouth.”

Harry obediently opened his mouth and sat submissively as Jack strapped his muzzle across his face.

*click* “Lie down.” Harry lay back against his pillow.

*click* “Arms.” He raised his hands above his head and Jack bound them with the cuffs before patting him on the head like a dog. “Good boy. I’ll have you trained in no time.”

Liam waited until he’d left before coming over and removing his muzzle, brow furrowed in concern. “Harry, is he treating you o.k?”

Harry shrugged, avoiding his gaze, cheeks burning as he realised that they’d seen it all, seen Jack giving him orders…And seen him obeying like a trained monkey. But they didn’t know what the consequences would be if he didn’t; they didn’t know about the room…About the games…“Yeah, he’s just a bit of a control freak, that’s all.”

“You sure?” Liam sat down on his bed and Harry stared up at him, touched by his sympathy but painfully aware that any attempt by him to intervene would only make it worse “It’s just…The other Handlers have said some things about him…”

“I’m sure. Look Liam, just leave it will you? I’m fine, just really tired. Hurry up and gag me again so I can go to sleep.” Liam frowned, but did as he asked. As he watched him go he caught sight of Niall out of the corner of his eye. The blonde boy was lying staring at him, eyes narrowed, and something in his facial expression told Harry that he didn’t believe him for a second. Then Liam flicked off the light. Harry lay in the dark sucking thoughtfully on his muzzle, trying to block out his misery with thoughts of Louis and wondering if Louis was thinking of him too.

***********

A week later and Louis was refusing to allow himself to think of anything else.
Eleanor slid her lips from around his cock and straddled him, leaning forward to capture his mouth with her own and kiss him hungrily.

“Fuck, you look so sexy. I need you inside me.” She lowered herself slowly onto his length, flinging her head back to expose her white throat, her small breasts bouncing as she moved. “Does that feel good? Am I doing it right?”

“Oh, yeah…Oh God, yeah!” But he couldn’t look at her. Instead he rested his hands on her silky thighs and closed his eyes, remembering….

The way Harry looked as he’d knelt in front of him, gazing up at him with those exquisite jade eyes, his full, deep pink lips stretched so beautifully around his cock, how he’d sucked him greedily, dark head moving up and down…The sight of those white cotton boxers being slid down Harry’s strong, golden thighs…How tight and hot he’d been inside when he’d straddled him, the weight of him in his lap, the taste of him…Harry spread out across that very same bed, legs bent back, feet resting on his shoulders, head thrown back as he came perfectly undone, eyes screwed tight shut, gorgeous mouth forming a perfect ‘O’…

Louis caught hold of Eleanor’s slender hips and thrust upwards into her, crying out as he came. Seconds later her felt her own climax pulsating around him, then she slumped forwards on top of him, sweaty but sated, and kissed his cheek before staring into his eyes.

“Ummm, that was perfection.”

“Glad you enjoyed it.”

She snuggled up to him, tucking her head beneath his chin and reaching to touch his chest, above his heart. “I love you so much Louis.”

And suddenly he had to get away.

“Yeah, I love you too.” He kissed her hair distractedly before disentangling himself from her and climbing out of bed, ignoring her hand when she reached for him.

He rushed to the bathroom, turned on the shower and stood beneath the power jet, pressing his forehead to the cool tiles and trying to bite back the guilt and self-loathing that threatened to overwhelm him…Because he loved Harry, he didn’t love her…He wanted Harry, he didn’t want her…

But at least, he told himself, she didn’t know. Thank God for small mercies.

Back in the bedroom Eleanor reached to touch the space that he’d left behind. The sheets were still warm from his body and part of her wanted to curl up in them and cry. After he’d proposed…That was when she’d first started to feel him pull away. It had been little things at first-A few unanswered texts, a few missed phone calls, a few cancelled lunch dates…Then she’d started to notice that when they spent time together he’d been more and more distracted; looking over her shoulder, tuning her out when she talked, playing with his phone, people-watching-anything rather than look at her. He even closed his eyes now when they made love…Why couldn’t he bear to look at her? It felt like the space between them was now a gaping chasm she had no hope of ever breaching. And she missed him, God but she missed him…It was like a death, and she grieved for him. And then he’d come home with the scent of someone else clinging to his jacket, to his skin;
then she’d phoned him and heard an unfamiliar voice in the background of the call... And she’d started to question the man she thought she knew, the man she loved who had such a big heart, who would never hurt her. Still, she wasn’t ready to add the sting of betrayal to her grief just yet without proof.

A high-pitched bleeping sound pierced through her thoughts and she turned... To see his mobile phone on the bedside table, buzzing against the wood as the alarm flashed. She glanced from it to the closed bathroom door and back again... But the shower was still running... She lunged for it, snatching it up and opening it. His password was the same for everything-His birthdate. She typed it in with trembling fingers and found his call log, scrolling down... Some were to work, some were to Stan, some were to her... But again and again the same name kept coming up-quick calls, only one longer than fifteen minutes... No, not a name, an initial...

‘H’

Who the fuck was ‘H”? Was it a woman’s name? Was he having an affair? He was hers, her Louis... She thought she knew every inch of him, thought he was too good to ever hurt her like that, had almost deified him in her mind, turned him into some sort of angel... But even angels could fall... She called the number and raised the phone to her ear, heart pounding, praying that no one would pick up- because of they did what the hell would she say? The dial tone droned, then...

“Hello, you’ve reached The Bird Cage Hotel. How can I help you?”

“Sorry, wrong number.” She hung up and sat back, her mind spinning. A hotel? Was he meeting her in a hotel? She’d never heard of a hotel called The Bird Cage.

She jumped as the bathroom door opened and Louis stepped out, a towel wrapped around his waist.

“Your turn.” He strode over to the bed and kissed her before looking down at the phone in her hand. “Why have you got my phone?”

“Oh, um, your alarm went off.” She held it out to him.

“Oh. Sorry about that love.” He took it from her and crossed the room to his chest of drawers, turning his head to talk to her over his shoulder as he selected clean underwear, a shirt and a tie.

“I’ll make you whatever you want.”

She swallowed. “I’m watching my weight-I’ve got a wedding dress to fit into, remember?”

“Don’t be stupid. You’re perfect.” He smiled at her, that cheeky, mischievous smirk that had captivated her when they’d first met, had made her want to run away with him and get into any trouble he was getting into just for the joy of being with him... Tears pricked her eyes. She rose from the bed and crossed the room to wrap her arms around him, her breasts against his chest; laying her head on his shoulder and breathing in gulps of his scent, warm and comforting, like Sandalwood.

“I love you. Do you love me?”

“Hey, what’s brought this on eh?” But he hugged her back.

“Just answer the question.”

“Sure I do. I love you El.” But there was a slight tremor in his voice. He released her, and tipped her chin so he could look into her face. He was so handsome; all she’d ever wanted... But did he still want her? Had he ever wanted her? “So...breakfast?”
She pasted on a smile. “Pancakes…With Nutella.”

“Fine. Whatever my girl wants, she gets.”

He turned his back on her. He didn’t see the tear that escaped down her cheek as he left the room.

She waited until he’d left the house before calling in sick to work and going back to his room to search for…What? She didn’t know-just something, anything, that would prove to her that he was cheating on her…Or reassure her that he wasn’t. She searched through his drawers, through his wardrobe, through the pocket of every jacket, every pair of jeans-Gum wrappers, loose change, receipts for petrol, for coffee and…Theatre tickets? She found them in the inside pocket of his beige Burberry trench coat and turned them over and over in her hands, examining them-‘Shakespeare’s Othello ‘…But Louis hated the theatre, loathed Shakespeare. A lump formed in her throat as she realised-Maybe SHE liked it. There was a box file on his desk, full of all his essential bits of paperwork. She searched through it, not even quite sure what she was looking for until her hand closed on a thick brown envelope-His internet banking details.

It would be a MASSIVE invasion of his privacy…but he wouldn’t have to find out…And if she found nothing then she could relax, let all this go…All she wanted was some proof that she was wrong…

The password for the laptop was the same-he was too forgetful to have a different one. She logged on, typed in his codes, clicked ‘Recent Transactions’…And what she saw shocked her...

Transactions for massive amounts of money…£900…. £12, 000… £72, 000…All cash withdrawals or cheques. She slumped back in the desk chair, heard pounding as she stared at the screen.

“Oh Louis…” She whispered. “What the hell have you gotten yourself into?”

She knew she couldn’t confront him without having to admit what she’d done, knew that he’d be furious at her…But there was one other person who maybe, just maybe, might know what was going on…

She printed out the page, dressed quickly, and ran from the house.

Stan answered the door on the second ring, freezing in the doorway when he caught sight of her, rain-soaked and shaking, panting, her face make-up free and her hair and eyes wild.

“El…W-what are you..?”

The words came out in a frantic jumble. “I-I’m sorry to call over like this, I know I should have rang you first or something but this seemed too important, so I got a cab but there was a traffic jam, so I ran the rest of the way and…Shit, I’m not as fit as I thought I was…Sorry.”

“O.k, just breathe…Here, come in. I’ll get you a glass of water.” She let him lead her through into the grubby kitchen of the student flat where she collapsed onto a picnic chair as he filled a glass at the tap. He handed it to her and sat down opposite as she took a long drink, watching her carefully. “Better?” She nodded, finally able to catch her breath. “O.k, so what is this about?”

She set the printed pages down on the table in front of him, along with the theatre tickets. “I think Louis might be in serious trouble.”
“What?!” He stared at her, suddenly worried. “What do you mean?”

And she told him it all, showing him the transactions...And as she talked she could see his eyes darkening, panic setting in...It was obvious he knew something. “So either he’s being blackmailed, or its drugs or gambling...or he’s cheating on me...And I know from your face that you know, so don’t even think of lying to me Stanley.”

He looked up at her wretchedly. “Look...You need to talk to Louis...It’s not really my place to...”

And she’d had enough. “No! No, don’t you dare give me that bullshit! Don’t you dare try fobbing me off! Just tell me what the fuck is going on!”

“I told him he needed to be honest with you, that he had to tell you...”

“Tell me what?! Jesus Stan, just tell me! I can take it! IS HE CHEATING ON ME?!“ Her scream bounced off the walls of the tiny kitchen. Stan went white. And she could see the answer to her question written all over his face. It was like a body blow. She slumped over the table, winded, tears blurring her vision. He reached for her hand, touching it gently.

“I know you might not believe me, but he hates himself for it, for lying to you. He doesn’t want to hurt you; he loves you, but...”

“Love? If he’s lying to me then he doesn’t love me, he doesn’t even respect me.” She wiped her tears on her sleeve, determined not to cry in front of him. “Have you met her?”

He flushed beetroot with guilt. “Yeah...Sort of...It wasn’t like he meant it to happen. I just bumped into them...” So he was taking her out in public, parading her around behind her back? Were they laughing at her? Was everyone laughing at her? The thought cut like a knife...And she was too hurt to even be angry anymore. Stan’s face was full of sympathy. “Look El, I know I shouldn’t be making excuses for him but...He can’t help it, really he can’t. It’s the way he was born. He can’t change...And it’s killing him.”

“KILLING HIM?!“ She leaned back in her chair, gasping at the effort of biting back her tears, trying to calm herself. “So...Is she prettier than me? Is that it? Is she some model or something?”

“N-no...”

“Well then...What is she like?”

For a few long moments Stan sat in silence, staring down at his hands, as if struggling with how to word something. Then he looked up at her.

“Well, for a start...It’s a he.”

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“This is a lovely Merlot.”

“Very full-bodied, isn’t it? French, of course. From a little vineyard outside Carcassonne.” The man Jack watched his protégé as she took a sip from the glass, the wine staining her lips red. He turned back to the chessboard. “Rook to c7.” Caroline pouted as he captured her last pawn. He allowed himself a little smile at her disappointment as he lifted the remote that rested on the table between them and pressed the button. The room was filled by a loud buzzing sound and a muffled
cry.

“UMMMMM!”

He took another sip of his wine. “Your move.”

But she didn’t take it. Instead she smiled at him. “Do you remember when we first met?”

He nodded. “How could I forget…You were what? Sixteen?” She nodded. “The moment I read about your story in the paper I had to post your bail. I asked you why you’d taken that girl, why you’d bound her, why you’d hurt her…And you smiled at me and said ‘Because I enjoy control.’ And I knew then that I had to adopt you.”

“They’d told me that I was mad, sick, broken…Then you came along and told me about the natural order of things-That some people were put on this planet to dominate and others to serve, some to be the slaves…And others to be the masters.” She turned back to the board. “Knight to b4. Ha!” She smirked as she captured his rook, holding out her hand for the remote. He handed it over grudgingly. Again that buzzing sound filled the room, followed by another muffled cry of agony.

“UMMMMM!”

“So, do you like it here?”

“I didn’t at first…Too many rules and I didn’t get to make any of them. And they let the Products have too much freedom- it irritates me…” He nodded in understanding. “But then Simon realised that, rather than just have me as a Handler, my skills would be better put to use as a Trainer…And then I got my blonde bitch. You should come see her submission some time…Her tits look so pretty bound. She’s such a proud creature in public. But in private she crawls at my heel like a little puppy.”

“I’d love to.” He considered the board thoughtfully, before blocking her move. “Pawn to b5.” She scowled.

“Knight to d3.” Just as he’d predicted. That had always been Caroline’s flaw…She was volatile, she reacted immediately rather than planning…and in her rush to block his move she’d left her king exposed.

“Queen to 2g…Check.” He watched the horror spilling across her face as she stared at the board and realised he had her king surrounded; then made a show of lifting the remote. He pushed the button almost to full power.

“UUUUUUUMMMMMMMUMMMMMMUMMMMMMMMM!”

They both turned.

His slave boy knelt in the corner, naked and beautiful in his suffering. He’d bound his arms behind his back at the upper arms and wrists, forcing his torso forward so they could admire his toned chest, and placed a thick black leather collar around his throat to remind him of his status. It suited him so well that Jack had already decided he would wear it for every play session from now on, and was planning to manipulate Mr Cowell into having him wear it all the time. A spreader bar had been strapped between his thighs spreading his legs so that they could see the large vibrator he’d put inside him, stretching his lovely little hole cruelly, and angled to hit his G-spot just right. He was painfully erect, his penis swollen, the tip deep purple and glistening…But the cock ring prevented any release. His handsome face was twisted in agony, cheeks flushed deep red as he struggled in his bonds, fighting to get away from the vibrator that gave him such excruciating
pleasure, desperate for relief...But there were no tears...And that irritated Jack. It was like the little shit was doing it just to spite him. Caroline leaned her chin on her hand, admiring him.

“You’re so cruel to keep him muzzled Jack. The poor boy can’t even beg.”

“I know. He has a beautiful mouth, such pretty full lips...But for some reason I just love the sight of him gagged. It just makes him look so helpless, so owned. The bold boy who can’t keep his mouth shut looks wonderful with it stopped up. He suits tape too. The other day I put him in the frame for a whipping and stuck two strips over his lips in an X shape. He looked so funny. I took pictures. I’ll show you if you like.”

“I would.”

They went back to the chess game. Not that there was much of a game left. Caroline tried to block his move with her Bishop but it was too late. In one final move he captured her king. “Checkmate.”

She leaned back in her chair with a disgruntled sigh and waved a finger at him. “One day, you mark my words...One day I’ll beat you.”

He laughed at that. “I very much doubt it my dear.” He picked up the remote control and turned it up full blast. In the corner his slave arched his back, straining against his bonds and screaming against his gag, his magnificent cock twitching. He rose from his chair and crossed the room until he loomed over him, staring down at him with his head on one side, watching him the way a cat watches a mouse. The slave was shaking, beads of sweat shining on his skin. He unhooked the whip from his belt and used the tip to lift his chin, assessing him coolly. He was clearly in terrible discomfort...And yet, there it was; a flash of defiance in his green eyes.

“Ah, ah, come now...None of that.” He tapped his cheek gently with the whip. “You look in pain. You need release.” He lowered the whip between the boy’s legs, running the tip teasingly along his swollen length as the vibrator buzzed inside him. A blush crept down his throat and chest, his brow creasing as an agonised moan was muffled by his muzzle. “All you have to do, my pet, is ask. Would you like your master to make you come? Hmm?” The slave glared up at him...But he nodded—just a little nod, but it was enough.

“Good boy.”

He crouched down to untie the rope and unbuckle the spreader bar, before crossing the room and sitting back down. The slave was on his hands and knees now, chest heaving. Jack clicked his fingers and his head shot up, piercing gaze fixed on him. “Crawl!” The boy obeyed.

He watched as he crawled across the floor towards them on all fours, muscles rippling beneath his golden skin, that mane of dark hair falling into his eyes...His little lion. Love was an emotion Jack had never had any interest in feeling, but he’d admit to feeling great pride at having this particular slave in his possession. Pride that increased with every step closer he came to breaking him. A lot of slaves cracked quickly...But there was still a primal defiance in this one...Like a wild animal caged but not tamed...not yet. As soon he reached him Jack moved to kneel beside him, his leather gloved hand feeling his firm flanks and strong thighs, caressing the raised welts his whip had left lovingly. “You’ve been a good slave Harry...Time for your reward.” The boy flinched at that. He slid the ring from his cock and took him in hand, pumping the vibrator in and out of his entrance as he stroked him vigorously, making his entire body tremble. “Shhh, just let it happen...You see Harry you fight me; but something inside you wants this, craves it...Otherwise, why would you be enjoying this right now? You’re so proud...But deep down you want to dominated, humiliated...You’re a born slave.” The boy came with a muffled sob, back arched, thrusting into his hand, his seed spattering across the carpet. “Oh look...You’ve made a mess.” He slid the vibrator from inside him, stood and kicked him hard. He fell onto the floor with a satisfying thud, curling up into a ball with his arms over his head. Caroline laughed, clapping her hands in delight.
“He’s terrified of you!”

“I’m his master, he should be. GET UP! NOW!” At his bark the boy scrambled to his feet, clutching his side, face twisted in pain…And he wondered idly if he’d cracked one of his ribs. Oh well, no matter…He moved to stand in front of him and he lowered his gaze quickly to the floor. “I’ve been doing some obedience training with him.” He clicked his fingers. “Kneel!” The slave dropped obediently to his knees, crossing his wrists behind his back, keeping his eyes lowered. He clicked his fingers again. “Down!” The boy sank back on his knees and leaned forward until his forehead rested on the floor, arms stretched out in front of him in supplication. He clicked his fingers for a final time. “Display!” For a moment the boy hesitated…Then he rolled onto his back and raised his arms above his head, crossing them at the wrists. He placed the soles of his feet together and spread his knees until he was lying prone below them, his genitals on display. “Stay!”

Caroline gazed down longingly at his long, lithe body. “So, do you fuck him?”

“I haven’t…yet.”

Her eyebrows shot up in surprise. “Really? Is it because Simon…”

He snorted in derision. “Don’t be ridiculous. I have my own reasons for waiting.” Truth be told everything in him wanted to bind those strong thighs apart, spread those tight, toned cheeks and take him so hard that he screamed in agony- but rape was the ultimate sanction and he wasn’t about it waste it just yet, not with a slave as proud as this one was. He knelt, reaching between the boys spread knees and pushing the vibrator back inside him, ignoring his muffled whimpers. He slid the cock ring back on and stood, pointing the crop at him. “Now, you move and I’ll whip you to within an inch of your life. Nod to show you understand.” The slave nodded, closing his eyes. “Good boy.” Jack sat back down and poured himself another glass of wine, before turning back to the chessboard. “Fancy another game?”

Later Harry fought not to tremble as Jack sat down beside him on his bed, reaching to take him by the throat, his hand closing over the collar. “I am proud of you Harry…You performed well for me this afternoon.”

Harry kept his gaze straight ahead. “Thank you Master.”

Jack pressed his face close to his, his breath hot on his cheek. “Tell me Harry…Why did I beat you?”

“Because I looked at you, because I closed my legs to you and a slave should never close their legs to their master, because I hesitated before following orders.”

“Exactly. When you submit fully to me, when you spend every second of every day thinking of nothing but pleasing me then I might be kinder to you…But I gave you a treat today-I allowed you to come, and you came beautifully for myself and Mrs Caroline. I’ll let you in on a secret, Harry…Slaves only come like you did when they secretly enjoy being forced to submit. Think about that.” He unlocked the collar and removed it before kissing his cheek. The bedroom door slammed behind him as he left.

Left alone Harry sank to the floor, hugging his knees to his chest, his head swimming…He hadn’t cried, even during the beatings he hadn’t cried…but he’d come. Between his legs and inside of
him hurt. He leaned his cheek on his arm, feeling so lost, so confused…That hadn’t been the necessary release he’d felt with clients, nor the earth-shattering wave of pleasure and passion he’d felt with Louis…That had felt painful and shameful and dirty and WRONG…But he’d needed it…So what did that make him? Maybe he truly was everything they said he was…A slave…A slut. Maybe he somehow asked for the abuse, maybe he deserved it…He began to rock slowly, subconsciously, the back of his head hitting off the wall behind him…Yes…He deserved it all, deserved to be punished, yes it was all his fault…He rocked faster, the rhythmic smack of his skull against the concrete oddly comforting, the pain no less than he deserved. Yes, it was all his fault, all of it. If he hadn’t been stupid enough to walk home on his own, if he hadn’t been good looking, if he hadn’t been so dirty, so disgusting…He was rocking fast now, his head banging off the concrete, but he didn’t notice, too tied up in his thoughts…What kind of person comes like that? Gagged and on their hands and knees, a collar round their throat… Dirty Harry *BANG* Slutty Harry *BANG* Whore Harry *BANG* Slave Harry *BANG*…

“Harry? Harry, what the hell are you doing?! HARRY, STOP IT! STOP!” Suddenly Niall was kneeling in front of him, wrapping his arms around him and holding him tightly so he couldn’t rock. He struggled against him but the smaller boy only gripped him more tightly. “Stop it…You’re hurting yourself!” He felt Niall’s hand in his hair… When he sat back and held it out to him the palm was red with blood.

“W-what…how…?” He reached back and felt the wound, hissing through his teeth at the stinging pain.

Niall’s blue eyes were wide with shock. “You’ve split it. What the fuck, Harry?! Ya could have knocked yerself out! What’s brought this on?”

He stared at him, feeling dazed. Baby-faced innocent little Niall, the newest Product…He needed to be taken care of, he needed to be protected…Niall didn’t need to hear about his darkness…It would only frighten him. And Jack had told him to keep his mouth shut…

“I-I can’t talk about it.” He hugged his knees to his chest again, laying his cheek on them and turning his face away so Niall wouldn’t see his tears. He expected him to argue…But instead he moved to sit beside him, sliding his skinny arm across his shoulders.

“O.k, fair enough…But I’ll tell ye a wee story. Before I came here, back when I belonged to the priests, they kept me chained up in a room. Most of them only came in ta feed me, or to do dirty stuff to me…But there was this one priest, Father Brady…Father Brady liked to play games…”

A sense of deep foreboding came over Harry. He raised his head to look at him. “What kind of games?”

Niall lowered his gaze to the floor, his cheeks flushing strawberries and cream. “Weird games, sick games…He made me kneel in front of him, put a dog collar round me neck and called me his slave…Made me call him Master. If I refused ta do sometin’ he whipped me wi his belt. He liked tyin’ me up too…And of course he did the dirty stuff to me.” Then his expression grew serious and he hugged Harry closer. “I know Haz…About yer Handler. I know he takes you away in the middle of the night to play Slaves n’ Masters. I know ‘e tortures ya, an’ I know how…”’Cause it happened to me too. Come on Haz, talk ta me…What did he do that messed ya up so much yer hurtin’ yerself?”

Harry bit his lip. “He tied me up; put a vibrator inside me…”

Niall frowned. “Is that one o’ dem buzzy things?”
“Yes. I came…but I didn’t want to! I didn’t get off on it, I hate being tied up! I hate what he does to me! I didn’t enjoy it, I swear!”

To his surprise, Niall stared at him, amused. “O’ course ya didn’t!” He shrugged casually. “Father Brady used to do dat to me all the time.” He took in Harry’s look of bewildered surprise and rolled his eyes. “Look Haz…Y’know dat ting women have at the top of their fannys? The ting I had to learn how to lick? The ting they go wild when ya touch it?”

“A clit?”

“Aye! Dat’s the one!” Niall pointed at him. “Well we got one too…Sort of…Only it’s up our arses.” He continued on conversationally. “God only knows why, major design flaw if ya ask me. Anyway, if it’s touched just right wild horses won’t stop us from comin’. Father Brady tol’ me about it, used to laugh at me when he played wi’ it an’ I came. But I didn’t care ‘cause I knew it weren’t him makin’ me come, it were just biology. You comin’ weren’t yer fault Haz, it were just a reaction…Like a sneeze. It didn’t mean nothin’ and definitely didn’t mean you liked him hurtin’ ya. How do you not know about it? Ya know more’n me about dis stuff.”

Harry shrugged. “I was taught how to please other people…Not about me. Niall?”

“Yeah?”

“How did you stand it?”

“Easy…I just got angry, real angry. An’ I decided that I were gonna kill ‘im. That one day I were goin’ ta fuckin’ kill the bastard!” Harry stared at him in shock. It was almost bizarre hearing such blood thirsty words coming from the mouth of such a sweet, blonde boy, but Niall’s childish features were now twisted with rage, his hands balled into fists as he stared into the past, remembering. He spoke through clenched teeth. “‘im, shootin’ ‘im, cuttin’ ‘is throat…Shovin’ a red hot poker up his arse, see if he liked tings getting’ shoved up his arse for a change! Even now when a thought of ‘im pops into me head an’ I get frightened I think about killin’ him an’ it makes me feel strong. An’ I will Haz. I swear to Holy Mary mother of God that one day I’ll hunt that son of a bitch down an’ I’ll get my revenge fer all the hidin’s, all the rapes, all the times he made me crawl on all fours, all the sick games he played. I’m gonna feckin’ tear limb from limb!” He pulled him close so he could whisper into his ear. “So next time that bastard takes you to play Slaves n’ Masters, don’t get scared-get angry. And start plottin’ how yer gonna end him! Understand?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah.” It was good advice.

The bedroom door opened and Liam’s voice rang out. “Nialler? You in here?”

Harry stared at Niall, panicked, and mouthed ‘Don’t tell him!’

Niall nodded, just as Liam noticed them, sitting huddled against the wall.

“You two o.k?”

“No.” Niall looked up at him, his face the picture of wide-eyed innocence. “Was just chattin’ to Harry here when he said he was feelin’ funny…Then he fainted clean away on me. He’s whacked his head. I think he needs to go see the doctor.”

“Shit, Harry, you ok?” Liam hurried to crouch down beside him, inspecting the bleeding cut at the back of his head.
“I’m fine. Stop fussin’.”

“No you’re not, you could have a concussion. Come on. Let’s go.” Harry let him help him to his feet and lead him to the door, looking back over his shoulder and mouthing a thank you to Niall, who just nodded.

Two paper stitches and three hours later Harry leaned against the wall outside one of the bedrooms, nursing a splitting headache. Beside him Zayn was sticking his arm through the bars on one of the windows, trying to jimmy it open with Harry’s flick knife.

“You drop that knife out the window and I’ll fucking kill you.”

“Alright, keep yer hair on! Cracked it!” Zayn placed the knife between his teeth and pushed the sash window up. He passed it back to him and tugged his cigarettes from his jacket pocket.

“If they catch you smokin’ in the corridor you’ll get the whip.”

“Worth it.” He lit up before offering it to him. “Want to share?”

“God yeah.” Harry sat down beside him on the windowsill, taking a drag and blowing the smoke through the gap.

“You been to see Angel again?”

“Yeah. He’s ok, I think…Just still a bit shaken up. Doc tried to buy him more time, but couldn’t. He’s back workin’ tomorrow.” He handed the cigarette back and jerked his thumb at the closed door. “Think he's doin’ ok?”

“Well she’s still in there so he must be doin’ something right.”

“He was shittin’ himself when Liam told him his first client was a woman. Did you talk to him?”

“Yeah,” Zayn balanced the cigarette between his lips as he talked with all the expertise of a dedicated smoker. “I told him; two fingers in the cunt, pinkie up her ass, lick round the clit first, then suck it.”

Harry nodded. “Works every time.”

As if on cue a scream of ecstasy echoed out from behind the door.

“Nice one, Nialler. Get in!” Harry took the cigarette from Zayn’s lips and took another drag.

“Are you two fucking kidding me?” They looked up to see Liam walking toward him, wearing the fed-up expression of a man with many burdens. “You know the rules about smoking.”

Harry held it out to him. “Want a drag?”

For a moment Liam looked like he was going to yell at him…Then he gave up. “Yeah, all right.”

The three of them huddled round the window, passing the cigarette back and forth in companionable silence until the door of the room opened and Niall emerged. He was pale, his hair rumpled and his eyes wide and lost. He looked totally shell-shocked. He handed Liam an envelope thick with cash.
“You o.k.?”

He shook his head. Harry and Zayn tossed the cigarette out of the window and hopped down from the window ledge to throw their arms around his shoulders and pat him on the back, faking laddish pride in the hope of cheering him up.

“We heard her screamin’…You must have made her come like a train!”

“Well done mate! There you go, first one out of the way!”

“Lucky me.” But his tone suggested he was anything but. Liam glanced from Harry to Zayn and back again.

“I need to take this down to the office. You guys free to take him back upstairs?”

Zayn nodded. “Yeah, we got this.”

Harry turned to look at Niall as they climbed the stairs. He walked with his head bowed, hugging his arms to his chest.

“Was it really that bad? Did she hurt you? Did she make you do somethin’ weird? ‘Cause you know they’re not allowed to do that unless they’ve paid extra.”

Niall shook his head. “No…She barely even looked at me. She just barked orders; ‘touch this’, ‘do that’…It was just…horrible, y’know?”

They reached the landing, and started walking down the corridor towards their room. Harry opened his mouth to reply…

Drip.

Something landed on his head. Just as he looked up a second drip landed on his nose. “What the hell…?” Above them a damp grey patch was spreading slowly across the white ceiling. They stood, craning their necks, staring at it. “What’s up there?”

“Guest rooms, I think.” Zayn shrugged. “Someone’s flooded a bathroom, or there’s a leak. Not our problem.”

Another drip fell from the ceiling to land at their feet…

“I’m gonna go see.” Harry turned and headed back toward the stairs.

“Oh for fuck’s sake, Harry! It’s just a leak!” But Zayn and Niall still followed him.

Harry knocked the bedroom door. “Hello?”

No one answered. He tried the door. It was unlocked.

Zayn caught his eye. “We could get in trouble.”

“For what? Investigating a leak in the ceiling?” But something deep in his gut told him it was more than that. He tried the door. It opened easily and they stepped inside, flicking on the light.

The room beyond was empty…And trashed. The vanity table and a chair had been overturned.
Empty beer bottles, used condoms and cigarette butts littered the floor. The dark wood of the nightstand was coated in a tell-tale white residue.

“Wow,” Zayn stared about him, wide-eyed. “Looks like someone had one hell of a party in here.”

Harry stepped toward the bed. It was unmade, the duvet tossed to the floor. And the white sheets were stained rust red…Blood stains. The glint of metal caught his eye and he lifted a pillow out of the way…To find a set of handcuffs hanging from the headboard. He lifted them and turned, holding them up for Zayn to see, his expression grim. “Yeah…A party.”

Zayn blanched.

“Ummm, fellas? I think I know where the leaks coming from.” They both turned to where Niall pointed. Water oozed from beneath a door in the far wall, staining the beige carpet…red? They moved to stand over it, staring down at it in confusion, it couldn’t be…but…Yes, the water was tainted red. Harry knocked the door.

“Hello? Is there anyone in there? Hello?” He slapped his hand against the wood. Nothing. He tried the door. It was locked. Behind him Zayn took a step back, shaking his head.

“Haz I don’t like the look of this. I think we should get someone…Now.”

“Yeah,” Niall nodded. “I don’t wanna get in trouble.”

But Harry wasn’t listening. His gut was screaming at him that the person who’d been handcuffed to that bed was now in there, that they needed their help…

“Zayn, give me a hand.”

“Haz…I think we should…” Harry stepped back raised his foot, and kicked the door. Hard. “JESUS FUCKING CHRIST! THEY’LL HEAR YOU!”

“Then fucking help me!”

“Fine!”

They slammed their shoulders against the door…once…twice…On the third try it flew open, smashing off the wall beyond. Harry stepped into the bathroom.

The tiles were soaked with rusty water, the walls splattered with more red. Something crunched beneath his feet and he looked down at it, confused…Glass…hundreds of shards scattered across the tiles reflecting his face back at him. He looked up to find the bathroom mirror shattered into a spider web as if from a single blow. He walked towards it, staring into it at his own fractured reflection…And then beyond it to the large Victorian bath behind him. There was something in the bath…He turned.

Angel lay beneath the water’s surface, naked, palms upward like a sick parody of Millais’ ‘Ophelia’. His blonde hair floated around his head like a halo. His skin was ghostly white, his doll blue eyes open and unseeing. Blood from his slashed wrists flowed into the bathwater, staining it red.

“Harry?” Niall’s voice. “Harry, what’s goin’ on in there?”

Shit. Angel was his friend. In the few months since Niall’s arrival they’d grown thick as thieves. He couldn’t let him see this.
“NO!” Harry dived for the door, slamming it shut and pressing his weight against it. “NO, DON’T COME IN!”

“HARRY?!” Zayn’s fists pounded the wood. “HARRY, WHAT’S GOING ON?!”

“DON’T LET HIM IN ZAYN! DON’T LET NIALL IN! GET THE DOC, BOTH OF YOU, NOW! SOMEONE’S HURT!”

“ARE YOU O.K.?”

“I’M FINE! JUST GO GET THE DOC!”

He waited until he was sure they were gone before turning off the tap and gazing into the bath, tears blurring his vision.

“Oh Jamie.” He fell to his knees, staring down at him. There was nothing the Doc could do for him now. A shard of mirror rested on the ceramic, blood congealing on its surface. He stared at the lacerated flesh, the deep slices that covered his forearms from wrist almost to elbow. “You even did it the right way.” He reached out. The water was icy cold, and somehow the thought of him being cold was just too horrible to bear. He snatched a bath-towel from the rail and reached into the water. Jamie’s body was so small and light that he lifted him easily. He slid to the floor and wrapped him carefully in the towel, cradling him in his lap like a baby. He hugged him close, stroking his cold cheek. “Shhh….It’s o.k. Jamie, it’s o.k. I think I know what happened…He came to get you from the Doc, didn’t he? You thought he was going to take you to your room…But he didn’t, did he? Instead he brought you up here, hand-cuffed you to the bed. Did he gag you? He must have, because otherwise someone would have heard you screaming and tried to stop him. How long did he rape you for? Hours? He was drunk; high…He was having fun hurting you. And afterwards you must have been bloody…So he ran a bath…Left you alone to clean yourself up. You were frightened, hurt, and all on your own…And you couldn’t think of any other way to make it stop. But it’s over, it’s all over now.”

He reached to touch the crucifix around his neck. God, Heaven, Angels…He’d always thought it was just a lie people told themselves because they were scared of death…Now he wished it were real…Because otherwise it couldn’t end like this, Jamie couldn’t just…die…All alone in a brothel bathroom…It was too cruel, too unfair. There had to be somewhere better for him to go, somewhere where he’d finally know some kindness.

“Oh, Harry…”

He looked up, tears dripping down his cheeks. The Doc stood in the doorway, his wrinkled face desperately sad. Zayn was at his elbow, gaping in horror at the scene in front of him.

“He’s dead Doc.”

“Yes.” The old man moved to crouch down beside him. “Yes, he’s dead.”

“I wanted to keep him warm…He’s so cold.”

“I know.”

“He was all alone Doc.”

“I know.”

He turned to look into Angel’s face, so beautiful, even in death. “Look Doc…He’s smiling…Why
is he smiling?”

“Because Harry…He’s free. Here, let me take him.” Harry passed him over to the old man who laid him gently down onto the tiles. “You poor child…It’s over now. No one will ever hurt you again.” He reached down to close his eyelids.

“What will happen to him now? Will they just throw him away?”

The Doc nodded grimly. “They’ll bury him…But I’ll find out where, call in an anonymous tip and make sure he’s found. His family can then at least have a funeral.”

“If-if I write them a letter can you get it to them? I know they have our addresses. I won’t tell them anything about here, anything that will get you into trouble…”

“Yes…Yes, I can do that.”

“Who was he before?”

The Doc reached to stroke his wet hair. “This is James Campbell, aged nineteen, from Hackney, East London-son of Megan Campbell and twin brother of Joseph Campbell.”

Harry bent to kiss his cold forehead. “Goodbye James Campbell.”

He stood on shaky legs and tried to walk from the room. But Zayn wouldn’t let him past. Instead he caught him and pulled him close, ignoring his struggles until he gave up and let him hug him to his chest, sobbing into his shoulder as if his heart would break.

Later that night, Liam and Zayn tried to comfort a devastated Niall as he lay sobbing into his pillow. Harry wanted to cry too…But he had a message to pass on, a promise to keep. He tore a blank page from the book he’d found and began to write;

“Dear Joe,

You don’t know me but I was friends with your brother Jamie. He told me to tell you and your mum than he loved you very much. The man who kidnapped Jamie brought him to a terrible place…But he wanted you to know that he never regretted letting himself be taken so that you could escape. He never forgot you, told me that he missed you every day. He wanted to hang on for you, but it all just got too much. Now no one can hurt him anymore. He’s finally free.

H”

‘Free’…Harry stared at the word, scrawled in his spidery handwriting. Yes, now Jamie was truly free. No more clients, no more beatings, no more rapes, no more suffering, no more pain….

He envied him…He wished he could be free like that.
Ok, that was dark...But you have to get deep into the dark before you can see the light at the end of tunnel. Thank you so much to all the wonderful people who have read and commented on this story. I live for getting your feedback, it makes all the hard work and late nights (very late, I was up til 5am yesterday finishing this!) worth it. Please let me know what you think of this chapter by leaving comments and kudos! I'll have the next chapter up within the next two weeks! And, as always, I'm looking for someone who would be willing to make a trailer for this fic for me! If you have the time and can help me out please, please leave a comment and let me know! I'd love you forever!

Next time....The prisoners of The Birdcage say goodbye to one of their own, El confronts Louis...And Harry makes a confession to Louis that will send him into freefall.
Chapter 15-I'd Fight Lions...

Chapter Notes

I GOT MY LAP-TOP BACK! I was so happy when my mate Ali came round with it that I kissed him and now it's gone all weird and awkward between us because he's gay but, who cares, totally worth it because I got my lap-top back! Thank you guys sooooo much for being patient with me. I was so scared I'd lose all my readers! And I am so sorry about the wait! But anyway, here's the new chapter. Also considering recent events Zayn will still be part of this fic but won't play as much of a role. I'd also like to say thank you to those incredible ladies who created trailers for me! They are brilliant! Thank you!

WARNINGS- Bad language, description of an orgy, sex. There is also a scene of non-con so you have been warned!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 15-I’d Fight Lions….

It was past midnight when Liam shook him awake, raising a warning finger to his lips before reaching to unbuckle his muzzle and cuffs. He sat up and hissed at him as he moved to untie Niall and Zayn.

“Psst…Is there anyone down there already?”

“The Doc…And Taylor. Sophia is releasing the girls and bringing them down now…All the ones that are coming anyway. Some are too afraid.” Harry nodded. He couldn’t blame them, he was afraid too…But this was too important for him to back out.

He owed it to Angel.

They dressed quickly and gathered up their things before following Liam through the shadowy winding corridors, their hearts pounding in their ears, deep down into the bowels of The Birdcage, to the vast basement storage room beside the infirmary. Men and women, other Products, milled round the doorway talking to each other in hushed whispers, but they parted to let them past, whispering to each other that he’d been there, that he’d been the one who’d found the body. In a way he was glad that he had…Because he could see the shock and bewilderment on their faces, their disbelief, their futile hope that Angel would suddenly materialise beside them with his pockets stuffed with cigarettes, sweets and other contraband from the outside, his blonde hair poking out from beneath his porkpie hat, laughing at them all for falling for his joke. At least he knew for certain that Angel was never coming back.

He stepped through the doorway…And froze, gazing about him in amazement. The murky gloom had been illuminated by the flickering flames of what seemed like hundreds of candles which lined the edges of the room and every shelf. The boxes that had filled the room that morning had been arranged into rows resembling pews in a church, and a crate had been dragged to the front and draped with a white tablecloth to make a make-shift altar.
“No! No, the white lilies go over there! Up at the front!”

He turned. More men and women were scurrying to and fro, clutching vases of flowers, lighting candles and lugging boxes...And in the middle, directing it all in pink pyjamas, was Taylor. He crossed the room towards her.

“Did you do all this?”

She nodded, barely looking at him. “Of course I did. I’ve got a couple of Sugar-daddy clients who can get me whatever I need as long as I ask nice. No, Dan! Move that box over there!”

He reached to touch her elbow. “Thank you.”

This time she turned fully to look into his face, and he was shocked to see the pushy, spoilt courtesan act peel away like a mask. The girl who stood in front of him seemed so much younger, pale and fragile. She was shaking, tears welling up in her big doe eyes. “He used to call me ‘Princess’, used to flirt with me...Didn’t matter that I was five inches taller than him. He really made me laugh...” He nodded at that and they shared a sad smile. “It ain’t right.” She whispered, her accent suddenly less universal American and more Southern drawl. “It ain’t right that they just dumped him in some hole rather than give him back to his people...Everyone deserves to have a funeral.”

And for the first time Harry realised that he wasn’t the only Product in The Birdcage who used a persona to cope. Suddenly Caroline’s words echoed in his mind.

‘...And then I got my blonde bitch...You should come see her submission...Such a proud creature in public, but in private she crawls at my heel...’

His heart sank as the realisation hit him.

“Taylor?” Sophia appeared beside them, twisting her long, dark hair back into a bun. She was sultry and Mediterranean looking, and out of her guard’s uniform Harry could see what Liam saw in her. She was also another former Product turned Handler and as valuable an ally to the girls over in the Cat House as Liam was to the boys in the Tom House. “The Doc wants to know should he let everyone in?”

Taylor took a final look around the room before nodding her head. “Sure, send them in.”

Harry stepped toward the altar, propping the photograph he held up against an unlit candle before pausing to look at it. It was the photograph that had been taken for the hotel’s website. In it Angel stood with his hands behind his back, cowering away from the camera. He looked so young and frightened. He hated using it, but they had nothing else. He felt sick as he remembered the description they’d been written beside it: ‘This is Angel. Available for use by both men and women. At only fourteen years old, beautiful and compliant Angel is the perfect Lolita.’ They’d advertised him as being younger in order to attract paedophiles who no doubt had paid extra for the privilege of abusing a boy they’d thought was underage.

“Harry?” He looked up to find The Doc standing beside him, his wrinkled face even more creased with grief, his pale blue eyes filled with sadness. He reached to squeeze his shoulder in a gesture of comfort. “They buried him in woods up on Hampstead Heath. I called the tip in—They’ll find him. And I paid the Handlers who buried him not to...not to mutilate him. Although I don’t think they had the heart anyway. His poor mother’s suffered enough without that.”

“Thanks Doc.”
The old man turned to look at the rag-tag congregation. “They’re all waiting for you Harry…”

“Me? Why me?”

“Because you’re their leader.”

He stared at him, panicked. “No! No, I’m nobody’s…”

But the Doc smiled at him gently. “You’re the highest earner Harry. In this bizarre, warped little society that makes you leader. They’ve lost one of their own…And they’re looking to their leader to honour him.”

He stepped back and Harry turned…. to find around two hundred people perching on boxes and pressed against the wall, sitting on top of one another in the tiny space. Candlelight danced across their upturned faces as they all stared expectantly at him. He took a deep breath and straightened up.

“OI YOU LOT, SHUT UP!”

“SHHHHH! HE’S STARTING!”

“FUCKIN’ SHUT IT!”

“As you all know, Angel-Jamie-died yesterday. He was one of us…So it’s only right that we honour him. The first time I saw Jamie was the same as everyone else…When he was getting ‘The Speech’ from Mr Cowell, just after he’d been kidnapped. I remember looking up at that skinny little blonde kid and thinking that he wouldn’t last five minutes in here. I underestimated him…Big mistake.” A ripple of laughter spread through the room at that. “The second time I saw him we were being made to perform together and I was horrified. I remember thinking that I was almost a foot taller than this kid, that at eighteen I was older, more experienced…I was worried he’d be frightened of me. Then I arrived in the room and there he was, watching as they set up the cameras. I went over to him planning to reassure him, y’know, that I wasn’t gonna hurt him? But when I got there, before I could even open my mouth he turned to me, jabbed his finger into my chest and said…” He slipped into an imitation of Jamie’s' Cockney accent. “Now you listen here sunshine, I ain’t suckin’ nuffink! An’ if you try an’ make me I’ll climb yer yer to hit yer!” Again the crowd laughed and he smiled himself at the memory. “That was Jamie all over; tough, a fighter, a little guy who thought he was ten feet tall. Before long he’d found himself a niche as the go-to man for whatever we needed—we all used to joke that there was nothing Jamie couldn’t get hold of except a ticket out of here…We all thought he was trading sex with his Handler to get those things for us…And there’s no shame in that—After all, we’re all whores here, and we’ve all done it; given a few free blow jobs in exchange for a carton of cigarettes, maybe, or an extra fuck for a sneaky quarter bottle of vodka. Me? I used to trade ‘Specials’ to this one bloke in exchange for books just because it gets boring in here sometimes. But that wasn’t what was really happening with Jamie.” He paused, biting his lip…But they needed to know why he’d done it, needed to understand. “Jamie was being raped by his Handler every day…And he kept quiet about it to get us what we wanted.”

He waited until the murmurs of shock had died down before continuing. “When Niall first arrived Zayn and me asked Jamie could he possibly get him a guitar, just make things easier for him. We weren’t holding out much hope…But he managed it. And he wouldn’t take any payment for it. Christ only knows what Jamie had to suffer through to get that guitar, but he didn’t care as long as it made Niall smile. That’s just who he was.”

“Can I say somethin’? I wanna say somethin’!” They all turned to where Niall perched beside Liam and Zayn on the edge of a table. His eyes were red, his cheeks streaked with tears, but his expression was furious. Harry nodded.
“Yeah, sure Niall, go ahead.”

Niall looked round at them all. “Let’s be honest here…Angel was murdered! This place murdered him! An’ it in’t fair! It in’t fair that he got taken away from his family, and it in’t fair that he was made to do all dem dirty tings, an’ it in’t fair that he had to kill ‘imself just to make it stop! Them bastards should be made to pay for it! They shouldn’t get to throw him away like some fuckin’ broken toy! They should be made to pay for murderin’ him!”

His tears overwhelmed him and he twisted to bury his head in Liam’s shoulder, sobbing as Liam wrapped an arm around him, trying to comfort him. Harry turned back to the crowd.

“Niall’s right. Just like all of us, Jamie was a prisoner here…And he was murdered by our captors.” He took the paper cup full of whiskey that The Doc pressed into his hand and waited patiently until the rest had been passed out. Then he raised it in the air. “To James Campbell…We’ll miss you man and we’ll never forget you. But at least you’ve escaped this fuckin’ cage and now you’re flying free.”

“To Jamie!” The cheer rang up around the room as he knocked back the whiskey to stifle his tears.

They spent the rest of the night laughing, drinking and telling stories about Jamie, Waking him in the way he deserved. The first weak slivers of sunlight were seeping through the boarded-up basement windows as he watched the last of the Products trail out. He turned back to the makeshift altar only to find Taylor standing in front of it, staring thoughtfully at the picture he’d placed there. He felt a hand on his shoulder and looked up to find The Doc standing beside him.

“You spoke well. I’m proud of you, lad.”

“Thanks…Do you believe in Heaven, Doc?” He’d been thinking a lot about it since Angel’s death. The old man spoke with conviction. “Yes. Absolutely.”

“If there is a heaven, do you think they’ll let whores like us in?”

The Doc nodded sadly. “Of course Harry…No God would be that cruel.”

“Good.” He turned his attention back to the room. “How long before we have to take all this down?”

“Not for a while yet. I’ll keep an eye on it, but it’s my storeroom. No one else normally bothers with it.”

“Thanks Doc.” He watched the old man go before moving to stand beside Taylor, reaching for her hand. She let him take it. “You o.k?”

“You found him, didn’t you?”

“Yeah.”

She turned to look at him, desperation in her eyes. “Do you think it hurt?”

He nodded. “He slit his arms from wrist to elbow with a piece of broken mirror. I’ll bet it hurt like a bitch.”

She laid her free hand on her chest, directly over her heart. “Do you think it hurt more than this?”
And he knew exactly the pain that she meant…That raw, hollow, aching pain that the abuse of the body left in the tracks of the mind.

He shook his head. “No.” Then he took a deep breath. Part of him didn’t want to talk about it at all, but another part of him wanted an ally, someone who knew the depth of the darkness…And suspected she might need one too. “I know what Caroline’s doing to you when you’re alone with her…I know because it’s happening to me too.” And suddenly he was crying, tears dripping down his cheeks, the words coming out strangled. “I know she makes you call her ‘Mistress’ because he makes me call him ‘Master’…I know that she makes you wear a collar because he makes me wear one too. I know that she ties you up because he ties me up, that she makes you crawl because he makes me crawl. I know that she calls you ‘Slave’ because that’s what he calls me, that she whips you and enjoys it because he whips me all the time just to watch me bleed, that she makes you play these twisted games…I know that she makes you come because that’s his new favourite game for me. I know that you feel dirty, disgusting, ashamed…and exhausted because you spend all day being sold and then at night you’re too afraid to sleep in case she comes to get you. And you can’t tell anyone, because if you do they won’t listen anyway, but if Mistress finds out then it’ll get ten times worse…Although you’re not sure how it could.” She was staring at him, shocked. He turned back to look at Angel’s makeshift shrine. “And I know what you’re thinking standing here…That you’re jealous of him…Because I’m jealous too. I wish I had the guts to do what he did…Just so my Master could never hurt me again. I wish I could die.”

She turned to him, tears shining in her eyes.

“Me too.”

He gathered her into his arms and they clung to each other like children as they cried; the highest earners in The Birdcage…And the worst abused.

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Eleanor wasn’t sure what she’d expected a brothel to be like-red PVC sofas and mirrors above the beds maybe—but The Birdcage, with its chandeliers, cornicing and Victorian décor felt more like a high-end Knightsbridge hotel. Still, she was smart enough to see through the air of exclusivity to the sleaze beneath. She’d sat in the hallway and watched as beautiful girls the same age as she was tottered by on the arms of elderly politicians, their dull eyes betraying what they really were even as they laughed and fawned over the men who’d paid for them; smelt the musky scent of sex in the air as she’d been led down the corridor, lurking just beneath the heady perfume of the Diptyque candles that burned on every surface.

She perched on the edge of the four-poster bed and tried to take a sip from the champagne flute she held but her hands were shaking so much that she could barely raise it to her lips, so she set it on the bedside table and glanced around the spacious bedroom, thinking. She’d been so angry when she’d made the appointment, so determined to confront this Harry and warn him to stay the hell away from her fiancé…Now she was beginning to realise that she’d got the power play between them all wrong. Everything about this place suggested that the clients were the ones in control, not the prostitutes. And as the implications of that sank in her head began to swim and she lowered it into her hands.

“Hi.”
She looked up. So this was the man Louis was apparently in love with. Again, she wasn’t sure what she’d expected a Rent Boy to look like…But the youth that stepped through the door wasn’t it. For one thing, he was younger than her. Rather than being some spray-tanned poser with a baby-oiled six-pack, he was pale and lean, almost too thin for his height and more of an Indie kid with his skinny jeans and the long dark hair that fell in a curtain over one eye. He was strikingly handsome…but there was also a raw, primal sensuality about him that she found quite intimidating. He fixed her with a sexy lop-sided smirk and she shifted uncomfortably as he ran his eyes slowly down her body, seeming to drink her in. He let out a long, low whistle.

“Phew…I really lucked out today, didn’t I? You’re stunning.” He moved to sit beside her on the bed, so close that their thighs touched and she could feel the heat of his body. “I’m Harry. And you are…?” He reached to cup her cheek with his hand…And she smacked it away before scrambling to her feet and crossing to stand on the other side of the room. He stared at her, confused for a moment, before his lips twisted into that crooked smile again. “It’s o.k baby, I get it.” He purred “…It’s your first time and you’re nervous. But don’t worry, I won’t hurt you. You’re the one who’s paying me, remember? So I’m your boy-toy, here to serve, ready to spend a full hour pleasuring you. Just tell me what you want and I’ll do it. I aim to please.”

She frowned at him. “You have no idea who I am, do you?”

He shook his head before tilting it to one side as he inspected her. “No…Sorry love. No offense. Are you, like, a celebrity?”

“I’m Eleanor Calder.”

Again he shook his head. “I don’t watch much T.V. Busy, y’know?” Then that sexy smirk returned. “But I’ve got to say…I’m so glad to meet such a beautiful woman as you, Eleanor Calder.”

And that infuriated her. Was she really that insignificant to him that he hadn’t even mentioned her to his whore?

“YOU’RE FUCKING MY FIANCE!”

To her surprise, he didn’t even look shocked. He rose with a sigh to stand against the wall beside her, hands in his pockets, his stance suddenly defensive. “Oh, I get it, so that’s what this is…You’ve found out he’s screwing around and you’re looking for someone to blame. Look sweetheart, I’m really sorry but you obviously don’t understand how it works in here—I don’t do the fucking, I’m the one who gets fucked.” And then his expression became sympathetic. “I’m sure you’re really hurt and finding out about him must have been awful…but you can’t blame me because he comes here and pays to have sex with me. I’m just doing my job; it’s not my fault…”

“My fiancé is Louis Tomlinson.”

At that every muscle in him seemed to tense and all colour drained from his face. As she watched he slumped back and began to slide down the wall…and as he slid all the swagger and sensuality seemed to melt away. By the time he landed on the floor, hugging his knees to his chest, he was no longer a seducer…more a frightened little boy. He pushed his hair back from his face with a trembling hand before turning to her, his eyes wide with shock.

“You…You’re Lou’s fiancé…Shit.”

“And you’re Harry.” He nodded, unable to look her in the eye. “You’re his whore…” He flinched at that, as if he’d been kicked. “Except that you’re more than that. He loves you…Probably more than he ever loved me.” She tried to keep control…But still her voice cracked around the words.
And when he looked at her again he seemed racked with guilt.
“No!” He crawled to kneel at her feet, looking up at her pleadingly. “No, don’t think that! He does love you…Just in a different way. He didn’t tell me your name…But he’s told me how wonderful you are, how smart and funny…and beautiful. He says you’re his best friend, hates himself for what he’s doing to you…”

“But he’s doing it anyway.”

He sat back, crossing his long legs beneath him and biting his lip as he inspected his hands. “Look, this…this was never meant to happen…”

“Then how did it?”

“He saved me.” She looked down at him, surprised and he nodded. “I was working this party…Followed the wrong punter. He got his bodyguards to overpower me. He was going to rape me…But then Louis walked in. He could have walked away and left them to it…But he didn’t. Instead he saved me.” Well that at least sounded like the Louis she knew, unable to walk away from anyone in need. “A-after that he hired me to come to his house…But it wasn’t for sex, it was just because he was worried about me. He wanted me to have a break. He was just being kind to me…You don’t understand…No one is ever kind to me. And-and we had a laugh, we got on.” He looked up at her guiltily. “You should know…He never laid a hand on me until I wanted him too.”

And she knew she should hate him…But looking down at him sitting like that, hugging his knees to his chest again, eyes wide and scared as if waiting for his whole world to fall apart, she just couldn’t find it in herself. Instead she slid from the chair to sit on the floor beside him. “Has…has he always been gay?”

He nodded. “You have to understand…You don’t get to choose. When I first met him he hated himself for it, part of him still does…I’m sure if he could cut it out of him he would. Have you seen the scars on his arm?”

She nodded. “I’ve always been too scared to ask…”

“That’s him trying…And punishing himself because he can’t…And punishing himself for what he’s doing to you. He’s under so much pressure from his father…Being gay is not an option for him. And when he met you he loved you enough to think that maybe he could force himself to change for you. He’s so determined to give you a wonderful life…But he can’t change what he is.”

At his words she suddenly realised that the battle had been lost before she’d even come here…Because this boy understood Louis in ways she never could. “And do you love him?”

He nodded wretchedly. “Yes…Yes, I love him so much. He’s so good to me…You don’t know…”

“I do.” He’d always been good to her, had never even raised his voice to her.

And then tears were shining in the boys green eyes and despite her best efforts she felt nothing but pity for him. “Please…please don’t tell them…An’ please don’t stop him seeing me. I love him…I need him…it gets so dark…you don’t know…. Please, don’t take him away from me.” He was begging her now.

And she was amazed that he couldn’t see…She shook her head. “How can I? I’ve already lost him to you.”

He bit his lip at that, obviously afraid to look grateful. “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. I never meant to hurt you.”
“I know.” And she suddenly knew what she had to do. She reached to touch his hand and his gaze followed her fingers. “But I won’t let myself be someone’s show wife, you understand?” He nodded. “We both love him…But you’re the one that he loves back…And you’re the one who needs him. I’m glad I met you Harry. Take care of him, o.k?”

She rose, snatched up her bag and made for the door. Behind her he clambered to his feet.

“WAIT!” She turned. He stood behind her, looking even more wretched than before. And again she could feel nothing but sorry for him as he whispered. “You have to pay me.”

“Of course.” God knows what the owners of this dreadful place would do to him otherwise. She took out the envelope full of money and set it down carefully on the bedside table. “Goodbye Harry…I really hope he can get you out of here.”

And then she ran from that room, past the tall vampire-like man who’d claimed to be his guard but who she now knew was his jailer, down the grand staircase, across the spacious reception and out into the street…Where she vomited violently.

Later on that evening she sat at the kitchen table, examining the ring on her finger, noting how the light refracted off the diamonds and sapphire. In front of her Louis made coffee in his work-suit, chatting away casually to her as he did so.

“It’s a do for the shareholders mainly, but they need someone to be the face of TommoCor, and with my father still trying to sort out everything in Japan…”

“I can’t do it.”

He sighed at that. “I know you hate these things…I do too…But at least if you come with me we can hate it together. Please El; don’t leave me to deal with all those poncy bastards alone.”

She looked up at him. He was so handsome, so perfect…everything she’d thought she’d wanted. She loved him…but not enough to live a lie with him, to know that when he wasn’t with her he would be in the arms of someone else who he loved more than he could ever love her, and just accept it.

“I met your whore today.”

He stiffened. He set the coffee cups down slowly, his hands shaking so much that black coffee spilled over the rims and dripped onto work surface, and as he turned to her she could almost see him working on the lie. Sure enough. “El, what are you..?”

She cut him off. “Except he wasn’t a whore, not really…A prostitute yes…But not a whore…Instead he was just this kid who’s so in love with you. And I know you love him back. Sit down Louis. We need to talk.”

He did, lowering himself slowly into the chair opposite, his face a mask of guilt as he stared at her.

“El…”

But she waved a hand, silencing him. “Y’know, in a way I’m relieved. I always thought it was me, you see…That if I smiled more, laughed more, was more beautiful, more wild in bed then maybe you’d stop drifting away from me. I spent every day and night racking my brains for reasons why you didn’t seem to adore me as much as I adored you, reasons why you didn’t kissed me as deeply
as I kissed you…Why you never seemed to be able to look me in the eye, blaming myself… Now I know. It wasn’t anything that I was doing wrong, in fact, it wasn’t me at all…It was you.” She slid the engagement ring from her finger and set it down on the table between them. They both stared down at it. “I love you, but I can’t marry you Louis…Because you’re gay. You want that boy Harry…You don’t want me.”

To give him credit, he didn’t bother trying to deny it. “How-how did you..?”

“Stan.” She saw his look of betrayal and sighed. “Don’t blame him: I refused to leave his flat until he told me the truth. He’s worried about you, hates seeing you so unhappy…And you are unhappy Louis. I knew it, deep down I knew it, but I kept thinking I could somehow fix it. Then I came back from New York and you were glowing and I thought it was because of me.”

He looked as if he were about to cry. “I never meant to hurt you El...”

“So you thought you’d lead me on instead? Louis, how long did you think you’d be able to keep this up? Were you really going to go through with marrying me?”

He shrugged helplessly. “I would have taken good care of you.”

She nodded. “I know…But we wouldn’t have been happy. I would have spent the rest of my life going out of my mind trying to make you love me…Can’t you see how cruel that is?” He nodded, his face twisting with guilt. “And you would have also been cruel to yourself. Louis…There’s nothing wrong with being gay. I…I love you enough to want to see you happy…Even if it’s with another man rather than with me.”

He looked up at her, frightened, and the blue of his eyes made her heart ache…She’d always adored his blue eyes. ‘I don’t want to lose you’, she thought sadly, ‘but I have to for both of us.’

“H-have you...?”

“Outed you to anyone? Jesus Louis, surely you know me better than that.”

“Thank you.” And then he slumped forward, putting his face in his hands. His sobs echoed through the kitchen. She rose and went to him, leaning down to wrap her arms around him.

“Shhh,” She kissed his soft sandy brown hair. “The official line I’ll take is that I decided I didn’t want to settle down just yet.”

“You could say I cheated on you…Just not who with….I’m so sorry I cheated on you.”

“I know. And you know that it will get out eventually, right?”

“Yes…I’m scared El…Oh Christ, I’m terrified.”

“But is he worth it?”

And she felt the last shard of her heart break as he nodded in her arms. “I never meant to love him…But I do. I can’t see my life without him in it. I don’t want to.”

She released him and sat back down opposite him, reaching to touch his hand. “Then you need to help him. That place…”

He nodded, wiping his tears away with his hands. “I know. He won’t let me help him.”

“Doesn’t mean he doesn’t need it. You men, you can separate sex and love so well that you don’t
understand, but we women do…No one sells themselves because they want to. I was determined to hate him…But when I saw him in that place I just couldn’t. That boy loves you…He needs you to rescue him. As for me?” She rose again, moving to take his beautiful face in her hands one final time. “I love you, I always want you to be in my life…But I have to save myself.”

She kissed his forehead softly, released him and made her way to the door, walking determinedly, even as the tears blurred her vision.

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Louis smoothed down the lapels of his blue suit and stared at himself in the mirror. It seemed strange not to see Eleanor’s reflection beside his…They’d always gotten ready for these things together. He felt sad, but also…lighter…As if a burden had been lifted from his shoulders, and he enjoyed the sensation, aware that wouldn’t last. Even now, panic was beginning to bubble up from his stomach…But for tonight he had to ignore it, had to keep control…For the Corporation. The honk of a car horn echoed up from the drive outside and he checked his hair one final time before making his way downstairs and out into the London drizzle.

An hour later and the questions were starting to get to him. He snatched another glass of champagne from a tray as it was carried past and turned back to the crowd of chatting investors, knocking it back with a practised flick of the wrist. He knew he was drunk, but didn’t care.

“And so Louis…Where is your lovely fiancé tonight?”

“Busy.” He looked over their heads, searching until he spotted the French windows across the room, gaping open to let in the cool night air. “If you’ll excuse me lads, I need a smoke.”

He hurried towards them, feeling their glares on his back.

Once outside he lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply, tasting the filth inside and savouring it. He moved toward the stone railing along the balcony’s edge, leaning on it and gazing out across the rolling lawns behind the vast manor house towards the twinkling lights of London in the distance. Movement caught his eye and he leaned over the railing, squinting into the darkness.

A line of black shiny SUV’s crept slowly round the back of the building like a large, black centipede before pulling up beside some service doors, concealed from the patio where guests sipped cocktails. Men and women in strangely familiar black uniforms emerged from the drivers doors. The service doors opened and what appeared to be Manor house staff greeted them. For a few moments they stood in heated discussion…Then an agreement seemed to be reached and the men and women in uniforms moved to open the back doors of the cars. As he watched, fascinated, a horde of men and women emerged, all dressed in evening wear, all young and extremely attractive…and one very familiar.

He stared, open mouthed, at the tall youth who unfolded himself from the back seat of one of the SUV’s, his lean, muscular frame clad in a long black wool coat, a black shirt open almost to the navel and a pair of black trousers with white pinstripes that would have looked ridiculous on anyone else but made him look like some dashing pirate…

HARRY.

As he watched Harry turned back to the car and helped a young woman out. She was beautiful and
blonde, and almost as tall as he was, a midnight blue cocktail dress clinging to her slender body. An Asian boy with his black hair styled into a quiff and a blonde boy emerged after her and the four of them moved to join the crowd that had gathered around the service doors. At some sort of signal they all filed inside the building, the hotel staff and Handlers, for he now realised that was what they were, forming a line either side of them and glancing around furtively, as if to make sure no one was watching. They disappeared inside, slamming the doors after them, and he realised that he’d just seen ‘The Entertainment’ arrive…But for which party? He tossed his cigarette butt off the balcony and headed back inside.

Back in the room he scanned the crowd until he spotted his father’s PR, Vincent, sipping champagne and trying to chat up a bored socialite. He made his way towards him.

“Oi, Vincent!”

Vincent turned to fix him with his usual irritated glare. “Yes Louis?”

“A word.” He wrapped an arm around his shoulder, ignoring how he recoiled, and steered him into a corner.

“Louis, what do you..?”

“Have we hired any, y’know…’Entertainment’…for tonight?” He arched an eyebrow at him.

For a moment Vincent looked panicked; then he frowned. “I have no idea what you…”

“Cut the bullshit Vince, I know my father sometimes hires prostitutes from The Birdcage to entertain our clients. What I want to know is if he got you to hire some for tonight.”


“Fuck off Vince. For the moment I’m in charge. Don’t make me fire you.”

He turned his back on him and grabbed a passing waitress by the elbow. “Excuse me…But could you please tell me if the Manor is hosting any other social events or parties or anything tonight?”

She considered this and nodded. “There’s the annual EMIG parliamentary dinner but I’m afraid it’s private for obvious reasons.”

“Thanks.” He’d worked with Politicians enough to know that they always did their dirty work somewhere secret. They wouldn’t risk being caught having a crowd of prostitutes pleasuring them at the dining table…They’d hold that particular party somewhere else. “Tell me, does the Manor house have an attic?”

“Uh, well…” The panic on her face told him all he needed to know. He released her elbow and made his way through the crowd and out towards the lifts.

The moment he stepped out into the dimly-lit corridor he could hear the sounds of a party…Glasses clinking, classical music, voices talking and laughing and, running in an undercurrent beneath it all and yet somehow louder, the sound of moaning. A chink of light shone from a crack in a door half-way down and he crept towards it, crouching to peer inside…And what he saw shocked him.

It was like a scene from Caligula. Discarded suits and evening dresses covered the floorboards like
a carpet and on it, on the chairs, against the walls, everywhere were naked couples, sometimes ménage a tois, rutting like animals, writhing with pleasure. There were enough sex acts and positions to put the Karma Sutra to shame. Bottles of expensive champagne had been lined up on the table alongside lines of coke on silver trays and bowls of condoms. The air was heady with the scent of weed and sweat. Handlers leaned against the walls watching impassively, as if this was something they saw every day...Which it probably was. As he watched there seemed to be some sort of commotion, cheering...And then Harry appeared, moving through the copulating couples like some fallen angel. He was completely naked, skin shining with sweat, his cock swollen and hard, a metal ring at its base. He had the blonde girl he'd seen him with earlier by the hand, and she was completely naked as well, her skin flushed and her red lipstick smudged. As Louis watched he led her over to the long dining table, lifting her up onto the opposite side of it as the crowd cheered and shouted encouragement. He pushed her back and then his dark head disappeared between her thighs. Soon she was moaning, reaching down to tangle her fingers in his hair as men and women swarmed around her, reaching to caress her stomach and pinch her small breasts. Then Harry stood, caught her hips and drove into her, thrusting hard as the baying crowd shouted their encouragement, hands reaching forward to caress his shoulders, his chest, to pinch and slap his flanks...But Harry didn't seem to notice. Instead his expression was blank, his eyes lifeless. He fucked the girl as if on autopilot. Even his climax didn't inspire much more than a disinterested grunt. Then he climbed from between the girls legs, his position immediately taken by another man. He made to move away from the table only for a grotesquely fat middle-aged man to waddle up behind him, catch him by the back of the neck and force him face-down onto the wooden surface.

"Where do you think you're going, boy?" His accent was plummy and Louis was pretty sure he was the MP for Chelsea. "Spread those legs." Harry lay still as his legs were kicked apart, turning his head so his cheek was pressed to the table-top, and his gaze was towards the crack in the door. And then their eyes met. For a few seconds he stared at him in shocked horror...Then...

"WAIT!" he surged upward, wriggling out of the man's grip. "I need to take a piss!"

"You can go after!" The man slammed him back down and used his huge bulk to pin him there before turning to shout over his shoulder to another middle-aged man who was drinking champagne and casually watching two women having sex. "Here Seb! This one’s giving me trouble. Be a sport and come hold him for me, will you?!"

The man moved over to the table, catching Harry’s arms at the wrist and pulling them forward over his head so that he was pinned face down over the table. "This is Dirty Harry!"

"You think I don’t know who he is?! Why do you think I want to fuck him! Hold him tight!"

The man spread Harry’s legs wider, reaching for a condom and one of the many bottles of lube that littered the table and floor. Louis rose, ready to rush and intervene...But then Harry turned to stare at him, cheek pressed to the table again...And shook his head.

'No!' He mouthed at him as Louis stared at him in bewildered horror. ‘I’m fine! Don’t! Please don’t!’ His eyes were wide with panic.

It took everything Louis had to stay crouching in that hallway, watching as the man pushed into him and Harry’s face twisted in pain, watching as his body was pushed back and forth across the table by the force of the man’s thrusts. As he fucked him the man leaned forward to lick Harry’s cheek with a thick, slimy tongue, rolls of fat spilling over his narrow back as he bore down on him. It was horrific...And yet Harry lay still as a doll and took it, his eyes glassy and dead as he stared at Louis. Finally the man came, snarling into Harry’s ear.
“Oh you filthy little bastard!”

He pulled out and jerked his head at the man who held Harry’s wrists. “Come here and see this!”
The man released him and moved to stand beside his friend, who caught Harry’s flanks and spread
them wide apart to reveal his bruised entrance. “See that? He may be a whore but that little hole’s
still as tight as a girl’s cunt.”

The man pushed the tip of his finger inside and nodded in approval, ignoring Harry’s gasp. “My
turn.”

“No!” Harry struggled out of their grasp and stood. “I SAID I NEEDED TO PISS!”

There was movement behind them as Harry’s handler…That man Jack…detached himself from the
wall and slunk over. He caught a fistful of Harry’s hair, yanking his head painfully back so he
could hiss in his ear.

“Have you been causing trouble?!”

And as Louis watched Harry began to tremble, shrinking away from him, his eyes lowered. “N-no
Sir. I-I just really need to use the loo…P-please Sir…If I don’t go now I’ll piss on the floor.”

Jack seemed to consider this. Then… “Fine.” He released him, shoving him roughly forward and
tossing the bath robe he held at him. “Cover yourself up in case someone sees you!”
Harry shrugged it on and bolted for the door. Louis leapt back as he burst through it, slamming it
behind him.

“Harry…”

“Shut up! They’ll hear you!” He caught him by the elbow and dragged him down the corridor and
into a small bathroom, slamming the door behind him and sliding the bolt across with a thud,
before slumping against it to stare at him, wide-eyed. “What the fuck are you doing here Lou?!”

Louis ignored the question, instead rushing forward to take his face in his hands, his heart
pounding. “Jesus Harry! Are you o.k? I saw what they did to you…”

Harry stared at him, lost. “W-what? I’m fine…”

“No Harry, you can’t be fine! That sack of shit fucking raped you!”

“What? That? No…No he didn’t rape me Lou…He was a client…”

Louis gazed up at him in bewilderment. Was he so damaged that he didn’t even realise what had
just happened to him? He pushed his hair gently out of his eyes with the tips of his fingers.

“Harry…Harry, baby, look at me. It doesn’t matter that he was a client. You didn’t want to have
sex…And he made you anyway. That’s rape. Baby, you’ve just been raped.”

“No no it wasn’t…Was it?” He stared at him in confusion as this sank in. “I have to…”

“No Harry. You don’t. You don’t have to go back there! You don’t have to earn your living by
letting yourself be violated by sick bastards like him!” And he suddenly had an idea. “Look why
don’t you come home with me, right now? Just walk out of here. I’ll look after you. I’ll get you an
office job; I’ll make sure you’re o.k.”

Harry fixed him with a look of heart-breaking longing before shaking his head sadly. “I can’t. I
just…I can’t. I-I gotta go back…”
He pushed his hands away and made to walk from the room. And suddenly Louis was seized with frustration. He’d just offered him the perfect ticket out…So why the fuck wasn’t he taking it? He lunged forward, catching hold of his arm.

“So you’re just going to go back in there and fuck that girl while they cheer you on?!”

Harry turned to glare at him. “She’s a whore too, they force us together. It’s not like either of us enjoy it…Now, let me go.”

Louis shook his head. He’d had enough of this, enough of the lies and secrets…He was going to find out, once and for all. “So you’re going to go back in there and let yourself be raped by those sick old perverts?! Harry, why?!”

“It’s not rape… I have to.” He struggled in his grip but Louis only held on more tightly. “LOUIS LET GO!”

“It is Harry! And it’s fucked up that you can’t see that! Why? Why do you have to go back in there?? Why do you have to do those things?”

“Louis please! Let me go!” Harry fought with him, trying to wrench his arm away, desperate to escape now…But Louis clung to him like a limpet.

“Why Harry?! Just tell me why!”

As Louis watched his face twisted in grief and fear, terrified tears welling in his eyes.

“Please! I can’t! I-I have to get back…They’ll come looking for me…”

“Why are you a prostitute?! Why can’t you just walk away from it?! What happened to you?! Why do you have to earn?! Is it drugs? Are you on drugs?! Harry, tell me! PLEASE!”

“I WAS KIDNAPPED!”

At his scream Louis released his arm and stumbled back in shock. Harry sank slowly to his knees, hands rising to cover his mouth as if to keep any more of his horrific secrets from spilling out, his entire body trembling…And suddenly it all made sense…The bruises, the evasiveness, the night terrors, the refusal to tell him anything about himself, the Handler escorting him everywhere…

“You’re a sex slave.” It was a truth so terrible he could only whisper it.

Harry looked up at him, his face a mask of terror, and gave a small, almost imperceptible nod. …And Louis felt sick. “Oh my God! Oh my God…” He turned away from him, his stomach churning, his head spinning. He was a sex slave. He’d been paying for a sex slave.

Harry crawled across the tiles to him, wrapping his arms around his legs, pleading with him desperately through his sobs. “P-please Lou, please…Y-you can’t tell anyone…Please…Y-you don’t know what they’re like…H-he’ll kill me and he’ll go after my family…He’ll kill everyone I love, including you…Promise me Lou, please promise me! H-he said he’d take my sister! I can’t let him take my sister!”

Louis looked down at him, so frightened, tears pouring down his cheeks, and all he wanted to do was make his nightmare stop. He sank down onto the tiles in front of him, taking his tear-stained face in his hands. “Jesus Harry, I’m not going to leave you like this…With them…I can’t!”

“Yes!” He pawed at his chest, his breath coming in frantic, terrified pants, eyes wide with panic.
“Yes, you can! If-if Mr Cowell thinks I even breathed a word he’ll kill me…if-if you try to help me and he hears about it he could kill you! P-please Lou, I’m begging you. Please don’t tell anyone!”

“No, no I can’t just…”

“HARRY!”

At the shout from outside Harry froze like a rabbit caught in headlights, shooting a terrified glance at the door before turning back to him. “I-I gotta go. I gotta get back…” He made to get up and Louis caught him by the wrist.

“No! No, Harry you can’t…”

“HARRY! WHERE ARE YOU?!”

“I have to.” And then he ducked his head and pressed his lips to Louis’ in a desperate kiss. He pulled away, his jade eyes searching his face. “I love you Louis, but please, I’m begging you-If you love me…Don’t try to help me…”

And then he was gone, the bathroom door slamming shut after him, leaving Louis reeling….

He spent the rest of the evening out on the balcony, chain-smoking and trying to wrap his head around what Harry had told him. Every fibre of his being wanted to run back to that attic room and pull him out of there, battering anyone who tried to stop him…But he wasn’t stupid. He knew that neither of them would have a chance, that the place was crawling with Mr Cowell’s so-called Handlers and he’d probably just get his head kicked in…And then Harry would be punished, or worse….

He needed a plan…

He waited until he saw the line of black SUV’s creep back down the driveway before making his excuses and hailing a taxi.

Back home he opened his laptop, logged into Google and typed “Missing Persons UK” into the search bar. If Harry had been kidnapped then there must have been some sort of record of it, some sort of search. He racked his brains trying to remember and feeling ashamed that he couldn’t. So many children went missing every year-When had it stopped being shocking? He ran his curser over the first website;

www.missingpeople.police.uk

He clicked on it. Immediately a database appeared. He filled in the gender and physical description boxes easily. Missing from? Cheshire? He remembered how Harry had flinched when he’d asked him if he was from the county and typed it in. And a name-HARRY. But he didn’t know a surname, nor did he know when he’d been kidnapped. He clicked the search button anyway, hoping it would be enough…It was. Immediately a profile flashed up on the screen.

HARRY STYLES 16 HOLMES CHAPEL CHESHIRE

MISSING SINCE: 16th FEBRUARY 2010
He peered at the grainy photograph. In it, a handsome teenage boy was standing beside a pretty older woman with hair as dark as his, his arm wrapped round her shoulder and his cheek pressed to hers as they both smiled at the camera-his mother, Louis guessed. They were so alike and he wondered sadly how she must be feeling, how she coped with not knowing what had happened to her son, if he was alive or dead. He looked so young, his curls short and fluffy and his cheeks rounder…But he’d know that crooked grin and those dimples anywhere. He turned his attention to the description:

‘Harry was last seen on Holme’s Chapel High Street at approx. 6:30 pm after leaving a friend’s house to walk home. He is 5 ft 11 inches tall, with green eyes and dark brown hair. He was wearing his school uniform consisting of grey trousers, white aertex T-shirt, and navy sweatshirt with school badge, black Kickers shoes and a navy beanie hat. Distinctive feature-Harry has two extra nipples, located on his ribcage. If you have any information please contact Cheshire police on 0345 667893.’

Louis slumped back in his seat, staring at the picture of that kid smiling beside his mother as his stomach churned and bile rose in his throat. Sixteen. He’d been sixteen years old when they’d snatched him away from his family…Sixteen years old when he’d arrived at The Birdcage….Sixteen years old when they’d first forced him into prostitution. He’d been a child…It was horrific, a level of darkness he could never have imagined.

‘Marked’…The receptionist had said that Harry had been ‘Marked’ and had asked if he’d minded. He’d no idea what it even meant but doubted it was anything good. Now he watched from the window as Harry climbed out of the black SUV, the hood of his grey jacket pulled up against the rain, and followed at the heels of his Handler. From his hidden spot behind the curtains he could see how Harry shrank away as the tall corpse-like man caught hold of his arm, yanking him forward to hiss something in his ear. He nodded, biting his lips as tears shone in his eyes.

The shrill ring of the doorbell echoed through the hallway and he went to answer it. He waited until the Handler had gone before turning to where Harry stood uncertainly, hands behind his back and his gaze on the floor.

“Hello Harry Styles.”

At that his head jerked up and he stared at him, eyes wide with disbelief. “You-you know who I am?”

He nodded. “You’re Harry Styles, from Holmes Chapel in Cheshire, son of Anne and Robin Twist and little brother of Gemma Styles. You went to Holmes Chapel Comprehensive…And when you were sixteen you were kidnapped walking home from a friend’s house.”

“I-I haven’t been Harry Styles in so long…I almost forgot him.” And then his face twisted in grief. Louis ran to take him in his arms, holding him tight as sobs shook his body. “I-I struggled, fought…But there was two of them and they were so strong…”

“Shhh, I know Harry, I know. It wasn’t your fault.”

“H-have you told anybody? Please Lou, please don’t tell anybody! I’ll get in so much trouble!”
Please Lou, they’ll kill me! They’ll kidnap my sister; make her a whore like me! I’m so afraid!”

“Hush, it’s o.k… I haven’t said anything to anyone.” Yet. If only he could convince him to tell him his story, to trust him to rescue him from his nightmare…. As he rubbed Harry’s back his fingers caught the cotton hem of his jacket, pushing it up… To reveal a long, thin red welt. And somehow he knew that there were a lot more. An idea struck him. “Come on.” He caught his arm and pulled him up the stairs, ignoring his protests.

Once in his bedroom he steered him towards the full-length mirror until he was facing it and stood back.

“Take off your jacket.”

He stared at him in confusion, biting back his tears. “W-what? No!”

“Then I will.” He unzipped his jacket, pulling it from his shoulders and tossing it inside before starting on the buttons of his plaid shirt, tugging it off and pulling his white T-shirt up and over his head as he struggled, before wrapping one arm around his waist and pushing his jeans down his long legs…

“Jesus Lou! Stop it! Don’t, please don’t!”

Every layer of clothing lost revealed a new set of bruises, a new cut or welt. Finally he stepped back, gaping in horror.

Harry huddled in front of him, his back to him and his head bowed in shame as he hugged himself. The creamy white skin of his thighs, buttocks, back and shoulders was covered in a network of deep blue-black bruises and long, thin welts like claw marks, a road map of their cruelty and abuse.

“Jesus Christ.” He caught him, turning his trembling body so his wounds were reflected in the mirror. “Look! Look what they’ve done to you! LOOK!” For a moment Harry stood, shaking his head… And then he turned to peer fearfully over his shoulder, his eyes growing wide.

“Mr Cowell had me whipped… My M-master said I deserved it…”

“What the hell could you possibly have done to deserve that?!”

“I said no.” It was barely a whisper.

“No to who?”

“These clients. T-they wanted to fuck me… at-at the same time. I didn’t want to, it hurt. I said no, told them to stop. Whores don’t get to say no.”

He moved to take his chin in his hand, turning his head so he could look into those incredible technicolour eyes. “Can’t you see how fucked up that is? You didn’t deserve this… You didn’t deserve any of this.”

And at his kind words Harry seemed to fall apart. He twisted his fingers into his dark hair and let out a pain-filled wail. Louis caught him as his knees buckled, lowering him gently to the floor as he words came out in a sob-choked jumble. “I can’t take it anymore! I can’t! My-my friend killed himself because of them an-an I found him… He cut the shit out of his arms, there was blood all up the fuckin’ walls An-an’ I wish it had been me! I-I wish I’d had the guts to do what he did because I just can’t take this anymore!”
The thought of Harry feeling that desperate, that dark, was devastating. “Then please Harry, I’m begging you, please let me help you!”

“No! No, he’ll kill everyone I love! LOUIS PLEASE! PLEASE DON’T TELL!” It was a desperate scream.

“O.k, o.k Shhh.” And Louis knew it was pointless, that The Bird Cage had too much of a hold on him. He’d have to think of another way. He held him while he cried on his shoulder, waiting until his sobs subsided. “But I want you to at least tell me the truth, tell me your story.”

Harry sat back on his knees, wiping his tears away with his hands. “O.k…But not tonight. Tonight could you…could you just look after me? Please? I feel like I’m drowning.”

It was such a heartbreakingly sad request. He nodded, smiling through his own tears. “I won’t let you drown.”

They stood together beneath the shower, the water in the tray beneath them turning red as he wiped the crusted blood from Harry’s skin with a cloth, whispering comforting nothings into his ear as the spray mingled with their tears.

“I love you….It’s going to be o.k…It will all be o.k. I love you…I love you… I love you…..”

Once he was clean he dried him gently and led him to bed, laying him down on the cool sheets and tending to his welts and bruises with antiseptic and arnica cream from the bathroom cabinet. He kissed every wound and bruise better, Harry’s skin shivering beneath the touch of his lips, before turning out the light and pulling the duvet over them both. He spooned him, resting his hand on his shoulder as his mouth moved to whisper in his ear. “It’s all alright. You’re safe here.”

“I met your girl the other day.”

“I know. She’s gone.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I could never have loved her the way I love you.”

“Loving her would have been easier.”

He sighed, planting a tender kiss on his bruised shoulder. “I don’t think real love’s meant to be easy. I think real love is being willing to struggle, willing to fight on through the darkness no matter how dark it actually gets because no matter how hard loving that person is, nothing can be harder than not being able to love them at all. I was a coward before I met you; I lived my life to please other people. Now, I’d turn my back on those people without caring, without giving a shit if they hate me or what they’ll do to me. I’d fight lions for you.”

Harry rolled over to face him, his green eyes shining in the moonlight that seeped in from the window like rare and precious gems.

“Really?” There was doubt in his voice, as if he didn’t see himself worthy of such devotion…such love.

“Absolutely.”
Harry smiled, and it was perfect. He pressed his mouth to Louis’ and kissed him with the devotion of a pilgrim to some holy relic, his tears dripping salty sweet between their lips. Then he reached to take his hand and place it on his chest. Louis felt his heart leap beneath the tips of his fingers.

“I-I can feel them, all of them, on my skin…I only want to feel you. I’m tired of being fucked…I want to know if there’s something else.”

Louis nodded and pushed him back onto the pillows. Every touch, every kiss was feather light, gentle, designed to cleanse away the memory of the encounters that no doubt still haunted his dreams. He made love to Harry as if he was still pure, innocent, sacred, every movement slow and reverential, at the same time becoming both lover and healer as he met him at the depths of his pain and kissed away his scars.

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The next day he sat at the kitchen table and fiddled with his mobile phone, feeling like Judas. Harry sat opposite him, elbows resting on the table’s surface, and took a gulp of his tea, peering at him curiously over the rim of his mug.

“What’s wrong?”

“Oh, nothing.” He lied smoothly. “Just some e-mails from work.” He set the mobile down between them and lifted his own mug. “So last night you made me a promise. I want to hear your story.”

Harry turned away, biting his lip, evasive again. “I don’t know where to start.”

“The beginning’s usually best. When they kidnapped you, how’d it happen?”

“Well, y’know that band I told you I was in at school? Well we’d been rehearsing at my best friend Will’s house an’ I was walking home after. It started to rain so I stopped to text my sister Gemma, see if she would pick me up. Our mum had let her have the car, you see. They jumped me from behind, drugged me…When I woke up I was in the back of a van. My friend Zayn was there…They’d kidnapped him too that night. That’s what they do-Drive to a specific area and take a few at a time, spread the kidnappings out over a few months- different times, different places so they’re not connected…They even go up to Scotland and across to Wales sometimes.”

“So…Do they just cruise around until they see a kid they like the look of?”

“No…It’s a lot more organised than that. Mr Cowell has this team of computer nerds-The Tech Team, we call them-And they hack into school and college databases, go through the student pictures and select kids they think Mr Cowell might like. They send the pictures to him and he decides which ones he wants, and then sends his Handlers to stalk and kidnap them.”

“Fuck that IS organised.”

“You have no idea.”

“And after you were kidnapped…then what happened?”

Harry took another nervous gulp of his tea. When he looked at him he seemed to be assessing him. “How much do you really want to know?”
“Everything.”

“Ummm o.k….“And then he told Louis everything; from how his virginity was auctioned off in front of a baying crowd, to his training with Caroline and Ben, to his first client, to his journey to becoming ‘Dirty Harry’, and through it all Louis tried to keep his face expressionless while fighting back tears. When he finished he ducked his head, ashamed.

“And what has he said will happen if you tell anyone or try to escape?”

“That I’ll be killed. And he’d not lying-Products have crossed him before and you just don’t see them again. The Handlers come at night and take them away somewhere, put a bullet in the back of their heads. He doesn’t stand for any kind of disobedience. He punishes us.”

“By whipping you?”

“Yes…Among other things. And a while ago I got a new Handler…” And then he began to tell him about Jack…His entire body trembling and tears dripping down his cheeks as he described his enslavement and Jack’s torture. “I-I don’t think Mr Cowell knows what he does- it’s like his own private kink-but I wouldn’t tell him because Jack would find out and it would just get worse.”

“And no one’s ever tried to escape?”

Harry nodded, wiping his face with his sleeve. “Yes but he always catches them and brings them back. He beats the shit out of them on stage in front of us all…But it’s impossible to escape anyway.”

“Why?”

“The Handlers come everywhere with us and we’re cuffed to our beds and gagged at night. Remember that bracelet I was wearing when you took me up to Doncaster for the weekend? You said it looked like an electronic tag bracelet?” He nodded. “Well that’s exactly what it was, so he could track me if I tried to run…Not that I would. He has my home address. If I ran back there he’d follow…and he’d kill my family. He-he has these pictures of my sister Gemma. If-if I’m not good for him he says he’s going to kidnap her too. I love my sister Louis…I’d rather never see her again than see her being forced to be a whore at The Birdcage.”

Louis nodded. His stomach was churning, his head spinning…But he couldn’t show any of his shock or revulsion in case Harry saw and clammed up.

“Harry…How many of you are there?”

Harry considered this. “Around 250 to 300 men and women. He likes to take products when they’re around 17. I…was an experiment…”

“And how long does he keep you?”

Harry shrugged, fear in his eyes. “There are no Products over 26. As soon as you get too old in his eyes then it’s over for you. And we have quotas to make every week…If it gets to the point where you’re not earning enough, not making quota, then Mr Cowell makes you disappear…”

Louis echoed his words. “I need to earn-You have to make quota.”

“Exactly. But you can’t tell anybody Louis! Please! He’ll kill me! He could kill you too! If you want to help me then keep hiring me to come stay with you! I’m only safe when I’m with you!” He was getting agitated again, tears in his eyes and his entire body beginning to tremble. Tea spilled over the rim of the mug he was holding and he set it down “Shit. Sorry!” He jumped up and snatched up some kitchen roll, dabbing at the mess.
“Shhh, it’s alright! Harry don’t worry.” Louis jumped up with him, catching him and wrapping his arms around his shoulders. “Shhh, it’s just a spill. Do-do they beat you for spilling things?”

Harry shrugged. “They beat me for lots of things. I’m bad, you see. I’m defiant…I’ve got a smart mouth that needs stopped up.”

The way he said it, with such utter conviction, was chilling. It was as if he’d had it drummed into him so often that he actually believed it.

“Oh no Harry, no…” Louis rushed to correct him. “No Harry, you’re not bad…”

And then the door-bell rang.

They both looked at the door out into the hall-way and then at each other.

“I mean it Louis; please don’t tell anyone…Just keep hiring me.”

“O.k.” He lied. “I promise.”

Handing Harry over to that monstrous man was probably the hardest thing he’d ever had to do, but he comforted himself with the thought that he wouldn’t be with him for much longer…That he was going to get him out of there. He lifted the mobile phone from the table, tapping on the voice-notes icon and then the saved file. Harry’s deep voice with its Northern accent filled the room…

“Well y’know the band I told you I was in…”

He smiled. He’d managed to record it all. Yes, he’d lied to Harry…but it would be worth it to rescue him and all the other Products from that hell-hole. He shrugged on his jacket and zipped his mobile safely away in the pocket before going out to his car and driving immediately to Scotland Yard.

Chapter End Notes

Next time…Louis finds that helping Harry is going to be far more complicated than he’d thought, especially when he receives a threat, but gains a surprising ally. We learn a bit about the hole Harry left in the lives of those he left behind…And Jack imposes his ultimate sanction.

I’m planning on giving you guys either one massive chapter or two, just to make up for you having to wait and to say thank you for your patience. Please leave kudos if you like this chapter and also comment to let me know that I haven’t lost my wonderful readers!
Chapter 16-Bribery and Corruption

Chapter Summary

We learn a bit about the family Harry left behind...And Louis receives a threat.

Chapter Notes

Warnings; This chapter contains violence, swearing and threats.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 16-Bribery and Corruption

Gemma drove slowly through the pitch dark night, the jarring scrape of her windscreen wipers the only sound in the oppressive silence. She peered through the rain-splattered windscreen, trying to control the panic that was throbbing ice-cold through her veins. Where was he?!

Suddenly the beam of her headlights picked out a figure standing on the pavement up ahead, huddled against the rain, and she pulled over sighing in relief. She leaned across to open the passenger door.

“Get in, Pond Scum!”

“Cheers Gem!” Harry climbed into the car, sixteen years old and adorable, his navy beanie tugged down over his chocolate curls and his chubby cheeks pink with the cold. “I thought you weren’t coming.”

“I couldn’t let them take you.”

He smiled at her, showing the dimples she’d always secretly loved, before starting to fiddle with the blow heater. She sat watching him fondly; thinking about how much she adored him, how perfect he was.

“So how was band practice?”

“Great. Will’s has almost finished learning the solo to ‘Teenage Dirt-Bag’ so we should be able to perform it soon.”

“Good. Seat-belt.”

“And brace position!”

“Piss off!” she reached to cuff him gently around the head as he laughed, before starting the car and pulling back out onto the dark road. As she drove she stole glances at him dozing in the seat beside her, full lips pouted, his school uniform damp with rain. She’d found him. She’d picked him
up this time. He was safe. Everything was going to be o.k.
She swung the car into the driveway in front of their house and reached to gently shake him awake.
“Harry, we’re home.”

His eyes fluttered open-turquoise green. She’d never seen another person with the same colour eyes. They were so beautiful.

“Oh, o.k.” He sat up and yawned. Then he leaned over to peck her on the cheek. “Love you Gem.”

It was typical Harry…He could be so annoying; and then suddenly so sweet. She watched him scramble out of the car before getting out herself. “Hurry up and get inside. We’re already late.”

He swung his backpack onto his shoulder and turned to look at her, fixing her with that cheeky crooked grin…And then he vanished, fading away into thin air.
No! No, this was not what was supposed to happen! She’d done it right this time, she’d picked him up! SHE HADN’T LEFT HIM!
Seized by panic she ran to the other side of the car, searching frantically, her heart pounding so fast that she thought it would burst through her chest at any second.

“NO! NO, PLEASE, NOT AGAIN! HARRY! HARRY, WHERE ARE YOU?! HARRY!”
Her scream was desperate, visceral…But there was no answer, no sign of him…Just his backpack lying discarded on the ground, the strap torn. She snatched it up and turned, screaming into the darkness…

“HARRY!”

She awoke with a jolt, tears pouring down her face and lay panting, staring at the ceiling. It had been four years but she still had the nightmare almost every night…And her flatmates at University wondered why she rarely slept. She kicked herself free from the bedsheets tangled around her legs before stumbling out into the hallway…and found herself face to face with that closed door, behind which lay a bedroom frozen in time. For a moment she thought about going in…But today the loss was too raw. She knew her mother did sometimes…Go in and lie down on His unmade bed and smell the pillows, chasing the last traces of His scent; touch the clothes that hung in the wardrobe and try to remember the last time He’d worn each item, how He’d looked, what He’d been doing …But she couldn’t bear to talk to her about it.

She made her way downstairs to the kitchen and filled the kettle, setting it to boil and lifting the cups down from the cupboard. She worked on autopilot, filling each one with a tea bag, pouring in the milk…Then she froze.

She’d done it again.

Four mugs of tea sat on the kitchen counter. One for her, one for her mother, one for her stepfather…And one for someone who might never come home. That was the problem, you see. When she was away at University she could delude herself into believing that it had all been a bad dream, that he was back home with her mother and Robin; going to school, playing football, singing in that stupid band with his friends…Then she’d come home and he wouldn’t be there and the grief would hit her like a train. And worse than the delusion was the not knowing, because not knowing led to hope; hope that he would be found alive, safe and sound; that he’d just walk through the door—maybe not today, but tomorrow, or the next day, or the day after that…That kind of hope could
drive a person to madness…

She couldn’t let her mother see the cup of tea. She snatched it up and emptied it quickly into the sink, just as the door-bell rang.

She wrenched the front door open and gaped in shock at the sandy-haired man standing on the doorstep, a nervous grin on his face.

“Surprise!”

“Chris! W-what are you doing here? It’s eight o’clock on a Saturday! How did you even..?”

“I only live in the next county, remember? And I missed you. So I asked Sarah for your address. Thought I’d surprise you.”

He leaned forward to kiss her, but she ducked out of his way. “I told you I wanted family time…”

“Gemma? Who’s at the door?” Her mother appeared at her elbow in her dressing gown. She’d been so pretty once…But grief had aged her. Her once sparkling eyes were ringed with grey, her once smooth complexion pasty, worry lines creasing her forehead and lips. Her dark hair, once glossy, now hung down her back greasy as an oil slick…But at least she was getting some sleep now, thanks to the medication.

“Oh, how lovely! Gemma didn’t even tell us she had a boyfriend!” She pushed Gemma aside. “Come in! Come in!”

“No, Chris…Don’t…Mum…”

But her mother ignored her, hustling him inside. Her step-father, Robin, appeared on the stairs in his pyjamas.

“What’s going on? Who’s this?”

Her mother turned to fix him with a manic grin. “It’s Gemma’s boyfriend, Rob! From University! He’s come to visit!”

Robin and Gemma exchanged worried looks and Gemma mouthed at him ‘Help me!’ He ran down the stairs.

“Love, why don’t you and I leave them alone for a bit…?”

But she’d already pushed him into the living room. “Sit down! Sit down! Gemma, love, go get him a cup of tea! Stop being rude!”

Chris looked panicked at her strange behaviour…But maybe once he sat down they could get her away…Gemma took a deep breath, trying to settle her nerves.

“Alright…I’ll go put the kettle on.”

She made to leave, shooting Robin a meaningful glance. “Keep her calm.” She whispered.

He nodded…Just a shriek rang out from behind them.
“NO! DON’T SIT THERE! THAT’S HIS SEAT, NOT YOURS!”

She spun round…Just in time to see Chris jump up from the armchair in the corner that still had His jacket slung across the back, His trainers lying in front of it as if He’d just kicked them off and left them there…

“I-I’m sorry! I…”

“YOU DON’T SIT THERE! NO ONE DOES!” Robin rushed forward to take her in his arms, hugging her to his chest as she struggled. “That’s HIS chair! It all-it all has to be the same! Has to be the same for when he comes back! He’s messing it up Robin!”

“Shhh,” He cradled her head in his big hands, soothing her. “Shhh Annie, it’s alright. Calm down.”

Chris was staring in horror at the scene in front of him, clearly mortified. “I-I’m so sorry! I didn’t mean to…”

Gemma marched across the room and took him by the hand. “Come on, Chris. Let’s go.”

She led him out into the hallway, grabbing a coat from the hook and shrugging it on over her pyjamas, and then outside.

“Gemma! Is your mum o.k? GEMMA!”

“Have you got your car?”

“Yeah, it’s over there.” He pointed to a little red Ford Fiesta parked on the pavement opposite. “Gemma, talk to me!”

She stopped and turned to him with a sigh. “I will…Just take me away first, o.k?”

He nodded.

In a way there was nowhere she could run to-every inch of their tiny village was haunted by memories of Him-so she got Chris to park the car near the river, beside the arches of the railway bridge that still bore His name somewhere, scratched into the red brick with a stone one sunny day a long time ago. She slumped back in her seat.

“Do you have a cigarette?”

“Yeah.” He fumbled in his pockets and handed her his pack and a lighter. She lit one and rolled down the window, blowing the smoke out into the frigid morning air. They sat for a few minutes in silence. Then he sighed.

“So that’s why you never invited me home. Your mum’s sick.”

She nodded. “She’s bi-polar. Had a break-down a couple of years back.”

“Oh. I’m so sorry. I wish you’d told me.”

She turned to look at him. Chris, with his big blue eyes and gentle smile; Chris who was kind, and funny, and sweet…Who’d wake her with kisses, dance at her to make her smile, who’d driven her all the way to Cornwall one Saturday just so she could paddle in the sea. He was her safe-harbour away from all the darkness, and the grief and the pain; one of the few people who didn’t know, and
she’d wanted to keep it that way…But now she realised how impossible that was. She took another drag of her cigarette.

“I lied to you.” He stared at her, eyes wide. “I’m not an only child…Not exactly. I had a brother once…His name was Harry.”

“How old was he?”

“Sixteen.”

“And how did he die?”

“He didn’t…No; I mean…I don’t know…”

He stared at her, confused. “You don’t know how your brother died?”

“No…I don’t know IF he died.” She finished her cigarette and flicked it out the window before turning to him, wrapping her coat tighter around herself for comfort and biting her lip. “You see…He went missing.”

“Missing? You mean..?”

She nodded. “On 16th February in 2010 Harry left his friend Will’s house after band practice…but he never made it home. I…” For a second, just a split second she thought about telling him what she’d done…Sharing her deepest, darkest, most terrible secret…But then he might not love her anymore and she needed his love as a respite from the pain. “…A neighbour saw him standing outside a shop texting about ten minutes later, then…Nothing. There was huge man-hunt; the whole village came out to search. One of my mum’s friends works in T.V so they got the media on it; there were television appeals, press conferences, everything. We found the backpack he used for his schoolbooks in a hedge beside the road, but no Harry. I don’t think I’ll ever forget the day the police came to tell us that they were going to dredge the river to see if someone had dumped his body in there.”

“Oh Gemma.” He reached to lay his hand on hers and she didn’t brush it away. “But it wasn’t there. No body…It was like he just vanished into thin air. I drove him to school that morning…And that was the last time I ever saw him. The case is still open…They used to come to us all the time with leads, none of which ever came to anything…Not so much now.”

“What was he like?”

And suddenly she was choking back tears. “Harry was perfect. It used to drive me crazy…Everything he tried he was good at. He made friends so easily, was really popular at school. Everyone adored him. I should have hated him, but I just couldn’t…I loved him to pieces. I mean, yeah, we fought and stuff…But he was my baby brother. Most of the time we got on so well, he was my best friend…I miss him so much. When I think about him it hurts to breathe, so I just try not to think about him…”

“He might still be alive. You don’t know.”

“My mother thinks that. She has all these plans for when he comes home; what she’s going to cook him for tea, what she’s going to say to him, how we have to behave around him-She wants us to act like he never went missing. She just can’t even consider the idea that he might never come home.”

“Well…What do you think?”
“I hope he’s dead.”

He released her hand and sat back, gawping at her in shock. “What?!”

She rubbed a hand across her face. “I—I know that makes me sound like a monster, but just listen. Harry was very happy. He had a load of friends, was doing well in his GCSE’s…He had no reason to run away. And when he disappeared there was all this evidence…Mum and Robin couldn’t deal with it but…The strap of his rucksack had been torn, like it had been yanked off his shoulder; his mobile phone had been smashed on the ground…There was blood at the scene, just a few drops, but it was his; signs of a struggle…And footprints in the mud on the grass verge-Converse trainers, size 11—Those were Harry’s…and two pairs of men’s work boots.”

“He was kidnapped.”

She nodded. “I’ve done my research. Most kidnappings of children aged five to seventeen are for the purposes of sexual abuse…Harry was quite innocent for a sixteen year old, quite naive. I just can’t bear the idea of THAT happening to him, of him still being out there, going through that all alone. It sounds horrific but I still hope it was an argument that went wrong and he got hurt, or that someone hit him with their car, panicked and dumped the body…Or that if abuse was the reason they took him that it was over quickly, even if they did kill him to keep him quiet. Most paedophiles abuse and kill their victims within forty-eight hours…I’d rather he was dead than having to suffer like that over and over.”

She didn’t realise she was crying until he reached over to wipe her tears away with his sleeve. Without another word he gathered her into his arms and she cried into his sweater until she had no tears left.

“So…I’ll see you in two weeks?”

“Yeah…Sorry. Like I said, I need family time.” He nodded and she kissed him goodbye before walking to the front door and ringing the doorbell. Robin answered, still in his pyjamas. “How is she?”

“Not good, love.” He looked so tired.

She shrugged off her coat. “Where is she?”

“Where do you think?”

She nodded and gave him a quick hug. “Thanks. I love you.” Then she made her way up the stairs, to that room…Harry’s room.

Her mother lay in the bed beneath the duvet, her face pressed into the pillows, sniffing loudly. She looked up when she entered, her cheeks streaked with tears. “I can hardly smell him anymore. He’s fading away.”

“Oh Mum.” She crossed the room and climbed into the bed beside her, wrapping her arm around her and stroking her hair. “He’s not fading.” She reached to stroke her temple with the tips of her fingers. “Not in here.”

They lay still, and she stared around her at her little brother’s things…The Rolling Stones posters, the photographs tacked to the walls, the piles of CDs, and trainers, and dirty clothes…The books,
pens and papers from his last study session still spread across the desk beside a cup of half-finished tea now coated with mould…All the remnants of a life paused…Or cruelly cut short.

“He’s not dead. I know he’s not…I can feel it, I can still feel him. I feel his kisses on my cheek every night. A mother knows when her baby is dead and he’s not dead…So where did he go? Where did my baby go?” She sounded so lost, so confused, so helpless.

“I don’t know Mum.” She pressed her lips to her cheek, wishing she had a different answer. “I just don’t know.”

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Chief Constable Stuart Carlin waited impatiently for the little desk Sargent to finish setting out the cups of coffee in front of them.

“Anything else, Sir?” She stood back, pushing her blonde bob out of her face and he reflected that, though obviously stupid, she certainly wasn’t ugly. Definitely a project to pursue…

“No. That will be all Sargent Morrow.” He watched her go, before turning to the young man sitting opposite him in the interview room.

So this was the famous Louis Tomlinson, whose daddy was worth a billion. He stared at the handsome youth with his perfectly quaffed hair and neatly pressed outfit, and reflected bitterly that his designer jeans probably cost more than his month’s wages. Of course he had a rap sheet-Most spoilt rich brats do-But nothing more serious than possession of a few spliffs and a couple of incidences of being drunk and disorderly…Nothing he could use against him. He obviously had no idea what he’d gotten himself into; otherwise he wouldn’t have marched in here so brazenly and demanded to see him. Still, he’d most likely gone to one of those Public schools you could pay into, which meant he was probably thick as shit. He decided to go on the offensive. He leaned across the desk towards him, waving the mobile phone under his nose.

“You think this is funny do yer?!”

“What?” He stared at him, confused.

“This! You come in here with some cock an’ bull story about kidnappings, and prostitutes, and trafficking, and some fictional pimp…!”

Louis glared up at him. “He’s not fictional! I gave you a name!”

Yeah, Simon Cowell…well I got news for you, sunshine….HE DOESN’T F**KING EXIST! And neither does this ‘Bird-Cage’ place! There is no record of a man with that name living in London, and I think if there was a place like that smack bang in the middle of Chelsea then we’d know about it!”

“What?” The boy’s irritation turned to confusion, and he frowned. “No! Wait…Maybe that’s not his real name but…” He was thrown. Good. Chief Constable Carlin cut him off.

“And this kid you claimed to talk to…This Harry Styles…What did you do, pick his name off a website or something? Are you one of those pervs who follow cases like that, who get off on reading about missing kids? Maybe that wasn’t enough for you anymore, so you had to construct some messed-up story just to get your kicks!”

“NO! Jesus Christ!”
"That kid has a family, you know! What if I’d phoned them, huh? Told them that their boy had been sighted alive in London, got their hopes up like that? Would that have made you feel bad… Or would you have gotten off on it?"

"NO! WHAT THE FUCK…?!" He was completely flustered now, confused, his cheeks turning red. Oh, this was fun….

"Watch your mouth in here boy or I’ll have you arrested for abusing an officer! Is this your idea of some sick, twisted joke? Or some weird cry for attention because daddy didn’t love you enough? Huh? WELL?!!"

"No…No! It’s not a joke, I’m not lying!” he stood, his chair clattering to the floor, and smacked his palm on the table’s plastic surface. “Listen to the recording!”

This was the moment. He tossed the mobile phone onto the table with a thud. “THERE’S NOTHING THERE!”

Silence. The boy stared down at it and then back up at him in horror.

"No! No, I played it back! I checked it!” He snatched it up, fiddling with it frantically. “I checked it, I know I did! It was there! It was…” And then his face went white. He looked from the phone screen to him and back again, blue eyes wide with shock and confusion. “I-I know it was there. It must have been deleted…”

He leaned across the table once more, pushing his face into his. When he spoke he made sure his tone was low…Menacing. “So what are you implying, boy? Are you implying that a senior officer of the law would tamper with evidence like that? That I would delete evidence?! HOW DARE YOU!”

"NO!” Louis shook his head violently. “No, no I’m not…Look, I’m not lying…I’ve known Harry for months. He told me…”

“A kid who no one has seen in four years, a man who doesn’t exist and a place that’s probably a figment of your disturbed imagination…YOU HAVE NO PROOF!” That final yell did the trick. Louis Tomlinson gaped up at him in shocked silence as he realised that he was right.

“But…But don’t you at least have to do a report or something?” It was a hopeful mumble.

. He straightened up to his full height, and fixed him with an authoritative stare.

"Mr Tomlinson, my advice to you would be to go home. Now-Before I have you arrested for wasting police time.”

For a few moments they stared at each other. Then the boy stood, snatching up his mobile phone. “This isn’t over. I’ll be back with proof. And then you’ll HAVE to do something.”

“I’m sure you will.” He made sure to show him to the door, watching as he got into a Porsche daddy probably paid for, before turning to go back inside, muttering under his breath. “Arrogant little bastard.” He looked up…To find that new Sargent watching him thoughtfully from behind her desk. “What you lookin’ at, Morrow?”

What was that about Sir?"

“Just some nutter…Remember; I want those reports on my desk by eleven.” He glared at her. She ducked her head submissively.
“Yes Sir.”

He marched back into his office and locked the door before taking a disposable mobile phone from his pocket and staring at it. It was a damn shame, really, he reflected. He wasn’t into boys but he’d seen that Harry kid at a lot of the parties, knew he was popular, that he made Cowell a lot of money. He was young too. Cowell would probably kill him for this. But if he kept quiet and that Tomlinson brat went to one of the other police officers on Cowell’s payroll then he would lose his monthly kick-back. He owed his bookie too much money for that. And, besides, this was vital information that could stop Cowell losing his business…Perhaps he could angle to get one of the women for a night as thanks. He dialled the number.

“Hi, it’s Carlin down at the Yard. Hate to be the bearer of bad news, but one of your Toms has been shooting his mouth off.”

Louis pulled his car over and snatched up his phone, heart pounding as he examined it. It wasn’t just the recording; His photographs, music, videos, were all gone-The whole thing had been wiped…But how? That cop had taken it away; only for a few minutes…Could he have done it? But, why would he? He had no reason to. He was going to have to book Harry again, somehow get him to talk again, and record it on something sturdier this time…A Dictaphone maybe?

He started the car and pulled out into the traffic. He was waiting at a set of traffic lights when suddenly the passenger door was pulled open and a woman slid inside.

“Hang on, love…!” He whipped round to stare at her.

“No! Don’t look at me. Mr Tomlinson, I need you to act completely natural, like you were just picking me up.” Something in her tone made him obey. The lights changed and he put the car into gear and drove on, keeping his eyes on the road as his head spun. What was this? The world’s most polite car-jacking? He swallowed.

“Who are you?”

“My name is Detective Catherine Morrison, and I’m from Specialist Crimes and Operations.”

“What? Look, I haven’t done anything! I was in there to REPORT a crime.”

She chuckled at that. “I know Mr Tomlinson…But I feel you have important information pertaining to a current investigation.”

He stole a glance at her. She seemed familiar…Wait… “Here, aren’t you the girl who brought the coffee?”

“Keep your eyes on the road, Mr Tomlinson; you just went through a red light.”

“Oh, sorry. Please don’t arrest me. So, umm…Where am I driving us too?”

“Is your home private?”

“Yes, I guess.”

“There then.”
They drove the rest of the way in silence, Louis’ head spinning. They pulled into the integral garage and she turned to him, holding up a badge for him to see. “So you know I’m not lying to you.”

“Uh, o.k.” It seemed legit.

He led her inside to the kitchen, before turning to look at her. She was a tiny, slight woman…But something about her had changed. Back in the Police Station she’d seemed meek, now she held herself with so much confidence it was quite intimidating.

“Tea? Coffee?” He asked, because he couldn’t think of anything else to say.

“Tea. No milk.”

“Sure. Take a seat.”

She did at the kitchen table while he busied himself with the kettle. Five minutes later he set a steaming mug down in front of her and sat down opposite, his heart pounding in his chest.

“Am I in some sort of trouble?”

She took a sip of tea and shook her head. “No, Mr Tomlinson. What I am about to tell you is highly confidential. Should you divulge any of it, you will be putting lives at risk. Do you understand?”

He nodded, feeling a bit like he’d stumbled into a spy film. “You can trust me.”

“I hope so. I am part of an investigation into a high-class human trafficking ring operating in London, and ran by a man known as Simon Cowell. We have reason to believe that this ring has been abducting young people from across the country and forcing them into prostitution; and that they are then being supplied to, amongst others, prominent members of the Houses of Parliament. We believe that there has been considerable collusion between the ring, politicians, and some members of the Force itself to keep this a secret. Complaints haven’t been filed, reports have gone missing, evidence has been destroyed…”

“Like my recording.” He leaned towards her, intrigued. “Are you saying there’s a cover-up?”

“Exactly.” She searched in the shoulder bag she carried and pulled out a Dictaphone and a manila file, opening it to reveal a photograph paper-clipped to the inside. “Is this the boy you’ve spoken with? The boy who calls himself Harry?”

He looked at it. It was the same photograph from the missing person’s website. He nodded.

“Yes. I didn’t know his last name was Styles though. They’re not allowed to use last names.”

“Thank you…That’s very interesting.”

“Why?”

She took another gulp of her tea and sighed. “Because it means they’re dealing in children. Harry was abducted at sixteen.”

He nodded. “Harry told me that he normally takes them at seventeen, but that he was an experiment to see if younger kids would be more submissive.”
“Was it successful?”

He shrugged. “I don’t know. Harry’s pretty messed up…And he does what he’s told. He’s terrified of them.”

She set the Dictaphone to record and then lifted a pen and notebook from her handbag, opening it carefully and smoothing out the page with her hand. “So… what else has Harry told you?”

He began to talk and she sat in silence, listening, her pen scratching on the page as in front of them their drinks grew cold. He told her everything Harry had told him- about Harry’s jokes about sleeping with half the House of Lords, about his injuries, about what he’d seen at the M.P’s party a few nights before. He talked until his throat was raw before racking his brains to make sure he hadn’t left out any little detail. “And that’s it, I think.”

“Right, thank-you Mr Tomlinson. This information will be extremely useful.” She sat back, riffling through her notes.

“So…What happens now? Are you going to rescue him?”

She sighed sadly. “We need more evidence than your statement, I’m afraid, and at the moment I have witnesses cracking under the threats and intimidation and dropping like flies.”

“I won’t. I’ll testify if you need me to.” He fixed her with a look of grim determination and she nodded.

“Good. Chief Sargent Carlin has been under investigation for a while. We suspect that he’s been using prostitutes and accepting bribes from Cowell to cover up for him. If he tells Cowell about your report then there’s no way he’ll let you hire Harry again, which is unfortunate as it could have provided me with a key witness.”

At her words, Louis’s heart sank as a terrible realisation came over him, and a feeling of dread and guilt hit him square in the stomach like a punch. He raised one shaking hand to his forehead. “Oh shit! If he tells Mr Cowell Harry told me what happened to him, then he’ll be fucking killed!”

She shook her head. “Harry Styles is Cowell’s highest earner. That boy is literally worth millions to him right now, there is no way he would kill him.”

“Still, you don’t understand; these people…They’re monsters! He’ll be punished!”

“Cowell won’t do anything to jeopardise Harry’s earning power. And we’ll get to him. I promise, Louis. All we need is an address.” She tapped something into her phone and stood before reaching into her pocket and holding out a card. “A car’s coming for me. Look, if you hear anything please contact me, day or night. And this goes both ways, you know. I have your number. I will keep you informed.”

And with that she left, leaving Louis to run to the kitchen sink and vomit violently as the magnitude of the mistake he’d made hit him.

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“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHH! AHHHHHHAAAAA!”
Mr Cowell took a final drag before stubbing his cigarette out and turning casually toward the source of the screams.

“O.k. That’s enough for now, I think. Get him up.”

The Man Jack aimed one final bone-crunching kick to Harry’s side, before dragging the naked boy to his feet by his bound hands.

“ON YOUR FEET, SLAVE!”

Mr Cowell stood, reaching into his desk drawer and lifting out a serrated hunting knife before moving to where Harry slumped in Jack’s grip. Blood poured from his mouth, nose and a deep wound above his left eye, dripping in a steady scarlet stream down his chin and onto the carpet.

“Harry, Harry, Harry…What am I to do with you, hmmmm?”

“I-I d-didn’t…p-please S-Sir…” His speech was garbled through his swollen lips.

“Now stop that Harry, you know I don’t like lies. Only bad boys lie. Hmmm…to kill you or not to kill you? You are a deceitful, lying little Judas with a big mouth…but this…” He reached between his legs, twisting his cock and balls violently and smirking as he screamed. “…And your pretty little arse make me a lot of money. Hmm, decisions, decisions…” And then he caught hold of his jaw, digging his fingers viciously into his bruised cheeks and forcing his mouth open and his tongue out. “Perhaps I should cut out your tongue?” He raised the knife, turning it so that the lamplight glinted off its blade, and smirked as Harry let out a terrified squeak, struggling desperately in his grip. “But then a whore’s tongue has its uses.” He released his jaw and pressed the knife’s sharp edge to the side of his throat.

“Still…You’re getting older Harry…You’ll be twenty-one soon. A lot of my richest clients have already had you; perhaps they’re bored of you. I wonder if your earning power has peaked. If I wouldn’t just be better disposing of you now?” He pressed the blade into his flesh, the serrated teeth piercing the skin…Harry gasped, his eyes wide with terror and pain…

There was a spattering sound. He looked down just in time to see a steady stream of amber urine hitting the carpet.

“YOU FILTHY, PATHETIC LITTLE CREATURE!” Jack punched Harry in the face, sending a cascade of blood droplets across the cream wallpaper. “I SHOULD RUB YOUR FACE IN IT LIKE A DOG!” He caught hold of the collar he wore, ready to force him to his knees and do just that.

“No. Thank you Jack, but that won’t be necessary.” He saw the flash of disappointment in the other man’s eyes but didn’t care. To him it was enough to inspire such fear. He removed the knife and went to sit back down at his desk, steepling his fingers and looking at Harry thoughtfully. Both lips were split, both eyes would be black and that cut was definitely going to need a stitch or two…But his nose probably wasn’t broken—that was good. His face, chest and arms were covered with bruises and cuts but those would fade and heal with time. The way he was standing—almost bent double despite Jack’s tight grip—suggested broken ribs, which could be problematic, but nothing that would mark him long-term. “I’ll decide how Harry will be punished later. For the moment there is the rather more pressing matter of Louis Tomlinson.”

Jack shrugged. “Just kill him.”

“I’d love to. But that boy matters, his father has money. And Mark Tomlinson knows how things work. If Louis disappears his father could pay enough for our boys to turn on us.”
“If I may put forward a suggestion, Sir?”

“Hmm?”

The Man Jack twisted his fist into Harry’s blood-soaked curls, yanking his head back painfully against his shoulder and smiling happily at his agonised gasp. “Why don’t we just use Harry as our hostage?”

He frowned, intrigued. “I don’t follow.”

“I think Mr Tomlinson has formed a romantic attachment to this slave.”

Mr Cowell’s eyebrows shot up. “He’s in love with him?”

“I’m sure of it. I’ve seen how he looks at him when I drop him off, how they interact. I’m very good at reading people. I’m sure he’d do anything to protect the whore he…loves.”

He turned his gaze to where Harry struggled in Jack’s grasp, blood-soaked tears dripping from between his swollen eyelids. “And does our Dirty Harry love him back, do you think?”

Jack shrugged as if the matter was of little interest to him. “Probably. He certainly seems keen to see him…Either way; I fail to see the relevance.”

Mr Cowell smiled. “There is none…I just find it amusing. Right, clean Harry up a bit-I don’t want him bleeding all over the car. I think we’ll pay Louis Tomlinson a little visit.” He stood once more, crossing to lay a hand on the taller man’s shoulder. “I think I may just find out if dear sister Gemma is still in Cheshire, we could always use another pretty girl…But you know Jack; I feel that corporal punishment is really more your area of expertise. Once our visit is over why don’t you take Harry to your room and spend the rest of the night punishing him in whatever way you see fit?”

The man Jack beamed with delight, showing his skeleton teeth. And Mr Cowell smiled too when that spattering sound on the carpet told him Harry was so frightened that he’d wet again.

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Unable to sleep Louis trudged through the night time streets of Primrose Hill for hours, chain-smoking in an attempt to numb the panic that throbbed through his veins. He walked until his legs hurt and his shoes had rubbed his heels raw before calling into a 24 hour off-licence and buying a bottle of Jack to knock him out when he got home. He retraced his footsteps until he was back at his own front door, taking swings from the bottle as he reached for his keys and put one into the lock…

The door swung open as soon as he touched it…

He stumbled back, confused, staring at the door frame. Its paint was scraped, its wood splintered… As if it had been pried or kicked open. Thinking quickly, he emptied out the rest of the whiskey onto the ground and crept carefully inside, raising the empty bottle above his head, ready to use it as a weapon.

The hallway was swathed in darkness, but light spilled from a gap in the living room door…Along
with the scent of cigarette smoke. He stepped towards it, and carefully pushed it open.

“Ah Louis! We were wondering when you’d get home!” Simon Cowell was seated in the armchair facing the door, cigarette in hand and a bemused smile playing on his face, that vampire-like Handler-Jack- lurking at his shoulder. To their right, a hunched figure perched on the sofa, its hands behind its back and the hood of its grey jacket tugged up over its head, hiding its face. “Such a beautiful home you have here…Or is it your fathers?” He dropped his cigarette onto the floor, grinding it into the carpet with his foot. Then he reached into his jacket…And withdrew a Glock
9mm handgun, pointing it squarely at Louis’ chest. “Now, put down that bottle and come join us. We have important matters to discuss.”

Louis set the bottle carefully down on the floor, afraid, but determined not to show it. “Like what?”

Mr Cowell rose and crossed over to the sofa and that hunched figure, which shrank away from his hand as he reached for it. “This.” He tugged the grey hood away and Louis stepped back in shock as the figure turned its head to look up at him.

“Harry!” He gasped, horrified.

Harry had obviously been badly beaten. Deep purple bruises covered both swollen cheeks. Blood crusted round each nostril and on a deep, gaping wound at his left temple. Both eyes were bruised, the left swollen shut. The lower half of his face was covered by a strange and horrible black leather gag-like device that was buckled tightly behind his head. A thick black leather collar had been placed around his neck, a chain clipped to the D-ring at its front and left to dangle down into his lap. He shuffled forward towards him and Louis saw the handcuffs that bound his hands behind his back, fastened so tightly that the metal cut into the soft skin above his wrists and blood dripped between his fingers onto the sofa.

“Ummm!” It was a muffled plea for help. As Louis watched a tear escaped his open eye and dripped down his cheek. He ran forward towards him, determined to help him…Only to find his way blocked by Mr Cowell, who pointed the gun at him again.

“Don’t even think about it.” He sat down on the sofa, wrapping the chain round his fist and yanking Harry towards him, ignoring his muffled whimpers as he pressed the muzzle of the gun to his head. “See this whore? He’s mine. I own him and many others like him. I am a businessman. I have built an extremely successful business from nothing. Now it is worth millions. Today you threatened that business…Take a seat.” He gestured with the gun and Louis lowered himself slowly into an armchair, unable to take his eyes from Harry where he cowered away from the older man, shaking with fear. “The relationship between a Pimp and his whores is a complex one. Yes, I am Harry’s employer, that’s true…But I am far more than that. I am his owner, his jailer…I have complete control over his life. I decide when he eats, when he sleeps, when and how he is punished, when he works, who he fucks…And when he dies. To my whores, I’m basically God.”

Louis scowled at him. “You kidnapped him! You don’t fucking own him!”

Mr Cowell smiled at that. “My collar around his neck says different. Now, from what I hear you’ve grown rather…how shall I put it? Fond of our Dirty Harry here. So I have a proposition for you. Keep your mouth shut about my business and stay the fuck away from the police, and I won’t shoot Harry here in his pretty little head.”

Louis felt his mouth go dry. He swallowed. “You-you wouldn’t. He’s your highest earner.”

Mr Cowell shrugged casually. “All whores are disposable, all whores are replaceable. I’ll be keeping my eye on you. As long as you behave yourself Harry will live…With time I might even
let you use him again…At the Birdcage, of course. But the moment you step out of line…” He lifted the gun back and cocked it, the click loud and terrifying in the silence. Then he pressed it once more to Harry’s temple. “BANG!” Both Louis and Harry flinched. “Jack, could you come take him for me please?”

“Yes Sir.” Jack crossed the room and took the chain from Mr Cowell’s hands as he stood, yanking Harry to his feet. As Louis watched, horrified, he clicked his fingers. “On your knees slave!”

Harry immediately dropped to kneel at his feet just like a slave, head bowed and eyes on the floor as they both towered over him. It was a deeply disturbing and heart-breaking sight. Mr Cowell followed his gaze and pointed the gun down at Harry.

“His life is in your hands Louis, quite the responsibility. So…What do you say?”

And Harry, HIS Harry was trembling, bleeding, in pain, in chains….There was a gun pointed directly at him. He wanted to sob, beg for them to just stop it, just leave him alone…But he needed to keep his head. He swallowed.

“Fine…I’ll keep quiet. But as one businessman to another, I have one request.”

“You’re hardly in a position to bargain Louis.” But Mr Cowell was listening.

“I want regular updates, phone calls, photographs…Anything that will prove to me that he’s still alive. The minute they stop, I’m going to the police, the media—I’ll tell everyone.”

To his surprise the older man nodded. “Fine.”

“And I want some time alone with him. Now. Just to say goodbye.”

For a moment he looked like he was going to refuse…Then he nodded. “Jack?”

Louis stepped forward and Jack pressed the chain into his hand. Then they left the room. He watched them go before dropping to his knees beside Harry, frantically clawing at the gag as he watched him helplessly.

“Urgh, how do you get this fucking thing off?!?” Then he found the tiny gold padlock that locked him into silence. “Shit! Fucking heartless bastards! Oh Harry!” He cradled his bruised face in his hands, wiping his tears with his fingers, before gathering him into his arms and hugging him as silent sobs shook his battered body. “Oh Harry. It’s o.k, its o.k, it’ll all be o.k. I’ll get you out of this! I swear I will! I-I don’t know how right now, but I will!”

“Right, that’s enough, I think.” Mr Cowell’s voice. Suddenly the man Jack appeared behind him, reaching down and pulling Harry from his arms as he tried to cling on.

“NO! NO!” But he was too strong. Louis knelt and watched in horror as they strode from the room, dragging Harry behind them on his leash like a dog. As they reached the door Harry turned to fix him with the most gut-wrenching look of helpless desperation…Then he was gone, back to his prison and his enslavement.

Left alone, Louis slumped forward onto his hands and knees, gasping for breath like he was drowning. He thought about that Detective, about her card still in his pocket …Then about the bruises on Harry’s face, the collar around his throat…How he’d trembled as the gun had been pressed to his head. Mr Cowell’s words echoed in his ears- “All whores are disposable, all whores are replaceable.”
He had absolutely no idea what to do.

Chapter End Notes

Hi guys! I know that I'd promised two chapters this week but I had some serious family stuff on, so I couldn't finish the second chapter. I promise it will be up next week! Thank you sooooooooooo much for reading and please leave kudos and comments to let me know what you think!

Next time.......Jack deals out the ultimate punishment....And Louis gains an unexpected ally to help him rescue Harry.
WARNING! O.k everyone this chapter is as dark as it is going to get and it is EXTREMELY dark. I really upset myself writing it. This chapter contains quite descriptions of rape, gang rape and torture that might be triggering for some people. There is also swearing, bondage and rape comfort. If you are sensitive please do not read. I don't want anyone to be really traumatised.

The song Jack sings here is 'Girl With One Eye' by Florence + The Machine. It is a very dark, gothic, sadistic little song that I listen to a lot to get into his mindset.

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This was the happiest The Man Jack had felt in a while. He even found himself singing as he moved about the room, setting out bottles of beer…A dark, twisted little tune...

“I slipped my hand under her skirt…I said don’t worry, it’s not gonna hurt…I took a knife and cut out her eye. I took it home and watched it wither and die. Well she’s lucky I didn’t slip her a smile…That’s why she sleeps with one eye open.” He dimmed the lamps so that the corners of the room filled with shadows…Mood lighting…Perfect for this kind of party. As he moved he felt his cock straining against his trousers and reached down to rub it thoughtfully through the cotton. He’d always liked to think of it as his weapon. After all, it had fathered no children and brought no pleasure to woman or man, save himself…Only pain. There was a muffled moan and he turned, whispering the last words of the song. “Pretty little thing stopped me in my tracks…and now she sleeps with one eye open…”Cause that’s the price she’ll pay…”

He raised his camera phone, peering through the viewfinder.

“First picture to send to your boyfriend, I think.”

He pressed the button with a click.

It was a delicious sight. His slave, Harry, knelt on the carpet in front of him, a black metal spreader bar buckled between his ankles. He’d threaded his arms down between his strong thighs and strapped the cuffs that hung from the centre of the bar around his wrists so that his hands were between his spread feet, his weight thrown forward onto his shoulders and his cheek pressed into the carpet. He looked so beautifully contorted, so thoroughly debased. His tight, toned little ass was sticking straight up in air, bruised and striped from whipping, begging to be fucked. The boy moaned again against his muzzle; a sad, resigned little moan of fear and pain that stirred within him a dark, intoxicating yearning to inflict yet more damage. He moved to kneel behind him, running his hand over the still warm flesh of his buttocks before pulling it back and delivering a hard smack across each cheek. The slave winced and Jack unbuckled his trousers and stroked himself.
“Of course you know what I’m going to do to you now, don’t you Slut? And after your disgraceful behaviour today I hardly think you deserve for me to make it easy for you. How dare you speak out against your owner and your master? You need to be put back in your place.” He stooped to peer at that tight, pink little hole that he’d denied himself for too long. It was so beautiful, so fragile and vulnerable. “Now… I want to see tears.” And blood… Lots of blood…

Without any further warning, he caught the boy’s hips in a grip hard enough to bruise and forced himself inside…

And there WERE tears… Harry couldn’t help it. They poured down his cheeks, blurring his vision as he screamed in agony behind his muzzle. The pain was horrific, breath-taking, raw… he could feel his flesh tearing, the hot wetness of blood on his skin as Jack thrust violently into him again and again until he feared he would split him in two. The muscles in his shoulders and neck throbbed as he was slammed into the floor, the friction of his cheek and knees rubbing against the carpet burning his skin. The position he was bound in meant he couldn’t even struggle, could only press his face into the floor and bite down hard on his gag as Jack violated him, defiled him, savouring his suffering, his moans of ecstasy chasing Harry’s agonised screams. By the time Jack spilled his stinging seed into his ravaged body, sinking his teeth deep into the point of his shoulder, Harry was already teetering on the edge of unconsciousness. With that final agony he let himself fall.

He awoke lying on his side and curled up into a ball, hugging himself, before he realised the spreader bar was gone. Was it over? Was it all over? For a brief second he dared to hope… Then he became aware of voices, the clinking of beer bottles. Slowly he opened his eyes. There were men standing above him.

“He’s bleeding already.”

“You’ll be fine, just use a rubber. So how long do we have with him?”

“All night. That’s what the creepy bastard said; says the little shit needs to learn his place, that the best way to teach him that he’s just a fuck toy is to pass him around… Well, he said it more posh, but that was the gist.”

“All night, to do whatever we want to him? Shit, I’m in.”

“I think he’s waking up.”

He opened his good eye, and two faces swam into focus, peering down at him… Trev? And that sleazy bastard who’d offered to pay Liam for him once; what was his name? James? Joe? Joseph? Yes that was it-Joseph. What were they doing in Jack’s room? As he watched Trev turned to shout to someone out of his eye-line.

“OI! HE’S AWAKE!”

Jack’s voice sent a shudder of terror up his spine. “Good. Bring him over.”

And then they were both smirking down at him.

“Morning Princess.”
“What did I tell you Harry? I didn’t forget…We’re gonna fuck you bloody.”

He fought desperately, struggling and kicking out at them. Somehow it seemed important to fight, even though he knew it was ultimately pointless. Trev slid his huge arms beneath his shoulders and Joseph caught his thrashing legs, and together they carried him across the room and dumped them unceremoniously onto the bed. And then Jack was beside him, leaning over him as he buckled his wrists into cuffs fixed to either side of the bed frame. As Harry watched, terrified, he lifted a large coil of thick rope from the floor and turned to the two men. “Get his legs and spread them. Hold them to the posts.”

He yelped as strong hands caught his ankles, spreading them wide and lifting them so high that his backside hovered off the bed. NO! No, he wasn’t going to let them. He struggled and kicked so violently that neither of them had any choice but to release him.

“UMMM! UMMM!”

“LITTLE BASTARD!” Trev snarled as Harry drew his legs up to his chest, ready to kick out at them again.

There was an impatient sigh. “As usual Harry, you have to make everything more difficult for yourself.” Jack appeared in his eye-line, head on one side as he assessed him coolly. Harry glared up at him with as much defiance as he could muster. The older man simply smiled a strange, twisted smile of dark amusement…Then he put one big hand on Harry’s left hip. With the other he took hold of the inside of Harry’s left knee, and then he wrenched it sideways, twisting Harry’s leg viciously.

POP!

The pain was white-hot, searing. He screamed into his muzzle, long and hard, his entire body jerking, bound fists clutching the sheets. Then before he’d had time to recover from the shock Jack had moved to the other side of the bed, grabbing hold of his right leg.

POP!

Again he screamed, his head spinning, his vision blurring with agony as hot tears poured down his cheeks. When the room swam back into focus they were above him, leering down at him hungrily, a pack of wolves with their prey.

Jack spread his legs, ignoring his muffled cries of pain. “He won’t be kicking now.”

He disappeared from Harry’s eye-line, only to reappear and begin to line items carefully up on the mattress beside him. Even through the haze of agony he could see what they were and his heart lurched…Sex toys, a whole row of them, obscenely large and obviously intended for him. Something else to violate him with once they’d grown too tired and drunk to do it themselves. Trev and Joseph peered thoughtfully between his thighs, Trev reaching to stroke and pinch what was there.

“So…Who gets to go first?”

Jack smiled courteously. “You are my guests, here to enjoy my slave boy. It should be between you both.”

Trev looked at Joseph and shrugged. “Flip a coin?”

“Sure…Tails.”
A COIN? THEY WERE FLIPPING A FUCKING COIN TO DECIDE WHO WOULD BE THE FIRST TO RAPE HIM?! Harry turned as much as he could, and pressed his face to the sheets, tears of fear and humiliation spilling down his cheeks. It didn’t matter what way the coin landed, he was still going to lose.

“Heads!”

The bed creaked and he turned back to find Trev kneeling between his now useless legs, licking his lips as he unbuckled his belt. “You want my cock Dirty Harry? ’Course you do, filthy little slut. Gonna fuck you so hard you’ll scream.”

He felt sick, dizzy with fear. His insides were already on fire. He already felt like he’d been ripped to shreds, didn’t think he could cope with any more. He stared up at him, pleading silently with him through his tears. ‘No! Please, no! Please Trev, don’t do this! Please! Don’t do this!’

“Trevor?”

Trev turned to where Jack was watching curiously, head on one side, arms folded. “Yeah?”

“Make it hurt.”

“Sure thing.” Then Trev climbed on top of him, plunging into his already raw, ravaged entrance. Harry arched his back, straining against his bonds, flinging his head back and screaming through his muzzle as his body was invaded once more.

…And with that, the party began.

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Harry floated on the edge between consciousness and unconsciousness, the changing faces above him swimming in and out of focus, his mind fogged with pain.

“Umm! Umm! Umm! Umm! Umm!”

Strange rhythmic little noises: mewling sounds somewhere between a moan and a sob. It took a while for Harry to realise that they were coming from him. A sticky mixture of blood, sweat, semen and beer now glued his skin to the sheet beneath him, crackling as the man on top of him shoved his limp body back and forth across the bed with the force of his thrusts. He’d tried to retreat into his memories of Louis, to imagine himself back beneath that warm duvet where Louis had held him so tenderly and whispered to him that he loved him. But every time he reached that place another fresh agony would yank him back to reality. He wondered idly if they were going to kill him once they’d finished. He hoped they would. There was a grunt and then a groan of satisfaction as the man in top of him came and lifted his great bulk off him. Now, it seemed, he would find out.

“Right.” Jack’s voice, calm and authoritative. “He’s had enough, I think.”

“Little faggot’s bleeding all over the fucking show.” Trev, or Joseph, he didn’t know.

Deft fingers removed the cuffs from his wrists.
“Think he’ll tell?”

“Tell what? I was told I had permission to do whatever I wanted to him…It’s not my fault Cowell lacks imagination.” Harry let out an agonised sob as his legs were pushed back together, sending jolts of pain like electric shocks up through his hips. The sticky sheets from the bed were wrapped carefully around him like a cocoon. “Take him down to the doctor.”

“It’s late.”

“Leave him outside. He’ll find him eventually.”

“Fine.” Strong arms lifted him and he suddenly found himself hanging upside-down over a broad shoulder. He closed his eyes as the blood rushed to his head.

Every bouncing step was agony. He slipped in and out of consciousness as he was carried down flights of stairs and through winding corridors to the Infirmary. Once there, he was dumped onto the carpet in front of the door and found himself staring at a pair of black work-boots as their owner pounded against it-Nothing. Trev or Joseph-he didn’t know which- waited for a few moments and then grunted.

“Fuck this.”

He watched as the black boots turned and walked away back up the corridor, leaving him lying bleeding on the floor, still muzzled so he couldn’t even call for help. He closed his eyes, suddenly feeling so cold…He could just let himself bleed out, right here. Then there would be no more fear, no more pain. No more bookings, no more clients, no more Jack, no more Birdcage-And no more Louis. That thought shocked him back to awareness. If he died now then he’d never see Louis again, never feel his mouth on his, his arms around his torso, hear his voice whispering to him in the dark, telling him all about the little house they’d have, the things they’d do, how he’d take care of him, make it all better. If he died now then he’d never have given Louis the chance to. And Mr Cowell had said he’d take Gemma. He had to protect his sister, couldn’t leave her here without him. He forced his eyes open.

He couldn’t stand, couldn’t even sit up. No matter how hard he tried, his legs wouldn’t work. He reached out, gripping the carpet, and somehow managed to roll himself onto his side. With his last shred of strength he reached up to slap repeatedly on the door, his bloody hand leaving red smears across the wood.

“UMMMMMM! UMMMMMM! UMMMMMMMMMMMMM!”

He slumped to the floor. Minutes passed.

Then the door opened.

“Who’s..? Harry? Oh my God! Harry!” Suddenly The Doc’s wizened face was above him, fingers tapping his cheeks, pressing against his throat as they felt for a pulse, tugging at his muzzle as they tried to find a way to pick the padlock. “Harry! Harry, I need you to stay awake, o.k? I need you to keep your eyes open! Bastards! Absolute bastards!” A static crackling. “Liam?! Liam, its Doc. I need you to come to the infirmary now! It’s Harry. He’s been badly hurt and I need your help. I can’t lift him.” And then the Doc was above him again, taking him gently in his arms as he whimpered and stroking his hair in a gesture of comfort. His grey eyes seemed glassy, as if they held unshed tears. “Oh what have those bastards done to you? You poor child. You poor, poor child.”
He was as safe as he could be now. The Doc would piece him back together as best he could. Harry tilted his head against the old man’s chest and let go.

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Liam was running. He swerved through the corridors and leapt down stairs, panic coursing through his veins. Zayn and Niall were running too, sprinting to keep up with him. “W-what did The Doc say?! Did he say what happened to him?!” Zayn panted.

“No! But he said he was badly hurt! We waited for hours Zayn, and he didn’t come back! Fuck only knows what they’ve done to him!”

He jumped the last few steps down into the basement, swerved round a corner…And skidded to a stop, gaping in shock at the scene in front of him.

The Doc knelt on the carpet, cradling Harry in his lap and rubbing his limbs as if to get warmth into them. “Shhh, little one. Shhh. It’s alright; it’s going to be alright. Hush now.”

Harry lay like a broken doll, face tilted towards them, staring at nothing. There wasn’t an inch of his skin that wasn’t bruised purple. A bedsheet had been wrapped around him like a shroud, the white cotton soaked crimson with blood.

At his elbow Niall let out a strangled sob, while on his other side Zayn turned away, one hand over his mouth. “Jesus fucking Christ!”

But crying or swearing weren’t going to help Harry. He stepped forward to crouch down in front of The Doc and asked the question playing on all their minds. “Is he dead?”

The old man shook his head in disgust, not looking up from his patient as he rhymed off the injuries

He followed The Doc into the Infirmary where he gestured to one of the couches. “Put him down here.”

He laid Harry down gently and stepped back to give the old man room, watching as he wrapped a blanket around him and set to work, checking his pupils and pressing a stethoscope to his chest. Beside him Zayn took a deep breath. “What did they do to him?”

The Doc shook his head in disgust, not looking up from his patient as he rhymed off the injuries
like a horrific grocery list of torture, half to them and half to himself. “He’s been severely beaten… A few broken ribs …broken fingers…severe contusions, abrasions and lacerations…And he’s been raped multiple times. From the bleeding I’m guessing he has severe internal injuries. Oh, thank Christ, his pulse is rising. Niall,” He turned to where the blonde boy was sniffling quietly. “There are scalpels in that cupboard. Go fetch me one. There’s a good boy.”

He did, obviously grateful to be of some use, and The Doc cut carefully through the thick leather straps and lifted the muzzle away from Harry’s split and bloody mouth, tossing it to the floor in disgust. “Those monsters obviously didn’t want him to be able to tell us what happened.” He moved to the end of the bed and reached to lift the blanket and unwrap the sheet from Harry’s legs. His face crumpled. “Just as I suspected. He fought them, he must have done. Good lad.” He swallowed and then turned to fix Liam with a look of grim resignation. “I need you to come and hold him because you’re the strongest. When I do this he’s going to wake up, and he’s going to fight and scream blue murder.”

“Why?”

“Are you going to hurt ‘im? Why would ya hurt ‘im?” Niall looked up, confusion in his tear-filled eyes.

The three of them stepped toward the bed and The Doc lifted the sheet carefully away so that they could see. Harry’s legs lay strangely splayed. And they seemed all wrong; grotesquely distorted and somehow too long.

“He must have kicked out at them.” He said quietly. “Mustn’t have let them hold his legs or tie them so they could rape him…So they dislocated them both at the hip.”

Niall burst into tears. Zayn turned away, heaving, hands over his mouth.

“I-I can’t deal with this. I can’t!”

And then he was running from the room, from Harry. Liam stared after him, aghast.

“ZAYN!”

The Doc reached to touch his shoulder. “Let him go. It’s all just too much for him.” He moved to another drawer and they watched as he drew out a syringe and filled it carefully from a vial of liquid. “He must be in terrible pain.” He lifted Harry’s arm, cleaning it carefully with an alcohol wipe and sliding the needle in. “This will take the edge off and then I’ll set up a morphine drip.” He waved him over and Liam moved to stand by the bed, swallowing the bile that rose in his throat as his gaze fell once more on Harry’s twisted legs. At that moment, he wanted to kill. “Liam?” He looked up.

“Yes, Doc?”

“I need you to sit him up and hold him tight. Understand?”

“Yeah.” He moved to take Harry in his arms, one arm wrapped firmly round his torso and the other pressing his head gently to his chest. He stroked his hair, matted with their fluids, and whispered to him soothingly even as fury at his rapists coursed through his veins. “You’re going to be fine now, Haz. I swear. The Doc just needs to fix your legs, but I’ve got you.” The Doc moved beside them, taking Harry’s right leg in his hands, and fixed him with a meaningful look. He nodded. “You need to be brave for just a little bit longer…” There was a sickening cracking sound as The Doc suddenly twisted his leg and shoved the joint back in. And that’s when Harry woke up.
“AAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!”

His howl of pain and shock was gut-wrenching. He fought, struggling in Liam’s arms, screaming as The Doc moved to his other side and took his left leg in his hands.

“No! No, don’t! Please don’t! It hurts! It’s hurts so much!” He was pleading, tears tracing a path through the dirt on his cheeks… And suddenly Liam was crying too, even as he tightened his grip. “Let me go! Let me go! PLEASE!”

“Hold him!”

Liam nodded. Another sickening crack.

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!”

Harry howled in pain again, his body falling back against Liam’s shoulder. Then he went limp. When Liam turned to look into his face it was expressionless and his eyes had that glazed, far-away look again.

“Harry? Harry!” He shook him, but Harry didn’t respond. “Doc! He’s not moving!”

Niall backed away, glancing frantically from The Doc to Harry and back, his breath coming in frantic gasps. “He’s dead isn’t he?! Oh Christ, he’s dead!”

But The Doc just stared down at Harry sadly as he moved his legs up and down, testing the joints. “He’s alright Liam. He’s just gone somewhere else for a while; somewhere safe.” He reached to stroke Harry’s cheek. “Don’t worry little one. We’ll take care of you until you come back.”

“But Doc…”

“The human mind is a marvellous thing. At the moment Harry’s is protecting him from what has happened.” He fitted an I.V drip, hanging the bag of morphine from a hook above the bed. “Now, roll him over onto his side.” He did so. As he looked up The Doc met his gaze. “I think you should take Niall to bed. He doesn’t need to see this.” They both turned to where Niall was crouching down next to Harry, tears dripping from his chin as he pawed his cheek, desperately trying to get him to respond. “And Harry wouldn’t want him to.”

He nodded. “But can I come back? I don’t want him to be alone.”

“Oh of course.”

He moved to stand beside Niall, reaching to pull him to his feet. He fought but Liam ignored his struggles and shouts of protest, lifting him bodily and carrying him from the room as he sobbed into his chest.

By the time Liam returned The Doc had pulled white screens around the bed, creating a safe, private space.

“He really needs to get to a hospital, doesn’t he?”

He nodded wearily, pulling his tray of instruments towards him and snapping on a pair of latex gloves. “Of course he does, but Cowell wouldn’t allow it. After all, what does a boys’ life matter compared to keeping his nasty little business a secret?” His voice oozed contempt. “It’s
“despicable.”

“But can you help him?”

“I can do my best.”

“What do you think he did?”

He shrugged. “With this level of brutality I can only surmise that he committed the ultimate crime.”

“And what’s that?”

“He dared to ask someone for help.”

He dragged a chair over and sat down beside Harry as The Doc set to work, reaching to take his bloody hand gently in his own.

“He was all alone Doc. He must have been so scared.”

The thought of it made Liam both deeply sad...and quietly furious. He pushed Harry’s dark hair away from his cheek, searching his friend’s face for even the faintest flicker of the determined, charismatic boy he knew. He bit back a sob when he realised that what he’d always secretly dreaded had finally happened-That defiant spark that had always seemed to burn within Harry had been snuffed out. They hadn’t just broken him; they’d shattered him into a million pieces.

He slept by Harry’s bedside that night.

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

The next morning Liam woke to a familiar and terrible voice.

“How dare you say I can’t see my own property! Where is he?”

Mr Cowell. He just had time to duck behind one of the screens before he appeared, scowling down at Harry where he lay in bed, as comatose as he’d been the night before. “What the fuck is wrong with him?”

The Doc appeared behind him, fixing him with a look of thinly veiled hatred. “He’s severely traumatised. I don’t know when he’ll wake up.”

“Good.” And as Liam watched from behind the screen Mr Cowell leaned down to whisper in Harry’s ear. At the sound of his voice Harry stirred and shrank away, a whimper of terror escaping his lips as his eyes grew wide. “You see Harry, that’s what happens to anyone stupid enough to cross me. When you wake up I’m going to have you brought down to one of these basement rooms where you’ll be chained to the wall by a collar around your throat. And that’s where you’ll be kept from now on, servicing the clients that come to you. The only time your muzzle will be taken off will be so that they can fuck your mouth-the rest of the time you’ll be kept in Silence. A voice is a privilege Harry. One you obviously don’t deserve. My men are already closing in on your sister; they’ll bring her here soon enough. Just think Harry…Beautiful Gemma, made to spread her legs for clients…”

“STOP IT!” And then suddenly The Doc was between them, shielding Harry from him. “GET AWAY FROM MY PATIENT AND GET OUT! NOW!”
At his shout Mr Cowell’s face darkened. “Watch your step old man…”

But when The Doc raised his head to glare up at him it was with a defiant smirk. “Or you’ll what? Have me arrested?” He arched an eyebrow contemptuously. “Really Simon, you think I’m scared of you and your threats? Of prison? I’m a murderer. My wife had bone cancer and I smothered her. But I’m also seventy-five years old. What would I get if you turned me in? Ten years perhaps? Not nearly enough for taking a life. So instead I stay with you and tend to the young men and women you torture and brutalize. This,” He waved a hand, indicating the infirmary. “This is my penance. As for this boy?” He reached to touch Harry’s arm gently as he trembled. “He’ll be lucky if he’s able to walk again, never mind work. I spent most of the night stitching him back together. Did you know that they dislocated his legs?”

The look of shock on Mr Cowell’s face suggested that he didn’t. The Doc saw it and nodded sagely. “I suspected as much. You have tortured Harry from the day you had him abducted…But nothing you have done to him compares to what he was put through last night. You’ve got a wolf in your midst Simon, a rogue Handler that you can’t control- And he’s costing you money. Rather than threatening a boy you’ve already broken you should be out there hunting him down and bringing him to heel…Before I have to deal with anymore of his handiwork.”

For a moment they glared at each other. Then to Liam’s amazement Mr Cowell seemed to back down.

“Call me when he wakes up.” He spun on his heel and made for the door, slamming it behind him. The Doc watched him go before turned back to Harry, tugging the blankets up over him and stroking his cheek tenderly like a father with a child.

“Shhh now, it’s alright. He’s gone.”

Liam emerged from behind the screen and moved to stand on the other side of the bed, gazing down at him. But Harry had retreated back into himself again and his green eyes were vacant beneath their drooping lids. “Doc?”

“Umm?” He looked up.

“I’m sorry about your wife.”

The old man sighed regretfully. “She asked me too, you see. She was in so much pain. I could never refuse her.” He turned his attention to the drip by Harry’s bed. “This needs changed. You can stay with him of you like.”

He nodded and waited until The Doc had left them before turning to stare down at Harry. A rogue Handler-No prizes for guessing who. It was just as he’d thought; Harry could still be in danger. He reached into his pocket, his fingers closing on the cool plastic handle.

He’d gone searching for it the night before once he’d finished cuffing Niall to his bed. Of course Harry had been too afraid of being caught with it and punished to carry it every day-Instead preferring to keep his ‘security’ for parties and home visits with new clients. He’d eventually found it in a drawer, hidden in a pair of socks. He held it up for him to see.

“Look Haz. I brought you your knife. Here,” He tucked it beneath his pillow, within easy reach of his right hand. “Just in case anyone tries anything. I’ve to go sort Niall out but I’ll be back later.”

Harry didn’t look at him, didn’t show any sign that he’d even heard him. And the sight of him lying there, so shattered, caused Liam’s heart to lurch and tears to sting his eyes. If only he knew how to fix him…But he didn’t know where to start. He stooped and brushed his lips to his friend’s forehead before stepping back. “Hang in there, o.k?”

When he looked up The Doc was watching him and, embarrassed, he bit back his tears. They
shared a nod as he left. He waited until he’d reached the stairwell before sinking down onto the steps, covering his eyes with his hand and allowing himself to cry.

Liam watched the client as he signed the form he held out.

“Is that all?” He stood up, pushing his glasses up his nose. He was skinny and geeky, but he’d paid for Liam’s services a few times before he’d become a Handler and he knew he was essentially harmless; just a lonely software engineer with a wife and two kids at home and a secret to hide.

“Yes Sir. Just let me talk to my Charge.”

“Sure.” He watched the man go into the bathroom, to pop a little blue pill no doubt, before reaching for Niall and taking his face in his hands.

“Are you sure you’ll be o.k Nialler? If he tries anything that makes you uncomfortable just phone me and I’ll come get you right away.”

He could see the nervousness in the Irish boy’s blue eyes, but Niall smiled and reached up to gently push his hands away. “I’ll be o.k. Do ya really think he’ll be able to help Harry?”

“I really hope so. Zayn said Harry told him they were in love…I just hope he wasn’t just lying to him.”

Niall nodded. “Me too. What you said about ‘im being kept chained up all the time-I know what that’s like; not bein’ able to move or fight, just havin’ to wait in the dark, all alone, for the next one to come an’ hurt ya. I wouldn’t wish it on anyone, least of all him.”

The client appeared behind him again, staring at them curiously. “Is there a problem?”

Nail turned towards the older man and as he did so he changed, pasting on a cheeky grin and shoving his hands in his pockets as he sauntered towards him, every inch the Irish Charmer. When he spoke his Irish brogue was exaggerated, thicker. “Aye, sure I’m grand. Come on, Daddy.”

He took the man’s hand and led him toward the bed. He was learning, Liam realised; slowly creating the persona he would hide behind to enable him to do what he was forced to do. The thought made him sad. He made his way to the door. When he turned back Nail was sitting on the bed, feigning arousal as the client kissed his neck. He caught his eye and mouthed ‘I'M FINE! GO!” He did, reluctantly.

He changed in the toilets of the hotel, swopping his boots and guards’ uniform for trainers, jeans and a sweatshirt, before running out to the SUV and pulling out into the heavy traffic. He wrapped his sweaty palms around the steering wheel and swallowed, his throat dry, trying to ignore the way his heart pounded in his chest. He was only supposed to have an hour’s travel time back to The Birdcage-After that, they’d want to know where he’d been. Every time he stopped at a red light he checked his rear-view mirror, convinced he’d see another black SUV following him, but there was nothing but taxi cabs and red buses which gave way to Mercedes and BMW’s as he arrived in the leafy streets of Primrose Hill. He didn’t know exactly what he was doing, what he was going to
say… All he knew was that he had to try. He owed it to Harry.

He pulled up at the gates to Louis Tomlinson’s mansion and rolled down the window as the security guard approached.

“Do you have an appointment?”

“No. But I have to talk to Louis Tomlinson. It’s an emergency.”

“Sorry mate, Mr Tomlinson is not taking visitors today.”

Liam turned to fix the guard with a glare. “Trust me; he’s going to want to take this one.”

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

Louis put his elbows on the table and his head in his hands as he stared down at the screen of the mobile phone. Tears filled his eyes, causing the photograph to blur.

It was sickening seeing Harry so vulnerable and helpless, bound in such a way that he became dehumanised, silenced by that horrible leather muzzle—nothing but a sex object to be used. But the worst thing was the look in his eyes as he stared at the camera, his cheek pressed to the carpet and his hair falling over his face. They were full of terror—and defeat. There was no spark there. A wave of nausea washed over Louis as he read the caption below it for what felt like the hundredth time.

‘YOUR BOYFRIEND—ALIVE AND READY TO BE FUCKED.’

“You know what probably happened to him after this picture was taken, right?”

“Yes.” Detective Morrison’s voice from the other end of the table.

“It’s all my fault.”

“I know it doesn’t seem like it; but you did the right thing. Your evidence means that when we arrest Cowell we can prosecute him…”

The rest of her words went over his head. He forced himself to keep his eyes on the photograph, to keep looking. This was the reality of what his stupidity had done to the person he loved most in the world. He deserved every shred of the guilt he felt. “But you’re no closer to finding Harry, are you?”

She sighed. “We’re working gathering intelligence…”

At her words frustration seized him and he smacked his hand off the table’s surface. “THAT’S NOT FUCKING GOOD ENOUGH!”

His shout reverberated round the room. He looked up, meeting her gaze and seeing the pity there before she blinked it away. She stood, wiping her hands on her skinny jeans—part of a carefully constructed outfit designed to avoid suspicion by making her look like one of his friends come to visit.

“Look, I get that you’re frustrated…” They both froze as the buzzer in the hallway rang out, staring at each other. “Are you expecting anyone?”
He shook his head. “No. Should I get it?”

She thought for a moment and then nodded. “It could be nothing.”

He went to intercom and lifted the receiver. “Hello?”

“Hi Mr Tomlinson.” The voice on the other end sounded nervous. “My name’s Liam. I don’t know if you remember me, but I used to be Harry’s Handler? I-I really need to talk to you.”

He covered the receiver and turned to the detective. “It’s a Handler from The Birdcage. Says he wants to talk about Harry.”

She nodded; her face grim. “Let him in. I’ll call for back-up.”

He watched her reach into her bag for her radio before turning back to the receiver. “Yes Liam, I remember you. I’m coming now.”

He opened the front door to reveal Liam standing on the doorstep in jeans and trainers, tugging the hood of his sweatshirt up to hide his face. “Can I come in?”

Louis stepped back and Liam hurried inside, shooting a cautious look back over his shoulder as if expecting someone to be watching. He locked the door after him and turned to him. “Where’s Harry?”

And the look on Liam’s face made him freeze.

“He’s…he’s been hurt. Really badly hurt. They raped him. Beat him til there was damn near nothin’ left to beat. And it’ll only get worse for him. He said you guys had a thing, that you’re in love…Is it true? Do you love him?”

He stepped back, reeling. Everything he’d feared when he’d received that picture. It had happened. “Y-yes…Yes, we…I love him.”

Liam nodded. “Then you have to get him out of there. If he stays there they’ll kill him! Please. Maybe-maybe you could buy him? Or if Mr Cowell won’t sell then just, like, book him and take him away somewhere? I’ll help you, do whatever it takes…He’s my friend. I can’t watch it. I can’t watch them break him like this!”

Louis stared at him in horror.

“Liam? Are you Liam Payne?”

They both turned to find Detective Morrison standing in the doorway. Liam looked her up and down, suddenly guarded.

“Who are you? How the hell do you know my name?”

“Detective Catherine Morrison-Specialist Crimes and Operations.” She held up her badge. Liam immediately tensed and glanced at the door, obviously assessing how long it would take him to reach it if he bolted. “I know what happened to you Liam. I’ve seen pictures of what he made you do. I know you’re afraid…”

“Afraid?” He laughed at her but it had no humour in it. “You have no fucking idea lady. Harry talked and I saw what they did to him. So if you think I’m saying shit to you…”
“Harry’s your friend, right?” He nodded, glancing between them both, poised and ready to run. “And you came here to get help for him didn’t you?” He nodded again. “Liam, the only way I can get him out of there- get all of you out of there-is if you talk to me.”

“He’ll know.”

“He won’t. Does he know you’re here?” He shook his head and then hesitated, unsure. “If you talk to me Liam, tell me about The Birdcage, then I’ll make all of it stop. I can rescue Harry…And you too. I could get you home to your family.” And at her words Liam’s face suddenly twisted with grief, desperate tears appearing in his eyes. He turned away, gritting his teeth to keep from crying.

“You don’t know him. If he finds out I talked…”

Louis stepped towards him, his eyes searching his face. “Liam you said Harry was hurt. How badly? Does he need to go to a hospital?” The young man nodded slowly and Louis struggled to keep the panic out of his voice. “Then please Liam, talk to the detective. We can’t help him if we don’t know where he is. Liam please, I’m begging you.”

For a moment Liam looked at if he was going to run… Then he nodded.

Chapter End Notes

again, thank you all so much for the wonderful comments and kudos I have received! You are amazing! The next chapter is coming not this sunday but next.

Next time-A raid and an act of revenge.
Chapter 18-Raid

Chapter Summary

The Birdcage is raided...

Chapter Notes

Warnings-Contains descriptions of medical examinations and sexual assault as well as violence and character death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 18-Raid

“It’s called Catatonia-A psychological state characterized by stupor and mutism. It’s usually a symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, if a very extreme one.”

“And when will he wake up?”

“I don’t know.”

Liam reached over the bed to gently peel away the blanket. It was a pitiful sight. Harry’s naked body was almost emaciated, his long limbs like sticks. Beneath the bruises lurked the scars from previous whippings, some silvery and fine, and some dark and wide. Deep red bracelets of bruises encircled each of his wrists, and his cheeks were cut from the rough leather edges of his muzzle. Liam’s eyes burned with unshed tears. He should have fought for him more. He took the wet cloth from The Doc’s hands and together they set about washing him, wiping away their sweat, their semen and his blood, washing away all traces of their abuse from his skin and making him clean again. Liam bathed him with no embarrassment-They’d been forced to perform together before he’d been his Handler, he knew every inch of him.

Once they’d finished bathing Harry he helped The Doc dress him in a hospital gown and held him tightly while he struggled and cried through him fitting a catheter. It was only time he moved or made any noise at all and even then he didn’t look at them, his blank eyes gazing off into the middle-distance, wide with horrors only he could see. Liam arranged the pillows carefully behind his head and turned to watch The Doc as he lifted his legs again, one by one, bending each knee and moving them in wide circles as Harry whimpered softly.

“Why do you have to do that? It obviously hurts him.”

The old man nodded sadly. “To keep the joints from locking and reduce any build-up of scar tissue.”

“Doc, be honest with me...Will he be able to walk again?”
He sighed, not lifting his gaze from his patient. “He won’t be able to even stand for around a month. After that he will walk; but how well I have no idea. The dislocations were violent and I’m guessing there is a lot of damage. He’ll need extensive physiotherapy, which we both know he won’t get, and even if he did his gait could still be affected.”

“And if-if he ends up walking funny; if he needs help..?”

“Normally he would be disposed of. But Cowell’s plans for him don’t seem to include much freedom of movement. Perhaps his life will be spared.” Liam didn’t know how to feel about that.

The Doc finished moving Harry’s legs and stood for a moment, staring down at him, his grey eyes full of a weary pity. When he spoke it was half to himself, his words dripping disgust. “He’s monstrous, taking only the youngest, the most beautiful; exploiting them, torturing them and then disposing of them like so many broken toys once he’s done so much damage that they can never be fixed…BASTARD!” He lashed out, sending the basin full of water crashing to the floor with a swipe of his hand. “MONSTROUS BASTARD!”

“Doc!” Liam rushed to place a comforting arm around the old man’s shoulders. He wanted to tell him... But he’d been warned by that police woman not to say a word. So instead he stood in silence, waiting for the old man to regain his composure, before dropping to his knees and helping him mop up the mess.

They’d almost finished when the door behind them opened and a Handler entered leading a young blonde woman. He held a blood-soaked towel to her mouth with one hand, while in the other he held a mug. Blood poured down his hand and wrist.

“Got another one for you Doc. Client kicked out her two front teeth but we managed to find them and put them in milk.” He held up the mug. “How are you with dental work?”

The Doc caught Liam’s eye and when he spoke he sounded so tired. “It never stops.” He let Liam help him to his feet. “Go put the screens around Harry. I don’t want people gawping at him.”

He went to take the young woman gently by the arm and Liam wheeled the screens into place around Harry’s bed, creating their own private little world in which he could talk to him. He pulled a chair up and sat, reaching out to stroke the bridge of his nose with the tip of his finger, something his own mother used to do to comfort him when he was little. It seemed to work on Harry too, because for a brief moment the corners of his mouth curled in a smile.

“We all love you Haz. You do know that, don’t you? I’ve never told you this; but I’ve always wished that I were you. You’ve always been so brave. I remember that first night, watching you fighting them, and just being completely in awe. There was something in you, a fire they couldn’t touch. I know you felt I’d betrayed you and everyone else when I became a Handler—I hated the way you looked at me, like I’d let you down. When they put me in charge of you I thought I could make it up to you by protecting you. Well, we both know how that worked out. I’m so sorry I didn’t notice that you weren’t o.k. Niall told me about him coming to get you at night, about what he was doing to you. He was beating you too, wasn’t he? And starving you. I should have paid more attention.” He leaned down to press his mouth to his friend’s ear. “But it’s all going to be over soon. I went to speak to Louis. Do you remember Louis?” At the mention of his lover’s name Harry closed his eyes, his lips twisting into that little smile again.

“Yes!” Liam nodded frantically. “Yes, Louis! He loves you Haz—He really does. I went to talk to him and the police were there. I told them everything. And they’re coming for us. Harry, you’re going to go home. We all are.”
Harry’s eyelids fluttered open. “Home.” He looked puzzled, as if he didn’t know quite what the word meant. Then his eyes grew wide with panic. “GEM!” And suddenly he was flailing, struggling to get up. “GEM! GEM!”

Liam caught him, pinning his arms to his sides and hugging him to his chest. “Stop it! Shhh, easy mate! Easy! You’ll hurt yourself! Shhh, it’s ok. It’s o.k.” He waited until Harry had grown still before reaching up to stroke his hair. “I told them he was after her. They said they’d protect her, that they would get to her before he could.”

“Gemm.”

“Yes Gemma-she’s your sister, right? She’s safe, Harry. Shhh.”

“Safe.”

He laid him gently back down against the pillows. “Yes, and soon you will be too.”

He just hoped they wouldn’t have to wait much longer.

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

Louis paced back and forth, digging his nails into his palms to quell the frustration pulsing through his chest. He hated feeling this fucking useless. Harry was trapped in that place, having Christ knows what done to him, and here he was in a Police waiting room unable to do anything but wait for other people to rescue him. At least he wasn’t the only one.

He turned to where the family sat huddled together on a dusty grey sofa-Harry’s family. He recognised his mother from the photograph on the ‘Missing Person’s’ website, although it was obvious that the years of stress and worry had aged her. She sat slumped against the chest of a burly man in his late 40’s, overweight and tall, with glasses and a beard flecked with grey, who he guessed was Harry’s step-father. He’d expected her to be crying, but she wasn’t. Instead she stared blankly ahead, her face white as she struggled to comprehend the news that her son was alive… And that he’d been forced into prostitution.

The girl who perched on the arm of the sofa was around the same age as he was, blonde and as striking as her younger brother, with the same wide almond-shaped eyes and pointed chin. He wondered what it must have been like for her to have opened the front door that morning to a crowd of policemen, to have been told that the little brother who’d vanished four years ago had been abducted by a gang of sex-traffickers and that they were coming for her too. He wouldn’t have blamed her for falling to pieces…And yet when she raised her brown eyes to meet his, her gaze was steady and determined. She rose from her seat and crossed the room towards him.

“So you’re the one who told the police about my brother. I’m Gemma, Harry’s sister.”

He nodded. “I know. He told me about you. He said you were close; that you were his best friend. He’s really missed you.”

She winced at that, a small sound somewhere between a gasp and a sob escaping from her lips. Then she managed to compose herself again, taking a deep breath and straightening up. “How did you meet Harry?”
“At a party thrown by my father’s corporation. They’d hired prostitutes from The Birdcage for the guests. But I didn’t know anything about it, I swear.”

“And afterwards you hired him again.”

There was something in her tone that made him cautious. “Yes. But only to make sure he was alright.”

She narrowed her eyes suspiciously at him. “Detective Morrison said you hired him multiple times. Had him come to your house.” And at that he knew he was trapped. “Did you pay him for sex?”

He gaped at her, horrified. “I-Look, it-it wasn’t like that. Me and Harry…”

Gemma glanced over at her parents who were talking together in hushed tones, before moving closer to him, close enough to look him right in the eye. He turned away, his cheeks burning, trying to desperately to think of a way of explaining all that had happened between them after that first meeting.

“It’s a simple question, Mr Tomlinson. Did you pay to have sex with my brother? Well?”

“I didn’t know he’d been trafficked!” He hadn’t meant to say it; it just came out. And he instantly regretted it when she stepped back, her expression filled with shock and disgust. “No! Look; I’m not like that…Me and Harry…”

But he was suddenly cut off when the door opened and Detective Morrison entered, talking on a handheld radio.

“Taylor’s going on ahead with the warrant, some TFU and a big red key…I’ll be bringing up four cars…Yeah, get them in quiet-like; don’t want them panicking and getting rid of the hostages…Don’t know…Right, I’m on my way. Over.” She turned to look at them, her brow furrowed with determination. “We’re going in.”

The Man Jack had a headache.

“You fucking crippled him! Did I tell you to fucking cripple him?! No! Do you have any idea how much that whore’s worth to me?! Well?!”

Cowell’s shouting was as insignificant to him as the buzzing of a fly—yet just as irritating. He sighed and rubbed his temples. When he spoke he didn’t bother to conceal his boredom.

“Not that much now, I’d imagine. If you’ll recall, you told me to deal with him however I saw fit. And I did.” He moved to look out the window of Cowell’s office.

The sight that greeted him was deeply amusing and he couldn’t keep his lips from curling into a smirk. Cops—loads of them—in bullet-proof vests and hard helmets, swarming like beetles over the fence that surrounded the back of the hotel and creeping in formation towards it. As they crept closer he could see the sunlight glinting off the guns in their hands. He wondered for a moment if he should warn him.
“I can’t have you here destroying my merchandise! YOU’RE FIRED!”

No, best not. It wouldn’t be as fun if he warned him. He turned back from the window with a casual shrug. “Fine. Just let me get my things.”

He spotted the young officer just outside the kitchens and crept up behind him, overpowering him easily and dragging him into one of the storerooms. He snapped his neck quickly before stripping him of his jacket, vest and helmet and putting them on. Then he lifted the gun and weighed it in his hand, staring at it curiously. He’d never had much time for guns. Knives were much more fun as you could see the shock in their eyes as the blade went in; watch their faces twist in pain. And with knives you could take your time. Guns were too quick. But at least he could use it if he was discovered. Either way, he didn’t doubt for a second that he would walk out of there easily. He’d been through raids before. He just needed to collect what was his. He tugged the visor of the helmet down over his face and made his way down to the basement...

The old man turned from where he’d been making up one of the couches, staring at him in shock at first before his eyes took in the police badge and he smiled in relief. He stepped towards him. “Oh thank God. Have you finally come to free them? Arrest me if you must, I promise I won’t resist you. I’ll tell you everything you need to know about this terrible place and what happened here.”

His skull made an interesting cracking sound as Jack smacked it off the corner of one of the metal cabinets, blood splattering across the nearby wall-A bit like the top of a boiled egg being hit with a spoon except much louder. He didn’t bother to see if he was dead when he hit the floor; it was enough that he wouldn’t be able to stop him. He scanned the room until his gaze fell on a bed surrounded by white screens. He marched over and pushed them aside.

His slave lay on the bed, his face as pale as the sheets and his jade eyes staring at nothing from beneath half-closed lids-Beautifully broken. He lifted the sheets away to expose his battered body, taking in his bruised legs. He didn’t particularly care if he’d ever walk again; because if he couldn’t walk then he couldn’t run...All that really mattered was that he could crawl. He knew that he should just yank out the I.Vs, lift him into his arms and go. But he just couldn’t resist seeing the look of terror on his face when he woke up and realised that his Master had come to claim him. He lifted off the helmet and stooped to lean over him...

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

It was nice here...Safe. Here in this white nothingness, millions of light years away from anywhere Harry was protected, untouchable. Here he felt nothing; no fear, no pain, just an all-encompassing numbness. Here it was mostly silent. Occasionally there would be echoes on the edge of his consciousness; muffled voices, like white noise, but he ignored them and they eventually faded away. He passed the time thinking about the little things that made him happy... music, the taste of ice cream melting on his tongue, Louis’ deep blue eyes, the heat of his body against his as he held him close...He was dimly aware of something lurking in the dark corners; something evil, wrong and immensely painful-But here it was easy to ignore. Here he could pretend that it had never happened. Here there were no tears, no nightmares...Just exquisite empty silence. Then, suddenly, a horribly familiar voice smashed through the white noise, reverberating in his head-HIS voice. He closed his eyes and tried to retreat further into the whiteness, the numbness, so far that he would never find him...
And then came that flick just on the tip of his nose, shattering the perfect world he’d created in his psyche.

Suddenly he felt as if he was being yanked backwards, out through the white, breaching the surface to somewhere infinitely worse. He blinked and looked up. And froze as he realised with a jolt of terror that the monster he’d been hiding from had finally found him.

Jack loomed over him, grinning sadistically as he pressed his face to his and heard the terrified whimpers that escaped his parched lips.

“Hello Harry, it’s your Master. I’ve come to take you home.”

And suddenly he couldn’t speak, couldn’t breathe. He tried to kick out and bolts of pain shot up each of his legs. He pressed himself back into the mattress as Jack’s huge hands reached for him, fingers scrambling, searching of their own accord for something, reaching back beneath the pillow…He flinched in surprise as his hand closed on cool plastic and Liam’s voice echoed in his mind—“Just in case anyone tries anything.” He took hold of the handle, cutting the tips of his fingers on the sharp edge as he prised it open. He stared up at the man who’d caused him so pain, who’d taken everything from him. And suddenly adrenaline and survival instinct kicked in and he wasn’t scared anymore…He was absolutely furious.

“YOU’RE NOT MY MASTER!” He surged upwards and caught him by the throat, driving the blade of the knife deep into his gut and twisting it. He drew it back and plunged it in again and again, pressing his face close to Jack’s as hot blood dripped down his hand, his teeth bared in a primal snarl. “YOU DON’T OWN ME!”

As he watched Jack’s face twisted in horrified surprise and he opened his mouth to speak, but only a gurgling sound came out. Blood poured from between his lips and bubbled down his chin. He pulled the knife away and Jack slumped slowly to the floor. He leaned over the side of the bed and watched in amazement as he twitched, as his cold grey eyes grew dull and glazed, realising that even monsters weren’t immortal.

“DROP THE KNIFE!”

The shout jerked him back to reality and he let it go, watching as it clattered onto the tiles. He sat up and turned.

A crowd of police officers stood in the doorway, their guns pointed directly at him. He raised his hands slowly.

“He-he was going to take me! I couldn’t let him take me!”

“Lower your weapons!” A woman emerged from their midst, her gaze scanning the room and taking in the slumped body of The Doc and Jack’s still bleeding corpse, before turning to Harry and noticing his bruises and the I.V’s that protruded from the backs of his hands. “Jesus Christ! What the hell happened in here?! Someone radio paramedics. NOW!!” She looked at him and he was surprised to see a flicker of recognition in her eyes. “Harry? Are you Harry Styles?”

He nodded; surprised that she knew his name. “Is-Is it over? Can I go home now?”

“Yes. Yes, it’s over Harry.” Her tone was gentle. “It’s all over.”

He slumped forward, sobbing with relief.
Two hours later lay in a hospital bed, slightly groggy from the pain relief they’d given him, and watched with a curious detachment as a nurse finished laying out the equipment on a tray by the bed-brown envelopes, plastic sandwich bags, cotton wool buds and a lot of medical instruments. Beyond the room the sound of running feet and shouting voices grew louder and louder as more ambulances arrived, bringing more of The Birdcage’s Products to the already packed E.R.

“Will this hurt?”

She shook her head. “It can be a bit uncomfortable.”

“You know what I am, right? That I’m a prostitute?”

He expected her to be shocked but instead she just nodded, sadness in her eyes. “I know that you were taken from your family when you were just a teenager and forced to do a lot of things you didn’t want to do.”

“If you’re a prostitute does it even count as rape? It’s what I was there for.”

She reached to lay her hand on his, her expression a mixture of shock and pity. “Of course it does. What you described to those police officers was a brutal gang rape, and the fact that you were also sold by those people just makes it worse. You’ve been very brave.”

He turned away from her to gaze up at the ceiling. He didn’t feel brave. He felt numb, lost…And completely alone.

The door opened and a tall doctor with sandy hair and glasses entered and moved to stand over him, fixing him with a kind smile.

“Hello Harry. My name is Dr Graham and I’m going to examine you, if that’s o.k?”

The last thing he wanted was to be touched. But he knew that without evidence there would be no proof of what Jack had done, and of why he’d killed him. He nodded.

“You’ll stop if I ask you too, right?”

“Of course.” The doctor lifted a plastic Dictaphone from the pocket of his white coat and held it up for him to see. “I’m going to take photographs of your injuries and describe them as I go along, o.k? And if you ever feel uncomfortable we’ll stop.” He raised the Dictaphone to his lips.

“November tenth, 2014. My name is Dr Matthew Graham. I am conducting a full medical examination on Harry Edward Styles, a male aged twenty years. Patient suffered a serious physical assault and was restrained. Patient has made a complaint of rape involving anal penetration by three different assailants and anal penetration with foreign objects.” Harry’s stomach churned at that. “Right Harry, we’re going to start by combing your hair to check for any debris.” He kept his gaze firmly fixed on the ceiling as the nurse parted his hair gently with her fingers and arranged it so it fell either side of his face. She laid a piece of paper first on one of his shoulders and then the other, combing his hair carefully over it-The first comb it had had in days. “Now for your hands.” He felt her take each of his hands gently in her own and run a cotton wool bud beneath each fingernail. “O.k Harry, I need to take pictures of your broken fingers and the marks around your wrists. If you could just rest your hands on top of the sheet for me please?” He did so, aware of Jack’s blood still crusted on his skin. A camera flash lit up the room. “Patient has extensive contusions and lacerations around each wrist consistent with both the leather restraints and metal handcuffs found at the scene. The left index finger and right middle finger have been broken, both beyond the second knuckle. Now Harry, I need to take a picture of your mouth.” He raised his chin and closed his eyes, the flash from the camera lighting up the insides of his eyelids. “Patient has
contusions and abrasions on the cheeks consistent with the muzzle type gags found at the scene.” He moved to stand over Harry who instinctively pressed himself back into the pillows as he felt his hot breath on his skin. “O.k, now I need you to open your mouth for me please.” He did, keeping his eyes firmly shut. “And bite down, show me your teeth…Patient has slight displacement of central and lateral incisors and canines consistent with long-term wear of said gag. Nurse Thomas, if you could lift the sheets back for me please?” He felt cool air against his skin as his torso was exposed. “Patient has suffered extensive bruising and abrasions to the chest and torso.” More camera flashes. He felt latex-gloved hands on his skin and gasped as they touched his sides, sending a throbbing pain across his chest. “Second and third ribs on both sides are broken.” The sheets were folded carefully up over his chest. “Bruises on the thighs and calves. Bite marks on the inner thighs…” Another camera flash. And then the sheet was lifted higher and gloved fingers touched his hips.

“AAAHHHH!” He cried out in pain.

“Extensive bruising and swelling around both hips…”

“He-he grabbed hold of my legs and twisted them. There was a ‘pop’ sort of feeling…”

“…consistent with forcible dislocation of the joints. Joints have been re-articulated with a surprising level of skill yet there seems to be extensive muscular and nerve damage.” The doctor took a photograph. Then there was an expectant silence.

Harry opened his eyes to find both Dr Graham and the nurse looking down at him with a mixture of pity and concern.

“Harry, I now need to look between your legs and then do an internal examination. Do you have any idea what that may entail or do you want me to explain it to you?”

He avoided their gaze. “It’s alright. I have a fair idea.”

“We can stop at any time, you just have to say.”

“O.K.” He lay back against the pillows and bit his lip as those gloved hands reached down and took hold of him.

“Bruising to the genitals.” The camera clicked. And then came the moment he’d been dreading. “O.k Harry, I’m going to start the internal exam. If you could just roll away from me please until you’re lying on your side?” He did, his left hip screaming at him as he put weight on it. “Buttocks are bruised and have deep lacerations possibly inflicted by a riding crop as carried by the suspects.” He felt the doctor’s gloved fingers, slick with lube, touching him. “Looking at the anal verge…Patient has multiple obvious abrasions about one to one and a half centimetres up, that are approximately two centimetres in diameter, on average. All have been stitched and are in various stages of healing. There is also scarring which suggests previous rapes.” and then there was something pressing against his entrance, something hard and cold and suddenly he was frozen with fear, his heart pounding in his ears and his entire body trembling. “Now, Harry, this may be a little uncomfortable. I need you take a deep breath in…” The thing was pushed inside him-And then suddenly he was back there, back in that room, blinded by tears of pain and screaming against his muzzle as they pushed THOSE things inside him, laughing as he arched his back in agony, struggling desperately at the cuffs that cut into his wrists, blood warm and wet on the sheets beneath him…

‘You like that? ‘Course you do, you dirty whore.’
‘Listen to him moaning, he bloody loves it!’

‘Ha ha look! He’s crying! Do it harder!’

Hot tears stung his eyes and he struggled for breath, feeling like he was drowning. He couldn’t stand to feel like this again; so out of control, so alone, so violated and humiliated. He closed his eyes and let go.

He awoke to feel a hand stroking his hair, its touch so much more tender than anything he was used to. At first his thoughts turned to Louis but then…

“Shhh, shhh. It’s alright. I’m here.” It was a voice he never thought he’d ever hear again. He opened his eyes and his heart leapt.

“Mum!”

She sat beside his bed, her cheeks stained with tears-But she was smiling. She nodded, reaching to touch his face with her fingers, almost as if making sure he was real. When she spoke her voice was choked. “Yes. There you are. I’ve found my baby.”

For a moment they just stared at each other, marvelling at the sight of one another after such a long time of wishing and hoping and struggling to remember, afraid to speak in case they broke the spell. Then she reached to touch the crucifix that still hung at his throat.

“You kept it. They let you keep it.”

He nodded. “I kissed it every night. I was hoping you’d feel it.”

She stared at him in wonderment. “I felt it.” Then she reached for him again, frowning as her fingertips touched his cheek. “You’re bruised.”

He nodded, suddenly so ashamed but still desperate for her comfort after so long away from her. “They-they hurt me Mum. They really hurt me.”

He started to cry and she took him in her arms and rocked him gently, just like she had when he was a little boy, long before the monsters came and stole him away.

Gemma hesitated in the doorway, watching as her mother and step-father leaned over his bed; just like she had the day he’d been born. Even though she’d only been four years old she remembered it so well-How tired and happy her mother had looked; how her father had lifted the little bundle into his arms and crouched down so that she could see. ‘This is your new baby brother, Gemma. Meet Harry.’ She remembered him, all pink and squishy and small as a doll, how his little hand had wrapped round her finger and held on tight as they’d gazed at each other in wonder. Over the years part of her had accepted that he was most likely dead and she had grieved for him. Now this felt almost like a rebirth. Her stepfather crossed the room to her, reaching for her hand.

“He’s been asking for you.” She nodded and let him lead her towards the bed. “Now remember love, it’s been four years. He’s changed a lot.”
“I know.” Or at least she thought she did. But the young man in the bed looked so unlike the teenager brother she’d lost that it came as a shock. All trace of puppy-fat was gone, to be replaced by a long gangly body, far too thin. His face had changed so much she wondered if they’d made a mistake. The round chubby cheeks had vanished to reveal razor-sharp cheekbones and a strong, angular jawline. There was even a dusting of dark stubble on his chin and upper lip. The fluffy curls were now thick and so long they brushed his shoulders, and the eyes that gazed up at her were bigger, the twinkle they’d always had replaced with a haunted look. He’d been a beautiful child when they’d taken him; while they’d been searching for him he’d become a handsome man. And suddenly it hit her how much she’d missed with him- Helping him celebrate passing his GCSE’s, giving him dating advice, teaching him to drive, celebrating his eighteenth birthday-All moments they’d never get to have now. He had tattoos on his chest-birds. She wondered why he’d had them done, thought about the ‘H’ tattoo she’d had done one drunken student night and how her friends had assumed it had been for an ex-boyfriend and she’d let them because talking about him would have been too painful. She’d pushed him down deep in her heart for so long. Her gaze moved to the bruises that covered his skin, the full lips she’d always been so jealous of, now split and crusted with blood. And suddenly she had to turn away, tears blurring her vision, struggling to breathe as guilt settled on her chest like a stone. She felt a hand close around her wrist.

“Gem?”

She gasped at that, her heart lurching. No one else ever called her ‘Gem’ -It had always been his nickname for her. And it was definitely Harry’s voice, so deep and smooth, with the thick Northern accent she’d somehow managed to avoid. She turned to gaze into his face for the first time in four years.

“I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry I didn’t pick you up that night. If I’d picked you up then they wouldn’t have been able to take you. I’m so sorry Harry!”

She burst into tears and he reached for her. And it felt so strange and so wonderful to be so close to him again, to feel him in her arms, solid and real, and know that he wasn’t going anywhere.

“Don’t cry Gem, please don’t cry. They were watching me. They would have just found another time to take me. It wasn’t your fault Gem.”

But she just cried harder with relief as she felt her guilt melt away at his words. “Oh shit I’ve missed you. I’ve missed you so much!”

“I missed you too.”

He was so badly hurt. But he was alive…He was alive and back with them and that was all that mattered. When she pulled away he was staring at her curiously.

“What?”

“You’ve gone blonde. It suits you.”

And she had to laugh at that—Of course she’d forgotten that she’d changed too. And when he laughed with her his dimples showed and suddenly he was her Harry again. The door behind her opened and a doctor appeared, awkward at having to interrupt such an intimate moment.

“Excuse me, Mrs and Mr Twist. But can I have a word?”

“Of course.”
She kissed his cut cheek before moving to join her parents in front of the doctor. Away from Harry his expression suddenly became grave. “I just wanted to talk to you about your son’s condition. Prior to being rescued Harry was put through an especially violent assault.”

Instinctively she reached for her mother’s hand, threading her fingers through hers and giving it a squeeze as her step-father Robin’s face darkened. “Right. Tell us what happened to him. And we’d rather you be honest with us.”

The doctor nodded. “He was badly beaten. He’s sustained serious bruising, broken ribs and fingers…And he was gang-raped multiple times.” Her stomach lurch at that and she suddenly felt sick. Beside her, her mother let out a strangled sob and Robin wrapped his arm around her. “At some point during the assault Harry’s legs were dislocated. This has caused a lot nerve damage as well as torn muscles and damage to his tendons and ligaments. He is in a lot of pain and is complaining of numbness in his feet.” Her mother turned her face to her step-father’s chest and let out a strangled sob.

She swallowed and voiced the question at the forefront of all their minds. “Can he walk?”

The doctor shook his head sadly. “Not at the moment. But with physiotherapy and aids he might. I’m sorry.”

But he hadn’t done it, Gemma thought, anger suddenly burning in her chest and fizzing through her veins like acid. It had been the men who’d raped him, the kidnappers who had stolen him, the pimp who had sold him…and the people who’d paid for him…

Louis surveyed the chaos in the emergency room as he made his way through. Frantic families clutching photographs accosted doctors and nurses, waving them in their faces in the desperate hope they’d recognise their missing loved ones. Hundreds of former Products sat hunched in plastic chairs staring about them with glazed expressions, totally lost. More Products lay huddled on the stretchers lined up outside each treatment room as they waited to be seen, some unconscious and some crying. A few that he passed were hugging themselves and rocking slowly, their haunted eyes staring at nothing. Suddenly a tall blonde girl burst through a door in front of him, clad only in a medical gown and hotly pursued by two nurses who managed to back her into a corner. The girl’s face was bruised and her nose bloody and he was shocked to see a deep-red stain slowly appear on the front of her gown, just at her stomach. Yet she fought and kicked at the nurses as they tried to catch hold of her.

“Taylor honey, Taylor it’s o.k…”

“She’s popped her stitches.”

“No! No, you have to let me go! I have to go back! I have to! If-if my Mistress finds out I’m gone…”

“Honey, you’re parents are coming. You’re mum and dad are on a plane and they’re coming to take you home.”

“NO! You don’t understand! She’ll kill me! Please! She’ll kill me!”

One of the nurses stepped towards her, holding her hands up in surrender. “Sweetheart, don’t you remember? She already tried to kill you. She stabbed you, remember?”

At her words the girl sank slowly to her knees…And they both rushed to her aid.
“Hey Louis!”

He turned at the sound of his name to find Liam sitting on a plastic chair a few metres away. A man as broad-shouldered as he was and a petite blonde woman sat either side of him, along with a brunette in her early twenties—His family Louis guessed. All their faces were stained with tears.

“Liam!” His uniform was blood-stained. “Are you alright?”

He glanced down at himself and nodded. “It’s not my blood. When he realised what was happening Mr Cowell ordered the Handlers to kill as many Products as possible. Thankfully it came too late for most and a lot of the Handlers just ran. But some got stabbed and I had to carry them out. At least five dead.” He spoke the words as if he couldn’t quite believe them. And Liam’s story caused him to panic.

“Harry? Is Harry o.k.?”

Liam nodded his head and he let out a sigh of relief. “I saw him being rushed through here and down that corridor.”

“Right.” He made to go.

“Louis?” He turned back and Liam gave him a small smile. “Thanks for going to the police. You saved us.”

He shook his head. He would have loved for it to have been him, but he couldn’t take the credit. “No I didn’t. You did.”

He turned and made his way to the information desk. The harassed receptionist looked up at him.

“Can I help you Sir?”

“I’m looking for someone—Harry Styles? I was told he was brought in.”

“Are you a relative?”

“Yes.” He lied smoothly.

She typed something into her computer. “Ward C: up on the third floor.”

“Thanks.” He made for the lifts.

He approached the closed door and knocked on it. A few seconds later it opened to reveal Harry’s sister, Gemma. And the hostility in her eyes confused him.

“What do you want Mr Tomlinson?”

“It’s Louis. I just wanted to see Harry.”

She shook her head. “No.”


He tried to peer past her, catching a glimpse of Harry sitting in a hospital bed, his mother leaning over him…Then she stepped out of the room, shutting the door firmly behind her.
“I don’t think that’s a good idea.” She glared at him, her eyes cold and her mouth set in a determined line. “Because of you and men like you my brother was kidnapped, raped, abused. He can’t walk now, did you know that?”

“What?! Oh my God!” He tried to get past her but she blocked his way again.

“My brother isn’t your whore anymore. You need to leave.”

He gaped at her in horror. “No! No, he was never my whore! You just don’t get it. All those times I hired him were to get him away from that place. I love him!”

She arched her eyebrow at him. “You paid for him. Even if you do, do you seriously think you could have any kind of a normal relationship with him after that?” She sighed. “Look, he’ll always see you as a client. And when he looks at you he’ll always remember something that he’d be better forgetting. If do you love him, as you say, then you’d want him to move on, get his life back. And how the hell could he ever do that with you as a constant reminder of it all? We’re his family. We know how to piece him back together. If you love him, Louis. Then go the fuck away.”

And with that she slammed the door in his face.

He sat in a plastic chair in the corridor and waited for them to leave, turning her words over and over in his mind. She didn’t understand; she’d gotten it all wrong…And yet…And yet…He knew he would always be associated with The Birdcage in Harry’s mind. What, really, could he offer him? He hadn’t been able to save him and his stupidity and naivety had caused him to be tortured. And while Harry was now free, he still belonged to TommoCor. They’d always be hiding in corners, unable to be open, to walk down the street holding hands-Harry was worth more than that. As he realised what he had to do tears dripped down his cheeks and he wiped them away with his sleeve.

He ducked behind a wall when Harry’s family emerged, waiting for them to get into the lift before hurrying across the corridor and slipping into the room. He shut the door carefully and turned.

The room was dark. Soft light spilled from a lamp, illuminating the bed where Harry lay sleeping peacefully. Louis crept over to stand beside him, careful not to wake him, and gazed down at him. He was as pale as death, his dark hair fanned out on the pillow behind him. Bruises bloomed like black roses on his skin, but not even they could take away from his beauty. He was so perfect it made Louis’ heart ache.

He’d never thought he could love someone like this, enough to be consumed by them, to fight for them…Enough to let them go.

He reached to touch his face and Harry smiled in his sleep, tilting his head to press his cheek into his palm like a little kitten.

“I wish I could keep you. But it doesn’t matter what I wish. You deserve to be able to start again, to forget that fucking horrible place and everything that happened there…And you need someone who can love you properly. You’ve spent enough time being other people’s dirty little secret-I won’t let you be mine. I can’t. But I want you to know that I love you more than I have ever loved anything, that before you I didn’t understand what the point of ME was. Then I met you and I realised that the point of me living through every dark thing that had ever happened to me was to find you, and to love you; to comfort you when you cried and to make you smile. To hold you as you fell asleep and feel your skin on mine, to make you feel safe even if it was just for a little while; to show you that you were loved, that you mattered. I guess in that way I kind of found myself in you. And when I loved you, for the first time in years, I was free. But I let you down. I couldn’t save you when it mattered most. And because of that I don’t deserve you. I’ll probably still think about you for the rest of my life; first thing in the morning when I wake up, and last
thing at night when it’s silent. When it gets dark, when it gets lonely, I’ll think of you and just knowing that you’re out there somewhere, safe and happy and loved, and that you said you loved me once will keep me going. I’ll always love you. There no way now that I could ever love anyone else.” He stooped and pressed his lips to Harry’s, tears escaping from between his closed eyelids as he kissed him for what he was sure would be the final time. Then he turned and marched from the room as more tears blurred his vision, everything inside of him screaming at him to turn around and go back.

Chapter End Notes

Next time...Louis plots his escape from TommoCorr and Harry struggles to put his life back together; but finds he can't do it without a certain someone...

As always please comment and let me know what you think and press the kudos button if you liked this chapter. Thank you all for your wonderful comments and kudos, you guys have no idea what they mean to me! You are wonderful!
Chapter 19-Home

Chapter Summary

Louis makes a deal with his father, and Harry tries to adjust to life away from The Birdcage Hotel.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys, I am sooooooooooooooo sorry this is late! I lost a whole week's writing time because I had the stomach flu from hell! As always, thank you so much for your lovely kudos, comments and support. They mean so much to me!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 19-Home

Two months later Louis stood in his father’s office, glaring at him with contempt as he ignored him and talked on his mobile phone. Part of him was amazed that the old man couldn’t feel the heat of his hatred burning between his shoulder blades. Finally he hung up and moved to sit at his desk.

“Sit down Louis.” He gestured to the chair opposite him. But Louis shook his head. He was done obeying his orders and he knew that even the simple act of sitting would put him at a disadvantage.

“I’m good, thanks.”

His father’s lips curled into a smile of smug amusement and he shrugged. “Suit yourself. Now, I called you in because I wanted to talk to you about the trial. You’re not testifying. I’ll pull some strings and…”

“Oh yes I am.” His head jerked up at that and Louis felt a flicker of satisfaction when he saw the shock in his eyes. He continued, biting his back his hatred and keeping his tone calm but firm. “I want to see that son of a bitch go to jail so I’m testifying-That’s not even up for discussion. However, I could tell them the truth-That you knew that Cowell’s prostitutes were sex slaves when you hired them and that you didn’t care-or I could downplay you and the corporation’s role in it all, pretend like you knew nothing about it.”

His father leaned back in his chair, his eyes narrowing as he assessed him. “Are you threatening me?”

“No…I’m threatening TommoCor. I don’t think our shareholders will take too kindly to having their names associated with such a high-profile scandal. Your stock would plummet overnight; you have the potential to lose millions.”

“You’ll get charged with solicitation.”
He shook his head. “I’ve been told the charges will be dropped if I testify so I won’t go down…But TommoCor could. What was it you’ve always said, Dad? Oh, yeah; Everything for the Corporation.”

Minutes passed while his father assessed him. Louis could feel the power balance between them shift. Then he leaned forward in his chair and Louis thought he saw, behind the fury in his eyes, a subtle flash of…was that respect? “So what do you want Louis?”

“So simple…I want out.” He took the manila folder from under his arm and set it on the desk between them. “I had a solicitor go over the contract you bullied me into signing. I was underage so it’s not worth the paper it’s printed on. I also had them examine my custody case. Not only would it be plain to any jury that you kidnapped me, but the evidence you provided to prove that my mother was unfit to have custody was completely fabricated. I could walk out of here tomorrow and there’s nothing you could do to stop me. However, there is the small matter of my debt.”

“I see.”

He put both his hands on the desk and pressed his face close to his father’s. When he spoke it was through gritted teeth. “Cancel it or I drag the Corporation’s name through the mud.”

“Louis…”

“This trial is going to get nasty Dad. Those people were kidnapped, raped and tortured. There are statements detailing how Cowell murdered the ones who tried to escape or who got too old for him to pimp. And of course there’s the fact that all of them were in their teens when they were taken—That’s child prostitution right there. It could ruin you…I could ruin you.”

His father stared at him, confused. “But Louis when I die, you’ll inherit it all. You’ll be a billionaire.”

He laughed at that, but it had no humour in it. “You see Dad; that was always your problem. It was always about the money, never about the people. I don’t want to be a billionaire. I want my life back.”

Louis stood back and watched his father’s expression change from confusion to panic as he considered the situation and realised that he had him cornered. He frowned. “So that’s all you want; your debt cancelled?”

He thought about it. “And for you to pay a decent amount of maintenance to Mum for the girls. Say, a couple of grand a month? Oh, and fees if any of them decide to go to university. We both know you can afford it. And I’m keeping the car.” He’d need it to get to Doncaster.

His father rose from his seat and marched over to face him. For a moment they squared up to each other, gazes locked, but he was damned if he was going to back down.

“You’re an ungrateful little bastard, you know that?!”

“You’ve never given me anything to be grateful for.”

“Well perhaps this is for the best. I’d have hated to see my Corporation in the hands of a faggot like you.”

It was a cheap shot and he ignored it. “So, do we have a deal?”

The look on his father’s face was no less than murderous, but he nodded. “You’ve given me no other choice.”
“Good.” Louis spun on his heel and marched toward the door.

His father’s voice rang out behind him. “I heard he had some of them killed. Tell me Louis, did he kill your little whore? I hope he did.”

He froze in the door-frame, his heart pounding in his chest at the mention of HIM. “No, he didn’t kill him. And he wasn’t my whore.” He was much more than that.

He stepped out into the hallway and slammed the door behind him.

Back inside his car he gripped the steering-wheel until his knuckles were white, his entire body trembling as the adrenaline rush ebbed away. He’d done it, he’d actually done it. For the first time in as long as he could remember he could go wherever he wanted. He was free. He reached for his cheap new mobile phone and dialled her number with trembling fingers.

“Hello?”

“Mum?”

“Louis, is that you?”

“It worked. I-I don’t work for him anymore, he let me go. Mum, can I come home?”

For a few moments there was silence on the other end of the line. Then the strangest sound, a sort of muffled gasping…It took him a while to realise that she was crying.

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It was past 2am and pouring with rain when he pulled into the driveway, but she was still waiting for him on the doorstep. He had nothing but the car and the clothes on his back but as soon as he saw her he knew it didn’t matter. At the sight of him she burst into tears. He jumped out of the car and ran to hug her.

“Oh Mum, don’t be crying!”

“Sorry.” She pulled away, sniffling, and reached up to wipe away her tears with her fingers. “I just…I’ve imagined this over and over for so long. But I’d kind of decided that it was never going to happen, you know? I never thought you’d ever really come home.”

“Me neither.”

She led him inside. “It’s too late to wake the girls up now. I thought it might be nice for you to surprise them tomorrow.”

He nodded, grateful for some time alone with her, and made to follow her down the hall and into the kitchen.

“Louis?” A tiny voice echoed from the stairs and he looked up to find Phoebe standing in her pink pyjamas, staring down at him in confusion. Wisps of her blonde hair were stuck to her flushed cheeks and her eyes were blurry with sleep. “What are you doing here?”
He smiled up at her tenderly. “I’ve come home Pheebs.”

She frowned. “For the weekend?”

“Forever.”

“So you don’t have to stay with daddy no more?”

He shook his head and reached up, lifting her over the banister and into his arms.

“Good. ‘Cause I’ve missed you.” She kissed his cheek and buried her face in his shoulder as he bit back tears.

“I’ve missed you too.”

He rocked her gently before carrying her into the cozy little kitchen, where he settled into a chair and cradled her in his lap as his mother busied herself making tea. By the time she set the steaming cups down in front of them Phoebe was asleep, the fingers of one hand in her mouth and the other hand reaching up to tangle in his hair. His mother sat down opposite him and they shared a smile.

“I’ve missed so much of the twins growing up.”

“You can make up for it now.”

“I suppose.” He reached for his mug and the sleeve of his T-shirt slid up. Suddenly she reached forward, catching hold of his wrist and twisting his arm…To reveal the silvery scars and fresh cuts that decorated the inside.

“What the hell…?! Who did this to you? Did he? That son of a bitch!”

“No. It wasn’t him.”

“Then who did? Louis, tell me!”

And he pressed his face into Phoebe’s soft hair to hide his shame. “I did.” She released his arm and sat back in shock. “I don’t know why I even do it. It just…makes me feel better.”

“Why would you hate yourself so much that you’d punish yourself like that?” She sounded so sad.

And he couldn’t think how to answer her, how to explain the despair he’d felt every day until he’d met Harry, and the release as he’d drawn that blade across his skin. “I-I don’t know.”

When she spoke again her tone was firm. “I think I do. And it stops now. Are you listening to me?”

He nodded, his eyes burning with tears as the meaning of her words sank in.

She sat back and took a gulp of her tea. “Your friend Harry was in the paper the other day. You brought a prostitute into my house.”

“Mum…”

She held her hand up, cutting him off. “And I’m glad you did. Because after I read what those poor people went through, what he must have gone through, I was so glad I could give him a few days respite from it. Louis, I never thought for a moment that you were just paying to use that boy; I know that’s not you. I know that you loved him. So,” She rested her elbows on the table and fixed her brown eyes on him. “Tell me about it. All of it.”
“Well…” And it all came pouring out. He talked until his throat was raw and choked with tears and through it all she simply sat, drank her tea and listened.

“…And now I have to testify at the trial. I want to. I want to see them punished for hurting him. Because I loved him Mum, I still do. But his sister’s right. I’d rather he’d forget me and be happy.”

For a moment she was silent. Then she rose from her seat and moved to stand behind him, reaching down to wrap her arms around him and pull him into her, resting her chin on his head. He savoured her kindness, savoured just being held after months of being completely on his own. “My poor baby.” She kissed his hair. “I can see why Harry’s sister would feel like that, and why she’d be so protective over him. But she doesn’t know you…In a way she doesn’t even know him anymore. I watched you both all through that weekend-Saw how he looked at you when you weren’t looking at him. He didn’t resent you and he sure as hell wasn’t afraid of you…He looked at you like you were his raft on a raging sea. I’ve never seen anyone look at another person like that. You made him feel safe, and he adored you for it. I don’t know much, but I do know that wherever he is and whatever he’s doing, Harry is missing you.”

And he pressed his face into a sleeping Phoebe’s hair to hide the tears that blurred his vision; because he missed him too. So much.

That night as he lay in the tiny childhood bed he’d shared with Harry once he closed his eyes and began his new nightly ritual-A strange and heady mix of imagining and remembering…The scent of Harry’s skin, the sensation of his flesh pressed against his, his soft hair brushing his cheek, the heat from his body against his own, how his toned, firm torso had felt in his arms, his long legs entangled with his, the soft sighing noises he had made in his sleep…If he remembered hard enough, imagined hard enough he could almost convince himself that Harry was there with him, lying in his arms again.

It was the only thing that stopped the constant aching…And the only way he could sleep now.

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Harry lay on flat on his back and stared around a bedroom he didn’t recognise, filled with the belongings of someone he barely remembered but desperately wished that he could. It would all be so much easier if he could. His eyes roved past the photographs tacked to the walls of smiling teenagers whose names he’d forgotten, to the wardrobe filled with clothes that no longer fit. He found himself yearning to be back in that narrow bed with his wrists encased in leather cuffs above his head and Niall squashed in beside him, sucking on the muzzle strapped across his mouth as he listened to Zayn’s soft snoring…Or curled up on that sofa in front of the fire, his head resting on the shoulder of a strikingly handsome boy with cobalt blue eyes…At that thought a jab of pain shot through him. Louis had never searched for him. Did he not want to know what had happened to him? If he’d survived? He rubbed a hand over his eyes, forcing himself to think of nothing.

He was so tired, but while his conscious mind knew The Man Jack was dead, every time he closed his eyes his subconscious resurrected him to plague his dreams, and he knew it would be only a matter of time before he woke screaming. Then he’d have to see his mother in tears as she wondered how to fix him. Even he wasn’t sure if he could ever be fixed.

He sat up with a sigh and turned to where the wheel-chair lurked by his bed-side, his crutches
balanced across the armrests. He loathed the damn thing and hated himself every time he became so weary that he had to use it - It felt like admitting defeat. He reached for his crutches, propping them against the side of the bed and then lifted the covers back, gritting his teeth and swinging his legs round to dangle over the mattress. Already the pain had started; a low dull throbbing in his hips that made him feel sick. He let the soles of his bare feet touch the carpet...Here goes nothing. He took a deep breath, caught the headboard and pulled himself upright, biting down on his lower lip to keep from crying out as the damaged muscles and nerves in his hips screamed at him, the pain dizzying. He groped with one hand for his crutches and struggled not to fall as he pushed them under each arm before swinging himself forward...And standing. Great. Now he just had to get to the door.

Every movement was agony. His journey across the bedroom and out onto the landing seemed to take forever and left him shaking. By the time he reached the top of the stairs he was exhausted. At least this part was easier. He let himself drop to the floor and tossed his crutches over the banisters, tensing as he waited to see if the clatter of them hitting the ground would waken anyone. But neither Gemma nor his parent's bedroom doors opened. He scooted quickly down the stairs on his bottom before propping his crutches up against the wall and using the banister rail to drag himself back onto his feet. Finally, tired and thirsty, he tucked his crutches back under his arms and made his way painfully towards the kitchen.

Unlike her mother Gemma had always known that Harry would be different if he returned, yet she felt she'd underestimated just how much of a stranger he'd really become. The old Harry had been loud, bubbly, and sociable - This new one was withdrawn, haunted. And he barely slept...

A loud crash from the living-room directly beneath woke her with a jolt and she sat bolt upright, straining to hear.

"Fucking hell! Fuck, fuck, fuck!"

Harry's voice.

She slipped from beneath the duvet and crept down the stairs to peer round the door. And what she saw made her heart ache.

Harry lay on the floor, his crutches splayed out either side of him and the shattered pieces of a mug spread out around him like ceramic confetti. Tea soaked into his blue cotton pyjama bottoms and pooled across the floorboards.

She made to push the door open...Just as he sat up, snatched up one of the crutches in frustration and hurled it across the room like a javelin. "FUCK!"

She leapt backwards as it smashed into the wall beside the door frame, missing her by inches.

"JESUS CHRIST, HARRY!" She stared from it to him and back again. "That could have hit me!"

He turned to look up at her, startled-then his jade eyes grew wide with surprise and guilt. "Shit, sorry Gem." He hung his head, looking up at her meekly through his hair as if awaiting punishment. When none came he turned to look at the mess that surrounded him, his gaze lost. "I just wanted to make a cup of tea; managed it an' all...Then one of my fucking crutches slipped."

And all she wanted to do was run to him and take him in her arms...But she knew now how that sort of spontaneous contact would panic him. "Here, let me get them." She stooped to pick up the
one he’d thrown.

“NO! I hate those fucking things. Just let me do it my way, alright?!” It was a snarl of frustration.

She made to argue and then stopped as she realised that this was his way of clawing back at least some control. “O.k, but at least let me clean this up and make you some more tea. I’m going to make a cup for myself anyway.”

At that his expression softened and he sighed. “Sure…Thanks.”

It had become a feature of their daily lives but it still made her want to cry to have to watch her once so active younger brother as he turned and began to crawl backwards across the room, dragging his long, lean and next to useless legs behind him. With every movement his face twisted in pain. At least, she reflected, paraplegics felt nothing. Every day now she was woken by his cries of agony as Robin helped him with his physiotherapy exercises. Yet not once did he ever ask him to stop. Even now behind the pain there was a look of steely determination in his eyes as he moved that made her so proud of him. She felt tears on her cheeks, and hurried quickly to the kitchen so he wouldn’t see them.

By the time she returned he’d managed to pull himself up onto the sofa. He sat curled in on himself, arms wrapped around his chest, chewing on the pad of his thumb as he gazed into space. He was still beautiful…but it was a fragile haunted beauty now-so lean, all angles, and pale as a ghost.

“Here.” She held out a steaming mug. “Tea.”

“Thanks.” He took it from her and balanced it on the arm of the sofa before sliding an elastic band from his wrist and reaching up to scrape his long hair back from his face. She sat down beside him, careful to keep a distance between them, and watched him thoughtfully. With his hair tied back she could see the similarities between them, in the shape of their faces and their eyes. It was comforting in a way, seeing a little of herself in him, a small reminder that this stranger was, in fact, family.

“Young hair’s so long. I like it- its very rock star. But it’s driving mum crazy. If you’re not careful she’ll stick a bowl on your head and cut round it like she did when we were kids.”

She’d hoped to make him smile, but he scowled instead. “Mum wants my hair the way it was when I was sixteen. I’m not a kid anymore.”

No, she thought, you’re a man now…And we’ve missed everything in between. He turned to look at her curiously, his eyes searching her face.

“Gem…Why was Detective Morrison here yesterday? I heard Mum and Robin talking.”

“Detective Morrison?” She tried to feign surprise, but it was too late; he’d already seen the guilt in her eyes.

“She came when I was at the hospital. Don’t lie to me Gem. If something’s going on with the case then I want to know.”

She took a deep breath. “She brought some evidence that they’re going to use in court that she thought Mum and Robin had better see first…Pornography.”

“Oh.” He flushed red and turned away. “With me as the star, I’m guessing?”

“Yes.”
“Did you watch it too?”

“No!”

He glanced at her fearfully, as if scared he’d lose her. “I’m sorry. I didn’t want to do it Gem but I didn’t have a choice. They pimped us out to these film-makers. I just did what I was told. I never, ever wanted any of you to see them. I’m so sorry.”

“Stop saying sorry Harry, you haven’t done anything wrong.”

He turned away again. She changed the subject.

“Robin was saying Dr Thompson talked to him yesterday about how hard you’re working in your physio sessions. She says that your progress has been incredible; that she’d expected you to be in the chair full-time for at least another month; that the fact you can now walk…”

“If someone helps me stand first.” He cut her off. “And even then only with crutches.” He sounded angry with himself.

“Still, I’m proud of you.”

He allowed himself a small smile at that, his full lips curling; then his brow furrowed in determination again. “I’m not going into that courtroom in a wheelchair Gem. I won’t give him the satisfaction.”

She wondered if the ‘him’ he was referring to was the man who’d kidnapped and pimped him, or the man who’d crippled him…The man he’d killed. Her parents refused to talk about it, but the fact that her little brother had stabbed a man to death still played on her mind—especially as he refused to tell her why. Had he been one of the men who’d raped him? And hadn’t it all been rape in the end? Rape. Harry had been raped. Even thinking the word made her shudder. For all women it is a constant threat hovering at the back of their minds…but she’d never, ever thought it would happen to him. He refused to talk about any of it with them and according to his therapist he said next to nothing during their sessions. It was as if he thought that if he pushed it all down deep enough somehow it would disappear, even as his nightmares and flashbacks proved him wrong.

“Good. So how come you’re up? Did you have another nightmare?”

“No, I just…” And then he hesitated, turning away.

“Just what? Harry, tell me.”

He shook his head. “You wouldn’t understand.”

“Try me.”

He bit his lip, assessing her; then he lowered his gaze to his hands. “I-I can’t sleep if…”

“If what?”

When he spoke it was in a whisper. “If I’m not tied up.” Her heart lurched. He raised his head to look at her with frightened eyes. “And I miss my muzzle.”

“Your...?”

“My muzzle-The gag thing I had to wear. It had this bit inside-like, a plug-and I used to suck on it. It was...comforting.”
“Jesus Harry, that’s sick!” It came out before she could stop herself and she instantly regretted it when he flushed pink and turned away from her.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“No, no you didn’t upset me.” She reached to lay a hand on his shoulder and he shrugged it off.

“I—I’m too free.” He muttered it to himself, but she still heard. And she had no idea what to say.

They finished their tea in awkward silence and she got up to fetch his crutches. “Do you want me to help you up?”

He shook his head. “Nah, I can’t be arsed with them. I’m too tired. Do you mind bringing them up for me please, Gem?”

She nodded, tucking them under her arm and trying to keep her face expressionless as he slid from the sofa and crawled towards the doorway.

Later on she went his room to check on him and found him sleeping soundly...His hands above his head as if bound there. And tears pricked her eyes when she saw that he’d torn a strip from the bedsheet and tied a knot in it before gagging himself with it—Because being a prisoner, bound and gagged, had become his normality. She untied it and pulled it gently from between his lips before stooping to plant a soft kiss on his cheek. He was so damaged, so utterly fucked up that it frightened her. And she had no idea how to heal him.

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Gemma curled up on the sofa and tried to concentrate on her course notes, all the while wondering if she should just drop out of university because she didn’t want to go back anyway. At the other end of the sofa her mother’s knitting needles clicked. On the opposite side of the room Harry lolled in his chair once more, his legs slung over the arm-rest as he flicked through a magazine, and Robin sat in the other chair doing one of his crosswords. The six O’clock news played on the television. It was as close to normal domesticity as they had managed in a long time. Then…

“Who’s that?” Harry looked up from his magazine to the television’s flickering screen, where a reporter stood with an official-looking man in a black suit and clerical collar.

They all followed his gaze and Robin shrugged. “Some C.O.E Minister—Shewsbury or something. He’s been all over the papers giving off about gay marriage.” He made to go back to his crossword.

Harry snorted at that “Well then he’s a fucking hypocrite, because I remember being hired by him. He was really into hair pulling. Yanked my head back so hard I could barely move my neck for a week. Into spanking too, dirty bastard.”

Then he went back to his magazine, as if what he’d just said was the most normal thing in the world. At the other end of the sofa their mother let out a sob before scrambling to her feet and bolting for the door. Robin sat up and reached over, touching Harry’s arm to get his attention.

“No son.” He shook his head sadly. “We don’t talk about things like that.”
Harry looked confused. “Why not?”

“Because it upsets your mother.”

“Oh.”

Robin set his crossword down before turning back to his step-son with a sigh. “I’ll bet in that other place talk like that was normal.”

Harry nodded slowly, still looking so confused.

“Am I in trouble?”

“No. But I think you and I are going to have to have a little chat, man to man, about what’s appropriate to say here and what’s not.” He turned to give Gemma a meaningful look and she tossed her notes onto the coffee table and made for the kitchen.

Her mother was leaning against the kitchen sink when she entered, dabbing at her eyes with a piece of paper towel.

“See?” She moved to lean against the kitchen cabinets beside her. “That’s why I don’t think he’s ready for this yet. What if he comes out with something like that in front of everyone? He doesn’t even realise it’s wrong!”

“He’ll be fine, Gemma. He’s been cooped up in here too long.” Anne tossed the paper towel into the bin and turned to fix her with a warning scowl. “He just needs to be around people his own age, be a normal twenty year old.”

And although she knew she should be patient, Gemma was suddenly tired of her mother deluding herself. “BUT HE’S NOT A NORMAL TWENTY YEAR OLD MUM!” She moved close, so she could whisper to her without being heard in the next room. “And he is not that little kid you waved off to school that morning. He is a former sex worker, he is a rape victim…And right now he’s disabled.”

For a moment she thought she was going to slap her. Then she turned away, pinching the bridge of her nose. And Gemma could see that she still wasn’t listening, was still clinging to the idea that somehow with time he’d be the old Harry again. “He needs to get out. And he’s been looking forward to it.” Gemma highly doubted that. She’d seen the look of panic on Harry’s face when she had suggested it and was sure he’d only agreed to it to keep her happy. “You’ll look after him, won’t you?”

She turned to find their mother looking at her appealingly.

“Of course I will.” Like she could ever do anything else when she loved him so much. She glanced up at the clock. “I’ll go see if he’s ready.”

Back in the living-room Harry and Robin were talking, their voices hushed. She knocked on the door-frame and they both looked up. “Harry, we have to go if we’re going to get there for seven… That is, if you still want to go.” He hesitated…Then nodded. “Should I go get your chair?”

He bit his lip at that and turned away, his cheeks flushing with embarrassment. Robin nodded.

“Please love. He pushed himself a bit too hard at the hospital this morning. Kid thinks he’s
Superman. I think the whole fuss with the crutches would be a bit too painful right now.” He reached to lay a reassuring hand on Harry’s shoulder. “But maybe next time, eh?” The smile he fixed him with was so warm it made Harry smile back.

“Yeah, next time.”

She went to fetch his wheelchair while Robin lifted him carefully and carried him to her car.

Fifteen minutes later they sat in the car-park of the George & Dragon pub. She watched him as he tugged his beanie down over his long hair and pulled the hood of his cotton jacket up over his head like he wanted to hide.

“I mean it-you really don’t have to do this if you don’t want to. We could just go home, watch a movie. I’d text everyone, say you don’t feel well. They’d be fine with it.”

But he shook his head. “Might as well. I’m here now.”

“O.k. But if you want to go at any time, just say and we’ll go.”

He nodded. “Thanks Gem. Can I ask a favour?”

“Sure. What?”

“Could you, like, say people’s names really loud? There’s a lot of people I’ve forgotten. And if I’m saying something that isn’t appropriate, could you kick me under the table or summit?” Harry used to be the life and soul of the party…Now he looked so nervous. She reached for his hand and gave it a reassuring squeeze. “Of course. Now, come on. Let’s do this.”

She went to fetch his wheelchair from the boot and wheeled it round to his side, holding it still while he swung himself into it.

Inside the pub they found a table in the corner near the fire and she went to the bar and bought him a pint for courage.

“Only one, mind.” She said, setting it down in front of him. “Don’t want you getting arrested for being pissed in charge of a wheelchair.”

He gave her the finger, but also smiled, and it was beautiful. He took a sip and glanced over to where the barman and a few of the regulars were watching them. “People are staring, Gem.”

She shrugged, drinking her Coke. “A lot of them were part of the search team when you went missing. They’re just glad you’re home. Don’t worry about it.”

“Harry?”

They both looked up.

The tall, dark blonde man who stood in front of them looked as if he’d seen a ghost. “Holy shit, it’s really you!”

For a moment Harry just stared and she was worried that he wouldn’t recognise his best friend. Then he smiled.
“Hey Will.”

And Will rushed forward to pull him into a hug. Immediately Harry froze. Will pulled away to fix him with a slightly hurt look. “I-we…we thought…”

“That I was dead?”

“Yeah. Sorry.”

“It’s O.K.”

“Oh Harry!” They all looked up at the sound of the barely muffled sob. Alice stood in front of them, her eyes fixed on the wheelchair and brimming with tears. “Oh Harry!”

Harry looked blank, so Gemma jumped out of her seat. “Hi ALICE! Thanks for coming! Can I get you a drink?”

There was flash of recognition in Harry’s eyes as he suddenly remembered the sweet, bubbly brunette from his school days. “Hi Alice.”

She stooped to hug him and he flinched when she kissed his cheek. Then she turned to Gemma, wiping her eyes with her fingers. “A stiff G and T would go down well please Gemma.”

“Sure.” But she wanted to wait for the final person to arrive before she went to the bar. She didn’t have to wait long.

“Hello Harry.”

Gemma wondered if Harry would even recognise the handsome black-haired boy now that he’d grown into a man with a moustache and goatee. But Harry’s green eyes widened at the sight of him.

“Josh!” Of course she knew that there had been something between them once—a puppy love. “You—you’ve really changed.”

“So have you.” Josh’s smile faded as his gaze moved from Harry’s face and the long curls that skimmed his shoulders, down to the wheelchair. He turned away, his face twisting as he fought not to show how upset he was. She moved to lay a hand on his shoulder carefully steering him away from Harry so he wouldn’t see.

“Drink? I’m buying.”

He seemed to compose himself. “Yeah, thanks. I’d love a Corona.”

“Sure.”

When she returned from the bar they were all sitting awkwardly.

“Sorry it’s just us.” Will muttered. “It’s just…A lot of people have gone to uni, moved away…”

“That’s o.k. It’s good to see you.”

She finished handing out the drinks and sat beside her brother where he hid in the corner. Harry took a deep breath and licked his lips.
“Right, let’s just get this out the way. I’m sure you’ve seen a lot about it in the papers an’ that…but here it is— The night I went missing I was kidnapped by traffickers. I was taken to a brothel in London and I was forced to work there as a prostitute for four years. As for this…” He reached down to slap one of the wheels of the wheelchair. “I took a really bad beating just before I was rescued. My legs were…they were badly damaged. I can walk with crutches but it hurts, and it makes me really tired. It’s not permanent though; I’ll get better. Any questions? Comments? You might as well ask now, I’m not going to cry or anything.”

Silence. They all ducked their heads, avoiding his gaze. Finally Alice piped up. “Are you o.k.?”

Harry’s lips pouted as he considered the question. He shook his head. “No. No I’m not.” It was the truth, and she couldn’t fault him for that. He stared at their shocked expressions, took another deep breath and turned to Will. “So I take it you guys had to stop with the band? Sorry man. I know you had high hopes for it.”

Will squirmed awkwardly in his seat. “Ummm, actually we’re still together. We’ve recorded an album. We’re hoping to release it soon.”

For a second there was hurt in Harry’s eyes, but he blinked it away and nodded. “Oh, that’s cool. I want to hear it.” He turned to Alice. “So Alice, what have you been up to?”

“I’m at Newcastle uni. I’m training to be a nurse…”

And so it went, Harry asking questions while no one dared to ask him any. Still, she was proud of him for trying to make them comfortable, get them to talk. The only problem was that soon they were talking amongst each other. She watched him, huddled in the corner, sipping his pint silently and staring at nothing, letting their conversation flow over him. He reached up to tug his hood back over his head, obviously wanting to disappear into the background. She was just about to gently remind them that he was there and that they needed to talk to him—No matter how hard it was—when they were interrupted by a woman’s shriek.

“Oh my God, Alice! I didn’t know you were home!” A slender blonde Gemma didn’t recognise suddenly appeared, running across the pub to fling her arms around Alice’s neck. “Hi Fiona.” Alice hugged her back. “How’s London?”

“Exciting! But then that’s working in Events for you! You have to come visit some time and I’ll see if I can get us into Chiltern Firehouse.” She turned to the other two men. “Hi Josh! Hi Will! Looks like the whole gang’s back together.” She obviously didn’t see her or Harry sitting in the shadowy corner. Gemma opened her mouth to say something.

“Umm…”

But the girl talked over her. “Speaking of which…” She glanced behind her before leaning in conspiritually. “Did you hear about Harry Styles? He’s alive! My Mum rang last week to tell me. Apparently he was part of that big sex scandal—The Birdcage Scandal—Y’know, the one with all the MPs?”

“Oh, Fiona…” There was a warning in Alice’s tone, but the blonde woman was relishing sharing her gossip too much to stop.

“Apparently the guy who ran that brothel kidnapped him; Sold him for sex. Urgh, can you imagine? Being forced to have sex with those disgusting old perverts. And I bet that pimp Cowell let them have his whores for a discount or even for free just because they were politicians. I mean, we vote them in…”
“Nine hundred.”

At the sound of Harry’s voice everyone at the table winced. Fiona noticed their discomfort and turned toward the source of the interruption.

“Excuse me?” Harry lifted his hood away and glared at her with a venomous arrogance as her eyes grew wide and the colour drained from her cheeks. “Harry! Oh, I…”

“Nine hundred pounds an hour. That’s how much it cost to fuck me. I may have been a whore but I sure as hell wasn’t a cheap one and Mr Cowell didn’t give away anything for free.” He spat the words at her, baring his teeth. “And if you’re as successful in Events as you’re making out then there’s no way you didn’t know about The Birdcage. If it was a big event, then we were there.” He sat back to look her up and down and a change seemed to come over him. He became almost… seductive? When he spoke it was in a slow sensual drawl. “I worked events at The Firehouse a few times. Did you see me? I guess you didn’t recognise me. I’m all grown up now.” He arched an eyebrow flirtatiously, the corner of his lips curling into a smirk. “Did you want me? I bet you did. And I bet you were gutted you couldn’t afford me. Even if you didn’t see me, I know you’ve heard of me…after all, I was the best. The Rolls Royce of rent boys—that’s what they used to say. They called me Dirty Harry.”

And Gemma was shocked to see the girl’s cheeks flush bright red. “I-I’m so sorry. I think I’d better go.” She spun on her heel and hurried away.

Gemma knocked on Harry’s bedroom door.

“Yeah?!”

She stuck her head round it to find him already in bed. “Can I come in?”

“Sure.” He set down the book he was reading and she moved to sit on the edge of his bed. He reached down to push the duvet towards her and she lifted the other end, sliding her legs beneath it, just like when they were kids. Her feet touched his and he yelped.

“You’re feet are freezing!”

She giggled. “Sorry.” They shared a smile. He was shirtless, his black swallow tattoos standing out in sharp relief against his creamy skin. She pointed to them. “Why do you have those? Did you choose them?”

He looked down at them and shook his head. “A lot of pimps brand their prostitutes with tattoos to show they belong to them. Like, I once met this girl whose pimp’s symbol was a panther so she had this big black one all up her back. Mr Cowell used birds.”

“And a barcode.” The fact that he had one, like some product on a supermarket shelf, made her furious. “When did you get them done?”

He ran tips of his fingers over the ink. “The night I was taken. They held me still for the bar-code
but I kept struggling and screaming so when it came to the birds the tattooist got this big roll of duct tape and taped me to the table. Taped my mouth as well. My friend Zayn had gone first and he only got a little bird on his hand but Mr Cowell was angry at me for fighting. He said ‘Give him real big ones so he knows who owns him now.’ I didn’t think tattoos would hurt so much.”

The idea of him, so young, tied down and in pain, made her want to cry. She reached out her wrist towards him, pointing to the inked dots and dashes.

“I got one too…For you. It’s your name in Morse code- Kind of like I was sending a signal out.”

He smiled, obviously touched. “That’s really cool Gem. Thanks.”

“So,” She sat back. “Do you want to talk about this evening? About what you said?” A look of guilt ghosted across his face and she hurried to reassure him. “I’m not mad at you. I just want to know why you said it.”

He shrugged. “I don’t know, to shock her I guess. She was being such a bitch.”

“You acted like you were almost…proud or something.”

He sighed and sat up, wincing. “I’m not proud, it’s just…Will, Alice, Josh…They’re actually doing stuff with their lives. They’re off at university, making music. Me? I haven’t even got one GCSE. The only thing I’m good for, the only thing I’m good AT is fucking.”

“Oh Harry, that’s not true.”

He ignored her, lowering his gaze to his hands where they rested on the duvet. “I miss The Birdcage Gem. I’m homesick for it.”

She gaped at him in horror. “Jesus Harry, why?”

He raised his head to fix her with his piercing turquoise stare. “Because there I knew where I stood. I knew what was expected of me. Follow orders-don’t think, just do. Now I just feel lost.”

And then it hit her. “You’ve forgotten how to be free.”

He nodded. “And those people back there…They might have been my friends once but I don’t know them now and they don’t know me. I miss my friends from The Birdcage.”

“You’ll see them again next week.”

“I know. But me and Zayn were kidnapped together. Liam was my Handler for a long time. And we all looked after Niall; he was like our little brother. We were always on top of one another in there. It feels weird waking up and them not being here.”

She frowned. “But what about what happened to you in there? Harry, you were abused. They RAPED you.” He flinched at the word. “The man that you killed…Was he the man who raped you during the attack where your legs were damaged?”

He hung his head and nodded. “Yes, one of them. There were three.”

And he seemed finally about to open up. She kept her tone gentle. “So tell me about it. Harry, what did they do to you in that place?”
And he wanted to tell her everything that had happened to him and how raw he felt inside, to crawl into her arms and cry into her shoulder. He raised his head to look at her where she sat at the other end of the bed, parted his lips…Then it was as if he could almost feel the invisible plug being pushed between his teeth, the invisible muzzle being strapped tightly across his mouth, trapping his words behind it.

And suddenly he was fighting back tears. “I-I can’t Gem. Please…Don’t make me.”

She nodded quickly. “No, no it’s alright. You don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

For a few moments they sat in silence. Finally he decided to say it again. He wiped the tears from the corners of his eyes with his fingers and fixed her with a determined look.

“Gem, I want to see him.”

“Who?”

“You know who. Louis Tomlinson.”

He watched as her face darkened and her mouth twisted into a scowl. “No way Harry! Absolutely not! We’ve been over this! You seem to think this was some epic romance, that you made love. Honey, don’t you see? That man paid to abuse you!”

He shook his head violently. “He wasn’t like that, Gem. You don’t understand. He didn’t lay a hand on me until I let him and the first time we did it, it was because I wanted to!”

“That was all part of the act Harry. He made you think…”

She wasn’t listening. And suddenly he was so frustrated at her that he wanted to scream, wanted to yell…Wanted to shock. “I fucked HIM Gem, not the other way around! I climbed on his lap and I sat on his cock and I fucked him!”

And it was her turn to shake her head, looking vaguely disgusted by his words. “Harry stop it! It was a trick…”

“No it wasn’t!”

“Yes Harry, it was! Just a trick to make you think he wasn’t using you!”

“No! He was so kind to me. He treated me like a human being.”

“Who he’d bought and paid for. It was all just an act Harry…”

“No! GEMMA I LOVE HIM!”

His desperate shout echoed around the room.

Her mouth snapped shut and they stared at each other in shock.

“No honey.” She reached out to him. “You only think you do.”

He pulled his hand away. “Gem, please stop telling me what I think and feel when you have absolutely no idea what I went through. The best part of my life for the last four years was him.”

For a moment she seemed to soften…Then she shook her head. “No. No, I don’t think you should see him. You associate him with your time in that place. Seeing him could bring it all back. It’s like I said to him…” The last words spilt unchecked from her lips and she froze, looking up at him guiltily through her blonde hair as he gaped at her.
“Wait… Wait, you’ve talked to Louis? When? Where?”

She bit her lip, squirming beneath his accusing gaze. “At the hospital the day you were rescued. He wanted to see you. I-I told him to go away.”

“What?! Why?!”

She lowered her gaze to the duvet. “I was being protective. I-I just…I didn’t think it was a good idea. I just thought he was some client, figured that seeing him would only bring back bad memories for you. I wanted you to be able to forget about it all and heal. I thought I was doing the best thing for you.”

“The best thing for me?! You don’t even know me!”

The minute the words left his mouth he regretted them. Her expression filled with hurt and she looked away, tears shining in her eyes. “No… No I don’t anymore. And you won’t let me get to know you again. You won’t tell me anything.” She kicked the covers away and stood, biting back her tears. “I’m gonna go.”

“Oh Gem, no! Wait, I’m sorry!”

He reached for her but she dodged out of his reach and ran from the room, the door slamming behind her.

Left alone, he flopped back onto his pillows and stared up at the ceiling, resting his hands on his temples. He hadn’t meant to hurt her like that, but her betrayal still stung…because his longing for Louis was now a constant ache. He felt incomplete, as if there was a gaping hole in his chest that throbbed so realistically and so often that he was amazed no one could see it. He rolled onto his side, tugging the duvet up over his head and pressing his hot cheek into the cool pillow as he thought. So Louis HAD come to look for him after all. He felt a spark of joy at that, which was quickly extinguished by a flood of grief when he realised that he’d been driven away. He closed his eyes and went to that safe quiet place in his memory that the darkness couldn’t reach, and there he found Louis smiling his cocky smile at him, his sapphire blue eyes sparkling as he reached for him. And in his mind he crawled to him, wrapping his body around him, his mouth seeking out his lips and savouring his kiss. It was the only way he could sleep now.

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Harry sat in the far corner of the dingy hall that was hosting the support group, watching the circle of parents seated on plastic chairs, clutching paper cups full of awful coffee as they talked to one another. Every so often a new couple would enter and move to join them, to be welcomed with hugs and pats on the shoulder. It was strange, but Harry had never fully considered the impact the kidnappings would have had on the families left behind. They all looked so exhausted. Around him former Products greeted each other awkwardly. A few caught his eye and they shared knowing nods, like veterans back from a war. It was strange seeing them in clothes they’d chosen themselves, the girls fresh-faced instead of troweled in make-up. Everyone looked so much younger—Just kids really.

“Harry!”

He looked up just in time to catch Niall in his arms as he barrelled into him. He hugged him hard
and Harry hugged him back just as fiercely.

“Hey Nialler! You’re looking good!” And he was. He’d put on weight and his cheeks were a healthy pink, his blue eyes sparkling. He wore jeans, trainers and a football shirt, his bleached blonde hair growing out to reveal the dark beneath.

“Don’t I?” He caught hold of the bottom of the football shirt and held it out so he could see it. “Derby County was always me team!”

“But you’re Irish.”

“Aye, it’s a long story.”

“Nialler! Haz!” At the familiar voice they both turned to find Liam striding towards him.

“LIAM!” Niall let out a squeak of delight and launched himself into his arms. Liam staggered beneath his weight as he wrapped his legs around his waist and hugged him tightly.

“I missed you!”

“I missed you too.” Liam set him gently back down on the ground and Niall gaze immediately flew to the snack table on the other side of the room.

“Here, do youse know there’s food at this ting? I’m gettin’ some sandwiches. D’youse want me to bring somethin’ back fer yus?”

“No thanks.”

“No Niall, I’m o.k.”

They both watched as he hurried off. Then Liam turned to look at him. He also looked well. His tall frame clad in jeans and a shirt had grown less muscular, more lean, and his shaved hair and beard had grown out slightly, giving him the look, Harry reflected, of a young David Beckham. He gaze moved to where Harry’s crutches rested against the side of his chair and he frowned.

“Can you..?”

Harry nodded. “I can walk, just not very fast or for long. It’ll be a while before I’m running any marathons.”

“Does it hurt?”

“Yeah. But I’ll be fine.” He turned, searching through the crowd of former Products and their parents that still streamed into the room. “Where’s Zayn?”

“Yeah.” Niall arrived back clutching a paper plate piled high with sandwiches and sausage rolls. He pulled up a plastic chair beside Harry and sat down. “Have either of youse talked to him?”

At their words Liam suddenly looked sad. He nodded. “I did when you were still in hospital, Haz. He’s not coming. He…He wants to forget about it all, y’know? Move on with his life.”

“Oh.” He understood, but still…He hadn’t even been given the chance to say goodbye. That stung. Beside him Niall was more philosophical.

“That’s grand. As long as he’s happy.”

Liam pulled up a chair and they sat side by side, their eyes drifting over to where their parents greeted each other.
Harry sighed. “It’s weird, in’t it?”

They both nodded.

“I hadn’t seen ‘em since I was fourteen.” Niall whispered sadly. “I didn’t know ‘em really, an’ they didn’t know me. Turns out me Mam and dad split up after I went missin’. The strain got too much. My brother Greg had to live between ‘em til he got old enough to move out. I feel pure awful fer doin’ that to ‘em.”

Liam nodded. “My mum just cries all the time. Like, every time she looks at me she just bursts into tears. And when I was kidnapped my sister Ruth dropped out of uni. She’d always wanted to be a lawyer but she never went back, just got a rubbish admin job in Dudley so she could look after my parents. If it weren’t for me she’d be a successful lawyer now.”

Harry’s watched his mother as she sipped coffee and chatted with the petite blonde woman Liam had pointed to. Sure enough she was crying, tears dripping down her cheeks. “After I was kidnapped my mum had a nervous breakdown. She was hospitalised and they diagnosed her with bi-polar disorder. She’s still on medication. Me going missing actually made her ill. My dad blamed her for what happened and cut all contact with her and my sister Gemma. I haven’t seen him yet and I don’t know if I will. I don’t think he wants to see me. Maybe he’s ashamed.”

Liam nodded in understanding. “My dad looks at me all funny now when he doesn’t think I’m looking. Here, do they ever ask, y’know…about what happened to you?”

Niall nodded, chewing on a sausage roll. “Aye, sometimes ‘cause I got me scars an’ the tattoos an’ that.” He held up one hand to show the raised red scar that encircled his wrist from years of wearing chains, and the swallow tattoo beneath his thumb. “I wish they’d just leave it.”

“Yeah,” Harry agreed. “My sister keeps asking me. But how the fuck do you even start?”

“Exactly.” Liam watched his mother as she burst into a fresh flood of tears. “How the fuck do you look your parents in the eye…And tell them about how you were raped and sold, about the things they made you do for money. I can’t even find the words.”

“At least you both can hide most of your scars.” Harry scowled. “For the first couple of weeks after I got home from the hospital I couldn’t walk at all, so my step-dad had to help me go to the toilet and get into the bath. The look on his face when he saw the bite marks on my legs…It was horrible. I thought he was actually going to cry.”

“Shit, Haz.” Liam shot him a look of sympathy while on his other side Niall just looked shocked.

“Who was it who, y’know?”

“Trev, Joesph…and Jack.”

Niall’s eyes grew wide. “Is it true? Did ya really kill ‘im?” There was admiration in his voice.

He nodded, keeping his face blank. “Yep, and I don’t regret it at all.”

“Well why the fuck would ya? He was a sick son of a bitch! Good on ya!”

Liam’s brow furrowed in worry. “But have you been charged?”

Harry shrugged. “Not formally yet. I told them the whole story though, and our lawyer doesn’t think it’ll even go to trial. Turns out he had a charge sheet as long as your arm—Kidnapping, rape, sexual abuse, assault, trafficking…He was even implicated in a few murders. No one’s going to miss him…And he killed The Doc.”
For a moment they were silent, united in their sense of grief for the only person in that monstrous place who’d shown them any kindness. Then a tall, Mediterranean looking brunette entered the room, her eyes searching through the crowd anxiously. Liam jumped up from his chair and waved to her.

“Hey Soph! Over here!”

She turned at the sound of his voice and smiled; her face lighting up at the sight of him.

“So, you guys are still together?” Harry asked as she weaved her way through the crowd towards them.

“Oh, yeah.” Liam nodded. “Couldn’t do any of it without her. Turns out her family live quite close so that makes it easy. And our families have been o.k with it. Hello beautiful.” He reached for her and kissed her full lips. She smiled and turned to them.

“Hi guys! How are you feeling Harry?”

“Incredible. The crutches really add to my sex appeal.” She laughed. “Seriously, you look good Soph. How have you been?”

She sighed. “When my sister found out that I’d been working as a Handler she stopped speaking to me. I’ve tried to explain but she doesn’t want to know. As far as she’s concerned I went from abused to abuser.”

“Have you seen Gia? Maybe she could tell her?”

“We’ve talked on the phone but her parents won’t let her meet up with me. They don’t get it either.”

Liam wrapped his arm around her shoulders and kissed her forehead. “They’ll come round babe.” He turned to Harry. “Hey Haz, what about Louis? Have you seen him since?”

“Hey, you know that it was because of him we got rescued, right? He went to the police.”

“Really?”

“Umm hmm.”

“My sister says that it was just an act; that he didn’t really care about me.”

Liam scoffed at that. “No way, mate. I went to him after you were attacked; to ask for his help. I talked to him. He’s in love with you. Don’t you want to see him?”

“Yeah…But my family are really against it. I’m not allowed to.”

Liam arched an eyebrow at that and then reached to lay a hand on his shoulder. “I know we spent so much time locked up, so much time having to obey that it’s hard to get your head around it, but…Harry you’re free. And you’re 20 years old. You can do whatever you want, go wherever you want, see whoever you want.”

And he had a point. But there was one other problem. Harry reached for his crutches. “Yeah; but how the hell would I get all the way down to London on these?”

“He isn’t in London. At least I don’t think so. He left his father’s company-didn’t you hear? It was all over the news.”
Harry’s heart swelled with pride at the thought of Louis finally breaking free. “Really? Good for him!”

“No idea where he is now though.”

Harry had a fair idea…

They talked for hours and, unlike with his school friends, it was easy, comfortable. When it was time to say goodbye Niall broke down in tears and Harry hugged him hard, his hand rubbing circles on his back.

“I’ll never see youse again!”

“Of course you will Nialler. I promise as soon as I get these legs sorted I’m coming over to visit and you can buy me a Guinness.”

“Exactly! Lad’s weekend in Ireland!” Liam pulled him into a bear hug and ruffled his hair. “We’ll always see each other, right Haz?”

Harry nodded. “Exactly. You guys are more like brothers than friends.” He knew they’d always be bound by their unique experience.

Liam helped him stand and he leant on his crutches and waved them goodbye, before crossing the room to where his parents were waiting and following them out to the car. His mother waited until they were on the motorway back up north before speaking.

“You o.k, Love?” He looked up to find her watching him curiously in the rear-view mirror.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Just tired.”

“Was it good seeing your friends today?”

“Yeah.”

“What did you guys talk about?”

“Oh y’know…Stuff.” He turned back to gaze out of the window, playing Liam’s words over in his mind. Thinking…Planning…

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He tugged his beanie down over his curls and leaned over the piece of paper in the dark kitchen, his heart pounding in his chest as he tried to think what to write. He looked at the wad of bank notes resting beside it and snatched them up, ignoring the pang of guilt in his chest as he stuffed them into his pocket. Then he put pen to paper.

Dear Mum, Gem and Robin,
Please don’t worry about me. As soon as I get to where I’m going, I’ll phone you to prove that I’m fine. There’s someone I have to go see who means a lot to me, but I don’t think you’d understand. I promise that I’ll only be gone for a few days. I’m really sorry about the money I stole from you. I promise to pay it back as soon as I can. I love the three of you very much but I have to do this.

Lots of love,

Harry

He stared at it for a moment, guilt making his stomach churn. But he HAD to see Louis. Then from outside he heard the sound of a car horn as his taxi to the station pulled up. He slung his rucksack over his shoulders, snatched up his crutches and made his way painfully to the front door, teeth gritted in determination.

Chapter End Notes

Next time- LOADS of Harry and Louis fluff. With Louis’ support Harry begins to open up...And finds his calling.
Chapter 20-Speaking Out

Chapter Summary

Louis helps Harry heal, and gives him the courage to finally speak out.

Chapter Notes

Wow, this story has been such a journey! I'm actually quite heart-broken that it's ended but I've told the story I set out to tell. I'm sorry it is late but A-it's a really long chapter, get a cup of tea or coffee and settle in! and B-I was sort of putting off writing it as I knew it would be the end. I've met some incredible people through this story and I want to thank you all so much for all your wonderful comments and support. It's been amazing!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 20-Speaking Out

Louis lay in bed and listened as outside the storm picked up speed, the rain pounding on the roof and spattering against the window-pane. Suddenly, the tinny buzz of the doorbell echoed up from the hallway. He turned to look at the luminous green numbers on his alarm clock. 2 am-Who the hell could that be at this time? Maybe he’d imagined it…But no, there it was again, followed by a series of loud thuds, almost as if someone was smacking something against the door. He leapt out of bed and ran out into the hallway to find his mother already standing at the top of the stairs. She turned to him as he approached and shook her head violently.

“You’re not going down there.”

As she spoke the doorbell buzzed again, and there was another thud. His mother’s husband, Dan, emerged from their bedroom clutching a cricket bat. “It’s probably just some drunk who’s got the wrong house. If it isn’t, ring the police.”

“Dan, no!” But he ignored her.

“Come on, Louis.” He nodded and followed him down the stairs. Dan took up position behind the door, bat raised. “Open it and if it’s a nutter I’ll bash him.”

Heart pounding, he wrenched it open and gasped in surprise as he recognised the stooped figure in the doorway.

“HARRY?!”

Harry was soaked through, rain dripping from his clothes and dark hair where it escaped from beneath his hood. He slumped forward, trembling violently, a pair of crutches the only thing
keeping him upright. When he lifted his head his face was grey and pinched with pain. But when he saw him his eyes lit up.

“Louis!” It was a gasp of relief.

Then he fell forward.

Louis ran to catch him, sinking down onto the wet doorstep with him as he cried out in pain.

“Shh, it’s o.k. I’ve got you.”

Harry buried his face in his shoulder. “I-I’m sorry, I’m so sorry. I just…I had to see you.”

He looked up at Dan, who had set down the bat and was gawping at them both in shock. “Help me get him inside!”

Dan dropped to his knees beside them, reaching for one of Harry’s arms and tugging it over his shoulder, and together they managed to carry him into the house.

Ten minutes later Louis set the pile of clothes on the arm of the sofa and watched as his mother slid the needle into Harry’s arm.

“There, pet.” She pushed the plunger. “That should help with the pain.”

“Thanks.” Harry hissed through his teeth as she pulled it back out. “I’m sorry I woke you all up.”

“Don’t be stupid.” Louis dropped a towel over his head and began drying his curls with it, coaxing a giggle from his lips. “It’s good to see you.”

“So,” Jay sat back on her heels to look up at him. “How did you hurt your legs?”

Harry bit his lip, avoiding their stares. “I’m sure Louis told you…”

“That you’d been kidnapped? Yes, pet, he told me all about it. And there’s no need to be embarrassed.” She reached to lay a hand over his and he looked at her, surprised by the gesture of comfort. “You’re incredibly brave to have gotten through that.”

He swallowed. “Just before they came to free us I was…I was attacked. One of the men who attacked me pulled my legs out of their sockets. They’re still pretty messed up so I use my crutches or a wheel-chair.”

“Fuck!” Louis’ felt bile rise in his throat. He turned away so Harry wouldn’t see the tears that filled his eyes.

“T-they dislocated your legs?!” He could hear the shock in his mother’s voice, but then her nursing training kicked in and when she spoke again her tone was calm. “I’m sure you’re in a lot of pain. Do your parents know where you are?”

“No. They would have stopped me coming.”

“Right. Give me their number and I’ll give them a ring. Louis, can you make up a bed for Harry?”
“Sure.” She bustled from the room and he felt a cold hand touch his arm.

“Louis? Are you alright?” He wasn’t. He was furious and grief-stricken, torn between hugging Harry close and marching out into the night to hunt down his attackers and tear them limb from limb. But then Harry’s fingers threaded through his where they rested on the back of the sofa and he gasped at the sensation of his touch-cool and hesitant and REAL. He turned to find him staring up at him with that intense turquoise stare, and he was so beautiful and so vulnerable. Suddenly he could only stare back in wonder because he thought he’d never see him again and now here he was, like some waking dream.

“You can barely walk…And yet you somehow managed to get yourself across two counties…”

“I missed you.”

Such a simple statement, and yet it winded him. He moved to sit on the sofa and take Harry’s face in his hands. He leaned up to plant a soft kiss on his temple before pressing his forehead to his, his eyes drinking in his handsome face.

“I missed you too, Harry…I missed you so much! I thought about you every day, wondered if you were o.k…”

“But then why didn’t you come find me?” He sounded hurt.

“Because I wanted you to be happy. And how could you be, if I was around reminding you of all that…that darkness?”

To his surprise Harry laughed. “But you weren’t part of the darkness, Lou…You were what got me through it.”

Then he tilted his head and pressed his full lips to his, and Louis couldn’t help but sink into the kiss he’d spent so much time craving, savouring the taste of him after so long living on memories. He kissed him tenderly, lovingly, his lips chasing Harry’s when he pulled away and sat back on the sofa, his eyes sparkling.

“Remember this?” And he raised his hands and began to sign, the same signs as he’d done that night in the bar a million years ago it seemed. And as he signed Louis spoke the words in time with his movements.

“I love you. I wish you were my boyfriend.”

Harry nodded, suddenly nervous. He spoke hesitantly. “I-I’m free now. I don’t belong to anyone anymore…But I choose to belong to you. Will you be my boyfriend?”

And it was so honest, and so innocent, and so sweet…And so Harry. He reached to cup his cheek with his hand. “Yes. I’ll be your boyfriend and you’ll be mine-We can belong to each other. I’ll look after you.”

Harry smiled at that…Then his smile faded. “I can’t sleep in your room with you Lou.”

His heart lurched when he realised what Harry had been conditioned to think he’d expect from him now. “No! Harry, I know you’re not ready…With everything you’ve been through I’d never…”

“Huh?” Harry stared at him, confused. And then realisation dawned. “Oh! No! No, Lou, I just can’t get up the stairs! Well, I can…But I don’t want you to see me crawl. It’s embarrassing.”
“Oh!” Louis nodded. “Well then I’ll make you up a bed here. Now, come on. Let’s get you into some dry clothes. You’re drenched.”

He blinked away tears at the sight of his scars as he slid his jacket and shirt from his shoulders, and flinched at his gasps of pain as he pulled his jeans down his injured legs. He dressed him carefully, as if he was a child, but Harry didn’t seem to mind. Indeed, he seemed to savour being cared for.

“Thanks Lou.” He whispered when he’d finished.

“It’s o.k.”

His mother bustled back in from the kitchen with Dan at her heels, the cordless phone still in her hand. “Right, I’ve spoken to your mum. The poor woman was going out of her mind with worry but I’ve told her that you’re fine and that you can stay with us until tomorrow. Then Louis will drive you home. Harry, don’t pull anything like that again; I don’t think she could take it.”

He nodded guiltily. “I won’t. Sorry.”

“I’m not the one you should be apologising to.”

“Still, thanks for letting me stay.”

At that her expression softened. “You’re always welcome here. I’ll always love someone who loves one of my children.”

He blushed, glancing from Louis to her and back. “Oh…so you know?”

She arched an eyebrow at him. “Not much gets past me, love.”

“And you don’t mind? I mean even though I— I was—a whore?”

For a moment she looked like she was going to cry, then she reached to push his hair away from his forehead. “Oh honey, no. You were never a whore. You were a kid who was being exploited and abused, who was doing what he could to survive in the most horrific of circumstances. Why wouldn’t I want Louis to be with someone as brave as you?”

Harry considered this, full lips pouting. When he finally spoke his voice was quiet. “I don’t feel brave.”

“Most brave people don’t— because bravery is fighting on even though you’re exhausted, and in pain, and shit scared, because there is no way in hell you’re going to let the bastards win. That’s what bravery is and that’s what you did.” She ruffled his hair affectionately.

Louis stepped forward. “Harry’s legs are hurting so I was just going to make him up a bed on the sofa.”

“Sure.” She stooped to kiss his forehead. “Night, Harry.”

‘Night.”

She moved to kiss her eldest son’s cheek.

“Night lads.” Dan nodded at them and they nodded back. After they’d left Harry turned to him with a smile.

“You’re mum’s amazing.”
Louis grinned. “I know. I’m just gonna go get blankets and stuff, o.k?”

When he returned Harry was squashed back against the sofa cushions, chewing the pad of his thumb as he gazed into space with haunted eyes. The T-shirt he’d leant him rode up to expose his jutting hip-bones, the pyjama bottoms too short for his lanky frame.

“Are you hungry? Thirsty?”

“No, I’m fine.”

He tossed the pillows onto the floor and draped the duvet over him before wriggling in beside him, so close that their thighs touched. Harry flinched instinctively away and he reached for him.

“Easy. I’m not going to hurt you.”

For a moment Harry seemed to hesitate; then he ducked beneath his arm and allowed him to pull him close. “I know. It’s not logical but, now, when someone touches me and I’m not prepared for it I get panicky.”

Louis nodded sadly. “I’m not surprised.”

“Did someone tell you? Do you know?”

“What?”

“That I was raped.”

Louis turned to look at him and he ducked his head, lowering his gaze to his hands as he played with his fingers. And he looked so guilty, so ashamed, as if he’d done something wrong, as if it had somehow been his fault. He reached to take Harry’s hands in his own.

“Harry, look at me.” Harry looked up at him through his long, dark lashes. And he seemed so afraid. “Yes, I know that they raped you. I know that you have been raped so many times that you’re not even sure now quite what rape is.”

“I was a prostitute. That’s what I was there for. The way I used to act, just to get the punters to want me…”

“And did you want to be a prostitute?” He shook his head. “And even when you were acting that way, deep down, did you want them to want you? Or was it just because you knew you had to earn or you’d get hurt; because they’d threatened you, threatened your friends, your family; because they’d kidnapped you and forced you into prostitution and you couldn’t see any other way to survive except to adapt?” Harry shook his head again, his eyes filling with tears. “Harry, when a sixteen year old boy’s first experience of sex is being held down and forced into it by a man old enough to be his father, while a crowd of people watch and cheer and do nothing to make it stop even though he’s screaming-That’s rape. When a young man is forced to have sex with strangers to earn money for the man who kidnapped him, to participate in acts that make him feel confused and degraded and sick, acts that cause him pain-That’s rape. Every time you said no and they made you anyway, every time you did it because you had no other choice, every time they tied you up and gagged you so you couldn’t protest or fight back-That was rape…And when they wrenched your legs out of their sockets just to stop you from kicking them away that sure as fuck was rape.”

Harry was crying now, silent tears dripping down his cheeks, his lower lip clamped between his teeth. “That man-Jack. He sent me a picture…Of you. You-you were naked, your hands and feet
strapped to this bar thing. After he took that picture-Was that when they raped you?"

Harry nodded, biting back a sob. “It was punishment.”

And Louis felt so guilty. “Because you told me what was happening to you and I went to the police. Harry, I’m so sorry. I’m so, so sorry! I was a fucking idiot!”

To his surprise Harry simply shrugged. “You didn’t know just how powerful Mr Cowell was. I don’t blame you Lou. You still managed to get someone to listen in the end. And if it wasn’t for that, I’d still be at The Birdcage working for him…I’d still be with Jack.” He shuddered.

“Do you want to talk about the attack?”

“I already told the police what happened.”

“I know…But you haven’t told anyone how it made you feel.”

Harry’s lip crept back between his teeth again as he thought. Then he took a deep breath. “Jack raped me first…The way he strapped me to the spreader bar…I hated feeling that helpless; it was so humiliating. And he whipped me before, smacked me too. He’d done so many horrible things to me…But he’d never made me have sex with him before. It was like he was building up to it, y’know? He didn’t use anything, wanted to really hurt me…And he did. It hurt so much I couldn’t breathe. I-I think I passed out. W-when I woke up there were these two Handlers there-Trev and Joseph. They’d both made it clear they wanted to fuck me in the past, but they hadn’t been allowed…Up til then. I was so scared, Lou. I didn’t want to make it easy so I fought with them. They wanted to tie my legs to the bed-posts and I just-I hated the idea of being spread like that, unable to move…Now I wish I’d let them just fucking tie me up. What he did to my legs…He did it so casual, like it was nothing. He didn’t even react when I screamed!”

“Oh Harry…” He reached to take his hand but Harry pushed him away, scowling into the middle-distance, determined to keep talking. “They tossed a coin to see who would go first, like it was some sort of game! They took turns. They’d tied my hands, crippled my legs, muzzled me… I just had to lie there and take it, like a doll…Like their toy. Every time one finished another would climb on. I didn’t think they’d ever stop. They—they wanked on my face, in my hair, told me I deserved it. Every time one finished another would climb on. I didn’t think they’d ever stop. They—they wanked on my face, in my hair, told me I deserved it, that they knew I loved it. When they got too drunk to rape me themselves they put things in me. When I screamed or moaned in pain they said it was because I was enjoying it. I wasn’t! I hated every second of it! They pulled at my legs to make me scream. They really got off on making me cry and scream. I hate myself for crying, it was the one thing I swore I’d never do, but I couldn’t help it, it all hurt too much. After a while I just…I sort of, stopped caring. I wanted them to kill me.”

Louis wiped his tears with his sleeve. “Harry…”

He shrugged. “Why not? I wasn’t anything special—Just a whore, there to be fucking. Even if I made it out of that room, even if they let me live, there would always be more people wanting to hurt me…Rape me. I was just so tired of it all, Lou. After they’d finished they dumped me on the floor outside the medical room. I-I was bleeding real bad. I felt so cold. I just sort of knew that if no one found me I’d die and I wasn’t afraid or anything…I guess I was sort of ready, y’know? Then I thought about you. You were the only good thing in my shitty life…And, and if I died then you’d never know that…And I’d never get to feel you touch me again. It’s hard to explain but…When every touch you get in your life is one you don’t want; when every touch hurts…You sort of crave a touch that’s gentle. You crave being held. I wanted to feel you holding me again. So I made myself crawl to the door, hit it. The Doc came out. I-I think he was crying, but I’m not sure. I don’t remember anything after that. Not until…”
“Until what?”

Harry sniffed and wriggled out from beneath his arm. He turned to him, eyes wide and frightened. “Is there anything I could do that would mean you wouldn’t love me anymore?”

He thought for a moment before answering him with conviction. “No.”

“What if I killed a man?”


Harry swallowed. “Jack. I killed Jack. It was during the raid. I-I don’t even remember Liam telling me that he’d put my knife under my pillow, but I guess I must have registered it on some level because when I opened my eyes and he was standing there, I knew to grab it.” He turned away again, his brow creasing as he remembered. “Y’know it’s funny, you’d think it would be hard to stab someone…But it’s not. If you go quick enough the knife goes in really easy, like through a slab of meat. He looked so shocked-He’d really never seen it coming, never believed that his slave would have the guts to actually kill him. I saw it in his eyes when he died; they suddenly went cold and blank, like glass.”

“Harry…”

“I took a life. I’m a murderer. I murdered another human being, and I know I should feel guilty-But I just don’t. I know I should care-but I can’t make myself. I’m glad he’s dead.” He looked up at him, fighting back tears. “Because I have NEVER been as frightened of anyone as I was of him, and I have NEVER hated anyone more than I hated him. The things he made me do…He made me crawl on all fours like a dog, made me play sick games, whipped me for fun…Made me come for him. He made me into his slave! And if I’d let him take me that day I’d have been his slave forever, only ever able to crawl at his heels like some fucking pet. He’d have taken me fuck knows where and tortured me until he got bored enough of me to kill me-And he would have made it a slow death, because that would have been fun to him. He was a psychopath and I’m glad he’s dead…and I’m glad I got to be the one to kill him.”

Louis stared at him for a moment. Then he reached for him, wrapping his arm back around his shoulders and guiding his head to rest on his chest. He turned to kiss his hair. “And I’m glad you killed him too. He was a monster. And why should you care? You’re a human being, not a saint. He made your life hell. It was self-defence and no one can ever fault you for that.”

“My sister wants to ask me about it. I wouldn’t even know how to start telling her what happened.”

He rubbed his arm gently. “How has it been at home?”

“Hard. My family have been great but…They don’t really know what to do or say, y’know? I mean, I know it’s unfair to expect them to, but…I feel like I’m trying to pick myself up piece by piece, and I need time, and my mum won’t give it to me because she just wants it all to hurry up and be o.k again. She wants me to be the Harry she knew-But I can’t remember how to be him. In a way I miss being ‘Dirty Harry’-At least then I knew what to say, how to act. And Dirty Harry didn’t feel a damn thing. Now I keep acting the wrong way, keep saying the wrong thing and then everyone gets upset. And I’m so scared, Lou. I’m scared all the time and I don’t even know why. And I can’t sleep because when I do I have nightmares and what’s even worse than the nightmares is when I wake up and my whole family are in my bedroom because I’ve been screaming and my mum and my sister are crying. I hate making them cry. They want to know what happened but when I try to tell them it’s like I can’t find the words. I don’t know who I am anymore.”
“That’s because you, Harry Styles, are brand new.”

He turned to him, confused. “What?”

He smiled at him gently. “Sixteen year old Harry died the minute you were brought to The Birdcage. Dirty Harry died the minute you left it. Think of it as a re-birth. You can start from scratch- find out who you are NOW, what you like NOW. But first you need to heal. I think you need to talk to your family about what happened to you. If they don’t know what you went through then how can you expect them to know how to help?”

“But…”

“But what, Love?”

“What if they hate me? What if they don’t want me when they realise how dirty I am, how disgusting…That I’m a filthy little slut?”

Hearing him talk about himself like that cut Louis to the core. He tilted his face to his and kissed his tear-stained cheek. “Oh no Harry, no…You’re none of those things. You are not what they made you do. You’re still pure…perfect.”

He shook his head. “I want it back, Lou!” And Louis assumed he meant his innocence. Harry’s face crumpled and he lowered himself until he was curled up in the foetal position on the sofa, his head resting in Louis’ lap. Louis stroked his hair, whispering words of comfort as he sobbed.

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

It was the pain from his legs that woke him. Today would definitely have to be a wheel-chair day- Except, he realised, he didn’t have his wheel-chair. Harry pressed his face into his pillow with a groan, chasing sleep. Then, slowly, he became aware of voices…

“You definitely sure it’s him Phoebs?”

“Yep! That’s Harry, Louis’ friend.”

“With the girly hair.”

“Do you think Mum knows he’s here?”

“Do you think he knows he snores?”

“I’m gonna get him up…Harry! Harry, wake up!” Hot fingers poked him in the arm.

“Daisy! Don’t!”

But it was too late. He opened his eyes…To find four faces staring down at him- Louis’ sisters.

“Were you out on the piss with our Louis last night?” The blonde one with the china doll eyes- Lottie- scowled at him.

“If our Mum doesn’t know you’re here she’s gonna go spare!” The dark-haired one-Fizzy- seemed quite excited by the prospect.

“I’m gonna go wake Louis.”
“And I’m gonna go tell our mum!”

They both marched off, leaving the twins standing staring at him, both of them dressed in matching Disney Princess pyjamas.

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“Do you know you snore really loud? Harry, why don’t you cut your hair?”

The twin on the left punched her sister on the arm. “Shut up Daisy! He’s hurting, can’t ya tell?”

Phoebe. He couldn’t help but smile as she came to sit beside him, reaching to take one of his big hands in her tiny one, brows furrowed with concern and her little face deeply serious.

“Harry;” She said solemnly. “When you were out with our Louis, did you drink too much beer an’ fall an’ bang your bum?”

And he burst out laughing. He couldn’t help it. He laughed until his sides ached; and it felt good to laugh over something so innocent.

“No, Phoebe. No, I didn’t bang my bum. I’ve hurt my legs.”

“How’d you do that then?”

“Phoebs…” At the sound of Louis’ voice they all looked up. Louis stood in the doorway fixing his little sister with a warning look. He wore boxers and a T-shirt, his eyes bleery and his hair mussed and fluffy from sleep…And Harry’s heart leapt at the sight of him, because it hadn’t been a dream-there he was; real, beautiful-And his. “‘Morning.” To Harry’s surprise he moved to lean over the sofa and peck him on the lips. “Did you sleep alright?”

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“Uh, yeah.” He turned to look at the twins, worried. Daisy put her hand on her hip and rolled her eyes dramatically.

“Oh we know Louis likes boys ’cause he said. Some people are gay, get over it.”

“So you don’t mind me being Lou’s boyfriend?”

She frowned, assessing him. “Nah, you’ll do-As long as you cut your hair.”

“I like his hair.” Louis reached down to ruffle his tangled curls. “So, do you fancy a cuppa?”

“Yes, please. Milk, no…”

“…Sugar. You’re sweet enough.” He winked at him.

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“I’ll put the kettle on!” Daisy ran off towards the kitchen. Harry reached to touch Louis’ arm.

“Oh.” Louis’ thought for a minute. “Well, I’ll help you…”

Harry shook his head. “I’m too heavy for you. I can get up the stairs my own way, but…”

He turned to look meaningfully at Phoebe where she perched on the sofa, watching them.
Phoebs, could you give us a minute?"

She ignored her brother, instead turning to Harry. “How did you hurt your legs?”

“I-I had an accident.”

“Do they hurt real bad?”

He nodded. “So bad it hurts to walk. I use my crutches but they can be really annoying.”

She nodded sagely. “I got crutches when I broke my ankle ice-skating. They were so fiddly to use.”

“So to get some places you gave up on the crutches and crawled?” She nodded. “Well, I have to
crawl too. But because I’m a grown-up it’s a bit embarrassing…”

She considered this for a moment and then smiled. “I’m dead good at crawling! We could turn it
into a race! Race you up the stairs? Then we could slide back down on our bums!”

“Ummm, that wasn’t exactly what I meant.”

“I know, but if the others see we could just say you were playing with me! I’ve got a plan!”

He turned to look at Louis, who shrugged. “It’s an excellent plan. I can’t fault it.”

“That’s ‘cause I’m the smart twin!” She hopped down from the sofa and got down on her hands
and knees, grinning at him through her blonde hair. “Scared I’ll beat you?”

He faked annoyance. “No! You’re on!” Then he turned to Louis. “Look…Just don’t get upset,
o.k?”

Louis nodded in understanding. “I won’t let it show.”

He lifted the covers back, scootched to the edge of the sofa and, with Louis’ help, lowered himself
carefully to the floor. He shrugged on his back-pack and leaned back onto his hands before turning
to look at Phoebe where she knelt beside him. “Ready?” She nodded. “Set? GO!”

Phoebe won, of course, but he didn’t mind. They reached the top of the stairs and collapsed in a
flood of giggles, flopping onto their backs as their chests heaved. He felt a little hand reach to
tangle in his hair.

“Harry?”

“Umm hmm?”

“I’m glad you’re Louis’ boyfriend.”

“Me too.”

“Do you love him?”

“Yes. Very much.”

“Good.” She sat up and looked down at him. “Because when he came back from Daddy’s he was
all quiet and sad…Like he was missing something. I think it was you.”
He nodded, surprised by her perception. “I missed him too.”

“Then come visit him more. You can now he’s not in London.”

“I know.” He smiled at the thought.

She waited for him to emerge from the bathroom and sat on his lap as his slid back down the stairs, squealing with delight. Louis met him at the bottom, helping him to his feet and guiding his arms into the cuffs of his crutches.

“Come on, Mum’s making breakfast.”

The entire family were packed into the tiny kitchen. The older two girls were dressed in school uniforms, packing books into bags while Dan fed the two babies who bawled in their high-chairs and the twins ran to fetch their school sweatshirts from the dryer.

“MUM! WHERE’S MY ART FILE?!”

“In the car where you left it. Daisy, your shoes are under the coffee table.” Jay stood at the stove cooking breakfast; calm, cool and collected in the midst of the madness.

“MUM, I NEED…!”

“Fizzy, your lunch money is on the counter-get the hell out of my purse! Dan, I’m on a late shift but there’s a lasagne in the oven-gas mark six for about half an hour, o.k?” She turned as Harry hobbled into the room and her face lit up in a smile. “Morning, love. You sleep alright?”

“Yes, thanks.” Louis helped him into a chair at the kitchen table while she turned to yell.

“Alright, you lot! Breakfast in five! Four! Three! Two!...” By the time she’d reached one all four girls were sitting at the table. They chatted about the day ahead as she ladled bacon and scrambled eggs onto plates and passed them round. It all felt so easy, so comfortable. And as Harry sat and listened to them, Louis hand resting casually on his beneath the table, he felt guilty…Because for the first time since he’d been rescued, he finally felt at home.

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

“Are you ready for this?”

Harry turned to look at Louis who was staring at him, cobalt blue eyes searching his face. “Are you? They’re not going to want you here.”

“As long as you do, I don’t give a shit.” He pulled into the driveway.

They were already there waiting with his wheelchair. As the car pulled up Robin hurried forward with it, wrenching the passenger door open.

“C’mon, son.” He let him lift him into it as Louis climbed out and his mother and sister ran over to meet him. “Careful now.”

They surrounded him as Robin began to wheel him into the house and he twisted to make sure
Louis was following behind, his hands in his pockets and his mouth set in a grim line.

“HARRY! Harry, love, are you alright?! We woke up and you were gone! I was so scared!”

“Harry, what the hell?! Mum was going out of her mind!”

“I’m sorry! I had to go!”

“TO HIM?!” And suddenly they were in the hallway and Gemma was rounding on Louis, shoving him backwards with a snarl. “WHAT THE FUCK DID I TELL YOU, HUH? STAY THE FUCK AWAY FROM MY BROTHER!”

“Gem! Stop it!”

Harry’s mother stared at Louis, confused. “I-I remember you…You paid for my son. I-I don’t understand. Did you take my son?”

“NO!” Louis held his hands up. “No, he came to me!”


“Because he’s warped Harry so much that he thinks he needs him!” The look Gemma gave him was pure venom. “You really are a piece of work, you know that?”

And suddenly all of them were arguing over his head.

“No! I told you! I’m not like that! Jesus Christ! Harry came to me because he wanted to! I didn’t ask him. I didn’t warp him. If you’d just listen to him for one fucking minute…”

“You’ve probably set his recovery back months!”

“I didn’t do anything! He came to find me!”

“I don’t want someone like you anywhere near my son…”

“You need to leave. Now!”

“I’m not going anywhere. Not until he tells me to.”

“We’re his family!”

“And I’m his boyfriend!”

“His boyfriend?! Harry isn’t gay!”

“Yes, he is.”

“You paid for him!”

“It wasn’t like that!”

“HEY!” At Harry’s yell they all looked down at him. “Stop talking about me like I’m not even here! I’m not a child, and I’m fed up being a fucking victim! It’s my life and I deserve a fucking say in it!” They avoided his glare, embarrassed. But at least he had their attention. He took a deep breath and turned to Anne first, reaching for her hand. “Mum…I like men as well as women. And it’s not because of what happened to me, or because Louis made me…It’s just how I was born. I’ve
always been like this…I just didn’t know how to tell you before. And Louis is my boyfriend.”

“Harry…”

He kissed his mother’s hand before turning his attention to his sister. She was shifting anxiously from foot to foot, her body shielding him from Louis, determined to protect him. “Gem, I know you’re just trying to defend me because you weren’t there when I was taken and you couldn’t stop what happened to me, and you feel guilty about that…But I need you to back down. I’ve already told you-Louis didn’t lay a hand on me until I wanted him to. I was going through hell and I was too scared to tell him about it, but he guessed something wasn’t right. So he hired me to give me somewhere to shelter. And when I finally broke down and told him what they were doing to me, he risked his life to get me help. He’s a good person, a kind person…and that’s why I fell in love with him. And now I need him to help me put myself back together. I can’t do this without him Gem.”

At that she seemed to deflate, her hand flying to her mouth to muffle her tears as she stepped back. She turned, and he reached up to pull her into a hug. She crouched down to press her face into his shoulder as he stroked her hair.

“Shh Gem, don’t cry. Please.”

“I-I thought we’d lost you again. That I’d lost you again!”

“No Gem, I’m not going anywhere.” He reached to take Louis’ hand, pulling him forward. “As long as I have you…ALL of you.” She turned to look between them. “I know you’ll like him Gem.”

As one his family turned to look at Louis, who looked back at them with conviction. “I never used Harry, I promise you that. All I ever wanted to do was help him. And then I fell in love with him. I never expected to-But it is what it is. And as long as he needs me I’ll be by his side.”

They all seemed to consider this. Then Robin sighed.

“Then I suppose you’d better come in and sit down.” He made to push Harry’s wheel-chair, but Harry turned to him and shook his head.

“It’s o.k Rob. I can do it myself. I’m injured; not helpless.”

For a moment his step-father frowned; then, to Harry’s surprise, he stepped back, his lips twisting into a wry smile. “Of course you aren’t. We just never thought about it before.”

In the living-room Harry positioned his wheel-chair beside the chair Louis chose, while his mother and sister sat on the sofa opposite. Robin made tea, passing the mugs around before sitting down beside his wife and wrapping his arm around her shoulder, his fingers brushing his step-daughters arm-almost as if he knew what was coming and was preparing to comfort them. Harry reached for Louis’ hand, desperate for some comfort of his own, and caught his eye.

Louis assessed him carefully. “Are you sure you’re ready?”

He nodded. “Yeah.”

“O.k, if you’re sure.” Louis turned to his family. “Harry needs to talk to you. Go on, Harry.”

He took a deep breath, his stomach suddenly in knots as he felt their collective gaze boring into him. But Louis’ hand on his gave him strength.
He talked for hours, until his throat was raw from the words and the effort of holding back his sobs. Even when his words moved his family to tears he kept going, knowing that it was better that they hear it now, that if he kept it all inside in order to protect them it would fester and turn his love for them into resentment. And through it all Louis’ hand anchored him.

“It’s hard to explain, but I never thought I’d escape…So instead I adapted. And I grew hard, numb. It was about survival. I know you find it hard to accept…But I’m not the Harry that you knew and for me to be able to live here with you, you have to let him go. And I need you to stop feeling sorry for me. If you keep thinking of me as a victim, then whose victim am I? Jack’s? Trev’s? Joseph’s? Mr Cowell’s? Either way, I still belong to them. For me to be able to stand in that box and give evidence; for me to work hard every physio session so I eventually get out of this fucking wheelchair and walk again; hell, for me even to get out of bed every day, I need to think of myself as a survivor…And I need you to as well, because I need you in my life- All of you. Louis is part of my life now. He was there when it was darkest to keep me from giving up. He reminded me that I was a person when I felt like nothing but a product. He saved me, in a million different ways. And yet he’d still tell you I owe him nothing. If you love me, then I need you to love him too, because without him I wouldn’t be here.”

The silence ticked by slowly. Then his mother rose and crossed the room to drop to her knees in front of Louis, reaching to take his face in her hands, her eyes gazing into his. When she spoke her voice was choked with tears.

“Thank you. Thank you for my son.”

He allowed her to pull him into a hug. Gemma watched, biting her lip, before coming to join them and reaching to touch his shoulder to get his attention. He looked up at her.

“I guess I owe you an apology. I was angry-At the man who took Harry, at the people who abused him…And at myself. I took it out on you.”

He shook his head. “You didn’t know who I was…”

“I didn’t want to know. I’m sorry. Maybe we could start over?”

Louis smiled. “Sure. I’m charming once you get to know me.”

She arched an eyebrow teasingly. “We’ll see.”

Robin rose and moved behind them, reaching to lay his big hand on Louis’ shoulder in a gesture of acceptance. “You looked after our boy when we couldn’t. He loves you and that’s fine by me. You’ll always have a place at my table.” He turned to look at them all. “Right, it’s been a long, hard day and I think we all need some sleep.” He reached for Harry’s shoulder with his free hand and smiled down at him. “I’ve been your father since you were nine years old. You’re my son and I’ve always loved you as my son. Losing you was the worst thing that ever happened to me. I know you’re not helpless…But will you let me help you anyway? For me as much as you.”

Robin had always been a typical Northern man-quiet and gentle, but uncomfortable with displays of emotion. Harry found his words deeply moving. “Sure, Dad.” He allowed him to lift him into his strong arms and carry him upstairs as the others followed them.
In his bedroom he watched Louis park the wheelchair beside his bed and lean his crutches against it. He tugged the duvet back.

“Get in.”

Louis looked uncertain. “I’m not sure your mum would be too happy.”

“Yeah well, I’m not exactly a virgin, am I? Besides…Remember what I said last night about being held?”

For a moment Louis looked unsure; then he tugged off his clothes and climbed in beside him. Harry rolled onto his side to face him and Louis reached to take his face in his hands. “You’re so beautiful Harry.” Harry felt his stomach lurch at that. He pushed Louis’ hands away and rolled away from him, pressing his face into the pillow and hugging his arms to his chest. “Harry? What’s wrong?”

He sighed. “You said I was beautiful. I know that I’m beautiful-It’s the reason Mr Cowell had me kidnapped. It’s the reason I became his highest earner, the reason every client who fucked me wanted me…It’s the reason I was raped. ‘Beautiful’ means nothing…If beautiful is all I am then I’m nothing but an ornament. I hate being beautiful.”

He heard a sigh behind him. Then arms encircled his waist as Louis pulled him close to his chest and he couldn’t help but sink into him, savouring the feel of his body against his own. Louis’ lips tickled his ear as he whispered to him. “Yes, you are beautiful Harry Styles…But you are so much more. You’re sweet, charming, intelligent, honourable…And brave as hell. And that’s why I love you.” Harry smiled at that and rolled over to press his lips to Louis’, savouring their softness. His kissed him reverently, parting his lips gently and pushing his tongue inside, savouring the taste of his mouth. They kissed slowly, languidly, hands ghosting over each other’s arms and chests. Harry wriggled in between Louis’ thighs, pulling his leg over his hip and rubbing into him without quite realising what he was doing. Soon he could feel himself growing hard, straining against the cotton of his boxers. Louis obviously felt it too because he broke their kiss to look down between them and then back up at Harry.

“Do you want me to..? Or are you ready?”

Harry pressed his lips together, thinking. He heart fluttered in his chest and his stomach tightened with nerves at the thought of being touched…But at the same time there was that familiar ache, that yearning for release. And with Louis it had always been different…With Louis it had always felt good, special. He nodded. “Yes. But no fucking. I-I’m sorry, I’m just not ready…” But Louis silenced him with a kiss.

“Shhh, baby. I understand. We’ll take it slow.” And then Louis’ hand was between them, stroking him to hardness through the cotton. His lips traced a path down the side of Harry’s neck and he sucked on his collarbone, drawing a moan from his lips, before reaching down to take the hem of his T-shirt in his fingers. “Is this o.k?”

“Umm hmm.” He nodded and Louis lifted it quickly over his head, tossing it away before kissing his way down his chest. He lavished attention on each nipple, stroking, sucking, mouthing first one then the other until they were stiff and Harry was hard and aching. He planted butterfly kisses in a row down his stomach before pausing again.

“Still alright?”
The fear still lurked beneath the surface, but his need now surpassed it. He nodded. “I trust you.” So please don’t betray me…And please don’t push me. Louis lifted the duvet away and slid his boxers down his legs and off, before pushing his legs apart gently and crouching between them. He sat back, frowning, and then his hand moved to his inner thighs, his finger-tips tracing the bite marks, now scars, that stood out against his skin—Raw, pink indentations in the flesh that served as a constant reminder of that night and of them. He gasped and flinched away.

“I-I know they’re horrible…”

But Louis didn’t look up at him, just kept stroking them. “My brave baby.” He whispered, before lowering his head to kiss each one. “What would I have done if they’d killed you? No you…No me. I’m so sorry I couldn’t save you when it counted.”

“But you’ve saved me now.”

He looked up at him and smiled at that before turning his attention back to between his legs. He licked his palm and reached to stroke him, his touch slow yet firm, the pad of his thumb brushing the tip, spreading the pearls of pre-come around the hole until he was shuddering, wriggling, his skin suddenly hot against the cool sheets. With his other hand he took hold of his balls, rolling them expertly, one finger reaching to stroke the silky-soft skin behind them…And it was too close. He felt a shot of panic.

“Lou?” He looked up. “N-nothing inside—not yet. I-I don’t think I could stand it.”

Louis nodded before lowering his head to kiss his stomach. He licked all down his length before taking the tip in his mouth, his tongue teasing him until he was clutching the sheets in his fists, his head falling back and small moans escaping his lips. Then he took all of him deep into his throat, enveloping him in heat and Harry had to cramp his fist into his mouth to muffle his cries of pleasure in case his family would hear. He tried to thrust up and Louis caught hold of his hip-bones, pinning him gently but firmly to the bed. He slid his mouth slowly up and down Harry’s length, his teeth gently grazing him, his tongue swirling round him…And Harry could feel himself start to unravel. When his pleasure finally came it was like falling, dying…And when he opened his eyes he felt cleansed. Brand new.

Louis swallowed it all, sucking him still as he came down from his high and slumped down onto the mattress. Finally he sat back onto his knees, wiping his mouth with his hand.

“Sheer, I love the way you taste.” Harry looked up at him, smiling lazily as he watched him swim in and out of focus. “Did you enjoy that?”

“Yes. Thanks.” He noticed Louis’ own cock, swollen and thick where it protruded from his boxers, its tip almost purple. “Do you want me to..?”

“No, if you’re unsure. I can get myself off.”

He reached out and caught hold of his arm, pulling him back down onto the bed beside him and reaching to stroke his cheek, the surge of love he felt when he looked into his face enough to wind him. “I’m sure. I love you.”

He tugged off Louis’ boxers shorts, licked his palm and reached to take him in hand, turning to kiss his cheek as he pressed his face into his shoulder. He stroked him expertly, like he’d been taught to, and yet with Louis it didn’t feel like a chore; more like a gift—or an act of worship. When Louis came, shooting hot ribbons of come onto both their stomachs, he reached down and rubbed his fingers through it, gathering it on the tips before pushing them between his kiss-swollen lips and licking it off, as Louis sat back to watch him, fascinated.
“Jesus.”

“I love the way you taste too.” Louis sensed the slight surprise in his voice.

“You’ve never tasted it before?”

He shook his head. “No erection without protection—that was the rule. They liked to cover me in it—But yours is the first I’ve tasted. Maybe I just like it ‘cause it’s yours.” Louis flopped back onto the pillows and he curled up beside him, wrapping his arm around him and pressing his face into the space between his neck and his shoulder as Louis’ fingers stroked through his hair. “Don’t leave tomorrow, please? I need you here.”

“I said I’d be here as long as you wanted me to be. What have you got on tomorrow?”

“Just my physiotherapy.”

“Can I come?”

“Sure…But sometimes it can get really hard and I cry and stuff. Just let me cry, because I have to do it. If I don’t I won’t get better.”

“O.k.” He turned and planted a kiss on Harry’s forehead before piling him close. “Go to sleep now, Love. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

And curled up against him in the dark, warm and safe and loved, Harry slept more peacefully than he had in months.

It was indeed so difficult to see Harry in pain, but Louis decided to help by taking on the role of motivator. He stood at the end of the set of rails as the nurses helped Harry to his feet. Around them in the gymnasium doctors, nurses and physiotherapists worked with other patients—their own moans and cries of agony occasionally filling the air. At least no one was staring at Harry—But it was still a bleak and depressing place. He watched as Harry took hold of each rail, head bowed and teeth gritted together, his expression full of determination even as his body began to tremble with pain. Louis clapped his hands and he looked up at him, beads of sweat breaking out on his forehead.

“Right, come on Bambi! Let’s see you use those gangly legs of yours!”

He was still trembling, but he smiled at that.

“Fuck off Lou!”

“Come over here and make me!” Harry nodded and steeled himself…And took a step. “That’s it Bambi, come on!” He took another step.

“That’s it Harry, you’re doing well.” The Physiotherapist looked up and gave him a wink. “Just one step at a time.” He took another, then another, then another…And then seemed to slump.

“AAAAHHH!”

The nurses ran forward to catch him, holding him as he fought back tears. Louis made to run to hi, but the physiotherapist held out a hand in warning before moving towards him.
“Harry honey, you need to keep going.”

“Shit! Shit it really hurts!”

“I know. Come on, you were doing so well. Harry I need you to try.”

“Yeah Harry, I know you can do this. Come on Harry, try!”

Harry looked up at him and the Physiotherapist moved beside him. “That man…He’s not your friend, is he? He’s your boyfriend.” He nodded, still shaking. “Lucky you, he’s absolutely gorgeous. I think you’d better get down there before I snap him up for myself.”

“Yeah Harry.” Louis smirked at him. “I’ve never told you this…But a woman in scrubs really does it for me. You gonna get down here and fight for me or what?”

At that Harry straightened and took a deep breath. “Right. I’m ready to go again.” The nurses moved away and he took a step, then another, then another…

“That’s it! That’s it! Good lad! Keep going Bambi!”

“Quit calling me fucking Bambi!”

“Get down here and stop me then!”

Finally Harry reached the end of the rails but before the nurses could get to him he fell forward into Louis’ arms, knocking him back onto the floor and landing on top of him.

“OOOF!”

“SORRY!” He grinned down at him. “You proud of me?”

Louis nodded, slightly winded but trying not to show it. “Of course I am.” He leaned up to kiss his cheek. “Now get off me, you’re heavy, and go do it again Bambi.” Harry rolled off him and let the nurses help him up. “And Harry?”

“Yeah?”

“I’ll even more proud when I see you walk into that court room and show those sick fucks that they haven’t beaten you.”

Harry nodded. He let the nurses half-steer, half-carry him over to the rails and took hold of them again, head bowed. Louis scrambled to his feet and ran to the other end, gesturing for Harry to come to him. “Right, now I know you can do this ‘cause you’ve just proved it. Come on Bambi, walk!”

Harry raised his head to fix him with that look of sheer bloody determination again. Then he took a step forward…

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Louis shifted in his seat in the packed court-room, keeping his head bowed and his gaze on his hands so that he wouldn’t have to look at the Accused. Just the sight of that man, lounging in his seat wearing a designer suit and smug smirk, so sure that he was going to get off, brought out a depth of blood lust and hatred in Louis that he’d never felt before. He turned to where Robin was
glaring at the back of the man’s head, his expression murderous.

“Do you think Harry will be able to do this?”

Just as Robin turned to answer a voice rang out.

“CALLING WITNESS NUMBER 451 HARRY EDWARD STYLES!”

The whole court turned as the door opened and Harry entered and on his crutches. Louis watched, holding his breath, as he made his way painfully up the aisle past his former pimp, who glowered at him, and towards the box. Louis didn’t realise he was holding his breath until Harry sat down. The Prosecution approached him.

“Can you confirm your name and date of birth for me please?”


“And you affirm to tell the truth?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Harry can you recount the events of 16th February 2010 for the jury?”

For a moment Harry seemed to hesitate…Then Louis saw that now-familiar flash of determination in his eyes coupled with a flash of defiance. He raised his head to look the Prosecution directly in the eye.

“Yes...That was the day I was kidnapped. I was walking home when I was grabbed from behind. There were two men in masks. They drugged me. I woke up in the back of a van with another kidnap victim-Zayn Malik.” His voice was emotionless.

“And what happened next?”

“We drove for hours before arriving at The Birdcage. They took us to The Doc and he examined us. Then they took us to the tattooist.”

“Can you show the jury the tattoos you received?”

“Sure.” He held open his shirt to reveal the swallows and then turned his head and lifted his hair away to show the barcode.

“And what do those tattoos mean?”

“The birds are Mr Cowell’s brand. The barcode was used to log me onto The Birdcage’s computer system. I was scanned in and out using it.”

“Like a product.”

“Yes. That’s what they called us-Products. It was when we were getting tattooed that we saw Mr Cowell for the first time. He came in to look at us. He said he owned us now. After we got tattooed we were brought into his office. He told us that we were his now, that if we didn’t do everything we were told we’d be shot, that he knew where our families lived and that he’d have them killed too. He told us that we were whores now; that we had to have sex with the people he gave us to… That saying no or fighting back wasn’t an option-this was how our lives were going to be from then
on. He asked us questions…”

“What kind of questions?”

Harry bit his lip. “About our sexual experience. He asked if we were virgins. I said I was. Then we were taken to a room and locked in. That room became our bedroom.”

“What happened the next day?”

“We were introduced to the other Products. He handcuffed us and gagged us and made us kneel in front of them while he yelled at us. He told us that we were nothing but his whores now, told us again how he’d kill us and our families if we tried to run. Then they locked us back in our room. They didn’t come back until later…And they only took me that time.”

“Why only you?” Harry hesitated. “It’s o.k. Just tell us the truth.”

Harry shivered, gazing into space as he remembered. “Zayn had told Mr Cowell he’d had sex. They stripped me, gagged me and cuffed my hands behind my back. They brought me out onto the stage in the client’s dining room. There were lots of people sitting at the tables. Me Cowell introduced me and said I was a virgin, had me turned round so they could see all of me. He kept going on about how pretty I was, how pure and innocent …Then he started the bidding…”

“What were they bidding for Harry?”

“My virginity.” He flushed red but kept his composure.

“And then what happened?”

“A man won. He was really old, old enough to be my dad. He came up on-stage and started touching me. I was struggling, kicking, but the Handlers held me still. He took my gag off and they pushed me down on my knees. I-I didn’t know how to do what he wanted me to do…”

“Oral sex?”

“Yeah…So he hit me. Then I was laid face down on the floor. They held me down. The people there kept yelling things like “Just fuck him!” I was crying, begging him not to, screaming that I didn’t want to, but no one was listening…He raped me while Mr Cowell stood and watched. They all watched, and cheered him on. A-afterwards I was bleeding, crying. I kept asking them to let me go home. Mr Cowell told me to stop whining or he’d have me whipped. He told me that I was going to fuck a lot more men for him and I’d have to suck it up and get used to it. He said that he could already tell I was going to be a nice little earner for him.”

“And how old were you when this happened?”

“Sixteen.”

A murmur passed through the court-room. The prosecution nodded; his expression grave. “And what happened after you were raped for the first time?”

“Umm, then I started my training…”

Harry kept his face blank as he described the horrific abuse he’d put through, his gaze never leaving the jury. You could have heard a pin drop in courtroom as he talked about each beating, each rape; the endless procession of clients; described his daily life in The Birdcage and how they spent their days being sold and their nights chained to their beds; described the atmosphere of
terror that Mr Cowell had created.

“And the last attack on you, Harry—When you were gang-rape and your legs were dislocated. Who ordered that attack?”

“Objection!” At the Defenses’ shout Harry jumped. “That is a separate case that does not involve my client.”

“But your honour, that case falls within the perimeters of the investigation. And the level of the Defendant’s involvement is significant here.”

The judge nodded his head. “Fine. I’ll allow it. Answer the question, Harry.”

Harry nodded and Louis saw the façade crack, for just a second, to show just how scared he was underneath. Then he straightened up in his seat, chin jutting out, and Louis was struck by how similar he looked to the strutting, proud boy he’d caught glimpses of before—Dirty Harry. “That day Mr Cowell had me beaten. He hand-cuffed me and then stood and watched while Jack beat me up. Then he told Jack that he could punish me in whatever way he saw fit.”

“And Harry is Mr Cowell—the man who kidnapped you; the man who had you raped and beaten, who forced you into prostitution—in this court-room today?”

Harry turned…His gaze meeting Mr Cowell’s warning glare. And then something strange happened…He smiled—his lips curling into that cheeky lop-sided smirk, dimples popping in his cheeks. “Sure he is.” And he raised his hand and pointed. “He’s sitting right over there.”

And Mr Cowell lost it. He surged upward, absolutely furious. “YOU BITE YOUR TONGUE, YOU LITTLE WHORE, BEFORE I MAKE YOU!”

“ORDER!” The judge banged his gavel and Cowell’s solicitor jumped to his feet to catch him by the shoulder and pull him back into his seat. “Mr Cowell if you don’t sit back down and stop threatening the witness I’ll have you in contempt of court!”

But Harry didn’t look threatened; he was still smiling—suddenly the picture of confidence. He addressed Mr Cowell directly. “How? How are you going to do that? Look around you…Sir.” He spat the word at him contemptuously. “It’s over and you lost. I’m not your whore anymore. I’m free. And now you’re going to pay for every kid you stole and everyone you hurt.”

“Harry, same to you.” The judge hissed.

“Sorry.” But Harry never took his eyes off his former Pimp. Cowell was the first to break the stare and look away.

“Any more questions, counsellor?”

The Persecution turned to look from Harry to where the jury sat in silence aware that, no matter what the outcome, there had already been a victory of sorts in that courtroom. “No, your honour. Thank you.”

Harry turned to scan the room, searching for him. Louis caught his eye and smiled at him, so proud of him that it brought tears to his eyes.
A week later they walked side by side through Covent Garden. Harry had grown steadier on his crutches but Louis still held an arm protectively around him as they weaved through the crowds and along Museum Street.

“Guilty.” Harry breathed it as if he couldn’t quite believe it. “They found him guilty.”

Louis nodded. “He lost, and you won.”

Harry sighed. “Not quite yet. There are still more trials to testify in. Ben’s and Caroline’s…Trev’s and Joseph’s. I’m going to be stuck here in London for ages.”

“Well then so am I. Good thing the court puts us up in a hotel, huh?” Harry smiled. “Hey, hang on a second.” He reached out to stop him before sliding one arm around his waist. He stroked his cheek gently and chucked him under the chin to make him laugh. “I’m proud of you kid. I know it’s hard, but you’re not letting them beat you.”

Harry thought for a moment. “It feels good to be able to tell, y’know? To be able to speak out about what they did after so long keeping quiet. It’s…freeing. But I don’t think I could do it without you here. I love you, Lou.”

“I love you too.” He tilted his head up and kissed him. “Now come on. I could really do with a drink.”

“Sure.” They began walking again. “So have you heard back from college yet?”

He shook his head. “Nah, probably won’t for ages. Here, we’re a right pair, in’t we? Me going to do my A-levels and you doing your G.C.S.Es; bouncing between our Mum’s houses until we get a place of our own.”

Harry shrugged. “I think it’s nice…normal. An’ they’ve said I’ll get compensation so we’ll get our somewhere soon.” He turned to look at the shops they were passing and his eyes lit up. “Here, want to find out what our future holds?”


But Harry was pouting at him, pleadingly. “Oh come on Lou! It’s just a laugh! I want to look at the weird books again! Maybe I’ll find one on hexes!”

And he was so cute that he couldn’t refuse him.

“Oh go on then.” He sighed and followed Harry towards the shop.

The woman with the short hair met them at the door, her brown eyes sparkling. “There you are! The gypsy boy and the boy who looks like Jimmy Dean! Thank goodness, I’ve been bored out of my skull today!” She turned to Harry, taking hold of him and steering him gently but firmly into a
green velvet armchair in one corner. “Just you sit, gypsy boy-you’re in more pain than you’re letting on! Besides, you’ve had your reading. I want to read for your blue-eyed man.” She caught hold of Louis’ arm and pulled him through the little shop, stuffy with the scent of incense and old books, to where her Tarot cards waited on the counter beside a paper cup of green tea.

“You’ve been expecting us?”

“Of course.” She looked up and saw how his eyebrow arched in disbelief. “I’m not claiming it was my psychic power, love. I saw you both in the newspaper. Read all about the trail.” Her gaze moved to where Harry sat reading through a dusty grimoire, his nose wrinkled in confusion. “So it was him, then?”

“What?”

“The Queen of Pentacles-The harlot. No wonder that reading was so dark. The poor boy! Still,” She looked up at him, a smile playing on her lips. “Stars shine brightest in the darkness, don’t they? And I’m guessing he followed his star.”

“What?”

But she was lifting the cards and pressing them into his hands. “Shuffle them and think of a question. Don’t worry, it’s no charge. Like I said, I’m bored. Most of our clientele come morning or evening when they can’t be spotted.”

“Why? Because they’re vampires and witches and wizards?”

She laughed at that. “Vampires and wizards, no. But we do get a lot of witches. Now, shuffle.” He did. “Fan them out on the counter…Now pick nine.” He did. “Right, give them to me.”

He watched as she laid them out carefully, the first one making his heart lurch even though he prided himself on not being superstitious. “The Devil?”

But she smiled. “The Devil inverted, defeated. He’s in your past now…” Her eyes roved over the spread and she held up a card for him to see. “Your signifier-The Lovers. I’m guessing this reading is more for the two of you?” He nodded, slightly embarrassed. “The Lovers is a good card. Your relationship is balanced and full of care for one another; just don’t let yourself get caught up in the romance. Remember, true love is shown in the little things. Comfort him when he’s frightened and, believe me, he’ll be frightened for a while yet, especially at night when the terrors come; laugh at his jokes even though they’re terrible; make him a cup of tea every morning and kiss him every night before you go to sleep—that’s what that boy wants.” She turned back to the spread. “You still have many hurdles to overcome. It will take a long time for him to heal and he will need your strength. You worry you’re not up to the task but I know that you are because here…” She held up a card. “Is how you feel for him.” Louis stared at it. On it a small boy was shown riding a white horse through a field of sunflowers, a yellow sun shining in the sky above him.

“The Sun?”

She nodded. “You know his shadows and his light and you accept him for who he is and love him completely. You were his star in the darkness…Now he’s the sun in your sky. And he adores you.” She leaned across the counter towards him and lowered her voice to a whisper. “And that question you’ve been thinking of asking him…Hold off for a little while, just until everything is settled. But trust me, you don’t have to worry-he’ll say yes.”

They shared a smile. Then a young woman with glasses bustled over.
“Sorry, but do you have Penzak’s The Witch’s Shield?”

“Excuse me.” She sighed and turned to her. “O.k, love, who have you pissed off now?”

He took that as his cue to leave and moved over to where Harry was inspecting another book.

“Come on you.” He helped him to his feet. “Let’s get that drink.”

“Hang on Lou. I might buy that one. It’s interesting.”

“No, you might accidently summon a demon or something.” He steered him quickly from the shop before he got any ideas.

Back outside Harry turned to him. “So, what did she say?”

He looked up into Harry’s incredible green eyes, his stomach lurching as he smiled and his dimples appeared. For a moment he thought about asking him that question…But they had time. He smiled. “She said everything’s going to be o.k.”

“And when I look at you I believe that.” Harry ducked his head to kiss him. Louis kissed him back, his hands reaching up to tangle in those dark curls as the crowds in the busy street parted around them and above them the sun broke through the grey clouds.

The End

Chapter End Notes

So that’s it. Please leave comments to let me know what you think. I’m off to catch up on sleep for a week or so and then I’ll be back with my new fic 'Carrier'-A Larry MPreg with a twist that I hope you guys will read and love too! On a more serious note, while researching this story I learnt a lot about Human Trafficking and what I learned shocked me. Sadly, far from being just a story, what happened to Harry is some people’s reality. Please if you have time check out these websites and donate. They do amazing work.

http://www.humantraffickingfoundation.org/

http://www.unseenuk.org/

https://hopeforjustice.org/donate/uk/

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!