I offer this up as a nice bit of queer poly representation in the face of literally dozens of nasty anons I got daily about this topic.

Also note that since Phil gets a lot of hate, I’m gonna do a lot of it from his perspective.

This is an au to my own fic, it exists in the world of seasons 3 & 4, but is not part of their storyline. I have big plans for Rae and Finn and Phil, and as lovely as this particular story is, this isn’t how it’s all gonna go down for these three…
Do I Wanna Know?

Do I Wanna Know?’ by Arctic Monkeys

I’m sorry to interrupt it’s just I’m constantly on the cusp of trying to kiss you…

Phil looked up when he heard her cheering voice. His eyes flicked back to the game and then back up at her. It was a cold blustery day and Bethany was sitting next to her, huddled together for warmth, both screaming their lungs out in support. Phillip lowered his eyes and looked back at the field. He had to stop looking at her with that hunger he could feel in the pit of his stomach.

Since she had said no to him in Lincoln, several months ago now, he had been working overtime at getting his urges under control. Knowing that she loved him, wanted him, but chose Finn anyway was one of the hardest things Phil had ever had to go through. He didn’t understand why love had to be destroyed like this for the ideal of the purity of the one true love. But he had to accept what she wanted. He had to be a good man. And he had to stop looking at her the way he was. They were just friends, and her friendship was deeply important to him. But even months and months of just being friends didn’t stop the desire that existed between them. Every time they were alone something came to life and it was still almost impossible for him to keep himself under control around her.

He wondered if it would have been easier to not know how she felt. For her to have just said a flat out no and told him she had no feelings for him.

His whole body balked at that idea. The thought of having never kissed her, never having held her, touched her, lain with her…

He shook his head and focussed his mind back on the football match. It was getting harder to focus when she was around, but he still had enough will power and strength to force himself to do what he must.

He looked around the field and saw Finn.

Finn Nelson had been a constant figure in his life since he had first had feelings for Rae. Their relationship was fiery, to say the least. Phil reflected how much he used to despise Finn. But now they had become friends. Probably Finn had felt pity for him at first, but now he seemed to genuinely enjoy Phil’s friendship. And Phil definitely enjoyed his. It made this whole thing easier knowing what kind of man she had chosen.

It was strange to be playing on the same team as Finn. Last year they had been opponents at all of these PE class matches. This year Macca had him and Finn playing the wings to coordinate their attacks to shut down the first year class.

And they worked brilliantly together.

There was an unspoken understanding across the field of what they needed from each other, and just a glance was needed to strategize; both completely, intuitively understanding the other. With Macca in the centre position, they felt like a pack of wolves hunting their opponents, bringing them down, drawing blood.

He couldn’t wait for the AFL match that was coming up in a few months; this year it would be in August after the exams.
Phil used to hate football and most other team sports, but last year after the AFL match, with its raw physicality, he had come to love the brutal masculinity of these sorts of sports. He’d become hooked, and Finn had more than once told him he was part of the tribe now; a caveman like him.

The feeling of his lungs pumping air into his blood, his heart thudding, his eyes hunting, his mind on the prize; shut them down, steal the ball, get a goal… he loved it.

“Good game lads!” Macca smacked Finn’s arse and gave Phil a nod before he headed into the showers. Finn plonked down on the seat next to Phil and started to undo his shoes.

“We make a great team.” Finn noted; they had decimated the first years: 6-0.

“Too right, we do.” Phil agreed and pulled his shirt off, throwing it haphazardly into his bag. Finn noticed the movement of Phil’s back muscles.

“The boxing’s paying off mate.” Finn noted and Phil looked over his shoulder at him.

“Oh yeah?”

“I mean you always had pretty impressive muscle definition, but you’ve definitely gained some size and stronger definition in your upper body.” Finn had learned a lot from Rhys, and while he had been doing his personal trainer training, he had begun to unconsciously take on some of his habits. Rhys had the habit of touching people when he was considering their physicality in regards to their training, and Finn found his fingers running along the subtle muscle of Phil’s lower back.

“We need to work on your core strength a little more.” Finn stood up and put his hands on Phil’s waist, turning him around as he inspected his body. Phil was used to this now and allowed himself to be poked, prodded, and turned around. It had been strange the first time, but he couldn’t argue with Finn’s results, so he didn’t argue with his methods.

“Alright.” Phil grunted in response.

“Let’s check your legs then.” Finn ordered.

“Is this really the place for it?” Phil noted that they were still at school, not at the still to be re-named boxing joint.

“Aye I s’pose not!” Finn laughed, “I just get caught up in your body, you know?”

“Taken out of context Finn…” Phil laughed and they both shrugged. “I think you’re doing an amazing job on my training.”

“Aye I know I am.” Finn nodded at his body, “You’ll always be skinny through the waist; it’s how you’re built. But you’re starting to look more like a boxer. How you feeling but?”

“Stronger.” Phil answered, “Much, much stronger.” He sat back down, and like Finn continued to unlace his shoes. “And more physical, like I got more of a physical presence. More confident.”

“Good.” Finn kicked his shoes off and took his shirt off in the same action. Standing, he dropped his pants and grabbed his towel, his eyes returning to Phil, he was folding his dirty shirt now. Finn grinned; it was so like Phil to be so neat. He watched Phil pull out a towel and stand, dropping his pants and leaving them beside his bag, before his eyes went up to Finn’s eyes.

“Coming Phillip?” Finn popped the last ‘p’ in Phil’s name and Phil rolled his eyes before throwing
his towel over his shoulder.

“D’you know, the first time you popped the ‘p’ in my name, I couldn’t fathom how you could show so much contempt for a human being in one small sound.” Phil shook his head as they headed to the showers together.

“Aye it’s a fucking gift!” Finn laughed.

“One of many.” Phil shot back.

“You saying I’m gifted with a bunch of nasty, mean-spirited talents?”

“Shut up Gwyn.” Phil put his towel over the door to his shower stall and turned the water on. The shower stalls covered from knee to chest on an average sized man, and everyone was laughing and joking about how bad the first years had lost. Finn took up residence in the shower beside Phil and turned on the water.

“I’m sorry if it upset you that I popped your ‘p’ again.” Finn said with a small cheeky grin. His tone showed that he clearly meant it; he’d been keen to look after Phil because he could so thoroughly empathise with how he was feeling about Rae. But lately he found himself seeking out Phil’s company more and more. Finn didn’t think about it much; he just liked the guy. How could he hate a lad that loved Rae so much, and put her needs so completely ahead of his own? Plus Phil was whip-smart and pretty much good at everything he tried; which made for an excellent rival to keep Finn on his toes.

“Nah, you don’t have the same contempt anymore, so I really don’t mind.” Phil shrugged and started to lather his soap. He looked over at Finn to see him doing the same and felt an odd pulling in his stomach when he saw Finn’s eyes on him. He’d noticed this odd pulling a lot lately. The last few months had seen an increase of the time they spent together and the fondness he had for the Neanderthal.

“We doing painting tomorrow?” Finn asked, his eyes lingering for a moment before he slowly looked away. Lads didn’t look at each other directly like this in the showers, at least not for too long… Phil cleared his throat and looked away. Phil had gotten used to Finn’s eyes on him; he was his trainer after all. Finn had a pretty intimate knowledge of Phil’s body now. Phil didn’t mind.

“Yeah of course.”

“I’m really enjoying painting.” Finn replied, “I can’t wait to show Rae what we’re creating.”

“What you’re creating.” Phil reminded him. Finn looked up to see Phil’s eyes on him and felt an odd tingle in the pit of his stomach.

“I couldn’t do it without you.” Finn looked Phil in the eye and they paused for moment, staring at each other. There was an intimacy, a closeness in that look. Phil supposed it was a closeness born of their shared love for Rae. He felt an unexpected blush rise on his cheeks and turned to the water, plunging his face under the too hot water. It wasn’t the first time he’d felt himself blushing around Finn lately. He didn’t think about it. He tried to not think about Rae or Finn. It was easier that way. But sometimes he had to think about them. And sometimes he couldn’t stop himself.

When Finn got out of the showers only a few minutes later to hurry off to physics, Phil lingered on in the shower. He leaned on the wall, the hot water streaming down his back, listening to the shower room slowly emptying. He had a free period and was planning to head to the library in a
few minutes. He decided to take a moment to examine that blush... the feelings in his gut he’d been getting with greater frequency over the past few months.

The friendship he and Finn had forged was one of the things sustaining him through all of this, and he supposed he was growing closer to Finn because of his own emotional issues. He took a deep breath and the feeling of Finn’s fingers on his lower back came back to him. Phil rolled his shoulders back slowly and stood upright, washing his face in the water again.

His mind ran around in circles, not sure what to make of his strange reactions to Finn... but lately they’d been increasing. An odd pulling in his stomach, tingles down his spine, a blush rising on his cheeks. And was he imagining Finn’s eyes lingering on him?

Phil bit his bottom lip and tried to get his thoughts and feelings in order.

Finn was a mate. He was a good mate.

Phil slammed the water off and grabbed his towel; this was going nowhere so there was no point thinking about it. It only made everything harder. Best to just go and do his homework in the library, like he had originally intended.

Phil shook his head at himself when he realised that he’d taken the long way round to the library so he could walk past the classroom he knew Rae would be in.

“Just stop it Phil.” He whispered to himself as he snuck a look in the room, walking past without stopping. It was empty. His brows furrowed and he guessed the teacher must be away and there was no substitute.

He froze, the thought of finding her tumbling around in his head, sending shivers down his spine.

“Go. To. The fucking library.” He told himself sternly and made his feet move again.

He claimed a table by the back window overlooking the seats at the back of the school. He looked out at their table; she wasn’t there. He had no doubt she’d be there eventually; she almost always ended up there in her free periods.

“Stop looking.” He whispered and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly as he made himself turn away from the window and sit down at the table, taking out his homework and reading it over, listing the kinds of books he needed to look up for reference. He looked down the list and memorising what he needed got up to head to the stacks.

He walked up and down the aisles, his fingers along the spines of the books, scanning the names, not paying attention to his surroundings, his lips pursed in concentration. He stopped and pulled a book from the shelf, opening it, his long, agile, fingers caressing the page slightly. He loved books. The smell of them, the feel of them in his hands, the knowledge he gained from them.

“English homework?” Phil snapped out of his deep concentration and turned his eyes to her. Of course it was her. He nodded. “Me too.” She smiled grimly, “Mrs Vines is really heaping it on us!” She chuckled, shaking her head.

“Ah yes, second year of college. An absolute fucking turd of a year.” He grinned and she returned it. It had been two weeks since they had had a moment alone; Phil had been studiously avoiding time alone with her. He gripped the book as she came closer, her eyes on him. She noticed his breath catch and took a step back; the heat between them was still too great to be so close when
they couldn’t…

“What are you doing your essay on?” Even Rae could hear how breathless her voice had become. It was an unavoidable side effect of being this close to him. As was her complete inability to take her eyes off him unless it was to look at his lips. He seemed to be afflicted in a similar manner.

“Uh…” He ummed uncharacteristically. Phil almost always had complete control of himself. “Uh, the effect Queen Elizabeth had on Shakespeare’s writing. Maybe?” He gathered his thoughts together with supreme effort.

Rae tried to gather her own thoughts. Since she had said no to him at Lincoln, she had expected everything to get better, for her feelings for him to flow away slowly, peacefully, for him to be free of her and able to find love. For Finn to finally know for sure that he was her one. But here she was months later, still unable to take her eyes off him. If anything it was getting worse and worse. She tried to look away and saw his fingers, holding the book open and had a flashback to those strong fingers slowly, gently making their way into her knickers as they had in Lincoln.

God he knew how to use those fingers.

Phil followed her gaze to his fingers and felt them twitch slightly. He tried not to think of his fingers on her skin, tracing down her body. He tried not to let his mind return to how it had felt to slip these fingers inside of her, how she had tasted on his fingers. His eyes shot back up to her face.

“You?” He tried to keep the conversation going.

“What?” She asked her eyes snapping back up to his face.

“What are you gonna do?” He tried to make his voice sound less hungry. Tried to force his eyes to not drop to her lips.

“Um… I dunno…” Her eyes dropped back to his lips, “I really wanted to explore some of the more controversial interpretations of his work, but I’m not sure I can make it fit…” Her eyes lingered on his lips for a moment and she forgot to keep speaking for a moment. She blinked, trying to get herself under control, “um… with the topic.” She added. “Not sure I can make it fit with the topic.” She cleared her throat again.

“I’m sure you’ll find a way.”

Neither of them had noticed the small shuffling steps they had taken, slowly bringing them closer together, Phil noticed he could feel her breath on his forearm and before he knew it his hand was on her face again. There was an achingly short moment of staring longingly at each other.

“Damnit.” He took his hand off her face. “I’m sorry Rae, I need get myself under control.” It was the main reason he’d been avoiding time alone with her.

“I don’t mind.” She whispered. Every part of her wanted him to rip her clothes off and fuck her up against the library stacks. She could almost feel his penis sliding into her, so real was the image in her mind, so deep the desire. She shook her head slightly to free her mind from that image and looked away slightly. “I’m sorry.” Her voice was small and sad. “I’m sorry I do this to you.” Her eyes went up to his and she saw the ache in them. The hunger. She was sure he’d been thinking the same thing.

“It’s my fault.” His voice was thick with desire, “I should learn to keep my hands to myself.” Rae’s eyes lowered sadly. She wished he didn’t have to learn to keep those hands to himself. “It’s just hard when…” He made himself stop, clenched his jaw shut. He couldn’t tell her how
beautiful she was, how he couldn’t get her out of his head, how he could feel the heat emanating from her right now.

“I know.” She answered. “I know.” Her voice was higher than usual. “How are you holding up?” She worried for him. She knew how torturous this was for her, she couldn’t imagine how bad it was for him.

“Rae…” He didn’t want to answer, didn’t want to tell her he was falling apart, that he needed her, ached for her, loved her completely and unconditionally. He could never tell her that despite his complete belief that no one could ever be owned by another person, he belonged to her. He couldn’t say that the months passing hadn’t changed anything for him except make him love her more.

“I just need to know…” She put her hand on his arm, “You know how I feel, and I just wanna know that you’re alright.” He hated seeing the pleading expression on her face.

“I’m fine.” He said gently.

“Don’t you lie to me Phillip Seymour.” Her eyes flashed with stubborn determination.

“I’m coping Rae.” They had edged closer still, “I miss-” The words had left his mouth before he had chance to stop himself.

“I miss us two hanging out too.” She understood. “Like…” Her eyes rose to the ceiling, “I know we got all this other stuff,” she looked back at him, “but we used to have this real solid friendship too. And I miss it so much.” Phil nodded.

“I’m trying Rae. In time I’ll be better and-”

“It’s not your fault Phil.” She shook her head, “you can’t help some things.” She sighed, “I just miss us.” She reached up and touched his face. “And it’s not just the friendship I miss.” He could tell from her voice that she couldn’t believe how much she missed him in every single way. “I’m so selfish.” Her fingers traced down his cheek, “I should let you go. And I try…” Her fingers continued down his neck and Phil’s hand went to her waist, his other hand snatching shut the book and placing it haphazardly back on the shelf, “I try so hard to get you out of me head.” Her voice was barely a whisper now as her fingers came to his chest and he gently pulled her closer, “I love Finn… I do…” Her eyes fell to his lips, “But, I love you… Phil, I don’t know how I’m ever gonna let you go…” her other hand went to his face.

“You don’t have to.” He told her, “I don’t want you to.” She raised her chin slightly, accommodating Phil’s slight height advantage over Finn, her lips parted. His hands came to her face, holding her tenderly. He stroked her skin gently, and watched her eyes close with expectation, her breath stopping in her lungs. Phil paused for an agonizing moment, studying her face as she awaited his kiss.

But he couldn’t kiss her. She had made a decision; he was her friend, nothing more. She was with Finn, and if he did this it would be a regret for her. And they had both agreed in Lincoln that they didn’t want the things that happened between them to be regrets. He stroked her cheeks with his thumbs and gently dropped her chin, kissing her on the forehead.

“You once asked if I loved you enough to not kiss you. It was a rhetorical question cos you already knew I did.” He said softly, “Now you know I still do.” She looked into his eyes for a moment, but he let go of her gently. She watched him swallow hard, as if he was swallowing back his desire for her. He stroked her face one more time then turned back to pick up the book, breathing deeply
to calm himself.

Rae took a few deep breaths and watched him.

“I wish I was as good as you, and could love you enough to let you go.” She said sadly. Phil looked up at her sharply.

“Not letting me go is an act of love Rae.” He told her, putting the book down again. “You know it hurts me to be so close, and unable to touch you, so you think it’s selfish. But if you let me go you’d be cutting me adrift at sea.” He turned back to her, “Don’t let me go. I couldn’t handle that… I can take how much it hurts to be around you and not… I can take it.” He almost pleaded.

“I don’t know if I can though Phil.”

They both took a moment to take in the pain in those words.

“If you have to…” He swallowed back his pain, “If have to let me go for you. Well that’s a different thing and you go right ahead and do that.” She hesitated looking at his eyes, filled with so many emotions, fear, pain, longing. And endless love for her.

“Can’t.” Her hands went up to his face, “I don’t think I’ll ever be able to let you go.” She looked into his eyes for a long time, until slowly their foreheads came together, “what am I gonna do?”

“I don’t know Rae.” His hands went back to her face, “But we can’t do this.” He once again pulled away, but this time, after a lingering glance he once again picked up his book and returned to his table. Rae followed with a few books of her own and sat down at the table, opposite him.

Almost immediately their feet found each other under the table, as they kept their eyes on their books. Phil knew that Rae would tell Finn everything that had happened, and he wondered how many encounters like that would it take for Finn to lose his good mood. He’d miss Finn’s friendship when the hammer finally fell, and of course he’d miss Rae, everything about Rae. But when this run of sympathy and tolerance from Finn ran out he’d have to move to London. Finn’s insistence that he was fine and wanted them all to be happy and just needed communication was eerily unexpected when you took into account his previous jealousy. He looked up to see Rae looking at him, her foot slowly crept up his ankle, his shin. His breath came sharply in as her toes reached between his knees. Her eyes never left his as she rubbed the inside of his knee with her bare foot, having slipped her shoe off under the table. But she went no further. There was always a place at which they stopped. He reached his hand down and gently rubbed her foot, she made a small noise of appreciative longing, and they both looked back down at their books, Phil’s hand staying on her foot as it rested on the edge of the chair between his thighs.

They stayed like that, reading silently, the frustrated tension between them still palpable, until it was time to head out for lunch.

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Information about poly relationships:

http://www.morethantwo.com/resources.html

http://www.goodtherapy.org/therapy-for-polyamory.html#

http://ego.thecichagoschool.edu/s/843/images/editor_documents/What%20therapists%20should%20know
Poly FAQs:

http://www.morethantwo.com/polyamory.html

Gender and sexuality definitions:

http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/01/a-comprehensive-list-of-lgbtq-term-definitions/
Phil gently placed the body of his cello between his knees, his fingers caressing the neck before he began to play. Lately everything he played had a haunted feel to it, a deep sadness mixed in every note. The rain started to pound against his bedroom window, the light in the room turning grey.

He stood, quite suddenly pushing the cello away from him and leaned it against the wall. He looked up at his violin in its case on the side and wondered if that would ease the chaos in his heart and soul. He looked over at the painting he’d started yesterday; Rae, standing staring out at him, so beautiful. His long fingers reached out and touched her cheek on the canvas. He looked at the other half of the canvas, where, quite unexpectedly Finn had appeared under his paintbrush, looking over Rae’s shoulder, his eyes piercing Phil’s soul. He stared at the painting, the corners of his mouth turned down. It felt like there was a fire burning through his innards. He grabbed his biggest paintbrush and the black paint and painted over the picture of Rae and Finn. Why had he even painted them together? He didn’t need to see that here in his bedroom; he saw it enough at school. And yet even as he gave in to a feeling of morbid bitterness, he could feel a shift inside of him. He was genuinely friends with Finn and that was hard because it would be easier to hate the man she had chosen over him even though she loved them both. But Finn was so very hard to hate and so very easy to like. He was good for Rae; he made her so happy. And he was a good, kind human being. As he thought Phil had painted a whirlpool of colours on the black background, deep dark reds and oranges, like lava brewing in a volcano.

He hated not being able to understand what he had painted.

He sat up in the bed.

“I don’t know what it is you do with your hands but you could charge women for the privilege and they’d pay.” Jenny lit up a cigarette and lounged across her bed. Phil slid the used condom off the end of his cock and tied the end and stared at the wall for a moment. There was usually a soft tug of hollowness after sex for him. Not because meaningless sex was bad, but because he wished he were making love to Rae instead. He wished he were laying down next to her and holding her after making her moan like Jenny just had. He wondered if lying down with Jen would make him feel any better. He turned to look at her and tried to imagine stroking her hair like he’d stroked Rae’s in Lincoln.

What the fuck are you doing Phil?

Just stop it.

You choose the women you choose because they don’t want that kind of intimacy. And neither do you.

Unless it’s with Rae.

He stood up and dropped the condom in the bin near the door, clothing himself as he walked.
“See you next Tuesday.” She said as he got to her bedroom door; she knew he’d see himself out.

“Sounds good.” He answered before he left her bedroom.

Outside, it had started raining again. Phil had walked over to try and clear his head; he kept thinking of Rae, of course, but then Finn would pop into his mind unbidden and kiss her. The weird thing is that either Finn or Rae would stare at him after, sometimes both of them; as if they were saying something to him with their eyes. He had no idea what his mind was doing to him, he didn’t even know if he wanted it to stop. He stuffed his hands deep into his pockets and hunched his shoulders against the cold rain; it was oddly comforting. His hair quickly stuck flat to his head as he walked, the heavy rain soaking through his clothes to his skin. He shivered as he walked; but he liked the cold, he liked feeling things physically when he struggled to let himself properly feel the depth of his own emotions.

He cut across the playing fields, the wet grass sticking to his shoes, the cuffs of his jeans growing heavy with water. Ahead he saw a lad walking towards him. He had a vision of Finn approaching him and his stomach clenched. But he knew this lad was not Finn; he was slightly shorter, marginally stockier, the hair colour was just off. Phil still watched the lad as he approached and looked at his face as they said hi and passed each other. Phil felt himself turning and looking at the lad, his eyes dropping to take in all of his form.

As soon as he did that, Phil turned himself back around to face the right way, his eyes opening a little wider in surprise at himself. But completely against his own better judgement, he turned back around and watched the lad walking away, his broad shoulders moving under his jacket. Phil cocked and eyebrow and turned back around, to face the direction he was walking. Lately he had found himself assessing the male physique more and more. He imagined it was because of the training he was doing with Finn, but in reality he was comparing his own body to Finn’s and Liam’s; the men she had be with, although he really could not understand Liam. Finn deserved Rae; Liam most certainly did not. Phil was aware of Rae’s self-esteem issues, but Liam still seemed to be an odd choice.

Rae.

She was always on his mind.

And now Finn was too a lot of the time. He supposed they came together; even in his thoughts they were inseparable.

He got to the street and ran his hand along the wet brickwork of the fences as he walked. When he realised what he was doing he snatched his hand away and shoved it into his pocket, his heart hammering in his chest.

Sometimes he would ache so much for her he would cry. But whenever he cried, there was only so much he’d allow himself to cry before some huge subconscious internal hand would squeeze the life out of him for feeling such things; his emotions just shut down sometimes and were replaced by a cold snow storm of numb, it had been that way since he was young. He could never cry for long before he gained control of himself. He hated that. He sometimes wished he could just let go. He didn’t know how to. But music usually always helped stop the relentless white noise in his skull during these emotional moments. Painting was good too, to a lesser degree. But the last few weeks he hadn’t been able to play.

He supposed that was why he was finding himself running his fingers over rough surfaces more
often lately.

Either way he knew he was in trouble. He couldn’t take it.

But the minute he had that thought, he felt his inner strength surge, and a sense of self-control returned to him.

Not only would he take this, but he would take it for as long as she still wanted him around. As her friend. He knew it would never be more.

And he had Finn’s friendship to live up to as well now. He would not let either of them down.

“Looking good Phil!” Phil had his earphones in and only half heard the words, but he grinned.

“Hey Finn-” He turned to see it wasn’t Finn. “Oh hey Jamal.” Phil said awkwardly and took his earphones out.

“Nelson give you that many compliments huh?” Jamal asked with a suggestively cocked eyebrow.

“Well he is my personal trainer.” Phil answered, trying not to sound embarrassed, and trying not to get the urge to cover up his naked upper torso too hastily. Boys change rooms could be tricky.

“Well you know his best mate’s gay…”

“Doesn’t mean he’s gay.” Phil answered and tried to stop himself from rolling his eyes.

“No, but you know… other people around you might be…” Jamal looked at him for a moment and then looked away. There was an awkward moment of silence while Phil tried to figure out if Jamal had just outed himself or not. “But I don’t suppose guys like you… guys like us are interested into that kind o’ thing.” Phil took a deep breath and considered it.

“I’m not opposed to gay sex in theory… in practice, it’s… it’s never really come up. No guy’s ever tried it on with me and… well, I haven’t considered if I find men attractive like that. It’s definitely not a repulsive idea…” Phil furrowed his brows.

“Aye but you either do or you don’t find men attractive. It’s not something to consider.”

“I s’pose.” Phil answered, “I guess it’s never really been a question for me; I’ve always found women attractive. But I’m not turned off by men’s bodies and… I suppose anything’s possible… it just hasn’t happened for me.”

“Yet.” Jamal said and slipped his shirt off as if changing for the game, but Phil noticed the flex in his muscles.

“Yet.” Phil replied not taking his eyes off Jamal. He wasn’t threatened by Jamal’s nudity, nor his apparent interest; he was curious to see if anything would stir inside of him.

Nothing did.

He shrugged internally and turned back to his locker.

“But your fucking shirt on Jill! The world can’t handle that!” Finn laughed and Phil’s stomach leapt.
“Fuck you Quinn, if the world has to endure your fucking face, it can handle my chest.” Phil shot back and Finn patted him on the back before opening up the locker next to his. Finn had had his locker moved a few months ago. Phil hadn’t thought anything of it at the time, he just kind of liked having Finn’s locker next to his, the conversations they had were the highlight of PE.

Phil fidgeted almost imperceptibly; his fingers slowly running over the ends of each other. Mrs Vines spoke about Chaucer, while the heat of Rae’s body bathed him. He had noticed that whenever the three of them were together, he and Finn would end up sitting on either side of Rae. In school, in the social events they went to. Even if he sat down first, to stop himself from sitting next to Rae, inevitably she’d sit next to him, Finn on her other side. Sometimes, like at lunch times at the bench they sat at, they would end up pressed together for lack of room, and he would feel their thighs pressing together, their arms… When she was close like this he remembered Lincoln. He remembered her showing her body to him, the way she felt sleeping beside him, the taste of her mouth, the feel of her body; the intimacies they had shared. Not once did he regret not taking advantage of her. He knew a lot of other boys would have taken her emotional upset over Finn as an opportunity; and invitation even, especially since she basically told him to take it as an invitation. But she was emotional and vulnerable and he would be lying to himself if he were to say it would have been anything other than him taking advantage of her. But he just couldn’t do something like that to anyone, least of all the love of his life. He could have made love to her numerous times over those three nights. He probably could have used her vulnerability to manipulate her into not trusting Finn anymore. He hated himself for even knowing that he could have done it. It wasn’t enough to know he’d never do something like that, that when tested, he stayed true to himself, even though he wanted her so badly; he wanted a version of himself that didn’t even know that things like that were a possibility.

Phil found himself smiling as Finn compared Chaucer’s character the miller to a frat boy. It was a clever comparison, although Phil would never tell Finn that. And then Rae joined in saying the wife of Bath would fit in on something like the Jerry Springer show. Phil would tell Rae what a brilliant comparison it was if it came up in conversation. He knew he was unfairly denying Finn, but Finn didn’t really need his compliments, so he didn’t worry too much about it. That’s what he told himself.

Except he did worry about how unfair he was to Finn.

Constantly.

Two days later he was on a free period and was walking through the stacks in the library, his head down, pouring over a list of books he needed to find. He turned the corner into the last stack, the only dead end row in the library, with only one entrance to the row. It was a slightly darker aisle, but there was nothing extraordinary about it; people doing advanced English would need to head to this aisle because it housed literary criticisms and the classics. He looked up as he walked into the aisle and saw Rae and Finn at the end of the aisle. A book was splayed on the floor, her hands were pressed against the wall. His hand was in her jeans, their eyes never parting, their lips almost touching. The intimacy of the moment nearly floored Phil. And he stepped back on impulse as if the light of their love had pushed him back and made him physically unable to simply turn, he slammed into the stack clumsily. He couldn’t recall doing something clumsy since he was 10 and his deportment classes had begun. He banged the stack hard enough for the books to jump and he raised his hands to catch them on instinct. None fell, but he had to stop himself from exclaiming loudly about how hard he’d hit the stacks and how much it had hurt; yelping ‘fuck’ loudly in pain
was not good etiquette in a library, or most places really. He had dropped his piece of paper in his haste to back away and he bent to pick it up, resolutely not looking at Rae and Finn who must know he was there now.

Completely against his own will, his eyes flicked up to Rae and Finn as he straightened up; his piece of paper clutched in his hand. Rae’s eyes were wide with shocked horror at being caught, specifically by him, her hands were now in Finn’s forearm as if trying to pull his hand from her pants. But Finn was looking over his shoulder at Phil thoughtfully, his tongue poking at his back teeth, his hand not moving from Rae’s pants. He seemed to almost look Phil up and down, as if sizing him up, and slowly slid his hand out of Rae’s pants. Rae fumbled with zipping up, her face flushing scarlet, but Finn just turned slightly and looked at Phil.

“Need a book?” He asked. And Phil stared at him in silence for a moment.

“Um…” In all of the time Rae had known Phil she hadn’t heard him say ‘um’ once, occasionally he’d say ‘uh’, but never ‘um.’ “Um… I’ll come back later.” He said in a low voice.

“Don’t let us stop you.” Finn said and Rae gave Finn a disbelieving look. He motioned for Phil to come closer, “C’mon mate, get your stuff.”

“I just needed one book.” Phil lied. Rae noticed how he couldn’t look either of them in the eye. He was great at lying to people he didn’t care about, but people he did care about; she’d noticed how he couldn’t look them in the eye when he lied to them. She’d seen him lower his eyes and say he was fine when Chloe had asked him. She’d seen the same lowering of the eyes when Kelsey had asked him, or Izzy, or Woody, or Bryn or Bethany… She was sure he’d lower his eyes if any of his other good friends asked him how he was and he answered fine.

“Come get it, it’s fine.” Finn said honestly and picked up the book he’d made Rae drop when he’d pushed her up against the wall.

“Oh I need that book.” Phil nearly kicked himself for not keeping his foolish mouth shut. Finn held it in both hands and looked over at Rae.

“Oh I need that book.” Phil nearly kicked himself for not keeping his foolish mouth shut. Finn held it in both hands and looked over at Rae.

“It’s fine.” She shrugged, “Don’t need it.” She lowered her eyes, barely able to look at Phil, terrified of the pain this had caused him, cursing herself for letting it go this far in the library of all places. Phil walked up to Finn and took the book, but Finn didn’t let go immediately. Phil could smell her scent in the air; a scent he knew from Lincoln. He paused, again barely able to move, Rae looking at her feet, Finn looking him square in the face as he held the book. Phil felt heat spread through his lower abdomen and felt the sudden burst of blood in his cock that was so familiar to him whenever Rae was near, each beat of his heart pulsing more blood into his cock. Phil desperately willed the blush to not come to his face as his desire grew. Finn was his friend, and Rae was right there, and this was just all sorts of awkward and wrong… but his body was aching with lust. His lips parted slightly, his eyes on Finn, the smell of Rae’s cunt must be obvious to him too; he was a man, he had to smell it. Phil looked down to Finn’s fingers, the ones that had been inside Rae’s pants a minute ago and knew that’s where the smell was coming from. Finn looked down at his fingers too, and in that moment they both knew that they both could smell her. Thankfully for Rae, she was too busy still staring at her shoes and trying to stop her face from looking like a radish to notice. Both lads looked up at each other simultaneously, and almost subconsciously, Finn let go of the book with that hand, the fingers unconsciously going up towards his nose or mouth, Phil couldn’t tell. Finn’s eyes had a strange look in them as if he didn’t know what he was doing or why, and Phil was mesmerised by his fingers moving towards his face, and the look in his eyes; he so wanted to taste those fingers, to taste her… on those fingers.

“Finn!” Rae hissed almost silently, and he stopped his hand from finishing its trajectory, his eyes
flicking from Phil to Rae. Phil looked from Finn to Rae too. There was a moment of silence before Finn looked back down at the book and cleared his throat.

“I’m gonna need this book.” Finn said, “I’ll come round and get it tomorrow yeah?”

“Sure.” Phil said and Finn let go of the book. “See you both in drama.” He turned and left before they had chance to say anything, grabbing his bag, checking out the book and leaving the library as quickly as he could.

“That was rude Phil. You’re supposed to say goodbye to friends.” He said to himself to stop himself thinking over any of what just happened.

He felt like it was tawdry, to do this to the memories of Lincoln, but every time, every goddamn time, he just couldn’t stop himself. The steaming shower water down his back, his forehead against the cold tiles, his hand pumping back and forth, his other hand on his chest, his eyes closed. He could almost feel her lips on his again. The look in her eyes in that moment she realised she loved him too. He would not let himself think of that other look – the one when she knew she’d have to tell him no even though she loved him. When he thought about any of that the air was sucked from his lungs. Instead he remembered the sounds she made when he had made her cum, the way her body had moved, how sweet her lips tasted, her smell… he felt himself lying beside her in bed naked. He thought of that last night in Lincoln. He could feel his hands on her creamy skin, he could feel her warmth.

He felt a sound escaping him as he came, the images of her still strong in his mind as he rode his orgasm. But now Finn sat up in the bed on the opposite side of Rae and looked at him thoughtfully. Phil’s eyes snapped open, his body heaving with his orgasm. It wasn’t the first time Finn had invaded his private thoughts about Rae and it didn’t happen often, but from the first day Finn had stepped up jealously to him, he’d been angrily asserting himself in Phil’s fantasies; often stopping him from coming. Which Phil would suppose was only fair enough, he often worried if it was appropriate to be fantasising about someone he knew and talked to most days in a sexual way like this; how would Rae feel about it? He knew many women who hated the thought and urged men not to sexualise women against their wishes, but wondered at what point it became thought policing and at what point it became legitimate criticism of the male gaze and male sexualisation of the female form. Usually Finn would appear standing over the bed, and Phil would become instantly aware of just how negatively he compared himself to Finn, and all hope of orgasm was lost. It had been different this time; this time he’d been in the bed with him and Phil hadn’t felt threatened by his presence. He supposed it was because they were friends now.

“Ugh, I don’t need happy Finn dancing through my fantasies.” He turned the temperature down and shoved his face under the water.

_Darling Phil,_

_I’ll be home for dinner, don’t eat without me, I want to hear all about your day!_

_Mother xo_

He knew he shouldn’t bother… but he still waited.

He ate the dinner she’d left for him; a vegan salad, at 9:30pm. Alone. He left her plate of salad in
the fridge and headed up to his room, ignoring how dark and silent the house was.

It was moments like these, when the three of them were laughing together that did his head in the most.

“Your core strength isn’t good enough.” Finn ran his fingertips down Finn’s stomach. Phil had seen Rhys do a similar thing to Finn; testing the muscle. “Get on the decline bench.”

Phil laced his legs in the knee stirrups and leaned back at the 45 degree angle. These sit ups were killer. Finn grabbed a five kilo medicine ball. “Catch it or it’s gonna break your face.” He said and Phil looked alarmed at him. “Sit ups, come on! This isn’t a day at the beach, lazing about.” Phil did his sit ups, his hands ready to catch the ball, his eyes on Finn, sweat beading on his forehead, after about forty sit ups, Phil started to grunt with exertion and that’s when Finn threw the ball for the first time, when he was just starting to rise for another sit up, and he threw it very hard. Phil barely caught it, the muscles in his arms, chest, back and stomach tensing magnificently to catch the weight. He understood what he had to do and threw the ball back, completing the sit up as he threw it. Phil was rising again and Finn threw the ball again.

“I’m gonna do this, until you can’t catch it from exhaustion.” Finn said sternly, “Then we box.” Phil gritted his teeth and threw the ball back, hard. Finn gave him an impressed look. “Good. Harder next time.”

Phil lay in bed, his body aching from the workouts Finn was giving him; he’d up the difficulty this week and his body was letting him know about it. He also felt the urge to eat meat; he had cravings for it. He’d need to remind his mother to have more meat included in his diet; she’d just have to tell whoever she had preparing their meals, it wouldn’t be any extra work for her. He really enjoyed training with Finn, and playing football with him; Finn had brought out a more physical side of Phil. He’d always had his physicality with tennis and fencing, and he was a very physical lover. But this was an extremely muscular physicality. It was new to him and he liked it. He was no longer surprised by just how much he enjoyed Finn’s friendship; could there really be any doubt that he’d be an amazing lad? Rae loved him; of courses he’d be brilliant.

And he supposed that this was his life now; friend to both of them. Rae, the love of his life. And Finn, her entirely awesome partner, who he was so glad to call a friend.

Phil rolled over in bed and put his face into his pillow in frustration and misery.

“Stop thinking about them!” He told himself, “Stop thinking about her. She’s happy.” He laid on his stomach and stared at the wall, “She’s happy Phil. Let her go.”

But even as he said the words he knew it was impossible to just let her go. He so wished he could just let her go; then they’d all know peace. “I’m trying… I’m trying.”
Undisclosed Desires

‘Undisclosed Desires’ by Muse

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8OOWcsFj0U

I know you’ve suffered, but I don’t want you to hide. It’s cold and loveless; I won’t let you be denied.

Kelsey, Phillip’s older sister, was in Stamford doing an urban art commission for the art gallery, and when their parents were away she would often stay in the house with him. He was used to being alone, so it made for a nice change… Until she decided to have an incredibly huge party on Friday night. Their parents were getting back on Monday evening after taking a mini-break for the long weekend, and right now Phil was watching two girls shagging on the grand piano, with a pained expression. He turned when he heard a crashing noise from the kitchen and rolled his eyes. Kelsey would have to deal with all the shit her friends were doing.

The doorbell had been going all night and Phil was checking that the door to upstairs was locked when he heard a knock at the door. He looked up immediately, a huge grin coming to his face. The only person he knew that knocked that door rather than used the doorbell was Finn. He jogged through the house to open the door. When he did he saw the entire extended gang on the front doorstep, Finn leaning on the door frame with a cigarette hanging from his lips. Their eyes met for a moment and Finn grinned.

“You gonna let us in wanker?”

“Alright I suppose.” Phil shrugged, returning the grin.

“Jesus Phil!” Izzy looked around, “Your house is really crowded.”

“You gotta have half of fucking Stamford here.” Chop agreed.

They all claimed the settees, lounging across them, drinking, laughing, as all around them the numbers increased and the clock ticked closer to midnight. Phil was sitting next to Rae as always, squeezed onto the sofa, the entire side of his body touching her, and on the other side of Rae, Finn was pressed against her too. They were all nicely buzzed from alcohol, when Chloe got up and pulled Rhys to his feet, starting him dancing. Kelsey’s friends had bought some lighting rigs and just before midnight the houselights went out and the lighting rig went on, just as Izzy was convincing Chop to join Chloe and Rhys on the dance floor. The dance floor was the huge lounge room; everything had been pushed to the walls, and hundreds of people writhed together in the flashing lights, the music throbbing in their chests. It was more packed than most nightclubs. When Chop finally agreed to get up even though he was exhausted after work, there was enough room on the lounge and Phil didn’t really have a reason to stay pressed against Rae. But he didn’t move. He looked around and couldn’t see anyone else from the gang; they had all been swallowed by the press of people. Phil looked over at Rae and Finn softly talking and suddenly felt very alone, the buzz of the alcohol slightly wearing off. He started to pull away but Rae’s hand fell to his thigh. It was impossible to talk properly, the music was far too loud, Rae had had to practically yell into Finn’s ear about having a dance. She wasn’t going to yell into Phil’s ear. Instead she just stood up, using his and Finn’s thighs to do so. Her black dress, fitted like a glove over her breasts and lose
from the waist down, moved sinuously over her body as she stood before them, her high, messy pony tail bouncing as she started to move slightly to the music with a grin on her face. Finn got up and put a hand on her waist and Phil looked away. He was just starting to feel really sorry for himself when Finn grabbed his cuff and yanked it hard; they’d been waiting for him to join them, while he was staring off. The surprised look on Phil’s face made Finn and Rae laugh. But he got up and grinned at his friends; they were trying, and they didn’t have to do this for him, they could be enjoying each other instead of worrying about him.

They danced, carving out a tiny spot for themselves, in a little triangle, none of them touching now, just enjoying the act of moving to music with friends.

Kelsey appeared from nowhere and gave them all drinks, dancing for a while with them, laughing drunkenly before tripping off into the crowd, leaving them in a buzzed mood, drinking and laughing, the strong alcoholic content in the drink loosening up their dance moves. Kelsey looked on from across the crowded room and grinned when Finn’s hand went to Rae’s waist, and far from excluding Phil, he stepped in closer to both Phil and Rae. She grinned and nodded to herself, hoping that the very obvious desire she had seen in all three of them from the moment she’d first seen them together in London would finally get the better of them.

Rae felt the closeness of Finn and Phil, her eyes falling somewhere in between them, her brain moving off beat to her body; the alcohol affecting her more than she’d expected. The feeling between them had very suddenly shifted from three mates dancing to charged. The possibility of something happening danced around them tantalisingly, and as the crowd pushed in on them, instead of pushing back to keep their space, they all silently agreed to let themselves be pushed slightly closer together. She looked up at Finn, his eyes were on her and she flicked her eyes to Phil, his eyes were on Finn, but they moved to her and she put a hand on his chest and Finn slipped behind her, his hands going up her sides as he danced behind her, his pelvis grinding against her arse. There was still space between Phil and Rae, and Phil watched as Finn’s hands moved up her body, her hands on Phil’s chest, her fingers slowly curling around the material of his shirt.

Phil didn’t quite understand what was happening, but as the rhythmic movement of the press of bodies behind him pushed into him again he let it push him forward. Rae put her arms on his shoulders and he let one of his hands go to her waist. Rae’s head rolled back and Phil could see Finn kissing her neck. Finn looked up at him, his bottom lip dragging along her neck, the desire in his eyes devouring Phil. He was still staring into Finn’s eyes when he felt Finn’s hand over his, his fingers caressing the skin of his inner wrist gently. Rae dropped a hand to Phil’s waist and pulled him in closer, the three of them rhythmically grinding together.

Rae raised her hands above her head and swayed her hips lavishly and Phil’s other hand instantly came to her waist to feel that sway, his breath stopped in his throat. She was so sexy; her head thrown back, her eyes closed, her arms raised above her head, swaying and grinding to the music. Phil’s cock started to throb in his pants and he knew that there was no way she didn’t feel how hard he was through their clothes; they were pressed too close together for her not to.

The slight movement of Finn’s hand on his, the way Finn’s other hand squeezed Rae’s breast. The feel of being pressed against her, the rhythm of the music. He saw Finn’s head roll back when Rae dropped her hands, one of them creeping behind her to rub his hard cock through his pants. The other one reached down and rubbed Phil’s cock through his pants, her eyes on his face.

Rae hadn’t intended or expected for this to happen when she suggested to Finn that maybe they could invite Phil to dance with them; she had only wanted for Phil not to feel left out. She still wasn’t entirely sure of what had happened to make this happen, but she didn’t care anymore. She was with the two men she loved, dancing with them, pleasuring them, being pleased by them.
expressing their feelings physically, sexually. She realised now that trying so hard to not have any regrets with Phil, and denying her true feelings and thoughts all along had nearly become the biggest regret of her life. She had to be with both of them, she loved them both. And right now she didn’t care what anybody else said about it. Phil let his fingers start to caress Finn’s hand in return and was gifted with that hungry, intense look again. Feeling more confident of what was happening Phil raised his other hand to Rae’s breast and gently felt the shape and weight of it, his eyes dropping to her other breast, Finn’s fingers squeezing it firmly. He nearly fell to his knees with desire and aching for this to be something real. He never thought he’d touch her again, and here he was, in front of half of Stamford, worshipping her right breast. He knew that almost every student from the College was here, but he couldn’t take his eyes off Rae. Unless it was to look at Finn.

Finn pulled on Rae’s hips turning her around and kissed her passionately, one hand going to her face, the other still on Phil’s hand. Rae leaned back on Phil, still swaying her hips to the music, as Finn kissed her neck, his hand moving from her face to Phil’s and Phil lowered his mouth to Rae’s neck. Finn’s fingers laced through Phil’s and they clapped hands tightly, resting their hands on Rae’s hip. Rae moaned loudly, the sound lost in the thumping music as both lads kissed her neck passionately. Finn’s hand travelled down her body slowly, enjoying her soft curves, until he reached his destination and gently cupped her cunt through her clothes. Phil’s hand was also journeying around her body, again ending up on her breast, squeezing it gently. Rae again groaned and raised one hand to caress Phil’s face, the other holding Finn’s shirt for support as he started to gently rub her pussy.

Phil looked up and saw the way Finn was looking at Rae, and she was returning the look. Phil watched them kiss, feeling Rae’s hand drop from his face to his hip, pulling him closer and Phil happily moved closer, wanting more of this, wanting something he never knew he’d wanted so badly until this moment.

Finn looked up from kissing Rae and looked at Phil; his mouth open, his eyes alight with desire. He cocked a questioning eyebrow at Phil and Rae looked over her shoulder at Phil as Finn put his hand on Phil’s face, his eyes dropping to Phil’s lips.

And in that moment a shuddering realisation, an understanding came to Phil. He was in love with Finn too. He understood the blushes, the shivers down his spine, how intimate his lingering gazes had become over the past few months of friendship with Finn. But he wasn’t gay. He knew that. He’d only ever been attracted to girls before this moment. But it was Finn, and he wanted Finn too. And Finn was looking at him like he might kiss him. Phil saw the slight hesitation from Finn; he wasn’t sure, was nervous… was only doing this for Rae?

Phil suddenly pulled back from them both, his hand pulling from Finn’s almost violently.

“I can’t do this.” He whispered and turned from them heading out towards the back of the house.

“Phil!” Rae called after him. She hadn’t heard what he’d said because of the music, but they both knew what the sentiment was.

Rae turned to Finn, a scared, anxious look in her eyes. She needed them both, she loved them both. There was a reason she couldn’t stand the idea of letting Phil go; she wasn’t meant to. But what would Finn feel? How would he feel being just one of two she loved?

“Finn…” She turned to him and he saw the look in her eyes, understanding what she needed with perfect clarity. He put his lips to her ear.

“I’ll go talk to him.” He yelled over the music, “Wait here.” He gave her a reassuring smile before kissing her deeply and heading out through the crowd.
He knew where Phil would be. He’d been to Phil’s house a lot over the past few months, and they had done several painting lessons in the back yard. There was a beautiful gazebo out there that Finn knew Phil liked to go to think.

Phil sat silently, his arms wrapped around his waist staring at the garden lit up with fairy lights. It was magically beautiful out here, and the music was nowhere near as intrusive; they could talk.

“Your house is well sound proofed.” Finn noted the drop in volume in the music from coming outside, “Even so, how d’you keep the neighbours off your arse?”

“£1000 cheques with their invitation to join us.” Phil said softly. “Kelsey forges mum’s signature, and dad doesn’t mind mum spending however much she wants, so he never asks her about it.”

“Wow money really can buy you anything.”

“No it can’t.” Phil wouldn’t look up at Finn, everything hurt too much. He couldn’t look at his friend and know how much he loved him and Rae. It was too much having one person he couldn’t be with, now there were two of them. He kept asking himself why it had to be another person he couldn’t have. He’d hoped that he would love again after Rae… why did it happen with someone else he couldn’t be with? Why? His eyes were threatening to spill tears so he took some deep breaths, still not looking at Finn. Finn sat down next to him and looked out at the garden thoughtfully.

“That took an unexpected turn.” Finn said bracingly. Phil scoffed and nodded his head.

“Yeah.” He said softly.

“We was just gonna keep you company all night… didn’t expect…” Finn wasn’t sure how to approach the topic. “D’you remember teaching me to paint fucking tulips out here. Fuck I whinged the whole time… ‘Why the fuck have I gotta paint fucking tulips?’”

“Colourisation.” Phil remembered.

“Aye.” Phil had used the flowers to help teach Finn about how colours really worked; how nothing was ever a solid colour, it was always mixes of colours.

“Capturing natural light.” He added and took a deep breath, feeling more steady. Finn nodded again.

“Never thought about capturing light in a painting till you taught me.” He said, “It’s like me eyes were opened up to something I didn’t even know existed until then.”

“Well I didn’t know how to knock a guy out till you taught me.” Phil returned and Finn grinned. “I feel a lot safer knowing I can defend myself a little.” He added.

“This friendship we’ve got… it’s brought a lot of good things to both of us.” Finn said but Phil still couldn’t bring himself to look at Finn. This was the talk, this was the ‘we still have to be friends’ talk. This was the moment Finn told him that even though something had happened in there on the dance floor, Phil was not a part of their duo, their special relationship. Phil was a friend. And Phil had to be a good friend to Rae and keep being their friend. And maybe he’d get to have some fun with them tonight, but tomorrow… tomorrow they’d be friends. And it stuck in Phil’s throat.

He knew he could probably go back into the house and fuck Rae and Finn, what a night that would be, what memories he’d have. But memories couldn’t hold him, and he was so lonely.
But he already knew he’d do it. How could he pass up a night with the two people he loved more than his own life?

“Oh fuck.” He muttered to himself.

“What is it?” Finn asked gently; he was always better at reacting to people than having to get to the difficult topics. But Phil just shook his head “Why d’you run out? I thought we was having a good time?” Finn tried to prod. He thought if he added the ‘good time’ bit it would reassure Phil.

“I don’t just want a good time!” He retorted angrily. “I want the bad times, I wanna hold her when she cries. I wanna be there for you when the shit hits the fan. I don’t just wanna fuck!” Phil finally looked at Finn, “I am in love with Rae!” He said desperate for Finn to understand.

“I know.” Finn tried to answer, not sure why Phil’s response stung him so badly.

“And god fucking help me, but I love you too Finn.” The tears he’d been holding came, and he let them slip down his cheeks, knowing it didn’t matter anyway, “and not just as a friend.” He clarified. He looked away when he saw the surprise of Finn’s face, “and… and I can’t just be a fuck for the night. I can’t do it.” He said, knowing that he would do it. “I love you both, and I can’t do this and then just watch you two go back to your happy relationship after it. I can’t Finn.” He willed Finn to understand and withdraw all offers to fuck, because if the offer stayed, he’d go. “I wanna be loved. Just once… just once Finn… I wish I was loved by someone who could love me too. And be with me. I wanna be loved Finn. I need it.” Finn saw the misery in his face, even though he was looking away and gently put his hand on Phil’s thigh, making him turn his face back to Finn.

“Y’are.” Finn said softly, his hand going to Phil’s face. “You’re so loved Phil.” Phil looked in his eyes for a moment, completely bewildered, but before any thoughts could come to him, Finn’s lips were on his.

Phil stopped breathing as Finn’s lips gently insisted that he kiss back. And he did, both of his hands instantly going to Finn’s face, his mouth opening to let Finn’s tongue taste him.

A shiver went through his body as Finn’s fingers found his again and laced through them, his other hand going to his chest.

They stopped, their lips coming apart, their foreheads still pressed together.

“I’ve never…”

“Me either…”

They stayed like that, both panting with desire, both mentally exploring this new experience silently. Phil’s hand caressed Finn’s face before he pressed his lips to Finn’s again, just gently; a slow, tender kiss, filled with the new love he had discovered within himself for Finn. And Finn returned the kiss deeply.

Finn knew he had to stop kissing Phil, had to have a minute to get his head in order. This was all a surprise, but he knew what he wanted. And the minute Phil had said he loved him, Finn had understood his own feelings; everything had become perfectly clear. They stayed silent for a moment longer, foreheads touching, fingers laced together, Finn’s thumb slowly caressing Phil’s hand, while Finn figured out what this all meant for them. Phil was entirely stunned and still not able to even think. How was it that Finn had come out here and kissed him?

“So then…” Finn whispered, his lips brushing Phil’s, “That should clarify things a bit.” They
kissed again. Finn pulled back and stroked Phil’s hair, looking him in the eye.

“This whole night has been so… fucking… unexpected.” Phil told him, still trying to catch up with it all.

“Aye.” Finn agreed and grinned, “But good unexpected right?”

“Yeah.”

“Aye.” Finn dropped his hand to Phil’s other hand and looked him in the eye. “Come back inside.” He saw the fear in Phil’s eyes; was this a one night deal? “We both love you Phil.” Finn stood up and held his hand out to Phil, “Trust us.” Finn said softly.

Phil looked at his hand then up at Finn’s face. He saw no lie in Finn’s face, no mockery. There was only love, laced with desire.

Phil reached up and took his hand, allowing Finn to lead him back inside to Rae.

She was sitting alone on the sofa, looking worried, biting her thumbnail as she stared off. They stopped just out of her line of sight, both of them staring at her in awe. They glanced at each other, still holding hands, and Finn gave Phil a grin, before forging forwards, Phil following.

Rae looked up to see Finn returning. She didn’t see Phil until she stood up and saw him trailing behind Finn, the crowd pressing in on them, but their hands were clasped together firmly.

They stopped in front of her, but the music made speaking impossible. Phil pointed to the ceiling and they understood what he meant. Phil led the way back through the crowd, Rae taking Finn’s hand and following. Her heart was in her mouth; was this really happening?

When they got to the door to the stairs Kelsey was leaning on it with a grin. She’d decided to head out to the gazebo a few minutes ago to have a breather only to find it occupied. She looked at her baby brother first, then Finn, then Rae and held up her closed hand. Opening it, a long roll of packaged condoms unfurled. She handed them to Rae, cocked an eyebrow suggestively and disappeared into the crowd.

Phil blushed and cleared his throat but Rae and Finn exchanged a glance and in that look Rae knew that Finn was alright, that he wanted this too. She grinned, squeezed his hand and they both looked at Phil as he unlocked the door. He waited for them to come through before locking it behind them all three of them heading up the stairs to his bedroom holding hands.
Phil dropped onto the foot of his bed and sat looking up at Finn and Rae. Rae kicked her shoes off and sat down on the bed, using Phil’s pillows to support her back, putting the condoms on the bedside table. Finn sat on the desk, looking over at them.

They sat in silence for a moment, not sure how to proceed.

“Wow.” Phil said, “I guess I’m bisexual.” Finn made a sound in the back of his throat and nodded.

“Aye.” He agreed. “Not something I expected.” Rae watched her two lads looking at each other, still figuring this thing out.

“I suppose if it were gonna be anyone, it’d be you. You’re such a pretty boy.” Phil said with a cheeky grin.

“I’ll show you pretty boy.” Finn answered saucily and Rae enjoyed the sexually charged energy between them; it was raw and excitable.

“I have no doubt o’ that.” Phil’s eyes never left Finn’s and Finn felt his cock stirring, just from the hungry look Phil was giving him, “I look forward to it.”

“Holy shit Phil.” Finn breathed, “You are so fucking sexy.” He chuckled at how unexpectedly horny he was. Phil gave an embarrassed shrug and lowered his eyes momentarily before looking back up.

“Well out of the three of us I do have the most experience, so hopefully I can be a little sexy.” Everything was so new and they didn’t have a clue how to proceed, so there was another moment of silence while Rae looked over at the condoms and then back over to Finn.

“Well I guess that brings us nicely to condoms.” She said softly and both lads turned their eyes to her.

“I suppose it does.” Phil’s mouth suddenly felt very dry, at the very least, it seemed very probable that the three of them were going to have sex tonight. “I always use ‘em.” Phil said sounding less nervous than he was. “I have no intention of being a father before I’m ready and I’m not keen on getting anything either.” He told them, “I’m always really careful, use different condoms for different partners in threesomes and foursomes every time….” He shrugged. “I get regular blood tests, my last one was a week ago.” He looked up expectantly at Rae and Finn.

“You sound like you’ve said that a lot.” Rae said, taking a moment to let everything catch up with her.

“Yeah.” Phil said, “I’ve made it a standard conversation before every sexual encounter I’ve had with a new partner. Much better to be safe than sorry.” He took a deep breath and looked down at his shaking hands, “If you’re gonna fuck around you gotta be careful.” He looked at both, “What
about you guys?”

“Um…” Rae looked at Finn.

“We’re clean.” Finn answered. “I take it you are?” Phil nodded and Rae and Finn exchanged a look; instantly they decided that they both trusted Phil.

“Good cos we don’t use condoms.” Rae picked up the condoms and tossed them across the room. Phil looked at the condoms where they landed and bit his bottom lip.

“I was only gonna not use condoms when I got into a long term relationship.” He said slowly and Rae made a slight noise in the back of her throat as if she was agreeing with the sentiment.

“We’ll use ‘em if you wanna.” Finn looked at him closely and Phil felt his insides clench. “I mean I dunno how threesomes work and what the etiquette is…” He bit the inside corner of his mouth slightly, the nerves were starting to creep up on him too, “But… I’m with Rae, I don’t think us three need to.”

“Um…” Phil thought about it for a moment. They hadn’t really addressed what he said about the relationship, but he didn’t think it was a deliberate omission on their behalves. When he looked over at Rae, he could see her hands shaking too. And Finn was biting the inside of his mouth again, and Phil knew he did that when he was anxious or unsure. “What’s happening here?” He whispered.

“We’re talking about whether you wanna use condoms or no.” Rae answered.

“Oh right.” Phil shook his head, not wanting to ask them if this was the beginnings of a relationship, afraid of what the answer might be; would probably be.

“Do you not wanna go through with this?” Rae’s brows furrowed and he could hear that she was trying to keep the emotion out of her voice. He understood that she was trying to do for him what he had done for her; a guilt free decision.

“No, I do.” He told her, “I do… I’m just…” He blew out the breath he’d been holding in his lungs and laughed nervously.

“I’m nervous too.” She added and they all shared the nervous laugh. Rae bit her bottom lip and built up her courage. She knelt and crawled down the bed to him, Finn watching. She was nervous about touching Phil in front Finn, what if his old jealousy came back? But when she looked over at him his eyes were filled with lust and he nodded his head, urging her on. Rae knelt beside him, facing him and he twisted his torso to face her. She ran her fingers down his face and kissed him deeply, Finn’s eyes burning with hunger as he watched. But he had decided to give Phil a moment with Rae before getting involved. Phil had loved Rae for so long, had asked for her without reprieve for so long. Finn wanted him to have a moment to just enjoy that he was touching her again. Finally.

“How long have you been in love with me Phil?” She asked softly, her hand on his face, her forehead touching his.

“Over a year. Since December of 1996.” He answered, his voice wavering with his emotion and desire. It was May of 1998 now, it had been October of last year that Rae and Phil had spent those few days in Lincoln; that long since they had touched each other.

“And how long have you loved Finn?” Rae had understood the looks between them since they’d come to Phil’s room; it was more than a sexual attraction between her lads. The boys both looked
at her with adoration; of course she’d understood it easily without explanation.

“Past few months probably really since January, but I only realised it tonight.” He answered and they both look over at Finn.

“And how long have you loved me Finn?”

“Since August 96.” He grinned. “And him…” He looked at Phil, “probably February or March if I really think on it… loved him afore I knew it, like you girl.” Rae looked back at Phil with a grin.

“August 96.” She pointed at Finn, “probably around May of 97.” She pointed at Phil, “but there was a lot of denial with that, so pinpointing exactly when’d be pretty hard.” And they both realised what she had just done; she’d eased everyone’s nerves.

“It’s a long time.” Phil said softly, “Three months that we all…” But it didn’t need to be said; there had been three months where they had all loved each other but had not together. His eyes went from Rae’s to Finn’s. “Is this actually real?” Rae straddled him in response and Phil’s hands went straight to her hips, his eyes not leaving hers.

“That’s a long time,” she kissed him again, “that you’ve been waiting for this.” She stroked his face and Phil could still barely believe this was real. “I’m sorry you had to wait so long… but I had some shit to sort out.” She took his face in her hands, “It’s sorted now.” Phil wasn’t entirely sure what she meant, but in his heart he was believing more and more that they intended for this to become a relationship. He took a moment to stroke her hair and take her in.

“I love you Rae.” His voice was filled with emotions that made him deeply vulnerable.

“I love you.” She replied, and looked over her shoulder at Finn, “And I love you too.” Finn looked at them, Phil’s hands gripping her hips while she straddled him; there was no raging fire of jealousy as there had been all those months ago when he had first realised that his girl loved another man. He had been on such an intense journey in that time, of learning to love selflessly, without ego, and at the end of it, he’d realised that Phil was obviously someone very special, because it wasn’t just Rae that had fallen in love with him when she got to know him. He had too. So seeing the two people he loved so much embracing lit a different fire in him now; desire, happiness, and increasing love.

“I love you both.” Finn replied in a husky voice and Phil looked around Rae to Finn.

“I love you.” He told Finn, “You gonna come over?”

“In a minute.” Finn answered, wanting to let Phil have a moment longer with the woman he had loved for so long. Rae understood what he was doing and slowly pulled Phil’s shirt off. She kissed down his neck and Phil groaned, falling back on his bed, pulling her with him. She laughed and happily fell onto him, slowly kissing his lips the minute they landed. He stared at her longingly in between deep aching kisses, his hands always on her face or in her hair. She had felt these aching kisses from him before; in Lincoln. They were no less potent now than they had been then and she was breathless with desire and emotion.

“I can’t believe this is happening.” He murmured in awe as she felt her hand travel down his chest, her fingertips stopping at his jeans.

Finn jumped off the desk and went over to the bed. He pulled his own shirt off and laid down on his side beside Phil. He watched Rae and Phillip kissing passionately; the heat between them exquisite. Rae stopped kissing Phil and turned to Finn, kissing him with equal heat and passion,
making Finn groan appreciatively. Phil watched them kissing, feeling the heat from them, it made his insides tingle with joy, and started to pull Rae’s dress up as she kissed Finn. Rae was kneeling on her dress and she laughed as the boys both started to pull on it and struggled to make any headway. She jumped off the bed and left Phil and Finn lying together, looking up at her. She nodded slowly and motioned for them to kiss by pointing at both of them and bringing her hands together, a lusty look in her eyes.

They turned to each other with nervous grins. They had already kissed, but this was all so new; touching another man like they wanted to touch each other was something neither of them had done before. Finn’s hand went to Phil’s chest, feeling the firm muscle with real delight. Finn looked over at Rae with a grin; wanting her to see how much he was enjoying this new experience. Phil bit his bottom lip and touched Finn’s face, letting his fingers trail down his neck, his chest, down the centre of his stomach, stopping just before his fingers hit his jeans. Finn pulled Phil closer and their legs entwined as Phil’s hand went to Finn’s waist to continue the motion of pulling closer. Phil turned his eyes to Rae, wondering what she was feeling as she watched them, but Finn put a hand on his cheek and he turned back to Finn, their lips touching in the same movement.

Their first kiss in front of Rae had been barely a peck, slowly coming apart and swinging back together in the momentum of the kiss, both of them with open mouths this time, Finn’s hand on the back of Phil’s head to pull him to him. Their mouths were hungry, their hands desperate to explore and Rae watched them kissing heatedly, their hands travelling over each other’s bodies both excitedly and tentatively, their hands stopping at the place where their jeans started, still not sure how or when to proceed with that part of the exploration. Rae knew that over the next few weeks she’d have to give them lots of time like this, to explore their newfound attraction and love for each other. She found she didn’t mind at all; it was quite a turn-on to see her lads like this. After a few moments, both lad had a hand permanently attached to the top of the other’s jeans, slowly slipping the tips of their fingers below the hemline, but always stopping before they got far enough under the jeans to feel anything.

“Undress each other.” Rae suggested and was greeted by two equally agreeing groans. And as if she had given them permission, Finn started to unzip Phil’s fly while Phil’s hands dropped to Finn’s belt and slowly undid it; their mouths never parting. But before he undid Finn’s jeans, Phil got up off the bed and pulled Finn up, both of them laughing together, Finn’s hands going to the bulge in Phil’s pants. They both paused and looked down at Finn’s hand and Rae had to suppress a chuckle at how lost they both looked for a minute. Phil looked up at Finn’s face and Finn, still looking at the nice bulge in Phil’s pants squeezed slightly, Phil gave him a groan and Finn slid his fingers in the unzipped fly, feeling Phil’s cock through his boxers’ both lad’s heart pounding with excitement for the unknown.

Phil reached over to Rae and pulled her closer to them, his hands again finding a way to start pulling her dress off and she helped him; the two of them pulling it up over her head as Finn undid the top button of Phil’s fly. Rae turned to unzip Finn’s pants, everybody laughing as they started to figure out how this all worked and who put their hands where.

“Can we all kiss at the same time, do you think?” Finn asked, “Cos I wanna kiss you both.”

“Let’s try.” Rae answered and they grinned and giggled, bringing their faces together, their lips pursed, and found that they could indeed all kiss at the same time, their tongues creating some kind of magic as they writhed around each other.

Both Finn and Phil reached to take Rae’s bra off as the three of them were kissing and they all burst out laughing.

“Right you hold one side, I’ll pull the hooks out.” Finn said and Phil nodded; it was the quickest
Finn had gotten her bra off, and before it had hit the ground both of them were holding a breast, stroking it, kissing and sucking her nipples, Finn adding a bite, soft but with a sharp kick in the tail; that lad knew how to use his mouth. Rae felt a hand on either hip, slowly slipping under her knickers and gently pulling them down, Phil’s hand cupping her vagina while Finn’s slid over her arse, his hand finding its way to her vagina from behind.

“Oh this isn’t fair.” She whimpered as their mouths travelled all over her body, “You can’t tag-team me like this.” That started them all laughing again and Rae used the break in the sexual intensity to refocus her efforts on getting the lads naked; it was entirely unfair that she was naked and they weren’t. She pulled on Finn’s jeans and he helped her pull them down, his eyes going up to Phil’s face as Phil saw Finn’s erect cock for the first time. Finn felt that same trepidation he’d felt with Rae; worry that he’d measure up. Phil’s eyes stayed on Finn’s cock as he took his own pants down, Rae’s hands helping. She pulled them both in for another kiss and the three of them were pressed together, Rae reached down and felt their cocks rubbing together and groaned with desire. She pulled back and took a step back so she could look at them, they both took a step back too, all three of them taking the time to just really look at each other.

Finally they stood naked before each other and the happiness and exhilaration they each felt was incredible.

“Oh my god.” Rae whimpered, seeing them both naked, was incredible. Her face took on that look of tragic lust that Finn had seen before but was new to Phil. They grinned at her as she looked from one of them to the other, taking her time to come to terms with the fact that she was seeing them both naked together.

Phil enjoyed having this time to take them both in. He had seen Rae naked before in Lincoln, but even so, he hadn’t had enough time to revel in her, and he did so now, in between staring at Finn’s body, revelling in him too. Finn and Phil had both seen each other in the change rooms numerous times, both pretending to not be looking, denying to themselves that they had looked. It was nice to be so openly admiring each other now.

Finn honestly felt like the cat that had gotten the cream. He had had a feeling in the pit of his stomach for months now, and he had been admiring Phil more and more. The realisation that this admiration, this feeling had been attraction, lust, love for Phil was a wonderful revelation and a real relief. He was the first of them to completely accept and wrap his head around this new situation; he had him a man and a woman, and he was very happy with that. They were both just so fucking beautiful.

“We’re really gonna do this.” Phil asked breathlessly.

“Fuck yes we are.” Finn answered and Rae made a whimpering noise of want in the back of her throat. Finn kissed Phil and Rae felt breathless just watching them; they were both just so attractive. Finn drew her into the kiss and they all kissed each other at the same time again, such a wonderful and strange experience to kiss like that. Rae ran her hands all over her men and tried to not dissolve into a puddle of lust when both of them put a hand on her.

“Alright.” Rae had to stop, breathless, laughing at herself. “Holy fuck.” She marvelled at how sexy the three of them kissing and touching was.

“Aye.” Finn agreed and looked down at Phil’s cock. He hadn’t touched it with his hands yet, not bare anyway, grabbing it through his boxers didn’t count. Neither did feeling it rub against his own cock; he wanted to touch it with these hands.

Both lads reached out at the same time to touch someone else’s penis for the first time and ended
up laughing at each other; getting in each other’s way in the process.

“Alright you go first.” Phil laughed and Finn did without hesitation; taking Phil’s cock into his hand, Rae making a whimpering noise again.

“It’s so much warmer than I thought it’d be.” Finn said when he finally grasped Phil’s cock. Rae’s hand went down with his to gently remind him to do more than just hold Phil’s cock in awe. Phil reached down and touched Finn’s cock; hot and throbbing, he understood what Finn had meant now. Rae’s other hand went to Finn’s cock, easily coordinating stroking two cocks. Both lads had one hand on the other’s cock, the other on her, and she was in heaven. Finn laced his fingers through Rae’s and moved his hand with hers. Phil gently moved his hand along Finn’s shaft as Rae slowly slid her hand up and down. He cupped Finn’s balls gently, all three of them revelling in this exploration of each other’s bodies. Phil kissed Rae, his hands happily exploring Finn’s body. And then he kissed Finn, still not believing what was happening. He watched Rae and Finn kiss again, fascinated by the way their mouths moved.

“So how are we gonna do oral?” Rae asked.

“I s’pose you better teach me!” Finn answered with a happy grin.

“And me.” Phil added.

“You’ve both got dicks, I’m sure you can figure it out!” Rae laughed, “I meant… do I just kneel between you and go one then the other?” Finn and Rae both looked at Phil.

“Don’t ask me, my threesomes have always been with two girls. This is totally new territory for me.” Phil answered.

“Um...” Finn answered. “Just do what you want.” He said with a shrug and Phil gave a nod to indicate his approval of this plan.

“Alright then.” Rae slowly slid to her knees, not bothering to kiss her way down two bodies, instead choosing to spend some time licking and kissing both of their pelvis regions, torturing them with anticipation. Phil’s eyes trained on her, aching for the experience of her mouth on his cock. And Finn, familiar with her feel, rolled his head back and enjoyed the torture; she was a master at making him wait for it.

Rae licked Phil’s shaft first, her eyes locked on his, then turned to lick Finn’s shaft, his head still rolled back. She took Finn’s cock into his mouth and Finn looked down at her, groaning deeply. She sucked on it for a moment, her hand stroking Phil’s cock steadily; two sets of eye watching her intently. Finn with pleasure and desire. Phil with urgency and desire. When she finally put her lips to his cock a shiver went through him. He looked at Finn’s cock glistening with her saliva as she stroked it and then down at his own. He watched it disappearing into her mouth. He felt the stop point at the back of the throat, the place where blow jobs generally found their home, and groaned deeply as she pushed him deeper into her throat.

“Oh god you can deep throat.” He whimpered. He had watched her doing it to Finn with awe and surprise. He’d heard it was hard to do, but that it felt really nice.

“Aye.” Finn answered, “That she can.” His voice was filled with respect for that ability, especially now that he knew he’d have to get on his knees soon. “Don’t expect it from me!” He laughed. But Phil was too busy watching the full length of his impressive cock sliding into her mouth. When her nose touched his pelvis he whimpered again.
“Holy fuck.” He groaned as she started to move up and down his shaft. “Have you got no gag reflex Rae?”

“Most of the time no.” She answered, her lips on the tip of his cock, “But sometimes it gets triggered.”

“What triggers it?” He worried and Finn grinned at Phil.

“Do you want me to sit here and tell you all about it or do you want me to suck your cock now and we talk about that later?” Phil looked down into her eyes, completely entranced by her saying 'do you want me to suck your cock now?'

“Suck.” He answered, the word barely leaving his lips.

“That’s what I thought.” She answered with a wry grin before she started to slide him down her throat again.

Finn wanted to let Phil enjoy watching the oral, but he also desperately wanted to kiss him. He put a hand on Phil’s face, and as soon as he looked up, he leaned over and started to kiss his lips. Rae switched back to Finn’s cock and he groaned through his kisses, Phil doing the same when she switched back to his.

“You wanna go first or shall I?” Finn asked him between kisses.

“I’ll go first.” Phil said and instantly slunk to his knees. “Alright…” He looked at Rae and then at Finn’s cock as Rae sucked it. She popped it out of her mouth, and gently moved aside for Phil. She stroked his hair gently as he took Finn’s cock and gently licked the tip. Finn’s eyes watched, the lust for both of them was clear in his expression. Rae wished her first experience of sucking a cock had been like this. She stroked Phil’s face encouragingly and whispered in his ear.

“Taste good, doesn’t it?” Phil made a noise of agreement. Finn’s lips parted with the desire to see Phil’s lips close over the head of his cock. Phil’s eyes travelled up Finn’s body to his eyes as he wrapped his tongue around Finn’s glans. Finn’s hand tangled in Rae’s hair as she gently stroked Phil’s neck.

When Phil felt Finn’s other hand in his hair he groaned and closed his mouth around Finn’s cock, slowly moving his mouth down his shaft. Phil felt Finn’s cock hit the back of his throat and pushed further, wanting to deep throat like Rae. He gagged, coughing and withdrew from Finn, tears in his eyes from the retch.

“Holy fuck.” He gasped and looked at Rae with respect, “How the fuck do you do that?” He didn’t wait for an answer before heading back for more. Rae figured she could teach him later, and Finn. She watched Phil passionately suck her boyfriend’s cock, and felt a real thrill at the idea that they’d probably both be her boyfriend after this.

Rae joined in and licked Finn’s balls, Finn groaned deeply, fighting between his head wanting to roll back and the desperate need to see them both licking and sucking him. Phil moved down to Finn’s balls when Rae started to lick his shaft, moving on to deep throat him when Phil moved.

They took it in turns to suck Finn’s cock, the intensity increasing until they were kissing around the head of his cock, Finn’s whole body heaving with every breath, desire and the fight to not cum yet.

Finn motioned for them to stand before he blew all over them, and he kissed Rae as Phil continued to suck his cock for a moment longer before he stood.
“You know, I don’t think enough attention’s been paid to Rae.” Phil said, is eyes crawling down her body lustily.

“I was thinking the same thing.” Finn gently pushed Rae towards the bed, and she laid down, needing no convincing to part her thighs. Finn looked back at Phil as he looked at Rae lying on the bed, holding her arms out to both of them. Finn laid down beside her and kissed her mouth, his mouth wide open, consuming her, moving down to her neck. Phil paused and watched them kissing passionately, the deep love and connection between them obvious. He wanted to give them time to revel in their long held intimacy and to enjoy each other, and give himself a moment to catch up with himself as he watched them.

“I love you girl.” Finn whispered to her. It struck Phil just how loving this entire threesome was turning out to be. Not at all like his past experiences which had just been fucking. Rae told him how much she loved him and they both turned their eyes to him and told him too before kissing deeply again, sharing a moment together that Phil was glad to witness. It was the first time he’d been excited by their connection, rather than saddened because he’d never have that with Rae. He watched Finn’s hands move over her body slowly, expertly; his familiarity with her exquisite form was exciting. He hoped that he’d know both their bodies that well soon enough; that they would teach him how to be a part of their lives. Phil admired their relationship; the hard work they’d put in to understanding each other, into communication and intimacy. They supported each other so completely, and he yearned to be a permanent part of this. He so hoped that when they finally got around to talking after this amazing experience they were sharing, there’d be room in their duo for it to become a trio.

Rae’s hand reached out to him again and Finn shot him an inviting glance. He went to them, running his hands up her thighs revelling in the response to his touch. He knelt, kissing her inner thighs, his tongue dragging along her skin sinuously. Finn reached down and ran his fingers through Rae’s pubic hair. Squeezing her labia gently before slipping a finger inside of her. Rae groaned loudly. Finn’s mouth was on her breast, Phil’s was on her thigh, and Finn was fingerin her with his usual expertness. As Phil came closer to Rae’s cunt, Finn slid his fingers out of her and Phil sucked Rae’s juices from Finn’s fingers. Rae watched, whimpering with desire as Phil gazed piercingly into her eyes; his thirst for her overwhelming.

Phil had wanted to tease Rae a little, to draw it out some, but being so close, and aching so desperately for her, made him dive in, Finn chuckling merrily as he watched Phil lick hungrily at Rae’s cunt and saw Rae’s head drop back, a guttural groan seeping from her throat. Finn wondered if in future one of them could be fucking her while the other licked her and considered the logistics of that for a moment before kissing Rae deeply again. Phil was immersed in her smell, her taste. The feel of her clit on his tongue was at once firm and yielding, her lower body tensing in pleasure as he chased his tongue around her clit before settling into a good rhythm. Phil became hyper aware of every movement she made, every sound; gauging her response to what he was doing. Sucking Finn’s cock had been far harder than he had imagined it to be; the gag reflex was killer and his jaw ached, but he’d loved doing it, and he knew from his own experience of receiving head what to roughly do. But giving oral sex to women required more concentration, and when he looked up at Finn, who was at that time looking down at him, he saw from the look in Finn’s eyes that Finn understood that too. He watched as Finn returned to kissing Rae’s body. Phil pushed his hands under her arse and gently tilted her pelvis up giving himself better access and licked her cunt in long passionate licks. He felt her legs twitch with pleasure slightly every time his tongue came back to her clit.

Phil remembered Rae staring at his fingers and he ran his hand up her body, making her eyes look down at him. He looked up at her over her pubis mound, still licking her clit, and the pleasure on her face was exquisite. He stretching his fingers out and curled them slowly, individuality,
showing off their strength and dexterity. He watched her eyes fall to his fingers and then flick up to his eyes, understanding what he was doing, moaning with desire as he brought his hand back down her body and slowly ran his fingers down to her beautiful vagina, his eyes never leaving hers as he slid his fingers into her. Finn watched in awe as Rae’s breath caught and almost instantly her stomach muscles tensed with impending orgasm. Phil found two separate sensitive spots inside of her and rubbed them both in a slightly syncopated rhythm; he had learned that creating an off rhythm between the stimulation of the ‘G’ and ‘A’ spots produced fast and powerful orgasms in most of the women he’d been with.

“Holy shit.” Finn marvelled, “Good fingers.” They both watched, in awe of their Rae, as she sucked in air with a high pitched, slow gasp of pleasure.

“Uh huh.” Phil answered, knowing that they were one of his sexual strengths. Although he had gotten good feedback, in his opinion, he was still learning how to do oral properly, but he knew could do this perfectly. Rae came with loud gasps before Finn had even had a chance to register how sexy that confidence was on Phil. He kept fingerling her, changing the rhythm slightly and feeling her body tensing for a second orgasm almost immediately.

“You gotta teach me this.” Finn said and Phil nodded, neither taken their eyes off Rae as she writhed in pleasure.

“You’ve already got guitar so it shouldn’t be too hard.” Phil said, his eyes on Rae’s body as she shook with orgasm a second time. “You good at oral?”

“I’m fucking great at it.” Finn said.

“I’m only alright at it.”

“Well I’ve got some tricks to teach you then.” Finn grinned and kissed Rae’s lips as she gasped; a third orgasm coming on the heels of the second. Phil began to lick her clitoris again and Rae gasped loudly as he pressed his fingers up, seeming to stimulate her clitoris from both inside and outside.

“Lick harder.” Rae told him through Finn’s kisses, and Phil obeyed eagerly. Finn reached down and pushed Phil’s face into Rae’s cunt. It was one of the sexiest things Phil had ever experienced and his cock throbbed.

When Rae finally came clitorally her whole body shook violently and her thighs closed around Phil’s head. He loved it.

As soon as she had cum Rae sat up and brought Finn and Phil’ face together, a hand on the back of both of their heads; they didn’t need any encouragement. Finn tasted Rae on Phil’s lips and groaned deeply; their girl tasted so good. She pushed Phil back and he laid back on his huge king bed, his arms stretched above his head and felt her mouth on his cock again. This time Finn was with her, ready to learn, and Phil watched Finn get his first taste of cock.

“Tastes different to you.” He said with a grin. “I like it but.” He licked the end again, very quickly getting into it. Rae laughed when Finn found his own gag reflex and look utterly appalled. “This is so much harder than it looks!” He took Phil back into his mouth and they spent some time happily lapping at Phil’s cock while he stared down at them, the intense pleasure coursing in waves through his entire body, until Rae eventually crawled up the bed to kiss Phil’s lips. Finn continued to suck Phil, gagging often; he was determined to kill the gag reflex as quickly as possible and Phil groaned loudly as he kissed Rae, one hand gently stroking the back of Finn’s head.
As soon Finn sat up Rae straddled Phil, and his hands went to her hips, his eyes on hers as he slid inside of her wet cunt, deciding he just didn’t give a single fuck about condoms right now; he wanted to feel her properly. He groaned loudly, his hand reaching out to Finn, wanting him to be here for this experience. Finn reached forward and took Phil’s hand as Phil stared to Rae’s eyes. He had never expected to experience lovemaking with Rae, let alone both Rae and Finn. He was having to focus hard on not coming yet. She leaned down and kissed him lovingly.

“I love you.” She whispered and he wrapped his spare arm around her, his other hand tightening round Finn’s fingers.

“Oh god I love you. Both of you.” He returned. Finn smiled happily as he heard the words they spoke to each other and gently ran his fingers down Rae’s spine as they had this moment together; they had loved each other for a long time without getting to physicalize that love all that much. There was bound to be these moments where they were both overwhelmed by finally being together. Finn felt Rae’s fingers close around their clasped hands; even as Rae and Phil shared a moment of finally getting to be together properly, they both wanted Finn there, they acknowledged his importance to them, and his presence. Rae straightened up, her eyes still on Phil, her movements sexual, seductive, aimed at bringing maximum pleasure to all three of them; visually for Finn and Phil, and physically for Phil and herself. Phil’s hand went back to exploring Rae, freeing Finn up to do his own thing for a moment. He straddled Phil’s legs, his cock rubbing against Rae’s arse, his hands travelling over her body as she rode Phil.

“You know girl, when we finally get to doing anal… this is gonna be a lot o’ fun.” The groan Rae gave Finn was deeply desirous.

“You got any lube Phil?” He shook his head, unable to speak; the feel of being inside of her was incredible. “The minute we get some.” She looked over her shoulder at Finn, “We’re doing it.” She said firmly and Finn gave her a lusty grin.

Finn decided to crawl up the bed and kiss Phil; their tongues feeling right together, Finn feeling more and more sure of this decision with every passing moment. He straightened up to kiss Rae and Phil grasped his cock, stroking it lovingly, his other hand exploring Rae’s body. Finn enjoyed it when Phil started to run his fingers over his body and gasped at how easily Phil’s hands found the sensitive places.

“Your hands are like some sort o’ magic.” Finn whispered to Phil.

“I know!” Rae agreed with him.

Rae stood up over Phil, the bed making her stagger slightly and they all giggled happily. She turned to the pillows on Phil’s bed and laid down on her stomach with some under her hip bones, her head over the edge of the bed. Finn remembered the last time she’d gotten into this position; he had stood at the edge of the bed, fucking her mouth and fingering her arse and cunt till they both came. Finn eagerly straddled her, sliding his cock along her crack, squeezing her thighs together. Rae motioned for Phil to come to her and he got up and stood in front of her, stroking her hair and watching as Finn slid his cock into her cunt. Phil groaned as Rae slipped her lips along his shaft. He watched as Finn licked his finger, leaving it very wet and gently started to insert it into Rae’s arse. He heard Rae groan around his cock, the vibrations from her vocalisation sending gentle shivers down his legs, his cock pulsing with pleasure. Finn grabbed Phil’s hand and licking his finger, rather more seductively than he had to, his eyes locked with Phil’s. He slowly guided Phil’s finger into Rae’s anus, so that they each had one finger up her arse.

Phil noticed the intensity of Rae’s moans and gave Finn and excited look. Finn cocked an eyebrow and grinned happily; teaching Phil silently about the things he had learned about Rae’s body was a
lot of fun. Phil understood by the particular tone of Rae’s groans that what they were doing made her ache for more, and by the way Finn sped up his thrusting, Phil understood that her ache was in her pussy. He felt Rae’s mouth go slack for a moment, a loud gasp, becoming loud moans, as she came again. Phil leaned forward, kissing Finn’s lips, one hand stroking Rae’s hair, the other still fingering her. He felt Finn’s jaw tighten and knew he was fighting back the urge to cum.

“Do it.” He whispered, their lips brushing, foreheads pressed together.

“One more for Rae.” Finn replied and Phil nodded.

“Let me under you.” Phil said to Rae, and Finn withdrew, moving back and letting her get on all fours. Finn slid back into Rae as Phil wormed his way under her. The view from under here was amazing and he watched for a moment before groaning loudly when Rae’s lips wrapped around his cock again. He ran his fingers over Rae’s cunt, feeling Finn’s cock sliding into her and then gently cupped Finn’s balls. Finn groaned as Phil started to massage his balls. He put his other hand under his head to get himself high enough and started to lick Rae’s cunt again, licking along the length, licking Finn’s shaft as he thrust, lapping at her clitoris until she was groaning so loudly that, had there not been a party raging downstairs, whoever was down there would have undoubtedly heard her, even though her cries were muffled by Phil’s cock in her mouth.

When she did cum, Finn groaned with her and sped up, Phil was surprised to feel himself very suddenly ready to cum, he groaned loudly. He was already synching up with them. His body was already reacting to both of theirs so completely that he was rushing towards orgasm as they both came, completely unable to stop himself now.

“I’m gonna cum Rae.” He said before continuing to lick her. It didn’t surprise him that this made no difference to her and she continued to suck his cock as he came spectacularly, Finn’s balls pulsating in his hand as Finn came, Rae’s whole body shaking above him. Rae swallowed as she sucked, enjoying the way their moans all sounded together.

They collapsed in a sweaty heap; Phil’s head on Rae’s thigh, hers on his, Finn curled around Rae, all of them panting happily.

Phil gently stroked her thigh as he lay there, still unable to come to grips with what had happened.

“What now?” He asked softly and both Rae and Finn looked down at him. Rae looked over her shoulder at Finn, she could see from the look on his face that he had remembered that these were the first words he had said to her when they had both first declared their feelings for each other. Rae stared into Finn’s eyes, a perfect feeling of things just clicking surged through her body and she saw a lopsided grin come to Finn’s lips and knew he was having the same feeling. She turned back to look at Phil, trying to think of a way to word what she felt.

“You know girl,” Finn said softly, his lips to her ear, he spoke loud enough for Phil to hear him, but soft enough to make his words intimate, “this all happened because we were both deeply in love with you.” Rae smiled, her eyes locking with Phil’s as Finn spoke. “And you owned both of our souls so completely that we had no real choice but to stop being rivals for you, because you loved us both and couldn’t stand to see us fight, couldn’t stand to see either of us hurt. So we couldn’t stand to see each other hurt. And neither of us could truly hate someone that loved you so completely. So we became friends. And that’s all it was supposed to be.” Phil slowly moved, crawling up the bed to lie facing her, “but you know Rae, maybe you just caught on before us two lads, that this were meant to be. Cos something happened, that I never would have dreamed of happening.” Finn’s hand reached over Rae’s body to pull Phil in closer, “we became friends for you, but we fell in love. But I should’ve known I’d fall in love with Phil, cos if he deserves your love, he’s someone extraordinary… we fell in love cos this is just right, because we’re all just
meant to be.” His words hung in the air, “I know you both feel it too. This is just right. So what
now?” He repeated Phil’s question. “This.” He referred to them lying together blissfully, “This is
what now.” They lay embracing each other, Finn spooning Rae, Phil lacing his fingers through
Finn’s and resting them on Rae’s hip, his forehead on Rae’s as Finn rested his face against her
neck.

“Aye.” Rae said softly.

“So this is real…?” Phil asked, holding his breath, almost afraid of the answer, but a feeling of
sureness was already spreading through him; Finn had told him to trust them, and he found that he
did. “It’s real.” He answered his own question.

“Very real.” Rae told him, “I won’t give either of you up now.”

“Good.” Finn answered sleepily. Rae stroked Phil’s face for a moment before she too fell asleep.
Phil raised his head slightly to see Finn and then took Rae in again before slowly closing his eyes.
It took him a long time to sleep; he was terrified he’d wake up to realise this had been a dream.
He opened his eyes and yawned, rolling onto his back. And right off the bed.

“Fuck.” He hissed to himself. He was used to not sharing his king bed with anyone, and they had all fallen asleep very close to the edge instead of moving to the centre of the bed.

Rae woke up with a start when Phil thumped to the ground.

“Phil!” She gasped, worried, she leaned over the edge and saw him looking up at the ceiling. She felt Finn stirring behind her and a hideously sticky mess between her legs as she chuckled at him.

“Y’alright?” She grinned.

“Aye I think so.” Phil grumbled. Rae cocked an eyebrow and Finn shot up to look at him.

“Aye?” Finn asked and Phil sat up and looked at him questioningly.

“What?”

“It’s fucking infectious, that word.” Rae scooted to the edge of the bed and put her feet on the floor. Phil’s hand gently touched her calf and she grinned at him again.

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard you say ‘aye’ before.” Finn answered Phil’s questioning face, and Phil rolled his eyes in response.

“Course I have, half of fucking England’s used it at least once.” He shrugged but gave Finn a cheeky grin; they all knew Finn had rubbed off on him a little.

“Right well I gotta shower.” Rae stood up and stretched, noticing how both Phil and Finn watched her, admiring her body. “Would you two gentlemen like to join me?”

“Is there enough room?” Finn asked as he scooted to the edge of the bed, Phil standing up.

“Yeah, it’s a walk-in; you could fit a whole football team in there!” Phil’s early morning grumps wore of instantaneously when the realisation that they were there, that it had not been a dream, really hit him.

“I don’t think we’re gonna need that much space.” Rae laughed and headed towards the bathroom. “Got enough towels?” She asked but as soon as she got in there, she saw the shelf with a few spare towels folded on it. Phil held his hand out to Finn and Finn took it, pulling on him, almost bringing him onto the bed instead of getting up. They laughed; the music from the party still surging through the house, it was 4am and they were in love. Finn put his arm across Phil’s shoulders.

“Fuck you for being taller!” He shook his head and Phil smacked Finn’s arse and gave him a cheeky wink.
“I’m always gonna have that on you.” He replied and watched Rae, already feeling at home in his place, going through his drawers. She found what she was after; a brush, and started to brush her hair while Finn lifted the seat to the toilet and took a piss. Phil started the shower, unconcerned by Finn; he was used to urinals and male public pissing. But when he came to pee himself he gave Rae a quick look.

“You don’t mind?” She shook her head and kept brushing her hair.

“Should’ve seen me the first time Finn did it but.” She laughed.

“You’ve got so much to catch up on.” Finn told him.

“I dunno…” Phil shrugged, “That was your shared past.”

“Oh aye,” Finn agreed, “But you should know about it so you know what Rae an’ me are talking about all the time.”

“But we can’t all know everything about everything.” Rae cleaned her hair out of Phil’s very clean brush and put it away, “I mean you’re just never gonna know all the literature that Phil and me know… and Phil will never know music like you and me… and I’ll never know sport like you two.” Rae considered.

“Well I guess we just have to communicate if we feel left out or anything.” Finn replied. Phil watched them working through the logistics of this relationship and realised that it was really happening. He didn’t have to just dream about this anymore.

“This is really happening?” He asked, astounded and completely overwhelmed with emotion.

“Course it is!” Finn said happily and then his face suddenly fell, and Phil saw pain, fear, worry etched into Finn’s beautiful face, “Unless you don’t want to?” He could see how much that thought hurt Finn and was speechless. He flicked his eyes to Rae and saw a similar expression; they both really wanted this. Wanted him. How could either of them think for a moment that he wouldn’t want to be with them?

“Of course!” Phil finally managed to say, a huge smile on his face that he saw reflected on their faces as soon as he spoke.

“I mean it’s gonna be tricky to figure out how it all works, but that’s no excuse to not be with the people you love.” Finn answered, “And we’ll figure it all out.” He got into the shower and pulled Phil in. “Rae’s got a thing about not being seen peeing.” Finn told him, suddenly realising how close Phil was and enjoying the feel of the hot water on their bodies. He ran his hands down Phil’s torso. “You know, I always admired your body.” Finn grinned. “Your muscle definition is fucking… amazing.” He made an appreciative noise in the back of his throat, his fingers tracing along the ‘v’ of Phil’s pelvis. Phil kissed Finn and Finn grabbed him, pressing their bodies together.

When Rae got in a few minutes later she grinned at her boys, kissing almost violently, pressed together, oblivious to anything but each other. She reached around them to get the soap.

“Sorry.” Phil said sheepishly.

“Why sorry?” Rae asked.

“I mean…” Phil wasn’t accustomed to discussing relationships so he took a moment to gather his thoughts, “I mean do we do sexual activities with only two of us present, or should it always be all
“I reckon it should be all three of us most of the time.” Finn shrugged, “but it should be alright to not be all the time?” Finn said, “Like I’m not gonna not kiss me girl or me boy if the other one isn’t there, and if that leads somewhere, then…” He shrugged. Phil felt a shiver of delight in his stomach; Finn calling him his boy… he loved it. And he suddenly realised that this whole time he had never dared to hope that something like this would happen. He had imagined that if it were to happen, he’d be, as Finn had said once, a secondary partner to Rae, never the first. And now here they all were; equal first it seemed.

“It’s just that ‘feeling left out’ thing.” Phil noted.

“I guess it’ll take some time to find our balance…” Rae mused.

“We’ll probably always be negotiating.” Phil said softly, concerned that this would end up being too hard.

“All relationships are.” Rae shrugged, lathering the soap in her hands, she started to rub her soapy hands on both of their chests. Phillip felt relieved by her response and knew he had to stop thinking it was going to end before it began.

“Although we do have the no coming rule.” Finn said suddenly. Phil shot him a questioning look. “If Rae can’t cum I can’t cum.”

“Yeah but two of us having sex isn’t the same as redgate.” Rae said. Phil again looked at them questioningly.

“Period?” He guessed.

“Aye.” Rae agree, “I don’t do stuff on me period.”

“So when she couldn’t cum, I couldn’t. Drove me fucking nuts.” Finn laughed at himself.

“But I won’t be having periods ever again cos I’m never not using an IUD; forever and ever I’m gonna have one rammed up there.” Rae asserted; she was glad to be rid of her period.

“Stunning imagery.” Phil tried to not picture that in his head and Rae laughed at him.

“Sounds much worse than it is.” She reassured him. “Anyway, two of us fucking is different to one of us not being able to cum.

“If one of us can’t cum, none of us can, I reckon.” Finn opined.

“Yeah.” Phil nodded, “seems fair.”

“So two of us having sex can’t result in orgasms if the third person can’t have orgasms?” Rae asked.

“Yeah but if the third person can have orgasms but just isn’t having sex, then the other two can just go for it.” Finn answered.

“How are we gonna know which is which?” Phil asked slowly.

“Case by case basis.” Finn answered.

“Ok, I’m up for it!” Phil laughed.
“Alright.” Rae shrugged, “but I don’t foresee it ever being a problem.” She said, “I’m never coming off me IUD, and what could possibly ever stop you two from being able to cum?” They both shrugged in reply and Rae shook her head. “Seems to me like the sex is gonna be never-ending.”

“Aye, suits me.” Finn grabbed her and pulled him to her. Phil watched and was then unexpectedly pulled into the mix, crying out in surprise and laughing hard, their bodies slippery and wet, pressing together.

They headed back down to the party for an hour, dancing together again, not seeing anyone from the gang; most people had left, leaving a lot more room on the dance floor that they didn’t need; they left no space between them as they danced. They went out to the gazebo and Finn and Phil filled Rae in on what had happened out here while they watched the sun rise, arms draped around each other happily.

Rae had headed home with Finn, leaving Phil alone for the moment.

After sun rise, they had slept until late morning, had a lazy breakfast and planned the rest of the long weekend. They had a public holiday on Monday, and no school until Tuesday, and they intended to spend it all at Phil’s place. Rae and Finn were just off getting clothes and homework. They said they’d be as quick as they could be, hoping to be no longer than an hour as long as they weren’t intercepted by parents. They hadn’t taken Phil with them to try and avoid parental inquisitions as much as possible.

Phillip laid on the bed staring up at the ceiling, a whirl of emotions, thoughts and fears making a god almighty noise in his head. He put his fingertips to his stomach, just above his low-slung jeans and remembered the feeling of Rae’s fingers, Finn’s fingers, touching him there.

“What if they don’t come back?” He whispered to the empty room. Phil felt a deep pain in his chest at the thought of it. Of course if they changed their minds he would accept and respect that, but he knew he wouldn’t be able to stay in Stamford, or England. He was deeply in love with both of them, and he wanted to spend the rest of his life with them. To not be able to do that would be incredibly painful after having had this taste of it. He began to worry that they were talking about it right now… wondering if they had made the right decision. Thinking about how hard this was going to be. Questioning if they wanted a third person in their relationship.

His phone rang and he looked over at it, his brows furrowing. He hesitated, what if it was them? He shook his head, deciding to trust them, as Finn had suggested, and picked it up.

“Hey gorgeous, are you free today?” It was one of the three women he had been seeing regularly to help keep his high libido under control and numb his pain, make him feel wanted for a while. With a surge of confidence in his fledgling relationship he answered.

“I’m not gonna be free anymore. Sorry.”

“Pity.” She sighed and hung up. Phil sat up and picked up his diary to see what was planned for him this weekend; he had to cancel it all. He was spending the long weekend, mostly naked he
hoped, with his boyfriend and girlfriend. His partners.

They were back 90 minutes later with fish and chips and a big bag of homework and clothes each. His stomach grumbled immediately and he was glad to see that they’d picked up white bread and butter and coke to have with the food; chip butties and a sugary drink his mother would never allow.

Rae pulled the blanket off the bed and they set up a picnic on the floor of Phil’s massive bedroom.

Finn set up the food while Rae stripped her clothes off, Phil watching her in admiration; he’d never get tired of seeing her naked. Finn followed suit and threw his clothes across Phil’s, bright, airy, and completely spotless room. Phil stood up and dropped his own pants, resisted the urge to pick them up and fold them, and sat with Rae and Finn. Finn handed him a can of coke and Rae was buttering some bread for them.

“How did it go with your parents?”

“Well mum wants me to babysit Aiesha next Saturday, so we’ll have to figure out how to get you there.” Rae said and handed him a chip buttie.

“And my parents were pissed off, cos we’re supposed to be with them this weekend.” Finn said grimly, “Which means they’re expecting us two to be there next weekend, but we have to be at Rae’s cos her parents think we’re at my place now.” He sighed.

“Well, how about you tell them you’ve got a group assignment to do for next weekend, so you have an excuse to be out of both houses during the day…” Phil said working through it, “Actually, just tell them you’re staying at my place so we can get through the homework quicker and that gives you a reason at night time too.” Phil took a sip of coke and grinned, “But when you gotta babysit for your mum go home an hour early so you get some time with her then take Aiesha over to Finn’s house, so your parents get some time with you too.”

“Mum’d love that.” Finn answered, admiring Phil’s quick thinking.

“Aye she loves Aiesha.” Rae agreed. “But where are you in all of this Phil?”

“Well… I can’t go to your parents’ houses all the time without them getting sus…” They looked at each other, Rae’s brows furrowed.

“I don’t wanna hide.” Rae said, “Mum always used to tell me if you have to hide the relationship you’re in you probably shouldn’t be in it.”

“I think she was probably referring to cheating?” Phil asked.

“Aye.” Rae nodded her head, “We’re not doing anything wrong so we shouldn’t have to hide.”

“People at school-” Phil started.

“They already call me a slut cos o’ the rumours about what they think happened in Lincoln.” She answered, “I’ve already been bullied for most o’ me life. What can they possibly do to me? I don’t care what they say.” Phil looked over at Finn who was clearly worrying about Rae. “I won’t have you be some secret Phil.” Rae said firmly, “You’re not our secret shame.”
“Yeah when I see us working, I see us all as equal in this thing.” Finn said, “you’re not the side partner.” Finn said and Phil had to swallow back his emotion, he had thought his only chance of some happiness was to one day be a side partner to Rae. This was so much better and it kept hitting him over and over again; he still kept expecting for the hammer to fall. “And I don’t want you to feel that way.” Finn said firmly, “but I don’t even know where or how to start with telling me da.” Finn rubbed his hand over his face, “Alright bisexual, I reckon he’d survive that, but… I don’t even have the words to explain this to me parents.” Finn reached forward and took Phil’s hand, “But I’m gonna have to find ‘em. I’m with Rae on this. I’m not gonna hide.”

“I would have understood if you did want to hide.” Phil answered, “But I’m glad you don’t.”

“This is gonna be really hard.” Rae tried to imagine how her mum would take it and felt a spike of anxiety in her chest. Finn gave Phil a look and then laid his head on Rae’s thigh, Phil doing the same.

“Worth it but.” Finn gave her a cheeky grin.

“Are you two always gonna do this?” She chuckled at how they had coordinated their movement to make her feel better.

“Definitely.” Finn teased.

“It’s the only reason I’m here.” Phil joked.

“You two.” She rolled her eyes and refused to give them the affection they were looking for and instead took a sip of coke and ate a piece of fish. After a while of both of them staring up at her she grabbed a handful of chips and started to feed them, Phil stopping long before Finn.

“You don’t eat much do you?” She asked Phil as Finn ate another chip.

“Not used to eating much.” He answered, “I been trying to have a bit more. Got training.” Finn sat up and looked at him.

“You’re not worrying about weight or shit like that are you?” Finn scrunched his nose.

“No.” Phil answered, “I just haven’t eaten much my whole life, thanks, to first poverty, then my mother.” Phil said with a shrug, “Does it bother you?”

“No.” Rae answered and stroked his hair soothingly.

“You should eat however much your body needs.” Finn told him and came over to him, kissing his lips, “Just promise me you’re doing that, right?”

“Well I eat till I’m full.” Phil answered.

“Good enough.” Finn took a sip of coke. “Want some?” Phil nodded and opened his mouth, his eyes not leaving Finn’s face as Finn carefully poured coke in Phil’s mouth. Rae started to chuckle, expecting this to go wrong at any moment. “Swallow.” Finn said softly, stroking Phil’s face.

“Well that became sexy from nowhere.” Rae chuckled. “You guys gonna swallow?” She asked looking at Phil and then Finn.

“Have to get a mouthful of it and find out.” Finn answered, his eyes on Phil, who nodded his agreement. “What d’you say; it’s your turn to fuck Rae, while I eat her cunt.” Finn asked Phil and then looked at Rae, “Yeah?” He asked her.
“I will never, ever complain about simultaneous oral and fucking. Me lady garden quite enjoys that amount of attention.” She grinned.

“And then I’ll eat his cum out of your cunt girl.” Finn said quite seductively and both Rae and Phil took a deep breath.

“Yes, I s’pose.” Rae answered feigning nonchalance for a moment before breaking out into a grin. She turned to Phil, “and you can kiss Finn’s cum outta me mouth.” She told him. “And then we’ll know who spits and who swallows.”

Finn ran his tongue across his teeth; he was sure he could still feel Phil’s cum on them. Cum had a strange filmy texture, but he hadn’t minded it too much and had swallowed it without thought or difficulty; it was Phil’s, of course he swallowed it, really enjoying the way it mingled with the taste of Rae’s cunt. And watching Phil kiss Rae, his own cum moving between their mouths had been quite exciting. Turned out they were all swallowers and learning these new things about each other was proving to be a lot of fun. Finn pondered over the contents of Phil’s shelves while Phil was kissing Rae’s body, her giggling as he tried to pick out her most ticklish spots with his mouth. A few minutes prior they had all been talking over their English homework; studying for the exams to come. But Rae had declared that a break was needed and Finn had wanted to get up and stretch. He found himself grinning every time a fresh wave of giggles broke out, indicating Phil had found a new spot to tickle, and wondered how long he’d feel Phil’s semen on his teeth. He supposed having a drink would get rid of it, but he kind of enjoyed having the taste of both of them in his mouth as he had done for the past hour.

He pulled out a music book about violins and flicked through the pages. He knew Phil played several instruments; violin, cello, double bass. Those were just the ones he remembered. He looked over at the huge wooden cupboard in the corner, the top shelf had a small instrument case on it and he knew it had to be Phil’s violin. While Phil was discovering more about Rae’s body, Finn was wanting to know more about Phil’s music. He reached up and grabbed the hard case and pulled it down.

The sound of his violin case opening made Phil look up. He watched Finn take the violin out and rested his head on Rae’s stomach as Finn held up the violin and looked closely at it.

“This a beautiful instrument.” Finn felt strangely in awe of it.

“It should be.” Phil grinned, “It’s a Stradivarius.”

“Oh right.” Finn nodded his head having no idea what that meant and gently plucked a few strings. Phil grinned up at Rae but saw she didn’t know what that meant either. “How’d you play it then?” Finn asked, putting the violin in position. Phil chuckled and got up, Rae rolling onto her side to watch them. He corrected Finn’s positioning, his hands gently caressing Finn’s as he placed Finn’s fingers on the strings. Phil picked up the bow and pulled it across the strings, making Finn sigh delightedly at the sound that came from the violin. Finn took the bow when Phil offered it and tried running it along the strings.

“Not so hard!” Phil laughed, “You gotta finesse the strings.”

“Oh right?”
“You make love to them.” Phil continued as he moved Finn’s fingers, and putting is hand over Finn’s, helped him moved the bow.

“That’s better!” Finn chuckled, “don’t sound like a dying cat.”

“You gotta be careful with which string or strings you want the bow to touch… loosen up your wrist but keep control of it.” Rae watched them laughing and learning together, naked and unembarrassed. It was amazing how comfortable they already were with each other and to her it was a clear sign that they were built for each other. After a few moments of Phil gently guiding Finn through how to play Finn created a few shaky notes; his understanding of playing music helping him understand Phil’s words a lot more than Rae did. Finn shook his head as a bad note wailed out of the violin. They bickered, threw insults at each other and laughed as Finn struggled with the precision required to play the violin.

“Goddamnit this is a fiddley, pedantic fucking instrument!” Finn exclaimed and Phil laughed.

“Good one.” He grinned but saw the look of bemusement on Finn’s face; he didn’t get why Phil had laughed. “Fiddley… The violin is also called the fiddle.” Finn cracked into a lopsided grin.

“I’m brilliant even when I don’t know it.”

“Yes you are.” Phil replied. “My brilliant Neanderthal.”

“Did you ever wanna throw this fuckin thing out the window?” Finn asked as he ran the bow along the string roughly. Phil laughed again.

“God no!” He said, “I love this instrument… plus it’s a Stradivarius.” Phil repeated, his eyes twinkling at the thought of what Finn was saying, and how he’d react when he knew what that meant.

“Right…” Finn said slowly, “You’re gonna make me say it aren’t you, you fucking wanker?”

“Maybe.” Phil answered with a flirty grin.

“Alright.” Finn groaned, “What’s a straddle… thingy?” He asked and leaned on Phil’s desk, the violin still in his hands.

“It’s just a type of violin made by a particular person.”

“Why do I feel like it’s a lot more than that?” Rae asked, her interest piqued. Phil bit his bottom lip as he blushed. He hated showing off his wealth, but he loved that violin, and was so glad he owned it and he wanted to share with them how important and special it was.

“It was made in 1701.” He said slowly and watched Finn’s eyes widen as he looked down at it, “It’s got a whole history, lists of people who have owned it… a personality.” Rae stopped herself from gasping.

“How much is it worth?” Finn asked, his eyes taking in the violin as if for the first time, “shouldn’t it be in a fucking museum?”

“Some Stradivariuses are.” Phil answered. “This one is worth… well it cost my parents about…” He paused, lowering his eyes, blushing. “About three quarters of a million pounds.” Finn nearly dropped the violin he was so stunned.

“Are you shittin’ me?” He asked handing the violin back to Phil, “Why the fuck would you let me
“Play with that?”

“Cos you’re my boyfriend.” Phil answered simply. Finn stared at him for a moment, unable to comprehend an instrument being worth that much money and Phil still letting him touch it.

“Play something for us?” Rae asked. Phil grinned and blushed, nodding almost shyly he put the violin into position under the side of his chin.

“This is one of my favourites.” Phil told them.

“Why?” Finn asked, understanding that favourite music selections said a lot about a person and he craved to know Phil more. He sat down next to Rae on the floor and took her hand as he listened to Phil’s answer.

“Because it’s so difficult!” Phil laughed, “And it felt so good when I finally mastered it.” He put his fingers on the frets and slowly started to play a dramatic piece of music. Finn was taken by the strength and dexterity in Phil’s fingers, and the speed. Rae loved the change of moods and speed in the piece. From heavy handed playing to light as a feather, fast dramatic finger picking that Finn would kill to be able to do on guitar, to slow delicate caresses of the strings.

They were captivated. Rae watched the passion and precision with which Phil played and felt she understood more about his personality. And Finn felt a new found appreciation for classical music; it was utterly astounding. When he finished they both clapped, completely speechless at first.

“That was breathtaking.” Rae said after a moment, shaking her head in awe. Phil grinned sheepishly.

“Thanks.”

“Well now we know how you got that finger strength and control.” Finn said with a cheeky grin.

“Oh no.” Phil replied, “The cello gave me control and dexterity.” Phil added. “It’s an exacting instrument with difficult unforgiving music.” He said and Rae and Finn were gifted with seeing him come alive when he talked about his passion for music; a music they didn’t know much about. “And the double bass, which I took up for jazz, gave me the finger strength. Those strings need some serious finger muscles to get them down and keep them down!” He looked down at his beloved violin, “This gave me soul… and flexibility and adaptability.”

“You got a cello and a double bass too?” Finn asked.

“Of course.” Phil replied.

“D’you hear him?” Finn asked Rae, “He says ‘of course.’” He chuckled, “Are they as expensive?”

“The cello is, but the double bass was made only a few years ago, good quality but no history.” Phil explained.

“You’re gonna have to teach me.” Finn shrugged, “I know it’s gonna take years.” He looked up at Phil, “But we got plenty o’ time.” Phil paused, completely taken by that sentence. He cleared his throat and nodded.

“Yeah.” He stared at Finn and then Rae, “And I hear guitar is quite complicated.” Phil said, “You could teach me that?”
“No way!” Finn laughed, “You’re focussed and driven; you’ll actually learn it.” He said with a huge grin, “I’m a lazy sod, who’ll have a lesson a month and never practice!”

“But I bet that’s cos you’ve got natural talent.” Phil countered.


“Do you write music?” Rae asked and Phil shook his head.

“I haven’t been brave enough.” He held up the violin, “you need to write something truly magnificent for an instrument like this.”

“We should write something together.” Finn said and Phil nodded happily, “I’m good at writing music. Crap at lyrics but.”

“Oh, well Phil here is a wordsmith.” Rae said as Phil put the violin back in the case, after having wiped it down lovingly.

They ended up coaxing him into playing more violin for them, and they even threw on some clothes and headed downstairs to listen to Phil play piano, spending hours listening to classical music as played by Phil with a passion that spoke volumes about the poetry in his soul.

Reading his physics book with his legs resting up on the bed and his head resting on Phil’s thigh was grand. Phil was lying with his head in Rae’s lap and she was sitting up against the drawers. They studied for their exams silently, occasionally stroking each other fondly, music playing softly in the background. A lazy afternoon spent casually doing homework with the loves of his life. Finn was happy. Because he could see that this happiness was shared by Rae and Phil. He could feel it; like there was an invisible cord between them. An unbreakable bond.

The sun streaming in the windows at dawn woke them up on Sunday morning. Despite them falling asleep with Finn in the middle, they had woken up with Phil in the middle and had laid together, gently stroking each other discussing more and more outlandish theories as to how this had happened.

Morning kisses in the pinkish glow of dawn, arms and legs tangled together, sleepy laughter and comfortable silences, fingers laced together. This is the stuff happiness was made of.

Kelsey had thrown another party last night, but they had stayed in Phil’s room, making love and getting accustomed to how this relationship worked. This morning, when Phil finally got out of bed to get them all some breakfast, there were people sleeping on the floor still and he left a note for Kelsey to clean up before tomorrow morning in case their parents got home early.

When he returned they ate, talking about their plans for the day; homework and fucking.

They had slowly been working out how to make love as a threesome; they’d done that a lot now, and Phil sensed a very slowly growing urge, especially in Rae to start exploring past love making. They communicated easily together and didn’t get jealous when two of the trio were doing
something. But they were yet to figure out how to tell everyone, or what the rules were in this kind of relationship; in their relationship. Rae was particularly concerned with this and decided, as they ate breakfast, that it was time to address it.

“So how’s Audrey?” She asked Phil and he looked up at her with surprise, then realisation. He put his piece of fruit down onto his plate and looked Rae in the eye.

“I’m not going to see her again. Or anybody else.” He answered, “But you’re right we do need to talk about this.” Finn was surprised to see them turn to him.

“I think we should stay faithful to each other.” Rae said honestly, “I think this should be a closed relationship.” She looked at Phil and he nodded.

“Aye.” Finn said, “But you know me girl, I’m not gonna deny either of you something you need. And you never know who you’re gonna fall in love with. You know my deal-breaker is that we gotta be communicating with each other clearly about this stuff, cos if we’re not and we end up cheating and shit like that… I just don’t wanna be in that.”

“Agreed.” Phil said.

“So we work as faithful to each other, in a closed relationship of three.” Rae said, “With the understanding that we don’t know what the future holds, and we gotta communicate clearly, be flexible and supportive of each other?”

“Sounds good to me.” Phil said.

“Which means you’re not seeing other people.” Rae said, “Unless you love them, or need to or…”

“It’s just you two.” Phil answered, “I’ve already called them all.”

“Really?” Finn looked so happy at the idea of it being just them, “I mean I’m not gonna deny that I’d like for it to just be us… but I love you both enough to, you know, do as you need.”

“I don’t really wanna see anyone else anymore.” Phil shrugged in reply.

“I think communication is gonna be even more vital in this than when it were just the two of us. And not just about relationship rules. There’s other things too.” Rae said, “Like, sex.” Phil grinned slightly and shot Finn a glance. “I like to be spanked.” Rae told Phil and he made a small noise in the back of his throat.

“I’m sure I can accommodate that Rae.” Phil said saucily.

“And tied up sometimes. And sometimes I like it real rough, like hair pulling and fucking so hard and deep it feels like your cock’s impaling me.” Phil’s mouth opened slightly, “And sometimes I like a good throat fucking and- OH!” Rae said suddenly, “The sex show club thing!” She said and Finn nodded.

“What?” Phil asked, confused.

“We like a lot o’ kinky stuff.” Finn said with a grin. “I don’t mind being caned occasionally.”

“Caned?” Phil asked thoughtfully. “I’ve never thought of that…” His tone of voice indicated that maybe he actually had thought of things like this.

“What sort of stuff do you like?” Rae asked.
“I quite like power plays.” Phil said, “Not all the time though, cos I like equality. And I’ve never really explored it because I feel it’s something you need a lot of trust for, and I’ve never been in a relationship where the trust was sufficient enough to play with power.” He looked at Rae and Finn, “But now…” He gave a wry grin and kind of shrugged to indicate that now he was in a trusting relationship.

“You’re dominant aren’t you?” Finn asked and Rae felt a tingle spread through her cunt; the idea of these two men ‘fighting’ for or sharing dominance in a sexual way was a breathtakingly sexy notion.

“I think that like both of you, I could be persuaded to be submissive sometimes… but I think all three of us like to be dominant.” He noted.

“I like being in charge.” Rae agreed, “But I do like being submissive too. Probably equally as much.”

“I’ve grown to like it.” Finn noted, “And now that you can explore power, you’ll figure out what you like.” He told Phil.

“What about anal sex?” Rae asked. “I haven’t done it yet and Finn and I have been building up to it and I wanna do it before the end of the weekend.” She looked at Phil expectantly.

“I’ve given it.” He said slightly nervously and looked at Finn, “I’m yet to receive it.”

“I haven’t given or taken.” Finn said, “But I have had a finger up there, and I loved that, so I’m actually quite keen for you to get to it Phil.”

“Yeah?” Phil asked with a crooked grin. “Well I won’t pretend I’m not nervous but… yeah I’d like to experience it with you too.”

“So we’re all up for anal.” Rae said, “But just to be clear; once it’s been in anyone’s arse it’s not going in my mouth till it’s been fucking cleaned proper!”

“I would have thought that went without saying…?” Phil answered.

“You gotta see some o’ the pornos we got!” Rae answered shaking her head and Phil gave a look of understanding.

“Oh right, of course! I hear that they do disinfectant anal douches beforehand.” Phil said; Andrea had done a few pornos and had told him all about it. And taught him a fair bit too. Their conversation veered back onto how to tell their parents and friends and what sort of things they might say, and how they were going to manage seeing families.

“My family won’t notice me missing, so we can just sneak me into your rooms every night after you’ve done the family stuff?”

“I’m sure they’d notice you missing?” Finn asked and Phil scrunched up his face.

“Debateable.” He replied.

“Phil’s got the best bed, so really we wanna be sneaking in here every night.” Rae answered, “It’s all a bit of a mess.” She sighed, “The world is not kind to polyamorous relationships.” She mumbled, thinking about what her mother was going to say.

“Look I’ve been thinking.” Phil said, “I could use some of the money I’ve saved and we could
rent a place and move in.” He said, “I mean it’d kinda mess up what I was gonna do for uni, but it’d be worth it because we wouldn’t have to worry about any of this stuff”

“We’re not gonna fuck up your plans for uni!” Finn said firmly and Rae nodded.

“Oh no, I didn’t mean it the way it sounded!” He said, “I just meant that I was going to use that money for getting a flat and paying my bills when I was in uni so I wouldn’t have to work and be at uni simultaneously, but it’s fine. I’ll just-”

“No Phil.” Rae said softly, “There’s only two months left of college… we’ll survive it.”

“Yeah and then we’re all off to London right?” Finn and Rae suddenly looked at Phil, completely panicked, Rae’s hand closed around Phil’s.

“You’re going to London yeah?” She sounded horrified that he might not be.

“I was tossing up a couple of places, but London it is!” Phil answered. “So we’ll move in then?”

“I think so.” Rae grinned.

“Aye.” Finn agreed and Phil’s mind started to work over how much extra money he should try to save to help support them too so they didn’t have to work but could focus on their studies.

If all else failed he’d sell his cello or violin; that’d keep them all financially safe until he got access to his trust fund. It was the first time he had ever been happy to have, as Finn had called it, money he hadn’t earned. That trust fund meant that he could look after the two loves of his life. It meant that once he turned 21 they’d never have to worry. Although, he figured that the years up until then were going to be difficult.
‘Tropical Oceans’ by D.D. Dumbo

*I opened my skull, you were looking at me*

Phil couldn’t believe how natural it felt to be sleeping beside them. He had had just a few hours on Friday night and Saturday night, and now, Sunday night and already he couldn’t imagine his days ending without the sound of both of them sleeping. It took him longer to get to sleep; he’d always been an insomniac, but normally it took him hours, now he would drift off to sleep only a few minutes after they were both asleep; he just liked to hear them sleeping for a moment before he let himself join them.

They’d gone through his entire room, picking up books and magazines and videos... always learning about each other. When they had found a beaten up old teddy bear, he’d explained to them that his mother had thrown away everything from when they were poor, but he’d managed to keep hold of this. He told them that his gran had given it to him; his gran had died before they got wealthy, it was all he had of her other than memories. He had never opened himself up like this. He’d opened up with Rae in their friendship; showing her glimpses of his soul. And he’d done the same with Finn lately too. But it wasn’t until they were all together like this that he felt really safe enough to just let it all out. And they had been loving and accepting as he talked about his sense of loss, losing everything from childhood, including, apparently, the love of his parents, who had become cold and preoccupied with appearance and wealth. He told them that he had blamed himself for it for being ungrateful; when they were poor, he’d wished every day they were rich so he could have all the toys other kids had. Finally saying those words out loud had felt like he had cracked his skull open and was bleeding all over the floor. But they had seen him, seen who he was, and they had tenderly kissed him and told him it wasn’t his fault. He realised that he had been seeing his parents’ distance as his punishment for being greedy, because he hadn’t wished to be ‘not poor’ like Kelsey had, he had wished to be rich. And they were now. Richer than he had dreamed of being as a hungry kid with nothing but a teddy bear and a one bedroom council flat in the east end of London.

Their love was like lying floating in the azure waters of a tropical ocean.

Phil understood that this was his home. He belonged here.

He drifted off to sleep with a content grin, his face pressed into Rae’s neck, his hand holding Finn’s as he slept on the other side of Rae.

They all awoke in the middle of the night as a loud clap of thunder rattled the windows. Lightening lit up the room and Finn made a grunting noise as he sat up, his heart thudding in his chest. Another ear-splittingly loud crack of thunder made them all look at each other with surprise at the immense volume. The room lit up with lightening almost immediately.

“It must be right overhead.” Rae mumbled and Finn laid back down. They tangled their arms
around each other Rae lying on Finn’s chest, Finn’s fingers laced through Phil’s as Phil settled in to spooning Rae.

“Tomorrow it’s all gonna end.” Phil said softly and the rain started to hit the window hard.

“No it’s not.” Rae answered.

“We’re gonna have to leave this room, and this… enchanted… weekend we’ve had will become hard.” Phil answered.

“Well it won’t be us making it hard.” Rae answered, “So we’ll always have us to come back to for comfort.” Phil grinned and ran his thumb along Finn’s fingers, his hand rubbing Rae’s side.

“Good point.” He answered.

“Don’t worry.” Rae soothed, “We won’t let it all fall apart no matter how hard it gets.”

They were still lying together sleepily in the early morning light when there was a knock on the door. Phil was expecting it to be Kelsey, telling him that she was off, so he pulled the blankets up over them; she knew they were together after spending the weekend here with her brother locked up in his room the whole time except for when they all got hungry and headed downstairs to raid the kitchen.

“Yeah?” Phil said and Rae pulled the blanket up higher; not wanting anyone but who she chose to see any part of her naked flesh. The door opened and as soon as her head became visible around the edge of the door Phil felt his heart drop.

She had a pleasant, expectant smile on her face and opened her mouth about to speak before she froze.

Rae had met Phil’s mother before; she had told Rae not to come back to this house after she had visited Phil when he was sick. To be fair, it was because Rae had broken Phil’s heart, rejecting him and choosing Finn. But that was before she had realised that being polyamorous really was a viable option for them.

Her eyes took in the three of them in the bed and there was a long extended silence while everyone’s mind tried to work out what to do or say next.

“Mum?” Phil asked.

“Who did you think it was going to be?”

“You’re supposed to be away till this evening.”

“Has Kelsey been here?” She asked sharply, realising who Phil had thought it would be.

“No, I had other friends staying.” Phil lied smoothly. “What’s happened?” He asked and slowly sat up, keeping the covers over Rae carefully. Rae noticed that look Phil’s mum did when she was pretending something didn’t happen and watched her raise her chin, ignoring Rae and Finn.

“Your father has to do some work in the north, so we thought we would stop by on our way through to let you know we’ll be gone for the next two weeks.”
“Is dad staying in the car or coming in?” There was a slight undertone of panic in Phil’s voice.

“He couldn’t see the point of coming in.” She answered, “Luckily.” She added, her eyes falling to Rae and Finn momentarily. “I just have to get a few items of clothing for us both.”

“Well you better hurry.” Phil told her, “You know what he’s like: time is precious.” Rae, lying closer to Phil than Finn was could feel how rigid and tense Phil felt. And Finn, who had always thought of Phil as a little rigid and tightly-wound, but had seen him wonderfully un-tense over this weekend, suddenly realised where that tension came from. They both watched Phil’s jaw clenching and Rae gently put a hand on his lower back and sat up, pulling the blankets with her. Finn got up, putting a pillow over his groin and sat on the other side of Phil.

Phil felt a sudden settling. They were with him. However this went, he’d be ok.

“You must be Finn.” Mrs Seymour said softly.

“Aye.” Finn put his hand on Phil’s thigh, making the situation clear to her. Rae’s hand was still on Phil’s lower back, gently comforting him. All three of them looking at her warily. She walked into the room and stood before Phil.

“Well then…” She said in a low voice, “I suppose my previous request to have you no longer come to this house must be rescinded Rae.” Her eyes met Rae’s for a moment before returning to Phil’s, “I won’t lose my son too.” She continued firmly, “I’ve had enough heartache with the decision your father made with Kelsey, I won’t have him make the same decision with you. So this is something he must never know about.” She looked at Finn and then Rae, “I can’t pretend to understand exactly what’s going on here. But I don’t care. I won’t lose you too.” She put a hand on Phil’s cheek for a moment before turning away and returning to the door, “You have a lock on your door Phil. I suggest you use it.” She popped the door lock and closed the now locked door without another word.

Phil fell back on his bed, his hand on his heart.

“Jesus fucking christ.” He muttered taking a few deep breaths and then wiping his eyes. “That is the most loving and accepting thing either one of my parents have done in almost a decade.” He said softly and they were both there. Rae rested her head on his shoulder, her fingers gently ran over his chest, helping his thudding heart calm down. Finn lay beside him, his body pressed against his body, his head propped up so he could gently stroke Phil’s face and wipe the tears that might come.

And the tears did come.

Phil felt almost overwhelmed. For so long he had ached to be loved. That show of love from his mother, coupled with the two of them being here for him was filling his senses. He pulled them both closer, clinging to him as the emotion swept through him. He kissed Rae passionately, and then Finn with equal fervour.

“Can we make love?” He asked urgently.

“Of course, but what about your mum hearing?”

“We can put some music on.” Finn jumped from the bed and went to Phil’s sound system. They hadn’t played any music yet; the sound of each other being what they had wanted to hear all weekend. He pressed play on the CD that was in the player and the magic that was Jeff Buckley filled the air.
Finn grinned over at them, him and Rae sharing a look.

“You can’t argue with Jeff Buckley.”

“No you can’t.” Phil agreed before Rae had chance to reply.

“Really can’t.” She added with a grin. Finn returned to them, and they embraced; Finn and Rae instantly taking it upon themselves to focus on Phil and his needs this time.
“It literally makes no difference to me.” Rae told them, “Cos your cocks are pretty much the same size, so it’s not like one’s gonna be easier than the other to take.” She held out the lubricant and Phil took it looking at Finn he handed it to him.

“I reckon it’s you mate.” Phil shrugged, “I’ve done it before and you two have been building up to it for a while.”

“Aye but, you’re here now.” Finn answered.

“Yeah but we can’t pretend you two didn’t have a relationship before me,” Phil shrugged, “I really don’t mind; I’m here now and I can still be involved.” He gave a cocky grin and kissed Rae deeply, his mouth opened wide, his tongue snaking around hers slowly.

“Bloody hell.” She breathed when he pulled away. Finn took a deep breath, preparing himself for what was coming; he was hoping that it wasn’t just Rae that was going to be experiencing her first anal penetration this afternoon. He was hoping to penetrate and be penetrated today. He turned to watch as Phil slowly kissed down her body, Rae happily lying back, but Phil returned his mouth to hers and gently slid his fingers inside of her. Her eyes rolled back in her head and Phil kissed her lips gently, Finn watched, biting his thumb nail with desire. Phil had shown him what he was doing with his fingers inside of her; moving them independently and in different rhythms, targeting different areas of sensitivity inside her cunt. That was impressive enough, but when he used his thumb to circle around her clitoris as well Finn was flabbergasted. Phil’s fingers went far beyond dextrous; he could move them all independently with different rhythms, at the same time. And he was ambidextrous. Finn was looking forward to Phil trying his hat at some prostate stimulation. He had a feeling Phil would be brilliant at it; anything that required good hands was Phil’s property.

“Don’t slow down!” Rae commanded but Phil gave her a cheeky grin.

“I don’t think you should cum just yet.” He answered lustily and gave a sly grin to Finn.

“Oh god are you two gonna do this to me together as well?” She groaned at all the things these two were tag-teaming on. Finn laid down beside her and stroked her hair.

“Only when you like it girl.” He whispered to her and kissed her deeply. She groaned through his kisses, Phil watching closely for signs of impending orgasm, always slowing and changing what he was doing when she got close.

“You have to let me cum.” She pleaded, but Finn kept kissing her and Phil kept carefully evading her orgasm, feeling her cunt getting incredibly wet he groaned and withdrew his fingers tasting her on one of his fingers, Finn licking her juices off the other. “You bastards.” She groaned when she saw the grins they were giving her as she writhed with desire.
“We can stop if you want?” Finn teased and quite suddenly turned her onto her stomach. She gasped; loving his strength. Phil made a lusty noise in the back of his throat.

“So can I use it on you too.” Finn answered, “Don’t you worry.” Phil bit his bottom lip and made another lusty noise before grabbing some pillows and helping Rae put them under her pelvis. Finn began to straddle Rae.

“Don’t straddle.” Phil said softly and Finn stopped and spread Rae’s legs instead, positioning himself between her thighs, understanding immediately that the other position kept everything closed and tight; which is fine when you’re used to everything, but for the first time, better to have some space and some nice open thighs. He ran his hands down her back and Rae laid her head down on the bed, her hand under her chin. Phil laid down on his stomach beside her and they made eye contact. He reached out and stroked her hair smiling reassuringly.

Finn stroked Rae’s back gently and slowly slid into her vagina, enjoying how wet she was. Phil watched Rae’s eyes roll back as she groaned with pleasure.

There was something magical about watching the woman he loved in so much pleasure. She opened her eyes and looked into his eyes. Finn watched the way they looked at each other with so much love and was glad Rae had him there for what was coming. He didn’t mind that Phil had loved Rae for much longer than he had loved him. The point was they all loved each other now; that was what mattered. He heard Rae starting to moan, her eyes not leaving Phil’s. Phil had never been big on watching pornography; preferring his own imagination. But watching Rae and Finn having sex was incredible, and he felt his cock aching, her moans sending shivers through his entire body.

As Rae came close to coming Finn withdrew and rubbed his cock along her crack. He took the lube and put some on his fingertips before gently pressing his fingers to her anus. He’d always just used his salvia or her juices to lube his fingers, but today he used so much lubrication his finger slipped in fast and easily. He slipped a second finger in and started to thrust into her pussy again, building her desire. He carefully slid a third finger in, but didn’t dare to go in higher than the middle knuckle, and heard her moans become more guttural.

“Alright?” He asked and she nodded slowly.

“It feels tight.” She whispered. Phil knew Finn couldn’t have heard that.

“Feels tight.” He said louder and Finn nodded. He squeezed more lube around his fingers and gently moved his fingers around, gently pushing further in, hearing her grunt and moan.

“You ready?” Finn asked breathily, excited for what he was about to experience. He was getting to have a first penetrative time with Rae; this was both their first time with anal sex.

“Aye.” Her voice was soft again, but loud enough for Finn to hear.

“Aye.” He repeated and took his cock into his hand, rubbing plenty of lube all over it.

Phil kept his eyes on Rae’s and stroked her hair as Finn prepared.

Finn pressed the head of his cock against her anus and pressed gently. There was a lot of resistance and he wasn’t used to that; Rae’s vagina was usually slick and wet for him, ready to have him, clinging to his cock like a glove, never feeling too tight, like it might hurt her, always feeling just right. The tightness from her anus was terrifying; it felt like it might hurt her if he did the wrong
thing. He felt his cock gently push past her sphincter and pushed in more, hearing a half grunt, half groan from her and some words to Phil.

“She says stop.” Phil said, “But don’t withdraw.” He was paraphrasing what she was saying. Finn had pulled back slightly as soon as he heard stop, but now he stayed still. He couldn’t hear what Rae was saying to Phil, but he could hear the tone Phil was using; gentle, supportive.

“You alright Rae?” Finn asked worried.

“Aye.” She answered louder, “Just go a bit slower, yeah?”

“Aye of course.” He waited for her to tell him to continue.

“Alright.” She answered.

“Go in a little and stop.” Phil advised, “And then pull back slightly. Give her time to open up after each push forward.” Finn nodded and pushed forward slightly, the resistance and tightness was incredible. Finn stopped without needed to be told this time and pulled back slightly as Phil had said, leaving his cock inside of her still, but giving her body time to get used to this.

It took a while, but eventually Finn was all the way in, and he waited a moment, breathing deeply, for Rae to tell him to start thrusting in earnest. She felt so tight, it was exhilarating and terrifying.

“What’s it feel like Rae?” Phil whispered to her, knowing that he’d be experiencing anal penetration for the first time soon. He didn’t need to ask Finn what he was feeling right now; he’d been there before and he knew that the tightness that was scaring Finn now would slowly loosen up, beginning with the deepest part of the anal passage, which would end up feeling slightly looser than a vagina; that was just normal anatomy at work. But the sphincter... the sphincter would stay tight throughout the entirety of the sex. It was a strange and wonderful experience.

“I feel really full back there.” She said sounding a little shaky. “It hurts quite a bit when he goes too fast... But it’s a weird, deep inside pain. But not as bad as you think it’ll be…” She whispered not sure how to explain it, “But I can already feel that it’ll loosen up... and it makes cunt ache Phil.” She sounded hungry. She moved slightly, thrusting back against Finn gently, giving Finn an unspoken sign to start thrusting. Finn did, slowly at first, barely daring to move an inch in or out. But as Rae’s body acclimatised to it, she started to groan more, encouraging him to go with longer thrusts, deeper, faster, harder, slowly increasing everything.

“It’s good when you get used to it.” She said breathlessly to Phil. “It won’t make me cum...” She knew that, “But if you fingered me now I swear to god Phil I’d cum harder than I ever have in me fucking life... my cunt...” She groaned, “I need it...”

Finn was finally starting to really enjoy himself; the scary part had passed, she was clearly opening up now and he could thrust without feeling like he was going to rupture something inside of her. He smacked her arse gently, knowing how that made her cunt ache. She groaned almost angrily. He watched his cock sliding in and out of her arse with a satisfied, disbelieving grin on his face.

Phil reached down and slid his hand between the bed and her pelvis, and gently ran his fingers over clitoris, her body instantly spasmed with response. Both lads noticed and they shared a glance and Phil’s eyes went to Rae’s face even though he could only see the side of it. Phil’s eyes also went to her face as he slid his fingers into her cunt. Almost instantly she groaned loudly; she was coming, with loud screaming gasps, Finn having to stop because the power of her orgasm was sending shudders through her whole pelvis, making her arse close incredibly tight around his cock.
“Holy shit.” He moaned at how pleasurable that felt. Phil’s eyes widened with surprise and deep desire; he’d never seen anyone cum like this; it was a powerful orgasm that lasted a long time and as soon as Finn started to thrust again, she started to cum again. The lads again shared a look. Both of them were thinking it, but neither of them wanted to say it just yet; maybe they should replace Phil’s fingers with his penis.

Rae started to gasp with exhaustion from the strength of her prolonged orgasm and Finn was so close to coming that if he didn’t stop now he wouldn’t be able to stop himself.

“Shall we stop for a minute?” He asked, gently withdrawing. Phil withdrew his fingers too and Rae collapsed, rolling onto her side.

“Oh my god.” She groaned. “Alright yes, we can definitely do this again.” She was panting heavily, her legs shaking. “Next time Phil, you’re fucking me too.” She said as she rolled onto her back fanning her face.

Phil and Finn shared a grin; of course their girl would be on the same page. Phil leaned over her and kissed her lips, resting his head on her chest, still lying on his stomach.

“So it were alright?” Finn asked and kissed her lips, before kissing her neck; incredibly horny, and wanting to cum, but not yet.

“Oh aye.” Rae said, “A bit hard at first, but once it’s all gotten going it’s alright. Like the anal itself is alright.” She nodded, “Nice actually.” She corrected herself, “But it really makes my cunt ache and I just cum… like a motherfucker!” She laughed and sighed contently. “It’s incredible… the way I came were…” She sighed again. There were no words. She stroked Phil’s hair as he lay grinning up at her and groaned as Finn mouth travelled down her stomach, kissing her body lustily. She looked into Phil’s eyes.

“You ready?” She asked him and he nodded.

“Yeah, let’s do it.” He gave a lopsided grin and she stroked his hair slowly, “It’ll be easier for you cos he’ll know what he’s doing this time.” Finn was listening and started to kiss Phil’s neck, making Phil groan softly. “And it’s really good after the initial bit.” Rae told him, “And you’ve got a prostate gland, so, it’s a party town for you in there”.

“I’m not scared.” He said as Finn started to kiss down his back, slowly creeping around to position himself, grabbing the lube as he edged around the bed. He stroked her face, “I saw what it’s like with you. I’m ready.” Finn ran his hands down Phil’s back, as he looked down and Phil’s narrow waist, enjoying how differently built they all were.

“D’you want me to clean up afore I-”

“It’s fine.” Phil said, “we’re gonna end up with all our bits all over and in each other.” He grinned up at Rae as she stroked his hair, “Good.” Finn lubed up his fingers again and started to gently prepare Phil. As soon as Finn’s first finger went into him Phil closed his eyes and sighed.

“Yeah.” He breathed almost silently.

“He likes it.” Rae relayed what was happening to Finn. Finn decided to have a feel around for the prostate, but he hadn’t really read up about it; he’d never expected to be in a position to want to find it in someone else. Phil groaned louder and Finn knew he was onto something and pressed his finger harder and deeper into him. Phil’s cock felt like someone was stimulating it from inside and it started to throb and drip pre-cum.
“Fuck.” He groaned, the sound coming deep from inside him.

“That alright?” Finn asked with a cocky grin; he’d heard Phil’s groan, he knew it was good and was getting excited to experience Phil doing it to him.

“I’d say yes.” Rae answered, watching Phil’s eyes roll back in his head.

As Rae had predicted, Finn knew what he was doing better this time, and hadn’t hurt Phil at all when he had started to penetrate him with his cock. Rae stroked Phil’s hair as he laid, whimpering in pleasure.

“What’s it feel like for you?”

“Amazing.” He answered breathily as Finn started to thrust in earnest. Phil felt shudders, like mini orgasms tingling through his entire body.

“Next time you get fucked in the arse, I can suck your cock at the same time?” She asked with a cheeky groan and he groaned loudly. It was an unspoken agreement that this first time for them all would be largely unimaginative; just all doing it for the first time. But so far they’d enjoyed it so much that there was no question of exploring it further. “D’you think you could cum from just the anal?” Rae asked and Phil nodded, still groaning loudly.

“It almost feels like I am already,” He gasped.

“Well we can’t have you cum yet.” Finn said and withdrew, Phil groaning with frustration. “You gotta do me first.” He said lustily, “Then we’ll figure out how we’re coming.”

“So you’d have to wash your cock afore I sucked it.” Rae joked as Phil hopped up and Finn happily laid his head where Phil’s had been, “For the next time we do this, and—”

“Next time I get fucked in the arse I’m gonna be fucking you in the arse at the same time girl.” He grinned, “Or in the cunt if you’d prefer.”

“Such things you say to me.” Rae answered with a saucy grin, “why not one then the other?”

“The things you say to me girl.” He returned and reached up to stroke her face.

“You ready?” Phil asked, warming up the lube between his fingers expertly; he’d been the penetrator in anal sex quite a bit and had been told several times that the lube was cold.

“Oh aye!” Finn laughed, “Between the time Rae had a finger up there and seeing your fingers at work, I’m keen as fucking beans.” Phil cocked an eyebrow and slid his finger inside Finn, instantly closing his eyes and paying attention to what his finger could feel. He moved around, feeling Finn’s expectations in the tension in his body; Finn was expecting something amazing from him and Phil did not want to disappoint. He moved his finger along the front wall of the anal passage, about an inch in and Finn gasped softly as Phil’s finger felt a slightly more bulbous bit of flesh; the prostate gland was located on the other side of it. He pressed his finger into it gently, and noticed the groan from Finn. He noted the size and shape of this area with his finger, listening to the cues Finn’s body gave him. Finn was already pretty impressed with Phil; he’d found an incredibly pleasurable spot inside of him and was stimulating it amazingly. What Finn didn’t know was that Phil hadn’t started yet; he was still learning the new anatomy and he would be for the next few months. But Phil had learned enough for now to start stimulating Finn, so he slid his second finger in, his eyes closing again and easily found the prostate gland, and each finger took up place on either side of the bulbous flesh and, pressing in at an angle, started to move in a syncopated rhythm that complimented each other so thoroughly that it sent a constant stream of
pleasure through Finn’s body, all the way to his scalp, crawling with bliss. Finn could feel the drops of pre-cum oozing from him as he gasped loudly in ecstasy, his eyes rolling back in his head.

“There we go.” Rae stroked his face, recognising the look of any person being fingered by Phil. She looked up at Phil; a look of concentration and learning on his face.

“Oh my god. Oh my god…” Finn whimpered, his body twitching with shuddering pleasure. And Rae could tell from the look on Phil’s face that he hadn’t even come close to mastering the art of prostate stimulation yet.

“Imagine me sucking your cock right now.” She whispered and he groaned loudly, clearly wanting that.

“I’d blow so much cum in your mouth you’d fucking drown.” He said between whimpering gasps, his eyes still in the back of his head.

“You could try to make me drown in cum.” She said lustily making both Finn and Phil make a desirous sound, Phil opening his eyes to give her a dirty look.

“You’re giving me ideas Rae.” Phil said with cheeky grin, “You ready Finn?”

“Fuck yes.” He answered, still gasping from the fingering he’d just had. Out of the three of them Finn had been most keen for anal, and perhaps it was because Phil was so experienced, or because Finn had a particularly sensitive prostate, but Finn hadn’t experienced any pain as Phil had slid into him, both men biting their bottom lip, both groaning happily when Phil finally got it in to the hilt.

“He’s loving it.” Rae told Phil as he started to thrust. Finn groaned happily, surprised at how good it really was, and in the back of his mind he could just imagine what Archie was gonna say about this.

“D’you think you can cum from just anal?” Rae asked him.

“The fingering, oh my god yes.” Finn answered, “I’m not sure about the fucking, but probably… but I don’t care if I cum from it, it’s so good.” Phillip ran his hands up Finn’s body, enjoying the strength of his body, the muscles moving under his skin, his beautiful pert arse. Phil looked down at his cock sliding into Finn’s arse and knew he had to stop soon or risk coming. But first he wanted to try different angles and rhythms. He tried thrusting with an upward tilt to his pelvis and Finn dissolved into a whimpering mess.

“I think you’re on to something.” Rae told Phil. “Would that make you cum?”

“Aye.” Finn gasp, “Fuck… oh my god…” Finn felt a strange contraction of pleasure go through his body. He recognised it as an orgasm, but not like his usual orgasms; he didn’t ejaculate and the pleasure emanated from a different place with a different feeling electrical frequency.

Feeling the jolt in Finn’s body made Phil stop; he didn’t want Finn to cum. Phil withdrew and lay down beside Finn with his head next to Rae’s; his and Finn’s erect cocks slipping against each other every time one of them moved.

“I honestly don’t know why every guy isn’t bisexual.” Finn said still in awe over what he had just experienced.

“You don’t have to be bi to enjoy it up the arse.” Phil said with a shrug.
“True.” Finn thought of what Archie had said about that straight guy getting pegged by his wife. “But I’m bi. And you’re bi…” He slipped a hand onto Phil’s waist.

“Aye that’s true.” Phil said and they kissed, Rae stroking their hair. “And I think I’d like to hear Rae scream again.” He looked at Rae, “What d’you say?” She groaned happily in response.

“I say yes please.” Finn kissed Rae before positioning himself on the other side of her. He pushed her onto her side, facing away from him, Rae always giggled when he manhandled her; she loved it and he knew it. She never thought anyone would be strong enough to manhandle her.

“Give me that arse.” He whispered in her ear lustily as he slid a finger into her again making her groan.

“Just gonna give me dick a quick clean before I get in you.” Phil said and hopped up. Andrea had taught him that there was a small risk of bacterial infections getting into the vagina if you penetrated the vagina after the anus. He’d explain that to them later, for now, he just quickly cleaned himself off, without any questions from them, before heading back to the bed, crawling in next to Rae, her eyes locking with his while he positioned himself better to be in her arms. He tilted his pelvis tilted under, she put a leg over his hips. It reminded him of the first night in Lincoln, lying in this position, their lips brushing as they talked. He reached down and slid his fingers into her cunt. Rae’s eyes rolled back and she groaned, but the fingering didn’t last long; Finn looked over Rae to Phil and nodded his head. Phil wrapped his legs even further under, tangling them with Finn’s legs and they simultaneously slid into her; Finn in her arse, Phil in her cunt. Rae gasped loudly. The ache in her cunt from the anal sex was immediate and intense, but Phil’s cock was there filling her up and she felt orgasm rushing at her. Rae started to moan loudly, Phil and Finn using each other’s legs as leverage, Finn kissing her neck and running his hands over her body, Phil stroking her hair and letting his lips brush against hers, kissing her in between her loud screaming gasps.

The feel of Finn’s cock and Phil’s cock completely filling her was intoxicating and satisfying. The usual warmth that spread from her cunt through her body when something was enjoyable, when something was going to make her cum was entirely different now; it was a shuddering electricity, an orgasm almost instantly; a feel of continuous high, there was no low in her levels of ecstasy, she was coming. Again and again. Multiple waves of electricity crashing into each other throughout her whole body.

“Phil! Oh my god! Finn! Phil! Finn! Oh my fucking god!” Her words where sometimes screamed, sometimes breathlessly mumbled, and while she had no idea what she as saying, she was too overtaken with pleasure, Phil and Finn were very aware of her every sound. This was the most incredible thing she had ever experienced and she needed her two men closer. Now. Closer.

She leaned her top arm back twisting through the torso so her shoulder was nearly on the bed, even as her hips stayed on their side to give both lads their access. Finn lifted himself to let himself be embraced by her; she had both of them in her arms now. She leaned back and kissed Finn, then Finn kissed Phil before Rae and Phil kissed. They drew their bodies closer together, to press against each other tightly, Rae keeping her arms around them both, their three foreheads coming together in a triangle, making love intensely. Rae, coming almost continuously, was exhausted when the lads, seeming to be in sync with each other still, both showed sign of starting to cum. Rae’s voice was ragged from the past twenty minutes of screaming, so she tried to groan louder to let them know she wanted them to cum too; wanted them to enjoy this.

Her groan was so animalistic that both Finn and Phil had gone from slow, grinding, love making, to fucking in a matter of seconds. Both sped up and got harder, making Rae groan louder and more
wildly. Her hips were moving back and forth rapidly now; fucking both of them instead of the other way around. And all three of them were thoroughly enjoying it. When Phil started to cum, he grabbed Finn’s arm, fingers digging in and kissed Rae deeply. But Finn was coming too and he grabbed Phil and put his lips into the mix, the three of them kissing together and exchanging kisses as both men came hard, grunting and groaning, the sounds in their throats freezing as their balls drained; Phil slightly before Finn this time. Even after they came, the three of them stayed pressed together, whispering their love for each other.

It was some time before they let themselves collapse in a heap, arms and legs still tangled together. And they lay in happy silence for a long time, tracing messages of love on each other; the secret language having been passed on to Phillip.

“It feels like I was built for this.” Rae said softly. She didn’t need to explain herself; they understood. They both felt the same way about themselves. But Rae continued, “Everything about who I am needs both of you.” She said in a soft, sure voice. Finn thought about the sex they had just had and thought that even her sexuality seemed to have been built for two to enjoy with her.

“I don’t think I’d do very well without both of you now.” Phil confessed.

“Well you won’t have to find out.” Finn said immutably.

“It sucks that the weekend is over. I’m not looking forward to school.” Rae sighed.

“At least it was a long weekend.” Phil noted, “But even I’m not looking forward to school.”

“Shock horror!” Rae joked, “What has gone wrong with the world?”

“I’d just much rather be here with you guys.” He said, “And we all know tomorrow isn’t gonna be fun.” Finn made a noise of agreement and Rae squeezed his hand.

“We got each other.” She said, “We’ll get through it all.”
“I’m exhausted.” Rae moaned as she got out of the back seat of the car. She had decided to be in the backseat cos it meant she could lie down and close her eyes for five minutes while Phil drove them to school. She looked over at Phil as he spun his keys around his finger and caught them, pocketing them in the same motion; an unconscious habit he had. He was wearing a white shirt and jeans, his hair an un-brushed mess; they’d had sex again before heading out, and had rushed out the door. Both Finn and Phil had sex hair. She looked over at Finn, a cigarette hanging out of his mouth looking up at the school main building, his black shirt clinging to him provocatively; it was Phil’s shirt and it was just that little bit too small. Not skin-tight, but certainly it fit him well enough to show off his body. Finn had accidentally put it on in their haste to get dressed, and after the lusty looks that Rae and Phil had given him, he’d left it on. Phil had put on Finn’s white shirt as an answer; it was only a little too big, but it sat on him in a roguish way that was beyond sexy. Rae had declared that they should always wear each other’s shirts and thrown on her blue dress and tights, both lads declaring that blue suited her. But then they both thought that all colours suited her.

They all wore sunglasses, looking like they were hungover and unimpressed to be outside, glaring at the school.

“We really did have a lot of sex.” Phil replied, not taking his eyes off the school; he’d never been less excited to go to school in his entire life. He liked learning, but today was a day for lazing in the arms of his lovers. He was gonna need a lot of those; they were too good not to have plenty of.

They were 15 minutes late, so when Rae took Phil’s hand and Finn slipped an arm around his waist, the three of them giving each other a reassuring boost, no one had seen them.

They walked into the building. It had a post-apocalyptic feel; it seemed abandoned and silent. But they knew classes were going on through the closed doors. It was so silent their footfalls echoed up the halls as they made their way to English.

Rae stated to feel that familiar white noise clawing its way from her gut up her chest, constricting her windpipe. She tried to take a deep breath. When she had first come to college she had wanted to stay under the radar. Dating Finn had blown that out of the water. But dating Finn and Phil would throw her into the stratosphere in terms of the attention this was going to get.

Phil, who was holding her hand, felt her fingers twitch and heard her deep breaths. He looked over at her and then at Finn who still had his arm slung around Phil’s waist, silently drawing his attention to Rae.

“You alright girl?” He asked softly.

“Yes.” She replied to Finn firmly without looking up; her eyes were plastered to the floor. Finn and Phil exchanged glances; the same sort of silent understanding they’d shown on the sports field in play now.

“We can blow off English.” Phil said softly and Rae’s eyes went up to his in utter shock. In all the
time she’d known Phil he’d only blown off one or two classes.

“No we can’t!” She was stunned that he, of all people was suggesting it. “We’re already late.”

“Aye we can.” Finn said suddenly pulling Phil and then Rae into the disabled toilet.

“Finn!” Rae exclaimed loudly, already off-centre from Phil’s suggestion. But she felt safe, away from prying eyes and she felt the panic lessening. “You big dickheads.” She grinned and pulled them both to her, knowing what they had done. Both of them stared intensely at the side of her face, the energy becoming charged. She looked ahead at the mirror, seeing the way they both looked at her, the symmetry in their movements as they moved their hands to touch her.

“We can’t fuck in the disabled toilet.” She said breathlessly. The look in their eyes; she could see it from here as she watched the sides of their faces in the mirror. It was almost like they were a pack of wolves taking their very willing prey down.

“Why not?” Finn asked, his hand travelling over the swell of her arse. “We’ve done it afore.”

“Aye and we was so loud I drew a crowd.” Rae reminded him. “With the two of you, I’ll scream the whole building down...” Her last word was almost lost in breathlessness as first Finn then Phil began to kiss her neck.

“We can just cover your mouth.” Phil said and covered her mouth with his. His kiss never failed to make her completely breathless; it was still filled with an aching longing to be closer to her. She had a feeling it always would be, just as Finn’s was always filled with his longing to be closer to her. He kissed down her neck, leaving her panting, but she was given barely a moment to gather herself before Finn’s mouth was on hers.

“Aye but who’s gonna cover your mouths when I make you scream?”

“Oh no.” Finn said, pulling back and looking her in the eye. “This is all about you Mrs Nelson.” He picked her up and turned her, sitting her on the basin.

“Fuck your strength is sexy Finn.” Phil said and Finn picked him up too making him laugh.

“You’ll find it even more sexy when I fuck you up against a wall Mr Nelson.” He kissed Phil and let his feet slowly come back to the ground.

“Mr Nelson?” Phil asked with a crooked grin and Finn shrugged.

“Next time we’ll all be Earl’s or Seymour’s... Whatever takes me fancy.” He turned to Rae and parted her legs slowly, his eyes on hers as she looked at first Finn and then Phil.

“We’re in school.” She moaned as Phil’s hand started to travel up her thighs, “We’re supposed to be getting an education.”

“Aye very true.” Phil answered.

“So Mrs Nelson, if you don’t mind, Phil and I have some very important business to attend to.” He kissed Rae’s lips.

“No, I suppose I don’t mind.” Rae tried to hide her grin; she loved the idea of both lads focusing on her alone sometimes. Finn stroked her face fondly and turned to Phil.

“C’mon Mr Nelson.” Finn dropped to his knees and pulled on Phil’s belt, “We’ve got an education
to get.” Phil gave Rae a cheeky grin before dropping to his knees beside Finn. Rae bit her bottom lip in anticipation; she was interested to see her boys teaching each other about her body. About her lady bits. She had broken down Finn’s dislike of kneeling in this public toilet and he had dispelled her fear that the sink couldn’t take her weight, and right now she was so pleased by that, because Finn was tearing her tights and underpants open. Rae sighed happily leaning back against the mirror as Finn put one of her legs on his shoulder, Phil following his example, his eyes glued to Rae’s cunt. Finn gently parted her lips and ran his fingers over Rae’s clitoris and her body responded, both lads giving a satisfied smile; there was nothing sexier or satisfying than your partner’s body responding positively to your touch. And even though Phil wasn’t touching her, Rae’s pleasure was extremely satisfying to him.

They both looked at her clit for a moment and Finn ran his fingers over it again.

“Rae’s most sensitive spot isn’t the top, centre of her clit.” Finn said softly, imparting his knowledge un-self-consciously, “It’s both sides.” He ran a finger along the right side of her clitoris, “She likes the tip of your tongue, hard, in at an angle on this side.” He showed the angle using his finger. “Flat-tongued, less hard licks down the centre, and light as you can, feather-like licks on the left side.” Rae furrowed her brows; she’d never considered her lady garden to be this complicated. “I mean she likes most things you’ll do down there, but those are the sweet moves, you know?” Phil nodded, “And the combination of them you’ll need to use to give her the biggest orgasms will vary depending on her mood and how horny she is.”

“Oh Rae, you’re so wonderfully complicated.” Phil said giving her an appreciative grin. “Tricky.” He added.

“So that’s good is it?” She shook her head, absurdly pleased.

“Well, I like complicated.” Phil answered, “Tricky’s good for me.”

“Oh aye.” Finn agreed, “Very good.” He gave Rae a wink and looked back at Phil, “break it up with licks down to her opening, she’s quite sensitive here.” He touched the top part of her vaginal opening and Rae was surprised at how little self-consciousness she felt as they knelt before her, staring at her vagina. “And she does enjoy her lips and thighs being licked and bitten softly. And you can suck on her clit and move it between your lips, she quite like that. But sometimes she doesn’t; depends on her mood.” Phil nodded, “You alright girl?” Finn looked up to see Rae’s face; excited and frustrated.

“Keen for you two to stop talking about it and do it.”

“Not just yet, alright?” She gave an imperious nod of her head as if she was being put out rather than this being the most bizarre foreplay for oral sex she’d ever experienced; she liked it.

“So, she as complicated inside?”

“Oh yes.” Phil grinned.

“So show me again what the fuck it is you’re doing with your fingers in there.” Finn gently slid a finger inside of Rae and Phil slid his in, laying his hand over Finn’s and gently guiding him.

“The G spot kind of lies on the other side of the clitoris. And I firmly believe that like the clitoris, it can get erect or run and hide. Feel that slightly firmer bit there?” Rae’s body responded again, her breath stopping. “Gently circle it.” Phil said, “I’m yet to figure out exactly what Rae likes; haven’t had enough time with her specifically yet, so this is just general, right?” Finn nodded. “After you circle it a bit, you can press into it a little; tap it firmly.” Rae gasped as both of their
fingers did that. “And then the A-spot… I’m not sure how I feel about these names!” He scoffed
slightly, “Is up a little higher and on the other wall, like you’re gonna press through to her anal
passage.” He twisted Finn’s hand, careful of Rae’s comfort, to be facing the other way so he could
feel what they were looking for. “It’s much harder to find.” Rae sucked in air sharply when they
found it, “But unsurprisingly it’s quite sensitive on Rae, so you’ll know when you find it.”

“Why unsurprisingly?”

“Well I imagine it’s this spot that’s getting stimulated by anal sex, but from the other side. That’d
make her cunt ache I reckon.” Phil answered and Finn made a noise of understanding.

“So how do you do the thing that makes her cum so quick?” Finn asked.

“So you gently stroke this one with the back of your middle finger.” He flipped Finn’s hand and
they both stroked her. Rae groaned loudly. “And you tap her g-spot at the same time with your
forefinger, in an off rhythm.”

“Why off?”

“You stimulate one spot then the other, then back to the first, then back to the second. You switch
were the main source of pleasure comes from rapidly.” Phil said, “it creates a constant state of
pleasure that I got told flows between the two spots.” They withdrew their fingers, “And if you do
it syncopated, it’s a completely unexpected rhythm, and it can give her even better feelings.”

“Who the hell taught you this?” Finn shook his head in awe.

“Andrea’s bisexual.” He grinned, “And a bit of a musical genius. She likes to play her lovers like
an instrument. Particularly the girls…” He grinned, “I was lucky enough that she liked me
enough to teach me.” He held up his hand and moved his middle finger side to side, the other
fingers not moving. Then in a completely different rhythm, he bent his forefinger and started to do
a tapping motion. Finn watched, his eyes wide with surprise even though Phil had already shown
him this before, it was just so impressive that Phil could genuinely move his fingers
independently. “Add to that the thumb on the clitoris.” He made a circling motion with his thumb,
again off rhythm to the other fingers. He curled his ring and pinky finger into his palm and kept
the three fingers moving.

“Jesus.” Rae breathed as she looked down on them, she hadn’t seen this before and it looked very
exciting; Phil’s hands were things of beauty. Finn held up his fingers and tried to do what Phil was
doing.

“I can’t do it in different rhythms.” He struggled.

“You’ll get there. It’s not as hard as it looks.” Phil slid his fingers inside Rae and started to do
what he had just been doing and response from Rae was immediate. She gasped, her back arching
lavishly in response to his fingers. “And when I learn exactly what Rae likes, I’m sure I’ll be able
to give her even more pleasure.” Phil’s eyes never left Rae’s face as he fingered her. Finn enjoyed
the way Rae responded to Phil’s fingering; she couldn’t hide how good it was. Phil withdrew his
fingers and turned to Finn.

“Your turn.” Phil told him and Finn nodded.

“You too.” He responded before gently sliding his fingers in. Rae watched him close his eyes as
she had seen Phil do when he had fingered Finn; he was paying attention, figuring her insides out
in more detail than he had previously. She started to groan when he found both spots and started to
try to stimulate both. It felt nice, but it wasn’t as exquisite as what Phil could do with his hands.

Which is what she could say about oral; the things Finn could do with his mouth were magic. Phil was good, it felt nice, she’d cum from it, but Finn was the master there…

Both her lads had their strong points when it came to stimulating her vagina; Phil’s was his hands and Finn’s was his mouth. Both were equally good with their cocks, different but great, and both lasting more than long enough, usually coming almost simultaneously. When one had cum obviously sooner than the other, it was split even as to who it was, sometimes Phil, sometimes Finn.

“Fuck I’m lucky having you two.” She groaned as Phil lowered his mouth to her cunt. Even on their less strong points they both did an amazing job and she could easily cum from Finn’s fingering and Phil’s oral. In fact, before being fingered by Phil, she would have sworn there was no better than Finn, and had she only ever had Phil go down, she could imagine swearing no one could be better than him. But the difference between good and great could not be denied when they were put side by side. Rae felt moments when both lads had it perfectly and the pleasure was beyond anything she’d experienced from oral or fingering. But Phil often wasn’t hard enough and Finn couldn’t get his fingers to do it right. She’d cum, and it’d be amazing, but she knew she could have so much more; and she knew these two would give it to her. She groaned loudly so Finn stood up and gently covered her mouth, grinning at her before his serious focus face went back on.

“Do you think that’s enough education?” Phil suddenly asked, looking up at Finn with a devilish glint in his eye. Finn nodded and withdrew his fingers.

“Alright girl we’re done.” Finn said cheekily and both lads moved to the other side of the cubicle, leaving Rae sitting on the sink with an outraged expression. Rae was absolutely all hot and bothered; they hadn’t made her cum after all of that.

“Fuck you both!” She said with an annoyed shake of her head. She knew they were teasing. They had to be.

“Well you already said we can’t fuck in the disabled toilet.” Phil said with a disappointed look. “So I guess you can’t fuck us both.” Finn added.

“You two tag-teaming is gonna be the death of me!” Rae shook her head in outrage.

“Nah.” Phil answered with a cheeky grin, “Cos you know we’ll always give you what you need.”

“Eventually, after a lot of teasing.” Finn added with a cheekier grin.

“No but I mean it.” Phil looked at Rae and then Finn, “I’ll always give both of you whatever you need until the day I die.” Finn put a hand on Phil’s face.

“You know I’d do the same for both of you, right?” Finn asked and looked from Phil to Rae.

“Aye this is all very touching but can you both get over her and do what you’re both best at.” She ordered with an exasperated tone. Finn and Phil laughed.

“D’you wanna cum?” Finn asked.

“Yes!” Rae answered, “And in news just in; water is wet.” She snarked.

“You know what the obvious answer to that is don’t you?” Phil asked as he and Finn crossed the
“Aye and we’re not gonna say it.” Rae shook her head but both boys were there, kissing her neck.

“Are you wet girl?” Finn asked sliding his fingers over her cunt; Phil’s right beside his.

“You both know I am.” She answered, “So are you gonna do something about that?” Her voice was more a command than a question.

“D’you hear that?” Finn said to Phil in between kissing her neck.

“I think we’ve got our orders.” Phil answered, his fingers gently caressing the opening to her vagina.

“Aye you fucking do.” Rae’s voice was breathy again; Phil was kissing her neck, his fingers teasing her and Finn was slowly sliding to his knees. “That’s more like it…” Her voice almost sounded drunk as Phil slid his fingers into her and Finn’s tongue licked from Phil’s fingers up to her clit. She rolled her head back and Phil just managed to get his other hand on the back of her head before she banged it into the mirror. Her body went limp with ecstasy and then tense with the waves of pleasure spreading through her body. She curled her fingers through Finn’s hair, her other hand pulling at Phil’s shirt. Phil kissed her lips, stifling her groaning moans. But she was getting so loud that Phil had to put his hand over mouth and moments later her whole body shook violently lava and electricity coursing through her veins. Finn stopped for a moment to let her catch her breath, Phillip changed rhythms, slowing down, and Rae went limp for a moment. But then Finn’s mouth was on her again and Phil ramped up the intensity of his movements. A second, screaming orgasm followed on the heels of the first, Phil’s hand firmly over Rae’s mouth. After that Rae’s body was exhausted, her clitoris too sensitive and they stopped, both Phil and Finn returning to staring at her face lovingly between soft gentle kisses on her lips as she caught her breath. After a while Finn turned to Phil and stared at him for a while and Phil turned, kissing him gently, Rae stroking their hair. The three of them kissed and stared at each other for some time before Rae’s sore arse on the sink brought her back to reality.

“You know I’ll give you both whatever you need?” Rae asked sheepishly.

“Aye as long as you’re not too horny.” Finn laughed

“Shut up!” Rae retorted with a chuckle. “You two are such fucking teases.”

“You love it!” Phil grinned and she rolled her yes.

“Alright, maybe I do.” She laughed and Finn helped her off the sink. “I really feel sorry for any disabled students at this school.” Rae said guiltily.

“We don’t have any differently abled students this year.” Phil answered, “We had two people in wheelchairs last year, and one person permanently on crutches…”

“How do you know this stuff?” Finn asked.

“I observe. I remember.” He shrugged.

“That is some next level genius shit Phil.” Finn shook his head and grinned at his man.

“Nah.” Phil lowered his eyes. In truth his parents had had him tested and his IQ was through the roof, through the stratosphere even. But Phil doubted the validity of such tests, seeing the inherent flaw in the design of a test meant to give a number out for a quality that is not even properly
defined. “What is intelligence anyway?” He asked and shrugged again.

“That is.” Rae said, understanding his thought process better than Finn; she had known Phil longer and was closer to him. Phil was proud of all the effort he’d put into learning and the results it had had, but when it came to the idea of innate intelligence he was unsure, and embarrassed by the notion that he was different to the majority of people in that regard. He shrugged again and Rae noticed the self-conscious blush, so she didn’t push. Phil had spent a long time keeping his true feelings and thoughts to himself, and while he had poured himself out to them over the weekend, both Rae and Finn understood that it would take some time for Phil to naturally just tell them his first thought every time. Finn kissed his cheek and turned to pick up their three bags.

“So just straight to drama?” Rae asked them and Phil nodded. Rae took her bag and slung it over her shoulder, checking her reflection in the mirror; shaking her head at another pair of torn tights.

“That’s probably the best class for us to go to first.” Finn noted as he handed Phil’s bag to him, “They’ve been treating us like a trio for a while now.” They took each other’s hands, Rae in the middle this time, and headed out the door.

“Have we had any bright ideas about how we’re gonna wrangle spending the next two weeks at Phil’s house?” Rae asked; all three of them had been thinking about this. Two weeks with an empty house seemed too good an opportunity to pass up.

“We’ll think o’ something.” Finn answered. They walked down the corridors, all the stragglers on their way to their next classes noticed them; double takes and whispered conversation followed them.

Rae felt anxious, but strangely untouchable; her two lads would always be there for her. They’d all get through this.
Gamble Everything for Love

‘Gamble Everything for Love’ by Ben Lee

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=reIDepQzVJY

Love me with an open heart, tell me anything. We can find a place to start to gamble everything.
We can set this thing apart; cos were gonna, gonna gamble everything for love...

“It’s about fucking time!” Kristi said looking down at their clasped hands and then back up at their faces. “Hey Stacia, you owe me ten quid!” Kristi called across the room, drawing the attention of the whole class. Rae’s eye fell on Izzy and Chloe, fear in her stomach. But Chloe shrugged and motioned for them to come over. Izzy took only a moment longer to crack into a grin and turn to look at Chloe, speaking rapidly, Chloe nodding her head and grinning too.

Finn kept his eyes ahead, having absolutely no interest in what anyone thought about his relationship. Phil scanned the room and saw a few confused and even hostile faces. But their drama group was grinning.

“TWO DADS!” Kurt yelled out merrily, and turned to Sam “I fuckin’ told you. Wish I put a tenner on it.”

“Enough.” Elsa had walked in as Kurt had yelled out, she took in Rae and Finn and Phil for the briefest of moments and cocked an eyebrow. She said nothing, and headed to the stage at the front of the room.

Rae, Finn and Phil sat down in their usual group.

“I think someone has some news.” Chloe said as Finn sat in the middle of Rae and Phil, lacing an arm around Phil’s waist and putting his hand high on Rae’s thigh. He was not messing around with not caring what people thought and being unashamedly himself.

It was the first time in his life, other than being on the stage, that Phil had felt all eyes on him.

With utter nonchalance, bordering on contempt for those glaring, Phil dropped his arm over Finn’s shoulders, leaning into him slightly, his fingers dangling, Rae’s hand instantly raising so her fingers could tangle in his. Like Finn, Phil refused to look anywhere but at Elsa who was starting to talk about the exams and their final performance pieces. As soon as Elsa finished talking and everyone moved into their groups to run lines Chloe turned to Rae expectantly.

“We’re supposed to be running lines…” Rae answered.

“Oh fuck that!” Izzy said, “Dish it.”

“Did it happen at the party?” Bryn asked; he’d seen them dancing just before Phil had walked away from them.

“Aye.” Finn answered. He wasn’t usually the one to answer these sorts of questions, but he figured it was best to get some sort of facts out their amongst their friendship group at the very
least; he could already hear the whispered gossip from some of the other groups. “And we’re together now.” Finn continued, “All of us. Equally… exclusively.” He added. Everyone’s eyes turned to Rae; they all knew she was the most verbose of the three of them.

“Doesn’t seem to be much more to add.” She shrugged. There was a baffled silence that followed that.

“So you’re all together?” Kurt asked, Stacia’s head in his lap; he stroked her hair gently and she looked at them curiously.

“Are you asking if we all fucked?” Phil said with a supremely unimpressed tone. No one wanted to admit that this is what they were wanting to know; all the dirty details of how a threesome happens. Chloe and Izzy both looked at their scripts; Rae would tell them all the details later. “Did you manage to get it up in the showers in London, or were we all cock-blocking you too much?” Phil asked, his eyes narrowing. Kurt’s eyes narrowed in response.

“I get what you’re saying; it’s a private topic… but friends talk about that kind of stuff.” He answered.

“Mind your own fucking business!” Kristi said in an exasperated tone at her brother.

“Answer my question and I’ll answer yours.” Phil said and Kurt’s eyes flicked between Phil and Kristi.

“Alright maybe drama’s not the place to talk about it.” Kurt answered, “There’s always PE.” He added with a cheeky grin. Phil gave Finn a quick look and Rae squeezed his fingers. There was a loud nasty giggling from across the room and Rae distinctly heard the word ‘slag’.

“Did you know,” Elsa said to the gigglers, loud enough for the whole class to hear, but soft enough for everyone to think it was a private conversation, “that there’s all sorts of configurations for relationships, and just because one is more common than the others it doesn’t make it more special or more real or more right or more normal than the other types.” She looked around the room, above all of their heads as if she were declaring it to an empty room. “Love is love people. And love is never wrong, no matter what form it takes…” She took a moment for the seriousness of that statement to sink in and then added, “Except incest and paedophilia and shit like that. That’s not love, that’s messed up and hopefully someone will superglue your genitals to themselves.” She continued on as if nothing had been said and everyone started to laugh. She had diffused the tension in the room and openly declared her support for the new relationship in the room without saying a word about Rae, Phil or Finn directly.

As they filed out at the end of the class Elsa very subtly motioned for them to stay behind. Rae took a long time packing her script into her bag and Phil and Finn both made a point of watching her, holding hands, waiting. When everyone in the class had left the room Elsa fixed them with a glare that said ‘you’re going to be the death of me.’ She took a deep, resigned breath.

“Your thoughts only go as far as those gossipers going out into the school and telling everyone you three are really cosy now.” She said.

“We don’t care what they say.” Through the silent understandings they shared, Finn had automatically become their spokesperson on topics that required absolute lack of caring.

“But,” Elsa continued, thoroughly unimpressed with what Finn had said, “That’s not the problem.” She looked at them each in turn, “Those gossipers are going to go home and tell their parents.” She said, “And you can guarantee that tomorrow morning Principal Dixon is going to be met by a
barrage of concerned parents, complaining that we’re running an immoral institution, or a whorehouse or any countless number of knee-jerk reactions to something they know nothing about.” All three of them now had worried looks on their faces. “And if you were Principal Dixon, what would you do about this?” She didn’t give them a chance to answer, “Barring abuse or neglect, those parents have a right to raise their kids with the morals they think are appropriate. Now we all know that this doesn’t make their opinions or concerns valid or their morals right. We all know there’s nothing wrong with polyamorous relationships. But current societal trends would disagree with us. And it doesn’t matter how wrong society is, or what Principal Dixon’s personal opinion on the matter may be… when those concerned and angry parents come knocking, she’s gonna have to answer.”

“Hadn’t thought o’ that.” Rae admitted and looked at her two lads; both of them bore the same expression as her. “What will Principal Dixon do?”

“If she’s smart she’ll delegate it to me.” Elsa’s gaze suddenly became sterner. Finn had expected a women so entrenched in polyamory to look more sympathetic right now. Silence settled between them as Elsa measured them carefully. “Do not make me go through that shit for you, if you’re just fucking around for shits and giggles.” Her voice was commanding.

“We’re not.” Rae answered, understanding that things could get very seriously difficult.

“Alright then.” Elsa’s voice was suddenly back to light and easy, “I’ve got you’re back.”

“Thanks Elsa.” Finn answered.

“Now I expect you three to have my back.” She said, “If I’m gonna make this fly with Principal Dixon, you have to understand that people think your relationship is inherently more sexual than monogamous ones. So people are gonna be looking for that and if you give it, there will be more complaints and Dixon will feel she can’t trust me on this. Don’t give them any ammunition. Not while you’re at college.” She held her hand up when all three of them went to speak, “I’m not asking you to hide, or to pretend to be something other than what you are. I’m just asking you to keep your kisses kid friendly when there’s a lot of students around. I don’t want parents walking through the school to see any of the students kissing to be honest; that’s not that you’re here for, you’re here to learn!” Elsa said, “But since you’ll be under extra close scrutiny just be a little careful. Because on top of ridiculous parental concerns, it’s awful, but statistically all three of you are now far more likely to be violently attacked, beaten, raped… everything.” Elsa gave them a concerned look, “People have got some fucked up ideas about people like us. They think we’re all fucked in the head or open to fucking anyone… And you shouldn’t have to change your behaviour for them, but I am urging you to be careful, that’s all.” They all nodded, “Look after each other. And Rae I don’t wanna hear you coming in that disabled toilet one more time.”

Woody had been the most accepting, after Chloe and Izzy that was. He was himself bisexual and into poly relationships, and he just seemed relieved to have other people like him around. James had given them an odd look and started to bite his nails viciously. Macca had asked if they were bisexual like Bethany and Woody and Chloe had raised her hand.

“And me.” She added and gave Rae a grin.

“I think you’ve got news too!” Rae said excitedly and Chloe nodded her head with a grin. Bryn was eyeing Izzy thoughtfully, his eyes falling to her engagement ring before crawling back up to
“I think we’re all bisexual.” Rae had answered and Finn had cocked and eyebrow at her and she shrugged, “I’d go there if I were single. But I most definitely am not.”

“Yeah I think you got more than enough to handle with these two strapping lads!” Woody shot down the table at her and she grinned.

“Wouldn’t you like to know what I’m handling Woody?” She shot back.

“Yeah I would actually. Bunch o’ fucking lookers in your trio!” He said happily. “Closed is it?” He asked almost hopefully.

“Yes.”

“Aye.”

“Yeah.”

They all answered simultaneously and then squeezed each other’s hands under the table.

“Pity for me.” He shrugged and went back to eating. That had been the end of discussing the topic in their friendship group at school. The twins, Stacia and Sam had come and stated hanging out with them more after that day, but no one had mentioned it again; things had continued as if nothing changed.

Phil sat down at chess club; it was the first time he’d been away from them for the four days since this had all begun. He was thinking more now about how he’d have to alter his busy schedule to fit in having a relationship. He knew he had to figure out what things to keep and drop; violin had to stay, tennis could go… so many decisions to make. But chess would have to stay. These people had become his de-facto family over the years and he cared quite deeply for the 8 guys and 3 girls that graced the chess club with their presence. Even Jake, who was the black sheep of the family. The 12 of them were close. This group mattered to him. He felt nervous; the 4 of them that went to college with him would have heard all about his relationship by now, so he knew he’d have to tell them about it, that this was the real moment of truth for him. His mother had been surprisingly supportive, and he knew that eventually his father would find out and disown him; but he’d known for a while now that his father would eventually disown him for something, so that was less of a concern for him. But this was his little home.

He ran his fingers over the chess board and looked around the room. Everyone’s eyes were on him; usually everyone was engrossed in their game. Jake and Sammy, came and sat opposite him. Jake gave him an expectant expression, Sammy had a more supportive, but confused expression; she was Phil’s closest friend and was surprised that she’d heard this through the grapevine rather than from Phil.

“Did I see…?” Jake asked, “You and trademark and King fucking Nelson, snuggling at school today?”

“She name is Rae. Never call her trademark again; that is a dehumanising and grossly over-sexualised nickname a bunch of misogynistic dickwads gave her that she despises.” Rae had garnered the new nickname when she had worn a particularly low cut dress, designed by Izzy, to
the Summer Ball. Her breasts had been an instant success, with even Tom and Archie having a
good look. Hot Mike had called her ‘Tits McGee’ and the lads at school, in an effort to not get
flattened by Finn, shortened it to ‘tm’ when taking about her. This had then been lengthened out to
‘trademark’ in a further attempt to obscure the fact that they had nicknamed her after her incredible
breasts and were all pretty interested in seeing more of those breasts. Rae hated it; she had
effectively been reduced to nothing more than a set of tits.

“I call her trademark cos she’s an original!” Jake replied. “That’s what it means now!”

“Hm.” Phil answered with a tight smile, “Giving a word a new meaning in no way erases it’s past
meaning, nor the impact on the people, or in this case person, being called that. Rae doesn’t want
to be called trademark, so don’t do it.”

“Fine.” Jake answered sullenly.

“Jake’s been telling everyone you’re in a threesome?” Sammy asked, her full lips stayed open in
concern, but she managed to keep a mostly neutral face of support. She loved Phil like a brother,
and she had heard numerous times the agony of his soul over this girl Rae. She worried he was
getting into something bad, something that would consume him or destroy him, for the chance to
touch her, even if just shared touches with the almighty King Finn. Phil looked around and saw
varying levels of concern on everyone’s face; even Jake was worried for him, even if he was a bit
of a pervert too.

“You don’t have to be worried. I’m fine.” Phil said softly.

“How do you know you’re fine?” Sammy asked.

“Yeah how do you know they’re not just gonna use you and get rid of you when they’re done with
you?” Roger asked, “They had a relationship before you… they’ll have one after you.”

“That’s not the way it is.” Phil said firmly, even though there was still a tiny seed of that fear in
his heart.

“Are you sure bb?” Sammy asked. She always called him’ bb’ short for big brother; she was older
than him but only 5 foot 4 inches, whereas Phil was 6 foot 2, nearly 3, inches.

“I am sure.” He took a deep breath, “I am in love with two people, and they are both in love with
me, and we are all together. Equally. I’m not some side fun.”

“So the three of you fuck?” Jake asked. “Like…” He pulled a face trying to intimate he was
asking about anal sex.

“I think that’s private.” Sammy snapped at Jake.

“I am bisexual.” Phil said clearly, not ashamed, “but I’m not willing to talk about my sex life at
chess club… is no one gonna try and beat my unbroken record of absolutely kicking the shit out of
all of you?” Sammy grinned and indicated she’d play him. Everyone settled down to play their
games.

“You know I always wondered why that school needed King Finn, when we’ve had out King Phil
here for ages.” She grinned, “I guess the world gets to have two kings crowned. It’s nice that not
everything ends in competition.”

“Not everything.” Phil agreed. “And the world doesn’t get to have these two kings… only Rae
does.” Sammy looked up at him.
“Well I still get my bb, right?”

“Well that’s not even a question Sammy, you’re family!”

“Well I better get to know your king,” She said and picked up her queen piece, moving it boldly across the board, “And your queen.”

“Of course,” Phil said keeping his eyes on the board, “you don’t think it’s—”

“It don’t matter what I think Phil. It don’t matter what anyone thinks if you’re happy.”

“I am.” He looked up at her, “But that doesn’t mean I’m ok with losing all my friends. I’ll do it if I have to… but I’d prefer not to.”

“Well you’re not gonna lose me.” She said, “Or any of these guys.” A murmur of agreement went through the room, “So don’t fret.”

“Thanks.” Phil said softly and moved his knight.

“But you are gonna have to take us to the fucking pub and talk about the sex!” Jake said loudly and there was a general laughter and more agreement.

“And it’ll be your shout, you lucky sod.” Jason chimed in.

“Oi are you bisexual Jase?” Roger asked, the mood in the club jovial.

“Yes I am!” Jason said, “and now that Phil, king of our little club has come out, well… I guess I can too.” Everyone was really supportive, and Phil found himself grinning at his adopted family.

“I’m bisexual too.” Steph said softly. They all turned their eyes to her.

“But aren’t you with what’s his name?” Adam asked.

“Being in a committed relationship doesn’t erase my sexuality.” Steph said. “But I only mention it cos I don’t want you lot thinking that every bisexual person is wanting polyamory or threesomes, just cos Phil and Jase do. A lot of us don’t.” She said, “I never say I’m bi as a girl, cos every lad in the fucking world seems to think that means I wanna shag him and his girlfriend.” She shook her head.

“Kick ‘em in the nuts when they do that!” Of course Sue would say that; Phil had invited her to come and join the club after meeting her at the arts centre. She’d gotten over her attraction to Phil and was eyeing off a first year named Peter nowadays; she didn’t get to see him often, only when the drama class was run at the theatre, but he’d given her a few shy glances. The girls laughed and most of the boys grinned, shaking their heads.

“It’s nice to know there’s other bi people here.” Jason grinned. “But no one’s living the life like Phil is!” He laughed and a couple of the lads commented they’d like to do it with two girls instead, everyone merrily laughing and generally being supportive.

“I think drinks are called for.” Sammy suddenly said.

“You’re only saying that cos you know I’m gonna beat you.” Phil grinned.

“You’re only saying that cos you know I’m gonna beat you.” Sammy laughed. “Alright vote; who says we finish up these games,” She gave Phil a look, “And then we take Phil to the pub—”
“And ply him with booze till he tells us everything!” Jake said loudly. A loud chorus of ‘aye’ went up and Phil had to laugh.

“See?” Sammy said with a grin, “It’s true what they say; chess geeks are the best geeks.”

“I’m not quite getting it.” Gary’s eyes went from his son to Rae then Phil. He looked almost betrayed. “I thought you two were in love?” His eyes fell to the necklace around Rae’s neck.

“We are.” Finn said in a slightly tense and defensive tone. Both Rae and Phil gently soothed him; Rae stroking his thigh, Phil squeezing his hand. “And we both are in love with Phil too.”

“Right.” Kenzie answered. “Um, I’m sorry… it just sounds-”

“I understand.” Gary said quite suddenly, his mind going to Janice. “I understand that people can and do love more than one person at the same time.” Something in his tone made Kenzie turn her eyes to him. “I’m not sure that I completely understand that you’re refusing to make a choice… because-”

“Because you’re making yourself make a choice.” Finn shot back and Kenzie’s eyes opened wider slightly before dropping to her hands, fidgeting in her lap.

“Do you not feel less special cos he couldn’t choose you above everyone else?” Gary ignored Finn’s truthful words and addressed Rae.

“I can see why you think that, but I just don’t feel that way.” She shrugged, “Maybe it’s easier cos I love Phil too… but really it comes down to loving Finn enough to want him to be as happy as he can be. And Phil is a necessary part of Finn’s happiness.” She knew that Finn had been saying the same about her for a long time before he had realised that he too loved Phil, “I don’t think that accepting all the love in your world into your heart and life cheapens love, because I don’t see love as some finite resource that must be jealously guarded and rationed out.” She felt all eyes on her, but she didn’t feel at all nervous; she knew she was speaking her truth, “We all have so much love in us, yet we’re all so afraid to love to our fullest extent. Whatever that extent may be… this relationship Gary, is really us not being afraid to love to our absolute maximum amount, no matter where it takes us.” Gary looked away, thoughtfully.

“Can you not do that with one person?” Kenzie asked gently.

“I think a lot of people can and do. But just as many people can’t and don’t. And they either deny themselves love or cheat… We’re just refusing to deny ourselves love and being honest about where that love lies.” Both Finn and Phil were looking at Rae adoringly when Gary looked back at them. “We’re not lying to ourselves. We’re not cheating, emotionally or physically, and we’re communicating, nurturing and caring for each other. I don’t understand how anyone could have a problem with people being in love.”

“Ok I’ve heard enough.” Gary said standing up. Finn was on his feet instantly meeting his father with squared shoulders, his chin defiantly cocked.

Gary gave his son a wry grin and turned his eyes to Phil.

“You’re welcome in my house.” He held out his hand and Phil shook it, the tension instantly disappearing, Phil at a loss for words just nodded gratefully. “Right you three, since you’ve given
us old codgers such a mental workout, you can sod off to the kitchen and cook us all dinner.”

Perhaps Gary’s acceptance had given Rae more hope than she should have had, but it was going much worse with her mother than she had dreamed in her worst nightmares; Phil was currently locked outside and her mother was glaring at them both silently, accusatorily.

“Mum!” Rae raged in response, “I am not discussing this with you with Phil locked outside!”

“I don’t have to let him in my house!” Linda replied staunchly.

“Why are you being like this?”

“Because I didn’t raise you to be a whore Rachel.”

There was a moment of stunned silence when all four people in the room could not believe what had been said. Karim gave a pained expression and picked up Aiesha, who unsurprisingly, had learned to sleep through people bickering and yelling at each other, and went out to the lounge without a word.

“Alright.” Rae said almost silently, Finn was beside her with a dropped jaw, trying to gather his thoughts to defend his girl; he wished Phil was here, he was better with this kind of quick-thinking. He just couldn’t believe Linda had said that. Finn wanted to punch something, someone. Hard. “Well then this whore’s not gonna live under your roof anymore.” Rae got up and Finn slowly stood, still in shock. “I’ll get my stuff when you’re not here.” Linda’s lips pursed and she looked away, still too in shock herself to even properly take in what Rae had said. Rae pushed through the door and went into the lounge room.

“I know it’s not conventional… and maybe it seems fucked up to you… but we really do love each other.” Finn said softly to Linda. “And both of us will look after her.”

In the lounge room, Karim had had a moment to compose himself, and he turned as Rae came through the door, tears already on her cheeks.

“My cousin has two wives.” He said, “it’s not permissible in Tunisia, but he lives in Egypt.” Karim put a hand on her face, “They are very happy. Sometimes two partners is good, sometimes is bad.”

“But it’s sometimes good, sometimes bad with one partner as well, Karim.” Rae answered, her voice thick with emotion.

“Yes.” He answered. “Go.” He said softly, “I will speak with your mother.”

By the time Finn had gotten outside, after having spoken with Karim about good times to come and get Rae’s stuff, Phil was gently stroking her hair and holding her, whispering soothingly to her while she cried. They were sitting on the back seat of the beautiful car Finn had made for Rae. He got in the front seat and started the engine, understanding that Rae needed to get away from here now, and knowing Phil was doing a great job comforting her. He drove them back to his place and they took Rae upstairs, Gary not needing a word of explanation to understand what had happened.

It was a revelation to Finn to comfort Rae with Phil there doing the same. They gently soothed her, held her and created a safe bubble, a barrier between this world and their girl with their arms
wrapped around her and their love enveloping her. They were safe together.
“You still bummed about not going to Egypt?” Finn asked Archie.

“No!” Tom said firmly. “D’you hear what happened?”

“Aye.” Finn said and settled down into the huge bean bag next to Phil. It was Phil’s first time to Chop’s house for a gang-only party. He’d been here for the extended gang party, but now he was part of the inner circle. He saw Chop furrow his brows momentarily as Finn rested his hand on Phil’s thigh, and look away.

“What was it? 62 people dead?” Rhys asked with a furrowed brow as he accepted some gin from Tom.

“Yeah 62, mostly tourists at the temple of Hatshepsut.” Archie said gloomily.

“D’you know his itinerary would have put us there at the time of the massacre?” Tom said and very suddenly put an arm protectively around Archie’s shoulders, “this is the only time I’ll ever be glad you were sick.” When it had been time for Tom and Archie to leave on their overseas journey Archie had had pneumonia; he’d had to spend a week in hospital. Tom had been beside himself, and despite his reputation for being a vain, preening pretty boy, nothing could drag him from Archie’s bedside. He hadn’t showered for a week, nor looked in a mirror, he had rushed going to the toilet to get back to Archie. Any doubt anyone had about Tom’s devotion to Archie died when they saw him in the hospital. “We’d have been dead. It would have been 64.” He took a deep breath.

“Maybe 63.” Rhys said, “Cos we both know you’d have put yourself between him and the bullet.” Tom looked at Archie, his arm still protectively around his shoulders.

“Anything for him.” Tom looked in Archie’s eyes, “Anything. My life is meaningless without you.”

“You do know I feel the same way. I couldn’t live without you.” Archie grinned, “I’d’ve taken a bullet for Tom!” Archie hit Rhys’s arm and Rhys gave him a nod to acknowledge what he had said, but he knew Tom. Tom would have put himself between Archie and danger before Archie even had chance to properly process what was happening. Rhys also knew that had Tom been shot, with his dying breath he’d protect Archie. He knew Tom. And even though this was the first time Tom had been in love, Rhys knew Tom’s personality well enough to know exactly what would have happened had Tom and Archie been there.

“Well it’s nice having you here instead of overseas.” Finn said and took a swig of beer, handing the can to Phil.

“I don’t really drink beer.” Phil answered, as Archie got up to go to the kitchen.
“Oh and I suppose your tastes are more sophisticated, you fucking aristocrat?” Finn snarked. Chop watched with a confused face.

“It’s not hard to be more sophisticated than a Neanderthal.” Phil returned.

“Fuck I love you.” Finn grabbed Phil’s face and kissed him, “What are you drinking?”

“I love you.” Phil grinned, completely oblivious to everyone else in the room, “If not wine, I prefer spirits.” Finn reached over to Rhys and he handed Finn the bottle of gin. Everyone gave Finn and Phil an odd look; the situation with Finn, Phil and Rae had been explained second hand through Chloe and Izzy to everyone in this room, and now they wanted a firsthand account.

“Grab us a glass Arch.” Finn said and Archie came out of the kitchen with snacks and some glasses.

“So I’m sensing a story here.” Archie pushed his glasses up slightly as he handed Finn the glass and sat down in the other huge beanbag with Tom. Chop had grabbed the mattress off the futon and put it on the floor, half propped against the wall like a sofa and he and Rhys were lounged on that.

“Oh aye.” Finn laughed.

“Are you and our Rae Rae still together?” Chop asked slowly, the cogs in his brain very clearly ticking over.

“Aye, we’re all together.” Chop furrowed his brows in response.

“Are you fucking?” Tom asked, “Cos I’m not gonna lie,” He pointed his finger at them, moving it between them, “You two are good looking couple.”

“They’re not a couple.” Rhys answered, “They’re a trio.”

“Yeah.” Tom shrugged, “But I’m gay, so I’m more interested in the man-only part of the sex.” He grinned deviously and Rhys actually rolled his eyes.

“Did that fucker just roll his eyes?” Chop exclaimed happily.

“Yes I did.” Rhys said, “And Tom knows why.”

“Why?” Archie asked but beside him Tom was chuckling.

“Because a polyamorous relationship is more than just sex. And in a pan or bisexual situation, such as this… it’s just so mono-sexual and monogamous to focus on one pairing within the trio.” He shook his head slowly, “there’s three people in the relationship not two, and you must consider all three of them when you consider the relationship. To do otherwise is akin to considering your relationship but only taking Tom into account.” Rhys said to Archie, “There’s two people in your relationship, not one.” Rhys said, “The mono way of thinking has been so programmed into our way of thinking that we can’t quite comprehend the idea that three, or more people, could actually love each other equally. So we break it back down to pairings. And yes I roll my eyes, because it genuinely annoys me, and he knows that!” Rhys nodded at Tom and Tom laughed, he enjoyed riling Rhys up. Most social justice issues either angered or annoyed Rhys. The ones that angered him were the ones he was the calmest about; Rhys would never let his anger get the better of him. But Tom had a good idea of the ones that annoyed him, and often riled him a little. And to be honest, sometimes Rhys didn’t mind being riled a little, “For all of my sexual life I have been in poly situations. Being with Chloe is the closest I’ve ever been to monogamy. And in essence it’s
how most mono people think of polyamorous situations; one central relationship with fun on the side, which is basically an open relationship. Well that or cult situations where you see crying 14 year old girls married off to 50 year old blokes. But that’s not the situation in all, if not most, poly relationships. There are so many different types of poly relationships it’d make your head spin.” Rhys shook his head, “poly people are practically invisible until it’s time to demonise them.” Phil found himself liking Rhys more and more. “Everything’s about mono relationships.” Rhys shook his head.

“Aye but it’s just human nature to go with monogamy; it’s what’s more normal.” Chop answered with a shrug, “I’m not saying it’s right, but it is what it is.”

“The notion of human nature is a myth.” Rhys answered, “If it wasn’t there would be some things that are universal to all humans and those are the things you would call human nature. We are taught to think the way we do. There is no such thing as normal.”

“Monogamy only really spread through the west with Christianity.” Phillip said to Chop, “I mean some ancient cultures limited marriage to be between two people, but extra-marital affairs were normal. What I meant was that it really became a moral thing to be mono, with Christianity…” Phil added and Chop, the only semi-religious person in the room gave him a strange look and turned to Rhys for confirmation.

“In all of human history poly relationships have overwhelmingly been the most common configuration of relationship. If you go by what’s been done the most in human history then poly is far more natural than mono.” Rhys explained emphasising the word ‘natural’ to show he didn’t like that word in this context, “Cos as Phil said, mono relationships and the moral imperative linked to them only really spread through the west when Christianity did, even though other cultures had practiced types of mono relationships before that, affairs were very common and expected. So we’re talking 200,000 years of human history in which almost every culture on Earth had primarily poly relationships as the norm or a big part of them. And 2000 years of Christian culture creating a moral imperative for a mono configuration of relationships… which is failing, when we consider cheating and divorce rates.” Rhys said pointedly, “I think that monogamy is wonderful for some people, like yourself perhaps? But for others it simply doesn’t work and we need to take the moral imperative and the idea that it’s more natural normal away from mono relationships.” Rhys shook his head, “Some scholars argue that early church leaders enforced monogamy, despite there being no scripture support for doing so, in order to make men stay and look after their children, because women had less easy access to work and money and therefore found it difficult to support their children when the men left.” Chop furrowed his brows and listened closely. Tom grinned; he loved it when Rhys was on a roll like this. “But because men didn’t want to look after children that were not their own; the virginity myth was born, a woman was worth more if she was a virgin and would be with the one man her whole life because then that man knew the babies she carried were his. So men who sleep around are studs, which literally means a male animal that impregnates a female animal. And women are sluts or virgins, or mothers. This means that a woman is reduced to nothing but her genitals; her worth lies in being a virgin, who then becomes a vessel for one man’s sperm to produce his progeny. This is why we as a culture are obsessed with young women, they can breed still, and virgins; we know it’s our kid so we stick around in a mono relationship to pay for the kid. Or at least, she’s expected to be mono and men are expected to ‘sow their wild seeds’ while simultaneously the spiritual guiders in our society tell us that we all must be mono… this is quite literally the society we live in. Have sex, but don’t is the message to men, and don’t have sex is the message to women.”

“Yeah but some girls like to save their virginity for marriage.” Chop scrunched up his face thinking about his sisters.
“Some people genuinely want to save their first time for someone special, and there’s nothing wrong with that.” Rhys said, “But the vast majority of people simply do what is culturally mandated without ever examining what it is they are doing and deciding if it really is for them. Most people simply go along with what is expected of them. Go to school, get a job, have a career, get into a hetero mono relationship, protect your virginity, get married, get a house, get kids… deviating from this path even a little will cause you a lot of problems.”

“People think that because this is ‘what everyone does’ that it’s natural… but everything had a beginning. Everything we currently consider normal was created by our cultures, our own minds, in the past, and we don’t really realise that.” Archie agreed.

“There’s an argument that monogamy evolved because of our large brained babies needing extra parental care.” Phil added, “But then really, that works better in poly situations than mono ones.”

“It takes a village to raise a child.” Archie noted and Phil nodded. “There’s a lot more anthropological and historical evidence for larger family units and tribes helping with raising children than two parents.”

“Genetic research indicates that up until about 18,000 years ago lots of women were producing offspring with a small number of men.” Phil continued, “And modern agriculture saw the number of men increase. So until agriculture, the women were probably all raising their children together, and men were competing for the right to breed, like a lot of other animals on the planet.”

“But you do sometimes see, like, lion brothers, take over a pride together.” Chop said unexpectedly, “Sometimes blokes work together, rather than fighting over the girls.” He looked at Finn and Phil; his cogs clearly working overtime.

“Oh definitely!” Archie answered, “It’s not at all uncommon for some males to form an alliance to keep other males at bay and command a larger territory.”

“Back to genetics, cos I love them.’ Phil said, ‘Our genes indicate that this increase in male population with agriculture really started to make an impact 5 to 10 thousand years ago. Instead of one bloke and lots o’ girls, there started to be more blokes wanting the companionship of a lovely lass… and culture started to tend towards monogamy on the surface, but affairs were the norm. The point I have with monogamy is that no matter why it happened, it’s not necessarily natural, and it most certainly came about for men. To benefit men.”

“Historically, cultures like the Romans tried to enforce monogamy to protect rich people’s assets; to keep them in the family, and legitimate children were kept to a minimum in order to keep the wealth in as few sets of hands as possible, rather than having it diluted down amongst many.” Archie added, enjoying the conversation; his knowledge was useful here, “So you’d have these marriages where the man and woman in them were shagging everyone but each other! Because the illegitimate children got nothing, and as we all know you’re only legitimate if you’re the child of a married couple. Some people say the church enforced monogamy for the same reason. But unlike cultures like the Romans who were fine with extra-marital affairs, the church, as you said, added a moral element to it. It was immoral to be anything other than monogamous.”

“And that way of thinking has stayed with us.” Rhys sighed. “And it annoys me that everyone treats poly relationships like they are an abhorrent anomaly, when it’s easily argued that it’s the other way around. Mono relationships are a tiny blip in human history. And even in all of nature, only 3 to 5 % of all species of animals practice some form of monogamy.” Rhys spoke passionately, and Finn was transfixed on his words.

“There’s actually no mammalian species that has been definitively proven to be monogamous.”
Phil added, “Individual pairings may be, but no whole species has been proven to be actually monogamous, which makes me think of that human nature thing you said Rhys; it’s not even animal nature to be all the same, at least not amongst mammals. And genetic research has shown that over 90% of birds are not monogamous. Insects, fish and amphibians, the figures are the same… across all species on earth very few animals partake in some form of monogamy.”

“Yeah, and by some form of monogamy they mean; will only produce offspring together but still shag others, or are monogamous while they’re together, but they’re only together for three months every year… or countless other variations on what monogamy is sold as, which is one man and one woman together for the rest of their lives.” Rhys agreed.

“Monogamy is a lot more complicated than I thought.” Chop said slowly, his eyes opened wide.

“Oh yeah!” Rhys laughed, “And that’s without even thinking about different sexualities as well.” He motioned towards Archie and Tom, “now some homosexual love is also monogamous, but homosexuality is also mono-sexual, they only like one gender like straight people do. But people who are poly-sexual… bi… pan… we are left on the outside again, despite, once again, human history being overwhelmingly poly-sexual. The animal kingdom is also more poly-sexual than we first thought.”

“There is no species on Earth, that has sex,” Phil said, “that homosexuality and bisexuality does not occur in.” He paused for emphasis, “Every single species that has sex to reproduce has homosexual and bisexual sex in their populations. All of them. Anyone who says being queer is against nature is flat out wrong.”

“You know, it was only in the late 19th and early 20th century that the terminology surrounding heterosexuality came into existence?” Archie added, “It’s a modern social construct, and the word heterosexual was listed in dictionaries as a disease, as a morbid sexual passion, until something like 1923! It only started to get used the way it is now to legitimise men and women having sexual pleasure.”

Wow!” Chop’s eyes widened again. Phil made a noise in the back of his throat in response to Chop.

“Heterosexual identities are fairly common,” Phil piped in, “and we’ve come to think that common identities are more natural than less common ones, or that they’re not socially constructed. But neither of those thoughts are true. Heterosexuality is absolutely a social construct.” He took a sip of his drink and rubbed his hand on Finn’s knee self-consciously, so Finn stroked his hand soothingly, “You know, what’s considered the norm for hetero identities has changed with the changing expectations of society. Think of what you consider to be an acceptable age for a hetero relationship to first have sex, marriage, children. Step back to the 1950s and ask yourself that question again; cos in the 1950s, 19 to 21 was the average age of marriage, it’s about 25 now. Step back to the 1930s, the 1800s… the 1700s. There was a time when 13 year old boys were kings having children of their own with wives of a similar age… what’s considered normal for a hetero relationship changes according to society, ergo, heterosexuality is socially constructed.”

“Wait are you saying heterosexuality isn’t real?’ Chop asked, his eyes narrowed in scepticism.

“The whole capitalist system and money is a social construct.” Rhys answered and pulled a £10 note of his wallet and held it up pointedly.

“Right.” Chop said, “So it’s a social construct, but it still exists… I think me head’s gonna explode.” Chop said, “If we’re making this shit up, but it’s still real… doesn’t that mean we’re all choosing it? I thought you couldn’t choose your sexuality?”
“You can’t.” Archie reassured him.

“Understanding that heterosexuality is a social construct in no way denies that a heterosexual identity does exist outside of, or without these social constructs,” Rhys explained, “it just means that the heterosexual identity is probably far broader than society narrows it down to.”

“Sexuality is a spectrum.” Tom said, “with lots overlaying bits.”

“Just as an interesting titbit,” Archie added, “The terms heterosexual and homosexual, where both created by a journalist; Károly Mária Kertbeny. And he created them in response to some dickwads trying to get sexual behaviour between two people of the same sex banned, while leaving it legal if it was two people of opposite sexes. He created the words to try to equalise same and different sex and to say that these were two different entirely legit categories of sexuality that people could enjoy. Like two different sides of the same coin.

“Holy shit.” Finn shook his head, “Well that got fucking hi-jacked!”

“Yeah by psychiatry.” Rhys said, “During the Victorian era psychiatry wasn’t very scientific, and they created the heterosexual identity and most of the sexual deviances we’re all familiar with to this day.”

“Our understanding of sexuality is so old fashioned it’s depressing.” Tom agreed.

“There was a lot of change and social upheaval in that time and people wanted have a valid identity in this changeable world.” Archie knew his history, “so part o’ that was the establishment of sexual normativity. Basically hetero men declared themselves to be the norm by which to judge all others.”

“Fuck man, people think heterosexuality goes back to the cavemen…” Chop said in awe.

“Not my Neanderthal.” Phil grinned at Finn.

“Fucking aristocrat.” Finn growled at him with a saucy grin.

“The truth is, men and women, or rather people with penises and vaginas and the other bits that go with them, were having sex together back then, obviously because sexual reproduction depends on an egg and a sperm and we’re all here. But it wasn’t just them getting it on, so were people of the same sex, and groups of people, and so on and so forth, and it wasn’t necessarily labelled, or judged as more or less right. What it meant to be a man that primarily had sex with women, wasn’t judged to be the norm, and all other sexual identities weren’t judged against the shining beacon of hetero-normativity.” Archie said. “Or at least, not quite the way it is nowadays anyway…”

“And what it meant to be a guy that had sex with women didn’t mean strict boundaries or rules on what that meant about you and who you are or how you act.” Rhys continued.

“So heterosexuality wasn’t an identity… it was just something you did.” Chop tried to understand.

“The whole concept of heterosexuality didn’t exist. Some guys shagged girls, some shagged guys, some shagged both…” Archie shrugged. “I mean talk to your grandmother; she would have existed in a world where the word heterosexual didn’t exist, and no one would have identified as it. And when people like Freud started to trickle these things into society, heterosexuality just became a byword for normal because no one really understood it and Freud talked about heterosexuality as something you attained; you worked towards it, towards being normal.”

“Which is probably why some people still think sexuality’s a fucking choice.” Rhys shook head.
“The fact that society’s ideas of sexuality is still based on shit Freud and his contemporaries said is so depressing.” Tom groaned. “This is a guy that has been discredited so many times the scientific world has lost count but our culture was so deeply affected by his shit that no one questions it! We still use his ridiculous notions and definitions and even his labels.”

“And when you create labels like this, you’re creating boundaries that perhaps didn’t exist before.” Rhys said, nicely summing up why he didn’t label himself.

“Yeah but in a world where the supposed normal is shoved down our throats Rhys,” Tom snarked, “Having a label, a group you can identify with is safe, and validating and really fucking important. To know that there’s other people out there like you, who have had similar experiences… in the face of the almighty ‘normal’, labels are sometimes quite literally a life-saver.”

“I understand their importance.” Rhys said, “And also their limitations.” He shrugged, “You know that I’d never seek to stop someone from using whatever labels they wanted for themselves?” Tom nodded.

“Yeah I know. This subject just gets me fired up. And you and your non-labelling is a little frustrating sometimes.”

“It’s only something I apply to myself and even then not strictly.’ Rhys said, “And never to others. Just because something is constructed, and therefore fundamentally has limitations, it doesn’t mean that it’s not incredibly meaningful and powerful. But constructs should be understood for what they are, and examined and changed so we move more towards equality.”

“Yeah, we’ve had this discussion before.” Tom noted, “And I’ve thought about it, but I feel that not labelling yourself only helps to enforce the dominant power structure.” Rhys’s head cocked to the side as he considered this.

“Are we seeing Rhys be schooled?” Chop asked Finn is a soft excited voice.

“Happens all the time!” Rhys laughed and turned to Tom, “please continue.”

“I’ve said before that labelling yourself gives you community and safety. But it also gives you history and a language through which to speak, to demand your rights.” Tom answered, “Not labelling yourself only gives us all a false sense of unity. Which doesn’t exist cos just not saying anything isn’t gonna give us the same rights as a straight man.”

“I see what you’re saying but I think that it applies more when it’s those in power attempting to enforce no labels on those that do not have power.”

“Silence only takes the side of the oppressor.” Chop said sounding very pleased with himself, “I went to a fucking library.” He said cockily; Rhys sometimes told him to go to a library when he was in no mood for educating him, “I only kinda read half of one book but…” He admitted with a cheeky grin. They laughed.

“Well Chop, I’m not silent, I’m very open about not being straight. And I do think I’d take a label if there was one whose definition weren’t too narrow to hold me.”

“So you’re not bi then?” Finn asked.

“The closest label is pansexual.” Rhys answered, “But even that’s too narrow.”

“What’s pan… sexual?” Chop asked.
“Attraction to people regardless of gender.” Tom answered.

“Attraction to all genders.” Archie added.

“And that’s too fucking narrow for you?” Chop shook his head and Rhys laughed.

“Just a little.”

“The whole world’s too narrow for you?” Chop shook his head. “And what’s all fucking genders? I thought there was just two?”

“Well you got cisgender and.” Rhys said.

“Wait, what the fuck is that?” Chop asked, bewildered.

“That’s you!” Tom laughed, “And me, and Archer, Finn and Phil there too.”

“But not Rhys?”

“He’s more gender fluid.” Tom said, “If you were gonna apply a label.” He gave Rhys a sly grin.

“Gender non-conforming.” Archie suggested. Chop looked over at Rhys in his usual sort of attire; a singlet, black pants with a green skirt Chloe had picked out for him over the top, nail polish, and pink beard at present.

“What cos you wear skirts an’ shit?” Chop asked.

“That’s gender expression.” Rhys said, “And besides, a skirt is a piece of material; how can it be gendered?” Rhys chuckled, “Our degrading of the feminine is so complete now that men are terrified of colours and items of clothing and there’s no bigger insult than being called anything feminine; like being told you’re crying or running like a girl. It’s poison to tell boys and girls that.” Rhys shook his head and brought himself back to the topic at hand, “I don’t really identify with any gender, but I do move through these socially constructed genders.” He said, “so what it is to be male or female is made up by culture, they’re social constructs, and I move between those definitions fluidly and also outside of them and sometimes I have both of them.” Rhys said, “I am who I am, and I don’t conform to social constraints of gender. I use male pronouns because I was assigned male at birth, not because I feel more male than female.”

“You’re cisgender,” Tom said to Chop, “Because you were assigned male at birth, and you feel male.”

“But if it’s a social construct how can you feel more male or female?” Chop asked.

“Just because the definition of what it is to be a man is a social construct, it doesn’t mean you don’t feel like one does it?” Tom shot back and Chop thought about it and nodded, understanding, “you can feel like a man and wear make up and skirts.” Tom said, “Or you can feel like a woman and wanna be a fucking mechanic.” He looked over at Rhys, “so you might be assigned male at birth, but not feel male. Both of those things are different to how you express your gender.”

“Ok… so is sex biological then? Like I got taught in high school?” Chop said, “Like I got a dick so I’m a guy, and Izzy’s got… you know…?”

“No!” Tom laughed, “No, some men have vaginas. And some women have penises, and some people have both and-"
“Ok…” Chop tried to get his head around it, “But at a chromosomal level then?”

“Have you ever had your chromosomes checked Chop?” Phil asked, Chop slowly shook his head. “There’s more than two chromosomal configurations.” He added, “More than two sexes.”

“And in some cases people’s chromosome do match up with the genitals, and in others they don’t. It’s very complicated and not nearly as clear cut as we like to think.” Rhys said.

“So I could be a girl chromosomally, and we’d never know?” Chop asked in awe and Rhys made an affirmative noise.

“You being assigned male was done because it looked like you had a penis at birth. And with that assignation, came all the stereotypes and expectations o’ masculinity. All the social constructs.” Phil continued.

“What d’you mean it looked like I had a penis? I fucking have a penis! It’s not a ‘looks like’, you either do or you don’t!”

“Well it’s not always clear Chop. And some people are born with both sets of genitals.” Phil answered and Chop’s mouth opened in surprise. “And I read that some people who have both are still assigned a gender and given ‘corrective surgery’ before they’re old enough to decide what they wanna do with their own bodies. We mutilate these children’s naturally occurring genitals, and call it corrective, because we can’t imagine having a third gender or a fourth. We have to fit neatly into male and female boxes with the ‘right’ genitals and the ‘right’ societal expectations.”

“Yeah ok, so there’s more than two genders, but most people are male or female right?” He was met with a negative sound in response but pressed on, “And the differences between male and female aren’t socially constructed? That’s natural… biological, yeah…?” Chop said it as if he knew he was about to be disproved.

“Studies indicate that we start to treat a baby different in the womb if we know the sex.” Rhys said, “So how would we actually know if we are different? We’re taught from before we’re born how to be what our genitals dictate us to be.”

“There was some research just done where mothers were asked to guess what degree of slope.” Phil held his hand on a slope, “they thought their male and female babies could crawl up. And the mothers guessed right for the boys, and drastically under guessed for the girls. There’s actually no difference in what degree slope a male and female baby can crawl up – they’re equal.”

“So physical differences between the sexes could be just completely cultural?” Finn marvelled.

“Could be.” Phil shrugged. “Can’t know for sure though, given the world we live in.”

“I always thought testosterone…?” Finn shook his head.

“Testosterone is a really not well understood hormone.” Rhys replied, “But even if it does make males stronger, it’s not by as much as we assume. We culturally, socially, push women into weaker positions across all spectrums and definitions. They are not naturally that way because of their sex or gender.”

“This stuff’s fucking confusing!” Chop laughed.

“Yeah!” Tom agreed with an excited grin; he loved how these kinds of talks invariably messed with straight boys’ heads.
“How many sexes and genders and sexualities are there?” Finn asked.

“How many people are there?” Rhys asked. “I truly believe it’s all a personal experience of yourself and your place in this world.” Tom tutted and rolled his eyes at Rhys.

“Something like 50?” Tom asked, “At last count.” He answered, “For those of us that think labels are important.”

“They’re important.” Rhys answered, “They just don’t fit me that well.”

“But they do seem to fit most people.” Tom answered.

“Whole societies are built on labels.” Archie said, “We all live that stuff.” There was a loud laugh from the girls in the lounge room and Phil looked over his shoulder towards the door; he was missing Rae. Having his two partners was so new and lovely he still missed them both when they weren’t around, even when he was having a good time. He’d heard giggles from the other room all night.

“It’s good to hear her laughing.” He said softly, Finn made a noise of agreement. Rae had been quite upset since Tuesday night and the incident with her mother and they’d lived mostly at Phil’s house because it was empty except Kelsey, but she liked having them around. Finn took a box of Rae’s things from her ex-home every day and stored it at Finn’s place; slowly moving Rae out.

“Do they always laugh like that?” Phil asked.

“Ayup.” Chop answered grimly, then cracked into a smile as Finn spoke.

“Oh aye, Rae’s probably told them all about your cock by now.” Phil gave a nervous laugh and nodded.

“Of course she has.” He accepted it. Archie noticed him taking a deep breath; he really wanted Rae and Finn’s friends to like and accept him.

“No need to be nervous here Phil.” Archie said with a grin, “most of us in this gang are queer.”

“And you’re sexy as fuck when you talk facts.” Tom said eliciting an appreciative laugh from everyone but Chop.

“Alright, he is good looking, but no one beats Tom for prettiness.” Chop said with a grin, setting everyone off laughing when Tom nodded in agreement.

“I am stunning, it’s true.”

“Alright Narcissus, stay away from deep still water!” Phil joked.

“Nah I’m right, I know how to swim!” Tom shot back.

“Nothing wrong with self-love!” Chop said loudly, “Have you seen my eyes? They’re fucking amazing!”

“Hear hear!” Tom raised his glass and they all did the same downing their drinks happily.

“So am I the only guy in this room that hasn’t been fucked up the arse?”

“I’m pretty sure you’re the only person in this house that hasn’t been fucked up the arse Chop.” Finn shot back.
“Oh you finally got it in!” Chop laughed. “So it’s just me that hasn’t had a dick up there… wow. It’s probably gonna stay that way.”

“Don’t feel bad Choppy-Chop. Some people are just straight.” Tom grinned.

“Like me and Iz!” Chop grinned.

“I dunno… I still reckon Iz is the biggest deviant out o’ the lot of us!” Finn laughed.

“Ah leave off!” Chop had a huge grin on his face. It was odd but Finn not minding that Rae loved Phil too had bothered him a lot more when they had been a duo with Phil on the outside; it felt to him like Rae, his Raemundo, was emotionally cheating on one of his best mates. But this set-up, with the three of them together, Finn obviously enjoying Phil’s attentions, and the love clearly shared; this made more sense to Chop. It felt right to him in a weird way that he didn’t understand, like no one was cheating on anyone in any way now or something like that; he was sure his mind would work over it and figure it all out. And all his fighting with Izzy over this topic had really helped him too; especially with worrying less that Izzy wanted something like this. It wasn’t for him, but he could see it was for Finn and Rae and that made it ok. Even that Phil looked far happier made it a good option in Chop’s mind; everyone was winning. Even himself:

“You know the best part o’ having you around Phil is that when Rae’s on it, Finn’s gonna have someone else to take his sexual frustrations out on instead o’ me in the boxing ring!” He laughed and Phil gave Finn a happy but questioning look.

“The sexual frustration of Finn Nelson when redgate’s around, is the stuff o’ legends!” Archie agreed. “Lucky for us she’s got that fucking IUD.” Phil cocked an eyebrow and Rhys caught his expression.

“There’s no privacy.” Rhys told him, “They know things about me that I’ve never-”

“His cock is nearly 10 inches!” Archie interrupted and Phil laughed.

“Holy fuck!” Phil looked back to Rhys.

“There you go.” Rhys answered and shook his head.

“I always got the idea you were real private.” Phil said to Finn in real surprise.

“Well I am and I’m not.” Finn said, “It depends on who I’m talking to and what the topic is.” He shrugged. “With this lot we have an unhealthy lack of boundaries.” He teased.

“Fuck unhealthy!” Archie said, “If it weren’t for this group o’ lads I’d know fucking nothing and feel so alone. The way we talk to each other and get through shit together is honestly one of the healthiest fucking things I’ve seen.”

“Here’s to that!” Chop held his cup up again. “To true mates.”

“To family!” Tom added merrily.

“Aye family!” They all agreed.

“And I guess we’re welcoming this splendid cunt!” Chop grinned and pointed at Phil, “Drink up lad!”

“Did someone say shots?” Tom asked with a cheeky grin.
“It’s like you want me to turn gay for you.” Chop said to Tom, “And steal you from Archer.”

“One day, my secret lover.” Tom joked as he got up to help Chop get together shot glasses, snacks and more booze.

“You alright?” Finn stroked Phil’s inner thigh. He knew that Phil had been nervous about this. This was the first Friday night since their realisation that they all needed to be together. It had been a huge week, and this was the last hurdle for ‘coming out.’ And in many ways, it was the most important of the hurdles. Phil had been anxious to be accepted; for Rae and Finn’s sake.

“Yeah.” He grinned.

“You’re body’s been quite tense.” Finn whispered.

“You’ll have to crack me open later.” Phil answered suggestively, “work out that tension.” Finn put his lips to Phil’s ear.

“I do hope you mean you’ll work out your tension by pounding my tight arse extremely hard.” He whispered and felt Phil’s body freeze. Phil had been looking at Finn’s neck as he whispered in his ear, but his eyes shot up to the wall, surprised that Finn had said something this graphic to him in public. He cleared his throat and the sound of Finn chuckling softly in his ear sent shivers through his body; Finn knew exactly what he was doing to Phil. Finn kissed Phil’s neck just under his ear, softly and pulled back to look him in the eyes.

“That’s more or less what I meant.” Phil answered as nonchalantly as he could. Finn looked him up and down and nodded and started to trace filthy messages onto Phil’s back as the conversation continued around them.
“Oh I can’t believe she said that…” Chloe shook her head slowly.

“Oh Rae…” Izzy put her hand on Rae’s back, “are you alright?”

“It’s been a really intense week.” Rae said, “I suppose I’m not that surprised about me mum.” She said sadly, “she just kinda reacts to things too quick sometimes.” Rae tried to soothe herself, “I’m sure she’ll come around.”

“I’m sure she will too.” Chloe agreed.

“But you know if she doesn’t, you’ve always got us; we’re your family too.” Izzy stroked Rae’s hair.

“Thanks Iz.” She took Izzy’s hand and then Chloe’s. “But you know, I have really had enough of feeling like shit over this.” Rae said, “I think it’s time to drink, and talk about Chloe getting some girly action!” Izzy and Chloe knew that this was their cue to cheer her up.

“All right, Jaeger bombs and lesbian sex!” Izzy cheered. Izzy made the drinks and they clinked glasses before drinking them down.

“All right, so I been thinking for a while that I might wanna have sex with a girl.” Chloe said, “But I didn’t know any girls to have sex with. So I asked Rhys if he knew any girls that might wanna…”

“Oh that would have been nerve-wracking!” Izzy grimaced, “Imagine if she didn’t like you?”

“Well…” Chloe paused, unsure how to tell them what had happened, “I thought of that, and so did Rhys… so…” She lowered her eyes and tried to get her voice back; these were her girls, there’s no way they’d judge her.

“It was one of the girls he used to work with.” Rae instantly understood and Chloe nodded her head, worried that they still didn’t understand.

“Oh she would have been amazing!” Izzy said, “I always imagine that everyone Rhys worked with didn’t just make it their job to fuck, but also made fucking their art form.”

“Well she was quite experienced.” Chloe bit her bottom lip, sure they didn’t yet understand.

“How much did she charge?” Rae asked as if this was no big thing.

“Ah 500 quid.” Chloe answered blushing.

“Holy fucking shit!” Rae’s jaw dropped.

“Oh my god!” Izzy was stunned. Chloe looked between the surprised faces of her two best
friends. “No wonder Rhys has got so much fucking money!” Izzy let her breath out loudly, “wow.”

“Fucking money?” Rae said with a grin. “Fucking money!” Izzy and Chloe laughed, “nice choice of words Izzy!”

“Alright!” Izzy giggled, “But you can’t deny that’s a lot o’ money!”

“Oh she were worth every penny.” Chloe said, “and more.” She opened her eyes wider to indicate how good she was, “her services were impeccable.” Chloe grinned, “and she was very, very good at her job.”

“So what happens when you hire a…?” Izzy tried to think of an appropriate term.

“Sex worker.” Chloe answered, “That’s how she referred to herself. And, well, she came to the hotel room, Rhys introduced us and we talked about the kind of things I wanted to do, and how long I wanted it to last and we talked about sexual health and safety…” Chloe said, “And then she named her price, and I nearly died, and Rhys simply agreed. He said it was a more than fair price.”

“Did you have a threesome?” Izzy asked with wide open eyes; clearly excited by this whole story.

“No, Viv is a lesbian, she doesn’t have male clients or lovers ever. But her and Rhys are real good mates.”

“So did Rhys watch?” Rae asked.

“No, he left.” Chloe said, “This was for me.”

“What a good man!” Rae said and handed her glass back to Izzy for a re-fill.

“Was she the best oral you’ve ever had?” Izzy asked with a grin.

“You know, I don’t think so.” Chloe answered, “But I wouldn’t want to compete with Rhys for any kind of sexual thing.” She pointed out and Rae and Izzy both made an understanding noise, “but she was damn close! Like photo finish close! And Rhys knows me and what I like, she didn’t and was still that good…” Chloe laughed, “And she was different to Rhys. Which was good. Only the second person to go down on me.” Chloe noted, “And she ate pussy like it was a seven course gourmet meal!” They all laughed, “But the thing I was really looking forward to was touching her and getting me hands on her vag.”

“What were it like?” Rae was intrigued, and she noticed Izzy leaning forward like she was.

“You know girls, women are so soft. It’s intoxicating. Our skin is soft, our hair is soft, our lips are soft… and we kiss with our whole heart and soul, even when we’re getting paid to.” She grinned, “And I’ve been trying…” She held up her hands, knowing what they were gonna ask, “To find a way to describe how we taste… Rhys said that candy-apples are often used as a metaphor for the way we taste. Cos you have a sour green apple covered in sweet toffee. But we both agreed it’s more subtle than that. There’s a subtle sweetness and a tangy sour undertone. It’s incredible.” Both Rae and Izzy were fascinated. “And we smell like power.” Chloe said, “We smell like the forbidden fruit all those conservatives are so afraid of.”

“Wow.” Izzy breathed. Rae made a mental note to ask the boys what they thought she smelled and tasted like.
“It was such an amazing night.”

“I suppose girls don’t roll over and go to sleep once they cum.” Izzy sighed.

“No, they keep going!” Chloe laughed, “But Rhys never does that, does Chop…?” Chloe was almost reluctant to ask. Chop had proven himself to be utterly clueless in regards to sex and girls multiple times now.

“You already know the answer to that!” Izzy rolled her eyes. “I love him, but he’s such an oaf sometimes.” She shook her head. “Anyway,” Izzy changed the topic, “I’m so glad you had such a good night!”

“Will you do it again?” Rae asked.

“Oh yeah!” Chloe grinned.

“Will you have a threesome?” Izzy asked.

“I think you want a threesome!” Chloe laughed, “And maybe…” She finished with mock demureness.

“I might.” Izzy laughed, “Not that it’s likely to ever happen in my life, so I gotta live through you girls.” She turned her eyes to Rae.

“So how does that work?” Chloe said with a grin. Rae looked at both of them grinning at her.

“Shut up you two!” They all broke out into laughter.

“Oh come on Rae!” Izzy said with a pleading face.

“You must wanna show off.” Chloe added. “Two such fit lads!” Rae rolled her eyes and tried to not look too pleased. “How did it happen?”

“Well… cos I loved ‘em both, they became friends to stop hurting me with their fighting.” Rae said, unable to keep the grin off her face, “And then, they just kinda fell in love with each other. Which doesn’t really surprise me; they’re both so easy to love.” Chloe enjoyed the happy look on Rae’s face. “They didn’t realise it right away, but at Phil and Kelsey’s party, we were a little drunk and… well I didn’t want Phil to feel left out, so I told Finn we had to keep him company. And we danced.” Rae looked down, “And maybe cos we was a little drunk, or maybe the music, or dancing and being close… it just…” She saw Chloe and Izzy leaning forward, both with excited expressions on their faces, “it got a little sexual, and Phil was upset about the idea of it being a one night thing when he loved us both. So Finn talked to him and… well. Kissed him.” Chloe and Izzy’s jaws dropped.

“So the boys actually do get it on?” Chloe asked. The girls hadn’t had chance to ask all these questions at school; it wasn’t the place to get into it, too many people were trying to listen in and get the gossip.

“Oh aye!” Rae said lustily, “It’s so fucking sexy.” The girls giggled excitedly. “The way their bodies move over each other, and their cocks rubbing together…”

“Bloody hell!” Chloe laughed shaking her head, “Those lads are too attractive for that kind of thing!” She joked, “Me knickers’d be off in a second!”

“Oh believe me Chloe, me knickers don’t stand a chance!” Rae laughed.
“Have they done anal together?” Izzy asked equally as excited.

“Oh aye!” Rae said remembering how it had felt to share that first moment together. “I don’t think it would have worked if we weren’t all completely equal.” She said, “Besides, I don’t think there’s anything sexier than guy on guy action, when you know you can get in on it!”

“So they do get it on with you too, at the same time...?” Izzy said impressed.

“Oh yes Izzy.” Rae said, “And it’s so good.”

“Alright, so you all fuck...?” Chloe sked and Rae nodded, “Are you all together?”

“Aye. Exclusively.”

“So it’s not open, it’s just the three of you?” Chloe clarified.

“Aye, unless one of us falls in love again.” Rae felt good going over the relationship with the girls, it helped her feel more confident taking about it. She knew if she was going to be poly, she’d have to talk about it many times in her lifetime.

“And then you’ll let them in?” Izzy asked surprised.

“Well we’ll discuss it and support each other.”

“But how does it work?” Izzy asked; Chop was so much work, she couldn’t imagine having two lads to worry about and look after.

“How does any relationship work Iz? Love, communication, commitment, effort, trust… mind-blowingly good sex…”

“Oh, she’s off!” Chloe grinned at Iz as Rae took a moment to fantasise about her men. “Rae!” Chloe brought Rae back to the here and now, “I thought King Finn was a magnificent lover?”

“Actually they both are.” Rae said dreamily and Chloe nodded, remember Phil’s incredible abilities, “and then when you put them both together…”

“Have you done a double penetration?” Izzy asked suddenly.

“Izzy!” Chloe was stunned but then dissolved into laughter.

“What?” Izzy returned, “It’s a valid question.”

“What two cocks in one hole?” Chloe asked, her eyes wide and turned to Rae.

“It’s doesn’t have to be two in one.” Izzy said, “It can be two in two… you must of at least sucked one off while being fucked. That’s counts as double penetration…”

“Listen to her!” Chloe laughed.

“Well I have done that.” Rae said with a cheeky grin, “And-” she stopped herself and bit her bottom lip, but both Cloe and Rae caught it and made loud happy noises.

“You got it in the arse finally!” Izzy laughed.

“And in the snatch at the same time you dirty strumpet!” Chloe laughed. Rae laughed, but her mother’s words came back to her. Chloe saw Rae’s slight drop in mood. “And there’s nothing
wrong with that!” She declared as if she hadn’t picked Rae’s mood, “I wish I’d done it!”

“Me too!” Izzy laughed, “I can cum from both spots, so I reckon I’d have a real good time!”

“There’s a point, can you cum from it?”

“No.” Rae said, “but I did like it and it makes me vag go utterly bonkers for cock.” Rae remembered the feeling of both of them filling her; the electricity spreading through her whole body, putting her into a heightened state of ecstasy. “And then when I did get the cock in me vag at the same time… it was actually the most incredible thing I have ever experienced. I was literally built for two lads.” Rae said with a straight face that had them all laughing.

“Then Izzy was too!” Chloe laughed.

“Oh you try telling Chop that!” She laughed, “And I don’t think I’d want two lads in a relationship. Boys are so much work. I’d just want a one night stand.” She smiled sweetly.

“Perfectly valid choice Iz!” Chloe grabbed the glasses and started another Jaeger bomb for them all.

“So how do their cocks compare?” Izzy asked and took her drink from Chloe.

“Jesus Iz, right to business!” Chloe laughed.

“Don’t pretend you don’t wanna know.” Izzy replied.

“Well I already know that Phil has a nice big cock.” Chloe reminded them; she had come clean about the short lived tryst her and Phillip had had a few months ago. “And Rae tells us that Finn has a nice big cock, so…” Chloe shrugged.

“The main difference is when they’re un-erect.” Rae said, “Finn un-erect is a pretty cute little thing that grows into a monster and I have no idea where it comes from. But Phil’s doesn’t get as small un-erect, so it’s pretty easy to see where that monster comes from. But erect they’re both pretty much the same.”

“Oh that’s nice.” Chloe said appreciatively, “lucky girl.”

“I am.” Rae agreed, “But not cos of the sex.” She pointed at the door to the kitchen, “I have two incredible human beings who love me in that room.” She shook her head, “the love and support in our relationship is…” But even Rae lacked the words to describe it adequately, “I am lucky.” She reiterated.

“You deserve it.” Chloe said and took her hand.

“We all deserve whatever it is that makes us happy.” Izzy agreed, “And if for you it’s those two lads, then I’m really glad you’ve got them!”

“I hope they both deserve you!” Chloe added.

“They do.” Rae grinned.

“Although girls, have you noticed out group dynamic now?” Chloe asked.

“Six guys and only three girls!” Izzy noted.

“That two lads for each of us.” Rae said with a cheeky grin.
“Well I’m gonna have to claim my Archie,” Chloe said, “Even though tom is-”

“I don’t mind having Tom!” Izzy jumped in, “Not one bit. I’ll just tell him an arse is an arse and get him to roll me over!” Rae and Chloe stared at Izzy for a moment and then both burst out into loud laughter.
Deep greedy and googling every corner.

The house had seemed empty when they stumbled in, slightly drunk. Kelsey could be around somewhere, but they weren’t thinking about that. Rae sent the boys upstairs, laughing and tripping over each other and headed to the kitchen to get some cold water from the fridge.

The boys tumbled onto the bed, Finn on top of Phil. He looked down at his boy and stroked his hair.

“Fucking aristocrat with your wine and spirits… and your perfect fucking hands, and your blue eyes and, crooked grin…” Finn mumbled happily and kissed Phil before he had chance to reply in a similar fashion. “Just stop it.” Finn commanded, meaning that Phil should stop being so attractive. He kissed Phil, open mouthed, his lips closing over Phil’s bottom lip, biting slightly, before the natural rhythm of the kiss made them both open their mouths again, sliding their tongues together. The playful drunkenness started to flow away as passion overtook them. Finn took Phil’s face into his hands and kissed him deeply and reverently before slowly pulling his shirt up.

Rae came up to the room to find them almost entirely naked, kissing breathlessly. She sat down on Phil’s chair and watched them, putting the jug of water and glasses on the side. When they heard the noise they both looked up. There was a moment where Phil wondered if they were supposed to apologise; was it alright for them to be doing this without her? But Finn had no such qualms and cocked a cheeky, sexy grin her way.

“Join us?” Finn held out a hand out to her and she grinned.

“I’m gonna watch you two for a bit first.” She answered.

“You know I told Phil he should pound his nerves out on me at the party.” Finn said seductively, turning his eyes back to Phil. “I’ve been looking forward to that.”

“I wouldn’t mind seeing Phil fuck you.” Rae’s lustful voice was enough to spur Phil to push Finn off him, roll him over and pin him down.

“How d’you want him fucked?” He asked and they all laughed, dizzy with alcohol, shared love, lust and exploration.

“I leave that up to you.” Rae answered. Finn looked up at him, his mouth open, his body straining to get Phil closer, to get a kiss. Phil teased Finn, leaning down to kiss him but stopping just before their lips met, making Finn groan loudly. Phil licked Finn’s lips and pulled back, still holding Finn down, stopping Finn from chasing him and planting a kiss on him. In reality Finn was a lot stronger than Phil and could easily have stopped Phil holding him down and teasing him like this; but that wasn’t the game they were playing. Finn, taught well by all the pleading he’d had to do with Rae, gave Phil a pleading look.
“Don’t give it to him that easy.” Rae said when it looked like Phil was going to fall for Finn’s puppy dog eyes. “He’s not really begging yet.”

“You saucy minx.” Finn shot at Rae, but Phil cocked an eyebrow.

“So is that the way you play is it?” He asked Finn.

“I want you to kiss me and I’ll get it however I can.” Finn again strained against Phil’s hands holding him down, but not with any real force. It was just enough force for them both to feel satisfied with the power struggle. Phil was stronger than Finn had imagined, and that was a turn on, but they both knew Finn would win if it got too physical; he had the weight advantage and the massive amount of strength training he’d done to back him. Phil took Finn’s wrists into one of his big hands and held them above Finn’s head, pinned to the bed. Phil let his other hand travel down Finn’s body, stopping when his fingertips brushed Finn’s pubic hair. Finn held his breath, waiting for Phil’s fingertips to keep travelling south.

“Spread your legs.” Phil whispered to him and Finn opened his legs immediately; sexually powerful and commanding Phil was a sight to behold. Phil settled in between Finn’s thighs, their pelvises pressed together and kissed Finn’s neck. Finn’s head dropped back, his Adam’s apple working in his throat as he groaned. Phil kissed up his neck, over his chin and stopped short of kissing his mouth.

“Phil…” Finn’s voice was urgent, pleading. Phil was teasing him on two fronts; he wasn’t touching Finn’s cock and he wasn’t kissing Finn. Finn raised is head, straining towards Phil’s mouth. Phil grabbed Finn’s hair and pulled his head back, kissing his neck again, then licking Finn’s lips with the tip of his tongue slowly, Finn straining against the pull in his hair to kiss him.

“You wanna kiss me?” Phil teased and kissed Finn’s cheek; the corner of his mouth brushing the corner of Finn’s. But Phil’s strong hand had Finn’s hair held fast, and Finn could not move his head to get to Phil’s lips.

Rae watched, still fully clothed, biting her bottom lip in desire. She had to stop herself from going over there and getting involved; she wanted to watch them because it was oh so sexy. She put her hands between her knees and squeezed her legs together, her thighs pressing against her cunt deliciously. Phil still had his jeans on, unbuttoned and halfway down his thighs, but Finn was naked except for one sock. Rae could see their cocks rubbing against each other, their flat, muscled, stomachs tense with desire, their bodies grinding against each other, their breathing excited, their desire painted by the sounds they made. It was the most erotic sight she had ever beheld.

Phil’s mouth was just centimetres from Finn’s, both of them had their mouths open, Finn straining to kiss Phil as he teased him with this closeness. Finn was begging softly, Phil licked Finn’s top lip and made a soft sound so sexy that Rae felt herself moan softly in response.

And quite suddenly Phil let Finn’s hair go. Finn’s mouth surged up to Phil’s mouth and kissed him violently; the game over. Finn easily overpowered Phil, rolling him over, their lips never parting as Finn positioned himself above Phil, unable to stop himself from kissing that mouth. Finn pinned Phil down and looked at him triumphantly.

“What are you gonna do now?” He asked cockily, his eyes never leaving Phil’s.

“I’m going to tell you,” Phil said softly, in a voice so commanding that even Rae felt compelled to obey him and she wasn’t the one receiving the order. You would have never believed he was the one physically pinned down. “To suck my cock.” Phil’s confidence was incredibly sexy. “Now.”
The ‘now’ barely sounded like a command. But Finn understood. Phil’s power didn’t lie in his physical strength; it probably never would. It lay in his mental strength, in his sexual confidence, in his self-assuredness. He didn’t make you do things with his physical strength, which was undoubtedly sexy when all parties agreed to it beforehand. No Phil made you want to do things with his fierce mental sexuality, with his willpower, his usually hidden confidence. This was a side of Phil that only came out on occasion; but it was no less potent for the lack of practice.

Finn nodded his head slowly, almost in a daze he was so turned on by Phil’s power. He ran his hands down Phil’s arms, unpinning him and kissing his lips, his neck, and continuing down, kissing his chest. Phil rolled his head back, enjoying the feel of his man’s mouth travelling down his chest and stomach.

Rae watched in awe. And then Phil’s head rolled round to face her and he opened his eyes. His eye contact with her was incredibly arousing, and the expression on his face clearly said ‘the things I’m going to do to you two… in time…”

“Undress.” He said softly. His voice clear, easily carrying across the room to her. He watched her hungrily as she stood up and started to take her clothes off. She was naked before Finn’s mouth had gotten to Phil’s lower abdomen, she was that excited to obey Phil.

When Finn started to lick Phil’s cock Phil groaned and looked down at him. Rae sat back down in Phil’s armchair and leaned back, putting a leg over each arm of the chair, spreading herself wide open and slowly started to masturbate, watching her Finn, sucking her Phil’s cock.

“Gag him.” Rae said softly and Phil looked over at her, his eyes crawling over her body, before giving her a slight nod and looking back down at Finn. Phil pushed Finn’s head down on his cock and was met with a loud retch. Finn pulled back and looked up at him with a grin.

“Arsehole!” He laughed, “You do it again and you fucking better believe I’m gonna do it to you next time…” They all heard the dare in Finn’s voice; the desire.

“I wouldn’t expect any less of you.” Phil said and cocked an eyebrow, a clear question; ‘do you want me to continue?’

“Then make me gag again bitch.” Finn shot back with a lusty grin. Phil grabbed handful of Finn’s hair and guided his mouth back to his cock, slowly working Finn further and further down his shaft until Finn started to gag again; but this time Finn didn’t pull back and Phil didn’t stop. Rae groaned loudly and Phil looked over at her with a desirous grin.

“Come here.” Phil told her and she came over. She didn’t know what he wanted, but she knew what she wanted and immediately knelt over his face, facing Finn. Phil laughed lustfully and grabbed her hips as he dove in, licking her cunt with a ferocity that was new for him. Rae groaned and watched Finn slurping up and down Phil’s cock, gagging himself now. Finn looked up at her as he sucked Phil’s cock, the way her body moved as she ground her cunt into Phil’s face, her hands slowly travelling up her own body, one gently squeezing her breast, the other going to her neck, gently caressing her own soft skin. The way her eyes rolled back, the sounds she made; watching Rae in pleasure remained one of his favourite things.

Rae grabbed Finn’s hair and pushed him down on Phil’s cock, biting her bottom lip at her own audacity. She laughed and couldn’t push him as hard as she wanted because she didn’t know where his gag reflex was exactly and really didn’t want to push him hard enough to make him vomit. Finn pushed himself far harder than Rae’s hand did, and the whole thing was incredibly sexy and Finn reached down and started to stroke his cock. He let his mouth travel down to gently suck Phil’s balls, and Rae bent over to deep throat Phil’s cock expertly. She came with Phil’s cock
in her throat, nearly choking as she tried to groan and take a deep breath, orgasm shuddering through her body.

“Rae…” Phil groaned, and Rae pushed Finn away and crawled down Phil’s body, sliding his cock into her cunt, before pulling Finn back, kissing him deeply before pushing his head down. Rae leaned back and put her hands on Phil’s chest, her hips grinding like a stripper. She threw her head back, her hair arcing out before falling down her back. Phil’s hands grabbed Rae’s arse and squeezed, and she groaned loudly in response. Finn licked from Phil’s balls up to Rae’s clit in long fevered lashings. He was oozing pre-cum and desperate to fuck, and as equally desperate to get pounded by Phil.

“Get the lube Finn.” Rae whispered to him and Finn was up like a shot, heading to the bedside table. Phil held his hand out for it and Finn tossed it to him.

Finn laid down on the bed and motioned for Rae to crawl on top of him, and she did so, sliding him into her cunt. They kissed passionately, fucking aggressively, Rae coming loudly while Phil laid beside them watching, running his hands over them.

Phil got up and warmed the lube between his hands, and within minutes Phil was carefully easing into Rae’s arsehole. Even though it was the first time he was having anal sex with Rae, he took his time expertly, and Rae, knowing what to expect now, and knowing how good it was, found it much easier to handle. She nearly collapsed onto Finn as the pleasure rocked through her, it was a deep, dirty bliss that made her groans guttural and her whole body roil with ecstasy. Phil ran his hands over her body and Finn kissed her lips, his hand snaking down between them to gently rub her clitoris.

Rae’s gasps went up an octave and both lads made a satisfied sound in response. Phil timed himself to Finn’s thrusts and sped up, making Rae almost incoherent with pleasure, she became completely unaware of what she was doing or saying. She had no comprehension of how loud her groans were or at what pitch. All she knew was her entire body was filled with electricity that had her waltzing along the edge of a knife and at any moment she could go tumbling down the rabbit hole.

Phil moulded himself to her back, kissing her shoulder and took Finn’s hand. They moved in unison, time meaningless, conscious thoughts lost to the moment they were in; the unity and intimacy of this moment. It was as if the closeness made them one, they moved in time intuitively, their breathing in perfect synchronisation.

When Rae came, Phil’s hand on her waist, Finn’s fingers sliding over her clitoris rhythmically, she felt like she had run and thrown herself of a cliff; her stomach fell out dramatically and her whole body froze, her lungs filled to bursting with air. And then the impact of the molten lava she’d dived into spread through her body quite suddenly.

She couldn’t breathe.

She gasped and cried out.

But the furnace inside her abdomen did not die down. She burned from the inside out. She felt like the fire would never stop until it had consumed every part of her; and she wanted it to.

Finn watched in awe as red flushed up her chest and face, and Phil felt her body grow feverishly hot as multiple forest fires spread throughout her.

And still her orgasm did not dip low, it abated slightly and rose again almost immediately in
multiple successive waves until finally Rae collapsed from exhaustion, her body shaking with orgasm and over-worked muscles. They lay in a heap laughing and panting, the intensity passing, but the desire to keep fucking continuing unabated.

Rae kissed Finn and then Phillip deeply before standing, her legs still shaky, and heading back to the chair.

“Don’t you owe Finn a pounding?” She asked Phil as she nearly collapsed into the armchair.

“Aye he does.” Finn followed Rae off the bed and bent over the chair kissing her. Phil lay sprawled across his bed, watching the two people he had never imagined he would touch kissing, naked, in his bedroom, after what had already been incredible sex, and he was yet to cum. Their intense kissing was such a turn on, and he had never thought their relationship would bring him anything other than mixed feelings; pain that he couldn’t have Rae and then both of them, and happiness that they made each other so happy. There were no mixed feelings anymore. He got off the bed, taking the lube with him and ran a hand over Finn’s arse.

“Give him a smack.” Rae suggested and saw the surprised and excited look in Finn’s eyes. Phil raised his eyebrows in approval of the suggestion and without warning smacked Finn’s arse. It wasn’t hard, but it was enough to make Finn look over his shoulder with a look of surprise.

“Want another?” Phil asked with a suggestive grin.

“Not if you’re gonna be that fucking pathetic; put your back into it man!” Finn teased and Phil cocked his eyebrows again and motioned for Finn to turn back around. Instead of spanking Finn he ran his hand over Finn’s arse and gently started to finger him, Finn groaning and kissing Rae. And then Phil bought his hand crashing down on Finn’s arse making him cry out in pain.

“Oh shit!” Phil said, withdrawing his fingers and rushing to comfort Finn, “I’m sorry.”

“No!” Finn gasped, “It was good.” He chuckled slightly, “Holy shit… that was…” He rubbed his arse, “much harder than I was expecting.” He turned and gave Phil a kiss, “you’ll have to give the other cheek one as equally hard.” He said, turning to let Rae have a look.

“You already got a nice hand print.” Rae said, “I reckon it’ll bruise nicely.”

“Bruise?” Phil looked horrified.

“Come here.” Rae said to him and Phil leaned over the chair. She put her hands on his face and looked into his eyes, “Finn and I have been on a journey of sexual exploration that has involved leaving bruises on each other. Remember the caning discussion?” Phil nodded, “Sometimes I find it really sexy to get spanked until I’m bruised.” She said, “It’s not all the time. Likewise, sometimes Finn likes to get a bruise. He told you to go harder for a reason. So you don’t have to feel guilty about it.” She stroked his cheek, “If it’s not your thing, that’s ok, we can work around that.” She kissed his lips gently and he took a moment to process what she had said.

“I’m willing to give it all a go.” He whispered, “But the thought of genuinely hurting either of you makes me feel ill.” But the truth was, a part of him wanted to go much further than this, and he was afraid of that part of himself when it came to these two. He loved them too much to lose them to what he thought of as his abnormal desires. Desires he’d barely even had chance to explore; he kept them hidden even from himself.

“Well this is a sexy sort o’ pain.” Finn tapped Phil’s arse gently. Phil looked back at him and Finn winked at him. “It’s not a genuine pain. I’m fine.” The fact that he was having to reassure Phil
like Rae had had to reassure him was not lost on Finn. “Now even up me bruises!” He kissed Phil and bent over again, kissing Rae and awaiting Phil’s decision. Phil’s eyes rested on Rae’s and she gave him a reassuring look and a slight nod. And without giving himself time to think about it Phil brought his hand crashing down on Finn’s other cheek, equally as hard. This time Finn had been ready for it, but he gasped nonetheless, looking over his shoulder at Phil, he licked the corner of his mouth.

“Fuck me.” Finn said lustily. Phil again slid his fingers into Finn and watched his man’s eyes roll back in pleasure before his head dropped as if the muscles in his neck had stopped working, sounds of deep bliss crawling out of his throat. Phil’s eyes went to Rae as he made Finn moan loudly. They stared at each other, sharing memories of all the longing and aching, and the now feeling of completeness.

Phil took great pleasure in the sounds Finn made as he slid his cock into his arse slowly, his eyes still on Rae’s. He tilted his pelvis up and heard Finn’s throaty groans turn to whimpers. He pushed himself in deep, keeping the same tilt and felt that odd shudder run through Finn again, it gave him so much satisfaction to see, hear and feel Finn’s pleasure. He grasped Finn’s hips and thrust harder.

“Let me taste you girl.” Finn muttered, trying to get his mouth down to Rae’s cunt. Rae gave Phil a devilish grin and Phil, understanding that she wanted to tease Finn, pulled him back onto his cock hard, making him gasp and also drawing his mouth away from her cunt. Finn instantly caught on to what they were doing and was happy to play along. He strained to get his mouth on her again.

“Let me have that beautiful vagina, girl.” He whispered to her as she reclined in the chair, her legs lolling over the arms of the chair. As soon as his mouth got close, a look from Rae had Phil pull him by the hips, back again. Finn was genuinely frustrated, even though he knew the game was to frustrate him. He tried again, and again Phil’s firm hands on his hips pulled him back at the last second. After doing this until Finn was grunting with annoyance as much as with pleasure a look from Rae had Phil push Finn forward and his glorious mouth was immediately doing its best work with a triumphant groan in his throat. Phil was greedily thrusting as deeply as he could, trying to feel all of Finn’s insides, eliciting wonderful groans of pleasure from him. Phil watched Rae’s eyes on Finn as he licked her cunt. He etched every line of her face in pleasure into his mind. And when she finally came, he watched every minute detail. He made a mental note to do this the next time Rae went down on Finn, to just watch him in pleasure and remember every tiny detail; commit it to his memory forever. He would remember their smiles, their laughter, their joy and of course, their ecstasy. Finn slowly straightened up, and Phil altered his thrusting to allow for the change in position, stopping altogether to help Finn as he positioned himself to fuck Rae.

As soon as Finn thrust into Rae the pleasure of being fucked, and fucking simultaneously was almost enough to make him weak in the knees. In this position it was easy for Phil to position himself to make his penis tilt down, making it more likely to stimulate Finn’s prostate.

Finn felt like his entire pelvis was a conduit for electricity, like Phil’s cock went right through him into Rae; like it was all connected and every molecule of his insides was alight with fiery energy. It felt like the atom was being split inside of him, sending a chain reaction throughout his body. Very soon Phil had to stand still and just let Finn thrust himself back and forth impaling himself on Phil’s cock and then thrusting deep into Rae’s cunt.

“I’m gonna cum way too quick.” He whimpered to Rae as she writhed in pleasure.

“Me too.” She gasped, putting Finn’s mind at ease; he could cum. And cum he did, crying out loudly, his cum spurting so powerfully that Rae felt it inside of her. And in such a copious amount
that it started to drip put around his cock as he kept thrusting. As soon as Finn was done Phil grasped his hips and began to thrust into him, hard and fast tilting his pelvis up, sending aftershock earthquakes throughout Finn’s whole body. Phil came loudly, his fingers digging into Finn’s hips and Finn reaching back to stroke his face. Phil kissed Finn’s fingers has he drained himself into him.

Finn was so exhausted he couldn’t even make it back to the bed and just sat down on the floor, pulling Phil down with him where they lolled panting.

“Alright, yeah, anal sex is pretty good.” Finn flopped into a lying position still puffed out. Rae reached onto the side and poured them all a glass of water.

“I’m gonna have to shower.” Rae said in an exhausted tone. “In a minute.” Finn nodded; he needed a shower too.

“Shower in a minute, then bed?” Phil asked and was met with agreement. “I bags the middle!”

“Damnit!” Finn sighed. Rae didn’t like to sleep the night in the middle so much; she usually had to get up and pee in the middle of the night. So the lads had fallen into play-fighting for it, and she tended to take the middle when they were napping in the daytime together instead.

“You guys should set up a rotating system.” She suggested, already knowing the answer.

“No way.” Finn said, “This is way more fun.” Yesterday they had literally wrestled for it. Finn had won. And Rae knew that Phil planned to make Finn play a game of chess for it soon. Which Phil would win. It evened out in the end and they had fun keeping their playful rivalry.

Her lads.

They were perfect.
Come Down

‘Come Down’ by Crooked Colours

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCQipkvdDKc

We got rules to break

“Do you remember when you said you weren’t interested in threesomes cos you still had so much to explore with me?” Rae wasn’t even sure if Finn was still awake; his eyes were closed. She knew Phil was because he was gently tracing pictures on her and Finn; an artist painting imaginary pictures on the canvas of their flesh.

“I stand by that.” Finn’s voice was sleepy, but his mind was clearly still alert. They had been lying together; the darkness lit by a few beeswax candles, for at least an hour. The shower had become a make-out session and even lying in bed was another chance for the three of them to be close, gently talking and drifting in and out of sleep. Phil was lying between Rae and Finn on his back staring up at the ceiling, Finn curled up with his head on his chest and his leg slung over Phil’s. Phil’s other hand had been gently painting on Rae’s waist, she had claimed the other side of his chest and he had his arms around both of them, painting down Finn’s back, along Rae’s side.

“Well the threesomes we’ve had would say otherwise.” She answered with a grin and he opened his eyes and gave her a happy grin.

“Not really.” He answered and Phil looked down at both of them, “Cos when I said that, a threesome would have meant inviting someone else into our loving relationship for the express purpose of sexual exploration.” Finn explained, “And I was saying that I’m in love with you and I don’t need to have someone I don’t love get all up in our sex to have plenty to explore and enjoy.” He gave her a cheeky grin, his hand tracing along Phil’s chest before rising to stroke her cheek, “I stand by that. I’m in love with both of you.” Phil pulled them both a little closer, “and I don’t need someone I don’t love getting involved to help with sexual exploration… I got plenty to explore with you two.”

“Aye.” Rae stroked Finn’s face and closed her eyes contently.

“Finn…” Phil asked softly, “do you think we started to love each other cos we both loved Rae so much?” Phil didn’t mind where the love had come from, he was just curious about Finn’s take on it.

“Don’t care.” Finn shrugged simply, “I don’t care why I love you. I just do.” Rae grinned, her eyes still closed and Phil stared up at the ceiling contemplating this answer.

“That is… oddly comforting.” He said and Finn made a happy noise in response.

“Very typical Finn answer.” Rae answered and yawned, Finn enjoying the way her tiny nose crinkled when she yawned.

“Aye, very.” Finn agreed, closing his eyes.
They came downstairs on Saturday morning, yawning and stretching to see Kelsey in the lounge room with copious sheets of butcher paper on the floor, drawing a huge, expressive picture of the three of them. She had stylised them to look like very realistic cartoons. Rae was a sexy, curvy vixen in the middle, with lovely cleavage and beautiful eyes looking out at the viewer, a hand on the chests of Finn and Phil, who both looked at her lustily, their hands clasped in front of her. Even the way their fingers were laced together screamed sex. Rae looked at the other pieces strewn around the lounge room. There were several of them; one with Finn holding her from behind, his eyes on Phil, who was looking at Rae. Rae was in the middle again, and the two lads were touching each other and her. There was one with Finn in the middle, looking over his shoulder, a hand on Rae’s stomach, the other on Phil’s chest, both of them were turned in to look at Finn. There were several with Phil in the middle as well.

“I got another commission.” She said, “Aztequita…”

“The gay night club…?” Rae looked at the pictures in awe, but wondered why Kelsey was drawing them for Aztequita.

“Yeah they’re aiming to be more inclusive of the entire queer community, so they want eight drawings of different queer identities or relationships, based on real people. They asked for them to be kinda sexy, I don’t normally draw my brother as a sex god…” She laughed, “They’re going up on the walls inside. These are just kinda rough drafts… mulling ideas.” She grinned, “I hope you don’t mind? I was gonna asked you afore I started painting it, and you can choose which one you want.”

“No.” Rae said, her breath taken away by how beautiful Kelsey had made her in the artwork; that seemed to keep happening. People kept painting or drawing her as breath-takingly beautiful. Rae couldn’t get anymore words out. She wanted to say that no she didn’t mind.

“No?” Kelsey looked at them, worried.

“We don’t mind.” Finn ginned.

“Not at all.” Rae clarified her previous answer.

“Your work is getting more stylised Kels.” Phil said, “You’ve definitely got a signature style now.”

“Yeah, and I’m getting a lot more commissions too.” She grinned. “Oh and mum called, left a message on the machine.”

“She’s never done that before.” Phil furrowed his brows. His parents had started leaving him alone in the house when he was 15; the year they’d thrown Kelsey out. Sometimes for weeks he’d be alone, no phone call, just money to buy food and a strict list of what he could eat. It took a long time for him to dare to buy things not on that list.

“Apparently they’re getting back a day earlier than planned and you should make sure you’re alone in the house when they get back.” She raised her eyebrows, “You told mum?”

“She found out.” Phil corrected, “She misses you.” He added.

“Well until she divorces that dickhead and gets a mind of her own, she can keep missing me.”

“We both know that’s not gonna happen.” He looked over at Rae and Finn, “mum’s very strict
Catholic; she doesn’t believe in divorce and she considers men to be the head of the house. So when dad decided to disown Kels, she felt she had no right to have a say in it.”

“Backward, misogynistic tripe.” Kelsey put her pencil down; she didn’t like to do art when she was angry. “She thinks queer people are sinners Phil. Whatever acceptance you think you’ve got now, it won’t last.”

“She said she didn’t understand it, but she didn’t want to lose me too.” Kelsey looked up with sad eyes. “She also said that I wasn’t to tell our father.” Phil added meaningfully.

“She went against him?” Kelsey said amazed.

“Our father has a rule that he has to know absolutely everything that’s happening in our house.”

“So he knew when I had me period, or when Phil got a girl….” She shook her head.

“He told me I had to tell him when I masturbated.” Phil shook his head. Rae took Phil’s hand, understanding how messed up that was, and Finn put a hand on his shoulder, “Course I lied.” He shrugged.

“I can’t believe she went against him. What about her Catholic rules now?” Kelsey remembered pleading with her mother, terrified, as her father threw her out, but her mother had told her she had to do as her husband commanded.

“I didn’t know you guys were Catholic?” Finn said not sure what to say.

“Dad’s an atheist. Mum converted just before we got rich. She thinks her conversion brought about our wealth and it’s a sign from god!” Kelsey said in a mocking tone. “Ugh!” She added in a disgusted tone. “And dad’s just a mentally and emotionally abusive, narcissistic control freak, who has massive temper tantrums when he doesn’t get his way, and throws his teenaged daughter out on the streets when she won’t follow the career path he had planned out for her.” Kelsey lit a cigarette, “Welcome to the family.” She said sarcastically, “Wait till you get to the extended family…” Phil raised an eyebrow and gave Rae and Finn a wry grin.

“They’re pretty bad too.” He lowered his eyes and sighed, “I have no doubt I’ll get disowned eventually too.” Phil said, “The plan is to make the free ride last as long as possible so I can afford uni without having to work.”

“Still saving all that allowance?” She grinned, “Wish I’d been as smart as you.” She shook her head, “I just figured my parents actually loved me underneath all the crap and that I’d always be able to rely on them.” She drew on her cigarette, “Whoops. My mistake.”

“Where do you live?” Rae asked.

“I couch surf mostly. Sometimes I sleep on the streets. I got a bank account and a PO Box in London.” She shrugged, “but three years after being kicked out; still no home.”

“Do the commissions help?” Finn was worried.

“Of course they do, but until the work is regular enough to show a steady income, no one wants to rent a place to me.” She shrugged, “It don’t matter, cos in a year I get me trust fund.” She sucked on the cigarette and gave a satisfied smile, “and they can’t stop me from getting it. So I’ll be able to buy myself a huge studio apartment in London and do art till the day I die.” She grinned, “I can live rough for another year.”
“You should let me-”

“No.” Kelsey said. This was obviously a discussion they’d had many times, “stick to your original plan; save it for uni.”

“If just let me help a little…”

“I got commissions.” She told him, “Stop fretting baby brother.” She shooed them off and they wondered into the huge kitchen.

“How do you even cook something in this kitchen?” Rae asked, “Everything’s ten miles from anything else!”

“Mum has us eating a lot of raw foods.” He shrugged, “And we eat vegan five days a week.”

“What the fuck is vegan?” Finn asked.

“No animal products at all.” Phil looked in the fridge and felt very uninspired.

“Yeah Stacia’s brother is vegan!” Rae said, “He says meat is murder.” She gave Finn a look and he got the reference to The Smiths she was making. “Says the whole animal farming industry is brutal.” Rae considered this for a moment.

“Well I could respect her choice if she was doing it for animal welfare.” Phil said grimly as he pulled out a lot of fruit from the fridge, “But she does it so we don’t get fat.”

“Your mum must hate me.” Rae said shaking her head and both lads turned to her with furrowed eyebrows.

“I don’t care what the thinks or feels about you.” Phil answered, “I love you and you’re perfect.” He stroked her face, “Anyone who thinks otherwise is wrong.”

“Yeah but most of Britain thinks fat people are gross Phil.” Rae answered.

“Yeah well a large chunk of Britain’s population used to think the Earth was flat Rae.” Phil said, “We all know how that worked out for them.”

“They were wrong.” Finn grinned; he had enjoyed having Phil around even before he loved him because of this. He had a wonderful way of making a point.

“Yes I know Finn.” Rae rolled her eyes, “You two and your bloody tag-teaming.” Phil grinned at Rae and gave a quick wink to Finn as he started to cut up fruit.

“So what the fuck is this?” Finn asked.

“Fruit for breakfast.” Phil replied. Finn still felt shaky on his food knowledge so he scrunched up his face momentarily while he thought through what he needed to say.

“Does your mum keep oats in the house?”

“Only during winter.”

“What about eggs.”

“No.” Phil shook his head, “If you’re worried about diet again, there’s some nuts in the cupboard that I finally convinced her to get for me.”
“Good!” Finn started opening up cupboards and Phil watched him with a crooked grin, waiting for him to ask which cupboard. “Nuts have got protein and essential fatty acids.” He opened yet another cupboard, Rae and Phil watching him, “just gotta have ‘em with no salt… Where the fucking fuck are they?” Phil pointed silently to the right cupboard.

“Great.” He said and took them out. “I s’pose nuts an’ fruit is good for breakfast.” He bought the nuts over to where Phil was chopping up some watermelon. “She always feed you like this?”

“Uh huh.” Phil said, “Fruit for breakfast. Salad for lunch steamed vegies for dinner, only sugarless black tea and water to drink. And two days a week I get a single boiled egg and a glass of milk for breakfast, 30g of cheese in my salad and steamed chicken with dinner.” He shrugged and gave them a wry grin, “I won’t be eating like that when I live in my own place. Although it’ll be hard to unlearn calorie counting and all that shit.” He sighed, “And to just trust my body to eat what it needs.” He started to cut up rock melon. “I can only go a few days of not eating like this before I start to worry a bit.” He furrowed his eyebrows, “cos even though I know my mum’s body image worries are misguided, I do know that eating less processed food is better for me. I feel better, healthier.” He shrugged. “I felt really unhealthy and like my insides were made of bricks and sludge after London.” He’d spent the last summer holidays in London, catching up with old friends, partying, having a lot of sex, eating all the things his mother wouldn’t let him and trying to forget his love for Rae. “But I hate eating like this all the time.”

“Balance.” Finn noted and Phil made a noise of agreement. He started cutting up some pineapple to go with the watermelon and rockmelon and Rae gave Finn a mischievous grin.

“D’you know about safe words?” Rae asked him and Phil cocked an eyebrow at them.

“Aye I have had a few chats about that with Andrea.” Phil said, “We never got around to the kind of sex that might require one. Why?”

“Pineapple’s ours.” Rae said, her eyes dropping to the fruit in Phil’s hand. He laughed and popped a bit in his mouth. “So have either of you had to use a safe word.” He asked as Kelsey entered the kitchen. She paused, looked at them all and sighed

“You guys gonna fuck today?” Her tone suggested that she had heard them last night.

“You might wanna put on some inspiring music.” Phil answered. “Loudly.”

“Will do baby brother.” She said shaking her head and turned back into the lounge room deciding her need for a cup of tea would have to wait.
Phil was sitting in the chair Finn normally sat in. He sat upright, rather than slouching like Finn did. His face was slightly apprehensive and he kept looking to Rae and Finn. Rae was sitting in her usual chair and Finn was standing, staring out the window, smoking.

Kester entered with a third chair and put it between Rae and Phil. Finn nodded at Kester but stayed looking outside; he could see Amy pushing Liam in a wheelchair along the footpath and he was wondering about that.

“So you are Phillip?” Kester asked and lit up a cigarette.

“Yes.” Phil looked over at Rae, “Rae and Finn thought I should come.” When Finn heard his name he sat in the third chair and slouched back comfortably.

“Have you ever been to a therapist?”

“No.”

“And why did Rae and Finn think you should come?” Kester asked it invitingly, Phil noticed the way he used body language to make him feel welcome and invite him into talking.

“Because this is relationship counselling.” Phil answered, refusing to call it ‘couples therapy’ as it was often referred to, “And I am now part of this relationship.” Kester leaned back in his chair and gave his mind a moment to catch up with what had just happened. He studied Rae and particularly Finn for a moment to attempt to ascertain where everyone stood. There was a silence as they all waited for someone to speak. In the end, Phil felt compelled speak.

“So Rae tells me she had some mental health issues a while ago. She tells me that she tells you everything.” Kester gave a mild disbelieving snort and flicked teasing eyes to Rae who rolled her eyes in reply to his disbelief. “She says that she and Finn have told me pretty much everything now.” Phil considered the way her eyes had dropped when she spoke about her scars, the way Finn had blushed with shame when he spoke about his temper problem, how they both stuttered over the many things that had been said in therapy by both of them about him. It had been a very full Sunday morning hearing all of this; but they saw Kester every second Sunday afternoon now, and he had to come with them today. “They bought me up to speed this morning.” Phil almost mumbled.

“That’s a lot to take in.” Kester noted.

“Yes.” Phil nodded his head and both Rae and Finn fretted that they had put too much on him too soon.
“In one go?”

“Oh aye.” Phil said, “Mostly in one go.”

“Was it a lot of unexpected information?” Kester tried to work this young man out.

“Well I had figured some of it out previously, even though I never said anything to them about what I had seen. So not all of it was completely unexpected. But certainly some of it… was…” But he shook his head. Because when you knew Rae and Finn like he did, none of it was unexpected really. “And not.” He added.

“And what do you think about what they told you?”

“I think…” Phil said softly, feeling both Rae and Finn’s eyes on him, both worrying even more that they had overloaded him. “That they both underestimate how far they’ve come. And how strong they both are to have survived all of this and to have overcome… conquered the things they have faced. And in some cases they are still facing these things, but continue to do so with such strength and majesty as to be utterly breath taking. I think they don’t fully realise how powerful, beautiful, intelligent and wholly remarkable they are.” Phil matched Kester’s body language, “And I don’t think I have expressed clearly enough, how lucky, and honoured I feel to be allowed into their lives. I feel like I don’t tell them both enough how much I love them, and how incredible they are, and how their love has made my life…” He shook his head, clearly unable to express his feelings, “A lot more pleasant.” He said with a self-deprecating laugh. “I haven’t the words for what they have given me.” He gave Kester a wry smile, “And after all they’ve been through, when they tell me about it, their concern is for me and whether I am overloaded with their mental health issues.” He looked at Finn and then Rae, “I’m not overwhelmed. But I am evermore in awe of both of you.”

“Likewise.” Rae returned. Finn reached over and put his hand on Phil’s knee for a moment, Kester noting the moment before looking at Phil closer.

“And what about all of your problems?” Kester asked. “We all have problems.”

“Oh I’m happy to admit that I have many!” Phil laughed slightly. “I just think I have it all under control, so I never think to talk about them all.”

“Well, give it a try.”

“My parents don’t love me which leaves me with a deep seated feeling of worthlessness, and a desperate need to be loved.” Rae felt like her heart had been pierced. She had been dangling her love for him just out of his reach for months. “And because of that sense of worthlessness I can be either deeply ashamed of the things I’m actually good at, or way too proud of them. In fact I have mixed feelings about most of my qualities. But I am working on that.”

“This sense of worthlessness and deep need for love, is-”

“Not the reason I’m in a polyamorous relationship.” Phil answered simply. “I’m in it because I love them both. I loved them both before I had any thought that they loved me, or that I could be with them.” Phil understood Kester’s reasoning, “I didn’t love them when they started to give me attention. I’ve never been able to love people just because they love me; but I have seen other people do that and I believe that perhaps they do it to wish fulfil. That’s not me. I accept that I have no control over who I love and do not seek to manipulate my emotions into neither more easier options nor more socially acceptable ones.” Kester drew on his cigarette.
“What’s your IQ Phillip?” He asked astutely.

“High enough to not read anything into the validity of such tests.” Phil answered whip-fast. Kester grinned, intrigued.

“So your parents had you tested?”

“Several times. Of course. How else could they be proud of their children unless they had a label for them?” Phil gave a slightly bitter smile.

“And what was your score?” Phil turned his eyes to Rae and then Finn.

“I tell him everything. We both do.” Finn said when Phil’s eyes fell on him. Phil sighed and returned his eyes to Kester.

“Which scale?” He asked, resigned.

“Stanford-Binet.”

“158.” Phil answered colourlessly. Kester’s eyebrows rose in surprise. He had expected it to be high, but that was a genius level score.

“The DAS 2.” Kester asked trying to stop himself from sitting forward in his chair.

“172.” Phil felt a blush on his cheeks and looked down. Finn had no idea what this meant, but he could see that Phil was embarrassed and Kester impressed. Rae leaned forward, wanting to go to Phil, but hesitating; this seemed important.

“Those are genius levels.” Kester answered and Phil shrugged, “Why would you be embarrassed by this?”

“IQ levels that high are dubious at best, they occur so rarely that there simply aren’t cases to make any sort of conclusions about them.” Phil answered, “And besides, as Charles Spearman said; ‘every normal man, woman, and child is, then, a genius at something, as well as an idiot at something.’” He grinned, “Perhaps my particular genius is taking these tests that return no valid measurement for an attribute that is essentially immeasurable.” Kester stared at him for a moment. “And I told my parents as much when they wanted to make a big deal of the results and send me to special schools.”

“When you play violin you feel like a genius to me.” Rae answered.

“Violin… that’s my soul in music form.” Phil answered.

“It must be awful to have those numbers following you around.” Kester said.

“They’re a hindrance.” Phillip nodded his head, “People expect…” Phil shook his head, “And the things I’m supposed to be able to do… but I can’t do all those things. I’m still just me.”

“Intelligence is like a plank of wood.” Kester said, “It’s plain, dull… nothing until you work it.” Phil’s eyes narrowed as he considered this, “by itself intelligence will do nothing for you. But if you were to nurture this gift…. It could do amazing things for you.”

“I’m already the best ranked student in Lincolnshire.” Phillip shrugged and then blushed and lowered his eyes, “Fuck I hate talking about this shit.”

“We should spend some time in one on one therapy.” Kester ascertained.
“Will your parents pay for it?” Rae asked and Phil nodded.

“Mum will.” He answered, “She’d prefer if I talked to a priest, but she’s all for therapy.”

“So let’s turn to the relationship, and the new dynamic it finds itself in.” Kester wrote a card for Phil and Phil accepted the time Kester had made for him without argument. “How did it come about?” Phil looked over at Rae and Finn, worried that he had already spoken too much.

“Well we both loved Rae.” Finn said, “And we could see that we both loved Rae so much. So we kinda became friends, cos it’s kinda hypocritical to hate someone for loving Rae, you know?” Finn grinned at Phil and then Rae, “And I could see us fighting was upsetting Rae, so I just gave it a rest. Turns out the fucking wanker’s pretty solid.” Kester watched the way Phil grinned when Finn talked. “And we fell in love right accidental.” Finn shrugged, “So we all love each other, so why wouldn’t we be together?” Kester saw the way Phil and Rae turned their eyes to Finn. They were all very obviously in love. He turned his eyes to Rae.

“What do you do about jealousy, feelings of inadequacy or feeling like you might be left out, or are left out?” He asked Rae because she had been struggling with her self-esteem for so long.

“Well I don’t feel jealous. When I see my lads kissing I just get excited for them.” She looked over at them, “Like I want them to enjoy each other. And it’s right sexy to watch.” They both grinned back at her, “And I don’t feel inadequate. Phil and I are completely different people; we offer different things, so you can’t really compare us, you know? If we was both apples and Finn chose Phil, I’d wonder why. Like what did he have that I didn’t? But he’s a... dragon fruit, and I’m an apple.” Phil grinned at the reference to the tropical fruit his mother paid a lot of money to have. “So I understand why Finn would like us both and I don’t feel inadequate. Apples are great and so are dragon fruit.”

“And what am I?” Finn asked enjoying the metaphor.

“Watermelon!” Rae laughed.

“I think of you more as mango Rae.” Phil added.

“Alright!” She laughed; her excursions into Phil’s fridge had taught her a lot more about fruit than she had learned from her mother’s almost fruitless fridge, and when she’d had mango for the first time she had declared it to be her favourite fruit. She returned her mind to Kester’s questions, “And we’ve talked about feeling left out.” Rae said, “About how we’ve all gotta communicate honestly. And so far we’ve all been really supportive of each other. I mean Phil’s bad with talking about the things that make him special, but he’s great at talking about the things that’ll keep our relationship sound.” Kester was intrigued by the interactions between the three of them, every time it seemed like one of them was the central figure, or one of the pairings was favoured, something would happen between the three of them, naturally, unconsciously, to bring it back to equal. “And Finn an’ me are getting real good at communicatin’ cos of our therapy.” Rae finished.

“Sounds like it’ll be all smooth sailing.” Kester tested how realistic their expectations were.

“No.” Rae answered and both lads were shaking their heads, “all three of us have problems with putting our own needs first, which can be fine in a healthy relationship. But if there’s a problem, you gotta be able to speak up about what you need. And we haven’t had to test if we can yet... cos we all look after each other so much. But if something were to happen to throw out the balance, what then?”
“And we still haven’t really figured out all the rules about duo versus trio sexual interactions.” Finn added, “We’re just kinda playing it by ear…”

“And my father will disown me when he finds out, and Rae’s mum…” Phil stopped and looked over at Rae. She gave a slight nod of her head. “Called her a whore.” Phil continued sadly, “So there will be some external pressures.” Phil lowered his eyes in thought, “Quite a few I imagine.” Kester could see that Phil’s agile mind was seeing all the possible issues they were going to face, and watched him silently for a moment. Phil looked back up with a fierce light of determination in his eyes.

“But love is love.” Finn concluded with his usual shrug of indifference for difficulties, “So we gotta try.”

“A lot of people will say you should have chosen one-”

“Why?” Finn replied. “You know I get the feeling that poly people have to explain why they’re poly all the time, but how about mono people explain why they’re mono? How bout you tell us why we have to choose? Like with proper reasons…” Kester smiled.

“You can’t solve all the problems you’ll have by turning the questioners gaze upon themselves.” He said, “But you will solve some of them that way!” Kester lit a second cigarette, thoroughly intrigued by this unexpected turn of events. “So right now, what do you think is the biggest challenge to your relationship?” He turned his eyes to Phillip.

“External pressures.” Kester turned his eyes to Finn but saw him nodding his head, as was Rae.

“So internally everything is…?”

“Perfect.” Rae answered.

“Real happy.” Finn agreed. Phil nodded his head.

“It feels like it was meant to be, and I don’t believe in things like fate.” Phil answered, “When I was just in love with Rae… desperately, hopelessly in love with Rae… it always felt like it’d never happen, or if it did, she’d always regret not having Finn… It always just felt like it wasn’t meant to be. And I hated that I loved her so damn much that I couldn’t…” Phil shook his head, “I couldn’t stop, I couldn’t walk away, I just couldn’t…” He looked at Rae, “You told me that you knew it was right to say yes to Finn, and I knew it too. It’s why I could never be truly bitter over the choice you made. Because it was right to choose him. But it didn’t feel right for us to not be together too. It was confusing.”

“I also felt that it was wrong to be saying no to you… that I weren’t sure of doing that….” Rae agreed, “It felt so wrong not being with you. But I was already with Finn, and I had to choose. And I knew it was absolutely right to choose Finn. I knew I couldn’t be without him.” She shook her head, “I couldn’t understand how it could feel so wrong to have made a choice like I was supposed to, and to have chosen Finn, who I knew was right to choose… how could it still feel so wrong?”

“Well you know why now.” Finn answered.

“I knew it too.” Phil said, “I didn’t understand it right away.” He admitted, his eyes on Rae, “But I knew it was never gonna be you and me.” He looked at Finn, “Cos it were meant to be all three of us. And it’s perfect like this. I don’t feel sad that it’s not just Rae and I, because Finn is an incredible human being that I love very deeply as well. I feel very lucky to have them both.”
“And how long have you all been together?”

“Just over a fortnight.” Rae answered. Kester raised his eyebrows slightly, “Yeah I know give it two months and see how we all feel!” Rae understood the expression, “I know it’s new, but I know… I’m sure. We’re sure.”

15 days after they had entered the queer community in such wonderful style a bomb blast struck Admiral Duncan’s gay pub in Soho, London killing 3 people and wounding 70. Neo-Nazi David Copeland had planted three bombs attacking the gay community in London, this was the only one to kill people. And suddenly the realisation of what attacks like Simmy’s on Archie, the silence of friends, the slight taunts, actually meant, what they paved the way for, came crashing into them. Homophobia was real and people were dying because of it. Rae held her boys tightly that night, unwilling to let them go, fear settling in her stomach. It never occurred to her that she too could be a target of people like that; her only concern was for them. She wondered if they should be less open, but Phil was philosophical about the whole thing and Finn openly defiant. They would have to learn to continue their relationship knowing they were in a world where some people would oppose them violently.

Weeks passed and their exams were approaching slowly. Boxes of Rae’s things had slowly built up in Finn’s garage. They had chosen Finn’s place to start storing things because Phil knew that as soon as his father found out he’d be evicted from his home and they’d all end up at the Nelson house. Very slowly boxes of Phil’s most precious books and suitcases of his clothes made their way into the pile of belongings they were amassing. Phil had managed to bring the double bass over, but he knew getting his precious cello and violin out of the house would be nearly impossible; his father kept a close eye on those expensive instruments. His father had already commented on Phil’s bookshelf looking sparser than he remembered. Phil’s paintings of Rae were still in bubble wrap, carefully laid in Finn’s bedroom.

There were moments. Of course there were moments.

A guy thumped Phil and called him a faggot after he’d seen Phil and Finn holding hands; they had been waiting for Rae to finish work. Finn had broken his nose in response. And when they’d taken Phil to the doctor, the doctor had implied it was their fault that Phil had been attacked.

Rae had been called a whore, a slut, a slag and all sorts of exciting names that she tried to ignore, but sometimes she cried. Phil and Finn would hold her when she did.

Mr Roach would demand that they not touch in school, despite never once saying a word to any of the people in mono, hetero relationships. Macca and Bethany had stopped showing affection for each other when Roach was around in solidarity with their friends.

Bryn was planning on changing schools next year because all the first years were ostracising him for associating with freaks, and next year all of his friends would have left; all his friends were second year students.

Drunk people at the pub constantly propositioned them; assuming their relationship was open to
other people.

They had had a hot coffee thrown at them from out of a car. And that was just the worst of the things thrown at them. So far.

There was a moment when Gary had had some friends and family over for dinner and Kenzie had suggested that they stay at Phil’s house for the dinner rather than have to explain their relationship to anyone. She had meant it kindly, but it had felt like covering up the family shame.

Elsa had received a formal reprimanding after she had suggested that some of the complaints the school had gotten regarding their relationship, were bigoted. She had suggested this at a large parent teacher meeting in front of a room full of witnesses. She had said it in a professional, non-emotive manner. But Principal Dixon, valuing her career, had said nothing, and the school board had come down on Elsa.

Endless moments.

But five weeks later, with just three weeks left of school, they were still together. Still in love. They had planned their universities; London of course. They were hunting for a flat to stay in together and despite the sadness of saying goodbye to the gang, they were excited to get out of Stamford. They hadn’t had a real fight yet, although Finn and Phil often bickered and called each other names, but these play fights were always filled with kisses and compliments and declarations of love. And they made Rae laugh a lot too. And because Phil was the aristocrat and Finn was the Neanderthal Rae had become Lady Og. Lady for the obvious reasons and Og because Finn had decided that was a perfect cave-woman name. Sometimes she was Baroness, Princess, or even Queen Og, depending on how outlandish and aristocratic Finn had decided Phil was being at the time.

One of the main benefits of being together was Finn had been able to relax more about Rae when he was at work. Because Phil was with her, he didn’t have to worry that Saul would be able to grab her. Finn’s stress levels had decreased markedly… except for worrying about exams of course. Of the three of them, Finn was the one who could shrug off external pressures the most successfully, with Phil being a very close second. But between the two of them, they always knew what to do or say when it got under Rae’s skin.

Right now Finn was doing a 60s, 70s and 80s retrospective show, talking to his listeners about the roots and influences of all the great bands he loved. Rae and Phil were in the producers room, looking through the glass wall at him.

“He’s so passionate about music.” Phil mused.

“You both are.” Rae answered. “We all are.” She corrected.

“Yeah but I’m not sure people think classical music and jazz and all that stuff count as music nowadays.” Phil shrugged.

“They haven’t heard you playing.” Rae answered and Phil blushed, storing away that compliment with all the others he had from both of them.

Audrey sauntered in and stopped dead in her tracks looking at them. She looked in at Finn and then back at Rae and Phil. She sat on the spare stool next to Phil who cleared his throat uncomfortably. Audrey barely showed up to do the production work, leaving Finn to do it himself from inside his booth. But Finn preferred it that way; he was learning. But she had decided to show up to this volunteer job today and had been gifted with a reason to give up her Saturday night;
these three. Rae was aware of the history Phil and Audrey shared and was torn between giving them a moment alone to talk and putting her hand on Phil’s thigh to show her support.

“I’d heard you three were together.” She said with a strange smile. “I didn’t believe it.”

“We are.” Phil answered.

“Well doesn’t that make you a whole lot more interesting?” Audrey drawled in her gorgeous American accent.

“Well I’m not.”

“Not you dipshit.” Audrey interrupted Phil and looked around him at Rae. “Here I was thinking you were some idiot following around the cock, being a slave to male opinion and just generally being a loser. Which was a shame cos I really liked your personality except for the love of men you seemed to have.” She scrunched up her nose. “But look at you…” She marvelled delightedly, “Building your own harem of dick.” She ate a French fry she’d gotten from a fast food outlet on her way there. “I love how they have to be loyal to you, but you get to fuck both of them. My word girl, I take my hat off to you. You are a shining beacon for ladies the world wide to look up to.” Rae opened her mouth, ready to tell Audrey it wasn’t like that, but Audrey looked at Finn and then Phil, “And two such hot men!” She made a lusty purring sound and turned back to Rae, “I’m proud to call you my friend.” She grinned. “Now do they fuck each other?”

“Um…” Rae was trying to get her head around everything Audrey had said, and also trying not to laugh at the idea of having a harem.

“Yeah we fuck.” Phil answered, “And Rae enjoys watching us do it.”

“I knew it!” Audrey sounded exhilarated. “Gonna get a blunt.” She told them and headed to the staff kitchen, where junk food and joints were stored for everyone to enjoy. Rae waited for the door to close behind her before giving Phil a pained expression.

“Why did you make it sound like she were right?”

“We get so little support for our relationship Rae, even if she’s wrong about the power dynamic, it’d be nice to have some support here, and for Finn to not have to have a fight at work.” Rae considered this and sighed, giving a nod.

“Alright but you have to explain it to him.”

“Of course.” Phil grinned, “That’s half the fun!” Finn would be slightly cranky about it and Phil would kiss him as he fumed until his mood lifted. And as soon as that happened, Rae would probably give them both head until they came, swallowing both loads with real relish. Sometimes Rae and Phil tag-teamed Finn like this; he was often cranky about the assumptions people made about their relationship. He’d always been like that and Rae was glad that that hadn’t changed. He was cute when he was a little grumpy.
“A year ago I never would have believed I’d be looking at that fucking aristocrat with lust.” Finn said and Rae squeezed his hand happily, making a sympathetic and lusty sound in the back of her throat. Their eyes both followed Phil as he walked across the floor, his fencing gear fitting him like a glove, his body upright and precise in movement. He carried his helmet under his arm and a bag of foils, epees and sabres in the other hand. Phil often still did these exhibition competitions as well as his continued training, even though he had withdrawn from competitions in general. He was, of course, one of the better fencers in the country, and would have to consider becoming an Olympian if he continued in competition, but his heart belonged to acting when it came to career options.

“How does he look so fucking good in all those white clothes? No one looks good in that much white.” Rae mumbled as she saw him turn and start to scan the audience. They both raised their hands, and even from where they were they could see him crack into a smile, even though he only acknowledged them with the barest of nods.

Tennis and fencing had been his sports until he had met Finn Nelson. His interest in tennis had been waning before his interest in football had been ignited. He wasn’t as good at football as he was at tennis, but he didn’t care; he loved it. And he loved fencing. But he was great at fencing.

“Our man is very sexy.” Finn answered and Rae nodded. He looked so proper, the stiff collar of the uniform holding his chin up, his spine straight, his focus and intensity charged the room with electricity. Or maybe that was just for Rae and Finn. Rae managed to make a noise of agreement in the back of her throat. Phil stood into the piste; the 14 metre long strip used to fence. His opponent joined him and they saluted each other. Phil was whip-quick, his foil snapping from his side up to stand vertically in front of his face and theatrically lowered. They saluted the referee and the audience before plugging in their electronic scoring equipment and putting on their helmets.

“En-garde.” The referee cried and they retreated to their en-garde lines to begin. Phil held one hand behind his back and walked with such an air of confidence that both Rae and Finn made a noise of desire in their throats. He stood still, his foil down, even as his opponent took up a fighting stance, his legs wide apart and bent, his sword raised.

“Why isn’t he doing the stance?” Rae asked.

“He’s appraising his opponent.” Finn answered, understanding the technique, “without giving anything about himself away.” Slowly Phil took up the same position; it was a requirement of fencing to do so. “He’s making his opponent wait for him. Unnerving him. That fucker’s clever.” Finn admired.

“Pret?” The referee asked them if they were ready in French; the usual language of fencing. Both competitors nodded. Phil a curt, single nod.
“Allez!” The referee ordered them to begin. Instantly Phil’s opponent attacked him and Rae gasped, covering her mouth, Finn’s mouth dropped; it was a far more vitriolic sport than he had imagined. Phil blocked and the parrying began; violent and passionate sweeps of the foils, Phil slowly edging forward. The aim was to be the first fencer to score 5 hits. With the foil, this could only be done with the tip. Phil would be competing with all three blades today; foil, epee and sabre.

He had explained as much as he could to them last night; fencing could be convoluted, but they understood that in this tournament the matches had five 3 minute phrases, with 1 minute breaks in between each phrase, and the first to get 5 points won. Suddenly Phil thrust his foil directly at the neck of his opponent.

“HALT!” The referred called and both Rae and Finn’s jaw dropped, worried that Phil had broken the rules, but a point was awarded to Phil and en-garde was called again.

Within the first 3 minute phrase Phil had beaten his first opponent and Rae and Finn clapped him, resisting the urge to cheer and whistle; this didn’t seem like the sort of place that would allow such behaviour. Phil looked in their direction, his slight swagger and roguish smile made them both hold their breath. He saluted them before leaving the piste to let the next match take place.

“I believe Phillip Seymour just saluted us.” Rae looked over her shoulder to see two slender and obviously wealthy young women sitting together. They had designer clothes and a tasteful amount of expensive looking jewellery.

“His father is said to be worth hundreds of millions of pounds.” The other said. Rae turned her eyes to Finn who gave her a disbelieving grin; Phil would be mortified to be talked about like this.

“He’s my favourite of the rich boys.”

“Hmmm. He has a trust fund and he looks like he can fuck.” They giggled and Rae and Finn both had to stop themselves from laughing.

“His father is on the lookout for a suitable match.” Rae’s eyes opened up wider and Finn tried to contain his snigger.

“Yes. He wants his grandchildren marrying royalty.”

“Lofty goal for new wealth.”

“Yes but it does put him out of your league.” Rae opened her mouth in surprise at the bitchy tone and Finn actually laughed and didn’t bother to cover it. “They’ll be wanting someone of a higher social standing.”

“True.” The other girl sounded like she hadn’t given up hope though, “So is that why you brought yourself to Lincoln for the day?”

“Why else would I be in this place?” She asked with a tone of disdain, “Phillip Seymour is very eligible for girls of my standing. And it’s time I started making him notice me.”

“Well mother says he’s not dating anyone in our extended social group, so he may be gay.”

“No.” She said it with absolute sureness, “Rumours of his bedroom prowess have reached my delicate ears.” She said with a mildly saucy tone and they both laughed, “But I’ve also heard that he might be with someone now.”
“Oh, now that is a shame.”

“He’ll forget her when he sees me.” She answered in a determined voice, “and my connections.”

“Shall we go further down and see if we can catch his eye while he waits?”

“Good idea.” Finn looked back at them as they stood up and one of the girls looked back at him paused and looked him up and down.

“If you want to fuck, no strings attached, give me a call.” She went to hand him a card but Finn shook his head.

“No thanks, I’m here my girlfriend.” He put his arm around Rae’s shoulders.

“And we’re here watching our boyfriend.” Rae said with a grin.

“What?” Her name was Penelope, and she’d heard of arrangements like this before, but not one publically claimed before. She looked over at her friend; the one with the connections to tempt Phil, but she had already started heading down the stairs.

The second round of matches were beginning and Phil had been drawn in the first match and he was preparing to begin.

“You know that guy you were just talking about like he was nothing but a dollar sign with a penis? That’s our boyfriend.” Rae answered.

“He was saluting us, not you two vultures.” Finn added with real disdain. She scoffed and shook her head.

“You people, you come up with such good... what is it you call them… yarns?” She mocked with glee, “Anything to take your mind of how poor you are.” She turned and followed her friend down the stairs.

“Alright, now I see why Phil is so embarrassed about being rich.” Rae shook her head.

“I wonder how many rich people are such arseholes?” Finn mused and they both giggled, “Phil’d hate to be talked about like a fucking breeding stallion.” Finn shook his head.

“Aye I know.” She watched Phil salute his opponent. “Those girls are going to be very disappointed.”

“Aye.” Finn laughed.

The next round was more of a challenge for Phil, but he still won, with only one hit scored against him.

It wasn’t until the last few rounds that Phil found himself being truly challenged. One opponent snapped his foil down Phillip’s back so hard that the audience had gasped and Rae had shot to her feet in outrage. The opponent had been given a yellow card while Finn had pulled Rae back to her seat. Phil shook his head slightly and Rae and Finn knew the expression he’d have under that mask as he lunged aggressively, instantly scoring a hit. Rae cheered loudly and Finn could see Phil’s body shaking with laughter as everyone else turned to look at her. She cleared her throat and looked around as if she was trying to find the source of the cheer too. He won that match 4 to 5 and was through to the final, which turned out to be quite an anticlimax after the semi-final. Phil won it 3-5 after a few hits from the opponent while Phil figured him out.
There was a short ceremony and Phil was given his trophy, and announcements for the start time for the epee competition were made.

“Let’s go down.” Finn suggested and they headed down to find Phil. When they finally found him he was doggedly polishing his foil and politely speaking to several young woman; all of whom saw themselves as the potential future Mrs Seymour.

“Why did you parents put you in public school?” One of them asked him.

“Because I flat out refused to go to private school.” Phillip replied in a disinterested tone. The minute he saw Finn his eyes lit up, and then his eyebrows furrowed when Rae was not with him, but Finn pointed at the toilets. Finn walked past all the girls and sat on the bench beside Phil; none of the girls had dared to do that because standing in front of Phil showed their bodies off much better than sitting beside him. Ignoring the girls, several of whom were eying him curiously, Finn picked up the trophy as Phil continued polishing his foil, his eyes on Finn.

“Careful with your weapon there.” Finn teased suggestively, the girls around them not sure what to make of this.

“My weapon goes exactly where I want it to.” Phil still had his game-face on; epee started in half an hour and he had to keep his concentration up.

“I can see that.” Finn held up the trophy and Phil gave a wry grin. Rae approached from the bathroom and sat on the other side of Phil.

“Congratulations.” She grinned and Phil gave her a small smile.

“I still have two more to win.” He told her as he finished polishing his weapon and sheathed it, putting it in his bag.

“I like this confidence Mr Seymour.” Finn said, “It’s right proper manly.” Finn heard Rae chuckle to hear Finn saying those words. Phil cocked his head at Finn.

“Oh right?” He asked.

“Aye.” Finn said and kissed him. Rae watched all the girls’ jaws drop and tried, unsuccessfully to stop herself from laughing. After Finn had finished kissing Phil, leaving him breathless and wanting more, he gently turned Phil’s face to Rae, who also gave him a kiss. Finn watched the girls who had been sitting behind them looking utterly bewildered and grinned happily. When Rae finished kissing him Phil took a deep breath and shook his head, resigned.

“I love you two.” He said firmly.

“We should stop taking his mind off the competition.” Finn said.

“Too late!” Phil said and shrugged. But they both saw concern on his face as the girls dispersed, gossiping loudly. “S’pose there’s only two weeks of school left.” He said softly, the concern in his features deepening as he watched Penelope pull out a mobile phone.

“What?” Rae asked, worried about the look on his face.

“Nothing.” He let the worries roll off him and grinned at his girl. “I love you both very much.” His tone of voice was reassuring and Rae gave Finn a concerned look; who was he reassuring and what was he reassuring them about? He sighed and pulled out his epee. “But you two do make it hard to concentrate.” He laughed. He still had several more hours of competition to focus on.
He won both the epee and the sabre competitions as well. He usually donated his prize money back to the fencing association to fund fencing in public schools. But today he took all three cheques.

Oddly, Phil had asked to drop off the cheques and trophies at Finn’s house before the three of them went to his house. Phil’s parents were often either not home or so self-interested that they didn’t notice what Phil was doing. But when Phil’s parents were in town, Finn always climbed in Phil’s window and Rae walked through the house with Phil. They kept Finn a secret because they knew Phil’s father would disown him if he knew about their relationship, and Phil was hoping to make it until the end of college before that happened. Phil’s mother had suggested keeping it hidden from his father, and they had all agreed when they had spoken about it later.

Phil was fidgety, sitting in the backseat and thinking about what he knew was to come.

“You guys know where I keep my eviction bag right?” Since he was 15 and he’d seen his father physically push Kelsey out the front door of their London home, bleeding and with nothing but the clothes on her back, Phil had been saving all his money in his bank account and had put together a bag of important documents and cash and clothes. He hadn’t thought to move it to Finn’s place yet.

“Yeah.” Rae furrowed her brows and looked back at him from the rear view mirror.

“Why?” Finn turned in the passenger seat and looked back at him.

“Just in case.” Phil looked down at his hands, his mouth was dry, but he was ready, “good thing for you both to know.”

“Am I going in through the window tonight?” Finn asked, feeling that tonight he wasn’t.

“No not tonight.” Phil answered as Rae stopped the car outside his house. Phil looked down the driveway at his car, a 1995 model silver Mercedes Benz that he hadn’t taken enough care of. His father had bought it for him brand new in mid 1995, just after he’d thrown Kelsey out. Phillip had known it was an emotional bribe. The papers were in his name, but he doubted his father would let him leave with it tonight.

Phil’s mood permeated the car; it felt like they should be celebrating, but instead they all sat in morose silence for a while.

“Well there’s no point putting it off.” He opened the car door, “You don’t have to come if you don’t want to…”

‘Of course we do.” Rae was starting to suspect what was happening.

They followed him into the house, and instead of heading straight up the stairs to his room, Phil headed towards his father’s study. It was locked when his father wasn’t in there, and the door was often closed even when he was. But today it was open. He stood in the door, as if presenting himself to a school principal. Rae and Finn stood in the hallway behind him. They couldn’t see into the study and still had no idea what Phil’s dad looked like. But they heard his voice for the first time, cultured but cold.

“You know Phillip...? I dislike Stamford. I dislike this tiny house, and this god-awful study…”
Lincolnshire in general is dreadful, I’ll be glad when our time in this place is finished at the end of the year.”

“I know you feel that way.” He answered.

“I’m sure that public school has been a bad influence on you.” He grumbled, “I should have insisted…”

“The private schools in Stamford aren’t as good as the ones in London. You’d have been throwing money away. And my education has not suffered.” Phil had had to use all sorts of arguments on his father over the years to get what he wanted. In many things he didn’t argue or fight, but for his education, Phil had fought hard; he had wanted to go to public school because they usually had better drama programs.

“Do you miss London as much as I do?” He picked up some brandy and behind Phil, from the other side of the hallway, Mrs Seymour approached with the mail in her hand, she was looking down at it and when she raised her eyes and looked up to see them all she stopped dead in her tracks. She shook her head and tried to shoo Rae and Finn off, a terrified look in her eyes. But her silent hand waving stopped when Phillip spoke.

“I don’t think anyone can miss London as much as you do father.”

“Quite right.” Mr Seymour answered, “That’s why I was so excited to hear from my good friend Jane Ratcliffe today.” The Ratcliffes were a family who lived in Kensington, London, Phil knew their daughter, Penelope, in passing, but had managed to avoid a lot of the social events the Ratcliffes had thrown, claiming he was studying.

“How was she?” Phillip asked, his jaw clenched, his head held high. He stood square on to his father for the first time in years. Ready. Waiting.

“She says Penelope saw you today at the fencing tournament.” There was an iciness in is tone. Rae and Finn stared at each other for a moment, realisation hitting them hard; they’d brought this down on Phil by wanting to show up those rich girls that had been trying to hunt down Phil. They should have realised that rich people gossip.

“Oh?” Phil asked almost conversationally, “Did she mention I won all three events?”

“She did not.” Silence crept over them and Mrs Seymour put a hand to her eyes momentarily. She took a deep breath and sprang into action, pushing past Phil into the room. Phil and Rae waited, to see what would happen.

“Mail dear.” Mrs Seymour said, “Did I hear right that you won all three events?” She asked cheerily, “I think we should have a celebration. Perhaps we can organise a party for next weekend and you can invite some friends over.” The way she emphasised the words friends told Phil, Rae and Finn that she was trying to save his arse, “I’m sure you’ve met some interesting friends at that school, and it would be nice to be introduced to them in a friendly setting.”

“Jane tells me,” Mr Seymour continued without even looking at his wife, “That Penelope saw you kiss a boy.” Finn shook his head in dismay, “And then a girl.” He continued, “Quite out in the open about it…”

“Well Penelope was always a nasty gossiper.” Mrs Seymour declared, “Can’t believe a word that comes out of that girl’s mouth. She is probably upset because I told Jane that we couldn’t possibly consider her to be an adequate match for our Phillip…”
“You know Phillip.” His father said coldly, “I can handle homosexuality.” He took a cigar from his cigar box and cut the end as he spoke, “Half the bloody politicians in this country are homosexuals… Some say that Prince Phillip is.” He referred to the rumours surrounding the queen’s husband. “But they all do their duty to their families. Produce children… heirs… and they keep it private. Because things like that,” He lit his cigar, “Are private Phillip.”

“I’m sure our son understands that.” Mrs Seymour soothed.

“I’ve spent my day, since 11am this morning when I got that call, making arrangements for you Phillip.” He said.

“Arrangements.” Phillip said softly, already knowing where this was going.

“Yes. And I’ve managed to make a match for you, to Constance Rothschild.” Rae’s jaw dropped. Finn furrowed his brows in question.

“The Rothschild family own half of the world’s banking, they’re trillionaires and some of them have been elevated to nobility and royalty throughout the world, including here.” Rae whispered, “It doesn’t get any more powerful than that.” She knew this because Chloe used to have an obsession with marrying a Rothschild; any one of them would do.

“This is a pairing well above our standing. But rumour has it Constance is a lesbian. Openly so. And no one will marry her.” Phillip watched his father suck on his cigar, “but her mother feels that she’s ready to do the right thing for her family, and I know that you are too. When you turn 20, you will marry her. I have arranged this with the Rothschilds.”

“This is incredible news!” Mrs Seymour sounded elated.

“The amount they’re willing to pay you for grandchildren and an end to this scandal will make your trust fund look like pocket money. And you can both have your little dalliances privately.”

“Holy fuck.” Finn breathed. And Rae nodded her head in agreement.

“That is my only offer.” Mr Seymour’s voice was a clear warning and threat. Phil took a moment to let everything settle in his brain before answering.

“I…” his voice was thick with emotion, anger, misery, horror and embarrassment that Rae and Finn had heard all of this, “am in love with Finn,” he watched his father close his eyes in disgust, “and Rae.”

“No one is telling you to not love who you love Phil.” His mother pleaded, “We just want you to keep it private. And to do this for us. For yourself. Marrying a Rothschild would give us all an incredibly powerful ally. Your children would be.”

“No.” Phil said simply. He shook his head and shrugged. “No.”

“You will do this!” His father suddenly roared.

“Please!” Phil’s mother was in tears.

“No.” Phil repeated in the same tone.

“If you don’t do this-”

“You’ll kick me out like Kelsey?” Phil spat.
“Yes!”

“Fine!”

“We can’t leave him alone in there.” Rae said, but Finn had already grabbed her hand and was heading into the study.

Mr Seymour was a tall man, handsome like Phillip, with startling blue eyes, and right now his face was a mask of fury. Finn took Phil’s hand and Phil turned his face to see them there, right beside him. Mr Seymour stood up, his cigar left in the ashtray.

“How dare you bring them into my house?” The threat in his tone was exactly like the tone he’d used on Kelsey three years ago. Phil took a steadying breath and glared at his father imperiously.

“I’ve fucked ‘em in this house.” Phil answered cockily. “Whenever you’re not around I have Kelsey stay and she always has huge parties. And I eat cheese.” He shot at his mother, “And bacon.” He looked back at his father, “So if you love your fucking money and your stupid fucking status more than your own two kids, then fuck you!” Phil answered. Mr Seymour took a swing at Phil. Phil had been expecting it; he’d hit Kelsey too on that night he’d kicked her out; he’d broken her cheek bone, Kelsey still had a slight scar on her left cheek from surgery.

Phil stood there, deciding not to duck or fight back; he would take this hit, so he never forgot just what kind of a man his father was.

But Finn’s hand let go of Phil’s and his arm shot up at lightning speed, blocking the hit, knocking his fist of course, making it graze Phil’s cheek instead of breaking his nose as it had been originally intended. And as soon as the punch was cleared Finn stepped forward and pushed Mr Seymour back. Hard.

“Why don’t you try it on with me cunt?” Finn roared at him. Rae grabbed Phil’s hand and checked his face quickly, a bruise would form on the cheek, but he was ok. Finn pushed Mr Seymour again. “No one hits my man!”

“He’s fine Finn.” Rae called to him. And that tempered part of Finn’s rage.

“Lucky for you arsehole.” Finn kept his eyes trained on Phil’s dad, standing in between Phil and his father now.

“Aren’t you faggots supposed to be limp-wristed na-”

“I’m not gay, I’m bisexual. Get it fucking right.” Phil snapped. “Fucking mono-sexuals.”

“Really?” Rae asked, “That’s the thing you’re upset about here?”

“If he’s gonna hate me, he can at least hate me for the right thing.” Phil answered, “Look, I always knew this dickwad was gonna disown me Rae.” Phil said, “The trick was to make the free ride last as long as I could afore I got outta this freak show.”

“Phil?” Phil turned his eyes to his mother.

“I am what you made me.” He said and gave her a sadistic grin. “Congratulations.” He looked back to his father. “I am going to take a bag of clothes and my vio-”

“No. You won’t leave this house with anything but the clothes on your back.”
“What possible use could you have for my clothes and my violin?”

“None. But I paid for them. They’re mine. Be grateful I’m letting you keep what you’re wearing.” His Father shook his head, “All those tests said you were a genius like me. But I see now that you’ll never live up to my legacy.”

“Yeah and no one ever will.” Phil shot back, Mr Seymour stepped closer to Phil and Finn shoved him back again. “Watch your family tree wither. Richard.” Phil looked at him with disdain and turned to leave, “You know Meredith…” Phil looked at his mother.

“Phil please…” But Phil was unmoved.

“I’m gonna go to my boyfriend’s house, Meredith,” He called her by her name pointedly “and binge eat chocolate and full cream milk. Who knows, if I’m lucky, I might even get fat.” And he left, Rae still holding his hand.

Finn backed out of the room, his eyes on Richard. He turned as soon as he got to the door and followed Phil and Rae to the car. Phil didn’t look back once.

Rae sat in the back seat with Phil and Finn took the driver’s seat.

It wasn’t until the car had pulled out of the driveway that the character Phil had created and acted out in that house started to crack. Rae held him in her arms as he unravelled.

“I can’t leave my violin in that house.” His voice cracked with tears, “That instrument has a soul… my soul… in it… and…” Rae held him as tightly as she could stroking his hair, “And my cello…” He shot up and looked Rae in the eye. “Leaving my violin is like leaving part of me… Rae… I can’t.”

“You have to.” She whispered. “I’m so sorry Phil.”

Phil was sleeping quite calmly, with the aid of the sleeping pill Kenzie had slipped into the warm milk she’d made him. Gary and Kenzie had grown quite fond of Phil over the past 6 weeks and this was very disturbing for them; they couldn’t imagine disowning their own son.

Finn was stroking his hair while Rae paced the room.

Rae was having painful flashbacks to her own estrangement with her mother. It had been six weeks since she had talked to her mother. And what had happened between them was nothing like this. She knew she had to talk to her again. Eventually.

She looked over at Phil. As he slept silently.

“We have to get his violin.” Rae said and Finn nodded.

“Thinking the same thing girl.”
‘Drop the Game’ by Chet Faker & Flume

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vopR3ys8Kw

You’re the heat that I know. Listen, you are my sun.

Finn froze, his foot on the window sill. Meredith was sleeping in Phil’s bed, a stack of used tissues surrounding her. She didn’t stir and he slowly continued through the window.

The first thing he did was pick up Phil’s eviction bag and sling it over his arm, opening it up to add things to it. Finn saw the trophy Phil had won with Rae on the top of his bookshelf taking pride of place and took it down to put in the bag. He sorted through a few of Phil’s drawers, adding a few trinkets to the bag before he slung it onto his back and went to the big cupboard that he knew had Phil’s violin in it and slowly opened up the door.

“You love him very much.” Finn spun around to see her sitting up looking at him.

“Aye.” Finn answered. She looked at the bedside table clock: 3:46am.

“I know that because I paid a private investigator to follow you and Rae for a few weeks. To see if you were just after his money.”

“Couldn’t care less about it.”

“That’s what Frederick concluded.” Frederick was one of the best P.I’s money could buy. “You’re both poor, her a lot more than you; she’s dirt poor, you’re middle class apparently. Whatever you both are, you seem to genuinely love my son.” She wiped her eyes with a tissue, “If my husband found out what you’re doing here in the middle of the night, he would make sure your prison stay was as long as he could possibly make it.”

“It’d be worth it.” Finn took the violin down and opened the case to make sure it was in there. “He loves this instrument.”

“Very true.” She answered, “He also won’t do well without his cello.”

“Aye but I can’t get that out the window.” She nodded slightly and stood up, picking up a wrapped gift on the side.

“I was going to give this to him as a graduation gift.” She said, “Please take care of it and give it to him. Make sure he doesn’t throw it out without looking at it, out of spite. He’ll like it.”

“What is it?”

“A 1632 edition of Shakespeare’s works.”

“1632… as in it were published then?”

“Was.” She corrected Finn’s English and nodded. Finn ignored the correction; he knew how to
speak correctly if he had to.

“You’re right, he’ll love it.” Finn swung the bag off his back and carefully put the gift in there. She also handed him two envelopes one labelled ‘Kelsey’ and one labelled ‘Phillip.’

“I had a feeling you’d be coming back for some of his things.” She said, “So I suggested to his father that he stay at his mistress’ house tonight.”

“Mistress?” Finn said with a disbelieving sneer.

“I couldn’t touch him after Kelsey.” She said softly. “This was better for both of us.”

“Why don’t you leave him?” He asked as Meredith took the bag off his back and slowly packed some more of Phil’s things into it.

“I made a vow to stay with him. A vow to god. At the time I didn’t really believe in god. But when… I nearly died from cancer.” She said, “God spared me, and then god blessed me with wealth beyond my wildest dreams…” She smiled sadly, “He also blessed me with two children that will survive anything their father throws at them.” She picked up Phil’s battered childhood teddy bear and stared at it sadly, “I think I’ve had so little control over my own life since his father has…” She stopped herself, “I may have exerted too much control over Phil. With his eating. Will you tell him I’m sorry?”

“Yeah.” Finn said softly, watching her gently lay the bear in his bag and zip it up.

“His father will never come in this room again and when we sell it he’ll sell it with everything in it, as part of the deal. My son’s things will go to strangers…” She looked down at her hands, “I’ll tell him I donated the instruments to some charity. God will forgive me for lying to my husband. He’s a loving god.” She looked up at Finn, “And I’ve packed up all of his clothes and the books, music and art supplies he’d most want.” She lowered her eyes, “It might have seemed like I wasn’t paying attention but I was. He just never seemed to need my help and I was so lost after what happened with Kelsey. It wasn’t until he was quite unwell with influenza that I realised he was in trouble with Rachel… and you…” She looked ashamed of herself, “But he wasn’t really in trouble with you two. God granted him twice as much love because he hadn’t had enough from us.” She wiped her face with a tissue again and pointed at the boxes. Finn looked at the boxes and turned back to her.

“It won’t all fit in me car.” Finn said and she held out the keys to Phil’s car.

“It belongs to Phil. The papers are in his name, his father can’t do anything about it if you take it to him.”

Rae watched in amazement as Finn came out the front door with Phil’s violin and cello. He got to the car and she wound down the window.

“We got some boxes to move girl.” She nodded and jumped out of their car to see Meredith at the front door with a box in her hands.

“The fuck?” Rae marvelled as Meredith put a box in Phil’s car and headed back inside

“Aye the whole thing’s fucked up Rae.” Finn whispered, “I don’t care though, we can get a bunch
of our lad’s stuff.”

“Hopefully it’ll help him get over all o’ this.” She headed up into the house without another word, Finn following.

Rae laid down next to Phil at 7am on Sunday morning, Finn was leaving a note to his father explaining what they had done last night and letting him know to not cook them breakfast. They had emptied both cars boxes into the garage, but had brought the instruments and Phil’s eviction bag upstairs. When Rae curled her arm around his waist he opened his eyes slowly. She smiled and they stared at each other for a moment.

“You have to talk to your mum Rae.” He whispered and stroked her face.

“Aye I know.” She stroked his hair in return, “I’m so sorry Phil.”

“You know you and Finn are worth it.” He answered, “I mean, as always I would’ve preferred for things to go differently… but I’ll never regret anything that leads me to being with and staying with you and Finn.” Finn came in and locked the door behind him. His large queen sized bed was not as good as Phil’s king had been, but it would have to do now.

“I can’t believe you gave up your violin for us.” She joked and he lowered his eyes.

“Yeah.” He said softly, “I’d do it again though.” He told her as Finn sat down on the bed, resting his hand on Phil’s hip. Phil was facing away from Finn, and he simply put his hand over Finn’s. “Although I do wish I’d hit him!” He said with a soft laugh.

“Turn around.” Finn said softly and Phil flattened out to be on his back. “I wish you’d hit him too.” Finn looked at Phil’s bruised cheek and gently kissed his lips. “How are you feeling?” Phil took a deep shaky breath.

“I’d expected this.”

“Aye but it’s still gotta hurt.”

“Quite a bit.” Phil answered with a sad smile. “But I daresay I’ll get over it.”

“Oh come on Phil. You gotta be sadder than that if you want the violins to play for you.” Finn teased. But instead of taking it as a tease and telling him that maybe violin jokes weren’t a great thing at the moment, Phil paused and looked at Finn’s face and then Rae’s smiling face. He sat up suddenly and looked around the room, and there leaning against Finn’s desk was his cello, and next to it on the desk was his eviction bag, looking fuller than he remembered it being and his violin. His breath left his body like he’d been punched and tears smacked at his eyes.

“You went and got it?” He didn’t even register saying the words, he was too busy scooting out of bed, “I can’t believe you’d do that for me…” He went to the table and opened the violin case, ‘But of course you both would.” He said, not hiding the tears streaming down his face as his fingers gently caressed his beloved violin. He took a moment to compose himself and turned his eyes to them.

“I love you both so much.” His voice was choked with tears, “Do either of you even understand what my father would’ve done to you?” He put a hand to his mouth to try and contain his
emotions, his eyes on his violin.

“Aye,” Finn said, “I knew what the risks were when I broke in.” Rae nodded to indicate that she had known when she had agreed to drive getaway. “But your mother, let me out the front door with boxes of your things that she’d packed up for you.” Phil’s eyes shot up to him and Finn got up and opened Phil’s eviction bag. He took out the bear and Phil started to cry in earnest.

“She packed that?”

“Aye she did.” Finn pulled out the present and the two letters. “She asked me to make sure you got these. And she said she were sorry about the food stuff.” Phil looked at the letters and the gift for a long time and nodded; still not wanting to take them from Finn. Finn put them down on the table and Phil felt Rae’s arm wrap around his waist.

“You know you’ve never played your cello for us,” Rae said, understanding that Phil playing his violin right now might be too hard with all the emotions he was going through; his violin expressed his soul the most.

“Oh?” Phil said through his tears, “Well how thoughtless of me.” He sniffed and kissed her cheek, “Thank you both for this. No one’s ever done anything even close to this for me.”

“Gotta look after our man.” Rae soothed. And to ease his emotions Phil focused his mind on his cello, lovingly closing the case on his violin. He sat on Finn’s chair and prepared his cello. Finn gave Rae a small smile; this had been a good idea; music always helps.

“Those are fucking heavy strings.” Finn pressed down on one of the strings and Phil nodded.

“Yeah, you should try trilling with them.” Phil said with a mild grin.

“Holy fuck.” Finn laughed, “Your fingers!” Finn stroked Phil’s fingers momentarily.

“Alright, I’m gonna play you some Popper.” Phil steadied his emotions, and let the calm that always overtook him when he played cello wash through him.

“Is it devilishly tricky?” Rae asked.

“Well it’s not as hard as Cage’s etudes for cello, or Barber, or Nomos Alpha… but it’s far too early in the morning for those!” Phil answered, “It’s suitably difficult.” Rae and Finn both sat on the bed ready to listen, “It’s meant to be accompanied by piano, but I don’t think it loses much for being solo.”

They had expected a sadder piece of music, but Phil didn’t choose the music for its emotional expression; he chose it to be able to take his mind off how he felt, so this was an almost whimsical piece with tricky fingering. It only took a few minutes for Finn’s jaw to drop at the way Phil’s fingers moved over those heavy strings with such ease.

When he finished Phil’s long, agile fingers, gently stroked down the neck of his cello. It was a magnificent instrument. He played some Jeff Buckley, transcribing the guitar to cello in his head as he played, and Rae gently sang the words. Finn picked up his guitar, and after a few minutes to think started to play a gentle counter melody.
They had played contemporary music for an hour before Gary had knocked on the door.

“So I s’pose breakfast is on the cards then?” He called through the door.

“Aye da!” Finn called back, “Sorry.”

“Oh it’s alright, nice way to wake up.” They heard him hesitate, then in a roguish voice he added, “Good to shag to as well.”

“DAD!” Finn yelled through the door at him, everyone laughing. Phil packed up his cello lovingly, sadness and happiness mingling in his expression. They headed downstairs to see Gary cooking breakfast, Kenzie kissing him goodbye; she had to hurry back to London for an evening shift at work. She came over to Finn and took his face between her hands.

“See you in a few days.” She kissed his forehead and hugged him tightly, “look after your bonnie lass and your handsome laddy.” She told him, “And try no to be too much a pain for your da, you ken?”

“Ciun a bhíos ultach túine, a-riamh?” Finn laughed.

“Nuair a tighinn sé rìst.” She replied with a grin.

“She said I’m a pain in the arse when it suits me to be.” Finn translated and Phil looked on with interest. He’d been thinking about learning a second language for a while now. Kenzie kissed Rae’s cheek and gave an extra hug to Phillip.

“It’ll be alright laddy.” She told him, “You’re a Nelson now. And a MacKay.” She kissed his forehead and put her arm around Rae’s shoulders, “Just like this lass.” Kenzie and Rae had had a long, bonding talk after Linda had called Rae a whore. Rae barely remembered any of it because she had been crying for most of it, but what she got from it was Kenzie 1, had grown to adore Rae and 2, was going to support any decision Finn made that brought him happiness, even if she didn’t rightly understand it.

Because they didn’t understand it, both Kenzie and Gary had made mistakes regarding their relationship over the weeks the trio had been together; made false assumptions, said problematic and hurtful things… but Finn’s parents were open to being corrected and when the shit hit the fan they backed this trio completely; Gary had nearly popped a vein in his forehead in a rage at the same parent-teacher meeting that had seen Elsa reprimanded.

Kenzie grabbed her handbag and looked back over her family.

“Love you all.” They all returned her words and she gave a lingering look to Gary, cooking up a storm, before leaving.

When Gary put the plates down in front of his kids, he thought of them all as his kids now, Phil’s jaw dropped.

“Is this a fry up?” He asked and picked up a fork to poke at a sausage.

“Ayup.” Gary answered with a happy grin, he’d heard all about Phil’s controlled eating, “you got eggs, fried potato, black pudding, beef sausages, chicken sausages, bacon, toast, baked beans, and cos I know how healthy you are I did some fried tomato, fired mushroom and fried onion.” Phil looked up at him in awe.

“I’ll never be able to eat it all…”
“That’s fine just have yourself a wee taste of everything and Finn’ll polish off the rest.” Gary said and sat down with a pot of tea for them.

“Thank you.” Phil said softly.

“You know da,” Finn said, “Phil could have married a Rothschild rather than be with us.” He watched his father’s mouth open with surprise.

“Bloody hell.” He marvelled, “Which branch of the family?” He asked and Finn shrugged looking over at Phil.

“I don’t know either. I made it my job to not know about that world.”

“You know, I heard that the original lyrics to ‘if I were a rich man’ from ‘Fiddler on the Roof’ were ‘if I were a Rothschild.’” He raised his eyebrows and shoved a forkful of food in his mouth. “I guess money doesn’t mean as much to you as your relationship.” Gary nodded slowly, happy he’d been right in his judgement of Phil.

“Well to be fair I do have a trust fund.” Phil answered, “I don’t get it till I’m 21, but… but I have saved up some money. And I find myself without lodgings.” Rae gave Phil a fond smile, she enjoyed the way his language sometimes became formal when he was nervous, “So I could pay board if you let me stay he-”

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Gary answered and waved him off.

“I can afford to…”

“Keep that money you saved for university, because I’m not going to be able to help all three of you through uni.” Gary answered, “You’re a college student Phillip.” Gary said, “Your parents should be paying for you. But since they aren’t, I will.” Gary said this with such an air of finality that Phillip understood that there was no point arguing.

“I don’t… I…” Phil lowered his eyes, trying to cover the tear that had dropped onto his plate.

“You don’t know how to handle parents being kind to you?” Gary said with heartbreaking Realisation.

“No … I don’t…” Phil shook his head slowly and Gary looked at him for a good long minute.

“Neither of your parents gave you the kind of love you deserved.” He said firmly, “You deserve better than you’ve had. And I want you to know you can rely on me.” Phil looked up at him with red eyes, unable to even think of one word to say, he simply nodded. And Gary patted him on the back making him laugh slightly. “I suppose I better give you something I was intending to hold off on for a little bit longer, but…” He looked at Finn and then Rae, “I think now’s as good a time as any to give it to you.” He got up and went to stairs, “Eat up, it might take me a minute to find it.”

“Thank you.” Phil said as he turned away and Gary shrugged.

“Don’t think on it laddy.” Gary answered.

“Sounding more Scottish da!” Finn laughed.

“Ach, it’s ye ma’s influence.” He laughed as he headed up the stairs.

“Don’t try to put on a Scottish accent! You sound fooking shite!” Finn called after him. Phil felt a
strange sense of everything being ok; he had gambled his entire life on these two. And it was ok. He was ok. He listened to Finn his father’s various attempts at accents, Rae laughing, and tried his first bite of chicken sausage.

“You know I’m gonna have to come up with another analogy.” Finn mused.

“You what?” Rae asked.

“You know how I called you me sun? Well I can’t very well have two suns can I?” Finn scrunched up his nose, hating to let go of that metaphor.

“There are binary systems. Phil said, and some multiple star systems too.” Phil said and he saw them both looking at him. “Research indicates that probably half of the stars we see are part of multiple star systems.” Finn cocked an eyebrow.

“Even galaxies don’t wanna be monogamous.” Finn grinned. “I should o’ remembered that!” He laughed, “I fucking study physics and I got into astrophysics a bit.” He shook his head and groaned to think about the exams he had coming up; his brain seemed to forget everything when it came to exams.

“So you’re saying that there’s galaxies with two or more suns in the middle of ‘em and planets rotating around ‘em… like ours but with multiple suns?” Rae asked amazed and Phil nodded. “Well you two are my suns.” She said happily in reply.

“There are actually planets like Tatooine out there. Millions of them. Hopefully some of them have life on them.”

“Nice Star Wars reference. Chop’s gonna love that.” Finn laughed.

“Chop got me into Star Wars when we were kids!” Phil reminded him that he used to know Chop when he was about 10 years old.

“I imagine Chop was happy that his conflict with Phil cos of you is over?” Rae asked Finn.

“I think he was glad that we all got together. I think it did his head in more that you loved Phil and me but were with just me, than we all love each other and are together.”

“At least he likes us happy.” Rae shrugged, “Which is more than I can say for most people we’ve had to deal with.”

“I’m sorry about last night.” Phil said, “I wish you hadn’t heard all of that stuff.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Rae grinned, “You’ve heard me singing; that’s more traumatic than your father being a dick.” She joked but Phil shook his head.

“The first time I realised I was in love with you was when I heard you sing for the end of year performance. I mean I loved you afore that… but that was the moment I knew.” He told her; “Your voice is beautiful.” They talked about falling in love with each other, and the moment of first realisation, laughing and joking, eating happily. Both Finn and Phil noticed that Rae just took the compliment instead of fighting it. Rae hadn’t even noticed that she’d done that; she was too happy and focussed on their future together to think about fighting compliments.

Phil tried everything on his plate, but was full long before Finn had polished off his plate and started eying his.
“You actually done?” Finn said and Phil nodded as Gary finally came back down. He put a shoebox on the table and picked up his fork. Finn eyed the box and started to open the lid but Gary put his hand on the lid, snapping it shut.

“I’m going to eat first son. Then we’ll look in the box.” He said with a cheeky grin. Finn looked back over at Phil’s plate.

“You sure?” He asked and Phil handed him the plate.

“I’m stuffed! He answered, “You know I don’t think I’ve ever felt this full.” Rae and Finn looked at his plate.

“Well at least you’ll be cheap to keep when we move in.” Rae answered with a grin, “Not like me and Finn… mostly Finn.”

“Sorry I couldn’t eat more.” Phil said to Gary.

“We’re all built differently.” Gary answered, “you eat however much feels right for you.” That was the first time Phil had been told that by a parent and he genuinely treasured Gary as his new father figure. Finn ate Phil’s food and Rae put bits and pieces of her food on his plate too, Finn happily eating it all. Phil watched him in awe; sometimes he and Finn were so the same, and sometimes they were so completely opposite.

Gary put down his fork, having finished all the food on his plate and turned his eyes to Rae.

“So you all know that necklace came through the family on my mother’s side?” He asked and looked at Phil who nodded. “So it’s not just your mother’s MacKay’s who have family history.” Gary grinned at his son, obviously glad to finally show off a bit. “The Nelson’s have been around since about 1180.” He opened up the box and took out a small pouch. “We have our own coat of arms and everything.” He opened up the pouch. “When I got married, my father gave me this.” He held up a gold signet ring, “It was made 1894, it bears the Nelson coat of arms; one of the earlier versions of it, I’m told.” All three of them looked at it in awe. “I was going to give it to Gracie’s husband, but…” he lowered his eyes and cleared his throat. Phil turned his eyes to Finn, but Finn was looking at the ring. Phil turned his eyes to Finn, but Finn was looking at the ring. “So since my son is bisexual, he should have the option to give something to his male partner.” Gary handed the ring to Finn, “but like that necklace it shouldn’t be handed out lightly.” Gary said firmly, “it’s for a husband, not a fling.” Finn nodded slowly; the seriousness of his father’s words sinking in. Gary turned his eyes to Phil, “It seemed unfair that Rae had something from our family history and you didn’t.” He looked back at Finn, “So I’ll let him figure out when and where and how he’ll give it to you. But I know my boy well enough to know he will.”

“You can’t give something like that to me…” Phil said in awe.

“Why? You planning on going somewhere?” Finn asked.

“No, but something like that belongs in the family.”

“Uh huh.” Finn agreed. “I gave that necklace, a family heirloom, to Rae with the understanding that we was forever.” He held out the ring to Phil, “I’m asking you to take this family heirloom, with the same understanding.” Phil stared at Finn and nodded.

“It goes on the pinky finger of the non-leading hand.” Gary told them.

“Phil’s ambidextrous.” Finn answered.
“Go with left then.” Gary answered and leaned back on his chair. Finn took Rae’s hand and they held the ring together and slipped it on Phil’s finger. Phil looked down at the ring with a huge dopey grin, his right hand tangled with Rae and Finn’s fingers.

“It’s backwards.” He said in awe, understanding that this marked it as an authentic seal.

“Oh aye, it’s the real deal.” Gary said. “Probably could have been more romantic if I hadn’t been hanging about… but it loses none of its meaning.” Phil stared at the ring then up at Finn and Rae and back to Gary.

“Thank you.” Gary waved him off and looked back in his shoe box. “And I thought my son shouldn’t be left out from family heirlooms.” He pulled out a wrist watch. “This was my Great grandfather’s watch. It was given to him by his parents as a farewell when he was sent to fight in World War 1.” Gary handed the watch to Finn, “He wore it all through the war.” Gary said, “I remember seeing him wearing it when I was very young.”

“Wow.” Finn held the watch and Rae reached over, Phil seeing her actions did the same, and in a solemn, silent motion they put the watch on Finn.

“You’ll have to be careful with it.” Gary said, “It’s not water proof but-”

“Da it’s been through World War 1, I’m sure it can handle me.”

“And World War 2.” Gary added.

“I’ll look after it.” Finn stared down at the watch and Gary looked on proudly as the three of them all looked at the watch and signet ring, talking and joking together.

Both young man had seen the necklace countless times around Rae’s neck. Phil had run his fingers along it and down to her breasts just two mornings ago. It had never occurred to any of them to take off Rae’s necklace because it symbolised the relationship Finn and her had had before Phil. Everything just seemed to open up to accommodate Phil with ease and the necklace had continued to be a promise. Now they each wore a reminder of a promise. Gary closed the shoebox and took it upstairs, while they kept chatting, moving on to what today held for them.

Rae had decided that she needed to go and talk to her mother. Alone. Both she and Finn were missing Aiesha, and she wanted Phil to know Aiesha too. And she missed Karim’s wisdom and her mother’s rough love. Her mother hadn’t thrown her out; she just had a very negative response to Rae’s relationship and Rae had decided to not accept that. She still wouldn’t accept it, but she wanted to give her mother a second chance. She loved her family, and after seeing what it looked like to know that there were no second chances, she needed to at least try.
They sat naked, cross-legged and facing each other. Finn handed Phil his acoustic guitar as Rae finished getting dressed. “You’ll be alright?” Finn asked and Rae nodded her head.

“I will drive there and back. I already called Karim; he said she’s home.”

“Are you sure you wanna do this alone?” Phil asked again; they’d already been over this.

“Nope.” She shrugged, “But it’s the only chance I’ve got to make her listen.” She leaned over and kissed them both on the cheek, “hopefully you two’ll be invited to join us for dinner tonight.” She straightened up. “Love you both.” She said as she went to the door.

“Love you too.” They both replied almost perfectly in time. They watched her leave, locking the door behind her.

“You worried about Saul?”

“Always.” Finn replied and Phil’s eyes dropped to Finn’s scar.

“Yeah.” He agreed.

“She’ll be fine; there hasn’t been any sign of him in over a year.” He sounded like he was convincing himself more than Phil.

“D’you think we should just go with her, sit in the car?”

“No.” Finn said, “Chlo told me that you gotta let survivors of sexual assault do things by themselves when they’re ready, you know? Help ’em feel normal again and she’s gotta feel safe by herself or she’ll never feel safe.” Finn shook his head, “It’s been over a year. He’s not coming back.”

“You’re right.” Phil said bracingly. “And after being shoved out the house by her mum, I don’t think I’m welcome…” Phil said with a grim smile as he looked down at the guitar. He put his fingers on the fret and made a small noise in the back of his throat. “I thought you weren’t gonna teach me?” Phil’s fingers picked experimentally with the strings, slowly picking up speed until it became obvious to Finn that he was playing Orf’s ‘O Fortuna.’ Finn cocked an eyebrow and shook his head.

“You never played guitar afore?”

“No.”

“And you’re playing Orf….?”

“Aye, you know Orf!” Phil grinned.
“Everyone who’s had Roach knows Orf.” Finn said, “I spent two fucking weeks transcribing it to guitar and learning to play it.” He looked at him, “you’re transcribing it in your head aren’t ye?”

“Well… I’m…” Phil blushed.

“D’you think that genius Kester was talking about shows itself in music for you Phil?”

“No.” Phil pulled a face.

“Right… So you just pick up a guitar for the first time and-”

“It’s not like that, I’ve got a lot of experience with strings.”

“Right.” Finn said unconvinced. He watched Phil’s agile fingers stop moving, Phil looking at him worried. “Ever played a wind instrument of any kind?” Finn asked.

“I dunno... maybe a recorder when I was five or something? So, I guess yes and no…” He shrugged and Finn jumped up and pulled his jeans on without buttoning or zipping them he went out onto the landing and called downstairs.

“Hey Da!”

“Yeah?” He called up the stairs.

“You still got that saxophone?” Gary had had a mid-life crisis of sorts a few years back and the saxophone had been the least embarrassing part of that.

“Yes.” The response had been quieter as if wishing he hadn’t been reminded of it.

“Cool. I’m burrowing it.” He called back and headed to his father’s room without waiting for a response. Phil pulled his jeans on and headed out onto the landing as Gary came up the stairs.

“What on Earth for?” Gary was bewildered.

“To prove a fucking point.” Finn opened his father’s wardrobe, “Where is it da?” Gary reached up onto the top shelf and pulled out a few boxes, behind them was a saxophone in its case. Finn pulled the saxophone out and handed it to Phil.

“Play something by… I dunno fucking Bach… that was meant for cello. On this.” Phil looked at the saxophone like it was a dangerous substance but Finn thrust it at him again.

“Alright…” Phil said and Finn took a quick glance at his watch, “But this is ridiculous, I have no experience with wind instruments at all… I don’t even know how to play this.” Phil fingered the instrument silently for a while trying to understand how it worked, plopping down on Gary’s bed without thinking. Gary leaned on the doorframe and folded his arms, intrigued. Finn leaned against the wardrobe and watched. At first Phil was self-conscious, but Finn watched that melt away as Phil’s mind worked it over how to play the saxophone. He looked at the mouthpiece and put it to his lips blowing experimentally.

Nothing happened and he rolled his eyes.

“See?” He was about to start laughing when he looked at the mouth piece again. “Is something missing from this?” He asked, “The hole looks too big to make a proper sound…?” He looked up at Gary.

“Oh right!” Gary fished around in the case and pulled out a reed. “You need this.” Phil took it
and looked at the hole again. “Put it in your mouth for a bit. It needs to be moist.” Gary remembered, “And then it’ll slide right in. Oh god!” Gary laughed, “That sounds oddly sexual.”

“Da.” Finn said unimpressed.

“I was pretty sexually frustrated back then…”

“Dad!”

“Alright!” Gary replied and rolled his eyes. Phil cleared his throat and gave a look that indicated he had no intention of commenting and put the reed in his mouth. After a minute he slid the reed into the saxophone mouth piece and put it to his lips and blew slightly, producing a pathetic wheezing sound.

“Right.” Phil muttered, “Now we’re in business.” He blew again, supporting his breath with his diaphragm, just as Elsa had taught them for voice projection. A stronger sound came out and Phil started to press keys, figuring out the notes by ear. He took a breath and directed his breath better and produced a strong ringing sound, Finn shook his head in awe, knowing exactly what was going to happen.

A couple more blows with Phil’s fingers experimenting on the keys and Finn distinctly heard the beginnings of a tune, sometimes with an off note, but it didn’t take long for him to find the right one, and with the odd squeaky note here and there. Some of the parts were slowed down while Phil still got used to the fingering on the saxophone, but the tune was an unmistakable and relatively well known cello solo.

“Un-fucking-believable.” Gary marvelled and stopped leaning on the doorframe, watching Phil in awe and Finn looked at his watch again.

“Ten minutes Phil.” Finn said, “Ten minutes from have never touched a wind instrument to I’ve heard that song on a car ad before.” Phil stopped and looked at him.

“It’s not well played, I need more time with it to perfect it… maybe an hour?” He asked, as if asking for permission.

“Phil, that just proved my point even more.” Finn said and took the saxophone and laid it on the bed beside him, “People spend their whole live learning instruments. You take an hour.” Phil shrugged and looked down at his hands, “You have got to acknowledge that you’re special Phil.” Finn said passionately. “You’ve got a gift.”

“You too.” Phil said equallling Finn’s emotion, “if I wanted to understand physics like you do I’d have to study my arse off. Which I could and then I would understand it… but you… you barely pay attention and you’re far superior to your teachers. And Rae’s got a way with words... her writing is incredible. The emotion she captures… I wish I could be that raw and honest and real when I write, but I end up in metaphor and poetry.” Phil said pointedly, “And neither of you think you’re special. To you, physics is just something you do. Well music… well it’s my life… so yeah… I just do it.” He lowered his eyes, “And I just keep wishing I knew as much about contemporary music as you and Rae do… cos holy shit Finn, you’re both incredible!”

“Alright, how about we just acknowledge that all three of you are special.” Gary said, “And it’s probably why you all came together.” Phil turned his eyes to Gary but Finn kept his eyes on Phil.

“Da.” Finn said softly and Gary nodded, knowing he had to leave Finn with this.

“I’ll make us some tea.” He left his bedroom and Phil looked at Finn.
“You strut around school like you know you’re the smartest kid there… but then you can’t accept that you’re a genius at something you’re so passionate about like music.” Finn shook his head.

“I’m not the smartest person at school, I’m just the one who studies the hardest.” Phil answered honestly, in his mind. “You and Rae are both naturally smarter than me, you just don’t put the effort into homework that I do. That’s all.” He shrugged, “I act like I’m king shit, cos I’m proud of the hard work I do. I earn those marks.” Finn thought about how much Phil hated having a trust fund because he hadn’t earned that money and knew he’d have to help Phil get past the idea that he didn’t deserve good things to happen to him; he felt he had to work hard and earn everything, that he didn’t deserve good luck or a break. But first he had to deal with Phil’s completely erroneous idea that he wasn’t an extraordinary person.

“You do a very good job of deflecting the attention off you Phil.” Finn said, “Even with Kester, you told him broad things, like the shit with your parents in the hopes that he would think you was doing alright and he wouldn’t dig deeper.” Phil lowered his eyes.

“What’s to dig deeper into.”

“Why do you say stuff like that?”

“Cos I’m not special. I’m not extraordinary like you or Rae.” Phil looked at the door, “I keep thinking one day everyone’s gonna realise that I’ve been fooling them.”

“Why do you struggle to think that you might be extraordinary?”

“Cos they didn’t think I was.” Phil put a hand to his mouth and rubbed along his top lip with one finger anxiously, his emotion building uncontrollably, “they threw me way like rubbish Finn…. How can I ever think I’m worth something when…?” Finn threw his arms around Phil and pulled him close. He let Phil cry for as long as it took Phil to bring himself back under control, tenderly soothing him, because everything Phil felt was regulated, controlled. Except his love for them.

“I can’t even imagine what it’s like to have parents like that Phil. I reckon I’d feel like shit too.” Finn stroked his hair. “But you know how you think Rae and me are so special?” Phil nodded his head but stayed buried in Finn’s arms. “I never could stand the thought of other guys touching Rae,” Finn said, hoping Phil would understand just how different he was from everyone else, how special, “I know, I’m a Neanderthal, right?” He asked Phil and he made a small miserable noise in the back of his throat, “I can be very jealous and possessive… and I know how wrong it is….” He rocked Phil slightly, “But you know, in some cases I think it were really warranted, like Liam… he were so wrong for her.” Phil nodded in agreement, “and Saul… what a fucking turd that guy is. He weren’t good enough to ever touch her. None of the guys that surrounded her were good enough for her. I couldn’t imagine them making her anything other than miserable….” He pulled Phil out of his arms and looked him in the eye, “But it were never like that with you.” He admitted, “It weren’t that I couldn’t imagine you touching her, or that you didn’t deserve her. The problem was that I could, and you did. You know that I thought you were better than me… but it were more than that. I could see you being with her, for a life time. And I could see you being happy together.” Finn stroked his wet face, “Even when I hated you, I could see you was special Phil.” The weight of Finn’s words was a welcome comfort to Phil, “And I’m sorry that your parents can’t see it. But they’re wrong. Phil they’re so wrong.” He pulled Phil a little closer, urgently, “you think Rae and me is special… but you complete us. Me dad were onto something when he said about how we’re all special and that’s why we came together.” Finn scooted closer to Phil, “I wish I’d figured out sooner that we was all meant to be together, and that’s why I could see her with you, and I could see you being happy together. Cos you were meant to be with her. But I kept thinkin’ it had to be you or me… and I so wish I’d
realised the truth sooner. We could have been happy months ago, and all the pain you went through being rejected by Rae could have been avoided… cos I think that’s part o’ why you think you’re not special in comparison to Rae and me… cos you think if forced to choose Rae’d always choose me, and I’d always choose Rae.” Phil lowered his eyes, scared to admit the truth.

“I know it.” He said softly.

“Well it’s not true.” Finn said. “I’d die before I’d choose between you two.”

“But…”

“And I know Rae’s the same.” Finn answered. “Who would you choose? Cos to an outsider, they’d be thinkin’ you’d choose Rae over me. But my money’s on the third option. You wouldn’t make a choice either.”

“No, I wouldn’t… I couldn’t make a choice.” Phil put a hand on Finn’s neck, “I love you both too much.”

“You are not the secondary partner in this.” Finn said firmly. “You’re equal in this with us. We’re not just saying that. I get why it’s hard for you understand it; it’s cos you’ve been treated as some throwaway accessory all your life… by your own parents even.” Finn told him, “But that’s not me and Rae. We’re not gonna do that to you. We’re special.” He said, “Like you.”

Linda opened the door, a squirming Aiesha in her arms.

“Rae.” She pulled Rae into her arms urgently, without a word. “I’m sorry.” She cried.

Rae held her mother, wanting it to be as easy as a sorry, but it wasn’t. She felt Aiesha’s fingers around her hair and start to pull.

“Ow.” Rae said, “Aiesha, c’mon.” She put her hands around Aiesha’s fingers and tried to free her hair but she started bawling immediately.

“She’s missed you pet.” Linda said, “We all have.”

“Rae! Rae! Rae! Rae! Rae!” Aiesha started to scream.

“That’s new.” Rae said and took Aiesha into her arms, “Hey little one.”

“You can tell Finn we’ve heard a few Finns as well… if you’re still him…?”

“Yes mum, I’m still with him. But you know that.” Rae answered curtly, “And you gotta stop making assumptions about me relationship… or trying to dig-.”

“That wasn’t an assumption. It was question.” Linda crossed her arms.

“You do realise that in order to even ask that question you had to have assumptions about-”

“Did you come here to lecture me or apologise?”

“I came,” Rae gritted her teeth, “cos I can’t just stop loving someone I love so much… and that includes you mum. I can’t just turn off that I love you and choose never see you again… even after
what you said.” Rae shook her head, “I don’t owe you an apology.”

“Six weeks Rae.” Linda said, “You think I stopped worrying about you once during that time?” Rae knew that her mother had been calling Gary every day for updates.

“You knew I weren’t dead.”

“Yes. I knew you weren’t dead because boxes of your things disappeared from your room every day. And my husband helped co-ordinate that while I wondered if I’d ever see you again.”

“Finn did the boxing.” Rae said, “I did wanna come back, and Phil didn’t feel welcome. Finn and Karim are good mates. You know that.” Rae shrugged, “Karim did the right thing by everyone. I have to move out and you obviously don’t wanna see your whore daughter.”

“How could you say that?”

“You knew where I was.” Rae answered as Karm came into the room, having heard their voices rising. He gave Rae a sad smile and gently took Aiesha, the child glad to go to daddy as always.

“I’ll make tea.” He said softly and left.

“Why didn’t you come for me if you was so worried?” Rae snapped, her hands on her hips.

“I will not talk to you while that other young man is around.” Linda retorted angrily.

“Right.” Rae said, “So this is where it ends.” Rae said, “Cos you have to accept one of two things here mum.” Rae held up one finger, “one: Phil.” She held up two fingers, “Or two: never seeing me again.” Linda looked bewildered and horrified at what Rae was saying.

“Are you giving me an ultimatum?”

“Aye.” Rae answered, “You don’t have the right to judge a relationship just cos you don’t approve. You can either accept it, or I’m gone forever.”

“Don’t you try taking the moral high ground with me!” Linda returned angrily, “You judged Karim and me to the high heavens and back!”

“Yeah and you told me it weren’t alright and it weren’t gonna stop you seeing him, so guess what mum? Same thing in reverse.” Rae’s hand flailed in between her mother and herself trying to indicate the role reversal.

“I am your mother Rae.” Linda said, “And I will not sit by passively and let you ruin your life in this train wreck of a relationship.”

“Train wreck?” Rae asked astounded.

“Would you prefer travesty?”

“Why would you say travesty?” Rae was exasperated.

“Because it is!” Linda’s voice was raised, her mouth drawn in a tight angry line, “It’s unnatural!”

“It’s not a travesty.” Rae said, “It’s not unnatural.” Rae’s voice went up an octave in anger, “You just think that only cos it’s not monogamous.”

“Yes!” Linda answered. “Yes I do think that because it’s not monogamous.”
"That’s not a good reason to-"

"Yes it is Rae."

"Why?"

"Because everyone’s monogamous."

"Well clearly not." Rae snarked.

"Well most people are Rae." Linda retorted, her cheeks red with anger.

"No they’re not.” Rae answered snippily, “Think of all the people that cheat; that’s not monogamy!”

“So this is legitimatising your cheating then?” Linda asked sarcastically.

“No mum, Finn and I are both with Phil. That’s not the same as cheating.” Linda threw her hands up and walked away from the front door, sitting on the lounge, she shook her head at Rae. Rae stayed at the front door, refusing to come in if Phil wasn’t welcome in.

“I don’t understand.” She said simply, “I thought you two were in love with each other, why would you throw that all away?”

“We’re not,” Rae tried to not grit her teeth, “Throwing it all away mum. We both love Phil.” Rae told her mother firmly, “He adds to our relationship, he doesn’t take away from it.”

“Adds what?” Rae gritted her teeth against her mother’s sceptical, bewildered tone.

“What do you mean by adds what?” Rae returned, “What does anybody add to a relationship?” She asked, “Themselves!” She shook her head, “Mum, he adds Phil to it. He adds everything he is and more love to us. And I just hope we can give him as much as he gives us.”

“The girls in mother’s group say it’s a phase that a lot of young people are going through nowadays.” Linda said with a shrug, “It’s not real.”

“It’s not a phase-”

“Then why are more young people doing it?”

“Probably for the same reason that there seems to be more gay people.” Rae snapped.

“You what?”

“There were always gay people mum!” Rae explained, “Society is just more accepting now so they’re coming out.” Linda tutted and rolled her eyes, “There’s always been poly people mum.”

“Poly people!” Linda spat, “Sounds daft.”

“It’s not daft!”

“You are throwing away a good relationship on a fad!” Linda spat.

“It’s not a fad.” Rae tried to keep her temper under control, “I am in love with both of them.”

“No you’re not.” Linda said firmly, “Real love is with one person Rae. It’s between two people.”
“Well maybe by your definition.”

“By most people’s definition!” Linda retorted, “By the law’s definition! You couldn’t marry these boys-”

“Archie can’t marry Tom but you’d call that a real relation-” Rae cut in, but Linda cut over the top of her as if she hadn’t spoken.

“Or have a stable family with them, and a mortgage and a bank account... By everyone’s definition love is between two people Rae.”

“Well not by mine.” Rae answered. “I am deeply, wonderfully, painfully sometimes, and utterly irrevocably in love with both of those men. Equally.”

There was a seeming impassable silence between them as they stared at each other. Neither willing to move. Both believing they were in the right.

“Karim keeps telling me about how some Muslim men marry two wives or three or…” she looked away. “I asked him if he wanted me to do that, and he said no of course. Because he loves me Rae.” Linda said imperiously, “Maybe Finn’s gay and he’s trying to hide it and-”

“He’s not gay.” Rae felt exhausted; it was hard having who she was attacked, “He’s bisexual. So’s Phil.” She took a deep breath, “Did Karim mention his cousin?” Rae asked.

“He did.”

“Did he also mention that his cousin and his wives are happy?”

“He did.” Linda’s mouth again drew into a tight line, but then a small smile touched her face; a victorious smile, “But I asked him if everyone was always as happy as his cousin is.” She said and Rae had to stop herself from banging her head against the wall; already knowing where this was going, “And do you know Rae, he said no.” Linda said pointedly, “He said that sometimes women would go to their new husbands crying and old wives would despise the new one... and no one was happy. Tunisia banned it, you know?” Linda gave a triumphant look and crossed her arms, knowing she’d won the argument. But Rae sighed.

“Well yeah mum…” Rae answered sardonically “That’s cos it were one person trying to force two other people to be in a poly relationship and they didn’t wanna be.” Rae’s tone grew more acerbic. “No one should be forced into a relationship they don’t wanna be in mum.” Rae pointed out but Linda’s face stayed triumphant. “Even a monogamous one.” Linda’s face fell. She hadn’t considered monogamy as something people were forced in to. That was polyamory... not monogamy. Rae saw the thoughts crossing her mother’s face with absolute clarity. “Did it ever occur to you that some people just aren’t wired that way?” Rae asked, “Maybe I’m not wired to be monogamous.” She put her last attempts at making peace with her mother on the table. But Rae sighed.

“Well yeah mum…” Rae answered sardonically “That’s cos it were one person trying to force two other people to be in a poly relationship and they didn’t wanna be.” Rae’s tone grew more acerbic. “No one should be forced into a relationship they don’t wanna be in mum.” Rae pointed out but Linda’s face stayed triumphant. “Even a monogamous one.” Linda’s face fell. She hadn’t considered monogamy as something people were Forced in to. That was polyamory... not monogamy. Rae saw the thoughts crossing her mother’s face with absolute clarity. “Did it ever occur to you that some people just aren’t wired that way?” Rae asked, “Maybe I’m not wired to be monogamous.” She put her last attempts at making peace with her mother on the table. “Because this feels like the place I’m meant to be. Maybe I was born to be polyamorous.” Rae saw her mum thinking that over. She was sure her mother would say something like ‘that sounds like trying to make an excuse to cheat or not have to make tough decisions.’ So she tried to say something else to shut her mother up before she said something they couldn’t come back from. “And you know the people who say that poly relationships cheapen love. Are the same type o’ people who say that gay relationships cheapen love.”

“Don’t…” Linda shook her head, “Why d’you keep comparing what you’re doing to being gay?”

“Poly relationships come under the queer umbrella mum.”
“Archie’s mum told me that the Q word is a slur and you shouldn’t use it.”

“Well you can’t use it cos you’re straight. Some queer people choose to claim it as their own though and that’s our right.” Rae had to stop herself from grinning at how Tom could go to calling himself a fag but would then thump any straight person that did that, “It’s all got to do with oppressive power structures, you should probably go to a library, or talk to some of me mates that could explain it better.”

“You’re not… queer…” Linda said the word softly, “So why are using it?”

“I just said poly relationships are queer…” Rae stopped herself from sighing.

“But you’re straight.”

“I’d have sex with a woman if I weren’t in a faithful, committed relationship.” Linda scoffed and Rae narrowed her eyes at her, “Yes mum. Faithful to my two men. And committed to them. No different than your relationship.”

“Oh there’s a lot of difference pet.”

“There’s the same amount of difference between yours and Archie’s relationship as there is between yours and mine!” Rae said angrily.

“Stop comparing yourself to the gays! You’re not like them!” Linda said angrily, “the gays don’t choose to be gay, and there’s nothing wrong with them.”

“D’you think I wanted to love two men mum?” Rae said, “All I ever dreamed about was being in a normal relationship, but I figured a fat girl like me couldn’t.” She shrugged, “Guess I was right. I can’t be in a normal relationship.”

“No but you chose to be with both of them.”

“Yes I chose to be who I am and to live my life truthful to myself.” Rae answered. “Archie didn’t choose to like boys, but he did choose to be who he was instead o’ hide it… eventually.” Rae remembered all the kissing girls Archie did before he finally came out. “And now Archie is in love and happy. Because he chose to be true to himself. Well that’s all I’m doing and you call it wrong. You’re no better than Simmy was with Arch!” Rae’s tone was acidic and Linda’s jaw dropped in surprise; she had heard what Simmy had been like with Archie.

“Don’t you dare compare me to Simmy.” Linda stood up angrily.

“Well he made sure Archie felt like his love was wrong, and that’s what you’re doing to me!” Rae asserted forcefully, “Ok fine, polyamory isn’t for you. Good for you. You enjoy your monogamy. But your way isn’t everybody’s way.” Linda stared at Rae, “I’m not trying to make you poly mum. I’m just trying to make you accept that we exist and we deserve to be seen, and treated with decency and respect.” Rae looked her mother square in the eye, “And if you can’t even do that basic shit, then it’s goodbye.” Rae took a deep breath, “You know where I am if you choose to apologise.” Rae turned to leave.

“Rae…” Linda said softly, “I don’t understand it.” Her tone became pleading, “But I don’t wanna lose you.”

“Well like I said mum.” Rae turned back to her, “You can either accept Phil or lose me.”
“Hi Gary.” Rae sounded exhausted when she came in and hung her jacket up on one of the hooks Finn had put near the door.

“Hi love.” Gary kissed her forehead and gave her a hug. “Fancy a tea?”

“I just really need to see my lads right now.” She said apologetically.

“They been making beautiful music while you were out.” Gary said and Rae nodded, hearing the music wafting down to them. “I may have given our Phil a saxophone.” Gary grinned.

“Oh god when we move, it’s gonna be like moving an orchestra!” Rae joked.

“Oh he’s too good with music to not give it to him Rae.” Gary replied, “You’ll hear when you get up there.” He nodded to the stairs and Rae took her leave.

When she got back into the room, her boys were sitting nakedly again, Finn on the chair with the cello, rubbing his fingers and complaining about the pain. And Phil was leaning against the bed, the saxophone in front of him like he was about to play, but he was grinning and halfway through a quip about getting strong fingers and orgasms. She dropped her keys in the key basket and locked the door behind her. They both gauged her mood and saw that she didn’t want to talk about her mother just yet. But she wasn’t crying, so that was a positive sign.

She went over to Finn and kissed him and Phil lifted himself onto the bed so she could kiss him easier when she came over. She sat beside him after kissing him hello and looked at the saxophone.

“I had no idea that you played the 80s instrument of love.” Rae said and they all laughed.

“80s instrument of getting laid.” Finn said.

“That and a mullet.” Phil agreed. “And I do now.” He said happily, “I picked it up pretty easily.”

“Oh right?” She asked happily. But Finn was even happier to hear Phil say that.

“I’m pretty decent at music.” Phil shrugged humbly and Finn decided that this was good enough for now. Two hours ago, Phil had been convinced he wouldn’t be able to pick up the saxophone and play it. But Finn had known differently. And Phil admitting he was decent at something he was so obviously a genius at was a step in the right direction. Over the last two hours Phil had pretty much mastered the saxophone, and the piece of Bach music Finn had told him to play on the saxophone when he’d never even touched a wind instrument was now played note perfect. Phil’s issue now was to know the instrument well enough to play with deep passionate emotion.

“Wanna show me?” She asked and he nodded and started to play the Bach piece. He played it with an intense passion that moved Rae to near tears.
‘Speaking in Tongues’ by The Eagles of Death Metal

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=__uekZ9v95U

I got this feeling and it's deep in my body; it gives me wiggles and it makes my rump shake. If I should touch you, might be electrocuted: deep in your body you will get your first taste!

Phil really didn’t know where to look. One of Linda’s eyes was narrowed in thought as she looked directly at him. He wished he hadn’t come downstairs early to have a quiet meditate while Rae and Finn bickered and Gary tried to get someone to go over the plan for today with him. Phil enjoyed meditating and he hadn’t done any since he’d started going out with Rae and Finn. He’d slipped out when Rae and Finn had started bickering about her inviting her mother to come with them to this. They’d had exams for the last two weeks so this had really been the first chance for Linda and Phil to meet each other properly. It was summer break for second years, first years still had another week, and then they had the AFL match and summer ball; after that they would have nothing more to do with Stamford College. They were all graduating with excellent marks; Phil had been the best student in the school, of course, he was actually the best student in Lincolnshire and he was one of the top 5 students in the whole country that year. Finn and Rae had both done well; Rae was in the top 5% for the entire country and Finn was in the top 15% which had completely surprised Finn and made Gary beam with pride; he’d put the marks up on the fridge. They still had to get their final exams back but the three of them had managed to do so well that they all had acceptance to multiple universities and thanks to the duologue competitions they all had excellent drama schools they could go to as well.

Today they were headed to London for two nights to find a flat to live in together.

And Gary and Linda were coming with them.

Karim would be joining them tomorrow, and Kenzie was meeting them there later in the afternoon; parents fretting and anxiously excited about where they were going to live... Parents to guide and love them and offer advice and support and to drive them insane with their unwanted opinions…

Except for Phil. His parents weren’t going to be there.

So he went downstairs to meditate. To centre himself. To make sure his emotions were under control. To hear the door bell and answer the door to Linda, who now sat opposite him at the table.

“Did you want a drink?” Phil tried again, but Linda said nothing, the only change was that she sucked her teeth slightly, clearly appraising him. Phil drummed his hands on the table softly, awkwardly and cleared his throat. He had decided from the beginning that he would not explain his relationship to anyone; it was none of their business. So he offered up no information to her, he simply attempted to be polite, but was met with a semi-icy glare and nothing else. Silence fell as soon as he stopped tapping, but thankfully he could hear that Rae and Finn had stopped bickering and were wondering where he’d gotten too. They had agreed to not make the third person take sides if two of them were arguing, so Phil slipping away was not entirely unexpected and they weren’t panicked about him. He was glad they had that rule about arguments, because if he was honest he thought Finn was right about this being a bad time to get to know Linda, and he didn’t
want to have to say that if he were forced to take sides or say his opinion on the matter; Rae was still trying to heal her relationship with her mother so this was important to her. He thought about this in the silence and tried to think of a way to help mend that relationship. He opened his mouth to try to say something, and instead heard Gary begin to loudly complain about the state of the airing closet. Finn called out Phil’s name and Phil cleared his throat before calling back up the stairs.

“Just down here.” He answered, his eyes not leaving Linda, “Linda’s here.” A silence so loud that it nearly thumped the air out of Phil greeted his words, followed by a hissing whisper and loud footsteps thumping down the stairs.

“Mum!” Rae said as she rushed into the room, “Weren’t we s’pose to be picking you up?”

“Thought we’d save time this way pet.” Linda said stiffly. Rae kissed Phil’s lips and turned back to her mother, her hand on Phil’s shoulder.

“Right, well we haven’t had breakfast yet, so I’ll put on some tea.”

“I can do it!” Phil offered, almost pleaded. But Rae waved him off and Phil turned his eyes back to Linda. Her expression had changed; she looked more murderous and Phil cleared his throat again. He was glad when Finn walked in, slipping a shirt on. Finn leaned down and kissed him before sitting beside him and putting a day plan in front of Phil.

“Good morning Linda.” Finn said with a cheeky grin and put a hand on Phil’s thigh.

“Finn.” Linda said tightly, her eyes narrowed.

“What d’you think of this plan?” Finn asked Phil and Phil scanned the page, glad for the distraction from the look Linda was giving him.

“We won’t make it to that open house on time.” Phil pointed to one and then another, “Swap these.” Finn nodded and made a note, “You can’t wear that shirt. And the hotel is-”

“Da’s paying for it, so it’s not open for debate.” Finn said with a grim smile. “And what’s wrong with me shirt?”

“It’s not formal enough.” Phil answered, “real estate agents make an appraisal of who they want living in the rental properties they manage based on two things; one, the impression you make on them and two, your references. We have no proper references since this will be our first rental. So when the real estate agent looks at us, they need to instantly see three things; that we’re not gonna break lease, that we’re not gonna trash the place and that we can afford to pay the rent.”

“Well you in your fucking brand name clothes’ll do the trick aristocrat.” Finn grumbled.

“Yes.” Phil answered refusing to take the bait and start bickering; not in front of Linda. “Now do try to look like less of a Neanderthal.”

“Alright, I’ll put a proper shirt on after breakfast.” Finn conceded, understanding Phil’s desire to not even play fight in front of Linda and kissed Phil’s cheek as Phil looked back at the trip plan.

“Three rooms at that hotel will be very pricey.” Phil shook his head. “And we can’t afford this flat.” He said, pointing at a two bedroom flat in inner London.

“Well if we all get jobs…?”
“I’d prefer to focus on study.” Phil said, “I’ve got 172 saved, we only need to last 3 years on that.” Phil spoke with a soft voice, but Rae heard everything he said as she made tea; “I was saving for just me. Had I known I’d have you two as well, I would’ve saved more.” He sighed and rubbed his face, “If we get a small studio apartment, we can definitely focus on our studies and not need to work.” He did the maths in his head, “we’d have a little over a grand a week. But to be honest, I’ve never had to pay for bills or groceries myself, so I have no idea if that’s enough for the three of us.”

“A grand a week?” Linda asked, stunned and appalled, “What rubbish are you talking?”

“I’m just saying…” Phil faltered. But Finn’s hand squeezed his thigh and he raised his head slightly and continued, “That I’d prefer to not have my focus and energy divided between work and study.” Phil said, “So I’ve been saving all the money my parents gave me for the past three years; you know allowance, birthday, Christmas presents, all that kind of stuff. I did spend a bit when I was in London over the last summer break.” Phil frowned and looked at Finn, “I had intended to just rent a room, but with the three of us, we’ll need our own apartment.”

“How did you save enough money to have 1000 quid a week for three years?” Linda asked, baffled.

“Phil’s parents are rich mum.” Rae sat down at the table with the tea and Gary rushed in stopped at the door and went back up the stairs, having clearly forgotten something.

“I think I better cook.” Finn said and got up.

“Well do we get to meet them?” Linda asked still stunned that this young man had saved that much money in his whole lifetime let alone in the last three years.

“No.” Phil said softly, “They disowned me.”

“What?” Linda’s face didn’t show some level of dislike for Phil for the first time.

“They were unwilling to accept that I was in love with Finn and Rae. They disowned me.” His eyes were lowered and Linda could see it caused him pain.

“D’you know mum, the first thing Phil said to me the next day after this happened was that I should talk to you.” Rae said pointedly. Finn tag-teamed Rae and bombarded Linda with more information, aiming to get her to see Phil as more than just an interloper.

“They wanted him to marry a Rothschild.” Finn said as he pulled sausages out of the freezer.

“A Rothschild?” Linda knew that name, of course. She never thought she’d know someone who would walk in those rarefied circles. Her eyes returned to Phil.

“They were more interested in getting family ties and heirs to the fortune than their son’s happiness.” Finn shook his head, “Fucking wish I’d clocked your father.” Finn grumbled. “He went to hit Phil, would o’ fucking knocked his head off.” He told Linda and then looked at Phil, “The force o’ that punch would’ve broken your nose and cheek bone.” Finn furrowed his brows and went over to Phil, instantly protective of him when he thought about it.

“I know.” Phil said simply.

“Why didn’t you defend yourself, I’ve been teaching you that.” Finn brushed Phil’s hair off his forehead.
“I wanted to remember what kind of man was disowning me, so I never felt like it happened cos o’ something being wrong with me.” Rae and Finn both made a noise of sympathetic pain and put their arms round him.

“It’s not because something’s wrong with you.” Linda said softly. “Parents might not understand their children’s decisions. But if they’re old enough to be making those decisions you let them make ‘em. You don’t go about disowning them… you try to understand.” She reached out and took Phil’s hand. “That’s what any sane, decent human being does.” She squeezed his hand and let go. “A grand a week will do you just fine if your rent isn’t too high and you’re not wasteful.”

“Yeah but rent in London is ridiculous.” Finn said and got up to keep cooking as Gary came down wearing a suit and looking far more formal than he probably needed to.

“Do you think this’ll be alright?” Gary asked Phil directly.

“You’re not the one they’ll be judging Gary.” Phil answered with a wry grin.

“Still, it’s better that they think your parents are rich and will help out.” Gary answered.

“Morning Linda, fancy some breakfast? Oh Finn, not the sausages.”

“So why is it only three years you’ve got to live with this amount?” Linda asked, “If Rae does a double degree like she wanted to, that’ll be four years?”

“Because I get my trust fund when I turn 21.” Phil answered honestly, his eyes lowered; he hated talking about his money, but it was Rae’s mum, so he’d answer her, “My parents set it up when they first got wealthy and it belongs to me, they can’t take it from me. But legally I can’t get at it until the terms of the fund are met.”

“Oh so that’ll help a bit until you all get work.” Linda tried to smile, still unsure of Phil and the whole idea of him and Rae and Finn in general. Phil stopped himself from instantly responding that when he got his trust fund none of them would ever need to work a day in their lives again.

“Yes.” A strange smile touched Phil’s lips before he focused on the plan for the second day.

“What’s that look for?” Linda sounded offended and Phil looked up at her, confused by her tone of voice.

“Nothing.” He answered, his eyes going to Rae for help.

“Mum, Phil don’t like talking about his money, so don’t pry.” Phil looked horrified at the thought of causing trouble between Rae and her mother.

“It’s just because I didn’t work for that money.” Phil tried to explain.

“And like I told you Phil, putting up with those arseholes for 18 years deserves a lot more money than’s in your trust fund.” And then Rae paused, “I actually don’t know how much is in there!” She laughed and shrugged, “Point is you earned that money by being a Seymour for so long.” Phil gave Rae an appreciative smile.

“I’ll ring my accountant and find out what the current balance of my trust fund is.” He saw her confused face, “The balance rises because of interest.” He explained and she made a noise of understanding.

“How the fuck are you affording an accountant?” Finn shot from the kitchen.
“Paid for by my parents until I’m 21. I have a lawyer as well.” Phil admitted with a glum look, “They paid a huge upfront fee to keep them both on retainer for me until the trust fund passes into my hands. There’s a discretionary slush fund that’s mine as well, that can only be used for paying the lawyer and the accountant for their time. But when I turn 21 that becomes mine too.”

“Bloody hell.” Linda shook her head.

“Don’t bother ringing your accountant Phil; I don’t care how much money you’ve got.” Rae answered with a shrug. “Save your slush money!”

“Well I’ll be getting a letter from my lawyer soon, I imagine, now that I’ve been disowned.” Phil said. “I’ll have to pay for him to do some work on legal guardianship and, I suppose a will… But after that, I will save my slush fund, as commanded.” He grinned.

“Right apparently we’re having sausages and fried egg for breakfast. And some fruit.” Gary winked at Phil. The last two weeks had seen some compromises being made to accommodate Phil; he was used to a very different kind of life, and it had been an adjustment. He’d expected to have to make this adjustment when he went to university, but had expected to be alone when he made it. It was nice having Rae and Finn. And Gary; he was a marvel of a human being.

Eventually Finn and Gary put breakfast down on the table. Phil had a single boiled egg and a couple of pieces of fruit while everyone else had fried eggs and sausages, Linda abstaining from having a second breakfast, even though the pork sausages smelled so good. Phil dipped a buttered piece of white bread into his runny yolk and savoured the flavour and texture in his mouth. Rae and Finn enjoyed watching him eat when he was like this; he always closed his eyes and looked so happy to be eating. Phil was enjoying the freedom to eat whatever he liked, but he found that he had a preference for a diet high in fruit and vegetables. It was probably the last eight years of his life eating like that, but it just made his body feel better when he had a lot of plant-matter to eat. But he ate animal proteins most days now, and with Finn’s training, in just two weeks had increased his muscle mass across his shoulders noticeably. Rae had started eating more fruit because both of her lads liked it so much. Her house had never had much fruit growing up; plenty of vegetables, but no fruit. So like Phil, she was going through an adjustment, but one she was very much enjoying.

After breakfast Finn and Phil went back upstairs to sort out Finn’s shirt and Gary joined them, feeling too formal. Linda looked at Rae as Rae cleaned up; it was Phil’s turn today, but Rae decided to do it because Phil was occupied and she wanted to get going; they were running late.

“You know you don’t have to sell yourself to the rich man Rae.” Linda stared at her daughter closely, “You and Finn… you’ll get by. Money might be tight, but you’ll manage.”

“Mum, I didn’t know Phil were rich when I fell in love with him.” Rae said scraping fruit peelings of Phil’s plate, “I knew he were better off than me, but I had no idea.”

“Alright.” Linda tried to believe Rae, “And you know,” She continued delicately, “You don’t have to stay with Finn if he prefers lads. You can let those two lads be together and find someone else. It’ll be alright pet. You deserve to be loved properly.”

“I am loved properly.” Rae was getting frustrated again, “Neither of them are gay. They’re bisexual and we all love each other.” She said firmly, “and I’m not gonna discuss my relationship with you anymore. Accept it or leave.” Rae scrubbed the glasses angrily.

“What’re you doing girl?” Phil asked as he bounded down the stairs. “I left father and son with a couple of suggestions, to sort themselves out.” He picked up a tea towel when Rae indicated that
she wasn’t going to stop. “You know, I think we should have a dishwasher at our place.” He grinned.

“Not used to plate washing are you?” She laughed.

“Really not!” Phil agreed.

“Ah if only Finn were here to call you an aristocrat.”

“Oi, shut up Queen Og!” Phil shot back with a grin.

“Oh you gonna make me?” She flirted and Phil grabbed her waist and spun her around, kissing her deeply; her infectious good mood making him forget Linda’s presence.

“Only in short bursts.” He said, “I like your voice too much to ever shut you up for too long.” Linda pulled a face and looked away, biting her tongue.

“Get back to it you two!” Finn ordered as he came back into the room with their bags in his hands.

“What the kissing or the working?” Rae asked as she turned back to the sink.

“Unfortunately there’s no time for kissing right now.” Finn called over his shoulder as he took the bags out to the car. He saw Linda’s massive suitcase next to the door and rolled his eyes.

“So you know London well?” Linda tried to talk to Phil as politely as she could.

“Aye I grew up in London.” Phil shrugged, “I remember it well.” Gary came down with his own bag and went out to help Finn.

Half an hour later Gary was behind the wheel, Linda in the passenger seat and the three teenagers were happily squished into the back seat.

“You didn’t drive over mum?” Rae asked.

“Karim dropped me off pet.” Linda said over her shoulder, her eyes taking in Rae sitting in the middle, both lad with their hand on her upper thigh. She turned back around and sucked her teeth. Rae saw the expression on her mother’s face but ignored it.

“Got some music da?” Finn asked, his fingers crawling higher on Rae’s thigh. Rae turned her eyes to look at him.

“Are you mental?” She whispered.

“Me dad’s music taste isn’t that bad.” Finn joked, the three of them had their heads together whispering. “No really,” Finn continued n a more serious tone, wanting to address what Rae was really talking about, “Seeing you two kissing this morning has put me in a right mood.” His fingers crept higher up still, until they were gently stroking her vagina through her stockings.

Gary put on some loud music and adjusted the rear view mirror so he couldn’t see where his son’s hand was and the stunned look on both Rae and Phil’s faces.

“What are you three whispering about?” Linda asked without turning around.

“Requirements we each have for our future home.” Phil lied smoothly. Rae and Finn had both learned that Phil was particularly good at lying. But not to them. He couldn’t look them in the eye even with the smallest lie.
“Yeah I think I need a very big shower.” Finn said loudly as his hand cupped Rae’s vagina. Phil’s eyes sneaked a look at Gary and Linda before he moved his hand up to her breasts.

“And I think we’re going to need a dishwasher of course.” Phil said as Rae kept her eyes plastered on Gary and her mother, her hands trying to get her two boys under control.

“What about you Rae?” Finn asked, “What do you require?” Rae gave him a dirty look as his fingers parted her labia through her tights and sought out the outline of her clitoris.

“Oh you know.” Rae tried to keep her voice under control; Phil was squeezing her nipple through her shirt and bra. “Clean, big enough…”

“Its own laundry.” Phil added.

“Enough light.” Finn continued.

“Stop it!” She whispered urgently and both lads pulled a slightly pouty look and withdrew their hands back to her upper thighs. But Rae could feel the way they were looking at her.

“I wouldn’t mind a herb garden.” Phil said as if in agreement with Finn’s last suggestion.

“Well you’re taking care of it.” Finn laughed. The journey continued like this for some time. The adults asking them about what they wanted in a flat, and what they expected for their time in London. Finn’s eyes barely left Rae’s face and it was very obvious he was lusting after her.

“I think your men have both got a hankering for you.” Finn whispered to her. Phil was certainly more subtle, moving his eyes around and engaging more in conversation, but his fingers caressed her inner thigh seductively and she knew that Finn was right; both of them were craving her right now.

By the time they got to London Rae was practically dripping with desire. Gary and Linda went to check in at the hotel; a bell boy coming out for their luggage. Rae and the lads were stretching their limbs, and both Finn and Phil instantly reached out to her and she batted their hands away angrily.

“You two need to stop it!” She fumed, “How am I supposed to come across as a respectable woman that someone should trust with a rental property if I look like a heavy-breathing, drooling dog in heat?” She glared at both of them but Finn gave her a lusty look, his eyes dropping down her body and back up to her face. She turned to Phil to see the same lust in his eyes as in Finn’s, although he refrained from looking her up and down. “Stop it!” She hissed, “I can’t fuck either of you right now. It’s totally not fair! So keep your hands to yourselves!” She stormed into the hotel, her sexual frustration obvious to both lads and Phil and Finn both put their hands behind their backs and gave each other a mischievous look.

“I don’t know if it’s just your influence on me Quinn, but I think I might have to keep on teasing her…” Phillip said with a saucy grin.

“Oh aye.” Finn agreed with an equally saucy grin. “Aye.” They meandered in after Rae, both looking cheekily innocent and both keeping their hands behind their backs.

They didn’t go up to the rooms to freshen up; they were running late and Gary hurried them on as
Finn and Phil walked up to Rae with huge grins. She narrowed her eyes at them as they both kissed her cheek chastely; their hands behind their backs,

“What are you two up to?”

“Us?” Finn asked innocently.

“Nothing.” Phil backed him up, his eyes lowered; still no good at lying to his partners, even in a playful way like this.

“I’m shocked,”

“Shocked and appalled.”

“Shocked and appalled that you would think that we’re up to something.” Finn finished with the cheekiest grin she’d ever seen. And while Rae’s eyes were on Finn, Phil stepped closer, his pelvis tipped towards her, his whole body just centimetres from hers. Her eyes turned to his; the heat emanating from his body instantly making her horn levels go through the roof. She held her breath as he slowly put his lips on her cheek again, his hands behind his back, and gave her another chaste peck on the cheek. As he pulled away he eye fucked her so thoroughly that Rae felt like they were in a porno. And then she felt Finn’s heat from the other side, doing the exact same thing, the two of them so close damn near made her knees weak.

“What are you two doing?” She whispered, unable to find her grumpy voice.

“Just keeping our hands to ourselves.” Phil answered as he kissed her neck chastely.

“You three!” Gary sounded exasperated and Phil gave Rae a grin before turning and walking away, Finn giving her another lustful look before he did the same. Rae whimpered slightly as they walked away, and accepted her fate; to be a perpetually horny fat lady for the rest of her life.

“This one has a balcony.” Linda said excitedly and walked out there, “Oh Rae come and look.”

“Couldn’t walk around naked in here with the windows open on a hot summer day.” Phil whispered to her and she desperately tried to ignore him and went out to her mother, Finn and Phil following. She wrote down notes about each flat and handed the paperwork to Phil; he was better at organising and remembering that stuff.

“It has built in wardrobes, which is useful.” Gary said as he walked out to an empty lounge room; they were all on the balcony.

“Shower’s too small.” Finn noted and made sure he stood as closely to Rae as humanly possibly as she wrote it down.

“I don’t like this one as much.” Linda pulled a face. “Tiny windows.”
“Before I knew you two I would have never believed I could be this horny all the goddamn time.” Phil checked that the real estate agent, Linda or Gary weren’t nearby and readjusted his hard cock in his pants.

“Semi-permanent semi?” Rae laughed, having given up pretending that she wasn’t as horny as they were.

“Permanent boner syndrome.” Finn suggested.

“Ah yes,” Phil said, “I am a PBS sufferer. And that is your faults.” He told them.

“We can’t live here.” Rae shook her head, “The bedroom’s way too small.”

“Yeah I’m buying us a king bed, maybe even a custom built bigger bed.” Phil agreed, “no way it’ll fit in here and still have room for some drawers even.”

“Do you think we could just lock ourselves in the bathroom and fuck?” Rae asked.

“Pretend the door’s stuck?” Phil suggested.

“Oh come one Rae!” Finn whispered back, “our parents have been hearing us fuck long enough to know what we’d be up to.” He shook his head, “They’d never believe us.”

“I dunno if I wanna move a fridge up five flights of stairs.” Phil noted trying not to think about how desperately horny he was.

“Yeah and I don’t like the feel of this place.” Finn agreed.

“I like this place.” Rae said as she looked at the huge cavernous studio apartment. On one side some cupboards and a sink made up the kitchen area, and Phil assured them a dishwasher would be easy to put in that kitchen. And a bathroom and combined laundry was on the other side of the huge room, the shower was big enough for all three of them, easily, and had dual shower heads. And the space between the kitchen and the bathroom was huge, with one wall covered with multiple floor to ceiling windows and a balcony, the other side having no windows because it led out to the hallway for the apartment complex. There were a few built in cupboards and gorgeous tiled floor and modern fittings in the bathroom and kitchen. It was on the seventh floor and the apartments had a huge lift. The best bit was that the windows overlooked a very old cemetery. So the rent was cheap on this huge place and there was no one to see them walking around naked through their open windows.

“No bath tub pet.” Linda shook her head. “And no walls. How you gonna tell the difference between the lounge room and the bedrooms?” But Rae looked at Phil and Finn who both seemed to like the place too. “And god, who would live with that view.” Linda shuddered as she looked out the window.”
“We’d be front row for the zombie apocalypse.” Rae said with a grin.

“And relatively safe from it up here.” Phil agreed.

“And the car park is an enclosed space for residents only, so we’d be able to safely get to our car in the event of a zombie uprising.” Finn finished.

“And it’s got two car spots.” Rae said noting it down.

“There are no car spots.” Finn shook his head.

“And what the hell is that god-awful smell?” Phil curled up his nose.

“And I can’t deal with the colour scheme in this place.” Rae shook her head, the walls were in burgundy with olive green detailing in every corner, dusky pink roof and rich cream painted hardwood floors.

“Oh I don’t know.” Linda said slowly, “Maybe it’ll grow on you.” They all looked at her with disgust and she burst out laughing.

“We can’t afford this place.” Phil muttered.

“D’you know what I’m gonna do to you two lads when we get back to the hotel room?” Rae’s voice was husky.

“Stop it!” Finn said in a tone that indicated he really didn’t want her to stop.

There were several couples interested in this place and the real estate agent was surrounded by couples trying to impress her by asking important questions. Rae and Finn and Phil wandered off to check the size of the shower.

“Oops.” Phil said as the bathroom door closed behind him, leaning on it and deliberately not locking it. Locking it would give away that they were deliberately stuck, rather than it being the door sticking, as he was going to claim. He pulled Rae back to him and kissed her passionately. Finn caught on instantly and as soon as Phil stopped kissing Rae he started, his hands joining Phil’s in exploring Rae’s body.

“What are you doing?” Rae whispered.

“Well your parents won’t believe you that the door’s jammed.” Phil said with a grin, “But they’ll believe me.” Finn was already unbuckling his belt before Phil had finished speaking. Rae only hesitated for a minute before her fingers fell to Phil’s belt and started to unbuckle it as Phil’s hands lifted her skirt. Rae bent and took Phil’s hard cock into her mouth groaning as Finn tugged her tights down and physically moved her into the right position for him to fuck her. He slid into her and grabbed her hips hard, fucking her deep and fast, Rae’s moans choked out by Phil’s cock deep in her throat. Rae grabbed Phil’s hips and moved him back and forth momentarily before he got the idea and started to thrust into her mouth. Phil laced his fingers in her hair and groaned as his
cock slid past the back of her throat again. Finn shushed him and tried not to groan himself as he thrust harder and faster; they had to be quick. Rae groaned, and even though her mouth was full, it was obvious she was coming. Both Phil and Finn tried to shush her, and Rae tried to keep it down but-

“Is everything alright?” It was the real estate agent. Phil and Finn gave each other a slightly panicked look.

“Yep!” Phil called back and pulled a face. “Swap.” He whispered to Finn and Finn nodded, withdrawing from Rae and swapping places with Phil; Finn was heavier, so when the real estate agent turned the handle to see it was unlocked and then tried to push the door, she found it solidly stuck. Phil slid into Rae’s cunt happily and Finn found his cock in Rae’s mouth before he’d even properly gotten himself positioned against the door.

“The door’s stuck.” Phil said, “But I’m sure I can get it; no need to worry.”

“Both of you’ve gotta cum in me mouth.” Rae ordered in a stern whisper before continuing to suck Finn’s cock and neither of them were going to argue with that. Rae really didn’t want to deal with cum dripping down her thighs while they were inspecting flats. Phil started to really fuck Rae for the first time, so far it had all been making love and exploring each other. But now they were fucking. Hard. In the toilet at an open house, rental property inspection. It felt good to fuck the woman he loved, he looked up and saw Finn happily, leaning back; his shoulders squarely on the door as people tried to push it open, but his pelvis thrusting his cock hard into Rae’s throat. Phil tilted his pelvis to give Rae as much pleasure as possible while he pushed himself to cum as quick as he could.

“No really!” He called to the people on the other side of the door. “We’re fine. Don’t wanna put anyone out.” They could hear the real estate agent organising several people to push on the door.

“Can you pull at the same time as us pushing?” She called through to them.

“We can sort it out!” Phil said politely as he felt his orgasm starting to build. He felt Rae’s cunt contract around his cock and knew she was coming again, her groaning started to get loader. “Alright me and my mate here are gonna try and pull it ourselves; just wait a minute.” Phil cried to cover Rae’s groans. Finn’s eyes rolled back in his head as he came warm salty jets of semen down Rae’s throat, she swallowed as she sucked, happily taking it all down. As soon as she was done, Phil was pulling her up and spinning her around. Rae dropped to her knees and put her mouth around his cock, deep throating him until he came moments later, his fingers bunched in her hair, Finn kissing him deeply. As soon as she had swallowed she pulled her tights up and Phil and Finn scrambled with getting their cocks back in their pants.

“Nope.” Phil said, “Not gonna work, try pushing it.” The real estate agent, Gary and some other guy pushed the door and Finn let it give; there was no way he was going to stop them anyway with their combined pressure.

“Oh thank fuck!” Rae said as soon as the door opened. She felt Phil’s hand carefully, subtly untuck her skirt from her tights. “I hate small spaces like this!” She put on a scared face and Phil put an arm around her shoulders.

“You alright?” Finn asked and took her hand.

“Not really no.” Rae walked shakily from the bathroom. Claustrophobia had nothing to do with her weak knees. But Phil took the water bottle proffered by Linda as if it did, and Finn stroked her hair as she drank the water.
“Thank you everyone.” Phil said in his best cultured voice and everyone felt very inclined to believe everything he said. “I have no idea what happened to the door!”

“You alright pet?” Linda asked and Rae nodded her head slowly. Phil and Finn both leaned against the wall, carefully controlling their breathing, even though they were puffed out from that quickie. The real estate agent looked at the door.

“Oh yes.” She said, “The top corner is obviously sticking, you can see the marks.”

“Is that right?” Phil asked, sounding intensely interested.

“We’d have that fixed before you moved in, of course.” She replied. Rae and Finn exchanged a look. Something about Phil made every real estate agent gush over him. Male or female; it didn’t matter. They all wanted Phillip Seymour as a tenant. He came across as calm, cultured, wealthy and reliable. This was not a tenant that would be throwing wild parties and putting holes in walls. And his friends seemed nice too. Rae and Finn let Phil do his thing; they liked to play to their strengths in this group, and that meant knowing when to take a back seat. With Phil impressing and charming all the real estate agents, they were sure they’d be able to get a place. Even Linda was starting to like Phil as the day passed. Although every time an obvious show of affection happened between Rae and Phil she felt unreasonably angry. And when it happened between Phil and Finn she felt like it was wrong, which wasn’t like her at all. She’d never had a problem with gay people and Archie and Tom kissing in front of her gave her no issues at all. She tried to examine her feelings about the whole thing, but it was exceedingly confusing. And Gary seemed to have no problems with it at all, which was disconcerting. She had been sure that Gary would worry about Finn being pushed aside. She looked back up at the three of them. Phil had just whispered something to Finn and he laughed, Rae grinning and shaking her head having heard what he’d said too. They seemed so happy.
Rae hadn’t thought she could top her dress from last Summer Ball, but Izzy had made her a dress again; this time in secret. Rae had intended to just wear one of her dresses from Curvy Girl on a Budget rather than spend any money on a new dress. But Izzy had planned the most beautiful red dress for Rae; ever since she’d seen Rae in red lipstick and a yellow dress after her disastrous date with Finn, Izzy had known she had to make it. The boys had been aware of Izzy’s dress colour for Rae for some time, and Phil had been studiously not talking about the Summer Ball for fear of not being able to keep the secret from Rae. But both of them had their suits. Finn was dressed in a classic black suit, white shirt and matching red tie. His father had paid for the suit and it was a well made, off the rack suit that looked amazing on him. Phil on the other hand had had his professionally tailored when he still lived with his parents. It was in charcoal black, in exquisite silk, with a matching red vest, cravat and pocket square. His shirt was creamy white and had cost nearly as much as Finn’s whole suit. Phil was aware that he was being overly extravagant, but he was going to the Summer Ball with the two people he loved and he had been expecting to go alone, and to be saying goodbye to them. He had wanted to celebrate that instead of alone, he was going with his two partners, with a very nice suit, and his parents had paid for it. They had dressed together in the spare room at Finn’s house. It was fast filling up with boxes. They talked about moving; they had 10 days till they started their lease at the ‘cemetery flat’ as they were calling it. But their actual postal address was on Finsbury Square, overlooking Bunhill Fields Cemetery. They were near the museum of London and several universities, and the bottom floor of the apartment was filled with shops. Really, the more they thought about it the more they wondered why the apartment was so cheap. But they didn’t care; 10 days until they were living together with no parental restraints. Then 5 long weeks of summer until university started. Phil ran his hand down Finn’s tie and Finn flinched slightly. They both laughed and then groaned; the AFL match had been yesterday and they were both bruised through the midsection from brutal tackles. But Rae had made them promise to not bruise their faces; she wanted good photographs of tonight. And whatever Rae wanted, they delivered.

“You look amazing.” Phil said, “I mean you always do. But a suit suits you.”

“You too.” Finn straightened Phil’s cravat, “Remember us at last year’s Summer Ball?” Finn asked with a reminiscent smile.

“I distinctly remember having the feeling that you loathed me.” Phil laughed.

“I did.” Finn said, “and you,” he stroked Phil’s face, “Truly hated me.”

“And now,” Phil looked up from his hands, lingering on Finn’s tie and saw Finn’s beautiful eyes on his face, “Now I can’t imagine my life without you.”

“Wouldn’t be much of a life would it?” Finn grinned, “Wanker.”

“One day,” Phil ran his hands affectionately up Finn’s chest, “Science is going to study you; the
outcome of two petri dish experiments allowed to breed.” They kissed through Finn’s laugh. “I wonder how Izzy’s dressed our Rae.” Phil’s forehead stayed on Finn’s, they often held each other like this. They both often held Rae like this too. A little over two months since they had first all realised they were in love and it still felt like the first time, and simultaneously like it had always been this way. They had never once questioned if they were moving too fast, or if it was right. They just knew.

“So you’re gonna have to put these over your nipples, unless you want people to see them.” Izzy held up the nipple covers, matching Rae’s skin tone fairly well.

“What?” Rae said at a complete loss.

“I made you a dress Rae.” Izzy grinned. “But it’s made completely out o’ chiffon. So it might be a tad see-through…” Izzy pretended to not see Rae’s face as she pulled up Rae’s shirt.

“What?”

“C’mon Rae, I promised Chlo you’d be ready for make up when she got here.”

“Izzy what?”

“I made you a dress.”

“You didn’t have to.” Rae was touched and she hugged Izzy, “But why did you make it see through Iz?” Rae asked as she held Izzy tightly.

“Well I didn’t do that deliberately.” Izzy said, “I mean I guess I did.” She pulled a face, “I know what chiffon’s like. I just wanted you to wear some. It’ll look beautiful draping over you.” Izzy gave Rae a puppy dog expression, “I gotta do the final touches right now, and Chlo’ll be here any minute.” She pulled out a long flowing dress in beautiful bright red.

“Wow.” Rae marvelled, her fingers touching the soft chiffon.

“Just try it on. If you hate it, you can wear one of your other beautiful dresses.”

“I’m not gonna hate it Iz.” Rae answered, “It’s just that a see through dress is kinda brave, even for me!” It was strange to think of herself as brave, but that’s exactly what she was. She pulled her shirt off and took her bra off, taking the nipple covers she plastered them over her nipples, Izzy lowering her eyes demurely.

“Pants off too. Have you got any nude coloured knickers?”

“Aye.” Rae took her pants off and changed underwear, Izzy looked through her bag of dresses. She had made a yellow dress for herself and a purple one for Chloe. Rae slipped the dress over her head.

“A little help…” She struggled and Izzy came to the rescue, pulling the long skirt out from where it had bunched up and tying the back ties. Rae looked in the mirror. The skirt was several layers of long flowing chiffon; metres and metres of it, the back was slight longer than the front so it pulled along the ground elegantly. The skirt flowed lose from the waist, and was moderately see through when under the right light, and the when the train was pulling. The top was almost
backless, with the front being a few pieces of crisscrossed chiffon elegantly tied together at the back; the shape and outline of her breasts was obvious and very visible. But the nipple covers did their jobs and she appeared oddly nipple-less. There was only a single layer of chiffon over her midriff and Rae looked at her stomach, her head cocking to the side.

“Oh my god, I love it.” Rae marvelled.

“I thought so.” Izzy grinned, “Zip me up.” Rae turned to her and zipped the back of Izzy’s dress up. When Izzy turned around, Rae’s jaw dropped. The v shape at the front of Izzy’s dress fell to her navel and she cocked an eyebrow at Rae.

“Hot sexy bitches at their last Summer Ball together.” Izzy said. “Might as well go all out.”

“You look incredible.”

“Chloe’s is lace.” Izzy said, “The whole top half is lace, the bottom half is satin back crepe.” Izzy grinned, “There’s nothing under the lace, she’s pretty see-through too!” Izzy grinned, “We ruled for the year, we’re going out with a bang.”

“A titty bang.” Rae joked. They were still laughing when Chloe was let in by Gary, who kept his eyes averted, just in case.

“Oh you two!” Chloe was taken aback, “You both look amazing.” Izzy handed Chloe her dress. “Thanks babe!” Chloe grinned. “I bought Rhys and Chop.” Chloe grinned, “They’re getting ready with your boys Rae.” Chloe put aside her dress for now and set to doing make up for Rae and Izzy. Rae had to wear red lipstick with that dress, and Izzy put long gentle curls in her lose hair. Izzy also donned red lipstick and gentle curls. But Chloe put her hair up in a messy bun. Matching her girls she wore red lipstick too, each of them with different eye makeup.

“I think our boys will die when they see us.” Chloe said as they checked themselves out in the mirror on the back of Finn’s door.

“Oh girls.” Izzy threw her arms emotionally around Chloe and Rae. The gang was breaking up. Izzy was going to Italy for a year as an apprentice fashion designer. Her and Chop were going to do the long-distance relationship thing. Chloe and Archie were going to uni in Leicester, only an hour drive from Stamford, so both were staying shacked up with their boyfriends in Stamford. And Rae, Finn and Phil were off to London.

“We stay in contact right?” Chloe said, her voice higher than usual.

“We promised we’d do New Year’s together every year.” Izzy said.

“And go somewhere together on holidays every year.” Chloe added.

“Oh god girls we gotta see each other more than twice a year! Promise?” Rae said and they all embraced, holding onto each other tightly.

“I promise.” Chloe said.

“Yeah me too.” Izzy agreed. “We’ll always be best friends.”

“Oh come one, we gotta stop this afore we ruin our make up.” Chloe said and wiped her nose, laughing over the top of her tears.

“I can’t believe it’s all coming to an end.”
“It’s not an end Iz.” Rae told her, “It’s a new beginning. We’ll never lose each other.” She wiped under her yes carefully, “Besides, Gary tells me that this email thing is gonna take off, and he bought us a computer. So Chlo, if you use the university computers you can email us every day… and Iz…”

“I’ll find a way.” Izzy said, determined.

“Alright then. What are we worried about?” Rae said bracingly, “Sure, it’ll be an adjustment not seeing each other most days, but we’ll call each other, we’ll write… it’ll be alright.” They took each other’s hands and felt the strength of their friendship, their promise to each other.

“Now let’s go slay our lads.” Chloe grinned. They filed from the room, Rae turning off the light and closing the door behind her.

When the door opened, they were expecting it to be Gary, hurrying them up. But he was downstairs with Cloe and Izzy’s parents, cringing as Linda tried to explain Rae’s relationship with Finn and Phillip. She very clearly did not approve, and the expressions on the other parents’ faces told Gary that they didn’t either. Gary gritted his teeth every time she said ‘I don’t judge though.’

Instead of Gary, Chloe walked in, Rhys’s eyes lit up instantly. He was clean shaven again, and looking very handsome with a double breasted suit in dark grey. Chop, like Finn, was wearing a good suit, but it was a basic black suit. Izzy had made the tie he was wearing and he quite liked the yellow. It was Rae who walked in next, Izzy close behind.

Chop’s jaw dropped. And Phil and Finn were both incapable of even breathing for a moment, yet alone speak.

“Wow.” Chop finally said.

“I think that about sums everything up nicely.” Phil said and held his free arm out for Rae; his other hand held Finn’s. He slipped his arm around her waist and she took Finn’s other hand, facing him.

“You two look amazing.” She let her free hand run down Finn’s tie and then Phil’s chest. “No kissing until after photos though.” She looked around the room and saw Rhys kissing Chloe’s forehead, his hand on her waist. Chop talking animatedly to Izzy, his eyes dropping to her chest constantly. When she turned back to Phil and Finn both of them had let their eyes drop to her chest.

“Oi.” She laughed and they both shot their eyes up to her face. “Right girls, let’s head downstairs, make the boys do an entrance this time!” The girls left the room and Phil and Finn looked at each other, still wide-eyed.

“That top is completely see-through.” Finn marvelled.

“I think she knows.” Phil marvelled at how confident she was; it was so sexy.

“Girl’s gonna do me fucking head in.”

“Mine too!”

“She can’t really expect to be that confident, and have that body, in that dress and expect me to be
able to hold a conversation, can she?” Finn shook his head.

“Oh no, I think she knows she’s making us go non-verbal.” Phil grinned. “I like that she knows exactly what she’s doing to us.” He took Finn’s hand, “I think she likes it.”

“I think she does too.” Finn said when he saw her waiting for them at the top of the stairs, looking over her shoulder, her hair also pulled over her shoulders, she raised her eyebrows suggestively for a moment and walked away, letting them see her bare back. Finn made a strangled noise of desire in the back of his throat that was met with a similar noise from Phil.

“If it’s not bad enough that you look like that.” Phil said to Finn, “then she has to go look like that.” He shook his head. “Extreme PBS sufferer…” Finn grinned.

“Me too.” He kissed Phil’s cheek slowly and they headed down the stairs for awkward family time and photos.

They were all happy to see Archie and Tom there.

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world!” Archie grinned.

“I’m here for the second instalment of Rae’s tits, and I was not disappointed.” Tom joked, “I am unnaturally obsessed with your breasts for a gay man.” He said to Rae.

“That’s alright, it’s entirely understandable.” Rae returned.

“Oh listen to you!” Tom laughed and hugged, “fuck I’m gonna miss you.”

“Don’t let’s start that again!” Chloe said and hugged them both, “us girls have got make up on Tomas! And we’re not all gone yet.”

When they pulled up at the hotel that was renting out their functions room to them, they saw Elsa at the door again. This time she was in a tight black dress, her hair in rainbow colours and up in its usual messy pony tail. Her hair was always different colours, but this is the first time they’d seen it be an ‘unnatural’ colour.

“Dixon’ll have something to say about that.” Finn nodded at her hair and Elsa shrugged, completely nonchalantly.

“I put in my notice kiddies.” Elsa said and lit up a cigarette, drawing stares from a few parents dropping off their kids. “Teaching is not my thing I think.”

“But you taught me so much.” Phil answered, stunned.

“Same.” Finn said, “I wouldn’t o’ done half as well as I did if it weren’t for you.”

“You’re brilliant.” Rae agreed.

“Firstly, you all would have done just fine without me, you’re all wonderful, never forget it. And second, I think I might be a tad too liberal minded to be involved in educating children.” She said, “See I think you three can make up your own minds, the good parents of Stamford disagree, and the only way you can be a teacher is if you toe the line when it comes to parents. But they are seriously misguided when it come to their kids.” She drew on her cigarette, “I had one of them tell
me that their 16 year old son had no idea what sex was, but now that there were threesomes happening openly on school grounds his son had been corrupted.”

“What 16 year old lad doesn’t know about sex?” Rae asked. “In Stamford?”

“Exactly.” Elsa replied, “But you try politely telling parents that every 16 year old boy knows about sex and you earn yourself a second reprimand.” She grinned grimly. “I’m not a diplomat. I never will be. What’s true and right is not negotiable to me in any way. But for people like Dixon it has to be negotiable, so she can cater to deluded parents. So I quit.” Rae, Finn and Phil shared a guilty look, but Elsa caught their expression. “Don’t go blaming yourselves. It was bound to happen eventually.”

“What will you do now?” Chloe asked.

“Back to theatre?” Rhys asked astutely and Elsa grinned at him.

“You know me far too well.” Elsa said to Rhys. “They offered the vice principal position to Evin, but she refused and is threatening to quit in protest to my formal reprimanding.” Elsa gave a slight grin, “Evin and I are… friends.” Elsa said with a very suggestive voice, “So she is quite angry.”

“I think I’d like to see Evin angry!” Izzy laughed, she had enjoyed dance lessons with Evin, but she could never imagine that wonderful lady ever being angry.

“Apparently she’s brutal in theatre.” Elsa grinned, “Will not accept anything but perfection from professional dancers.”

“You two could consider starting a theatre company.” Rhys mused.

“It has been discussed.” Elsa said, her tongue going to the back of her teeth cheekily, “Multiple times, over sherry. She likes sherry.” Elsa laughed. “We’ll see. You lot get inside and have a great night.”

“Oh but I’m sad cos we’ll probably never see you again.” Chloe said quite suddenly and she hugged Elsa emotionally. This turned into all of them hugging Elsa goodbye.

“Piss of you lot.” Elsa said with a sad smile, “I will miss you bunch o’ fools.”

“Well we might run into each other.” Phil said, “Theatre and all.”

“I do hope so Phil, cos I can’t wait to see what you do with that talent of yours.” She looked at them all, “All of you… never stop pushing, never settle. Never give up. Alright?”

Elsa watched them all eventually going in and felt quite sad to see this all coming to an end. It had been a very good few years. But it was over now.

Bryn’s eyes had nearly popped out of his head when he’d seen Izzy, and he had cast a very appreciative eye over Chloe and Rae too. When Bethany arrived in a sky blue dress, Macca grinning like a fool and happily holding her hand, Bryn had looked at her in a similar way and commented that he knew far too many beautiful women. James had come alone, but seemed happy enough to spend the night with Woody and the four dates he brought. Woody was bisexual and tended toward polyamory as well, so he had called his lovers from the coast to come inland for
the weekend so he could show his support for Rae and Phil and Finn. Stacia and Kurt looked amazing together and Kristi surprised everyone by bringing a relatively well known footballer that had just been signed to Manchester United. He was 20, and seemed to be wrapped around her finger. Kurt spent the night in awe of his sister’s dating prowess and slightly grumpy that she hadn’t told him; they were twins and very close usually. Sam came alone too; he’d been hoping to hook up with Kristi and was sorely disappointed.

They ate, they danced, they laughed. For Phil it was a far superior evening that the last Summer Ball.

Amy showed up late with Liam in tow, a very suave walking stick helping him to walk. Rae gave her a nod across the room and Amy smiled sadly, obviously sorry for everything that had passed between them. She nodded in reply, but they did not talk. Rae had already been to the hospital to farewell Liam; he was repeating his second year next year.

Saying goodbye to Bryn at the end of the evening was hard on him; his entire friendship group was leaving. Woody was heading to Australia to travel for a few months and catch up with his extended family. James was continuing his training to be a doctor in France. Macca and Bethany were taking a year off to travel, beginning in Russia and heading down through Mongolia, China, Thailand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand and finishing up in the Pacific Islands somewhere. When they came back they were headed to universities on opposite sides of the country. The twins were both heading to Hull university, Stacia was off to Canada to begin a marine biology degree. And Sam was joining the air force to become a pilot. Bryn worried that the last time they’d all be together would be in London in a few days time, and he hugged them all ferociously.

Rae had been making everyone use the library computers to get email addresses, so everyone promised to email and stay in contact and the school gang had been included in the New Year’s celebration and summer holiday pact now. But the original gang and their partners had agreed to carve out some time just for them as often as possible.

They stayed out celebrating as long as they could, Tom and Archie joining them later at Aztequita. Rae looked at the massive painting of her and her boys on the wall, there were still a couple of unfinished works, but that had been the first one to go up. She was leaning back against Finn in it, one of his hands was under her breast, the other was pulling on Phil’s belt. Phil’s pelvis was pressed against Rae’s, one hand on her waist, the other caressing the side of Finn’s neck. You couldn’t tell if he as looking at Finn or Rae; their faces were both so close together and they were both looking at him. And under the image: ‘Rae + Phil + Finn = polyamory.’ They loved what Kelsey had done with the artwork and a lot more people recognised them around Stamford. Turned out that the most unexpected people went to Aztequita.

It was 3am by the time they took a taxi back home.

Phil reflected that last Summer Ball he had gone home alone. His father had told him to stop pursuing Rae and to go for Chloe. Not for marrying, just for dating. Who he was to marry was always going to be chosen by his parents. He had gone up to his room alone and thought about Rae, knowing that she would be making love to the guy that had threatened him. He looked back at Finn as he paid the taxi driver with his father’s credit card; Gary often just gave it to Finn for things like this that he wanted to pay for. And Finn forged his signature without blinking. He’d never do it without his father’s permission though.
There had been no argument as there had been at the last Summer Ball, nothing to mar a perfect evening. At the last Summer Ball Finn had nearly knocked Phil’s head off out of jealousy and possessiveness. Only a few months later Finn had told Phil to tell Rae how he felt. And Rae and Phil had spent a few nights in Lincoln together at a drama camp, Rae discovering that she was in love with Phil as well as Finn. Phil had thought that he would never have more than what had happened in Lincoln. But because Finn couldn’t hate someone who truly loved Rae, and he understood what it was to be without Rae when you were in love with her, Finn had accepted the feelings Rae had for Phil and reached out a hand of friendship to him. And as their friendship grew, so too did their love for each other. Phil understood that it had been Finn’s compassion that had brought them all together. If Finn had been the sort of man to ‘win the girl’ and then tell Phil to fuck off, this never would have happened. If Finn had been heartless in the face of Phil’s heartbreak, this never would have happened. Rae had began it all; both of them falling in love with her in every possible way. But Finn’s genuinely kind and loving nature is why they had ended up together. Nine weeks ago they had all realised that they needed to be together because they all loved each other. And in that short nine weeks they had known heartbreak, triumph and the stress of final exams. Tonight was the release. It was all over now. College was done and soon they would head to London. A big city like London would be less judgemental about their love than Stamford.

They were excited, scared, sad, overjoyed. In ten days time they’d be leaving Stamford.

They made love. Spending an hour just kissing each other before slowly undressing to begin kissing each other’s bodies.

They didn’t sleep that night at all.
Chapter Summary

there's a male and female version of the video clip for this song - they're both pretty cool

‘Every Other Freckle’ by Alt-J

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axTSc3e6wu8
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mhgfXgwdls

Turn you inside out and lick you like a crisp packet

“Why is this one labelled ‘stuff?’” Rae asked and both Phil and Rae turned their eyes to Finn.

“You two are breaking my joyful spirit.” Finn replied. He opened up the box, “how would you label this?” Phil looked into the box.

“Miscellaneous Finn knick knacks.” Phil said as he wrote what ‘room’ this box belonged to on it, “sports, videos,” He looked back in the box, “trophies.” Rae wrote this down in her book.

“Box number 24.” She said and Phil wrote the number in big letters on the sides of the box.

“We have got so much more stuff than I thought I was going to have when I moved out.” Phil shook his head and sat down, his jeans not buttoned, his shirt unbuttoned. They were all only semi-dressed; preferring nudity when around each other, but needing to take boxes into the spare room. Plus Gary and Kenzie were around, fussing and fretting a lot of the time; although they were both out for a few hours right now. Finn looked at the way Phil curled his toes in when he was concentrating. He ran his fingers along the bottom of Phil’s feet and Phil jumped, giggling slightly.

“Are there it is.” Finn grinned, “My joyful spirit is returning.” He tickled the bottom of Phil’s foot again.

“Focus you two.” Rae said as Finn tackled Phil and started to tickle his sides, Phil laughing happily. Rae looked up at them, a fond grin on her face. Phil tried to pretend that Finn’s insistent fingers weren’t getting to him.

“Nope.” He said, desperately trying not to giggle. He looked up at Rae, expecting her to bring order to the situation. Finn looked up too, his fingers still worming along Phil’s side.

“Try biting his sides, he can’t pretend that doesn’t tickle.” Rae said and Phil cried out in defeat as Finn bit his side, Phil dissolving into laughter. Rae put the book down and went over to them, pulling Phil’s pants off as Finn bit him in all his ticklish places; she knew he had ticklish spots between his thighs too.
“Not fair!” Phil gasped between laughing.

“I know.” Rae said and pushed Finn back to pull his pants off. Finn, easily the physically strongest of the three of them, let it happen merrily and as soon as she tickled his sides, returned the tickles playfully. But Rae squealed and stood up. “I just did that to see you two tickle fight to the death.” She laughed. Phillip had taken Finn’s lapse in focus on him as an opportunity to attack.

“Oi!” Finn laughed, “That’s not how it works!” He renewed his efforts to subdue Phillip with tickles, accidentally tearing Phil’s open shirt and laughing twice as loud because of it.

As Rae had predicted it slowly turned sexual, and she stood there watching, never failing to be turned on by these two kissing and touching each other.

Quite unexpectedly Finn grabbed her hand and pulled her down to be lying in between them. Both of them started to tickle her. Rae squealed and squirmed, laughing until her sides hurt and kneeling Finn in the stomach by accident. While Finn groaned, winded, Rae attacked Phil, and he grabbed her wrists, holding her fingers at bay; Rae had a way of tickling with the tips of her fingers so that the nails gently traced on the skin as she did it. Neither Finn nor Phil could resist laughing and squirming no matter where she tickled with those nails. Rae twisted her wrists in Phil’s strong grip to tickle the back of his hand with her nails. Even only tickling there he started to laugh and tried to stop her.

“You should hold my wrists this hard the next time you fuck me.” Rae said seductively and Phil stopped holding her as hard, his cock twitching with desire, his eyes on her face. Rae used the lapse in his concentration to escape his vice like grip and tickled his thighs with her fingernails, making him wriggle away. Finn had gotten his breath back, but hearing what Rae had said had put him in an entirely different mood. Phil had only just gotten Rae’s wrists back in his hands when Finn appeared.

“Oh shit.” She laughed, knowing they would tag team the tickle attack. But Finn closed his mouth around Phil’s cock even as Phil wrestled with Rae. Phil took a deep breath of pleasure and Rae managed to break free and tickle his sides. Phil laughed loudly; his sighs of pleasure fighting with his laughter to be expressed. But he didn’t try to stop Rae this time, the two feelings together were exciting. Instead of grabbing her wrists he grabbed her face and pulled her to him, kissing her lips eagerly as her fingers still gently tickled his sensitive spots.

Rae kissed, her mouth open, her teeth grazing his skin, down Phil’s neck, the tips of her nails gently teasing his sides.

Phil had a feeling of being devoured alive and rolled his head back, wanting to let them do whatever they wanted to him. He wanted to be turned inside out and upside down by them. Losing all coherent thought was something his intelligent mind was normally terrified of, his intellect, his brain, his thoughts, they were all he had that defined his own identity against the backdrop of an essentially chaotic world. But he didn’t fear losing them when it came to this. When it came to their mouths on him, his mind happily slipped into incoherence and he lost himself in the sensations of the moment.

“I wanna kiss every one of your freckles individually.” Rae whispered to him and Phil sighed, he’d always been willing to give Rae whatever she wanted, but especially so with this desire.

Finn reached for the bedside table, the last place to be packed, trying to keep his mouth on Phil’s cock as he fumbled to get the lube out. He lubed his fingers and slid two in Phil’s arse as he licked his balls, his other hand stroking his cock. Rae was licking and kissing his body, tickling his sides,
making him laugh in between his groans. Finn wanted to give Phil as much pleasure as he could with his mouth, but he couldn’t wait to get inside of him and was already slathering lubrication on his cock as he sucked at Phil’s cock fervently. He wanted to use his fingers to gently stimulate Phil’s prostate but he found himself sliding his fingers in and out, prepping Phil’s hole for his cock. Phil groaned; Finn’s passionate desire was obvious in the way he sucked and fingered and Rae was kissing his lower stomach.

The minute Finn took his mouth off Phil’s cock Rae took it into her mouth. Finn had wanted to stay and kiss Rae’s lips as she licked his cock. But had to be inside his man. Now. He violently pushed Phil’s legs apart and Phil groaned urgently when he felt Finn’s cock pressing against his anus.

Phil watched as his man started to slowly thrust into him and his woman sucked his cock, her lips slipping down the full length of his shaft. The bliss he felt was like something wrapping itself around his body and simultaneously something growing from deep inside of him.

“Get that shirt off girl.” Finn’s eyes fell on Rae’s still clothed body. True, she was only wearing a shirt, but it was a large nightshirt and it covered her too well. True Phil was also wearing a shirt, but it was unbuttoned and torn. Rae pulled her shirt off and threw it across the room. Phil pulled at her thigh, moving her closer to him.

“Let me taste you.” Phil’s voice was demanding; he was learning to be more forward with his sexual requests as their comfort with each other continued to grow. Rae turned and kissed his lips momentarily before kneel above his face, Phil’s arms instantly wrapping around her thighs, his tongue sliding between her labia to taste her musky sweet cunt greedily. Rae kissed Finn, he held Phil’s legs and slammed into him hard and fast, eliciting grunts of pleasure from Phil. Rae ground her cunt into Phil’s face and snaked her tongue around Finn’s.

Eventually Rae bent down to suck Phil’s cock again, taking time to revel in the taste, the smell, the feel of his cock in her mouth. She sucked it, her focus wafting from giving him pleasure to the heat building in her body. Finn stroked her hair, her face, her back as she groaned loudly through her orgasm, her groans vibrating through Phil’s cock.

Rae stood up and motioned for Finn to get up too, and together they pulled Phil up and turned him around. Rae stood in front of him and kissed him, her hand grabbing his arse and pulling his cheeks apart. Finn took his cue and eagerly began fucking Phil again. Phil’s mouth kissed down Rae’s neck, licking under her ear softly.

“I wanna fuck you.” His voice was filled with desire and pleasure. Rae made a sympathetically desirous noise and, keeping her eyes on his slowly turned around, her face over her shoulder as she bent over. Phil let his hands slowly tickle down her spine, his fingers tracing down her crack to her pussy. He slid his fingers into her and she flicked her head back, her hair arcing wildly before it collapsed against her back. Phil reached up and gently pulled at her hair, understanding that she flicked it back like this when she wanted it pulled. He slowly curled his fingers into it and pushed his fingers in deeper. Rae felt that immediate sense of pleasure that only Phil’s fingers could bring and let her head fall forward, but Phil’s fingers latched in her hair kept her head back. Finn grasped Phil’s hips hard, slamming into harder than he ever had before; the resistance that always began anal sex made Finn scared to thrust too hard, too deep, too fast. But he was slowly overcoming that and he fucked Phil now with a joyous abandonment, only slightly tempered by that fear. Finn hand’s worked up Phil’s side as he heard Rae’s moans of ecstasy starting to peak again.

Rae’s insides were still shuddering with orgasm when Phil slid his cock into her cunt, slipping in fast and deep. Her cunt instantly clung to his cock perfectly, like a glove, her innards still
trembling. Behind him Finn had settled into a hard fast rhythm, and Phil rooted his feet to the floor and started a slower, deeper thrust into Rae, their bodies staying close. Finn couldn’t keep his hands of Phil, and in turn Phil’s hands never left Rae as she clung onto the desk for support. She was able to feel how hard and fast Finn was fucking Phil by the way Finn’s thrusts jolted Phil’s pelvis as he ground into her. Phil reached around to slide his fingers over Rae’s clitoris. He closed his eyes and fought back his urge to cum and focussed on giving her one last orgasm before he did. Finn’s enthusiastic thrusting was agonisingly good, and he felt pleasure shooting through his whole body; the entire length of his cock felt like liquid electricity, bliss sparking through every molecule of him as he rubbed against Rae’s soft warm insides.

Finn’s fingers dug into his ribs painfully, his hands having found their way under Phil’s shirt, and Phil found himself enjoying his first bit of pain mingled with pleasure as Finn thrust faster still, groaning through orgasm. Phil felt Rae’s body grow tense as orgasm approached, and was simultaneously hit by an explosion of ecstasy spreading through his abdomen. Rae’s cries of ecstasy mingled with Finn’s grunts of pleasure and Phil tried to be silent so he could savour their sounds, but interwoven with their bliss was his own and his moans soon joined theirs.

They collapsed together to the floor, sticky with sweat and cum. They kissed each other, licking the sweat from each other, unable to stop despite being spent and exhausted.

“Shall we take this to the shower?” Phil asked and got up, pulling his torn shirt off and throwing it on the ground. Finn and Rae followed him into the shower; not waiting for the water to warm up before jumping in, gasping as the cold water hit their hot, sweaty skin. They were still making out, their hands rolling over each other, the shower water now steamy hot, the three of them moaning and sweating, light-headed from breathlessness when they heard the front door bang shut. Gary had gotten into the habit of banging the door when he got home to declare his presence. They started to laugh.

“We literally didn’t pack one box while they were gone.” Rae shook her head.

“We’re gonna be useless living together.” Finn shrugged, “I find that I really don’t mind.”

“I’m sure the pressures of university will make us focus on some things other than this perfect triangle.” Phil reasoned, “Pity.”

“We bought some lunch home with us!” Gary called up the stairs. They groaned and knew they had to stop. They had a lot of work to do today before they had to go to dinner at Rae’s mum’s house. The end of the fight between Linda and Rae had not made Rae move back in. It was far easier and nicer living here with her boys and they were all heading to London so soon, why bother moving back in for a few weeks?

“Alright let’s get all the music in boxes afore we have to go to mum’s house?” Rae tried but Finn scrunched his nose up.

“Still two days till we go, what are we gonna do for music till then?”

“Radio.” Rae said sternly.

“But what if I wanna hear a specific song?”

“I’ll play it on the violin for you.” Phil grinned.

“Or any other instrument you want.” Rae said and Finn sighed.

“I s’pose.” He said glumly.
“Or we could not pack it and just leave it behind.” Phil said and they both looked at him with horror.

“Alright point fucking taken!” Finn grumbled, “Remind me never to get into an argument with you Dilip, you’ll just come in with a fucking chainsaw and take me fucking legs off!” Phil grinned cockily and shrugged.

“I do like to win arguments Quinn.”

“Oh I know you do.” Finn pulled him by the hips to him and Rae rolled her eyes.

“Oi you two. C’mon lunch then packing!” They looked at her guiltily.

“Aye alright.” Finn said humbly and looked as if he was going to turn the water off but instead pulled her to him as well and kissed her passionately. As soon as he stopped Phil’s lips were on hers, Finn’s face still touching hers; the three of them again kissing passionately, sometime one partner then the other, sometimes all three of them at once.

It was another thirty minutes before Gary saw them ambling down the stairs, happily chatting and flirting together.

“Alright, so I’ve decided that the trailer and two cars isn’t gonna move all of this stuff, so I’ve hired some removalists for you.”

“Thanks da!” Finn sat down and sorted through the sandwiches, tossing the salad on wholemeal to Phil, the ham, cheese and tomato to Rae and keeping the chicken, avocado and mayonnaise one for himself.

“Two days.” Gary sniffled slightly and shook his head. “At least you’re moving out the right way this time.”
(Don’t You) Forget About Me

‘(Don’t You) Forget About Me’ by Simple Minds

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jHz0wF0lg

Don’t you forget about me…

“It’s been amazing working here, and I’ll miss all your colourful calls! Goodbye everyone. Here’s me farewell song, you all knew what it were gonna be: ‘Wonderwall’ by Oasis. Finn out.” He pressed play on the machine and let his fingers run over the sound panels, careful not to mess up the sound or volume. Rae and Phil sat in the producers’ booth again. Rae had had her last shift at Curvy Girl on a Budget Boutique this morning, Phil and Finn had finished the packing while she’d worked.

Tomorrow morning the removalists would come and the entire extended gang was helping; driving to London, spending a day and a night there before everyone had to get on with their lives. The original gang had all promised that this would be the only summer that they didn’t go somewhere together. It was just that with Chop’s business, and the boxing joint, and most of them preparing for university, it was impossible to get away for any length of time this year. So the day in London was all they all had.

Rae tried to be optimistic, she tried to believe that it would be just this year, but there was a feeling of everything ending with the gang. Her mother had repeatedly and ominously spoken about everything changing when you left school at dinner last night. In between stiffly trying to be almost polite to Phil. Phil had been wonderfully charming; a gentleman to the bone, he’d kissed Linda’s hand at the end of the night and made her blush. Rae had joked that she and Finn knew what he was really like and he was just putting it on. But the truth was that Phil was very much a gentleman, with a secret dirty side that only his close friends got to see. And only Rae and Finn got to see all parts of him.

They watched Finn, sitting in his seat with his headphones on, listening out his last song at this job he’d loved so much.

“I’m gonna miss your pretty face and that lovely dick.” Audrey said and pulled Phil into a hug, “I kept expecting Rae to let me share you, but damn that girl owns you!” She laughed. “Good for you Rae.” She hugged Rae, “You go into the world and slay every motherfucker that gets in your way.”

“I will.” Rae replied hugging Audrey fiercely. Audrey had a lot of sharp, unexpected edges, but Rae liked her and was going to miss her wit and venomous tongue. Phil cleared his throat and tried to keep the bemused look off his face. It was such an odd thing for men to be spoken off in terms of property and objectification that it was always a surprise when he heard Audrey do it. But he admired her stance; it was true that men did it to women with such high frequency as to become normalised and part of the love vernacular and romantic ideals. Phil like Audrey too. Admired her. And having her for a lover had taught him how to cum on demand. Because when she was done coming if you weren’t done within about a minute you weren’t getting to cum.

The song ended and Finn turned on the overnight pre-recorded tracks. He sighed and took his headphones off, hanging them on the hook. Audrey went into the room and gave him a hug.
“Your music taste almost makes you human in my eyes Finny boy.” Audrey said, “I expect to hear you on national radio soon, alright?” She grinned.

“Aye alright.” Finn said with a sad grin. He suspected that not only would he never see Audrey again, but he’d never meet another person like her.

They left the station together, Rae and Phil holding Finn’s hands. This morning, when Rae had left Curvy Girl on a Budget, the girls had bought her cake, had a mini celebration to revel in the future Rae had ahead of her, and had given her some free clothes as farewell gifts. Finn’s farewell had been more subdued, but then Finn had loved his job. Rae had enjoyed hers, but had no intention of spending her life in retail. Finn wanted to spend his life being a radio DJ.

“Guys can we go past the graveyard?” Rae asked. “I know it’s one in the morning, but I really need to…” They both indicated that they were good with that and Phil got in behind the wheel of his Benz, Rae sitting beside him, and Finn squeezing into the big seat with her; the back seat already had some boxes on it; including one of their start up boxes. Kelsey would be driving Phil’s car to London tomorrow.

Finn and Phil stayed a respectable distance while Rae knelt at Tix’s grave.

“Oh Tix you won’t believe what’s happened the last few months.” Rae said, sitting back on her heels. “My mother called me a whore. And sometimes in the back of me head I worry I am.” She shook her head, “But I can’t help that I fell in love with two lads… and that they both love me… and that they love each other.” She stroked the top of Tix’s tombstone. “So the three of us are together now. And I’m happy… whether I’m a whore or no.” She shrugged. “We’re moving to London, so I won’t be able to see you much now. Got our final session with Kester tomorrow morning while the removalists fill up the truck… and then we’re gone.” She paused, “I just wanted you to know, even though I’m not visiting anymore, you’re still in me head Tix. You always will be. Love you.” She kissed the top of the gravestone and stood up, “Bye Tix.” She headed back to Finn and Phil. “Let’s go say goodbye to your gran and sister.” Rae said to Finn; the two gravesites were not too far from Tix’s, but where in opposite directions.

Phil had his own tombstone to say goodbye to. But it wasn’t at the graveyard. When Finn was finished he drove them along the streets of Stamford, both of them knew where he was going without a word.

He stopped the car outside his parents’ house and pressed the button to lower the window. He looked at the dark house silently. He sat for only a minute, the engine still on, before he looked down and then back to the front of the car. He took his foot off the brake and they rolled away from the house, speeding up as they continued down the road.

Kester had hugged them all fiercely and given them his home phone number and his new mobile number, urging them to contact him if they ever needed to. The last session had been a lot of shoring up things they already knew and Kester giving them contact details of London therapists he trusted. When they had arrived home Gary was fussing about all the gang and Linda and Karim helping the removalists move the boxes. Kenzie was working in London today; she had desperately tried to get the day off work but had been unable, but she’d be seeing them tonight in their new flat. In just an hour most of the truck had been filled, although they’d had to unpack part of it because someone had accidentally put Phil’s cello on the truck and there was no way Phil was letting his beloved cello go to London in any other place than beside him on the backseat with his
violin.

“You do realise that with those two instruments in the car we’ll have over a million quid worth of stuff traveling with us.” Rae said to Finn as Phil packed the cello and violin carefully into the backseat of their car. They heard Gary nearly gasp behind them and turned their eyes to him.

“You what?” He whispered, in shock.

“The cello and the violin are both...” Finn looked at Rae.

“Stradivarius.” Rae finished the sentence for him. Gary’s jaw dropped and looked over at Phil.

“You know I like Phil, but even if I didn’t, you two fell in love with the right bloke.”

“Da!” Finn crossed his arms and looked very unimpressed and Rae rolled her eyes at the joke.

“Money don’t mean a thing.” Finn asserted, “I’d love him just as much poor as rich.”

“Ah I know.” Gary said, “It was just a joke.”

“A bad joke.” Finn was not one to ever let his love, his relationship be questioned or undermined in anyway, by anyone; even his father telling a bad joke.

“Can’t believe they’ve been under my roof for the past few weeks; should have upped the insurance!” Gary marvelled. “Bad joke or no, I’m a lot happier not having to worry about you three worrying. His money’s helpful.”

When they arrived at their flat, Janice was waiting with a huge grin on her face, holding up the keys and their tenant information pack. They’d asked her to pick everything up and she’d been happy to. Janice and Gary had started to talk again in the past few weeks, and this had led to only one thing for Finn, an absolute sureness that his father clearly loved both Kenzie and Janice very much. Finn worried that his father was falling into being with Kenzie by default, and while polyamory had been the answer for him, his mind couldn’t help but think his father was better suited to monogamy and also not to his mother, but to Janice. But Finn would never say a word about it; it was his father’s business. And his father clearly loved his mother, and his mother and his father were finding their happiness together again. But Janice bought the best out in his dad, she challenged him, and he bought the best out in her too.

Everyone, including the removalists went up to the apartment to look at where they were putting the furniture and the boxes.

A lot of jokes were made about being the dead centre of town, because the flat overlooked the cemetery. Mostly by Gary and Danny.

Phil had brought his instruments up with him, and Rae and Finn had carried up their start-up boxes. These had sheets for the bed, towels, plates, cups, cutlery, box cutters, a couple of changes of clothes, list of phone numbers, toiletries, some basic cleaning things, their ID, and their box list that named what was in each box. They put the boxes on the kitchen sides and Phil leaned his cello against the counter, the violin he put on top of the boxes. Rae was already telling everyone where to put everything and everyone was nodding, making sure they understood her instructions.

“Is it just me,” Phil said softly to Finn as saw Gary and Janice steal a lingering glance at each
other, “Or is your father in love with Janice?”

“Oh there’s a whole thing there I gotta fill you in on.” Finn answered. He’d already told Phil all about the situation with his mother, but he’d only told Phil how he’d met Janice in Leeds. Finn quietly whispered everything that had happened with Janice moving into the spare room, the nights she had spent alone with his father, the slow falling in love over months, and then Finn’s insistence that Gary find his mother. They watched Gary attempt to move closer to Janice without looking too awkward and obvious, and when everyone started to head downstairs to move things up he grinned and spoke softly to Janice, her eyes lit up.

“Wow they really love each other…” Phil marveled.

“Yeah I kinda feel like I killed that relationship by insisting he find mum.” Finn frowned.

“No.” Phil shook his head, “He’s responsible for his own feelings. Eight years away from your mother… falling in love with Janice.” Phil made a soft clicking noise in his mouth, “That’s his problem, his choice what to do with his feelings, not yours.” Phil knew a little something about taking responsibility for his own feelings and bearing the emotional consequences of having to actually live with the choices he’d made with his emotions; refusing to try to kill is feelings for Rae and staying friends with her as she had asked him to had been almost unbearable. But he had made a choice. “Gary has to make a choice though.” Phil noted and Finn nodded.

“It’s not fair on mum or Janice.” Finn added.

“If only polyamory were for everyone.” Phil mused, “But I can’t see Gary…”

“No it’s not for da.” Finn agreed.

“Nor Kenzie or Janice.” Phillip continued. “It’s not for everyone.”

“Some people are just mono.” Finn said with a wry grin. The amount of times the three of them had had to tell people that ‘some people are just poly’ over the past few months was huge.

“Oi you fuckers!” Chop called out to them, “get your fucking arses into gear!” He put the box down he had carried up and headed back out.

“Alright alright!” Finn said and turned to Phil, “Stay up here and make sure everything goes where it’s supposed to go.”

“Shouldn’t Rae do that?” Phil asked, “It’s her plan.”

“Well someone’s gotta stay in here.” Finn shrugged and headed out. When Rae came Phil asked her to stay behind and headed out to bring up boxes. When he came back up she was directing every one and excitedly planning out their home. Finn came up behind Phil and they shared a grin as they watched her.

“You know,” Phil mused when he noticed Finn, his eyes still on Rae, “I’ve never seen anyone more perfect than her.”

“No, me either.” Finn agreed, “But I seen someone equal.” He gave Phil a crooked grin and kissed his cheek before going to Rae for direction with his box, kissing her cheek on his way back out.

“Aye me too.” Phil said as Finn went past him and saw the grin that elicited before he headed off down the stairs. Everyone was taking the stairs down and the lift up the seven flights of stairs.
It didn’t take long to get everything up into the huge open plan studio apartment. There were no interior walls except for the combined bathroom and laundry room. Rae had talked about getting some freestanding room dividers for the ‘bedroom’ but other than that they had no intention of dividing up the huge open space.

Everyone sat around on the floor except for Linda, Gary and Karim, who sat on the lounge Gary had donated to them room his own lounge room. He’d have to buy himself a new one now.

“Pizza?” Gary asked, “My shout.”

“Thanks da.” Finn said,”D’you know where a pizza joint is but?”

“Um… well now.”

“I’ll come with you.” Janice offered, she lived in London half of the time now and knew this part of it quite well, “Alright you lot, what do you want?”

Phil looked over at Sammy and Jason, his two closest friends, as they chatted with Chop and Kelsey, getting all the gossip from his early childhood. Izzy and Chloe where busily propery introducing Rhys, Aiyana, Nikki, Tom, Archie and Danny to Bethany, James and Bryn, Macca and Woody were already known to some of them and the previous acquaintances were quickly picked up on, the conversations flowing freely. Linda embarrassed Rae with all sorts of talk about the things she’d done as a child.

They stayed late before breaking up to go to their various hotels, tomorrow they were going shopping with their parents for white goods, and various other necessities. They were meeting up with everyone else at 11am to spend the rest of the day together, until dinner that night when everyone would head home.

Saying farewell to the parents hadn’t been hard at all, but standing here, late at night in the empty car park of a restaurant, all standing around their cars was terrible. Aiyana and Nikki had left with relative ease; Rhys was the person they knew the best here and he would be back in Stamford tonight. Kelsey also had no problems with the farewells; she only had a few weeks left in Stamford before she headed back to London; her usual home. Danny had been a wreck and Rae had held onto him for a long time before he let him go so he could say goodbye to the others.

“It’s only a few hours away.” Sammy said to Phil and kissed his cheek, “you better visit bb.”

“And you.” Phil replied, hugging Sammy and Jason before they headed off, saying their farewells to everyone else, Sammy a little teary.

“We gotta go.” Chop said morosely. And he had reason to be morose. Tonight they were starting a week long drive to Italy. They were taking their time, Danny looking after the mechanic for the week, because Izzy was staying Italy, Chop had to leave without her, head back to Stamford alone. Izzy started to hug everyone goodbye and Chop looked up at Finn with a furrowed brow.

“I’m gonna miss you fucker.” Chop said stiffly and Finn pulled Chop into his arms in response. “Who’s gonna finished me car with me?”

“I’ll visit.” Finn promised, “As often as I can.”
“Better bring our girl Raemundo.” Chop hugged Rae while behind him Izzy was fighting back tears hugging Macca and Bethany.

When it came to it, Rae and Chloe didn’t want to let Izzy go, and all attempts at holding back tears were gone and the three girls cried freely, swearing that they’d stay in contact.

Chloe and Rae clung to each other as they watched the tail lights fade into the night, driving Izzy away from them, taking her to another country.

After that the farewells had been a mess, Rae was in tears as she clung to Danny again, then Macca and Bethany, James Woody Bryn, saying goodbye to all of them made her cry afresh with each hug. Finn and Phil had also started to get teary after hugging Izzy goodbye. Even Rhys seemed emotional about Finn going; he had known him since he was ten, had trained him most mornings for eight years. He did not offer any advice or wise final words, like Gary had. Finn understood that Rhys offering no advice was his way of showing his faith in Finn’s ability to meet this new part of his life head on. He took the compliment and gave the huge man a fierce hug. But now that Archie hugged Finn tightly, he felt himself starting to cry in earnest.

“It’s fine.” Archie said, “It’s only a few hours, we’ll see each other all the time.” His voice cracked with tears.

“Call each other all the time yeah?” Finn promised; Archie had been his best mate for his entire life, the thought of not seeing him most days was awful and he found it hard to let go of him. He looked over Archie’s shoulder to see Rae crying hard as her and Chloe hugged; they had been friends for all their lives too.

“Every day babe.” Chloe whispered, “We’ll talk every day.”

“As soon as we get a phone I’ll call you.”

“How long?”

“No more than a week, I promise.”

Tom wrapped an arm around Phil’s waist and Rhys joined in as they watched these two sets of best friends say goodbye, the rest of the extended gang farewelling each other; they were all heading in different directions too.

When Rae and Archie turned to each other the tears started up fresh and Chloe and Finn drew in for a group hug, Chloe dragging Phil, Tom and Rhys in; she loved all of them so much, but it was Rae she was going to miss the most of course.

That night they collapsed into Finn’s queen sized bed, knowing that a custom built 250cm by 250cm bed was being delivered in a few days and they’d have to sell the queen. It was strange how Rae let that thought occupy her mind. She supposed it was better to think of that than how one of the happiest times of her life, finally moving in with her two men, was tempered with so much sorrow.
“Alright the box list system were brilliant.” Finn said as he unpacked his CDs. Phil and Rae looked over from the kitchen; they were unpacking the kitchen and bathroom first.

“Glad to see you’re doing the important stuff there Finn.” Rae laughed.

“We got three copies of both Stone Roses albums!” He laughed, “We were clearly meant to be together.”

“I reckon we’ll have at least two copies of a lot o’ things.” Rae said, “And just one copy of all the really amazing bands that I know that you don’t.”

“Dream on girl.” Finn shot back.

“You won’t have two copies of the old classics.” Phil said, “I’m positive you two don’t have B.B King in your collections.” He shrugged, “I like to know where my music came from.”

“Aye and we also don’t have fucking Chopin!” Finn laughed holding up a CD.

“Don’t knock classical music.” Phil laughed, “There’s some really emotive and hard core concertos and symphonies and stuff out there. It’s not given enough credit anymore. Outside o’ movie scores of course.”

“I’m not knockin’ it!” Finn said merrily, “Not after feeling those fuckin’ cello strings.” Finn found a Leadbelly CD and put it in the CD rack. He of course knew B.B. King and Leadbelly well, but had never bought a CD of their music; he had had his father’s collection for that until now. It was an old mixed swing music CD that truly piqued his curiosity and finally made Finn decide to play some of Phil’s music.

“We need to buy a microwave.” Rae suddenly realised as Finn wandered over to get a drink from their brand new fridge; courtesy of Gary.

“This music makes me wanna learn some old school style of dancing.” Finn said.

“I can teach you both to swing.” Phil answered.

“Where the fuck did you get your fucking education?” Finn laughed.

“I like to learn.” Phil shrugged. “Wanna learn?” He asked them as he started to limber up his limbs to give them an example of swing dance. “It’s not as impressive solo, but here we go.” Phil started to bounce, kicking his feet out, Finn and Rae watched, laughing, both trying to figure it out. Phil laughed at their attempts, and started to try and teach them, doing a basic knees in, knees out move.

It was quite a while before they got back to unpacking, puffed out and still laughing.

“You art is magnificent Phil.” Janice said as she ran a finger down the abstract painting of Phil’s they’d put up. They had boring white walls, and Phil had done some beautiful art so it had worked out well. Phil smiled humbly and his eyes flicked towards the bedroom, where his best work had finally been put up on the wall. He beautiful oil paintings of Rae, Finn’s drawings of Rae also adorned their room, carefully affixed to the doors of their shared wardrobe. Finn had taught him how to use tools and they had built a wooden room divider for the bedroom. Rae had declared that
she needed some drawings and paintings of her men and Finn and Phil had agreed. They had plenty of room to set up a place for an easel and canvas, and they had done so, and Janice turned to look at a half-finished oil painting on canvas, it showed Finn sitting with his elbow resting on his knee, his head on his arm. He was clearly naked, but his penis was hidden by the position he sat in. His eyes seemed to look right at her, even in their partially finished state, and Janice shook her head.

“Your talent really is extraordinary.” She marvelled.

“You should see the stuff Finn’s working on.” Phil said. “He’s got such soul as an artist.” Finn was cooking up lunch for them and Rae was setting the round table; it was only big enough for four at most, so they weren’t sure what would happen if they invited more people over. “But that’s up to him to show you.” Phil looked over at Finn and gave him a wink. They were exactly a week into living together and so far everything had been going amazingly. Except for that time they had drunk too much and Finn had been desperate to pee while Phil had been taking a dump, so he’d peed in the sink and Rae had been furious at both of them. Phil hadn’t blamed her; he was a clean freak himself. But Finn had had to make a mental note that pissing in the sink when desperate was no longer a viable option. They were all relatively good with housework, although Phil was the cleanest of them, but not to the point of him feeling the need to clean up after them, or re-clean what they had done. They had mostly unpacked and were starting to settle in nicely. The phone was getting turned on tomorrow, and Rae couldn’t wait to call Chloe and Archie and everyone else. Rae came over to Janice.

“Have you seen the oils he did of me?”

“Not finished.” Janice grinned. “I saw them in rough sketch, and then the first layers of colour.”

“Finish up the table?” Phil nodded, there wasn’t anything really left to do, but he understood Rae wanted a moment with Janice. Rae took Janice’s hand and led Janice through the flat.

They had set up the easel near the window closest to the long kitchen that spread along the one wall. Phil had bought portable island for them and it had been useful for dragging plates of food to one of the two tables, the sofa or beanbags. The table for eating was up the other end of the kitchen near the fridge and the cupboard Finn had bought for Phil and himself to keep their instruments in. There were huge open spaces and then a big square table with the computer on; their study table, they already had a timetable sorted out for computer use. Sunday was their day, free of study, socialising or anything else; it was for them alone. Near the table there was a plush rug and some beanbags thrown around; a reading place. They had squished the lounge section up near the bedroom so that the rest of the flat had lots of room and space; Rae wanted Phil to teach her fencing and Finn was determined to keep Phil’s training going, and the one window that didn’t go all the way to the floor, near the kitchen had shelves of weights, medicine balls, and boxing equipment under it, behind the easel. Phil’s foils, epees and sabres where there too. There was a punching bag, but they had agreed to only hang it from the exposed beam in the middle of the roof when it was being used, and given the high ceilings in this place, Finn figured he’d have to eventually get a stand for it. Janice noticed Finn and Rae’s impressive music collections merged together in the selves next to the tv, and when she saw some Mozart, she was sure she was seeing Phil’s music in their too; sorted in chronological order of course. Janice knew that this would be Finn’s doing.

“Oh they’re stunning.” Janice said when she stepped into the bedroom and saw Phil’s oil paintings of Rae. After taking them in for a while he turned to the opposite wall, the wardrobe doors and saw Finn’s charcoal drawings of her. “Phil’s rich colouring juxtaposed with Finn’s stark charcoals is a stroke of genius. Even putting Phil’s oils on the white wall and Finn’s black and whites on the
wooden wardrobe serve to highlight their differences and bring out the best in their individual aesthetics.” Janice looked at them again, “I can’t decide if it was Finn or Phil who did this.”

“They both decided that they wanted it like this.” Rae shook her head, “I get to sleep with six semi-nude pictures of myself.” Rae laughed.

“Well looks like there’ll be some other artworks going up in here too!” Janice thought about the semi-finished painting of Finn she’d seen.

“You know, when I modelled for your art class, I had all these bruises on me arse. And you never said a word. And now, with this relationship with my two lads, you haven’t said a word again. And I just wanted to thank you.”

“Oh Rae,” Janice answered, “You were obviously happy when you were getting spanked to high heaven and you’re obviously still happy now. You all are. So who am I to judge, really? I don’t need to know or understand all the ins and outs of what you three have got going here. It’s none of my business, and honestly all I need to know is that three people I care about are happy.” Janice looked at Phil’s paintings and then Finn’s drawings, both so obviously filled with love for her, and thought about the painting of Finn Phil was doing, the same love in every brush stroke, “Love is love. Don’t ever let anyone tell you otherwise.”

In their second week of living together they added another visitor to their list of regular visitors, which currently only had Janice on it. Kelsey finished up her commission for Aztequita and headed back to London. They offered up their lounge, but Kelsey had met a nice guy that she was willing to share a bed with for a bit.

Phil had been emptying his eviction bag for the first time. He’d had it for over three years, and it was the last thing he unpacked, Rae and Finn offering silent support. He put the teddy up on top of the wardrobe with their various trophies and ornament type things. He was looking at the two letters and gift when Finn had had to get up to get the door.

“Fucking hell this place is nice.” Kelsey looked around, “How the hell did you get this?”

“Both Rae and Finn were working at the time we applied for it, and I’m incredibly impressive when I want to be.” Phil shrugged.

“Of course you are baby brother.” She kissed his cheek, “Fuck I could see myself in a place like this.” She lit up a cigarette and headed to the fridge, pulling out a can of beer and sitting on the sofa, putting her feet up on the table.

“Boots.” Phil said and pushed her feet of the table, she unlaced her boots as Rae and Finn grabbed chairs and sat around the coffee table, Phil sitting next to Kelsey.

“So I got you a pressie for moving in.” Kelsey grinned and pulled a package out of her bag; whatever it was, was roughly wrapped up in material. Phil unwrapped it and looked up from the gift to his sister.

“Kels…”

“It’s hand made by one of me best mates.” She grinned. Phil held up the beautifully made glass bong.
“I’ve only smoked pot twice.” He shook his head, still grinning.

“I’m sure we can have a toke occasionally.” Finn lit a cigarette and lazed back in his chair. Kelsey pulled out a small baggie of marijuana and handed it to Phil.

“Happy house warming Pip.” She kissed his forehead. “I also got you some sheet music for your cello.” She grinned and he looked a lot more excited by that, he poured over them happily.

“Oh these are tricky.” Phil said happily. “I like tricky.” Both Rae and Finn watched his fingers move unconsciously as he imagined the fingering sequences.

“Written by the same mate who makes the glass bongs.” Kelsey leaned forward to ash in the ashtray and saw the letter with her name on it. “What’s this?” Finn leaned forward.

“It’s from your mum. She gave these to me to give to you and Phil, when I was over there breaking in and stealing Phil’s violin.”

“Ah so that’s how you got the ol’ strada.” She laughed, “Oh to have someone who loved me that much.” She shook her head, “I miss me old clarinet. And flute.” She looked down at the letter, still not willing to pick it up. “What could she possibly have to say to me?”

“Phil she made me promise to get you to open this.” Finn handed the present to Phil and he pursed his lips in thought. “She said you’d like it, and I agree.” Phil looked up at Finn and sighed. He unwrapped the meticulously wrapped gift and instantly put it down.

“Fuck, why didn’t you warn me?” He breathed and Finn looked surprised.

“You what?” Finn asked. Rae leaned over the table and gasped.

“Holy fuck, how old is that?” She whispered. Phil jumped up and grabbed a clean cotton shirt from the drawers and wrapped it over his fingers before opening the book delicately.

“1632.” He breathed.

“Well mum did always like to get us outlandish gifts.” Kelsey smiled cynically, “Shouldn’t that be in a museum?”

“Yes.” Phil slowly shook his head, “It’s um… Shakespeare’s works, printed in 1632.” He explained to his sister but she shrugged. “He died in 1616.” Phil said, “This is…”

“A second folio edition.” Rae marvelled as Phil carefully flicked through the pages; it was leather bound, gilt edged and in excellent condition.

“I love it.” Phil said in a low voice, “I hate that I love it.”

“Cos it’s from her.” Kelsey understood. Rae picked the book up through the cotton shirt and stood up.

“I’m gonna put this in the instrument cupboard.” She explained; that cupboard had some pretty discreet but strong locks on it to protect the most monetarily valuable things in the apartment.

“Gonna read your letter?” Phil asked as Rae came and sat back down.

“I dunno. Are you?” Kelsey asked and Phil picked the letters up.

“Yours has something more than paper in it.” Phil handed it to Kelsey and she felt the weight of
the envelope, moving it around experimentally. She held it up to the light and sucked her teeth thoughtfully. Reluctantly she opened the envelope and pulled out the letter, another envelope and a key. She looked at the key but realised that if her curiosity was really going to be satisfied she’d have to read the letter. Phil watched her eyes scan the letter, curious and still unwilling to open his own letter.

“What does it say?” Phil asked tightly.

“Apparently she’s sorry.” Kelsey said cynically, “If she was really sorry, she should leave him.” Kelsey said, “She can’t say she wants to make amends for dad kicking me out by just saying sorry.”

“Words aren’t the same as taking responsibility.” Phil agreed, “She wants to make amends as long as it doesn’t require any real work on her behalf.”

“Yeah, like, she won’t be poor for her kids.” Kelsey shook her head, “I’m sorry things are going bad for you, but I’m not gonna lift a finger to actually be a real mother. I’m just gonna be all talk.”

“Surprised she didn’t throw some money at you.” Phil said bitterly.

“Well hang on, I haven’t finished reading it yet.”

“You know I don’t expect anything from him. He’ll always just be a dick.” Phil said, “But with her, I keep waiting for her to change or… realise.”

“Yeah I went through that phase as well.” Kelsey sympathised, “I kept imagining she’d come save me. Cos we both know he won’t.” Rae and Finn silently empathised; they both had some pretty big issues with their parents too, but nothing like this. “Oh wait, here it is.” She said as she read, angry tears coming to her eyes. She opened up the second envelope and pulled out ten slips of paper and held them up. “Ten signed cheques worth five grand each, to be cashed one a month. Until, you guessed it, my trust fund kicks in.”

“Yes, she’ll be there.” Phil said cynically, “What’s the key?”

“Key to the house here.” Kelsey said, “Apparently it’s still got some o’ my stuff in my room. But, she also mentions in her letter that they’re in London for the next few months, and I should wait till they’re gone before I go to the house.” Her voice was bitter and she looked down at the key and the cheques, “Feel like I should rip ’em up. But I’m far too practical for that.” She folded them up and put them back in the envelope. “Might go get my instruments though.” Rae was struck by the sibling similarities and differences with these two.

“You know your mother said-” Finn stopped himself, not sure how much he should say, “She said that after he kicked you out Kels that she weren’t interested in sleeping with him.” Finn shrugged, “I dunno, I think she feels pretty shite bout what’s happened. I mean you’re right, she not doing anything about it that would actually put herself out. But she feels like shit.”

“Good.” Kelsey answered, “They both should. They let their 17 year old daughter sleep on the streets of London in winter with a broken cheekbone.” She shook her head and shrugged to indicate that she didn’t care if they felt bad, “The things I went through….” She looked down at the key and pocketed it, “They deserve to suffer.”

“How much are you gonna take?” Phil asked.

“Well baby brother, now that you’re not there to possibly take the blame for everything going missing… I might just clean them out.” She grinned. Phil shrugged and looked down at his own
letter. He knew Kelsey wouldn’t steal everything in the house; she’d just go and get a few of her own things. He knew this because like him, part of her still loved her parents and so desperately wanted them to love her back. Kelsey had never lived in the Stamford house, so everything that had ever been hers had been sitting in her bedroom in the London house, whereas most of Phil’s stuff had been in the Stamford house. She had never taken any of it when Phil had let her stay when their parents where away, because she hadn’t wanted Phil to get any blame for things going missing, even from her room. But her mother’s letter had said he never went into her room, so he’d never know.

“You do what you gotta do Kels.” Phil answered. “You can store some boxes in our storage cage downstairs till you have a place.” He added and Rae and Finn nodded their agreement.

“You gonna read yours?” She asked supportively.

“Yeah.” Phil said softly as he opened the envelope to find a letter and another envelope. He opened the second envelop and counted five cheques inside. He supposed that his mother’s guilt over him was less than her guilt over Kelsey.

To my dear son Phillip,

There are so many things I wish I could change, things I wish I could say to you, but we both know that no matter what I say or do, too much has happened now and the injustices that have been done to you and your sister can not be undone.

I have had much time to reflect upon my own character flaws that have allowed things to travel down this path, and I do wonder that had I not indulged your love of the arts, would you perhaps have not turned out as you have. I fear I let you down as a mother in many ways; I should have guided you more firmly towards family duty and normalcy. So just understand that I do not blame you for how you turned out. I blame myself. And when your keen mind eventually sees through your current rebellion and also questions how you ended up where you are, you will no doubt deduce that this is my fault.

Please don’t take my admission of guilt as a judgement upon your lifestyle. I am glad, above all else, that you are loved, even if it is in this non normal capacity, and I have no doubt that these people love you and that you love them. I do hope that your happiness lasts a lifetime, unlike so many normal relationships. Perhaps there will be something to be said for refusing normalcy? I do hope so, with all my heart.

Please understand that I am who I am with all my flaws, and I am going to try my best to be there for you and Kelsey, within reason; your father has forbidden contact with you. But please know that this breaks my heart and if I could have it any other way I would. If you need anything, please attempt to contact me without your father’s knowledge and I will do what I can. I have made this offer to Kelsey as well, and I have given you both some cheques to be cashed over the next few months. I do hope these help.

Please never forget that I love you, regardless of your choices, your lifestyle or anything else. You are my son and I will always love you, even if I do not understand you.

Please don’t forget me. As imperfect as I am, I have loved you since the day you were born and have tried my best; such as it was.

I hope your life is blessed my son.

Love always
Phil handed the letter to Rae who was sitting closest to him and she read it silently, her face scrunching up at the worst bits. Rae stood up and leaned over the table to hand the letter to Finn.

“What’d she say?” Kels asked Phil.

“Probably pretty much what she said to you. Except for the several allusions to my lifestyle being an abomination. Not that she used that word.” Kelsey couldn’t help but laugh at her brother’s wry grin.

“Jesus.” Finn breathed as he read it. “I think you’re meant to feel guilty and bad for her by the end of it.” He shook his head.

“I kinda do.” Phil said, “Cos she’s my mum, and I guess the reality of it all hasn’t really sunk in yet. I suspect I’ll always feel bad for her, no matter how angry I get.”

As their third week living together began, they started to really organise themselves for university, getting back in the habit of reading and timetabling themselves. They had sorted out a budget and daily chores for everyone to keep the place neat and tidy, and everything was running smoothly and efficiently; they were playing to their strengths with everything they did.

But other than that bit of seriousness, there was mostly fun. Finn had gone through the photos he and Rae had taken of the two of them having sex, and had decided to recreate them all with Phil. He took a lot of Polaroids of his own cock buried in Phil’s arse and Phil’s cock deep in Rae’s cunt, before decided to get photos of their threesomes; it had been a very sexy few weeks.

Which had brought Rae to a very important inclusion in their sex life: the sex show club. Her and Finn had gone three times as a couple, twice for Finn’s birthday and once for hers. But they had missed Phil’s birthday in November, right in between Tom and Rhys’s birthday, the three additions to the original gang born all one day after the other. It had been a topic of disbelieving discussion quite a bit and the general consensus was that it was all obviously meant to be. It had been Chop that had loudly declared that the first time, and now they all stuck to it.

She had mentioned it to Finn and he had agreed that they needed to take Phil, and she had rung up to get the latest location, to find the number had changed, and so had the nights. She asked the rules about bringing Phil and was informed that he would count as part of Rhys’s introduction too. So she had rung Rhys to fill him in.

Thursday night.

They were going to go as equals for Phil’s first time, with the possibility of one of them taking the helm if the feeling was right; preferably Phil since he hadn’t been properly dominant yet. He’d spoken about liking the idea of exploring power plays, but so far they’d all been too in awe of all the things they could do together to properly do any power play. The club seemed like a good place to start, if the circumstances grew that way. And now that they lived in London, they’d probably go more often if Phil was interested.

London was starting to feel like home, they still got stares, but it wasn’t as often, and they all felt happy here. Especially now that they had a phone and internet line, although dial up modem took forever, it was worth it for the daily emails from the gang. Slowly, everyone was settling into their
new lives.
I don’t Need a Reason

‘I don’t Need a Reason’ by Dizzee Rascal

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlzgDVLtU6g

All I want is sex; I don’t need a reason… All eyes on me!

He was wearing a black t-shirt and Finn a white one, both of them looking roguishly dishevelled after rolling around together on the bed while Rae got ready. That had been part of Rae and Finn’s plan; keep Phil excited and don’t reveal their destination. Rae was wearing a red halter neck dress, her back completely bare, the v-neck created by the halter neck went right down to her navel. The skirt was loose, knee length and flipped up every time she twisted her body slightly. Phil had been flabbergasted when he’d seen her, obviously not wearing a stitch of underwear; her breasts were wonderfully round, her nipples pressing through the material and every time she turned to them, the way the skirt flipped up showed a tantalising flash of her bare bottom, or black bush. She wore heavy black mascara and eyeliner that would run easily if she teared up, and bright red lipstick. She had handed her tiny makeup bag, with lipstick, mascara and eyeliner in it to Phil and he had pocketed it without question. She intended to keep her lips red, her eyes ready to cry black tears for the whole night. She had no intention of cleaning up her mascara tears or smudged lipstick when she reapplied the makeup. Finn had a tube of lubrication in his back pocket, not that Phil knew that. Finn eye fucked Rae for a moment.

“I think I’m gonna have to get better clothes for this.” He noted.

“Mesh top.” Rae grinned.

“Oh aye?” Finn cocked an eyebrow.

“What… what is happening tonight?” Phil asked looking from one to the other. But they just grinned mysteriously.

“What are we doing tonight?” Phil asked again, deeply confused, but hopelessly aroused by Rae who had sat on the back seat alone, spread her legs and started to masturbate as Finn drove. Phil looked over the back seat at her and Finn checked her in the rear view mirror as often as he could. They stopped at lights and Phil expected Rae to carefully pull her skirt back over her exposed vagina. But she didn’t, her eyes went to the cars beside her, making eye contact with a guy from a carload of guys obviously out for a drink. He told his mates and they all turned to look at her in the car. Phil’s mouth opened in surprise. Rae often flirted with being caught, but mostly she was very private and would run from actually being seen like this.

But the times they went to the sex cub were different; they were someone else for the night. And whether she was domme or sub, she was confident in this place; she was a fat, sexy confident lady, who left behind all of her insecurities for the night. She slid her middle finger into her cunt and Phil could hear the guys in the other car cheering for her to do more, to show her tits, to come get fucked. When the lights went green, Rae pulled her middle finger out and flipped it at the guys, it was wet and Phil could smell her cunt, his cock aching for her. The guys all groaned as Finn
pulled away from them, turning right, while they turned left. Rae reached forward and rubbed her finger under Phil’s nose, wanting him to smell her.

“Don’t get me wrong, I am appreciating this quite a bit,” Phil breathed in her smell, “But what the fuck is going on?”

“Shut up Bill and suck my dick.” Finn said and Phil turned to Finn, surprised but turned on. He turned his eyes back to Rae who was putting her fingers under Finn’s nose now and he groaned. There was something in her smell, some chemical that made it smell so good that it drove him wild with desire. As soon as he smelled her, something clicked in his brain and he knew he had to fuck her; both Phil and Finn were like this with Rae’s scent. And she knew it. Phil unzipped Finn and pulled his cock out, bending over to suck it happily, feeling a thrill of excitement when they stopped at a pedestrian crossing and he decided to keep going, not hiding what he was doing.

By the time they parked the car, Phil wanted to fuck so badly, and Rae rubbing her body against his when she got out of the car and the way Finn looked at both of them did absolutely nothing to abate that.

Phil’s eyes opened up a little wider as they approached the Abney Park Cemetery. It was an abandoned, derelict old cemetery with an eerie and mysterious feel to it.

“What the fuck are we doing tonight?” He asked as they approached a huge black man standing at the entrance to the cemetery. He was talking to the police in an authoritative voice, and showing them paperwork. Rae knew from Rhys that they had been faking permits lately because the police had been suspecting that something was going on. But when Rae had seemed concerned Rhys had laughed and told her that there were politicians, rich and powerful people, police captains and all sorts that went to this illegal sex show club on various nights of the week; he told her that he himself had fucked a leader of a political group when he had been working there. They would never be shut down, no one was going to jail for this. Rae had also been told over the phone that the past month had seen an increase of gate crashers and thus violent incidences, so there was increased security and an increased entrance fee to cover it. Rae looked in the entrance of the graveyard and saw several guides waiting to take them to the chapel were the show was tonight, there was also another three guards that she could see. She had been given this information, the location, and the password for security to let them pass.

They waited for the police to leave, Finn passing Rae a cigarette; Rae smoked when they came to the club. Phil looked at the cigarette going up to her lips and accepted a cigarette too; he guessed he smoked tonight too. He looked up at the cops and saw one of them unabashedly eye fucking Rae, he noticed that Rae was watching him as his eyes crawled over her breasts. She sucked on the cigarette and when the cops eyes finally got to her face she blew out her smoke, an incredibly confident look on her face as she slowly, almost lazily rolled her head back as if stretching, taking a deep breath and pushing her breasts forward. The cop’s mouth opened with desire, his eyes crawling down her pale throat, exposed by her stretch, back to her breasts. Rae rolled her head back down and held the cop in her gaze and he was obviously completely under her power, unable to look away from her. Even when his partner spoke to him, saying it was time to leave, he seemed to barely hear. He walked past Rae, his eyes not leaving hers. Rae took another drag on her cigarette and followed him with her eyes, but she refused to look over her shoulder so even though the cop tripped over, still looking at Rae, she didn’t look back at him, nor see the lustful looks he gave her until he got back into his car. Phil gave Finn a look and Finn cocked an eyebrow; this was
normal at the sex show; Rae became the character completely, and when she was this confident, the affect she had on men was profound. Phil’s cock was aching for her and he could see the bulge in Finn’s jeans. And she seemed to not care one bit that every man, that was attracted to women, near her was currently aching to get a leg over her. The guard was giving her an appreciative look as she smiled up at him.

“D’you wanna fly out on a big jet plane?” She asked him as if asking him if he wanted to fuck her.

“Oh you have no idea.” He answered shaking his head, an appreciative grin on his face, “A guide will take you to the chapel. Don’t disrespect the dead.” Rae nodded, blew her smoke out seductively into his face, he made lusty noise in the back of his throat as she turned away, her skirt flipping up giving him a flash of her arse, and took Phil and Finn’s hands, heading into the cemetery.

A very androgynous person, in black clothing approached them.

“I’m your guide.” They said, but Phil was looking at the other guides; a woman wearing a horse bridle, a man in leather arseless chaps, someone in suffocatingly tight rubber clothing, covering everything but their eyes, a woman in incredibly high stilettos and a leather collar and not a stitch of clothing… Phil turned his eyes back to his guide.

“Your first time?” The guide asked him. Phil nodded and looked over at Rae and Finn as they shook their heads. “You’ll have a great time.” They reassured Phil, “Please follow me.” They followed their guide who seemed to glide over the ground towards the chapel. Phil looked up at the building as it loomed over them. “Through the doors, I assume you know to speak to mistress?”

“Aye.” Rae answered, “Thanks.”

“Fuckmeat deserves no thanks.” They said and glided off, leaving them standing outside the abandoned chapel’s doors.

“So this is an illegal sex show.” Phil said softly and Rae grinned, Finn groaned.

“I told you he’d guess it afore we got inside.” Rae said, “You owe me a week o’ doing me house chores.” Finn groaned again.

“I should know better than to bet against Phil’s genius.” Finn shook his head. “Was it the fuckmeat thing that gave it away?”

“Kind of.” Phil said, still not sure what to expect, “but you do know that I come from a rich family right? When I was in London I went to a very expensive private school, and all the kids there spoke about illegal sex clubs existing. There were rumours all over the place about it.” Phil shook his head, “I thought it must be horny teenaged boys talking, not actually real. Wow.” He looked at the chapel doors, “I wonder if I’ll see some people I know in there?”

“Even if you do, you don’t talk to them.” Rae shrugged.

“Oh I know.” Phil said, “You entirely blank, as if you didn’t see each other.” A man with three women on dog leashes walked up behind them with their guide. He carried an empty looking bag and the women were taking off their clothes as they walked, shoving their clothes in the bag; the bag would be checked in at the entrance and given back to them at the end of the night.

“So we kinda have hyper-sexual and confident characters for this…” Phil understood, “become someone else for the night...”
“I spat in Finn’s face when I was dominant here.” Rae grinned saucily, “Whoever’s birthday it is, is dominant.” She explained. Phil’s eyes narrowed as he thought about that.

“Well it’s my first time… so what does that make me?”

“What d’you wanna be?” Finn asked. “We can go in as three equals or one of us can be dominant, or two of us can be.”

“How did you find out about this place?” He avoided the question, afraid of just how much he wanted to dominate them; worried it would be too much for them and they’d run from it. And it’s not like he wanted to do it all the time. But sometimes he wanted to have total control.

“Rhys used to work here.” Rae said, “I asked him about it. We’re here under his name, so whatever we do reflects on him until mistress feels like she knows us well enough to consider us our own members. Then we can invite people ourselves.”

“So it’s closed, by invitation, community…” Phil marvelled, “So it’ll be relatively safe.”

“It’s a lot of fun.” Rae said, “Good chance to explore very dark, very rough things that we don’t necessarily want as an everyday occurrence, but we do want a bit of.” Phil turned his eyes to her.

“Dark?” He asked, “Rough?”

“Aye.” Finn said. The way he answered was scintillating to Phil. He had known they were his life, that he was more in love with them than he had ever imagine possible, but this part of him that wanted to see them suffer a bit had seemed to be too much for him. Even with their talk of bruises and caning, he felt that his desire was too much. He was beginning to realise that he should have known better; of course they were all compatible with each other, even in this way, and had they not been, Rae and Finn would have worked through it with him. Part of him wished he had been more candid than he had been with those small hints he had given. But a large part of him couldn’t believe that his fantasies would be acceptable to them. He understood that everyone had different sexual desires, and whenever someone deviated from what society deemed normal sexual urges, which most people did in reality, they always struggled with thinking they were particularly abnormal. He told himself he wasn’t, but he still couldn’t help but think they wouldn’t want to crawl on hands and knees all night for him, or any number of things he wanted.

A lot of people had been arriving while they talked, so when Phil finally pulled them towards the doors, still not sure what role he wanted to take, there were a lot of people waiting in line to get in. In the entrance way a woman in tight rubber was getting throat fucked brutally. People watched as the man, with no apparent regard for her comfort fucked her throat and she gagged and slobbered, tears running down her face. But he had a firm grab on her hair and wasn’t letting go. Phil’s eyes widened in understanding and he looked back at Rae’s makeup, understanding that she intended to cry tonight in the exact same manner as this sub. Phil felt his cock throb and looked back at Rae then Finn, his imagination starting to get away from him. He looked back as the man pulled her up by the hair and bent her over. Besides the neck hole for her head, there was only one hole in the rubber suit and it opened up over her arsehole, even her hands and feet were covered by the suit. He pulled out a glass butt plug and Rae considered the size of it; much smaller than the one Chloe and Izzy had gotten for her way back in Sutherland. She thought that she might need to get herself one of those, especially when she saw with what ease the man slid into her arse because she had been wearing it. He handed the butt plug to his sub and she immediately put it in her mouth. Rae shook her head.

“Safe word is still pineapple.” She reminded them, “Cos I might say no when you fuck my throat.” Finn nodded slowly and Phil blinked a few times. “And pineapple for arse to mouth
still.” She said, still watching. It wasn’t her thing, but she still enjoyed watching the woman sucking something while getting thoroughly arse fucked.

“Same.” Finn answered. Phil was silent and they both looked at him, unsure how he was taking everything.

Quite suddenly, the person they had seen in the rubber suit with only an eye opening burst in, panting, having obviously run from the cemetery gates. They collapsed on their knees in front of the man as he fucked his sub’s arse. This one was obviously also his sub. The man pulled something out of his pocket and they all recognised it as a remote control to a vibrator; they’d been playing with the vibrating eggs lately. The sub obviously had an egg inserted in them, anus probably, but if the sub had a vagina, it could be in there. They didn’t know, and it didn’t matter. The remote control obviously had a long range and he had used it to call his sub to him. But it looked slightly different in that it had a red button on the side. He pressed the red button and the sub on their knees cried out in pain. The red button obviously gave the sub an electrical shock.

“You took too long.” The dom said as his sub cried out. As soon as the pain had subsided the sub fawned over the dom, rubbing their rubber covered face on his shins as if they were a cat. No one thought twice about what they were seeing; everything was consensual here and if any sub were to say a safe word, or to ask for help from anyone, they would be protected instantly. This closed community did not tolerate real abuse. He pulled out of the woman’s arse and put his big hand on the other sub’s head, tilting their face up and came in the open eyes of his secondary sub. As soon as he was done, the woman was sucking on his cock dry and the secondary sub was sent back to the front gate to guide people in, cum dripping down the rubber over their face, their eyes stinging from cum.

“Remarkable.” Phil said softly and turned his eyes to Rae then Finn. “I’ll be dominant.” He told them, “Though it’ll take some time for me to be like that guy.” He nodded towards the dom they had watched. Phil wouldn’t mind doing something like that one day. But he knew he needed to take small steps, to ensure he didn’t hurt the two loves of his life in any way.

“Should o’ seen me my first time.” Finn told him. “I was much better my second time.” Rae nodded appreciatively.

“Since you’re dom, your subs are here for your pleasure only. Our pleasure, our comfort don’t matter.” Rae smiled seductively and ran her finger down his face, “Please do use us well.”

“And it’s up to you when we cum. If you let us cum at all.” Finn answered, “We’re your property, your sexual objects, until we get back into out flat.”

“It’s not for every day.” Rae said, “But sometimes it’s real nice to be treated like a bunch o’ holes to be fucked.”

“Yeah a nice hate fuck.” Finn greed, remembering the way Rae had fucked him, slapping his face multiple times, pulling his hair brutally. His orgasm when he’d finally been allowed to cum had been incredible. “Animalistic…” He reminisced happily.

“And I’m sure we could fuck the shit outta each other at home. And we do.” She added, “Have lots of amazing exploration, and I wouldn’t change a thing,” Rae said, “But there’s something about bringing it here… that makes it different. Here, you can slap my face if you want to. Even when we’re rough at home, it don’t feel like it’s that kind o’ rough.” Finn agreed nodding his head.

“It’s cos when we’re at home, we’re just being ourselves fucking each other roughly. Here, we’re someone else. We’re whoever we collectively decide for the night.” Finn continued, “Finn would
never slap Rae’s face. But dominant Sex club Finn sure does every time sub Rae comes off his cock before he tells her she can.”

“And Rae would never accept anyone slapping her face, but sub Rae often comes off the cock when she hasn’t been given permission too so she can get the slap.” Rae gave a very sexy grin, ”and I fucking love it. Here. As these characters. As a sometimes event.”

“The club offers a nice strong border between the characters we play for this kind of exploration, versus the stuff we do at home.” Phil understood it all, he was incredibly excited by this. It was a perfect idea. They loved each other and the exploration they did at home was amazing, it was enough to keep him satisfied. But here they got to go to every corner of their brains, even the parts that wouldn’t normally get an airing, and they got to do it safely in this neat little sandbox. They got to play in every way together.

“So tonight, we’re your fucktoys.” Rae said, “And you don’t give a shit about us other than how well we can make you cum.”

“And we should be made to make you cum as much as you can possibly manage.” Finn said, “And we don’t get to cum at all. If that’s your wish.”

“Until the very end of it all. Cos I like the huge orgasms I get at the end of being edged mercilessly at this place!” Rae grinned, “And then at home we do some aftercare.” They all nodded.

“I’ll look after you both when we get home.” Phil agreed, “But for now…”

“We’re worthless pieces of meat.” Finn bit his bottom lip, excited to do this in their trio.

“Well we do have some use Finn; he can use us to make himself cum.”

“Oh aye, of course!” Finn laughed.

“What are my limits?” Phil asked keenly.

“Well you know our hard limits.” Rae said, “other than that, go for it and we’ll see if a safe word gets said.”

“So that’s why we had such an early dinner.” Phil marvelled. It was 11pm and they had had a small dinner at 5pm. “Cos you don’t wanna vomit when you get throat fucked.” He nodded. “Good.” He turned to Rae suddenly, “You spat on Finn?”

“In his face.” She grinned. “This is a place where we do all sorts o’ things. And when Finn was my sub, he was a worthless piece of meat for the night. Spitting in his face seemed like a good way to tell him.”

“I made her keep me cum in her mouth and go and order us drinks.” Finn said and Phil nodded appreciatively. They were finally at the front of the line, and mistress was smiling welcomingly at them, in clothes that looked like they were from the 18th century, she even wore a powdered wig. She looked exquisite, as usual.

“O’Daire.” Mistress said and picked up the sub and dom stamps expectantly, “So who’s in charge today?” Rae and Finn looked at Phil.

“I am.” Phil said, his voice calm and quiet, edged with power. Finn cocked an eyebrow at Rae; Phil had obviously thought about this before.
“A new O’Daire.” She smiled. “Name?”

“Phil.” Phil answered and she smiled appreciatively and stamped his hand.

“This is Phil O’Daire.” She told the same sub that kept Rae and Finn’s names.

“Thank you mistress.”

“Are you sharing them sir?” She sked and Phil turned to look at Rae and Finn, they subtly shook their heads and he turned back to mistress.

“No.” She stamped Rae and Finn’s hands accordingly; as subs not to be shared.

“And are you sharing yourself sir?”

“No.” He answered without needing to ask Rae and Finn; he knew he didn’t want to be with other people. It was up to Rae and Finn if they wanted to be with others, not him.

“There you go sir.” She said to Phil and stamped him as a dom not sharing. “Good to see you both again fuckmeat.” She said sweetly to Finn and Rae, “As usual, O’Daire’s get everything for free. And what happens here, stays here. Protect our anonymity and thus our viability.” Rhys had told Rae that there had been a leak of a famous musician’s identity who attended the sex show club; it made people trust them less and not want to come, which threatened to close down the shows. They all nodded their agreement and mistress pointed to the door, “You can take one of my subs as a guide if you have any questions. Otherwise, it’s just through the door. Have a great evening.” They all moved to the side and Phil looked at the subs all in leather, several with their cock out in cock rings. Some kneeling, some had been allowed to stand. All had their eyes lowered. And all of them were male, with a collar with ‘bitch’ embroidered in pink on it. Because mistress was going through a pink phase.

“From the moment we go through that door,” Phil said almost politely, “I want you to consider default position to be on your knees. You will crawl, not walk. You will kneel, not sit. Unless I give you a direct order otherwise.”

“Yes sir.” Rae replied and Phil’s eyes fell on her lustfully.

“And you will say ‘yes sir’ to everything I say to you.” Phil’s eyes turned to Finn and gave him a lustful look

“Yes sir.” They both replied.

“And you will crawl in front of me. I want to be able to see you both at all times.”

“Yes sir.”

“Alright, I’ll give you more orders as I think of them.”

“Yes sir.”

Phil stepped forward and walked through the door, Rae and Finn following, both instantly dropping to their hands and knees, Rae tying the skirt of her dress in a knot so it didn’t get under her knee as she crawled in front of Phil with Finn beside her, Phil strolling slowly, taking everything in, embodying his character; sexually dominant male, demanding, controlling, in control. It was a huge cavernous chapel, with a huge stage in the middle of the room, chairs set up on three sides of the stage. The area between the bar and the stage was chair free, and, as always,
the backstage area was in a room behind the bar. Portable toilets had been hired and set up in the 
grounds just outside the chapel and corners of the chapel were darker with tables and chairs set up 
for fucking on for those that weren’t so public. Rae and Finn hadn’t gone to the dark area since 
their first time here. Now they always fucked right out in front of everyone here; it was a turn on 
to be watched. They both hoped Phil would be the same.

It looked as it always looked, so while Phil was slowly taking it all in, Rae and Finn weren’t 
missing anything other than seeing people fuck on the dance floor.

“Stand.”

“Yes sir.”

They were standing in the middle of the dance floor, and the music was grinding, pounding in their 
hearts. The show had not yet started and Phil wanted to dance.

“Dance with me.”

“Yes sir.”

As soon as he started moving Rae and Finn danced with him, both of them focussed 100% on Phil, 
their hands moving over his body, kissing him, rubbing themselves on him in rhythm to the music.

Phil had always been aware of what an attractive trio they made. There had been a time when he 
didn’t think of himself as attractive, but he had overcome that particular self-esteem issue and knew 
he was not bad looking. He particularly knew that his body, while slender through the waist, was 
very good; he’d worked hard at it; to have an actor’s body. And of course Rae was the most 
beautiful woman on the planet, and Finn was the most handsome man. But seeing the looks that 
the three of them dancing together was attracting made Phil realise just how good, how sexy, they 
looked together.

Ever since she had drunkenly danced at Sutherland, Rae had been unlocking her own body slowly, 
and nowadays her hips swayed so sensually when she danced that people who swore fat women 
were ugly found themselves re-evaluating their world views after seeing her move to music. Phil’s 
hand moved over her undulating body, his other hand down Finn’s pants, squeezing his balls 
firmly, enough to make Finn on edge. And Finn liked it. He liked dancing around the edge of 
what would be extreme pain if it went wrong; it was exhilarating. And he trusted Phil. That’s 
what play like this really brought to the fore in their relationship; the trust they had for each other. 
To push it, but not go too far.

Rae was just losing herself, leaving behind all her anxiety, all her issues with her body. She had 
been working for years now to overcome these things that always dogged her steps, and she often 
felt like she had it under control. But here she got to step out of herself and be someone else, 
someone comprised entirely of dark sexual desire. She loved coming here. But she wouldn’t want 
to lose herself forever, so she was happy to keep a clear line between exploration here and 
exploration at home and she knew that her two lads completely understood that need in her.

As Phil watched all the eyes appraising them, he knew he could invite almost anyone in this club 
into their trio and they would happily join them. And although he had no desire to have anyone 
join them, the fact that so many wanted to was extremely arousing. Seeing so many watching 
them was an aphrodisiac, and Phil knew he’d have an audience tonight when he fucked Rae and 
Finn. And he liked that.

A beautiful woman with long dark hair danced over to them and ran her hands up Rae’s body,
ignoring Finn and Phil until she saw their stamps. She pouted slightly, but decided to push her luck and ran her hands up to Rae’s breasts. Rae, having not been told to stop dancing continued to dance, even as the other woman touched her. Both women kept their eyes on Phil, Rae ready to do as she was told, the other woman, Rihanna, waiting for the dom to tell her if she could play with his sub or not. Finn felt his eyebrows arch slightly when he saw Rihanna’s hands on Rae’s breasts. Rae continued to focus her attention on Phil, but all three of them were simultaneously wondering if this was an experience Rae should have one day. But not tonight. Phil took Rihanna’s hand and kissed it.

“No tonight.” He said gently. And she nodded with a pout.

“Maybe next time you’ll let me make her scream.”

“Maybe.” Phil answered and Rihanna gave Rae a last, lingering look before disappearing into the crowd. Finn watched her go, his mind ticking over many possibilities in just a few seconds before he looked back at Rae; slightly pink in the cheeks, but lustily focused on Phil; as she should be. Finn ran his hands down Phil’s body, and noted Phil’s narrowed eyes; he was thinking about Rae and another woman too.

It didn’t take long for the dancing to make them all forget the encounter with Rihanna and just enjoy each other instead. When the music changed, Phil understood that to mean that the show was starting soon.

“Knees.”

“Yes sir.” They both instantly dropped and Phil headed towards the chairs; he wanted to see this sex show, even if lots of other people were still dancing. Finn and Rae kneeled on either side of his knees as he sat down.

“Bare chested.” He didn’t look at them as he gave his commands.

“Yes sir.” Rae untied her halter neck and tied the ends around her waist. This was the first time she had been so openly bare chested here, but she had always known that eventually it’d come to this, so she was prepared for it mentally. Finn pulled his shirt off and shoved some of it in his back pocket, pulling out the lube and handing it to Phil. Phil took it, happy to have lube; that made everything a lot easier. He handed the makeup bag Rae had given him to her.

“Do his makeup like yours.”

“Yes sir.” Rae started to put eyeliner of Finn; his eyes not wanting to co-operate. But it only took about five minutes for Rae to have given Finn makeup that was perfect for a face fuck.

“Back straight, shoulders back, chest out, head up, eyes can wonder, hands behind back.” Phil listed his orders in a quiet, powerful voice. The fact that Phil had spent a great deal of his schooling in a private school for very rich people, in the royal borough of Kensington was always audible in his accent and tone. But it was even more pronounced in the calm way he addressed them, his power, as always was implied, needing no physicality to back it; his force of will was enough.

“Yes sir.”

Finn was just putting the makeup in his back pocket when the first act came from the backstage area. Gina and Tom joined by Alex, a wonderfully androgynous person, walked through the audience. Phil crossed his legs and folded his hands over his knee, his eyes thoughtfully following
the trio. As they moved through the audience Phil saw one of his fencing opponents with a truly enormous woman, his parents would never let him be with her; she didn’t fit the family’s image. He was very clearly sub to this woman, who was spectacularly beautiful to behold. Phil’s eyes met his opponent’s and both gave a curt nod before they both turned their eyes to follow Gina to the stage.

“You can turn to watch.” Phil told them and they both did.

“Yes sir.” They watched as Gina and her two lovers began to kiss and undress each other. Rae and Finn had seen Gina and Tom a couple of times; they almost always started these nights, as a more ‘vanilla’ sexual warm up. It was good to see a threesome offered as a more vanilla experience, although it did make Rae worry about who was on tonight. They watched the performers undress, all starting to feel very horny. Gina started to suck Tom and Alex’s cocks and Rae gave a satisfied grin because she sucked two cocks almost daily now. Rae’s eye scanned the room and she noticed a lot of people staring at them, she had a terrified thrill of electricity shoot through her from her stomach when she remembered that she was bare chested, her breasts were completely exposed. She saw a man who looked like he was in his 90s eyeing her hungrily, Phil had noticed him as well and he stroked Rae’s hair gently. Finn looked over at what Rae and Phil had seen and found his cock throbbing when he saw how may appreciative look they were getting, and how Phil was dealing with one man who wasn’t looking away. He pulled Rae’s hair back hard, making her gasp, but she kept her hands clasped behind her back. Phil’s hand slowly caressed down her chest until his hand was on her breast and he squeezed it hard.

“Look at him.” Phil whispered to her as he pulled her head back, making her have to look down her nose at him.

“Yes sir.” She gasped, Phil’s pull on her hair was harder than she had experienced before. It was delectable and she was having to force herself to not squirm and push her thighs together to squeeze her cunt a little.

“Lift her skirt fuckmeat.” Phil said and Finn understood that that meant him.

“Yes sir.”

Rae was completely exposed, the old man staring at her, but it wasn’t just him; as many eyes were looking at what was happening with them as what was happening on the stage. Rae started to breathe heavy with desire, right now she wasn’t sure what she wanted to happen, but if Phil ordered her to fuck that guy she would; such was Phil’s control. The old man talked to a young man beside him and the young man nodded and headed across the room to them.

“Drop her skirt.”

“Yes sir.”

Phil gently stroked Rae’s breast and hair, juxtaposing this gentleness with the firm brutality of just a few moments before.

“Keep your eyes on him fuckhole.”

“Yes sir.” Rae replied fixing her eyes on the old man. Phil realised that a lot of people were watching, gauging their chances of playing with their trio. Phil had just told everyone that Rae was his. He leaned forward and rested his arm on Finn’s head and looked up at the stage as the young man began to speak to him.
“My boss has sent me over here to-”

“Tell your boss I don’t talk to underlings.” Phil replied in a curt voice without even looking at the young man.

“Cigarette.”

“Yes sir.” Finn provided the cigarette and lit it for him, the whole time careful to not move his head in such a way as to disturb Phil’s arm as it rested on his head.

Rae watched the old man give Phil an admiring look and slowly get up.

“Eye fuck him. Both of you.”

“Yes sir.” Rae had already been doing that to some extent, but now she put the full force of her lust into undressing and fucking this old man with her eyes. Finn doing the same.

“Anyone who approaches us, you both eye fuck them.”

“Yes sir.”

“Unless it’s to reply to me, don’t talk unless I say you can.”

“Yes sir.”

The old man stood before Phil, a wry smile on his face and looked at Rae as she bit her bottom lip and stared lustily at him.

“So she’s yours.” The old man said to Phil. Phil looked at him with a straight face, a smug smile only just playing at the corner of his mouth. He looked at Rae, “You do whatever he says?” He asked her. Rae said nothing, she just eye fucked him mercilessly, making the old man want her even more.

“You can answer.” Phil said.

“Aye.” Rae answered in a lusty voice.

“Shouldn’t you call me sir?” He replied with an indulgent smile.

“No.” Phil answered and the old man looked back up at Phil.

“I will give you an awful lot of money to have her for the night.” The old man said, “More than you can imagine.”

“I doubt that.” Phil answered.

“I could go to six figures if-” The old man started saying.

“I am terribly bored by this.” Phil talked over the top of him. “Have you heard of Jarred Seymour?” Phil knew that he had a few more months before his parents slowly let it slip that he had been disowned too. Time to use the name to his advantage.

“Yes of course. New wealth, computers and retail?” He asked, “Said to be worth hundreds of millions of pounds, heading into billions of pounds....” And then his eyes showed understanding. “You’re Phillip.” He took in Rae and Finn again, “Well I probably can’t afford her then.”
“No.” Phil answered and dismissed the man with his eyes, looking back up at the stage. The old man looked at Rae longingly before walking away without a word. Rae and Finn gave each other a look out of the corner of their eye, both wondering just how rich Phil’s ex-family actually was; were these rumours of the Seymour wealth true?

On the stage Alex was eating Gina’s pussy expertly, spreading out her labia so everyone could see him licking and sucking on her cl. Tom was licking Alex’s balls and arsehole.

Phil dangled the cigarette he was holding in his fingers in front of Finn’s face, noticing people eying Finn, bit no one would approach them after what had so publically happened with the old man because the rebuke had been clear; Phil was not sharing.

“Neither of you are to look at that old man or anyone with him for the rest of the night.”

“Yes sir.” They both instantly blanked him, turning their eyes to the stage. Phil knew this game; power. He’d been fantasising about things like this for a long time; since before he’d known Rae. He’d always had a rich fantasy life in his head and when his urge to masturbate and have sex had started, that ability to fantasise had translated well into his masturbatory dreams. He leaned back.

“Suck my cock.”

“Yes sir. They both turned to him and started to undo his jeans.

“I didn’t tell you take your hands from behind your back.” He looked at first Finn and then Rae. He had let them get his cock out before saying that, and Finn was glad for that. They both put their hands behind their backs.

“Yes sir.” Rae whispered, but Finn had not thought to say it and Phil gave him a sweet smile, before standing up, lacing his fingers through Finn’s hair brutally and snapping his face around. He slid his cock right down Finn’s throat until he gagged, trying to pull back, his hands going to Phil’s thighs.

“I’m going to tell you once.” Phil said softly, barely audible over the music, “Your hands stay behind your back, you do not pull your mouth off my cock without permission, you breath when I tell you to breath.”

“Yes sir.” They both said it, but Finn’s response was drowned out by Phil’s cock pushing into his throat hard. Finn gagged, his whole body reacting to Phil’s cock pushing past his gag point, his eyes watering, making the mascara Rae had put on him run down his cheeks. Phil fucked Finn’s face, keeping count in his mind for Finn’s breath. He slid his cock right down Finn’s throat until he gagged, trying to pull back, his hands going to Phil’s thighs.

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went almost this hard often, almost every time he started to throat fuck her. Whereas Phil rarely throat fucked her at all past a few gentle thrusts, so this was him doing it properly for once. Her nose slammed into his pelvis on every thrust, tears streamed down her eyes, she drooled all over herself. And her cunt was wet and aching for cock. Finn took a deep breath and tried to loosen his muscles as Phil turned back to him. He looked up into Phil’s eyes and tried to make his body, his muscles not react to his air supply being violently cut off by a cock being shoved down his throat. He still gagged and retched, but it was noticeably less, and Finn knew he was onto something with this. Now he needed to emulate Rae’s mind when she was getting throat fucked; the trance–like look on her face. Rae knew how to be properly submissive; Finn was still learning. Even in the times she had tied him down and caned him, or other similar moments he had urged her on, or struggled, or taken back control. He realised now how unfair that had been; agreeing to be submissive in a situation was as much a contract as being dominant. You were playing roles to create a fantasy for your sexual pleasure. And he enjoyed being submissive, but he had no patience for waiting and being truly edged like subs were, so he’d always step outside of the sub role. He would learn not to do that. If he agreed to be sub, he would be sub. He made a mental note to make it his business to be sub more often when they played with power. Finn thought of how he’d felt when Phil had been squeezing his balls, and how painful that would have been had something gone wrong, and how much he had trusted Phil. He let go of himself and trusted Phil not to kill him, to give him enough breaths, to push him and hurt him, but not too much. He felt his mind going blank, his whole body focussing in on the reaming his throat was getting. He felt his nose touching Phil’s pelvis for the first time and his mind came back to him. He gagged violently, working hard to not pull off Phil’s cock, but Phil pulled him off and slapped his face. Finn realised that his hands had come to Phil’s thighs and he put them back behind his back quickly and opened his mouth back up. Phil took a moment to gather himself, was that too far? It didn’t seem to be, and Rae had talked about slaps outside the chapel, in here, they were playing parts. He loved Finn, but Finn was his sub tonight, they’d all agreed to this, and until he heard the safe word, he was gonna push them both; it’s what they wanted, it’s what this kind of sexual play was all about. He spat in Finn’s face.

“Keep your hands behind your back.” There was a threat in Phil’s voice and Finn felt a surge of sexual excitement.

“Yes sir.” He said huskily. Phil turned to Rae and started to fuck her throat hard. After a few minutes of fucking Rae’s throat brutally hard, her mascara tears dripping from her chin onto her breasts, half of the audience still watching them instead of the show, Phil pulled out and pushed their heads to his balls. They both started to lap at his balls while he jerked his cock.

“Mouths closed.” He told them and they both looked up at him with their mouths closed, trying to say yes sir with their lips firmly together. He came all over their faces and collapsed back into the seat.

“Rae you can have the privilege of sucking me dry since you kept your hands behind your back.”

“Yes sir.” Her tone clearly said thank you and Finn looked on longingly as Rae lowered her mouth to his cock.

“Don’t get cum on me.”

“Yes sir.” She sucked his cock, taking the last few drops of cum left into her mouth happily.

“Watch the show.” He ordered calmly as he put his cock back in his pants.

“Yes sir.” They both turned on their knees, their hands behind their backs, chest out, shoulders square, chin up, back straight. And cum dribbling down their faces onto their chests. Both had red
lipstick smeared across their mouths and long black tear tracks down their faces. They both had messed up hair and drool all over them. Phil sat back comfortably, a slight smile on his face and watched the show.

On the stage Alex was fucking Gina while she sucked Tom. Phil still found that he much preferred his own imagination to porn. But a live sex show did have a certain charm, especially since there was no director to film it from the male gaze; the male bodies were equally as sexual on the stage as the female ones. And he could smell it. That made live sex shows infinitely more interesting than pornography. He decided that the next time he did this he’d need a cane of some sort; Rae’s shoulders were starting to round, he’d like to gently tap her with the cane as a reminder. Instead he moved his foot and tapped her arm. Rae instantly straightened her back, thrusting her shoulders back.

Rae loved this stuff; the pain in her knees, her muscles already aching, her throat stinging, the cum trickling down her face. It was the control, the waiting for release; she could feel just how wet her pussy was, and the ache was spreading wonderfully through her body. She felt like her cunt was swollen with desire. She’d been through this many times now, both at home and at the club, always rougher and more domineering at the club, Finn enjoyed tormenting and edging her. And she liked letting him; she found a calm patience in the frantic aching desire to cum.

Beside her Finn was physically ok; he was used to discipline and his muscles were fine with the straight back pose, although his knees were going to ache tomorrow. It was finding peace and patience with the ache in his balls that he was struggling with. He was used to having instant gratification when it came to his cock; unless redgate was about. And then his bad moods had become the stuff of legends in the gang; he did not do well without sex since he had been with Rae and it was even worse now he had Phil too. His cock throbbed in his pants, pushing uncomfortably against the material of his jeans. He wanted to throat fuck Phil and Rae exactly the same way he had been. He tried to stop himself from groaning with frustrated desire. On the stage Gina was being held up by Tom, her legs wrapped around his waist as he plunged his cock into her pussy, Alex was fucking her arse. Finn tasted the cum on his lips as he licked them with desire.

“Masturbate, don’t cum.” It was like Phil could read their thoughts and chose his orders to bring the most frustration possible.

“Yes sir.” Finn unzipped his jeans as he saw Rae slide her hand under her skirt.

“Keep your eyes on the stage.”

“Yes sir.”

Finn saw some of the tension leave Rae’s body, she’d obviously started to masturbate. He started to stroke his cock, very slowly because the urge to cum was already too high. He felt his body become tenser as he felt the pleasure spread through his body, but knew there would be no release.

Rae’s body soon became tense again as she grew close to coming but had to stop herself.

Tom came in Alex’s mouth and Alex in Tom’s, Gina watching on as they kissed passionately, cum dribbling down their chins. They both turned to Gina at the same time and grabbed her, making her laugh as they started to kiss her too.

It had ended up being far tamer than Phil had expected, especially given the people around him fucking on the dance floor, in the seats, in the dark corners. The way they were dressed and fucked each other had made him think he’d be seeing more BDSM. He had no idea that Gina, Tom and Alex had been the entrée to a three course meal.
A woman in hot pink latex walked past with information on the performers that had just been on and various sex necessities. Phil called her over and looked in her vendor tray. There were condoms in all sorts of colours and flavours, disinfectant wet wipes that Phil picked up and gave a sly grin when he read the back. These would be excellent for after anal sex, especially if he wanted to throat fuck them again.

“How much?”

“Ten quid sir.” Phil cocked an eyebrow.

“I see where you make your money.” He started pull his wallet.

“Yes sir.” She agreed, “That will go on your tab. Name?”

“Phil…”

“Last name sir?”

“O’Daire.” Her eyes lit up.

“Always happy to serve an O’Daire… in any way you wish sir.” She said but saw his ‘not for sharing stamp’ and changed tact. “Have you seen the brochure, we have stock you can buy.” She handed it to Phil and he looked through the brochure; a lot of it was things they already had back at the flat. But he saw the glass butt plug and looked at Finn and Rae.

“How much for this?” He asked, forgetting that everything they got was on the house.

“Fifty quid, but for you it’s on the house sir.”

“Even if I wanted three of them?”

“Of course sir.” She smiled seductively, “Will there be anything else?” Phil pointed at some nipple clamps and she nodded.

“Good choice sir, three of those too?”

“Yes.” He continued flicking through the catalogue until he got to the porn videos of the shows. “That’s all.”

“Excellent,” She answered, “You can pick them up at the desk on the way out or we can bring them out to you sir.”

“Bring two of each out to me and leave the other of both at the desk.”

“Yes sir.” She curtsied and continue on through the audience.

“Go get two bottles of water and a vodka lemon.” He considered for a moment, “And both have three shots of vodka straight. You have five minutes.”

“Yes sir.” They both crawled towards the bar, carefully winding between the dancing crowd. Phil looked at his watch and timed them. He saw them get to the bar and kneel, trying to get the bartender’s attention. The bartender was brutally brusque with them, calling them both bitch and whore. Rae and Finn looked at each other, huge grins on their faces as they swallowed down the triple shot, both instantly feeling the burn in their stomachs.

Coming back with the drinks was the tricky part, and they had to crawl just on their knees. Phil put
the drinks on the chair beside him, along with some packages that had been brought to him while they were gone. Rae and Finn took their positions beside him without a word, hands behind their backs, their heads happily spinning from alcohol.

“I got these.” He held the wet wipes between them and they both looked, understanding the meaning of him having these.

“Yes sir.”

“Turn to me.” The both moved on their knees towards him.

“Yes sir.”

He took out the nipple clamp and attached one to Rae’s nipple. She gasped and looked up at him; they were painful but wonderfully so. There was a chain between the two clamps and when he attached the other one she looked like she was adorned in the most beautiful jewellery. Finn eyed Rae’s tits lustily, wanting to pull on those clamps and hear her gasp with pain. And then Finn grunted as a clamp closed on his nipple, he saw Rae looking at him with the same dirty lust. He looked down at the chain between his two nipples, falling over his upper abdominal muscles. The constant pressure on his nipple sent shoots of pleasure through his torso. Phil pulled on Rae’s chain slightly and she gasped. He pulled on Finn’s and got the same response.

“Most excellent.” He mused.

“Yes sir.” They both sounded slightly breathless.

“Stand up and put your hands on the edge of the stage.”

“Yes sir.” They both stood, groaning slightly to straighten out their knees and put their hands on the edge of the stage in front of them.

“Show me your fuckholes.”

“Yes sir.” Rae pulled her dress up and Finn lower his pants, first loosening, then tightening his belt around his upper thighs so his pants stayed somewhat up.

“Bend.”

“Yes sir.”

Phil looked around the audience, there will still a lot of people watching them as the stage was wiped clean and various props were brought out; a chair was bolted to the centre of the stage. He put lubricant on his fingers and slid them into Finn. Finn groaned loudly as Phil found his prostate and rubbed it, pre-cum dripped from his hard cock, hanging out the front of his lowered jeans. Phil lubed up the first butt plug and pushed it against Finn’s anus. It slid in much easier than a cock because of its smooth surface. Phil watched, fascinated, as Finn’s arse opened for the butt plug, Finn grunting with pleasure and strain at the widest point of the butt plug. But as soon as the widest part was gone past the rest of the plug seemed to be engulfed by his arse easily, except for the stopper at the end which stuck out beautifully. Finn was left panting and gasping as he got used to the feel of it in his arse.

“Kneel fuckmeat.”

“Yes sir.” Finn knelt back in his spot, the butt plug moving inside of him exquisitely. It pressed into his prostate putting him into a heightened state of pleasure; his cock was dripping pre-cum and
he felt like the slightest brush against his glans would make him explode. He took a deep breath and tried to find the calm place in this desperate urgency, folding his hands behind his back and watching as Phil slowly slid the butt plug into Rae’s arse. Finn felt like he’d ooze his orgasm out just watching that butt plug slide into his girl’s arse. Phil could hear Rae gasping over the music as the plug got to its widest point and again noticed how many eyes were on them. And then the plug was in. Rae was panting heavily; every move set a fire in her flesh. The plug was pressing against her sensitive spots constantly and her pussy felt more swollen and desperate for cock. Right now she’d probably rub her cunt on Phil’s leg like a leg-humping doggy and cum in less than a minute.

“Kneel.”

“Yes sir.” She gasped and took up her position, every movement making her body twitch, pushing her thighs together as she knelt made her moan like a wanton whore and both Finn and Phil grinned slyly at her, ideas forming in their heads; anal play was definitely good for edging their girl, she was a mess of desire right now.

The music changed as Phil picked up his drink and settled back comfortably, wrapping Rae on the head hard when she squirmed, sending shivers of near orgasmic pleasure through her body. She instantly froze and straightened her spine and shoulders. Finn was in almost as bad a state as Rae; Phil was a master at pushing them both. The cum drying on his face that he could smell and taste, the sting in his throat, the nipple clamps, the but plug, Phil’s calm authority; Finn was in deep trouble, he was desperate to cum, and he knew there was still a few hours to go.
Chapter Summary

this is pretty much just sex - skip it if you're not into it

‘Pony’ by Abbe May

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq-3Ceuk3YI

The things I will do to you... Juices flowing down your thigh... gonna get nasty baby...

Three incredibly beautiful women walked from the change room, each with a different body shape, different ethnicity, one of them was an amputee. They were naked, except for a black collar with a karabiner ring attached.

Both Finn and Rae cocked and eyebrow. They knew that this was Dominick. The women sat on the edge of the stage, one opposite Phil, her legs spread, she made eye contact with Phil, and unlike the man on the other side of the stage that had been targeted by one of the other women, Phil did not look away. He held her gaze, and she licked her lips, obviously turned on to have met her match.

But the music changed again and all three women looked towards the back stage area. Phil’s eyes also went there.

Dominick walked from back stage, bare foot in black leather pants and no shirt. Behind him a man in a full suit strode formally, juxtaposed with Dominick’s cocky strut. His arrogance rolled off him, but it wasn’t that that had Phil staring; his resemblance to Finn was remarkable. He was taller, a little more slender, darker haired, blue eyed, but the facial structure was so similar that Phil couldn’t look away from him.

Every time Rae and Finn had been there Dominick had addressed them, always offering a threesome, but they had always refused. He wanted to fuck Finn because it would be like fucking himself. And he considered Rae to be a remarkable beauty. The first time he had seen them he had remarked that his mother must have had triplets; he was a twin, but his twin was not in this business.

He always scanned the audience; sometimes he took a woman from the audience to fuck. He saw them and approached with a very amused grin.

“Well isn’t this delicious.” He looked at Rae, took in her breasts and the mess on her face and then looked at Finn, his eyes crawling down to his erect cock. Lastly his eyes took in Phil, who had maintained a calm demeanour despite being quite taken by Dominick. “Oh my.” Dominick licked the corner of his mouth and put a hand under Phil’s chin. Phil let himself be guided to stand, just centimetres from Dominick, his eyes drinking Phil in, his breath tickling Phil’s face, his lips almost on Phil’s. Rae and Finn both watched from the corners of their yes, both oddly delighted that Dominick approved of Phil, even though they had no intention of fucking him; he was incredibly
attractive and his interest in them was unbelievably flattering.

“I think my offer for a threesome will need to become an offer for a foursome.” He ran a hand down Phil’s chest and stopped at his belt. He clicked and the man in the suit pulled a card out of his pocket. Dominick slid his hand into Phil’s pocket, the card in his palm, his fingertips seeking out Phil’s erection. He gently stroked Phil’s cock through his pocket as he left his business card in Phil’s pocket. “I will fuck you three until you weep from it.” Dominick was not used to being refused and his continued rejection form those two had been quite a frustration for him.

“I’ll keep that in mind.” Phil replied and sat down, his head now level with Dominick’s cock, he looked up at Dominick through his eyebrows, “As I’m sure you will.”

“Oh you know how to play.” Dominick grinned and turned without another word, jumping up onto the stage. Phil took a subtle deep breath; he didn’t know how to play, he was acting a role. And having a great time doing it. Dominick stood behind the woman in front of them and ran his fingers in her hair, grabbing a handful. She instantly went limp, allowing him to move her as he wished. Phil was going to enjoy watching this Finn doppelganger, who was obviously dominant. He pushed the woman away from him after pulling her to him, his eyes on Phil. Dominick went to the centre of the stage and looked out across the huge audience and took a small mic out of his pocket and put it on his ear.

“All participants in my show are consenting adults, safe words are in use and are respected at all times.” His voice was cultured and smooth. Phil was impressed that he had said that, and then suddenly realised that his show needed a warning like that whereas Gina, Tom and Alex had not. He seemed to dismiss the audience as he sat down in the chair, it almost looked like a throne, and cocked one leg over and arm of the chair, leaning back. The largest of the women sat at his feet, gently rubbing her face on his shin. He ignored her and rapped his knuckles on the wooden arm of the chair twice. The man in the suit suddenly reefed the woman missing a hand by the hair to her feet, she cried out in pain and he slapped her face hard. Phil’s mouth opened in surprise. He had slapped Finn’s face but not with anything close to that force. He noticed that the music had hushed to a soft background grind, and almost everyone was watching now; this was one of the main shows. The music being softer only served to highlight the sound of her whimpering as the man in the suit slapped her again. But in between the pain whimpers, groans of excitement and pleasure where clearly discernible. Phil closed his mouth and rearranged his face to show nonchalant interest. He very quickly realised that the way Rae and Finn played here had been shaped by this performer and he had been worrying about nothing; his desires would fit in just fine here. He watched as the man dragged the woman by her hair to the hook closest to them and attached the Karabiner ring on her collar to it, pushing her face into the ground and leaving her arse high in the air. They had an excellent view of her from here and when the man in the suit brought his hand crashing down on her arse much harder than Rae had ever experienced she groaned loudly with desire, her whole body desperate to cum. Phil tapped the top of her head hard.

“Not a sound from you.”

“Yes sir.” She answered and Phil enjoyed the desperate undertone to her voice. He had brought both Finn and Rae to the brink and now he intended to keep them there for as long as possible.

The woman’s arse in front of them was growing redder and redder as the man spanked her, even as she scrambled to evade his blows he kept going and her groan grew. She did not call the safe word, she just moaned loudly and cried out in pain and seemingly tried to get away, although Rae suspected that struggle was part of the show. She couldn’t imagine trying to get away from a spanking like that. She could only imagine begging for more, which the woman now did, screaming out for it to be harder, even as she flinched away, unable to go far since her collar tied
her down, her face pressed into the stage. Rae understood that; it was going to hurt, and that made you flinch, but that pain was going to bring so much pleasure if you could just handle the initial moment of pain.

Dominick double knocked the chair arm again and the man stopped spanking her, leaving them all with the sounds of her shuddering gasps.

“You want it that hard fuckhole?”

“Yes sir.” Rae answered with a saucy, pleading tone. Phil felt a sadistic grin come to his lips when he heard that tone. The man pulled the woman that was sitting facing them up by the hair and pushed her down onto her knees, pressing her face into the arse of the other woman. She started to rim the other woman enthusiastically. After a while Dominick knocked again and the man in the suit undid his fly and pulled his cock out, leaving himself fully clothed. He grabbed the woman and place her cheek on the back of the tied down woman. He slid his cock into the tied down woman’s arse, straight up to the hilt with no pauses and she cried out. But he did not stopped, he merely started to fuck her at a staggeringly hard and fast pace. She grunted and groaned, squealing and squirming, but the collar and his hands kept her in place as he fucked her arse hard. And then he pulled out of her arse and shoved his cock straight down the throat of the other woman and began to fuck her face as hard as he had fucked the other woman. Phil glanced at the disinfectant moist towelettes he’d gotten; designed for arse to mouth scenarios where the person having to put the cock in their mouth wanted a clean cock, not a cock straight from an arse. Each towelette could wipe a cock clean approximately 20 times before needing to be thrown out. Because Phil wanted to go from fucking one of their arses to the other’s mouth like this, but without the risk of faecal contamination that doing it like this carried. But given that the performers weren’t using lubricant, Phil supposed they had done a disinfectant anal douche beforehand which had left her prepped for anal sex. He pocketed the towelettes, quickly pulling out the card Dominick had given him and seeing the phone number and email contact details on it he slid it back into his pocket and looked back up at the stage.

Phil found that he watched the sex show with an interest for gathering ideas for what to do to Rae and Finn.

“Fuck. Don’t cum.” He said and they both looked at him surprised. “If I have to repeat myself…”

“Yes sir.” Rae answered hurriedly and turned on her knees, bending over and lifting her skirt.

“Yes sir.” Finn answered and moved forward, sliding his cock into Rae’s cunt. Phil watched them both have to pause, their entire bodies twitching with an almost unstoppable wave of pleasure. Phil put his feet up on Rae’s back and felt how tense she was, desperately trying not to cum, her cunt was so wet that it literally dripped. Phil watched the struggle and strain in Finn’s face as he took a few deep breaths and slowly thrust, barely daring to move. His whole body twitched and a spasm of almost orgasm clenched his abdomen. He had to stop again, and looking down at his cock in Rae, that butt plug stopper sitting out of her arse did nothing to help his self-control.

Phil sipped on his drink, finishing it as he happily watched Dominick bend over the fat woman and fuck her pussy hard, but skilfully; she was screaming with impending orgasm within minutes, so of course he stopped and made her drop to her knees for a violent face fuck. Phil had to enjoy a man that edged his lovers. Phil noticed that Dominick did not slap his sub as often, nor did he physically force her, he spoke and she obeyed immediately; his voice seductive and gentle, making people want to obey him. Phil felt that he had a lot in common with Dominick in terms of how he played dominant.
In front of him Finn had managed a grand total of five thrusts, both of their bodies shuddering with near orgasm. He pulled on Finn’s nipple clamp chain and Finn did a sharp, hissing intake of air.

As much as Phil admired Dominick, and enjoyed the agreed upon brutal violence of the unnamed man in a suit, he had seen enough and wanted to play with his subs again; his cock was throbbing and hard.

“Hands on the stage, bent over.” He ordered softly and Rae and Finn again both hesitated; there was a show on right now; Dominick was on that stage. It was one thing to put their hands on the stage when it was empty, but this was another thing all together. “You don’t want to know what will happen if I have to repeat myself.”

“Yes sir.” They both stood and assumed the position. Dominick, who was again sitting; following his usual pattern of taking it in turns with a rougher man or men, looked over at them with an amused grin. No one had ever dared touch one of his stages without permission.

A tense, charged energy filled the room as everyone wondered what Dominick would do. Phil stood and raised his hand, an almost arrogant, crooked smile on his face. He bought his hand crashing down on Rae’s arse making her cry out. Pulling her hair back hard so she was looked straight at Dominick as he spanked each cheek ten times, so hard that his hand was hurting after just a few slaps. The man in the suit looked between Phil and Dominick, but continued to thrust into the tied woman. Dominick watched Phil spank Rae, turned on by what he was seeing, aroused by Phil’s demeanour and power. He wanted to be in Phil’s place, and from the look on Phil’s face he knew that. Phil repeated the treatment on Finn, his eyes daring Dominick to stop him. But Dominick watched, his fingers drumming against his thigh, his curiosity and desire well and truly piqued by this upstart and his perfect subs.

Phil slowly slid the butt plug out of Rae’s arse, handing it to her. His eyes never leaving Dominick’s as he took his cock out and slid it into Rae’s arse. She gasped as he slid in to the hilt, able to do so because of the butt plug having prepped her. The man in the suit was fucking his subs arse right in front of Phil and he looked over at Dominick again, who was still too enchanted by Phil to do anything but watch him. Phil fucked Rae, hard, her hands on the stage, a butt plug in one of them, her eyes on the suited man’s cock as it slid into the tied woman’s arsehole. It was incredible to watch what was being done to her, being done to someone else. Dominick nodded, the two dominant men truly admiring each other, Dominick allowing his stage to be shared for the first time. He was dominant over everyone on the stage, including the man in the suit, so as soon as he nodded, Phil’s co-dominance was accepted. But that wasn’t enough for Phil. He reached forward and knocked the stage twice. All eyes turned to him, still fucking Rae and he nodded at Dominick, who gave him a bemused grin, clearly turned on by his sheer gall.

“I love impudence.” Dominick said, his mic sending his words around the room. His tone showed that he obviously had not been challenged enough lately; everyone simply bowing to his will without much of a fight. Dominick’s eyes stayed on Phil’s, a silent moment passing between them, Dominick on the stage, Phil beside it, the fact that Dominick was on a higher platform did nothing to give him more power than Phil. And that was impressive on Phil’s behalf. Phil gave an arrogant nod, challenging Dominick to do as he was doing. Dominick drummed his fingers against his thigh in thought and stood up, his eyes still on Phil, the room was silent, save for the soft grinding music, everyone watched Phil and Dominick. And through it all Phil kept plunging into Rae, his eyes cockily appraising Dominick. He clicked and one of his subs bent in front of him. Dominick nodded to Phil and slid into her arsehole, all three men now fucking a woman anally.

Rae was barely able to keep coherent thoughts; getting fucked in the arse always made her desperate for vaginal sex, and this time was no different. Except that she was already in an
incredibly heightened state of arousal, and the nipple clamps were doing all sorts of things to her… and Phil’s power… now that was something else.

“Plug.”

“Yes sir.” Rae handed him the butt plug and he withdrew from her and easily slid the butt plug back in, slipping Finn’s out, Finn nearly whimpered with anticipation. Phil handed the butt plug to him and slid right into Finn’s arse then double knocked the stage again. There was an audible gasp as Phil cocked his head in challenge to Dominick. It was known that Dominick was pansexual, but with a preference for women; only very special men turned him on. His shows were almost always heterosexual. Phil cocked his head again, holding his hands out in a more obvious challenge as he plunged into Finn’s arse.

Dominick looked down at him from up on his stage, everyone in the place was glued to the action, the power struggle, this newcomer was incredibly sexy and no one had seen Dominick interested in prey like this for some time; other than Rae and Finn of course, but they had never thought to challenge him like this. He nodded once and the man in the suit looked surprised, but when Dominick clicked his fingers he obeyed, lowering his pants and bending down in front of him, bracing his hands on the back of Dominick’s chair. Dominick motioned to the back stage area and a whisper when through the audience, no one could remember anything like this happening before. Alex came out with lubricant for Dominick, and sat in the front row, several of the other performers coming out with them. Dominick prepped the suited man’s arsehole and slowly slid into him, his eyes never leaving Phil’s. They heard Gina laugh delightedly, sitting beside Alex as Dominick nodded to Phil, acquiescing to his will for the second time.

Finn’s cock was still dripping pre-cum and Phil’s cock sliding in and out of his arse was incredible, he dug his fingers into the stage, fighting back the urge to physically overthrow Phillip and fuck him till he came. But it wasn’t Finn’s willpower that made him stop, it was Phil’s quiet authority. Finn could easily physically overpower Phil, but right now, this character he had created in this place, Finn was completely at his mercy, and he was loving every frustrating minute of it. He watched Dominick’s cock sliding into the suited man’s arse and was struck by the fact that the exact same thing was happening to him. He looked at Rae, both of them coming to the realisation at the same time. This hadn’t really been a power play by Phil; well it hadn’t been seeking power for the sake of having power. He’d done this for them. For the pleasure of watching someone getting what they were getting. That’s what a good dom did; give their subs amazing experiences.

Dominick motioned for the women to play together, and they happily started to kiss each other’s bodies, the one woman still tied to the stage.

Rae looked around the room and saw Pandora looking at them with a keen eye. They hadn’t seen Pandora since the first time they had been here; she usually did other, more kinky nights. She was sitting with two women, a huge black woman, well over six foot tall, a corset pulling tightly at her midsection, much like Pandora. On the other side of Pandora was a small woman with stylish glasses and purple nails. Rae felt that she looked familiar somehow and tried to think of where she had seen her before. It was when Elsa came and sat next to her, handing her a drink and saying something in her ear, both of them laughing that Rae remembered that this was Lys, she had seen her with Elsa before. And then the realisation of how she and Finn and Phil looked and what they were doing coupled with the fact that Elsa had obviously just arrived crashed into Rae. She felt a stab of panic as Pandora turned in her seat to speak to Elsa, obviously explaining what had happened, she pointed over at them and Elsa’s eyes followed her direction. Her eyes met Rae’s and they widened slightly as she took in Rae, Finn, and Phil and Dominick, their gazes still locked on each other. She shook her head, bemused and said something to Pandora. Rae made a slight sound and Finn looked over at her, seeing where she was looking he looked over and made a similar noise.
to what Rae had just made when he saw Elsa looking back at him. He had once slammed her up
against a wall, wanting her body, and now his boyfriend was fucking his arse violently in the
middle of a sex show club, half the audience watching them instead of the actual show. Elsa raised
a glass to them and looked up at the stage. She knew Dominick well, she had had sex with him
many times and his twin brother, Rafael, had been her first love. Unless you counted the person
she lost her virginity to, then it was a guy back in Australia that she didn’t like to think about
because it made her heart hurt. Seeing Dominick, and Finn for that matter, was a reminder of Raf.
But she didn’t mind being reminded of Raf. Sometimes.

Phil reached into his pocket, still thrusting into Finn violently, noticing Finn’s fingers curling
around the edge of the stage even as he kept his eyes on Dominick. He opened the towelettes one
handed in his pocket and then pulled one out, wiping his cock he pulled Rae by her hair and then
slammed his cock in her throat hard. Finn looked over his shoulder to see what was happening and
groaned with desire. Rae sunk to her knees and went limp, letting him use her mouth as he wanted,
er her hands behind her back, the butt plug making her almost incoherently desperate for a cock in her
cunt. Getting throated like this had the same effect on her she found; she wanted her pussy to be
pounded like this. She saw the towelette laid across Finn’s back and knew she could trust him to
not break her hard boundary of nothing that had been in an arse going directly in her mouth. So she
just looked up at him adoringly while he reamed her throat. He hit her gag spot deliberately and
she brought her hands to his thighs.

“Hands behind back. Don’t make me tell you again.” She tried to say ‘yes sir’ around his cock
and put her hands behind her back. But she remembered that Finn had gotten a delicious looking
face slap for that transgression. So she quite deliberately took her hands out from behind her back;
made a show of it so he knew what she was doing as he looked down at her. She put her hands
firmly on his thighs and he shook his head.

“You wanna be punished.” She made a sound in the affirmative in the back of her throat, his cock
still in her mouth. “Alright.” He yanked her head off his cock and slapped her face. She groaned
delightedly and took her hands off his thighs only to put them back on. He gave her a disbelieving
look and spat in her face. She groaned loudly, her cunt aching more than ever. She squeezed his
thighs and he slapped her face again. She put her hands behind her back and he rammed his cock
down her throat again, but this time she was eagerly doing the work for him and he groaned
appreciatively, his fingers slipping into Finn to keep him on edge as he rubbed his prostate.

Phil went back to fucking Finn’s arse and Rae stayed kneeling where she was expectantly, her eyes
closed, her mouth open, ready for him, trusting him completely. Phil swapped between Finn’s arse
and Rae’s mouth several times, always carefully wiping down his cock for Rae, and loving the
contrast between Finn’s anus and Rae’s mouth. He put the butt plug back in Finn and spanked him
very hard on each cheek several times. Making him cry out in pain, and sheer desperation to be
allowed to cum; right now Finn would do almost anything to be allowed to cum.

“Swap.”

“Yes sir.” Rae leaned over, her hands on the stage and Finn knelt, his mouth instantly open and
Phil plunged his cock into Finn’s mouth, thrusting hard, one hand on the back of Finn’s head, the
other pulling Rae’s butt plug out, ready to fuck her again.

Rae was finding it harder to focus and stay calm and patient. She was going to start begging soon
and she knew it. On the stage Dominick had abandoned the man in the suit, leaving him gasping
and clutching the chair. He looked out at the audience, his erection glistening in the lights. Rae
saw someone else order his sub to put her hands on the stage and Dominick instantly spoke some
stern words and the sub removed her hands, the dom put in his place, making it clear that touching
Dominick’s stage was something special for Phil, Rae and Finn only. Dominick languidly walked over to the women and unhooked the tied down woman, using her hair he manoeuvred her to be facing Rae, their faces just inches apart. He looked into Rae’s eyes as he slid into the woman’s arse and Rae eye fucked Dominick as Phil continued to grind into her arse. She could feel the other woman’s breath on her face and turned her eyes to look into hers. She had a look of frustrated bliss and Rae knew that she was loving this, but like Rae, was desperate to cum. Rae found herself wanting to touch her; she was so beautiful and so in need of kissing. But she wouldn’t take her hands off the stage without permission. But right now, if Phil ordered her to get on that stage and be fucked by all five people up there, she would gladly do it. Being this horny was not good for her decision making skills; she’d fuck anybody right now. And Phil knew it.

Finn watched Phil’ cock as it slipped in and out of Rae, he was getting more and more desperate to cum, to feel the inside of Rae or Phil. Although right now, he’d happily fuck just about anyone; Finn knew that he’d pushed Rae to this point before, but it was the first time he’d been pushed to this point. Usually when he became desperate for sex he became obsessed with Rae, transfixed on her. But he’d also never been sub for so long. Usually after an hour or so of this sort of torture from Rae he’d take control again; he knew that sometimes that was her intent, but he also knew that sometimes it wasn’t, and he promised himself to be more patient and submit more when that’s what she wanted. Because this was incredible. Rae had made him beg before, but she had goaded him into begging, with this, he knew Phil would punish him for speaking, but he knew he’d eventually beg anyway. It was the mental control required to be a sub that was really getting to Finn, but he did enjoy the challenge of watching Phil fuck Rae, just waiting to have his mouth used, and get no pleasure for himself.

Phil withdrew from Rae, cleaned and ground his cock into Finn’s mouth. On the stage, Dominick matched him, without cleaning, and the man in the suit was much better at deep throat than Finn.

“Oh you’ve got to train him.” Dominick purred and Phil nodded once, slowly pushing his whole length down Finn’s throat, causing his eyes to water wonderfully. He held Finn on his cock and looked at his watch nonchalantly, timing how long it took for Finn to tap out. After 30 seconds Finn started to move slightly, trying to let air out of his lungs, his eyes rolled back in his head. He pulled back slightly but Phil kept him held on his cock until, at 43 seconds Finn tapped Phil’s thigh three times; their safe word when their mouths were full. Immediately Phil pulled Finn off his cock and watched him gasp for air for a moment before gently stroking his cheek, messed with mascara, lipstick, tears and semen.

“You alright?” He asked gently, his lips near Finn’s ear, Finn nodded, still gasping for air. After a few more gasps Finn turned his eyes to Phil, a lusty respect in them.

“That were fucking hot.” Finn whispered. “How long?”

“43 seconds.”

“That’s not nearly good enough.” Finn panted, “Gotta be at least a minute.”

“I’ll get you there.” Phil said gently, but he had no intention of pushing Finn too much in that regard tonight; he’d end up passing out if he did it too much. Phil kissed Finn’s lips gently, Rae looking over her shoulder at them, she had seen the tap and was concerned. “D’you need to stop for now?”

“Maybe just give me a minute?”

“Of course.” Phil stroked his hair, everyone in the club seeing the love and respect between them. On the stage, Dominick continued fucking his man’s throat, but his eyes were on that trio. People
in the club were glad to see the safety and boundaries of the sub being put above the hard-on of the
dom; good BDSM relied on that. Dominick looked over at Pandora who gave a particularly
approving nod; these two veterans had seen too many dom-wanna-be’s disrespect safe words
and tap outs in their time, so it was nice to see a young dom, just starting to explore this world
understand this most basic element of this world. Just last week Dominick had had a performer
have to stop completely in the middle of a show, not stop for a breather and start again, but
completely stop. Both Pandora and Dominick had seen dominants respond violently in these cases,
but Dominick had very quickly responded with care and concern; he loved his subs, this was a
game they played, his subs weren’t actually lesser human beings in his mind. He had taken her
backstage and stayed with her, leaving his three suited men to finish his show for him. Several
people had commented that Dominick should have pushed her through her block and mistress had
had them permanently expelled from the club; there was no room for that in BDSM. The safe
word, the tap out was to be respected at all times.

Rae turned and stroked Finn’s hair too.

“Y’alright?” She asked Finn.

“Aye.” He grinned. “Fucker deliberately brought me to a tap out.” He looked up at Phil and Phil
gave a shy grin.

“Might have.” He agreed slyly.

“And it were hot as hell. And I’m gonna push you like that too.” Finn said.

“I do hope so.” Phil returned; part of the fun of being a sub was to be pushed.

“Pretty sure it’s Rae’s turn.” Finn noted and Phil cocked an eyebrow at Rae who nodded, kneeling
and opening her mouth.

“Let’s get your plug back in.” He said to Rae.

“Yes sir.” She handed it to him and stood, bent over in front of him. As soon as he was done
putting it back in her she was on her knees again.

“Hands behind backs.”

“Yes sir.” They both complied and Rae looked up at Phil lustfully while Finn took the moment to
gather himself again. That experience had been incredible for Finn. He had never doubted that
Phil would stop, but he had wanted to stay as long as he could, refusing to tap out even when his
instinct was to fight and pull off the cock. The speed with which Phil had responded to the tap out
reinforced Finn’s absolute trust in Phil, and his tender touch after made him know that he could
always safe word Phil and have his wishes and boundaries respected. This made Finn feel more
inclined to push his own boundaries and explore, he knew he was safe with Phil and Rae. They’d
help him push, but they’d always stop when he needed; that’s what this whole thing was about.

Phil fucked Rae’s throat deeply and Dominick made an approving noise at Rae’s skills and clicked,
one of the women rose to her knees and opened her mouth, the suited man was now discarded.
When they weren’t being used by their master, Dominick’s subs put their heads on the floor, their
arses as high in the air as they could.

Phil pushed his full length into Rae’s throat and looked at his watch, Finn’s eyes alight with
excitement as he watched Rae’s eyes watering. Rae watched Phil timing her and went to her calm
place, loosening her muscles and stilling her mind. Being a sub was the only time her mind ever
shut up. She let her jaw go slack and when she started to feel the pressure in her lungs to let out the air she had captured in them she tried to just sit with that discomfort for as long as she could, her eyes rolling back and closing. Finn again noticed how calm Rae was in submission; something he wanted to learn. At 72 seconds she pulled back ready to stop, but Phil, pushing her, kept her held there until she tapped at 80 seconds. Finn shook his head in admiration as he watched Phil checking in with Rae, who was gasping but started to suck his cock again immediately. Rae was used to this with Finn; he’d been pushing her breath control and deep throat skills for a long time now, often without realising.

Phil found Rae’s insistent mouth after tapping out, her hands already back behind her back to be unbelievably sexy and he gave up trying to soothe her; she was fine and the way she was sucking him, so ferociously, with so much desire, was going to make him cum. He pulled Finn in closer and Finn started to lick Phil’s balls, sucking them into his mouth. Phil blocked out the entire club, his head thrown back, his eyes closed and focussed on the pleasure they were eagerly giving him. Phil’s groans of orgasm punctuated the sounds of Dominick starting to fuck his subs again. Phil looked down and saw Rae and Finn kissing around the head of his cock, lapping up his cum.

“Eat every drop.”

“Yes sir.” Rae practically purred and Finn’s voice was equally as lusty.

Phil collapsed back in his seat. He’d cum multiple times in a day a lot, but this was a particularly draining setting, and his orgasms had built so spectacularly that he knew he only had maybe two or three more in him before he’d need to curl up and sleep, and he had aftercare to attend to. Rae and Finn knelt beside him and he handed Rae a bottle of water and Finn the other.

“Have as much as you need.”

“Yes sir.” They both drank a fair bit of water; it was hot and sweaty business being a sub. When Rae was done, she handed her bottle back to Phil, who drank his fill from the remains of Rae and Finn’s water.

“Go get another round of drinks.” Phil said, “Same order.” Rae and Finn crawled off into the audience, people moving aside for them, eying them respectfully, lustfully. On the stage Dominick was coming into his man’s mouth, then clicked for him to share it with two of the ladies, the other started to suck his cock again; drawing out every drop, Dominick stroking her hair as she did, his head thrown back.

Rae and Finn got to the bar to find their order waiting for them, the bartender calling them both bitch with a respectful reverence; treating them as subs still, but amazed at Dominick’s reaction to them. They had downed their triple shot and were on their way back before Dominick’s show was finally over; he allowed his three woman to masturbate to orgasm, but his subordinate man was not allowed to cum this time.

Rae handing Phil his drink and Phil sipped it, leaning back in his chair, his leg crossed over the other again, watching the women jump off the hip-high stage and run through the audience happily. Dominick headed towards Phil and sat on the edge of the stage staring at him for a moment, his eyes went to Finn and then Rae, his desire very apparent. He slipped his mic off and put it back in his pocket.

“I want you.” He said to Phil, “And I want your subs too.” Dominick stood up and Phil stood to meet him; their height comparable, their bodies similar. Dominick stroked Rae’s hair, then Finn’s. “We could have a lot of fun with these two.” He said and then traced a finger down Phil’s face.
“I have your number.” Phil replied.

“Yes.” Dominick took a deep lusty breath, “I don’t like to wait and these two have already kept me waiting for some time.” Phil gave a cocky grin and a slight shrug to indicate that not only was this not his problem, but it’d change only when Phil wanted it to change, not when Dominick did. “And I see I’ll be waiting some more.”

“Might be.” Phil answered. Dominick nodded, enjoying Phil’s answer and turned, walking away towards Pandora as the stage got cleaned and the vendors came back out. The three of them watched him chat to the four women, kissing Elsa’s hand and sat to chat for a while as Pandora and the black woman, stood up. Pandora walked over towards them and both Rae and Finn, knowing the kind of things she did in her show both opened their eyes wide in fear. She looked at Phil for a moment.

“I’m Pandora.” She said in an almost sweet voice, “This is Andromeda.” The black woman had pale blue eyes that were startlingly beautiful. “Don’t try that shit in my show.” She said, “I don’t share power with men.”

“Understood.” Phil replied. Pandora’s eyes took in Rae and Finn and then Phil again and the corner of her mouth twitched upward.

“Although I very much enjoyed watching you push Dominick’s power.” She nodded once and turned away, leaving Andromeda looking at them.

“If you three are ever here for one of my shows, you three are welcome to join me on stage.” She said.

“We’ll keep that in mind.” Phil answered and Andromeda left, following Pandora to the change room.

Rae and Finn shared a look, and nearly laughing at themselves; they were both so horny they’d take part in a Pandora show if offered right now. And they knew what sort of stuff Pandora did.

“Stand up.”

“Yes sir.” They both held in the groans as they straightened their knees. And the groans of pleasure from the butt plugs moving inside of them.

“Go take a piss.” He ordered.

“Yes sir.”

“Stick together until you’re in the cubicle.”

“Yes sir.” Phil waved them off and they both headed to the bathroom, neither of them thinking that they had to go, but both of them pissing the Niagara Falls when they got there.

“How you going?” Finn asked as they washed their hands in the unisex bathroom area.

“We’re not supposed to talk you!” Rae pretended to be scandalised and Finn laughed.

“He knows we’re gonna talk, that’s why he sent us together.”

“Aye probably.” Rae agreed in a conspiratorial tone, “You know Finn, if I don’t cum soon I might have to kill someone.”
“Aye I nearly came when I touched me cock to fucking piss.” Finn shook his head, “try pissing with a hard cock.” Finn laughed. “He’s good at this.”

“He’s good at acting.” Rae reminded Finn, “I bet on the inside he’s as unsure as we were the first time.”

“Sounds like him.” Finn grinned.

“I nearly came when I wiped me vag after pissing.” Rae confessed and bit her bottom lip. “God we’ve got another act to go through afore we can even get close to coming.”

“I don’t think I’m gonna last.” Finn shook his head.

“You have to.” Rae gave a teasing grin.
Want

Chapter Summary

it's still just all sex.

‘Want’ by Recoil

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQrGRR6Su4E

I want to reach my hand into the dark and feel what reaches back... And I want and I want and I want and I will always be hungry...

They returned to their Phil, Finn taking a look at Elsa, sitting with Lys talking, Dominick was still with them, but he had stood up now, clearly saying goodbye. Finn knelt, as was expected, and his view of them was obscured by the stage. Phil handed them both a bottle of water again and they both gave him a grateful grin before drinking deeply. On the stage, a wooden bed, a desk, some chairs and an upright pole had been arranged carefully. An electrical cable had been run down to the stage, and there was a tool box at the end of the plug. Phil was intrigued. The vendors were just finishing up, Phil had taken a flyer about Dominick and pocketed it without looking at it. He scanned the audience and saw the old man still looking longingly at Rae, but he continued his scan without pausing, his eyes seeing a few other faces he knew from various things; one of his father’s friends was here. But his eyes stopped on Elsa as Dominick kissed her hand and walked away. She looked over at them and he raised a glass to her, she nodded, clearly amused at seeing them there. His eyes lingered for a moment before he continued to scan the audience; most people were in various states of undress and fucking now.

The music changed and several men, all naked, except for black leather masks over their heads, zips over the eyes and mouths, walked through the audience, each on a choke-chain held by a woman in a suit; high waisted pencil skirts and stilettos. Andromeda and Pandora came out together, stalking through the audience like women who would snap the necks of any man who dared to touch them. They were truly impressive. They got to the stage and Andromeda sat backwards on a chair, her legs spread wide, slipped her mic on and reached into the tool box, she sorted out the plug for the wire, and then pulled out a pair of latex gloves, snapping them on over her wrists. The women, with their pet men, lined up in front of the stairs at the front of the stage. Pandora put her mic on and sat on the desk in front of Andromeda. Andromeda ran a hand up Pandora’s leg and the women shared a sexually charged moment before Pandora spoke.

“I’m Pandora.” She drawled lazily, “Everyone who comes onto this stage is a consenting adult. Safe words are in use, and are absolutely respected by any self-respecting dominant.” Her eyes returned to Andromeda.

“I’m Andromeda, I usually run the Tuesday torture pit, but who can refuse an offer from Pandora?” The audience cheered. It was obvious that these two women working together had been highly anticipated by this community. “Likewise, Pandora will be accepting my offer to
attend next Tuesday.” Another cheer. Rae and Finn both suddenly noticed how packed the place was, there were far more people than they had ever seen here, and the shows were usually very well attended. Most of the chairs were taken, the dance floor was so packed that getting to the bar was near impossible; people had started flooding in when they heard Pandora’s name. It had happened when Dominick was the main show on other times Rae and Finn had been there too, but tonight there were two stars of this world working together, and fans of both of them were here. A man walked past them, trying to find a seat, he lead a woman by a lead; the lead was attached to her pierced nipples. Rae considered the piercings for a moment before looking up at the stage. It was obvious that in this show, Pandora was dominant, but Andromeda wasn’t exactly a sub. And it was clear that at Andromeda’s show, the roles would be reversed.

“This show isn’t for everyone.” Pandora warned, “So be advised, it’s adults only from here.” A silence descended upon everyone, the music low and dark. Elsa motioned and the first woman yanked the choker chain on her man, making him cough violently. She pulled him onto the stage and presented him to Elsa.

“Nine.” Elsa said and Andromeda grabbed some alcohol swabs. The man, firmly guided by his owner sat on the table next to Pandora, directly in front of Andromeda, who wiped his penis clean. Everyone in the audience seemed to be leaning forward, some having no clue what was to come, and others, who were fans of these women, knew exactly what a ‘nine’ was. Andromeda worked fast, sterilising everything, and then she marked his cock with two dots using a magic marker. She took out a heavy looking needle and put ointment on the end of it, next pulling out some clamps to hold his cock. The man’s mask had the zip done up over his eyes and mouth, he couldn’t see what was happening. Andromeda inserted the needle through the urethra at the head of his cock and he grunted loudly in pain. Finn’s jaw dropped, and Phil had a moment wherein holding his character was extraordinarily difficult. The three of them watched, mesmerised as Andromeda pushed the needle down through the flesh of the head of his cock. Once the needle had come out right where she had marked, she threaded the piercing jewellery into the end of it and pulled it back out, bringing the jewellery through the hole. She screwed a ball onto the end of the barbell and pulled her gloves off; the needle and gloves going into a yellow biohazard bin that had been in the tool box but was now beside it. The man was yanked away and tied to the bed on the other side of the stage, his owner got up on the table and started to walk on him in her stilettos.

The next man was presented to Pandora.

“Forty-eight.” Andromeda again started to prepare, but this time the electrical wire was explained, this was going to be a tattoo. The next man was called up to pull the second man’s arse cheeks wide open. Andromeda tattooed the pink flesh above his arsehole; the man yelping with pain. The sound of the needle, the smell of the ink, it was somehow intoxicating, and Rae was beginning to strangely enjoy this.

“What does it say?” Pandora said when Andromeda had finished, again putting things in the biohazard bin. The owner of the third man unzipped his eyes and the man looked down at the arsehole of the second man. He spoke but no one could hear it. “Louder.” Her tone was laced with menace.

“It says ‘spit first.’” An appreciative whisper went through the audience; a lot of new dominants where getting ideas.

The second man was led off, walking gingerly and tied up to the pole. The woman grabbed a cane and ran the end over the man’s skin; she would start caning him when Pandora was done with marking all the subs.
It continued like this, working through the eight men; each being marked in a different way, pierced or tattooed somewhere. No one tapped out or said a safe word, and it occurred to Phil that the sub men must have known what they were getting in to; they must have known they were going to be marked.

When they were finished with marking the men, a man lay chained to the bed, one to the desk, one to the pole and two were tied to the floor via the hooks, one face down, arse up, the other on his back, his huge erection glistening with pre-cum. The final three were left kneeling at the edge of the stage, watching the action with their hands behind their backs.

Almost at once everything started, the woman that had been walking on her man, her stilettos cutting the skin on his chest, opened the mouth zip on his mask, hitched her skirt up and pissed on his masked face, aiming for his mouth, when she was done, she knelt down and smothered him with her cunt, letting him up for air every now and then, his gasps a wonderful part of the sound track of what was happening. The man tied to the pole was caned, across his back arse and thighs, he cried out with each hit. The man on the desk in front of Andromeda was getting his dick sucked by his owner; a very obvious rarity for him, but his delighted pleasure only lasted as long as it took Andromeda to disinfect his feet and start inserting needle through them. He was crying out in pain after just a few moments of it. One of the free men was on his knees, gladly lapping at Pandora’s cunt, another at Andromeda’s. The women took it in turns to ride the man’s cock that was tied down on his back. They slapped his face and spit on him as they made themselves cum using him as a fuck toy. And the last free standing man was slowly fingerling the other tied men’s arsehole. And for everything that was happening on the stage, it was this that Rae, Finn and Phil fixated on, because he pushed two fingers in, then three, then four, eventually he was fisting the other man’s arsehole; Finn’s face the perfect picture of horror. Rae looked concerned and astounded as if trying to figure out how that was even possible. Phil’s head was cocked to the side, internally he was in disbelief, but externally he bore the appearance of being mildly amused. The man forced his fist further into the other man’s anus and the other man was groaning with pleasure. Rae’s head dropped to the side, her eyes wide, as part of the man’s forearm disappeared into the other man’s arsehole. Finn wished he could look away, but for some reason his eyes refused to stop looking. Andromeda, leaving the pins in the man’s foot, turned her attention to Pandora, fingerling and licking her pussy. Phil watched how hard Andromeda pushed upwards wither movements, how fast and violent the action was, how loudly Pandora moaned and then, something he’d read about; Pandora squirted all over Andromeda. Finn, who had managed to look away from the fisting when Pandora had started moaning had been astonished, and instantly wanted to see Rae squirt. Rae’s head had dropped to the other side; she always learned so much at these shows…

The mistresses were all moving around their subs, doing various things to torment them, and Phil had a feeling that he would watch it for hours and learn a lot, but right now, he was focussed on that squirt he’d just seen. He looked over at the darkened area; it looked completely abandoned, and he could see the outlines of a table in there; that’s what he wanted.

“Stand.” Rae and Finn took a moment to come out of there stupor; they had been so amazed by the things they were seeing.

“Yes sir.”

All around them things were fast turning into an orgy. The audience were all starting to get sexual, while still watching the show. Phil pulled them both by their nipple clamps both of them gasping with the unexpected pleasure and pain of it. Walking, again with the butt plugs in was setting off desire through Rae’s entire body, she looked at Finn to see the same desperate need to cum.

When they got to the table Phil had Rae lay down on it on her back.
“Suck his dick.”

“Yes sir. Rae opened her mouth and Finn positioned himself so she could suck his dick.

“Don’t thrust, keep your hands behind your back, your eyes on her. Don’t cum.”

“Yes sir.” Finn said through gritted teeth as Rae wrapped her tongue around his cock lustfully.

Phil thrust two of his fingers into Rae’s cunt pushing them up at a much sharper angle than he’d ever done, as he had seen Andromeda do, and started to finger her slowly. Rae groaned deeply, he could see how swollen her clit was and knew she was desperate to cum.

“You have to let me cum.” Finn suddenly blurted out and Rae made a loud noise that indicated she agreed; she wanted to cum too. Phil grabbed Finn’s face, his fingers digging into Finn’s cheeks.

“Don’t move your pretty mouth.” Phil said calmly. “Not a fucking word.” Finn groaned with frustration and desire bordering on painful. He let go of Finn’s face and grabbed his hair making him watch as he fingered Rae, his thrusts getting harder and faster. Eventually the pitch of the groans became high and urgent, her cries of pleasure heralding oncoming orgasm. Both Finn and Rae expected Phil to stop, but he didn’t, he pulled Finn’s face down to be close to Rae’s cunt, but not so that he couldn’t see what he was doing. Rae was screaming in pleasure, her cries stifled by Finn’s throbbing cock, when a clear, sweet smelling liquid squirted from her, both men making a triumphant sound as she shook in violent orgasm. Phil pushed Finn’s face down into Rae’s wet cunt and put his lips to Finn’s ear.

“Cum.” Finn groaned in response, his tongue on Rae’s cunt, his pelvis thrusting, his cock going deep into her throat. He came with a loud cry, every spurt of semen from him eliciting a loud shuddering cry of ecstasy from him. His cock was sensitive and he shudder and twitched with each post-orgasmic thrust, but he kept thrusting, his cock still throbbing and hard, the butt plug making his insides scream with pleasure; he had to cum again.

“Stop.” Phil said softly making Finn groan with frustration but stopped thrusting. Rae was groaning as Finn licked her cunt, close to coming again, but Phil pulled Finn’s face away from her.

“Bend over the table, cheek on it, looking at each other, hands behind back.”

“Yes sir.” They both got up and positioned themselves as he had ordered, he pulled out their butt plugs and put them in their hands.

Phil paced himself; he was going to spend the next thirty minutes or so fucking their arseholes, sometimes fucking Rae’s cunt, but not letting her cum, sometimes reaching around to masturbate Finn, but not letting him cum either. He had at first intended to let them satisfy all their needs to cum right there and then go home and collapse, but now another thought had come to him. Something Kelsey had said had entered his mind; and an idea had formed even as he had let Finn cum.

Now he needed to get them both back to as desperate as he could; begging for release…

It didn’t take nearly as long as he thought it would for them both to start making urgent, desperate, pleading noises; he had underestimated just how strong an effect he’d already had on them. He was quite violently fucking Rae’s arse; she was grunting and groaning when she started to beg for him to fuck her cunt and let her cum. Finn’s urgent groan of sympathy told Phil that they were both ready. He returned to Finn’s arse and pushed the butt plug back into Rae. He fucked Finn hard, and he too begged to be allowed to cum again.
Phil emptied his balls into Finn with a loud groan. He shoved the butt plug back in and this only made Finn’s horniness even worse, the idea that his man’s cum was trapped inside of him was almost too much for him, he begged again to be allowed to cum.

“Follow.” He was still shivering from his orgasm, but he had somewhere he wanted to take them. He walked along the edge of the room, avoiding the press of the audience, writhing together, fucking and watching the show. Phil looked at the stage and saw one of the men bleeding, his head dropped to the side again and he headed for the exit, Finn and Rae following, both their bodies a desperate mess. They stopped at the desk to get the things Phil had bought and had left there. Mistress had a sub see to it.

“Did we have a good time?” Mistress cast an appraising eye over Rae and Phil.

“We did.” Phil answered. Both Rae and Finn stood with their hands behind their backs, bare-chested, nipple clamps firmly in place, butt plugs pressing into them, covered in cum and drool and running make up. Finn had pulled his pants up for walking, tying the belt up, but his cock was still exposed, and Rae’s dress was still pulled up over her arse. Their hair was a mess, their bodies were trembling with exertion and desire, their knees where red, their arses starting to bruise up from the spanking. They looked like well-used subs, but Phil wasn’t done yet. There was more thing he wanted to do.

They walked from the chapel, not abandoned tonight, but in a week, it would return to its abandoned state. It was the first time either of them had left the club location with any parts of them exposed like this, but they were so deeply into their sub characters right now that they didn’t question it; they followed Phil as he walked them to the car. It was 2am and the houses and apartment blocks near the entrance where they had parked were dark and quiet, and they didn’t have far to walk. The man at the gate gave them and appreciative nod of his head.

“Very good to see you again.” He called after them. Rae shot him a look over her shoulder that made his cock stand to attention.

“Back seat.”

“Yes sir.”

“Kiss and touch each other, but keep it above the waist.”

“Yes sir.”

Phil got in the front of the car and readied himself for the 50 minute drive he had to make. It’d take him over an hour to drive them home after this; but it’d be worth it. He wondered if he was being utterly insane, and found he didn’t care; he was going to do this. He looked in the rear view mirror at them kissing passionately and grinned; they’d entertain each other nicely.

By the time he stopped the car, Finn was lying on top of Rae, one of his hands squeezing her breast, the other in her hair, they were kissing deeply, their bodies writhing together, their groans deeply frustrated; the way Rae’s fingers were digging into Finn’s flesh were a clear sign that she was still aching to cum.

“Out of the car.”

“Yes sir.” They got out and saw that they were parked outside of Chop’s grandfather’s house in Kensington; the place in front of his parents’ house had a car in it. As Kelsey’s letter from their mother had said it would. He pointed at Finn and then the side of the car. Finn leaned against the
hood of the car.

“Lick his balls, his pelvis, everywhere but his cock.” Phil ordered Rae.

“Yes sir.” She leaned her hands on his thighs and started to lick his balls, Finn groaned in frustration. Phil slid Rae’s butt plug out and fucked her arse again. He could actually feel how swollen her cunt was; she was near bursting already and she groaned angrily as he fucked her arse and still not her cunt.

But this was only the tease, within minutes he was handing Finn lube.

“Fuck my arse Finn.” Phil said, the dominant character disappearing as he ached to be more close to them; dominance was awesome for fun and games, but it wasn’t as intimate as fucking like they were about to.

“Yes sir!” Finn answered with a huge grin. Phil popped Rae’s butt plug back in and pushed her forwards, so her chest rested on the car hood. He waited while Finn slowly eased into him, reaching his hand back to stroke Finn’s face lovingly.

“Try not to cum too quick.” Phil whispered to him.

“I’m gonna cum about six times, alright?”

“Alright.” Phil laughed. He grabbed a fresh wipe and cleaned his cock before plunging it into Rae’s cunt.

“Masturbate.”

“Yes sir!” Rae squealed and reached her hand down to rub her swollen clit.

Almost instantly they were all moaning loudly, and within minutes the desperate urge to cum had been satisfied in Rae with loud gasping screams, Finn moaned loudly behind him and he felt his cock throbbing with orgasm.

Finn started to laugh, as lights came on in the houses. He sped up, wanting to cum again and again before they had to pack up and go. Rae hadn’t come down from her first orgasm; she as up in the clouds, sailing along in a land of heightened sensory overload, her body was rigid with shuddering orgasm, and her groans as Phil ground his hips into her were loud and high pitched, wavering with extreme pleasure. Phil laughed with Finn as the lights kept going on in this street full of rich wankers that had made his early teenage years an utter misery. As lights turned on he thought about who lived in that house and thought about their judgemental words, how they’d shaped his upbringing as his parents and their new wealth desperately tried to force him into the box of old wealth rich boy. He knew that he shouldn’t whinge about being rich, about the privileged life he’d lived in terms of education and opportunities; but fuck he hated most of these people and they had always reminded him that he’d never truly fit in with them, that he’d always be inadequate, he’d never be as polished, or have the connections or breeding.

Finn was coming again when Phil came, his eyes on Rae, his fingers having reached forward to gently stroke the side of her face; all three of them groaning and crying out loudly with their pleasure. Rae’s shuddering was just slowing down when Phil stopped moving, Finn too was exhausted for now; but he had a feeling that in an hour he’d want more. Rae turned around and kissed Phil deeply, her knees so weak that she had to lean on the car.

“Incredible.” She said dreamily. Finn kissed Phil, and nodded towards the car.
“Better get going afore the fuzz show up.” He stumbled towards the back door. Phil helped them both get into the back seat.

“You too cuddle up and snooze, I’ll drive us home.” He soothed and they grinned happily, dopey with exhaustion from good use. As he closed the door he looked up at his parents’ house. The light was on and he flipped the house the finger. He didn’t know or care if anyone was watching him right now; it was somehow cathartic to raise his middle finger to that house.

He got in the car and drove away, feeling happily exhausted, but having saved just enough energy to look after his partners when he got them home.
When he finally pulled up into their car spot and turned to look at them on the back seat they were both asleep, Rae leaned against the door and Finn leaned on her, hugging her tightly. Phil pulled a face when he realised they were both sitting on their hip rather than their arses; he’d left the butt plugs in them this whole time. He swore at himself silently and gently woke them up. After initial grumbles and reluctance to wake up they both stirred, Rae making a noise of pain as her neck clicked.

“Oh fuck a duck.” She rolled her head, a hand on her neck.

“Y’alright?” Finn asked softly and rubbed her side softly as he sat up.

“Oh fuck I ache!” Finn groaned and then laughed, “I sound like an old man.” Phil’s brows furrowed and he helped them both out of the car.

“Sorry that-”

“Don’t be.” Rae told him firmly, her hand going to her lower back, “If I don’t ache after being at the club I weren’t fucked right.” She clicked her neck again and jiggled slightly, making a slightly turned on noise. “Alright that butt plug is magic.”

“Can I put me shirt back on?” Finn asked and Phil nodded.

“I thought it were obvious I weren’t really in charge anymore.”

“Y’are till we’re through the front door.” Rae answered. Finn’s eyes fell to Rae’s breasts and he traced along the outer curve of them happily, the nipple clamps and the feel of his butt plug starting to stir things up inside of him again. Phil gently untied the knot in Rae’s skirt and then gently pulled her halter top back up over her breasts, the chain between her nipples still visible.

“Well let’s get you two up to the shower.” Phil answered picking up his bag of things.

“I do feel very fucking sticky!” Finn laughed and took the bag from Phil. Finn and Rae wrapped an arm around Phil’s waist and he put his arm around their shoulders. They walked through the underground car park to the lift arm in arm. When they got to their door, Rae reached into Phil’s pocket to get the keys and open the door.

They grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge; Phil drank a lot of chilled water and had bought a bunch of drink bottles to store tap water in the fridge. This one was a Wonder Woman one, but there were several from both DC comic and Marvel. It turned out that all three of them were interested in comics; none of them had spent a ton of money on them, all three preferring to spend money on music, but all three definitely enjoyed them. They headed through to their huge bathroom and Phil turned the water on. While they waited for the water to warm up Phil knelt and
slowly took their shoes off, throwing them through the open door to be picked up and put away later. He slowly, tenderly stripped their clothes off, Rae and Finn stroking him and each other as he worked. When he took the nipple claps off they both gasping noises.

“Oi that smarts.” Finn chuckled and rubbed his nipples; they had been clamped for hours

“Reckon we’ll get bruised nipples?” Rae asked looking down at her own nipples, the feel of the clamps coming off actually heightening her growing sense of needing to fuck again.

“I hope so.” Finn didn’t look up from his own nipples; they seemed to be hyper-sensitive now and so erect they looked bigger than usual. The feeling of the blood coming back into his nipples was far more painful than when Phil had put them on, but the throb made his cock grow erect and he found he liked the way his nipples felt now. Phil put the nipple clamps on the side.

“I don’t think they will bruise.” He said.

“Pity.” Rae answered and looked at her arse in the mirror. “At least I got these bruises.” The marks on both of their arses were already showing up; they weren’t the worst bruises she’d had on her arse, but they’d do nicely. Phil ran his hand over her arse, feeling the heat in the forming bruises. “I’ve had worse afore you start fretting.” She told him, but he didn’t say a word, he just gently pulled her butt plug out, making her groan softly. He put it in the sink to be cleaned later. She moved about and raised her eyebrows.

“Feel a bit weird now!” She laughed. Phil kissed her lips softly and turned to Finn gently removing his butt plug. Finn looked over his shoulder at his arse, and then spread his cheeks.

“What the fuck are you doing Finlay?” Rae shook her head.

“Seeing how bit me hole is!” He laughed, “Can’t properly see…” He grumbled and started muttering about setting up mirrors so he could see thing better, Rae and Phil exchanged a glance and Rae pulled Finn’s shoulder to try and help him twist better so he could see.

“You’re a very visual creature aren’t you?” Phil asked with a fond grin.

“Aye.” Finn replied.

“Oh a bit o’ cum just came out!” Rae said in loud surprise. Finn twisted harder and managed to see.

“Oh that’s disgusting.” He said, leaving them all in silence, looking in the mirror at the reflection of cum dripping out of his arse. “I fucking love it!” He turned to Phil and kissed him. “Thanks for the filthy fuck.” He grinned at his reflection momentarily, the makeup smeared all over him, before heading into the shower.

“I won’t be able to sit proper for a week.” Rae grinned and kissed Phil, “Thanks.” She joined Finn in the shower.

“Arse-pounding like that you shouldn’t be able to walk right!” Finn laughed.

“I fucking can’t!” Rae replied happily. Phil watched them joking and laughing in the shower for a moment, feeling overwhelmed with emotions. It had been a challenging, exciting and terrifying night of exuberating sex and role play. He felt mentally and emotionally exhausted, but so happy that they seemed to be genuinely into exploring this kind of thing.

“You getting dom comedown?” Finn asked; he’d had something like it happen to him the second time he’d taken Rae to the club as his sub when he’d gone much harder and deeper into the
“Yeah maybe?” He answered and shook his head as if to clear it, “let me get in there and wash you two.” He tried to push aside his odd feeling of coming back into his own body; he’d experienced it after a long run of shows in the theatre as well, and always ended up wrecked for the next few days. Rae pulled him into the shower and kissed him tenderly, Finn putting a hand on his lower back and joined in. The three of them kissing at the same time was certainly harder than just two of them kissing, but there was something magic about their three tongues sliding over each other. Rae put an arm over both of their shoulders, drawing their bodies closer still, and Finn twisted her hips towards him before reaching out to Phil’s hips to pull him in closer still. This is how it went; it seemed like Finn was the one who chose how they’d fuck or make love the most often. It had just naturally ended up like that; Finn was often the more demanding one sexually. They had relatively equal libidos, but Finn was much clearer on what he wanted and when; Rae and Phil still couldn’t believe their luck half the time and were happy to just be having sex with the two loves of their lives in any way at all.

They kissed passionately, all three of them, then in alternating pairs, and back to all three. Rae’s hands in their hair, the lads hands all over each other’s bodies. Rae pressed down on Finn’s shoulders with her arm and he knew what she wanted and helped her jump up and wrap her legs around his waist. Phil ran his hands along Finn’s muscles as they bulged to support Rae’s weight. He reached under and helped guide Finn into Rae’s pussy. Rae kept an arm around both of her men’s shoulders, glad she was flexible through the waist, she leaned back and kissed Phil nodding for him to penetrate her as well. As soon as Phil was in her Finn pushed him and Rae back until Phil’s back hit the wall, Rae leaning back on him, Phil’s hands going to Rae’s arse to help take the weight. He leaned his shoulders back into the wall Rae leaning with him taking more weight off an exhausted Finn, and pushed his pelvis forward, copying Finn’s technique in the bathroom at the open house when they had been flat-hunting. Finn leaned into them, kissing Rae’s neck, mascara and lipstick running even more under the dual heads of the shower. They made love building slowly towards their orgasms, far more interested in the intimacy than then the explosion waiting for them at the end of it.

They slept until midday; Phil waking first as usual, he had already cleaned up after last night’s revelries so he had time to think about what he was going to do today for aftercare for Rae and Finn. He felt completely energy-less and was surprised by how much this felt like a post-theatre-performance come down. He went to the fridge and stood naked in front of its contents, pulling out a mandarin he put the bottom of his left foot on the inside of his right knee, an old balancing trick Kelsey had taught him when his poor balance had threatened to stop him becoming a fencer, it had become a habit. He peeled the mandarin and ate it, trying to decide whether they’d prefer a fry-up or pancakes for breakfast.

“Pancakes for Rae. Fry up for Finn.” Of course, he grinned to himself and set to making them breakfast in bed. They had been too exhausted after their shower to do anything other than sleep last night, so today was when the aftercare truly began. Phil felt quite guilty that he hadn’t tried harder last night to be more caring; but they were all wrecked before they’d made love in the shower, after it they’d barely had the energy to wash each other and dry themselves before falling into bed. Rae liked butter and sugar on her pancakes so Phil put those on the tray for her; serving trays had been her idea and she had been right about how useful they were. Finn had gotten into fried avocado lately, and Phil had learned that putting the pan up extra hot and giving the avocado only a few moments on each side got the best results. Technically it was Finn’s job to do all the
meals today: that’s how they’d worked it out, they did a rotating basis for cooking, it had started with Finn, then Rae then on to Phil and back to Finn. But Phil would cook today for Finn and tomorrow for Rae. Phil had inherited a lot of his mother’s body issues, and although he struggled against them, he knew that as an actor-wanna-be, he had to maintain a certain physique. So while he made these beautiful breakfast for his lovers, gently waking them up, both deciding to watch tv and eat instead of laze in bed any longer, he himself made a fruit smoothie, and had his usual one boiled egg. Finn watched him like a hawk; he was just dancing the line of eating enough and his muscle mass had improved for not eating as his mother had had him eating, which was not enough, but Finn wanted him to eat a bit more still. And it wasn’t just a rigid adherence to his ‘movie-star’ physique; he genuinely wasn’t as hungry as Finn thought he should be. Finn had asked Rhys about this and Rhys said that it wasn’t uncommon, after years of being on a near-starvation diet to not be able to stomach large meals for some time. Eight years of living on 1500 calories when he should have been having at least 2400 had left Phil not able to gauge his own feelings to food properly. Like Rae who had been emotionally bribed with food by her mother and taught to jump from fad diet to fad diet had binged at times in the past, and occasionally verged on binging nowadays too; they both had a complex relationship with food, they both had trouble trusting their bodies’ demands when it came to food and they both struggled with knowing what was a good amount to eat. Phil was controlled, Rae was disordered, and Finn was always on hyper-alert, watching them both for any signs of becoming too unhealthy for his liking. He didn’t want to police their eating; wanting them both to find their own comfort and safety with food, wanting them to learn to trust their body’s hunger and full cues, wanting them to learn to understand what their bodies were craving. But Finn already knew he’d be watching this issue for the rest of his life; his two people had a lot of emotional stuff tied up with food.

Phil finished his fruit smoothie and took out the bruise cream Archie had given them. He applied it to their knees and bums lovingly, and was about to ask them what else they needed when Rae pulled him down onto the couch. They all snuggled up together and watched the midday move; a truly terrible murder mystery that had them all laughing within minutes.

When the end credits started rolling Rae sighed and looked at Phil.

“Alright, I think we’re all awake enough now for the post discussion.” She looked at Finn and he nodded, lighting up a cigarette he leaned forward to look around Rae at Phil. Phil had never had to have a post-sex discussion before and he looked at their expectant faces, knowing that he had to say something and not knowing what that was.

“Um…” Rae looked back at Finn, trying to hide her grin; Phil rarely ummed and it was a sure sign of him feeling awkward or uncomfortable in some small way. “Well…” He put a hand to the back of his neck and actually ended up scratching the back of his head as he thought. “I guess we could discuss what you liked and what you didn’t like?”

“Oh right?” Phil asked, he wasn’t sure what he had been expecting but it wasn’t that. Given his sense of relief, Phil realised he’d been expecting them to have hated what he did.

“The thing I liked least was the flavour of those disinfectant wipes.” Rae piped in.

“Oh aye!” Finn agreed.

“What do they taste like?” Phil was concerned.
“This sickly sweet…” Finn tried to place the flavour.

“Cherry.” Rae helped.

“Cherry!” Finn agreed, “Cherry flavour all over your cock.” He laughed. “Bad cherry flavouring.”

“They’re trying to hide the flavour of disinfectant, I think.” Rae added, “But I could still taste it.”

“Oh.” Phil pulled a face. “I thought they’d be a good idea.”

“No not a good idea.” Rae answered, leaving Phil feeling disappointed “They’re a fucking great idea.”

“Oh, ok.” He was relieved.

“They just taste a bit strong.” She shrugged. “But I love that we got ‘em. Frees things up a bit.”

“Hm.” Finn agreed, “Can do all sorts o’ things now.” Phil nodded grateful for their input.

“Uh… what about the roughness and bruises?” Phil tried not to lower his eyes.

“Well,” Finn drew on his cigarette, “Me throat’s rough as fucking guts today.” He looked at Rae, “How the fuck do you handle that, girl?” Rae shrugged in reply.

“Just tougher than you.” She laughed.

“Yeah yeah.” Finn laughed, “Alright. Well now I know what I were doing to you all those times I did it.” He said in an impressed voice. “So now I know you can take it harder.”

“And how did you come to that conclusion?” Rae shook her head, grinning at his teasing.

“We can both still speak, we could both take more.” They both turned their eyes to Phil. “Don’t worry about how hard you went.” Finn intuited what was on Phil’s mind, “We’ll safe word you if it’s too much.”

“Yeah I have been worrying.” Phil lowered his eyes, “I got very worried that it would make you think or feel differently about me.”

“Just makes me think I don’t have to worry about sometimes being dominant myself.” Finn shrugged, “Cos I know you’re not gonna think I’m too rough after last night.” He teased and Phil blushed.

“Was I too rough?”

“No.” Rae answered, “That’s what those nights are for. But…” She stroked his hand and took it firmly as if about to break bad news to him. Phil looked at her hand holding his and waiting for whatever she was about to say, “Given that was your first time there, it’s really fucking obvious you been thinking about that for a while.” She cocked a knowing eyebrow at him and Phil sucked his bottom lip for a moment and nodded.

“I um… I guess I started fantasisimg about having control and maybe hurting my lovers, just a little bit, when I was about 15.” Both Finn and Rae made small noises in response. “I kinda thought there was something wrong with me at first…”

“There’s not.” Finn stubbed his cigarette out.
“Yeah I know.” Phil said, “It’s just a kink, and even then, I’m not into living the lifestyle 24/7. One of Andrea’s friends wanted to do that; she wanted to be dominant over a few subs at all times.” Phil shrugged, “I know that human sexuality is vast and complex and all sorts of things exist within its spectrum. And I know there’s a lot of academic papers about the deviancy of my kink.”

“Our kink.” Finn reminded him and Phil nodded, grateful for his two.

“But to be honest, when all the adults involved are consenting, and I do mean proper consent that’s enthusiastic, informed and without duress of any kind,” Rae liked Phil when he talked like this, “and when proper care is taken and it’s all done within a framework of love, respect and trust with the goals of pleasure for all and sexual exploration, then I really don’t see how it’s anyone else’s fucking business.” Both Rae and Finn agreed loudly, “And I know that sometimes actual abuse is hidden by being claimed as BDSM, and that’s why people decry it, because it can be hard to discern the difference for an outsider and also sometimes for the subs that are being abused, so that’s why it’s the responsibility of all members of the community to not let it persist in any form, in any forum, at any time. Real abuse must never be excused because we’re afraid it’ll make us look bad. And there’s a reason I’m saying all of this; I think that it can be easy to fall into abusive patterns when you’re in a dom position, so we just need to look out for each other and communicate and be very vocal, and we gotta make sure that we keep the environment a safe place for being vocal and communicative too.”

“You still worried you were too rough?” Rae asked and Phil nodded.

“Yeah but I trust you both when you say it was alright. You can never say it was alright if it wasn’t, this trust thing has to go all ways.” He looked at them both meaningfully, “No protecting my feelings or sugar-coating things; if you have any issues whatsoever, you need to voice them. We all do. Or we just can’t do this.”

“Understood.” Finn agreed and Rae nodded.

“Aye,” Rae motioned to Finn and herself, “We’ve already had a lot of discussion about this. We’ve even talked about having a permanent exploration day, but we never got round to doing it.”

“Like once a month or something?” Phil asked, intrigued.

“Once a week.” Finn answered, putting his feet up on the table.

“How about we each get to be in charge once a month? Like on a Sunday?” Phil asked.

“I like that. And on the fourth Sunday we can all be equal? Or to go to the club as equals?” Rae looked back at Finn. He shrugged and nodded his head.

“Except I dunno if we wanna go there on Sundays,” Finn noted; Sunday nights was for the very heavy stuff, water sports, scat and blood play, heavy torture and pain, “and I were looking forward to Sundays being a doing nothing together day.”

“So Saturdays?” Rae said, “Gives us Sunday as recovery day, and Saturdays at the club are bisexual, pansexual and trans performers’ night now. I think we’ll be fine with that.”

“Alright, but I’ve got an idea.” Finn said with a small grin, “We go to the club every second month and on the other months, we have a fantasy jar.” They both looked at him with curious expressions, waiting for him to continue. “So we get a big jar and we each write down as many fantasies as we’ve got, each on their own piece o’ paper, as detailed or as vague as you like. And
we fold ‘em up and put ’em in the jar. Then every second month, we pull one out and we do it. And you can add fantasies to the jar whenever you think of ‘em, like be continuously adding stuff.”

“Yes.” Phil nodded, clearly loving the idea.

“What if the fantasy is something at the club, like fucking on the stage?” Rae asked and the lads made a teasing noise at her before laughing.

“Well we’ll know who put that one in now.” Finn laughed.

“But that would need some pre-planning.” Phil said, understanding Rae’s question.

“I reckon most of the fantasies probably will.” Finn said, “So we should pull the fantasy out at the beginning of the month, so that we can get excited about what we’re gonna be doing, and so we can plan if we need to.”

“But what if it don’t need planning?” Rae said, “then it kinda takes the surprise and spontaneity outta it.”

“Alright, so,” Phil worked it out, “We mark the outside of the folded paper with a colour; blue for need planning, red for doesn’t. And we decide at the beginning of the month which way we wanna go; planned or spontaneous.”

“Genius.” Finn answered.

“So,” Rae recapped, “First Saturday of every month, I’m in charge, second…”

“Me!” Finn piped up before Phil had chance.

“Finn’s in charge, third Phil’s in charge. And on the fourth Saturday, we either got to the club as equals or we do something from the fantasy jar, which could be a pre-planned fantasy or a spontaneous one. We should decide blue or red on the Sunday after I’m in charge.” Rae summarised.

“Sounds right.” Phil said with a grin.

“Alright, so have we got an agreement?” Finn asked happily.

“Seems like it.” Phil grinned.

“So you been thinking about doing this kind of stuff since you was 15?” Rae raised her eyebrows suggestively and Phil blushed again.

“I didn’t think I’d ever do it, cos I wasn’t expecting to ever be in a relationship with the level of trust required. I’m so glad I got to try doing it.” Phil grinned, “But don’t get me wrong, I prefer making love with you guys.”

“Of course!” Rae answered, “I think we all like that the most.”

“Aye,” Finn agreed, “But this is fun.”

“Yeah it’s fun. A lot of fun.” Phil was really loving the way they talked so openly.

“And we like to do that kind of stuff to varying degrees quite a bit.” Rae added, “But when we do it at home, we’re still ourselves doing it, so we get rough, but not as rough. Which is awesome, cos variety and exploration is amazing. And at the club we become someone else, a character… so it
tends to get rougher there, and I just want you both to know that I am definitely more open to it getting a lot rougher and more power play-ey than it already has been at the club.”

“Oh girl, you always do things to me.” Finn shook his head, “And I think we probably will get rougher and do a lot more power play things. Don’t worry about that.” He looked up at Phil, “This fucker’s shown the way.”

“Well I didn’t mean to-” Phil demurred.

“Well you went out hard.” Finn laughed, “Challenging Dominick!”

“I just…” Phil laughed, “It seemed like something my character would do, and I thought it’d make the experience better for you both.”

“Fuck yes it did. I was getting my arse pounded by the most powerful man in that place.” Finn nodded, “Now that did things to me.”

“I dunno if I were the most powerful…” Phil blushed again, absurdly pleased.

“You didn’t have a stage to help assert your dominance.” Finn reminded him, “And he acquiesced to you.” Phil opened his mouth to say something but couldn’t find the words and Finn gave him a look as if to say ‘see, I told you so.’

“So am I gonna have to take on Andromeda or Pandora to get the same effect?” Rae asked him.

“I wouldn’t be brave enough to take those women on!” Phil laughed, “They are not messing around!”

“Yeah the tattooing! That’s some commitment. Basically saying ‘I’m gonna be a sub for the rest of my life.’” Rae’s eyes widened.

“Which some people do choose.” Finn shrugged, “It’s not for me but.”

“So what’s it gonna take for me to have the same effect on you as Phil does when I’m dominant?” Rae asked.

“Confidence.” Finn answered, “See, you’re already doing for me girl. You own that place every time we go there. Did you see the people looking at us?” Phil nodded his head. “You could make anyone of them kneel. That’s power Rae.”

“Alright.” She was secretly chuffed but she rolled her eyes. “We do need to talk about Dominick, and other people that are interested in having us…”

“At this point in time, I am not wanting to share.” Finn said with a shrug. “What about you?”

“No.” Phil agreed, “But I really do enjoy the flirtation and teasing.”

“Oh aye!” Rae agreed.

“So a little flirtation, maybe the odd touch, but nothing serious?” Finn asked and they all agreed.

“So…” Phil had a sudden realisation, “Can I just ask…?” He looked from Finn to Rae, “Last summer holidays, when I heard you two fucking out the front of me parents’ house…”

“We’d just gotten back from the club!” Rae laughed.
“It were our first time there.” Finn added. “And Rae had done it as a surprise for me.” He furrowed his brow, “Sorry about that.”

“No it’s alright.” Phil shrugged, “Anyway, I don’t really know how to do aftercare properly, so…”

“Well shower’s good.” Rae said, “Bath’d be better but we don’t have one and it’d have to be one that were big enough for the three of us.”

“When we get our own place we’ll have to get a custom made one.” Finn mused.

“Aye it’s gonna be so fucking expensive.” Rae scrunched up her nose indicating how unimpressed she was with that.

“Aye, but buying a flippin’ house is gonna cost a packet Rae,” Finn pointed out, “this’ll just be one more thing to add to the cost of it all.” Phil listened to them talk and couldn’t help but smile; they always forgot about his trust fund.

“Anyway,” Rae returned back to the Phil’s question, “make love is mandatory after something real rough. But not after something a little rough.” Finn nodded in agreement, “Often sleep, especially after the club cos it always so late.”

“Care for wounds, bring food and drink, give lots of love.” Finn said, “Watch movies together, listen to music.”

“And then the post sex talk.” Rae finished up, “That’s how we’ve been doing it and it seems to work alright.”

“Aye.” Finn said, “And so far you’re doing fine.” Finn soothed, “How do we deal with your dom comedown?”

“You don’t worry about that.” Phil answered, “That’s my problem.”

“Oh no!” Rae said loudly, “We don’t have that shit in this relationship. If you have a problem it’s our problem too!”

“I just meant that cos you’re the subs you-” Rae made a loud noise and Phil closed his mouth.

“We’re all here for each other regardless of the roles we just played in a sex game, alright?” She said sternly.

“Alright.” He answered with a grin. He saw their expectant looks and sighed, “It just feels like I’ve just come off a long run of shows in the theatre. I’m just exhausted and a little grumpy. It’s nothing really.”

“This is you grumpy?” Rae asked with a disbelieving tone.

“Well I am reigning it in a bit.” Phil said, “But I might be more sarcastic afterwards cos I tend to have more trouble reigning that in after shows, which is not good for looking after subs. I normally have my sarcasm under control.”

“Oh right?” Finn asked bemused, “So the reason you never have good comebacks Dilip is cos you’re,” Finn did air quotation marks, something neither of them had ever seen him do before, “Reigning it in?” Phil’s tongue went to his back teeth.

“I’m not gonna reply.” He said firmly. “I will reign it in and be good at aftercare.” He nodded.
“So I get a free pass…” Finn answered, “I can hassle the fuck outta you and you won’t say nought?” Phil zipped his lips and Rae hit Finn’s knee.

“Be nice you.” She told him and Finn rolled his eyes and then winked and Phil.

“Aye I’m such a prick.” Finn teased, “She used to call me a prick all the time, when we first met.” He explained to Phil. “You know I should o’ realised sooner I were in love with you Philly.” Finn said, “I’ve only ever hated two people in me whole life.”

“And I’m one of them.” Rae laughed, “You’re the other.” She said, “And I didn’t really notice either of you at first, I were caught up on other lads; Archie and Liam.”

“You two were like Miss Bennett and Mr Darcy then.” Phil noted.

“Aye but only if Mr Wickham weren’t a scoundrel and joined in in the end.” Rae laughed.

“It’s a book reference innit?’ Finn asked and they nodded. “You two and your secret book language.”

“Alright,” Phil got his mirth under control, even his exhausted grumpy mood didn’t stand a chance with these two around, “Shall we do some bruise care? Do we need drinks? More food? Music? Movies? Your wish is my command.”

“Well now that you mention it,” Rae answered saucily, “Those hands o’ yours could be being put to better use.”

The next few day blurred into a mix of love making, laughing, lazing around and tender, loving aftercare for all of them. Phil found that his usual post-performance grumpiness was well mitigated by being in close proximity to Rae and Finn. It was no coincidence that Finn’s grumpiness and Rae’s moods were also lessened by the three of them existing together uninterrupted; they calmed each other, and heightened each other, and brought out the best in each other.
They say if you love somebody, everything will be okay. I say anywhere, anywhere, anywhere with you.

“The scooter’s fucked.” Finn came in wiping his greasy hands on his jeans, “If I were in Stamford, I’d know where to flog the parts and Chop’d help get it running again, but here…” He shook his head, “We don’t have the money.” He sighed and sat down at the kitchen table, Phil turned from the lasagne and salad he was making for lunch and shrugged.

“Take some money, we’ll re-budget.”

“Might as well buy a new one, it’s gonna cost a fortune.” He said glumly. “I’ve had that scooter for yonks.”

“I know it’s sad, but with the bike and the two cars to run, it’s kinda a blessing in terms o’ money.” Rae said and Finn nodded.

“Aye I know.” He sighed.

“Don’t worry about money.” Phil said, “We’re spending less than I thought we would, so-”

“Aye, but we got New Year’s and summer holidays to factor in Philly me lad.” Rae said, “Those’ll cost a packet.”

“I’ll just get a job.” Finn shrugged.

“Let’s just see what the university workload is like afore we decide to get jobs.” Phil said softly, “don’t fret about money; we’re living under the budget I set for us, we’re fine.”

“One day we’ll all have jobs we love and a triple income home and we won’t have to worry one bit Phil. But right now we’re a no income family, and we’re living off savings. So aye, I worry.” Finn replied.

“Who the fuck used the last of the fucking toilet paper and didn’t tell me to pick up anymore?” Rae yelled out of the bathroom. Finn and Phil looked at each other in horror. “It’s alright for you two bastards, you don’t use it as often as me. And while I’m on it; who fuck keeps leaving the seat up?” Finn cocked an eyebrow at Phil ready to blame him but Phil shook his head.

“I sit down to pee at home, stand in public loos.” Phil reminded him; Finn knew this of course, “It’s all on you buddy.”

“Fuck, I thought I’d gotten that under control.” Finn groaned. “Sorry!” He called back.
“Unconscious habits are hard to break.” Phil sympathised, “But think o’ this the next time you go to flush the toilet with the seat up; research indicates that when you flush a toilet with the lid up, microscopic particles of faeces and urine that have gotten pulverised by the flushing action get discharged into the air and can be found on objects up to 200 feet away from the toilet.” Phil gave Finn a grin.

“That’s disgusting.”

‘They’ve got a lid for a reason.” Phil returned.

“I’m never flushing with the lid up again.” Finn got up, “I’ll go down to the shops and get some paper.” He called to Rae.

“Hurry the fuck up!” She yelled back, “I’m stuck here till you get back.”

“I’ve never had Turkish food before.” Rae said and ate some of the kebabs, “but fuck it’s good.” Finn handed them the list of what he got and Phil read the top line and turned his eyes to Finn as he unpacked everything.

“Ooo zucchini balls?” Phil asked excitedly and Finn pointed at some deep fried puffs of dough, “Zucchini balls sounded so much healthier than they are.” Phil lamented.

“Some food that’s not a salad won’t kill you Phil.” Finn answered and then held up the salad, “But the family pack does come with a salad, so…” Phil grinned and took the plastic container filled with delicious looking salad.

“Anyone want any of this?” He asked.

“Fuck no, I got pide.” Finn grinned; Turkish pizza was amazing.

“There’s so much food here, I’m not gonna miss a fucking salad.” Rae told him and Phil tucked in, grabbing some grilled lamb from the big pile of meat that came with the family pack, to go with his salad. “It’s gonna be feeding us for days!”

“See how I look after you?” Finn asked Phil; Finn had been responsible for ordering and getting this meal and he’d gotten this huge family deal specifically because it came with salad. Phil grinned and nodded.

“Thanks.” Phil said sheepishly.

“Oh my god try the bread dipped in… what’s this again?” Rae asked Finn.

“Carrot dip.” Finn replied. Phil nodded his head and took some of the fluffy bread and dipped it in the orange concoction.

“Oh that is good!” He laughed; he hadn’t expected carrot dip to be so amazing with bread.

“So there’s two types of kebab from what I can tell.” Finn said holding up the wooden skewer with chicken threaded onto it. “These are kebabs, and you can also get kebabs which are meat and salad wrapped in flat bread.” He shrugged, “I just got the skewers.”

“Skewers are perfect.” Rae answered dipping some chicken into the Cacik dip. “I have no idea
what this is. But it’s amazing!” Phil tried a bit and shrugged.

“It’s a little like Tzatziki, which is Greek. But that makes sense; Greek and Turkish cuisines borrow of each other a fair bit.” He tried a bit more, “My mother went through a Mediterranean eating phase when I was about 12.” Phil explained, not needing to see the looks on their faces to know they wanted him to elaborate, “She read somewhere that Mediterranean women had better control over their weight.” He shrugged. “She went through several phases before she settled on the mostly raw diet thing.”

“Sounds a bit like my mum, but she never settled on one type o’ diet.” Rae answered.

“Yeah but I gotta get out of the habit of thinking like my mother.” Phil said.

“You both do.” Finn said softly and ate another piece of the cheesy, oily pide. Phil looked at it and took a piece, Finn looking up at him in surprise. “It’s drowned in olive oil.” Finn warned him, “It’s so good.” Phil was known to occasionally stray from his strict diet, but it was usually not too far from it, and it really wasn’t often that he’d have something so far removed from his usual diet as pide. Finn had noticed Phil opening up his palate, trying new things, including foods that had been forbidden in the past, Finn had noticed Phil’s diet becoming more balanced. Just like Rae, he was making positive changes slowly.

Phil took a bite and made an appreciative noise.

“Oh my god it’s amazing!” He said around a mouthful of pide. Finn scrunched his nose up happily and Phil started laughing as he took another bite.

“Alright, what am I missing out on?” Rae asked and took a piece too.

The final two weeks before university started was moving far too fast for Rae. She was anxious about starting what was undoubtedly going to be a difficult 3 to 4 years because she had foolishly decided to do a double degree in writing and theatre. Phil was doing the same double degree, opting to hold off on going to the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. He would do some part time study there until he did a year or two full time after he’d finished his degree. There Phil who wasn’t at all regretting his decision because he knew this was the right choice, and Rae who wasn’t sure about her decision because doing a double degree in three years seemed like it might be too much for her and she worried about her anxiety flaring up, but she was sure this is what she wanted to study. And then there was Finn, who was also doing a double degree in sound engineering and theatre tech, and unlike Phil and Rae, he was absolutely terrified he’d made the wrong decision. If you’d have asked him two years ago if he was going to university he’d have given a flat out no as his answer. Now he was studying a double degree and failure seemed like a very real possibility. He tried not to worry about it too much but the orientation day for uni was fast approaching and he was terrified.

Chloe and Archie weren’t faring any better. Chloe had decided she wanted to be a human rights lawyer and the terror of law school was fully upon her in her latest emails to Rae. Archie was keen to start his archaeology degree, but really upset about missing his trip to Egypt and Greece; he didn’t know that Tom was secretly planning a couple of shorter trips to those destinations for his holidays.
Izzy was absolutely loving Italy, and was so worked off her feet she’d barely had time to miss Chop; her emails were always short but exuberant. Chop was throwing himself into his business but missed Izzy like nothing else; his emails were starting to get a little morose and Rae was already planning their first weekend back to Stamford to comfort him. Tom and Rhys’s business was taking over Stamford with over half of the population there having a membership for the gym; even Rae’s mum was heading to the gym three times a week now, and Rhys had started very slowly helping her heal her relationship with food.

Phil’s lawyer wrote and informed him, as predicted, that his disownment did not affect his trust fund, and invited him to consider writing a will. He had also advised Phil to get a PO Box because the terms of the trust fund included Phil’s parents knowing Phil’s postal address until he was 21. Phil agreed to set one up and give the lawyer these details by the end of the week. This had begun the trio on the task of consolidating their lives. The lawyer had been confounded at first, but had begun drawing up paper for wills and legal guardianship with almost glee; it was such a tricky legal situation, that he knew he would make plenty of money looking after these three. And he did his job well, getting them the most rights and assurances that he could under the law. But even then it was limited to specifically contract laws between the three of them; the law didn’t have provisions for basic things like rights to children, medical decisions, insurance, and a world of other things that were automatically granted duos just upon moving in together into a de facto relationship. And they couldn’t get legally married either, meaning that all the legal rights and safeguards for relationships afforded to married people was not open to them at all. Finn had mumbled about knowing how Archer and Tom felt now. But the lawyer did his best, and collected his fee, and they were better off legally now.

The bank had been less helpful; there couldn’t be three people with equal standing in a bank account of any kind. One or two. Not three. They could have the kind of account parents often had with children, were one or two people have all the power and the ‘children’ just get a key card; he’d seemed appalled that they even suggested the three of them have a joint account. Phil and Finn had sat silently while Rae had fumed at the bank manager loudly, who cited legal reasons as to why he couldn’t do it and appealed to Phil and Finn to make Rae be reasonable and to make her lower her voice. Finn had laughed at him, knowing that telling the lads to ‘reign their woman in’ would only piss Rae off more, and Phil had given him a severe and unimpressed look in reply before starting a lengthy lecture on misogyny. They’d changed banks to a credit union, but the law remained; a joint account were everyone had equal access to the account was for two people only. Although the credit union seemed to be far more sympathetic so Rae had been less angry about it. Changing banks had reminded Rae and Finn that Phil was actually rich; they had at best a vague and abstract understanding of that, but Phil requiring a cheque to close out his personal account while Rae and Finn both got theirs in cash form was a slightly more concrete reminder. Rae and Finn had both instantly decided that Phillip should be the primary bank account owner and they’d just have cards; it was mostly his money after all, and it probably always would be. They’d get the lawyer to draw up something giving them access to Phillip’s accounts if something were to happen to him. Phil hadn’t been happy about it, but Rae and Finn had tag-teamed him and he’d eventually caved in on the proviso that they went over finances together once a week and he would try to give them the highest level of access he could. They could withdraw money, access phone banking, but that was all; any changes to the account of any kind and any large withdrawals had to be approved by Phil. Phil hated it, but it was comforting to Rae and even Finn, who had to admit that Phil was better with money and saving.

And then suddenly university was upon them. And as wonderful as learning and meeting new people had been, no longer lazing about nakedly together had been a real downer. It had been hardest for Finn because he had completely different classes to Rae and Phil a lot of the time; only in the theatre classes did they all three come together, and even then, not for all of them because
Finn was focusing on what was happening behind the scenes and Rae and Phil were all about what was happening on the stage. The homework load was brutal, but slowly they started to find a rhythm, and managed to put aside time every day to just relax, nakedly, together. And of course, they made time for sex. At least twice a day. Of course.
Nowhere Without You

‘Nowhere Without You’ by Bob Evans

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orNewD1zG5Q

Where would I go? What would I do? I would be nowhere without you.

It was Rae’s turn to drive; they always took it in turns for who drove. But as for who rode in the passenger seat…

“SHOTGUN!” Two male voices screeched through the underground car park to their units. They both looked to Rae for her to decide who had said it first.

“Sounded like you said it at the same time to me.” She shrugged and the two lads stared at each other for a moment and then simultaneously sprinted towards the car. The rule of shotgun meant that they had had to see the car before they called it, and they had both screamed it a soon as the lift doors had opened in the car park. Now Rae watched their mad dash to the passenger side of the car, elbowing each other on the way.

Rae sauntered after them and started laughing when they both put their hand on the handle at the same time. They glared at each other and Finn tried to pull Phil’s hand off the handle.

“Get fucked!” Phil said and put Finn in a headlock. Finn put his arms around Phil’s waist and squeezed. They tussled until they ended up on the floor wrestling and rolling about.

“Stop it you two, the floor is filthy.” Rae said calmly and got into the car. The lads looked at each other.

“Truce?” They both said at the same time and then laughed, helping each other up. They both reached for the door again and war threatened to break out again.

“Let’s play rock, paper, scissors.” Finn said and nodded sagely.

“Alright.” Phil agreed and they did a round; Phil winning.

“Fuck you!” Finn bemoaned, “Best of three?”

“It’s always best o’ three you fucking Neanderthal!” Phil shot back, “Were you raised in a barn?”

Rae sat down with her group of three other girls for the group work. They were sitting outside in the sun and going over the notes. Rae was still trying to remember their names; Bernadette, Melissa, Alison, she recited their names in her head, keen to try and make new friends.

“God I hate it when girls do that.” Bernadette said and they all looked up to see a trio of schoolkids in uniform, probably 17 or 18 years old, the girl kissed one of the boys deeply and then laid her head down in the lap of the other boy.
“She’s leading them both on. They’re probably both so confused.” Alison agreed.

“Honestly why do girls go and slut it up like that?” Bernadette asked, “Does she think they’re both gonna like her after that?” Rae lowered her eyes, not sure what to say.

“She’s such a slut.” Alison agreed, watching the trio.

“You know in terms of feminism, girls are trained to try and please boys. Sluts… girls like her; they’re just victims of the patriarchy. Desperately trying to get ale approval at all costs, even to their own dignity. It’s sad really.” Melissa said.

“Maybe she’s with both of them.” Rae said through numb lips, “and I would o’ thought feminism would support a woman’s sexuality.”

“Well that just makes her a deluded slut.” Alison said, “Homeboys are probably tag teaming her till she’s too loose to use anymore.” Bernadette laughed.

“Like hot dog in a hallway.” Bernadette said and Melissa rolled her eyes.

“Vaginas don’t work like that.” She said and then turned to Rae, “Women don’t have a sexuality of their own; the patriarchy has primed us since birth to be the vessels and sexual objects and property of men. The only real answer is radical lesbian separatism.”

“What?” Rae asked, bewildered; this was not the feminism she knew.

“If women wanna have any self-respect, they can’t just let men do whatever they want to them. It’s hard for some women, but that’s what a radical political movement is all about.” Melissa said, “Feminism isn’t meant to be popular or nice, it’s meant to be changing society. If society likes it, we’re not doing it right.” Alison and gave Bernadette and amused look and Rae could see that they thought this feminism stuff was all bullshit. But Rae had been talking about a more inclusive feminism that embraced and celebrated all women with Chloe and Izzy; this wasn’t what she was used to and she felt out of her depth and slightly ashamed, and angry for feeling ashamed.

She kept her mouth shut.

Finn took the keys to Phil’s Mercedes off the hook and wondered how shotgun was going to go with these two today.

“Ladies first.” Phil offered Rae to go into the lift first; he seemed relaxed and Finn worried that he was just going to give the seat to Rae; that there would be no battle for him to laugh at.

When they got down the car park Rae screamed out shotgun but Phil didn’t say a word and Finn scowled slightly.

He unlocked the car and sat down in the driver’s seat, using the mirrors to watch what Rae and Phil were doing. Phil opened the back door for Rae and Rae stood in front of it and gave him a dirty look.

“What the fuck d’you think this is? I call shot-” Her words were cut off as Phil tackled her into the back seat and started making out with her. Finn watched in the rear view mirror and rolled his eyes.
“I’m not driving you two anywhere while you’re doing that.” He told them and Rae started to thrust, Phil joining in, even though they were both still clothed; making the car rock. Finn shook his head and climbed through the space between the front seats.

“Right… how the fuck are we gonna do this?”

“Oi fuck off! Don’t be a faggot!” Finn looked up at the lads milling into the lecture. There sure did seem to be a lot of lads, and not many lasses.

“Fuck off; you’re the faggot!” From what Finn could tell, the two lads were calling each other homophobic slurs because in the queue to get into the lecture theatre they had accidentally bumped into each other, pelvis may have touched buttocks, but Finn wasn’t sure. He bit the inside of his mouth and looked down; he didn’t want to get involved in a fight in his first astrophysics lecture. He wasn’t even sure he belonged here anyway; he wasn’t smart enough for this stuff but sound engineering wasn’t really enough to do as a degree on its own; the course work required a triple major. He’d picked sound engineering, astrophysics and modern technologies. And he had his other degree in technical stage management as well. He lowered his head and tried to get his nerves and the feeling he didn’t belong here under control.

Rae tried not to laugh whenever both boys sat in the backseat; they always pulled faces at the rear view mirror and she knew one day she’d crash if she wasn’t careful.

“We should fuck.”

“No, I don’t think so.” Phil said politely and the girl looked at him like he was crazy.

“It’s uni, everyone fucks everyone here…”

“I’m in a relationship.” Phil answered.

“So the rumour that you’re with that fat bird’s right?” She asked and Phil furrowed his brows at her trying to ascertain if she was using fat as a descriptor, pejorative or something else. “Are you embarrassed to be with a fat girl? You shouldn’t be.” She said and Phil felt easier.

“I’m not.” He answered.

“Embarrassed or with her?”

“Embarrassed.”

“Good. Well I guess we’re just gonna be friends then.” She said, “Name’s Renee.”

“Phil.” They shook hands.
“My mate Kels has got a brother named Phil and you look a bit like her.”

“I have a sister named Kelsey.” Phil broke out into a grin.

“Fuck me, it’s a small world!” Renee laughed.

Phil sat with his head against the steering wheel.

“I called shotgun!” Rae said crankily.

“I called it first!” Finn retorted. They had been bickering for five minutes, standing at the passenger side door.

This always happened.

“You two have to get a better system!”

They sat in silence at their study desk, each using their side of the desk to the fullest, with notepads and textbooks spread out all over the place. They had a mixtape playing with songs that they all liked on it, and snacks in the centre of the table.

“Oh my fucking god.” Rae mumbled despairingly as she looked over her homework load. Phil closed the first reading and made a few notes before opening the next one like a machine. Finn looked up at him and envied that intellect; he was sailing through his work. Finn looked back down at the sound engineering text book and furrowed his brows.

Rae was excited to drive them out to the countryside for a picnic, even if Finn was muttering and sulking about losing the thumb-war that had resulted after the inevitable mad-dash-to-the-car-and-wrestle.

As driver, she got to choose the tunes, but the three of them had been pretty good about being inclusive of each other’s particular tastes and they had a decent reservoir of songs they all liked.

After about half an hour Rae could see a look of scheming on Finn’s face in the rear view mirror and was about to ask him what he was up to when he crawled through the space between the seats and sat on Phil’s lap. She rolled her eyes.

“That’s not gonna be safe in an accident.” She tutted.

“I can fit my belt around him too.” Phil said and took his seat belt off and wrapped it around the two of them.

“You two are bad examples on each other.” Rae shook her head again, but had to fight the grin from showing on her lips.
They had fallen into the habit of fucking hard and fast before classes in the morning.

No one was complaining about it.

Even when it sometimes made them a little late.

The other habit they had was making love slowly at night time before bed.

It had started to ease Finn’s stress and Rae’s anxiety so they could both sleep and stop keeping Phil awake with their shared insomnia. Phil had found it odd to be the one without insomnia for once. So he had begun to just gently make love to them to calm them and take their mind of university. It worked and they had been able to start sleeping properly again.

So far Phil was finding university to be just as easy as college had been. But the emotions about his family and the fear of losing the people he loved, or being less important to them than they were to him; that was what was killing him. These things were always milling around in the back of his mind, no matter how hard he tried to kill those thoughts and feelings.

“I’m not even close to ready!” Rae panicked. It was her first exam at uni and she was not coping with the whole idea. Phil had the same exam today; they were taking the same classes, but of course, he seemed to be feeling fairly confident about his academic abilities, as always. Although the stress was getting to him and he had to stop himself from swearing at the traffic; they were running late.

“You know this stuff girl. You’ve got this.” Finn stroked her hair and held her in his arms. Phil looked in the rear view mirror and gave Finn a supportive smile; they always supported each other through Rae’s panic attacks, giving each other strength and guidance for how to best help her; approaching it as a team if it was a big attack, solo if it was small, and tag-teaming in and out if it was a particularly long panic attack and they needed a moment to recharge their batteries before heading back in to the battle against her anxiety.

“What if I forget it all?”

“You won’t.” Finn reassured her.

“What if me pen doesn’t work?”

“You’ve got backup pens.”

“What if me backups all don’t work?”

“The test moderator will have spares.”

Phil listened to Finn answering all of her concerns and scowled moodily at the traffic; he played confident, but he was anxious too; this was his first exam at a university level, what if he didn’t have what it took? And they were running late.
“Fucking traffic.” He mumbled as the conversation in the backseat continued.

“Double degree in nursing and theatre…” Phil said with a grin, “can’t say you don’t have broad interests.” They had been put into pairs for a performance piece about accurate emoting vs accurate mundane. Elsa had covered all of this in college with them, so Phil wasn’t worried about acting the common; most people couldn’t manage to look realistic when they were acting everyday normal events; they looked like they were acting. Elsa had taught them it was unlearning acting; learning to not act, but to be instead. Nina, his acting partner, was taking on the accurate emoting part of the task. The problem people had with this was fully committing; they were always afraid to look foolish or not believable.

“I love both as a career option, but let’s be real, my chances of becoming an actress are pretty fucking slim.” She said with a grim smile.

“But you’re so talented.” Phil said, confused.

“Women already have it tough in this industry.” She reminded him.

“Yeah less than a quarter of all roles are for women.” Phil said, “In children’s tv there’s more animal characters than female ones.” He shook his head.

‘Add in that that I’m black and my chances just took a nosedive.”

“Oh would you look at that; white male fails to see beyond his own experiences and has to have something explained to him.” Phil quipped at his own expense, “I’m sorry.” He shook his head. “I really shoule’ve known better.”

“That’s alright guv’ner just don’t do it again!” She laughed.

“Right well I give you permission to fly kick me in the face if I do.”

“If I could I would.” She laughed, “How about I just thump you?”

“It’s great you can compromise!” Phil laughed, “This is gonna be a great working relationship!”

“SOMEDAY YOU WILL FIND ME, CAUGHT BENEATH THE LANDSLIDE! IN A CHAMPAGNE SUPEROVA IN THE SKY!”

Rae and Phil gave each other a look as Finn continued singing on the top of his lungs, spread out happily across the backseat, London traffic all around them, and he didn’t care one bit that people could hear him through the open windows and were looking.

“God it’s gonna be so much fun driving you home drunk.” Rae said to him; he was sober right now, but they all knew he’d be similar to this when he was drunk. He laughed and kicked off his shoes so he could get away with resting his feet on the back of Rae’s chair.

“WAKE UP THE DAWN AND ASK HER WHY, A DREAMER DREAMS SHE NEVER DIES…”
“At least he can carry a tune.” Phil shrugged and Rae laughed.

“Ugh if Melissa keeps going on about radical feminism I might just barf.” Katie sat down next to Rae and Rae grinned.

“I mean they do make some points I s’pose.” She shrugged, “I’m still learning about it but.”

“Well liberal feminism is called diffuse and the soft touch of feminism, but I reckon if it’s embracing all women, including women of colour, trans women, disabled women, queer women; the whole spectrum of womanhood… not just those that fit your ideal of womanhood, then it’s gotta be the better option.” Katie replied, “I been going to this pretty cool feminist club on campus, you should come pal.” She grinned and ate a malteser, she was always getting chocolaty snacks from her sister in Australia.

“I might.” Rae wasn’t sure she could fit it in her schedule.

Phil grinned as Rae and Finn snuggled up close together in the backseat; the heater was not working in their car and they’d only just realised. It was midnight and it was freezing. But Phil’s opening night at his first play at the university had been a success. They both leaned over the seat and hugged him in congratulations, and to keep him warm as he drove them home.

Latisha sat down next to Finn. They didn’t talk, but Finn understood that as an African American exchange student; she was copping it from the multitude of white boys in the class and sitting next to him was a safe place for her. He didn’t say much to her or anyone else. He was stopping himself from ‘hulking out’ as Rae called it, on every fucker that kept using the word ‘faggot.’ Turned out a lot of white boys studying STEM subjects used bigoted language like that; Finn had heard some real bad shit thrown at Latisha, but she handled herself, and he was just trying to fly under the radar.

The two week run of Phil’s play was done and the after party had been huge. Phil stumbled into the back seat of the car, drunker than either Finn or Rae had ever seen him. Finn put the seatbelt on him, his mouth tight, a furious expression building up in his features.

“Did you see the lipstick?” Finn asked through gritted teeth and Rae sighed.

“On his collar yeah. What a fucking stereotype.” Finn made a very angry noise of agreeing and Rae sighed silently. “We’re not grilling him tonight on this Finn; he’s too drunk.”

“Aren’t we?” Finn snapped, “Oh, cos I thought cheating wasn’t allowed?”
“And that’s the other reason we’re not talking about it tonight; you’re too angry.”

“Aye you’re right, I’m fucking furious.” They had all elected to be fairly quiet about their relationship while they were still getting used to uni; better to have only one battle to fight at a time. Nonetheless, there were a lot of assumptions flying around about their relationship, and quite a few of them had been thrown at them tonight; and Finn hadn’t liked it one bit. But the thing that had made him really angry was Phil getting completely drunk and then disappearing for an hour and then Phil had gotten angry at Finn when Finn had told him it was time to leave. To Finn, it was one thing to talk honestly about your feelings and attraction for other people outside of the relationship and perhaps even organise to explore them, but it was an entirely different thing to just go off and do it. And all suggestions pointed towards Phil having cheated tonight.

“Lipstick on the collar doesn’t mean he cheated Finn.”

“How can you be so quick to clear him, you saw what he was like tonight!”

“How can you be so quick to condemn him?” Rae shot back and Finn pulled over.

“I’m too angry to drive.”

“Alright.” Rae said and they swapped positions, Rae checking in on an extremely drunk Phil. As soon as they started driving again Rae quickly looked at Finn, “Tonight was completely out of character for him.” Rae said and Finn nodded.

“I never thought I’d see him… I never thought any of us’d cheat.” Finn said, sorrow getting the better of him.

“A lot of his co-stars kissed him tonight.” Rae said, “It’s very possible that one of the girls got it on him.”

“Where was he for that hour?”

“I dunno Finn, but I’m not gonna assume the worst.”

“I’m scared it’s all gonna fall apart Rae.” Finn said, “It’s hard enough keeping a ‘normal’ relationship together… and it just feels like we’re too happy, like it’s going too well and I just keep waiting for something to collapse.”

“Isn’t it s’posed to be me that thinks that way?” Rae asked meaningfully and Finn sighed.

“Aye alright.” He shook his head, “I’m just not used to everything being happy for so long with so little effort.”

“We’re still putting the effort in Finn, but it’s like weight lifting right? You can lift heaps more now than you used to be able to, and when you go back to your starting weights it’s like nothing at all; it feels like no effort even though it used to be heaps. You’ve just gotten used to it.” This perked Finn up instantly.

“You’re right!” He answered feeling much happier. “But we still gotta drill our boy over what happened.”

“Oh definitely. Rae said as she parked them in their car spot. Finn got out of the car and opened the backseat, Phil was slumped over the seat belt apparently unconscious. Finn gently pushed him back and undid his seatbelt. Phil grabbed Finn’s shirt and pulled Finn to him.
“N’ cheat.” He slurred. “You ‘n’ Rae are m’ life.” And he was unconscious again. Finn looked up at Rae who had opened the other door to see if she could help.

“Finn…”

“Aye I know.” Finn pulled Phil out of the car and grumbled about it the whole time. Eventually he got Phil over his shoulder and Rae locked the car. The phone was ringing when they got in, even though it was 2 in the morning. Rae picked it up.

“Is Phil with you?” It was Katie.

“Aye what’s up?”

“Oh thank god!” She sighed. “Renee says we need to come over now.” Katie hung up and Rae looked down at the phone and shook her head.

“We’ve got visitors coming,” Rae said and Finn rolled his eyes.

“Now’s not really the time.” He took Phil’s shirt off and grabbed a bucket, just in case.

“I feel…” Phil said and put his hand over his stomach.

“It’s alright champ, got a bucket for you.”

Ten minutes later Renee and Katie were calling through the intercom for the building and Rae buzzed them in. Phil hadn’t vomited but Finn was getting worried about how drunk he was. As soon as Rae opened the door Renee was in and pulling Phil to his feet.

“We need to take him to hospital, he’s been drugged. I saw Pete slipping him a roofie.” She said.

“Holy shit.” Finn got up, all anger completely gone and forgotten; this was something completely different to what he had feared. It was much worse.

“Pete?” Rae asked and Renee nodded.

“Chop chop people!” Renee said and grabbed Phil’s shirt. Finn got Phil over his shoulder again and Katie gave him an impressed look.

Moments later they were in Renee’s car; the three of them on the back seat, Phil between them. Katie was driving and Renee was looking over the passenger seat at Phil. When they got to the hospital emergency room, they were lucky that it was a quiet mid-week night and they managed to see a doctor within half an hour; Phil vomiting spectacularly all over the waiting room floor probably helped with the speed at which they got through the waiting room.

“How much did you drink?” He asked Phil and Phil swayed, almost falling off the bed he’d been sat upon.

“Jus’ one.” He slurred.

“Right.” The doctor clearly didn’t believe him, “And what did you take?”

“He was drugged, probably Rohypnol.” Renee answered and the doctor rolled his eyes.

“Oh huh.” He answered, “It’s ok, I’m not gonna report you, just tell me what he took.”

“Listen here you fucking shitty little intern with a big man complex, my friend was drugged. And
maybe because you’ve got the idea in your head that only women can be victims of sexual assault you don’t believe me that he was given the date-rape drug, but guess what? You’re wrong, it might not happen often to men, but it does happen.” Renee was a women not to be messed with, “So treat him.” Phil slumped back on the bed and Rae and Finn both panicked.

“Is he alright?” Rae called out and the doctor took his attention off Renee and returned it to Phil.

It was several hours later that a washed out feeling Phil sat in the backseat between his partners, Renee driving this time and Katie trying not to fall asleep in the passenger side seat.

Finn pulled up some chairs and they all sat around in the lounge room, Rae helping Phil hold his tea.

“God and I thought because he had lipstick on his collar…” Finn mumbled, shaking his head, heartily ashamed of the conclusion he’d jumped to.

“Simmer down princess, the lipstick’s mine.” Finn gave her an icy stare in response, but had to acknowledge that he needed to get that jealousy under control again, “I always kiss him on the neck cos that fucker’s tall and since he’s one of the few men I’ve ever met that isn’t a misogynist at heart and he’s stupidly head-over-heels for you two, I know I can do that without him becoming a creep about it.”

“Lots of men aren’t misogynists.” Katie said and Renee rolled her eyes.

“I thought Pete were nice.” Rae said sadly, “I never would have guessed… you always think that you’ll know who the rapists are. That there’ll be something off about them.”

“Nope. The rapists are just like ordinary men; they don’t have horns and a tail, they have the cutest dimples and an arse to die for.” Renee said with a bitter smile, “I’m just glad nothing happened tonight.”


“I don’t remember what happened.” Phil said and Rae felt sour panic rising in her throat.

“Does anyone know where Pete was during that hour?” Rae asked, not even sure how she managed to move her mouth.

“That hour could’ve been when he decided to teach me how to play chess.” Katie said looking at Phil, “It was a disaster; you seemed to be far too drunk to concentrate or think or anything, but you were so determined to do it.”

“Oh thank fuck.” Phil closed his eyes and took a moment to let the relief wash through him.

“Pete’s had a thing for Phil since uni started.” Renee said.

“Yeah he’s asked me out a couple times.” Phil agreed.
“Are you gonna press charges? They took a pee sample, you’ll have evidence and a witness.”

“Probably.” Phil answered, “And I’ll talk to the appropriate people at uni, see if I can’t get him expelled.” He suddenly remembered being angry at Finn when Finn had tried to get him to leave the party, “Oh fuck, if you guys hadn’t brought me home when you did…” Phil shook his head and put his face in his hands. “I’m sorry, I yelled at you didn’t I?” Phil said to Finn and Finn shrugged.

“Don’t even think about it; you were unwillingly off your face. I’m the one who should be sorry.”

“I need to just…” Phillip stood up and swayed. Finn and Rae were on their feet instantly, helping him. “I need a shower… or I need to lie down.” He said groggily.

“Our cue to leave.” Renee got up, “See you in theatre Seymour.” Renee got on tiptoes and kissed Phil’s neck and Phil hugged her tightly.

“Thank you.”

“Aye thank you.” Finn agree with Phil, and Rae nodded her head, unable to speak; she was too choked up.

“Night all.” Katie said and left with Renee.

“Come on.” Rae said and gently led Phil towards the bathroom, “Let’s get tonight off you.”

Rae and Phil had played rock, paper scissors and Phil had won, so Rae was in the back seat this time. It had been a few weeks since the university had declared it wouldn’t expel Pete for attempting to rape Phil because there was not sufficient proof that it had been Pete who had drugged Phil, but somehow life was slowly starting to return to normal. Phil had been angrier than either of them had seen him when they ruling had come down, and the police wouldn’t press charges for the same reason. Finn had driven them all back to Stamford to visit Kester a few times and Phil was feeling much better now, although every time he saw Pete he clenched his fists, and had made a point of telling all of Pete’s friends what he’d done, making Pete increasingly isolated at uni because more people believed Renee’s version of events then Pete’s.

“Where are we going?” Phil asked as he put his seat belt on.

“Somewhere I’m embarrassed I didn’t think to go to sooner.” Finn said with a mysterious grin.

It didn’t take long for them to pull up outside of an elegant looking jewellery store. Both Rae and Phil looked at it confused, but Finn just smiled enigmatically and led them both inside.

“Aх Finn!” The jeweller said with a smile, “Right on time.” He waved hello to Rae and Phil and went out back. Finn turned to his partners and took off the watch his father had given them. He turned it over and showed them the back.

“I had this engraved on it.” They looked and saw the letters ‘R’, ‘F’ and ‘P’ on the back, organised in a triangle, with the letters facing in, so no one letter was obviously on top or the centre of it, the ‘tail’ of each letter touching in the middle to almost make a three pointed star. Phil ran his fingertips over the engraving and smiled happily. It was such a Phil thing to do; to run his fingers over things, and both Rae and Finn loved that about him.
“It’s gorgeous.” Rae grinnned. “Are we all getting our stuff engraved then?” She asked and Finn nodded. He’d cleaned out the last of his savings to get this done; they were living on Phil’s money alone now. But it wasn’t just the engraving. Philippe, who owned this store, returned with a stunning necklace held up to Rae. It was three thin chains plaited together to make one chain, the three chains were different hues of gold; white, yellow and rose and the clasp already had the engraving on it.

“Oh my god.” Rae said and the jeweller laid it down before her before as Finn gently undid her chain.

“I had this chain made with two chains to symbolise Rae and me.” He said to Phil, “I really should’ve corrected it a while ago.” He said with an apologetic voice. The jeweller took the necklace and gently removed the pendant from the old chain and using his jeweller’s pliers clasped it onto the centre of the new chain.

“It’s a beautiful piece of jewellery.” Phil answered, “You didn’t have to.”

“Yes I did.” Finn answered immutably. “This is important to me.” He took the new chain, with his grandmothers black diamond pendant now attached and hung it around Rae’s neck. “Much better. He grinned as he appraised the new chain, his fingers running down its length to the pendant.

“That’s quite a diamond.” Philippe said, “Be worth quite a bit.”

“Aye we know.” Rae answered, her fingers going up to the diamond as they often did.

“And now it’s just you.” Finn looked down at Phil’s signet ring and Phil slipped it off and handed it to Finn. Finn gave it to Philippe.

“Give me half an hour with it and the engraving will be done.” He smiled, “And do you want to sell this chain to me?” He held up the old chain.

“You should keep it.” Phil said, “As a memento of your time together before me.”

“That’s the past but,” Finn said, “It’s important, but I’m more into the now. So I honestly don’t mind either way.” They both looked at Rae

“Keep it.” Rae said, “I was wearing it for all the important moments in both this relationship, and the relationship Finn and I had before this. It’s too important to sell it.”

“I’ll get you a little bag for it.” Philippe reached under the counter, “And then you go have a cuppa, and I’ll engrave the ring, yes?”

When Phil got his ring back, the inside of it bearing the engraving he felt like this was just exactly what he had needed right now.

They had very tentatively been making love since the attempt by Pete, but when they got home, Phil was feeling more confident again, and their lovemaking was breathless, fiery, intense and consuming.

Phil felt like he was back to his old self.
“Yeah I’m free on Saturday.” Phil said and Rae and Finn looked up at him as he made a few notes, thanked the person on the phone and hung up. He turned to them excitedly, “I auditioned for a small speaking part in an episode of Hollyoaks.” He explained, “it’s only two lines, but I got it!”

“OH MY GOD!” Rae jumped up to give him a hug.

“Congratulations!” Finn kissed him.

“And I get paid for it!”

Phil’s birthday came on the 9th of November. Rae and Finn had gotten him a few small presents, they’d agreed to not spend more than 100 quid on birthday presents, so he got a huge book on the history of theatre, a book of 50 well known plays, a couple of CDs, some new oil pastels and some clothes. Phil had loved every single gift; they showed how well Rae and Finn knew him. Rhys’s birthday was on the 8th, and Tom’s was on the 10th, so they decided to go back to Stamford for the weekend and a huge birthday party bash; even Izzy had come back and it had been so nice to see all the gang together again, even a few of the extended gang members had managed to make it. But the Wednesday closest to Phil’s birthday had seen them at the sex show club having a great time until about halfway through. Rae and Finn had told Phil to be rougher still, so he’d pushed the back of Rae’s head up against the stage and fucked her throat deeply, her eyes watering, as she gagged and drooled copiously. But as soon as Phil had pulled back, she gasped for air and started to suck him furiously, so enthusiastic that both men’s cocks dripped pre-cum with desire; Rae knew how to turn them both on, whether she had the power or not. Finn had been determined to go as hard as Rae had, so when it was his turn to be pushed up against the stage, he was determined to take it, and to not tap out… he’d ended up vomiting. Phil had gone into hyper-aftercare drive, filled with a huge heaping of guilt and drove them home immediately, after cleaning Finn up a little. Finn had felt physically queasy for hours after. There had been long discussions after that about tapping out and pushing one’s self and were responsibility lay when things went bad like that; none of them had liked the vomit one bit. But they figured it out and moved on.

When Rae’s birthday came around on the 13th of December, the lads presented a beautiful handmade wooden chest for her to keep her many diaries in. Finn had put the basic shape together and Phil and he had carved it into an ornate finish, shellacking it lovingly, and lining the inside with green velvet. Rae had been stunned; she’d known the lads had been working on some secret project, but had had no clue that it was for her, or that it could be so beautiful. Along with that was some CDs to add to their bursting collection and some new clothes. And of course a night of being the dominant at the sex show club.

Their lives were running at a frenetic, hectic pace, and the pressure to perform at university was immense. But they were coping. When Rae had a melt down from anxiety about the spoken prose or poetry performance they had to do and she had decided on doing a poem about being a fat girl, and then immediately regretted it, the two lads had soothed her. She’d gotten a High Distinction mark for her performance, and then she’d handed the poem in for her writing degree and gotten a Distinction for it. She felt a lot better after that. When Finn had had a quarter life crisis; freaking
out that he’d chosen the wrong degree, they’d gone through options for changing the degree or dropping to a single degree; it had calmed him that they had listened and hadn’t invalidated how he felt by just telling him to stick with it. So he’d stuck with it, and found he really enjoyed it. When Phil was disappointed he didn’t get the lead for the uni theatre production, the first time he’d ever not gotten a lead role he’d gone for, they’d cheered him up and reminded him that London was going to be a hard scene to crack open, then fired him up to keep trying. He’d gotten the lead in King Lear, being performed in Soho theatre early next year. They supported and uplifted each other especially at their worst moments. Slowly 1998 was winding down, heading towards the end of the year and a nice 3 week holiday from having worked their arses off at university for the past 3 and half months.

They had, with a lot of debate, decided to stay in London over Christmas. The three of them didn’t really see much point in celebrating Christmas; none of them were overly religious, they preferred to give gifts on birthdays because it felt more special and tailored to the individual, and they had ample other days of the year to spend with family; days that wouldn’t result in arguments over who should be where and at what time like Christmas did. So they decided they’d spend the day snuggled on the lounge eating comfort food and watching childhood movies and opted out of traditional Christmas, which predictably resulted in arguments. Linda was the worst at guilting them, even though as a Muslim household they didn’t technically celebrate Christmas anymore. Gary had been sad but told them he supposed it was for the best; it meant that he and Linda could stop negotiations on whether they were all going to his place for lunch or dinner.

So between essays, assignments and so many readings Rae was sure her eyes would just stop working, Linda was relentless with her pressure about Christmas family time.

And for all the pressure, difficulty and meltdowns, there was nowhere any one of them would rather have been that in that huge studio apartment, relaxing with their partners. With not a stich of clothing on.
Filthy Gorgeous

'Filthy Gorgeous’ by The Scissor Sisters.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4RcBZy2jZA

Cause you're filthy and I'm gorgeous. You're disgusting and you're nasty. And you can grab me cos you're nasty!

The energy was frenetic and excitable. Their new friends Renee, Katie, Latisha and Nina were being joined by the twins, Bryn, Danny and his girlfriend Grace, Chop, Izzy, Chloe, Rhys, Tom and Archie and they were all sitting around on their floor, drinking, smoking and talking shit and getting to know each other. In a few hours they were heading out to the pub for a meal, then on to various parties for New Years. Rhys had agreed to take the core members of the group to the sex show club at about 1am, which, coincidentally, was when Danny had planned to head back to the hotel with Grace; they didn’t want to overdo it. And their uni friends, the twins and Bryn were all out to find someone to hook up with tonight, which no one doubted they would. Leaving the core gang members free to disappear for the secret and much anticipated visit. Rae, Finn and Phil were keen to see how everyone treated Rhys at the club, and Tom, who had worked at the bar. They had felt guilty about not inviting the school gang members, but Rhys was only willing to answer for people he knew personally, and so was Tom, so that had ruled them out, for now. Rhys had said if he got to know them better and they were interested perhaps he would take them in the future to a show. Apparently they did a special 24 hour show for New Years, and all the performers would be there and get some time on the stage. But the best bit was that everyone in the core gang was in London for the next week; and they were all meeting up every day at the trio’s place to chill together. It was so exciting to have the gang back together that even the twins, Danny, Grace and Bryn were pumped, even though the excitement in the room had little to do with them. Phil hadn’t been part of the core gang for too long, but he was still excited to see them all, and he and Rae and Finn were heading to a chess tournament in Leeds in after this week where most of his old chess club would be and he could introduce them to each other for the first time. He was far more excited about that than Rae or Finn, but they were quite keen to meet his friends and share in his interests.

The group was getting along well, and Rhys was sorry that Aiyana and Nikki hadn’t been able to make it to their celebrations. He was hoping they would in the future.

“Nice to see a brother amongst all these crackers!” Latisha grinned at Rhys

“Nah Aiyana gave us all different names, there’s only one cracker here!” Chloe laughed and Latisha cocked an eyebrow at her questioningly, “I was dubbed ‘creamy goodness!’ And I wanna stick with that if I can!”

“She called me mayo.” Archie raised a hand and Latisha laughed delightedly, Nina grinning beside her.

“My nickname’s vanilla ice cream.” Rae added.

“Toothpaste.” Chop said with a toothy grin.

“I wonder why.” Latisha chuckled.
“Milk.” Izzy piped in.

“Ritz cracker.” Phil said with a tight smile.

“Oh yeah, how rich we talking?” Latisha said and Phil nodded his head slowly at the question; Aiyana had explained to him that Ritz crackers were the rich white people. He didn’t mind the name, just the allusion to his wealth.

“I don’t really like to talk about it… it’s not my money… I’m a trust fund kid.” Phil answered and Nina gave him a sympathetic smile; her and Phil were good friends, she knew about the situation with his family and she was always willing to give him sympathy.

“Oh trust fund?” Kristi asked, “I had no fucking clue.” She laughed, “All these years and I thought I knew you.” She shook her head.

“I feel betrayed.” Kurt piped in.

“Oh for fuck’s sake.” Finn knew he had to change the topic for Phil’s sake. “I got stuck with fucking ice ice baby.” Everyone laughed loudly.

“And what are you sugar?” Latisha asked Tom with a saucy smile, eying him appreciatively. But she saved her most appreciative looks for Rhys. But then, Rhys was an impressive man, no matter how you looked at him.

“I’m actually sugar…” Tom nodded.

“I bet there’s a lot of jokes about getting some sugar.” Nina said, also eying first Tom and then Rhys appreciatively.

“So is Aiyana African American too?” Latisha asked.

“No, she’s from Hawai‘i.” Rhys answered Latisha. “She likes to remind our white friends of their race every time she sees them because, people of colour like us, are reminded of their race constantly, and white people never have to consider it.” Rhys explained to Katie, Kristi and Kurt.

“Sounds fair.” Kristi replied.

“Good cos you’re now mashed potato and French fries.” She said to the twins then looked at Katie. “And you’re…”

“Can I be chicken? I love chicken.”

“Alright!” Latisha laughed. “You’re chicken.”

“Why food names… except for Chop?” Kurt asked.

“D’you know how often us black folk get called chocolate.” Nina replied.

“Caramel.” Renee shook her head.

“Coffee.” Bryn added.

“Yes, Aiyana did research into common descriptive words used for skin colour.” Rhys answered, “People of colour’s skin tones are most often referred to in terms of food and beverages.”

“Shit I should get to know Aiyana!” Bryn laughed, “She sounds perfect.”
“Shit, you should get to know me.” Renee shot across the room at him, “chico, no hay nombre que describa las cosas que te haría!” She said with an obviously sexual grumble in the back of her throat.

“Oh wow hablas español?” Bryn replied, too excited to hear Spanish to fully register what Renee had said to him.

“Si, y te hablaré en español mientras te doy tremenda barra, hasta que pierdas tu mente y solo puedas susurrar mi nombre.” Renee propositioned him and Bryn went immediately red in the face, even though no one else understood what she’d said.

“Um… ok…” He stuttered. Renee smiled with brazen sexuality and Bryn made a high pitched noise in the back of his throat and looked at Renee with disbelief. “Your Spanish is different to my Spanish.” He noted their different dialects and cleared his throat.

“No…” Bryn agreed, “I… I understood y-you.” He stuttered. Izzy gave Rae and Chloe a look and they all tried not to laugh. “I mean I don’t know exactly what ‘Te doy la barra’ means but… but I-I think I get the drift.”

“It means to fuck.” Renee answered and everyone burst out laughing when Bryn blushed even more.

“Yeah…” Bryn swallowed hard and nodded his head trying to look chill. “I thought so.”

“Where you from?” Renee asked, having some mercy on him, “My family are refugees from Cuba.”

“I was born here.” Bryn answered still blushing furiously but trying to get himself under control, “Ah but my mother is from Guatemala, my father from Colombia… they’re refugees too. They came separately and met here.”

“I don’t see enough Latinos in the UK.” She eyed him lustily and he cleared his throat, clearly aroused but not knowing what to do with a woman like that. But he had a feeling she’d teach him.

“Don’t drink too much tonight.” She said and he nodded.

“Oh little Brynnny’s getting some.” Chop teased and Bryn blushed and mumbled.

“Speaking o’ getting some.” Archie pointed at Tom.

“Right kiddies,” Tom said as he went through his little bag of fun, “Tonight we have some quality MDMA, it’ll take about 40 minutes to hit us and it’ll last about 6 hours. We’re gonna take ‘em with food and have a real healthy dinner, and I’m gonna give you a vitamin C pill to have at midnight to help with the comedown.”

“So are we only taking one?” Kurt asked.

“What the fuck are you talking for?” Kristi snapped, “Like you’ve ever done drugs.”

“I just heard you take more than one!”

“Not tonight.” Tom answered, furrowing his brows, “I don’t want any nasty comedowns on the first day of the new year.”
“Sounds good.” Rhys answered, who didn’t suffer from comedowns; his fit body handled the occasional night on drugs with ease. Really Tom wanted the gang to be sober when they got to the sex show club, so no one did anything they’d regret later. Tom started to hand out the little pills, with a larger orange pill, both in a little baggie to each of them.

“Oh no, I think I’ll pass.” Danny said and Grace also passed.

“No thanks.” Nina answered, “I like to be sober when I’m out dancing; guys take enough advantage of single girls without that.”

“I’m fine to take whatever you give me.” Latisha said with a grin and Tom passed her the baggie.

“You’re not worried about guys taking advantage?” Kurt asked and then glanced at his sister.

“Ain’t no man gonna fuck with me and walk away alive.” Latisha answered.

“I’d believe that.” Finn told them.

“Oh you know me well enough to know it’s true!” She laughed.

“Don’t think Ryan’s ever gonna walk the same way again!”

“Dickhead puts his hand on the booty without permission; dickhead gets his balls kicked up into his throat.” She answered bluntly.

“I’m hanging around you tonight!” Nina said and reached out for a pill.

“That’s the spirit girl!” Latisha gave her a cheer. Katie took hers without a word and looked down at the pills thoughtfully as Kristi took hers.

“Why are you having some?”

“What the fuck Kurt?” Kristi gave him a glare.

“You’re me sister, it’s my job to look after you!”

“It’s everyone’s job to look after their friends and family,” Rhys answered calmly, “To the extent they wish us to and not beyond.” Kristi took the baggie from Tom pointedly and Kurt considered Rhys’s words as he rolled his own baggie over in his hand.

Phil looked down at his own pill and Rae put a hand over his shoulder. Around them everyone was talking loudly and laughing, Bryn asking Tom lots of questions as Renee pocketed her baggie.

“First time?”

“Yeah, I mean, except for being drugged by an attempted rapist.” Phil said with a tight tone and looked up at Rae.

“If this is too much of a reminder of-”

“No it’s fine.” He shook his head determinedly, “I just feel like such a novice sometimes. You and Finn have done so much…”

“No foursomes though.” Rae pointed out and Phil smiled gratefully and kissed her. He’d had loads of foursomes.
“Thanks.” He stroked her face, “perspective.” He took a deep breath.

“You don’t have to take it.” She told him.

“I know.” Phil said, “But I want to. I wanna know what you’ve both experienced.”

“Well I promise you you’ll enjoy it.”

“Well with a Rae Earl promise I feel much better.”

“Oi Mr and Mrs Nelson,” Finn turned to them, his conversation with Archie paused while Archer peed, “I think we’ll skip fucking in the club tonight, what with the gang all around?” He asked quietly so the others couldn’t hear.

“What about at the nightclub?” Rae asked.

“Well everyone’ll be high and fucking.” He grinned, “So yeah if the feeling takes us we can fuck at the nightclub. But at the other club, everyone’s gonna be sober so…”

“Aye alright.” Rae agreed, “Sounds like a fair plan.”

“Oh Jesus!” Phil laughed; the sex show club had been as public as he wanted to get, now it was looking like things were going to be a lot more public, and their friends were going to be there.

“Y’alright?” Finn asked Phil.

“First time with e.” Rae answered Finn.

“Well don’t take it if you’re unsure, we can all stay sober if you want.” He stroked Phil’s hair but Phil shook his head.

“Try most things once.” He grinned. He looked over at Bryn who was looking down at his pill with a strange expression. He looked like he was unsure or making up his mind, Izzy leaned over and whispered something in his ear and he nodded, giving her a grin. Phil knew she was telling him not to take it if he was unsure and he felt a deep appreciation for this group of friends. They ribbed and teased each other and pushed and pulled, but always they were supportive of each other. They were in a very real sense, a family. And all being back together again for only the second time since they’d moved to London and even overseas had them all extremely hyper.

“Do you two have to be all over each other?” Archie asked with a grimace as he returned for the bathroom to see Chop passionately kissing Izzy.

“Fuck off this’ll be the second time in 4 months I’ve had me dick played with by someone other than myself.” Chop retorted.

“That’s not true.” Izzy replied with a devilish grin, “when I was back in November we fucked ten times even though I were only back for 60 hours and nearly half of it were spent with you lot.” She laughed, “And we fucked in the car at the London airport!”

“Yeah it don’t count; a fucking guard came afore I did!” They all laughed at Chop. “You try keeping your hands off Izzy when your dick’s about to crack from bein’ ‘ard for so fuckin’ long.”

“Fuckin’ hell!” Bryn laughed awkwardly. Rae, Phil and Finn shared a knowing glance; it was obvious Bryn’s feelings for Izzy had not abated one bit and Phil’s sympathy for Bryn was endless. Phil looked up at Renee; she was just going to use Bryn for sex, she wouldn’t form any emotional
attachment to him, so it was fine that Bryn was completely emotionally unavailable.

The jovial mood continued at the pub; they didn’t drink because they were gonna drop pills, but they didn’t need the alcohol to be loud and rowdy; each swapping stories of their new lives.

“I swear to fucking god I sewed till me fingers bled. But I’ve found my calling!” Izzy said, “I’ve learned so much I think me head’s gonna explode.”

“Ugh I know babe, law school is fucking kicking my arse!” Chloe said.

“You’re getting great marks shut up!”

“Yeah I’m doing 80 hour weeks for those marks Archer.” Chloe shot back, “It’s fucking hard. I’m lucky I got Rhys looking after me, even though he’s working as hard with the boxing joint.”

“How’s it going?” Finn asked.

“Really good.” Rhys answered with a satisfied smile, “40% of members are women now and we are at capacity almost all the time. So we need to expand already.”

“We’ve already made back the money we put into buying it.” Tom added. “So this meal’s on us!” This was met with a general wave of cheer.

“How are the old timers taking all the girls?” Finn asked.

“Mostly good.” Rhys said with an ominous undertone.

“There’s been a couple of incidents.” Tom frowned, “guys being a little too pervy, trying to hit on girls who are there to work out, some guys saying women can’t box...”

“We’ve introduced rules about that and in the expansion we’re gonna include a ‘no talk’ zone, where you can work out and no one, not even instructors will talk to you.”

“We’ll have to get people to book it, because I think it’s gonna be popular.” Tom mused.

“Which will be bad if people can’t work out the way they want.” Rhys sighed.

“Maybe do a stoplight system?” Rae said, thinking about the stoplight system Elsa had had in their drama classes in college. “So everyone picks up an armband or sweatband or something on their way in; green for I wanna talk. Red for I don’t wanna talk. Orange for instructors are welcome, or I only wanna talk about exercise.” Rae shrugged and Rhys and Tom looked at each other, a silent conversation going between them.

“It’s brilliant.” Rhys answered. “Orange can also encompass looking for a sparring or workout partner.”

“It’d make the expansion much easier, the rules would be simpler, and we could accommodate everyone much better.” Tom sounded excited.

“Rae I think we’ll need to pay you something for coming up with this idea.” Rhys declared.

“Oh no, it’s fine, I’m your mate, so-”

“How does £10,000 sound?” Tom interrupted.

“Yeah should be fine.” Rae answered instantly.
“We’ll have to negotiate an amount.” Rhys chuckled.

“Your idea Rae, is going to make us a lot of money.” Tom grinned.

“Enough about work!” Rhys shook his head.

“Ah, well I was just about to say that Danny and I are having to expand as well; we’re gonna take on 5 more mechanics and open a second location on the other side of Stamford.” Chop said with a huge grin. “And I swear to god it’s all cos o’ this fucker!” He clapped Danny’s back, “Got a head for money and how to make it.”

“I am quite good with money.” Danny nodded his head and Grace smiled adoringly at him. She was quiet around the gang as she tried to figure them all out.

“Fucking hell!” Finn laughed, “I feel so…” He shook his head, “What am I doing with me life?” He laughed.

“Getting an awesome degree.” Archie answered pointedly. It had always been a battle between Chop and Archie as to which way Finn would go and Archie was delighted that Finn was at university rather than working with Chop; it felt like he’d won. And the prize he’d won was a huge shared experience with Finn; they could complain and moan about uni together, Finn understood the pressure of it all, and the hard work that want into getting a degree. This had been important to Archie. They literally talked every day on the phone about uni and relationships. This mattered a lot; it gave Archie something to cling onto while they were so far apart.

“Aye going to an early grave from fucking stress!” Finn laughed and Archie joined in, understanding perfectly what he meant.

“Ah yes stress; running a successful business, barely seeing my fiancée, there not being enough blow jobs in my world anymore.” Tom lamented.

“Ah you can blow me tonight.” Archie shot back. Tom grinned saucily.

“Oh I will be. You have no idea what’s coming to you Mr Archibald…” January 12th was the anniversary of their first kiss, and both of them had agreed that even though they hadn’t known it at the time, and Archie was too high on Special K to remember it, they were irrevocably in love already when their lips first met, so they were calling it their anniversary for when their relationship had begun. So Tom had organised a super quick 2 week jaunt around parts of Egypt and Greece as a surprise anniversary present. They left for Cairo the day that everyone else left for Stamford and Italy. Tom intended to fuck the love of his life twice every day that they were away; he’d missed their wild sex life, which had turned more mundane under the weight of their responsibilities, and when they got back to Stamford there was still a week until Archie had to go back to uni and Tom intended for both of them to be nearly completely black and blue by the end of it. Archie had an idea about the intended return of S&M to their sex life, but none about the holiday.

“Sounds exciting.” Archie answered with a grin.

“Speaking of exciting,” Tom turned to Rae, “Can you fit both of their cocks in your mouth at the same time?” Phil nearly choked on his drink and Finn tried to not laugh at him; Finn loved that Phil still wasn’t used to this group.

“What a fucking question to ask!” Latisha laughed. “I love you fuckers!” She raised her glass and they all joined in.
“Gonna answer?” Renee prodded Rae.

“Haven’t tried yet.” She admitted and scrunched up her face in thought about the logistics of doing it.

“What are you playing at girl?” Tom said in mock outrage.

“To be honest Tommy Tom-pit, there’s usually so much going in when we fuck that there’s still a billion things I gotta try.” Kurt’s jaw dropped; he’d been interested in talking about this before, but never thought he’d get the chance.

“How d’you handle both of ‘em?” Kristi asked, “I can barely handle one fit boy let alone two of ‘em.” Rae shrugged.

“Better to ask them how they handle me.” Finn turned his face to look at Rae when she said that: she’d come so far. Phil squeezed her thigh.

“Better to ask if they both deserve my Rae.” Chloe piped up in support. “Don’t let the fact that a boy’s cute ever stop you from demanding everything you deserve Krist.” Chloe told her, “So often we think cute boys are so important that we forget our own worth; that we are equally important. So what if Rae’s two lads are lookers… Rae’ a looker too! But regardless of looks, they better be treating her right. That’s what matters. Are they handling me best mate well enough?”

“Oh aye I suppose they’ll do.” Rae laughed, “In a pinch!”

“Oh that’s nice innit?” Finn laughed and kissed Rae, Rae turned to Phil for a kiss straight afterwards; she’d gotten into the habit of kissing both her men each time. Phil reached out to take Finn’s hand momentarily, they didn’t want to reach around Rae for a kiss at the crowded pub; they’d already had several people bump into them and fights had broken out in the pub all over the place, better to not risk bumping someone and starting a fight.

“No but really,” Izzy piped up, “I can barely handle one boy, how do you handle two?”

“But neither of us are as difficult as fucking Chop!” Finn laughed.

“Oi!” Chop returned with a filthy look, “Why am I always the one you shit on?” Chop spat and they all laughed, “What am I a fucking toilet?”

“I think what Finn meant to say is that he and Phil aren’t nearly as charming as you.” Archie shot back.

“Yeah I am fucking charming.” Chop laughed. “Mister Cordiality!”

“Right shall we have a round of non-alcoholic drinks to take our fun with?” Tom asked.

“Tell Phil, he’ll remember everyone’s orders.” Finn added and Phil rolled his eyes but listened carefully as everyone shot off their drink orders.

“Did you actually get all o’ that?” Tom asked.

“Yes” Phil answered, “Shall we?” He got up to accompany Tom to the bar and Finn joined them. Tom elbowed a space at the bar and waited for the bartender to finish up with other orders. Phil and Finn stood behind him, there wasn’t enough room at the bar so they held back until needed. There was a guy standing next to them in a white singlet, trying to get through to get to the bar. He gave up and looked at them, ready to complain to a sympathetic ear but he stopped and
stared at Phil and Finn. They were chatting softly and Phil stopped mid-sentence when he saw the
guy staring at him. Finn looked over at him and could already see the douchebag all over this guy.

“What?” Finn asked accusatorily.

“Aren’t you the two guys with that fat bird?” He asked. They hadn’t attempted to hide their
relationship and both had kissed her and put arms around her while they had been there. Everyone
in the gang had made jokes about who was garnering the most stares; was it the interracial couple,
the gay couple or the polyamorous trio?

“Excuse me?” Phil asked almost politely, unable to believe that this guy was saying this stuff to
their faces, and Finn realised that this would be the first time Phil was facing a verbal attack from a
complete stranger about Rae’s body.

“Does that fatty have a mechanical pussy or sumit – sucks and fucks at the same time?” Finn
rolled his eyes in disgust and looked at Phil, who had looked away, first across the bar, his
eyebrows furrowed, then up at the corner of the roof. Finn was about to yell something back at the
guy; deciding not to use his fists in this crowded setting. Both Rhys and Chop had drilled picking
your battles and weighing your odds into his head, and he knew Rae fretted when he fought.

“Nope.” He heard Phil say beside him with a strange tone, “Nothing else for it…” Finn turned to
look at him but simply saw Phil’s fist hurtling through the air, his whole body backing it up. Phil
slammed his fist into the guy’s face and he sprawled backwards, the crowd keeping him on his
feet, blood pouring down the front of his white singlet. Finn’s jaw dropped but then he saw Phil
shake his hand and realised Phil hadn’t squared his fist properly and he could have broken his
wrist. He took Phil’s hand into his and checked it; worry for Phil making him forget the guy he’d
punched.

At the table Rhys had stood, having seen the punch. Rae turned and saw a flash of blood and stood
up, worried for her boys.

Phil’s hand was ok, just sore and bruised and Finn brushed is lips along Phil’s knuckles as Tom
turned to see what the ruckus was.

“You fucking faggot.” The guy yelled at them and pushed Phil hard. Phil’s good balance saved
him from going sprawling, but Finn sprang into action; words were one thing, but you didn’t touch
his people. He grabbed the guy by the collar and slammed him into the support beam just behind
him.

“How about you take on this faggot?” Finn yelled at him. A group of eight men stood at the table
nearby, all of them glaring at Finn, but Tom was right behind him. “Cos you know what, I’m a
proud faggot. I take it up the arse, and I’m gonna fucking kick yours.” The eight men started to
surge through the crowd towards Finn and their friend, “You shit-talk about my girl then push my
lad, I’m gonna fucking kill you!” Finn slammed him against the beam so hard it shook and then
head-butted him brutally hard smashing his nose with a loud crack. Phil made a noise halfway
between horror and admiration and watched as Finn punched the guy in the gut hard enough to
make him cough and then vomit up some vile looking liquid. Chop saw the eight guys getting
closer to his mates and was up and across the table, pushing through the crowd, Archie not far
behind. Chop slammed into the first guy from the table to get there, both of them grabbing the
other ones shirt. Tom had already thumped one of them and Phil pushed away a guy that tried to
hit Finn. Archie had started pushing another guy and things were really starting to get nasty. Rhys
sighed and turned to Chloe, who was also starting to make her way toward the fight with everyone
else from their table.
“Time to go be the big scary black man. Again.” He said to her with a wry grin; this wasn’t the first time he’d had to get the gang out of a fight.

“Oh Rhys.” Chloe said with love and sympathy and kissed him before he turned towards the fight. Rhys pushed through the gathering crowd, the rest of the gang following in his wake. The crowd was starting to get revved up over the fight and was hard to move through, unless you were Rhys; his 198 centimetres, or 6 foot 5 and three quarter inches towered above most people in the bar, and he weighed an impressive 120 kilos, down ten from his heaviest because he was losing size to improve his martial arts performance. People tended to move for him, or he moved them with great ease if they didn’t. He strode into the fray and grabbed the fist of a man about to hit Archie, twisting it hard until he was on his knees and screaming, making everyone turn their eyes to him.

“If you’re taking on the faggots. You’re taking on me; the biggest faggot of ‘em all.” He said in a calm voice. The guys who were fighting the gang all started to bark “And I’m just in the mood for a good fight.” There was a loud cracking, popping noise and the guy Rhys was holding in place by the hand screamed in agony. Almost instantly half the crowd was stepping back, while five of the eight guys were scrambling to get away from the fight. The largest of them eyed Rhys for a moment and shook his head deciding to back off, and the other man looked back at his best mate being choked by Finn, but still started to slowly back away. Rhys cleared his throat and Finn took his cue and pushed the guy back into his mates sending him and two of his friends tumbling onto the floor. Rhys looked down on the guy.

“I have severely dislocated your shoulder, you need to go to hospital immediately.” He let go of the man’s arm and he yelped in pain. Rhys handed him 50 quid, “For the taxi.” He turned to the grizzled bartender; he’d seen a lot of fights in his bar before, but not where the queers won. “Call him a taxi now.” He nodded and headed out back to the phone. Tom joined Rhys in the middle of everything.

“And don’t mess with faggots.” Tom said, “All of us have had that word yelled at us, a lot of us while some douchebag tried to beat the gay out of us. We know how to fight back.”

“So I’m guessing the stares we were getting was because of the queeriness.” Archie muttered as they all gathered around Rhys. Rae going to Finn and Phil, checking that they were both alright and pulling them both to her in a fierce and relieved hug.

“Looks like it.” Phil said, scanning the room as Rae and Finn fussed over his swelling knuckles. “How did we manage to pick, probably the only homophobic bar in London?” Rhys laughed at him.

“You got a lot to learn about London.” He said shaking his head.

“Well at least they weren’t staring at you babe.” Cloe grinned at Rhys, “For once.”

“Well they are now.” Rae laughed. “We better go.”

“Alright you fuckers know how to party.” Nina laughed as they left the bar, Latisha winding her arms through Nina’s and Katie’s.

They headed back to the trio’s flat to wind down after the fight and to take their e.

“Glad we got to eat afore that happened.” Danny nodded his head. Grace tried to not be wide-eyed, but that was the first fight she had ever seen in real life.

“Me too Danny!” Izzy agreed. They had intended to take their pills at the pub and head out to the
nightclubs early, but now they took their pills and listened to Led Zeppelin, much to Tom’s delight; he found the idea of listening to them while waiting for the high to be ridiculously hilarious. They chilled out on cushions and bean bags, deciding to wait half an hour before heading out, Danny and Grace having a few beers instead of the ecstasy.

No one had hit the high when they headed out to go to the clubs, but they all knew they would soon as they walked down the street heading to a retro nightclub. Rae was laughing at the idea of a mechanical pussy, her, Chloe, Izzy, Laisha, Nina, Katie, Renee and Kristi sharing ideas on how that would work, Grace listening in with a grin. Rae was holding Phil’s hand, and Finn had an arm around Phil’s waist as they all dawdled to the club; the boys talking fight tactics, Bryn wide-eyed with all the knowledge he was getting. They weren’t expecting much; it wasn’t one of the big important nightclubs in London. It was just a tiny, independent establishment; most people would be heading in to the large, well-known, big-name places. Phil was starting to feel a little disappointed; maybe MDMA just didn’t affect him, because others in the gang were saying that they were feeling it now. And then Rae and Finn simultaneously pulled in to plant a kiss on his lips and he had never felt anything so good in all of his life. It was like life itself existed in the feel of their mouths together.

“I swear when I kiss you two, I can feel the rest of my life.” He marvelled at how every sensation was so heightened. They kissed him again; all three of them feeling the MDMA now, Phil unable to comprehend how every little thing could feel just so good. He could feel he was grinning dopily as they kept walking to the club; but he couldn’t help it, he was just so unbelievably happy. And then there was music; hearing music was incredible… he needed to play his violin when he was on ecstasy. He made a note of this for later, and even the thought of thinking about this later was such a pleasure. The club was packed and the music was amazing, and the prices for drinks were reasonable. ‘Club-e’ named for its owner Evelyn, was a brilliant little club; and the people there knew it. Phil found himself laughing as the gang carved out a space on the dance floor; Danny and Grace going for drinks and disappearing into the crowd, everything was fun, and the feel of his lovers’ bodies against his was something incredible. He’d already known it was incredible, but it was like the ecstasy showed him how every individual molecule of the contact was awesome, and it did that all individually and simultaneously, at the same time.

They started dancing, the whole gang together in a space in the centre of the club. Phil didn’t feel the physicality of dancing the same way he normally did, there was no working muscles and lungs, there was only the magic of his hands running over his lovers’ bodies, the power of their hands on him. Everything was good and happy and Phil honestly wondered what he’d been worrying about; this was amazing.

The gang were pressed against each other in this tightly packed nightclub, hot and sweaty, Finn could feel Tom’s grinding body behind him, he and Archie kissing as they danced and beside them Chloe and Rhys were bumping into them. On the other side of him Bryn was kissing Chop, Izzy watching with a wide open mouth, Renee putting an arm around Izzy’s waist. Latisha, Nina and Katie were dancing on the other side of Tom and Archie, all three of them keeping an eye out for a hook-up. Finn barely had time to let his brain register that he was seeing Bryn kiss Chop before he saw Chloe grab Rae and kiss her. Rhys, Finn and Phil watched the two girls kiss passionately, and exchanged glances. There was a moment, where the three lads danced on the edge of tipping all five of them into a one night stand; the looks they gave each other showed a willingness to go there for the night. But Rae and Chloe stopped kissing and they both cheered loudly; it had obviously not been as sexual for them as it had been for everyone watching. Even Rhys, when he was on
ecstasy found things to be far more sexual than he did when he was sober, and that kiss had him thinking that the girls might want some time alone, or hopefully with their lads as well. Finn looked back over at Chop and Izzy and he couldn’t see them anywhere, but he did see Kristi dancing with two very attractive guys, both of them intent upon her. Kurt was nowhere to be seen and Danny and Grace had gotten separated from the rest of the gang by the crowds.

“Well if the girls are gonna have fun!” Finn heard Tom yelling over the music and before he knew it Tom’s lips were on his. Tom was a fierce, passionate kisser, and before he knew it Finn was breathless, fighting through the kiss aggressively; just the way Tom liked it.

“Holy shit!” He laughed and his eyes went to where he expected to see Archie but he wasn’t there, he turned back to Rae and Phil to see Phil and Archie kissing. Chloe and Rae cheering. When he turned back to Tom, he and Rhys were kissing. They all laughed and kissed each other, Tom and Archie even kissed the girls, Rae noting Tom’s aggressive kissing style and giving it back well enough for Tom to groan appreciatively and tell her she was good. But the thought that this might end up becoming sexual was momentarily gone while they were focussed on simply experiencing different kissing styles. When Archie and Finn had kissed it had answered a lot of curious questions for the two of them; they were oddly not compatible in that way, they couldn’t get into a good kissing rhythm at all. Rhys’s kisses had set a deep, dirty, fire in everyone’s innards; Rae wasn’t able to stop herself from wondering what that mouth would feel like on other parts of her body. No one was. Rhys was very adaptable and moulded his kisses to suit who he was kissing; even high off his head, it was second nature to him to read people and know how to sexually gratify them. Rhys’s kisses had brought everyone into thinking that maybe something could possibly happen between the seven of them, tonight… but this was completely dampened by Kurt re-appearing, laughing and starting to dance amongst them, completely oblivious to what he had interrupted. He was only there for five minutes, but by the time he’d seen a woman who was, to him, the pure embodiment of heaven on earth and ran towards her, everyone was back to dancing with their partners. Which no one really minded.

No one had a clear idea of how much time had passed, but the kissing between Finn, Phil and Rae had been gradually growing more urgent as the music grew heavier. Phil or Finn almost always had lubricant in their back pockets now and when Finn lifted up Rae’s skirt and pulled her to jump up on him, Phil took the lube out of his back pocket. Rae again twisted to have an arm around both of their shoulders. Finn ripped her daggy cotton knickers; she’d worn them deliberately so they could be torn, used to clean up, and discarded. Phil tore the underwear from behind and she groaned loudly. Within minutes both of her lads were inside of her, grinding into her in time to the music, both of them holding her up tightly, all three of them in a state of perpetual almost orgasm; the ecstasy heightening every sensation. It felt as if they melted into each other, became one being. They all had a moment wherein they could almost feel what the others were thinking, like the electricity that sparked in the neurons in their brains jumped from one to the other, spreading the same message, like the same blood coursed in all their veins, their hearts beating as one. Rae tightened her legs around Finn and pulled her boys in closer, wanting them both pressed against her and in the end Finn let go of her and pulled Phil in, Phil doing the same, so that the two lads squeezed Rae between them as they thrust deeply, grinding their hips obscenely. The three of them kissed and didn’t notice just how many people were watching them. In a darkened corner, Rhys and Chloe were staring into each other’s eyes, Rhys slowly thrusting deeply into Chloe, and almost next to them, paying no attention to anyone else Archie had Tom pressed against the wall, one hand on the back of his head, the other on his hip.

Rae, Finn and Phil were still fuck-dancing when the New Year’s countdown came. Everyone around them cheering. But they were too intent upon enjoying each other to truly notice. When Phil came it felt like a symphony orchestra was playing in his groin and he could feel the rhythm of the instruments that Rae and Finn played as if they were inside his soul. And he knew they
were hearing the music scintillating through the fibres of their muscles too. Even after he had cum, the physical bliss and intimacy was so immediate and urgent that the sensation of needing to cum again was still a constant feeling.

Even as slowly sensations returned to their normalcy, their closeness was of supreme importance and the greatest source of pleasure in all three of their lives. When Rae slowly slipped her feet to the ground, they stayed close, kissing and holding each other.

“Wow.” Phil barely breathed the word and they all started to laugh.

“You might feel a little sad tomorrow.” Finn said and touched his cheek. “I never do, but Rae does if we go too hard.”

“Hmm but I think I’ll be fine tomorrow. That were a tiny dose.” She was enjoying the afterglow she always got from ecstasy; even after the heightened sensations had gone, she had a general feeling of wellbeing, like everything would be ok. Both Finn and Phil had the afterglow too; they both felt incredibly happy. Rae let her hands drop to their groins and they both started laughing again, remembering to put their cocks away.

“Ta muchly.” Finn thanked Rae for the reminder and she grinned and nodded toward Bryn, off to their left, two women kissing his neck, his arms around each of their waists, one of them was Renee and the other one had what could only be semen dripping down her inner thigh.

“Oh dear.” Finn shook his head.

“Someone’s gotta educate our boy about safe sex.” Phil agreed with Finn’s sentiment; it was one thing to not use condoms with someone you knew and trusted but Bryn had just had a threesome with a stranger in London.

“They sell condoms in the gents, I’ll go get him as couple, cos that little party isn’t set to finish just yet.” Finn grinned.

“I’m just gonna go clean up.” Rae joined Finn in heading to towards the bathrooms. On the way there they saw Latisha and Nina both kissing very attractive men, but Katie was nowhere to be seen and Rae worried a little. Phil headed to the bar; where they were all meeting up to leave and head for the sex club later. He saw Rhys and Chloe there already, laughing and talking animatedly. Rhys often seemed so serious, but he was extraordinarily sexual and Phil could see he also enjoyed laughing and joking; if the jokes were the right type of jokes. Chloe gave him a hug when approached.

“D’you remember when you was worried what Rhys’d say if he knew we’d fucked?” Chloe teased, “Now you’ve made out with both of us!” She laughed and Phil rolled his eyes with a huge grin.

“Yeah yeah yeah!” He mumbled shaking his head. “Was that the first time you and Rae kissed?” Phil asked.

“No!” Chloe laughed at the idea that that could have been their first kiss. “Did it turn you on Philly?”

“I think you and Rae know perfectly well that you had three men eating out of your hands.” Phil cocked an eyebrow at her and Rhys laughed appreciatively; Phil was not shying away from what had nearly happened between them all and Rhys admired a person who was not afraid of honesty.

“Might have.” Chloe scrunched her nose playfully, “Nothing wrong with playing with fire a
little.” She shrugged, “but I’m glad it didn’t go any further. I don’t wanna fuck me best mate!” Phil nodded his head, understanding the sentiment. Finn appeared after having given the condoms to Bryn, who had thanked him deliriously.

“Now I thought I saw Bryn kissing Chop…” Finn said, “And then Chop, Izzy, Renee and Bryn all disappeared.” He raised his eyebrows, “And now Bryn’s got a couple of lovely lasses, one of whom is Renee… and I wanna know the story of what happened in between.” Finn ordered a couple of bottles of water and turned back to them.

“Bryn kissed Chop?” Chloe asked with a stunned expression, “Like how Chop kissed Archie, or…?”

“No, no!” Finn said with a laugh, “No it were a right proper kiss!”

“Holy fuck!” Chloe laughed delightedly.

“What are you laughing at giggle-guts?” Archie and Tom had found them.

“Bryn snogged Chop!” Chloe divulged.

“Get fucked!” Archie shot back instantly.

“Aye I saw ‘em.” Finn reported.

“I wonder where Iz and Choppy-Chop are now?” Archie asked and looking up he saw Chop wandering over. Phil and Finn gave each other a curious look; wondering where their Rae was.

“So chop…” Chloe asked as he got within earshot. He instantly rolled his eyes; the tone of her voice giving away what she was about to ask.

“Did you fuckers see that?” They all burst out laughing, Chop glaring at them unimpressed. Through the laughter, Phil had an idea of what Bryn had tried to do; he’d tried to recreate what Rae, Finn and himself had. Phil decided he might email Bryn about this, take some time to really support him with his feelings for Izzy and give him tips for how to handle it. He’d also talk to him about how you couldn’t force a poly relationship to happen, and how there were loads of different configurations for poly relationships; he and Chop didn’t have to fuck as well. The point of poly relationships is that they didn’t follow someone else’s rule; they were whatever the participants wanted and needed.

“Am I bad?” Izzy’s brows furrowed and Rae shook her head. Girls milled about them going in and out of toilet cubicles, washing their hands, fixing their makeup, gossiping and laughing. Rae saw Katie come in, grin at her, and go into the cubicle. Rae was glad she was ok; drunk as a skunk, but ok.

“No Iz, you’re not.”

“Ah but Rae, my lad isn’t as experimental as yours.” Izzy fretted, “He’s not bisexual. He’s very very heterosexual… but when Bryn kissed him, oh my god Rae I wanted that threesome so bad… I just wanted Chop to get over his inhibitions and do it… And then with Renee there… I wanted it so bad.” She looked down at her hands, “It’s not fair, I wouldn’t ask Archer to be straight, so why is it alright for me to ask me fiancé to be queer?”
“Aye, but you didn’t ask him to be queer, did you?”

“No but I wished it Rae.” She sighed. “When he said ‘thanks Bryn, you’re really hot an’ all but I’m not into that’ I nearly cried.” Izzy shook her head, “I don’t want what you’ve got Rae, I don’t know how you can stand having two boys, one of ’em’s enough work…but I do want to try…” She lowered her eyes. “I wanna fuck Bryn and Chop at the same time. And I wanna have a foursome with Renee too.”

“Well Bryn’d definitely go for it.” Rae nodded.

“I know.” Izzy answered as if ashamed. “And Renee would too.”

“Don’t feel bad Iz.” Rae hugged her, “You feel what you feel; it’s fine. What matters is what you do with your feelings, and you’re not forcing either of those lads to do anything and no one could force Renee to do a thing she didn’t wanna do.” She reassure Izzy, “Even if you asked ‘em to do something, that’s not forcing them; as long as you respect their answer.”

“D’you think I should ask?” Izzy asked with wide eyes.

“I dunno Iz.”

“I don’t think Chop’d take it too well.” She fretted.

“Well I dunno Iz, maybe heading out to the club tonight’ll open his mind up a little?”

“I’m such a slut…”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing!” Kate said as she came out of the cubicle, not as drunk as Rae had thought she was. “That word is just used to control a woman’s sexuality. You don’t hear anyone calling men sluts for the same fucking behaviour.” She popped her lipstick in her bag and gave them a wink, “go out there and fuck all the dicks you want. Just use condoms.” And she was gone, leaving Rae giggling and Iz contemplative.

“She’s right Iz.”

“But I’m not single, I can’t fuck all the dicks!” Izzy started laughing. “Oh Rae… do you think I’m a slut? Tell me the truth.”

“Why the hell would I think you’re a slut; I fuck two guys every day… twice everyday… sometimes more…. Often more. I can barely fucking walk straight!” She laughed.

“Ah but you love both of ’em Rae! I don’t love Bryn, I just wanna fuck him, with Chop…” Izzy sighed, “And maybe another guy.” She added in a small devious voice. The two girls laughed.

“Maybe offer him a threesome with two other girls and yourself as a kind of trade?” Rae said, “He did look at Renee with appreciation…” Izzy laughed.

“I dunno Rae… right now I barely see him, I think I’ll have to stick to just him.” Rae shrugged and took Izzy’s hand.

“Let’s get going, they’ll be wondering where we are!” The girl headed back to the bar to find everyone waiting for them.

“Now I do have to warn everyone,” Rhys said, “That the club will be particularly dirty tonight…”

“Good!” Chop cheered, “I’m keen for this.” Izzy bit her bottom lip, thinking about what Rae had
said; maybe it would open his mind up a little… or shut it right down. They all headed out of the nightclub towards the taxi-van Rhys had called for them.

“D’you think we should warn him?” Phil asked as they followed.

“Nah.” Finn grinned deviously.

“Poor Chop.” Rae shook her head and sighed, thinking about Izzy.
the gang go to the sex club

‘Sexyback’ by Justin Timberlake

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_IBmHy_FXE

I’m bringing sexy back; them other boys don’t know how to act… VIP, drinks on me.

It was about a thirty minute taxi ride out to The Hyde, near Colindale, to the huge abandoned warehouse the club had set itself up in tonight.

“Something big happenin’ out ‘ere?” The taxi driver asked as he stopped the car, “I’ve drop five people out here already…”

“Just a party.” Rhys answered and paid him twice the fare.

“I’m not complaining!” The taxi driver grinned, “Y’all do pay right well.” Chop was jittering around, looking up at the warehouse. A limousine pulled up in front of them and a relatively well known actress got out, heading into the gate towards the warehouse without looking around.

“Oh my god!” Chop said in awe.

“This club has some very strict rules Chop.” Rhys said, “First of all, we don’t talk about what happens in here, we protect people’s privacy when they come here. And we don’t get excited over seeing people we recognise. Alright?” He looked around at all of them, even though the trio and Tom had already been here and it was really just Chop, Izzy, Archie and Chloe that didn’t know the rules.

“Got it!” Izzy said with a huge grin.

“You are going to see many things in there. You won’t like all of it. Don’t judge, just look the other way for the things you don’t wanna see.” He motioned for them to follow him and then stopped, “I used to work with these people, they know me very well… they know a part of me I don’t show very often.” Rhys sighed, “So… just keep that in mind.” They all gave him supportive grins and words and he rolled his eyes at them, “C’mon you lot.” He grinned. He looked at Chloe.

“I’m fine!” She answered his unasked question. She knew he would have fucked most of the people working at this place for money and the entertainment of others and she was perfectly ok with that.

“I used to work with ‘em too.” Tom said in a chipper voice, “’course I never did a show, I just worked the bar… which given my looks and predilections seems like a fucking crime!” Archie knew that Tom had been offered a show but he had refused. Tom didn’t even know why he refused; he would have loved to have a show. Archie knew why; his low self-esteem, masked by
his adorable narcissism. They got to the gate and security stopped them, Rhys looked down his nose at someone stopping him.

“The last train out of Sydney’s almost gone.” Rhys said the pass phrase for this week and the guard didn’t move, instead he looked over at them and saw Rae, actually wearing the same dress that she had worn there for the last three times.

“Why hello there Ms O’Daire.” He grinned at her dopily and Rae stroked his face gently.

“Jeff, you gonna let us past?”

“I have to stop all groups with more than four people and ensure their invites are legit.” He answered regrettfully. “Who invited you here?” He asked them, “Are you all under the O’Daire invite?”

“I’m Rhys O’Daire.” Rhys answered and the guard paused for a moment and then stepped aside.

“I apologise sir. One of the subs will guide you to mistress.” He clicked his fingers and Chop’s eyes opened wide as a naked man with a tight chain between his cock ring and nipple rings and downcast eyes approached them. “Take Mr Rhys O’Daire to mistress.” The sub looked up with surprise, but his eyes fell on Rhys and he grinned.

“That’s quite alright, we’ll find our own way.” Rhys told the guard and turned to the sub, “Eyes down Sid.” The sub dropped his eyes instantly and headed back to the group of sub guides.

“C’mon.” He said and they continued toward the factory without a guide. A sub came running past them in a metal collar and high heels so high it should be impossible to run, she opened the door to the warehouse and disappeared inside.

“This is gonna be wild.” Chop nodded his head slowly and Izzy took his hand. So far only the trio had been holding hands; Tom and Rhys were heading up the group together, the four newbies following, and the trio bringing up the rear, talking happily together.

They got inside and settled into the queue. The reason Rhys had not wanted the guide was because he knew he would be brought past all these people queueing and that was quite unfair. As usual, people were performing sexual acts beside the queue and this time they were met with a woman double fisting another woman. The trio were laughing and hadn’t really looked, so Chop pulled on Finn’s shirt, his eyes wide and nodded towards the two women, one with a fist up the cunt and the arse of the other woman.

“Are they…?” He asked Finn and Finn turned to look. He shrugged and looked back at Rae and Phil.

“Aye looks like they’re having fun.”

“What?” Chop’s brows furrowed. “Is that the kind o’ stuff you do here?” He looked over at Rae, too busy talking to Phil and Chloe to have heard what Chop and Finn where saying,

“Look Chop, you’re gonna see a lot o’ stuff here tonight, if you’re gonna get caught up wondering if your mates have done it too, you’re not gonna have a good time.” Finn shrugged again, “Fisting isn’t for everyone, us included,” He added to silence Chop’s thoughts, “But it is for some people, let ‘em enjoy it.” He waved it off.

“Aye of course.” Chop nodded his head, swallowing hard as he saw the woman push deeper into the other woman’s arse, the woman’s guttural groan filling the air.
“Rhys darling!” Rae, Finn, and Phil all watched on with bemused expressions as mistress stepped out from behind her table and hugged Rhys, kissing him deeply and passionately before pulling back to look at him.

“Dena.” Rhys replied, “How are you?” His smile was genuine and filled with fond emotions.

“Oh you know this business!” She waved his question off, “We’ll talk over brunch.” She ordered and he nodded.

“I’ll call to arrange it.”

“So you have brought some friends?” She looked at the gang. “Tom!” Her hug was as warm, but she kissed both his cheeks.

“Hey Dena love!” Tom grinned.

“And I know these three, causing quite a stir, they are!” She smiled at Phil, Rae, and Finn.

“Oh yes?” Rhys asked. Mistress nodded and pointed at Phil.

“That one challenged Dominick.” Rhys and Tom both started to laugh. Phil blushed and shrugged.

“And how did he take that?” Rhys asked with real curiosity.

“Shared power!” Mistress said as if it were the most delightfully delicious thing she’d ever heard, “You three should have your own show!” She said to them.

“Wow.” Tom laughed, shaking his head.

“I bet Pandora hasn’t let him live it down.” Rhys chuckled.

“Not for a second. But he doesn’t seem to mind, says he’s in love with a threesome.” Her eyes glinted as she looked over at the trio again, “And of course Elsa.”

“Of course.” Tom and Rhys both answered. They’d both seen the relationship between Elsa and Dominick over the years; the more complicated matter was that Dominick’s twin brother, Raf, was also in love with Elsa and they had quite a stormy history.

“Which reminds me of two things; 1. Raf is here tonight.”

“Really?” Rae asked with piqued interest and Finn raised his eyebrows with the same interest.

“They came separately but he and Elsa are talking…” She shook her head.

“Where are they?” Rhys asked.

“Backstage of course.” She told Rhys, “And also… I heard a little rumour that you had fallen in love?” She asked as if it were an impossibility.

“Yes, this is my girlfriend, Ch-”

“Girlfriend?” Mistress’s eyes opened up as if she had never been more surprised in her life.

“Chloe.” Rhys finished as if she hadn’t spoken. She looked Chloe up and down and then embraced her without a word. Chloe froze, her eyes wide open, and then slowly patted Mistress on
the back. Mistress took that as her cue to kiss Chloe, very passionately. Chloe returned the kiss and the entire gang watched with varying degrees of surprise; Rhys and Tom with absolutely none.

“Darling, you must look after my Rhys.” She said softly, “He pretends he is tough, but he is a soft gooey teddy bear, you understand?”

“I got it.” Chloe answered.

“Excellent!” She declared, “Now how are we stamping everyone today?”

Everyone was stamped as equal, but Tom, Archie, Rhys and Chloe got themselves stamped as open to being shared, while Rae, Phil, Finn, Chop and an almost reluctant Izzy were stamped as not for sharing. She introduced them to the same sub that was remembering Phil, Rae and Finn’s names.

“How do you remember all the names?” Chop asked him but the man looked up at Mistress.

“Darling, he’s a sub, what else am I going to use his useless brain for?” Mistress answered.

“Dena, why do you need everyone’s names? I mean, if this is a largely anonymous thing…?” Archie asked.

“That’s Mistress to you.” She replied with a kind smile. “We have everyone’s names so that I can know you all individually, and also to protect everyone; abusive people who break our rules are banned. The subs know everyone’s names and what everyone looks like. If I ban you, they will remember it and you will never be allowed in our community again.”

“If one of them dies but-” Chop started.

“Oh!” Mistress said looking distraught, “Don’t think of my subs like that.” She stroked the hair of the closest sub. “I have back up plans of course.” She shook her head.

“Sorry.” Chop mumbled and Mistress shook her head, while Izzy offered silent reassurance to Chop by stroking his back and taking his hand.

“You need to understand that my subs might just be stupid men, but they are my stupid men. They are not furniture or shoes… they are my people.” Chop looked around at the subs, all kneeling, looking at their Mistress with appreciative, adoring eyes. “Eyes down!” She snapped and they all looked down. But Chop could see they were all still smiling. Mistress put a hand to Izzy’s face, “If you were to make this one kneel and obey, would you stop loving her?”

“No.” Chop understood.

“No.” Mistress agreed. “And I love my subs; I don’t like to think of one of them leaving me, let alone one of them dying.” She shook her head.

“I get you.” Chop answered, “I’m sorry.”

“It is ok.” She touched his face, “No go and enjoy our club.” She dismissed him, “Come talk to me later darling Rhys.”

“I will Dena.” Rhys gave her a kiss on the cheek and she turned to the people in the queue behind them.

They wandered into the larger main room. It was a different set up this time because the ceiling had exposed metal beams and there were plenty of actual chains hanging down, and cages, with
people in them. The stage had two men hanging upside down from the rafters above it; they were halfway through a show. The stage also had chairs, tables, cubes, levels, upright beams and benches built into it this time and was taller than usual. There were three times as many chairs, and a lot of them were filled up, and the dance floor was massive; as big as some of the largest nightclubs, and it was packed. There were two bars tonight, one on either side of the room, the prostitutes that usually hung around were near the bar behind the dance floor, and the change rooms were behind the bar near the stage. Three massive demountable buildings had been set up in the courtyard off the other side of the room; unisex bathrooms, and once again the walls were lined with dark places to fuck and tie people up. They all stopped and watched the show for a minute; the guy that was centre stage grabbed one of the men, hung upside down by the ankles and started to fuck his face. Chop’s eyes opened wider and Izzy’s head cocked to the side.

“You all might wanna look away.” Rhys said, but none of them did. Archie gave a suggestive look to Tom and he nodded; yes they would have to get a setup that would let them be hung upside down. And then what Rhys had known was going to happen, happened. The man being face fucked threw up spectacularly. Chop made a noise of disgust and Izzy hit his arm.

“Don’t judge what other people get off on!” She said sternly.

“I just-”

“I know you don’t like it, no one else here needs to know it!” She said sternly and he nodded. Rhys was glad that Izzy was taking the lead in controlling Chop

“Alright girl!” He said crankily. Rae noticed that on this taller stage there was a drainage system designed into the sides of it to make clean up easier. She imagined all sorts of messy things had been happening on that stage, and might still happen. Vomit dripped over the upside down guys face, but the man fucking his face did not stop, and more vomit came, a dreadful, sobbing retching could be heard over the music. The music was pumping loudly; but the entire stage was mic-ed so that everything could be heard. Finn turned and gave a wry grin to Phil and Rae; they’d been through something like that by accident, and it had not been fun. Finn had actually cried. A lot. He hated vomiting, it made him feel like a small boy, sick with fever, his mother stroking his hair gently. Ever since he was ten and his mother had left he’d hated vomiting because she wasn’t there to stroke his hair. As a 19 year old, he’d completely forgotten why he hated it and the connection with his mother. He just always cried like a baby when he vomited. But Rae and Phil looked after him, so he could almost laugh now at what happened.

“Hmmm red hair’s an aphrodisiac.” A woman approached them and stroked Izzy’s hair, not quite as long as it had been before the cancer, but almost. Rhys gently picked up Izzy’s hand with the no sharing stamp and showed the woman. “Oh how dreadfully dull.” She bemoaned and walked off. Izzy watched with an open mouth and turned back to them with wide surprised eyes.

“What just happened?”

“People like to fuck here,” Rhys said, “And they’re very forward about it, so don’t be shy about flashing your stamp.” They all nodded and Chloe bit her bottom lip.

“I’m thinking threesome.” She said quite openly to Rhys, Rae noticed Izzy’s mouth draw into a tight line.

“Alright.” He said, “But first I’d like to see my old friends.”

“Backstage?” Phil asked.

They wound their way through the audience towards the bar. A lot of people dancing recognised Rhys, some knew Tom, and some knew the trio. None of them managed to make it to the bar without being propositioned for sex. Izzy had watched as a completely naked woman, model perfect, pressed herself against Chop and asked him if he wanted to spank her and fuck her. Chop hesitated, stunned for a moment, and Izzy found herself hoping he’d ask her for a threesome. But he shook his head and held up his stamp, unable to say a word.

They made it to the bar and when the bartender saw Tom, his face lit up. There were several other people working tonight and at the end of the bar there were plastic cups for people to take. Chop watched people taking them, but Rhys and Tom ignored it as they chatted with the bartender, introducing everybody. Chop watched a guy with the empty cup he’d taken head out to the demountable buildings and creased his brows trying to figure it out. Chloe and Izzy found themselves dancing to the music and looking out across the crowd at all the people and the clothes they wore. Archie was chatting to the bartender with Tom and Rhys and he turned to see Finn and Phil kissing, Rae dancing between them, her head rolled back onto Finn’s shoulder. It was hot and the music was pounding and he could hear the sounds of a guy being brutally throat fucked and struggling with gagging. Archie wanted to fuck; this place made him wanna fuck. He could see what Finn liked about it; there were no inhibitions here, and no judgement.

Eventually Rhys moved them all through a door that led to a huge busy room.

“Very crowded show; it’s because all the performers are on over the next 24 hours so a lot of people who have ever come to any one of these shows is here tonight. Usually you only get certain crowds on certain nights… not tonight… tonight we all mingle.” Rhys explained. The gang all took a moment to get their breath; it was calmer and less crowded in here, but the sound travelled into this room. Phillip looked around with the most interest; the backstage area of a sex show.

“RHYS!” They heard screamed out from across the room. “RHYS BABY!” Rhys started to laugh and much to Rae, Phil and Finn’s surprise it was Andromeda rushing towards him, but all the performers were looking with excited eyes towards Rhys. Andromeda was a huge woman, 6 foot three inches 100 kilos, but she ran to Rhys and jumped up onto him, her legs wrapping around his waist, as if she were Chloe’s size and it would be no bother for Rhys to catch her. And it wasn’t. His muscled bulged more than they were accustomed to seeing, but he had her and held her with ease. She wrapped her arms around his neck and hugged him tightly.

“Andy baby.” Rhys almost cooed and she practically purred in response. Chloe, who had her arm laced through Izzy’s watched with a grin; this was an entirely new thing for her to see.

“You have hair!” She ran her fingers through his short growth. Rae Finn and Phil exchanged glances; this was the same huge black woman who had pierced and tattooed men for Pandora, and then shoved needles through a guy’s feet. She ran a show about torture; specifically torturing men. And here she was purring for Rhys like a cat.

“I’m trying it out.” He replied with a grin. “How’s life treating you Andy?”

“Oh baby, I miss you choking me.’ She pouted and kissed his face and cheeks.

“Is that right?” The heat from Rhys would have been enough to warm them in the depth of winter in the middle of Siberia. Chloe made a noise of desire in the back of her throat; they were still working up to his full sexuality and he was showing more here than she was used to as he ran his hand up Andromeda’s side and slowly closed his hand around her throat. What Chop found himself most noticing was how impressed he was that Rhys could hold that woman up with one
arm, and Finn had similar thoughts and thinking it was time to start training hard again; he’d been getting soft without Rhys to train him every day. Chloe had been choked by Ian and Ben and had once been very against anyone touching her neck; but Rhys could, and while he never choked her, his hands on her throat was sexy and she no longer flinched at the thought. Though she certainly didn’t want it, she didn’t mind that others did, or that her boyfriend was doing it to them. She actually thought that the idea of sex with Rhys and this woman might be a lot of fun and she groaned slightly as Rhys put his lips close to hers his eyes on hers and her hands shot to his wrist; his hand strength was much stronger than she remembered, and it had been a long time since she’d let any man have anything even resembling control over her. But here Rhys had her life in his hands. Andromeda would have groaned if she could, instead she rolled her had back, close to blacking out. Rhys felt her legs growing lose around his waist and slowly stopped. She didn’t gasp for breath, she simply swooned backward and Rhys pulled her to him, cradling her head.

“What did I just see?” Chop asked with eyes wide open.

“Andromeda enjoys asphyxiation.” Rhys answered, “Only from me though.” He added, “You need good strength and control, and to know when to stop.” He stroked her hair gently, “She trusts me to do this.”

“Oh no darling Rhys, you’re the only man she trusts at all.” Pandora came up behind them, “A lot of the women here would claim that about you.” She pushed through the gang and kissed his lips passionately, putting her hand on Andromeda’s back and stroking her gently, slowly bringing her back to consciousness.

The gang looked back at Chloe, but her eyes were looking into the change room at Gina, Tom and Alex, chatting and laughing. She found Alex to be incredibly attractive and wondered what her chances were. She didn’t even notice that the gang were worrying about her or that Pandora’s hand was down Rhys’s pants.

“You took out your cock ring.” She sounded disappointed. Chloe heard the mention of Rhys’s cock ring and turned back to Pandora, Andromeda and Rhys. The whole gang were interested to meet Pandora; they’d heard a lot about her, even Tom had said she was the only woman he’d considered having sex with. Andromeda was rousing and Rhys was shrugging in reply.

“It doesn’t suit me anymore.” He said.

“No.” Pandora answered and took a step back, “No it doesn’t.” Andromeda gave Rhys a big grin and put a hand to her throat.

“Now I just need you to be fucking me when you do that.”

“Perhaps.” Rhys answered.

“Perhaps?” Andromeda shook her head. “I heard you fell in love with some tiny white girl.” She looked him up and down, “and now you’re telling me perhaps?”

“Yes.” Rhys answered with a devilish grin, “I am saying perhaps because it depends on what me and that tiny white woman over there decide to do tonight.” He chuckled when Andromeda and Pandora turned to look at Chloe, “This is Chloe, my girlfriend.”

“Girlfriend?” Pandora sounded disgusted by the word but Andromeda laughed.

“Oh but you are beautiful.” Andromeda said and stroked Chloe’s hair. She turned back to Rhys, “I’ll see you two at my apartment tomorrow night.” She grinned knowingly, “I’ll cook us some
food and we’ll fuck.”

“Andy…” Rhys said softly.

“You choked me out in front of her. Your relationship isn’t monogamous. The way she’s looking at me says she’s interested… am I wrong Chloe?” She said Chloe’s name delicately and for some reason that brought a blush to Chloe’s cheeks, “Shall we have some fun even if that big fool doesn’t want to.” Chloe looked Andromeda up and down and then looked past her to Rhys, an eyebrow raised.

“We could spare a few hours.” She said softly. Rhys licked his lips, wondering how to bring Andromeda’s violent sadism and Chloe’s growing confidence but still fairly vanilla ideal of sex, together.

“Well you know I won’t argue with you missy.” Rhys answered and Chloe grinned and looked over at Alex.

“Do you know…” She couldn’t determine Alex’s sex, “That person?” She asked and Rhys shook his head.

“They’re new. But I know Gina well. That’s the women with them.”

“Who are all these people with you?” Andromeda said and turned to look at them; she had started after Tom had finished working there, so she didn’t know him. Rhys though had kept working at the club for much longer than Tom. Rhys introduced them all and her eyes fell upon Rae, then Finn, then Phil. “Well I do know some of you already.” She laughed, “You’ve brought a lot of joy to this backstage area.” She looked down towards the other end of the change rooms and called out loudly: “Dommy babe!”

They all looked to where Andromeda was looking and saw Elsa and two men talking to her; they were very obviously twins, and had clearly not heard Andromeda.

“Holy fuck!” Archie’s jaw dropped.

“Wow…” Izzy agreed and they stared at the twins talking to Elsa, one staring at her face as the other dominated her attention. They all, except Tom and Rhys, looked back to Finn.

“That’s uncanny that is.” Archie said.

“So that must be Raf.” Rae whispered to Finn and Phil; she’d filled Phil in on the Raf story quickly as they had walked through the dance floor.

“Look at the way he looks at her.” Finn said softly. Phil took his hand and squeezed it; they both understand that look only too well. It was the look of a man deeply, desperately in love with a woman he could not be with. They had both been through that with Rae.

“Oh yes.” Pandora said with a sadistic grin, “His misery is such a delight.”

“Which one?” Andromeda grinned, “Both of those boys have it bad for her.” And then she turned to the trio and grinned, “But Dominick has another love too.” She screamed out louder now and Dominick looked up, as soon as he saw them he grinned, and then he saw Rhys and looked wonderfully surprised. He came over to them, Elsa and Raf following.

“Jesus fucking christ!” Dominick said loudly, “I should’ve known you three knew this fucker.” Dominick said to the trio before hugging Rhys; the performers rarely knew the names of anyone in
the audience. Rae looked over to see Raf and Elsa dawdling over, seeming to be enjoying the chance to talk alone.

“I’ll stop hogging up all your time.” Andromeda said to Rhys and looked back at Chloe, “I’ll see you two tomorrow.” She turned to Pandora. “You wanna come and fuck Chloe and Rhys with me tomorrow?” She asked.

“Wouldn’t miss it for the world. How many of my subs do you want me to bring?”

“Oh at least a dozen.” She grinned sadistically, “I have a feeling Miss Chloe there is going to be the default dominant, because this one,” She elbowed Rhys hard in the ribs, “Is very protective of her.” The gang all looked at Rhys with surprise. Chop had often thought Rhys wasn’t protective enough of Chloe, and here these people that knew him well were saying he was.

“Yes,” Pandora nodded and looked from Rhys to Chloe, “Yes, we’ll need a lot of subs to take our frustration out on!” Pandora agreed and turned back to Rhys, “I look forward to seeing who you are now my beautiful prince.” She touched the side of his face and turned to Chloe, “And I particularly want to crack open the person that could make my Rhys, of all people, fall in love…” She stroked Chloe’s hair, “You must be extraordinary.” She turned and looked at Dominick, opening her mouth to say something she just laughed.

“Yeah, yeah, fuck off.” Dominick shook his head and tried to hide his sardonic grin.

“Oh my pathetic little munchkin, what kind of dominant ever shares their stage when challenged?” She laughed and turned to Phil, Finn and Rae. “I understand that you are here under Rhys’s invitation, but I wish to extend my invitation to you as well.” She said with a devious grin as she looked over her shoulder at Dominick and then back at them, particularly Phil, “Please do come every time Dominick’s on.”

“Fuck off.” Dominick said, “One day it’ll happen to you.”

“Oh it already has Dominick… I just handled it better than you. But of course I did.” She glanced at Rhys and everyone caught that look. It had looked as though Pandora had accidentally revealed that she was in love with Rhys. But by the way Andromeda had reacted to Rhys and the way Dominick was now talking to Rhys, it was possible everyone here was. Pandora turned and looked at Tom.

“Don’t think I’ve forgotten you, you beautiful piece of meat.” She grabbed Tom’s face and pulled him to her, Archie’s jaw dropped as Pandora licked his lips and reached around to grab his arse. Izzy chuckled as she heard Tom whimper. Pandora looked up and Andromeda. “This one’s a connoisseur. And gay, so we don’t have to worry about him forming a sexual attachment.”


“You’d enjoy him very much darling.” Pandora said and stalked round Tom until she stood behind him, her lips near his ear. It had looked as though Pandora had accidentally revealed that she was in love with Rhys. But by the way Andromeda had reacted to Rhys and the way Dominick was now talking to Rhys, it was possible everyone here was. Pandora turned and looked at Tom.

“I’m in a committed relationship now.” Tom answered. Pandora pulled his hair hard and looked at the gang. She pointed at Archie and Archie chuckled and nodded, “I knew he’d fall for someone like you. I can see that under the darkish, sweet boy, exterior, you’re as deviant as he is.”

“Might be.” Archie grinned.
“Let me rip you open and show you what you’re made of.” She said and Archie’s brows furrowed. “Oh yes, your attraction to what I can give you is far beyond your sexuality.” She said, pulling Tom’s hair harder, and he let her. Archie looked at Tom.

“I think… I see what you were talking about…” Archie said, sounding confused. Pandora chuckled; she’d pegged a lot of gay men and all of them had stayed attracted to men throughout the whole thing. But all of them loved what Pandora did to them when she tortured them and then fucked them with her 12 inch strap-on.

“Of course you do.” Pandora’s voice slithered like snakes, “Andromeda and I are sharing a stage again…and she is very good at delivering pain to men…”

“We’re as good as each other.” Andromeda added. “Two boss bitches to fuck you up.” Archie’s eyes were still on Tom as Pandora let him go and took Andromeda’s hand, the two of them walking off. Tom and Archie stared at each other for a moment.

“Let’s do it!” Archie said.

“Yeah?” Tom asked, “She’s terrifying.”

“Good.” Archie grinned masochistically.

“Arch…” Finn said, “I’ve seen her show twice…she’s not messing around.”

“Finn I love you, but d’you really think Tom and me are messin’ around?” Archie asked, “I’m a sadomasochist buddy…” He turned to Tom, “Fuck it Tom, how often are we gonna get a chance to be fucked over by someone like her?”

“Not often. She’s a fucking master at it.” They stared at each other for a moment longer, Archie biting his bottom lip, and then ran off after Pandora and Andromeda, grinning like fools. Elsa and Raf strolled up and Elsa watched them running off.

“God, if it isn’t enough that I’ve seen some of my ex-students fucking, now I’m gonna see one of them get beaten to a bloody pulp by two of my best friends.” She shook her head, “Good to see you all, nice to see that Rhys is around to lead you astray now that I’m not.” She laughed.

“Ex-students?” Dominick asked.

“You remember that ill thought out stint I did in the public school system moulding the minds of our future leaders…?” She asked and Dominick laughed.

“And how many of ‘em ended up fucking here?”

“Well you just saw Archie run off, but I taught Chloe,” She pointed at Chloe, “And Izzy.”

“This is my boyfriend, Chop.” Izzy said, “He didn’t go to college.”

“And Phil, Rae and finally Finn.” Elsa finished off, Raf’s eyes followed each name she said, as if taking each one in carefully. When his eyes fell on Finn he paused for a moment and then blinked.

“Oh my god.” He said finally.

“Yeah!” Dominick nodded, “Welcome to our triplet. So you’re name’s Finn…” Dominick grinned.

“Is Dominick your real name?” Finn asked and Dominick nodded.
“I figured with a name like that I didn’t need a stage name.”

“The resemblance…” Raf muttered.

“I so wanna fuck him.” Dominick sighed.

“Of course you do.” Raf rolled his eyes.

“If you’re gonna look that good, how could I not wanna?” He turned his eyes to Rae, “So Rae as in Rachel?”

“Aye.” She laughed, “Not Raymond.”

“What idiot would think your name is Raymond?” Rae felt Finn’s fingers twitch in hers.

“You’d be surprised.” Rae grinned. And Dominick grinned back.

“Enchanting woman.” He said and then turned his eyes to Phil. “And Phil... who has made my life hell…” Phil shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly.

“So you shared your stage?” Rhys asked and Dominick nodded his head.

“This fucker challenged me and I relented, how could I not? Look at them; they are the epitome of perfection.”

“Yeah, well I’ll be doing it to you next time too.” Phil said with a cocky grin and Dominick moved closer to them, his hand going to Phil’s cheek.

“You two alone were perfect already, but this one manages to add even more perfection.” He shook his head, “Challenge my stage boy, I’ll let you have it, and I’ll let you keep having it till you finally end up on that stage with me, all three of you… worshipping me.”

“Nah.” Finn said, “You’ll be worshipping us three.” Dominick couldn’t help but be even more enchanted by them.

“We’ll see.” He answered.

“Aye we will.” Rae backed her men. Dominick laughed and headed back to his spot at the back of the change room without another word. He liked to read when he was back here, and he needed to read now before he asked them for a foursome again; he needed to control himself.

“Let me introduce you to everyone else.” Rhys changed the topic and started walking them around the change room. They walked past two new gay performers that Rhys didn’t know and they heard a snippet of their conversation until they got to Gina who hugged Rhys fiercely and offered to cook some of his favourite cookies for him.

“If you hit my fucking ear gain I’ll bite your dick off.”

“It’s not like I do it fucking deliberately.” Chop watched them arguing and rehearsing their show, as Rhys introduced everyone to Gina. Gina introduced her lovers, Tom and Alex and Chloe and Alex’s eyes met and they checked out her stamps and smiled suggestively. Chloe still could not tell the gender of Alex, even up close. And she found everything about Alex to be attractive, so she continued to give them plenty of signs that she was interested.

“I do the vanilla show.” Gina was telling them with a grin, “with these two.”
“What, so the vanilla show has threesomes?” Izzy asked.

“Oh yes!” Gina answered. “Well I mean, the definition of vanilla is changing, thankfully! It used to be so dreadfully dull. A lot more vanilla couples are inviting threesomes into their sex lives. And of course you have poly relationships, like ours.”

“I wasn’t sure at first about becoming poly, but Alex is just…” Tom looked at Alex and grinned, “They’re just perfect for us.”

“Aye I get that.” Finn agreed and Gina nodded. “Starting a poly relationship is kinda scary.”

“I did recognise you three. How could I not?” She said, “Everyone’s heard of you now. Dominick has never shared power before. Even his male subs, which seem to have some power actually don’t; they just perform for him. Very impressive.” She cocked an eyebrow at Phil, “You’d have a future here if you wanted it.”

“I am studying acting.” Phil answered wryly.

“Oh yes, but every good actor knows that it’s half show and half your own soul on display. Or else you’ll never make an audience believe you.” She gave him a pointed smile and raised an eyebrow again, “You three would be a wonderful addition to our ranks. And as one poly trio to another, I’d like to extend my invitation to you three to attend. I know you have Rhys’s, but you have mine too; we polys need to stick together.”

“Anyone who deviates outside of societies norms need to stick together and support each other.” Alex said and Finn lit their cigarette as soon as they held it to their lips. “Thanks.” Finn lit his own cigarette and looked over at tall thin man sitting alone, apparently meditating.

“Oh Alex you have to stop smoking!” Tom laughed, “They’re gonna get me back into it if we’re not careful.” He said to Gina.

“Why do you keep calling Alex they?” Chop asked with a confused expression.

“Chop!” Izzy hit his arm.

“You don’t find out if you don’t ask!” Chop retorted, “And Alex seems like a nice…” He was going to say fellow, and then thought he might be better to say lass, “Person.” He eventually said, “So they might not mind answering… and I just realised that I answered my own question.” Alex laughed loudly.

“I have Persistent Müllerian duct syndrome.” Alex replied and everyone nodded as if they knew what they meant, except Rhys, who nodded out of understanding. Alex saw the look of complete confusion on their faces. “Alright, don’t ask people on the streets this kind of shit, cos it’s really personal, but I’m in a fucking sex show; I’m all for visibility and talking openly about this stuff. So basically I’m intersex.”

“Oh I know what that is!” Chop said excitedly, “Oh shit sorry!” He started to chuckle. “It’s just so fucking rare for me to know what’s going on, I got a little exited.” Alex laughed at him again.

“I have Persistent Müllerian duct syndrome.” Alex replied and everyone nodded as if they knew what they meant, except Rhys, who nodded out of understanding. Alex saw the look of complete confusion on their faces. “Alright, don’t ask people on the streets this kind of shit, cos it’s really personal, but I’m in a fucking sex show; I’m all for visibility and talking openly about this stuff. So basically I’m intersex.”

“Alright!” Alex shook their head, “Well for the rest of you, I have a penis and a uterus. I feel like I’m both male and female, so using gendered pronouns like she or he don’t work for me. I use they and them instead. And I embrace androgyny in all its forms.” They shook their head, “I would love all intersex people to be as confident as I am, but a lot of them aren’t, society fucks us, you know? And this is very private, so don’t go asking other people about their genitals right?”
“It’d be so rude to do that.” Izzy answered.

“I weren’t trying to be rude!” Chop answered, “I were just curious.”

“And curious is fine as long as your curiosity doesn’t disrespect another person’s existence or make them feel dysphoric or triggered.” Alex continued.

“What?” Chop asked.

“I’ll explain it to you later.” Rhys answered and Chop nodded.

“Good.” Chop grinned.

“My parents are very supportive of me and my sex work, so my family experiences have been positive and open; but society is not kind, and the vast majority of intersex people I know have really unsupportive families.”

“Like Jesse.” Gina’s brow furrowed.

“Yes.” Alex agreed, “Their parents refused to accept the change from gendered pronouns to gender neutral ones. Jesse had numerous corrective surgeries forced upon them…” Alex shook their head, “People say they refuse to use they and them because it’s not grammatically correct.”

“Wait…” Chloe said, “So they’re choosing the rules of a fucked up language over living breathing human beings?”

“All the time.” Alex answered.

“Except it is grammatically correct.” Phil answered, “We always use they and them when we don’t know the gender of someone. So if I said, ‘sorry I’m late I got stopped by a police officer’ you say.” He pointed at Rae.

“‘Oh my god, are you ok, what did you do?’” Rae teased and Phil rolled his eyes, “no you say, ‘what did they want?’”

“What did they want.” Phil repeated, “We do it all the time.” He shrugged, “People who refuse to use correct gender pronouns aren’t grammar warriors protecting the precious fragile English language, they’re arseholes that don’t respect other human beings and try to force their own understanding of gender onto others.” Phil said, “Fuck that.”

“Yeah that’s fucking bullshit.” Chloe agreed, “And really why does a person’s gender or genitals matter to anyone?

“Well I mean… if you’re gonna fuck someone, it kinda matters.” Chop answered hesitantly.

“No but it don’t.” Chloe said, “If you love someone, a human being, enough to want to sleep with them, if you’re attracted enough to them to want physical intimacy with them, why does it matter what they’ve got in their underpants?”

“Cos sexual orientation…?” Chop answered.

“Aye but we just watched our two gay friends run at full speed to get fucked by a woman with a vagina.” Finn said, “It’s not always that clear cut.” He continued, “Like a year ago, if you’d told me that I’d fuck a bloke, I’d’ve told you ‘no fucking way’ cos I knew I were straight. But I fell in love with Phil and that trumps what genitals he’s got, what gender he is… all that means nothing; I
love him. So now, everyone here knows who we are cos a few months ago he was pounding my arse so hard that I swear to god me brain was ratting in me head, while staring down the most dominant man they’ve got here.” Finn shrugged, “I honestly think it’s social training that makes us get freaked out by people having genitals other than what we’re expecting, cos honestly, I reckon the most natural response would be curiosity. Which is exactly what y’are naturally Chop, afore you start thinking too much.” Chop looked as if someone had revealed something unexpected to him, and nodded thoughtfully, much quieter than usual.

“As usual Rhys, you have quality friends.” Gina laughed. “Now I believe that my Alex is interested in your Chloe.” She said, “Perhaps you two would like to join us on the stage at 3am?” Rhys groaned in contemplation but looked at Chloe’s excited and nervous face. “I know you Rhys, you don’t want to think about angles again… you quit this business… but look at your delightful girl…” Gina stroked Chloe’s hair.

“Alright.” He answered and Chloe looked up at him surprised, “It’s not my most favourite idea,” He admitted, “Because I don’t want sex with you to be a performance… but this one time…” He rolled his eyes as she grinned and bounced excitedly on her tip toes. “I’ll introduce them to everyone else and then we’ll come back and talk about what we’ll do in the show, alright?”

“Perfect.” Gina agreed. They had left Elsa and Raf dawdling behind them as Rhys introduced them to everyone; there were a lot of people excited to see Rhys, and a lot of Chop being curious about their shows. Finn had been noticing how much Elsa and Raf were talking and he wondered what they were saying. They approached the thin man sitting alone that Finn had noticed earlier.

“And this is Lance.” Rhys said and then turned to Chop who was, as always, the most eager and curious, “This is Chop.” Chop held out his hand to shake and Lance looked at him with disgust.

“I don’t touch people.” He almost hissed.

“Sorry!” Chop had been saying that a lot tonight. There was a moment of silence before Rhys continued to introduce everyone. But everyone’s mind was on one thing; if he didn’t touch people, what kind of sex show did he run? Everyone came to the conclusion that it must be animals at the same time and Rhys saw everyone’s eyes open wider as they thought about that.

“Um…” Rae said politely, “Do you have a popular show?”

“Quite.” Lance answered.

“Have you been on already tonight?” Chloe asked feeling her skin crawl.

“Yes I opened tonight’s proceedings. But I will also have a corner in the ending orgy.”

“Where’s Angel?” Rhys asked.

“Her she’s headed to an all-night chemist for more laxatives.” Lance replied, bringing his hands into a prayer position in front of his mouth, his hands rapidly opening and closing ever so slightly, as if in tiny, silent applause.

“Oh.” Rae suddenly said as she realised what Lance’s show actually was.

“And your corner?” Rhys asked.

“In the usual spot.” Lance answered.

“Great. Well tell Angel I said hi.” Rhys led them away from Lance and as they approached Gina,
having done the whole room now and been introduced to dozens of performers.

“Scat.” Rae said to Rhys and Rhys nodded.

“Yes.” Rhys said in low voice, “Lance is the scat performer.”

“Oh.” Chop said, his face screwing up in disgust. “I thought he were fucking animals.”

“Oh my god! Same!” Izzy said. “I don’t know which is worse…”

“He lies down on stage and people shit on him and he plays with and eats it.” Rhys said, “If forced to choose which was worse between scat-play and bestiality, I’d probably pick scat-play.”

“You judging?” Chop asked with a wry grin and Rhys cocked his head to the side and thought for a moment.

“I’m judging that it’s not something I’ll ever do.” He admitted, “But I like Lance when he’s not in the zone like he is now. He’s a funny bloke away from this place. And Angel is wonderful; so sweet. So I don’t judge them, I judge the activity as not for me.” He nodded, “And I’ll stay away from their corner!” He laughed.

“Aye me too.” Chop laughed.

“MAKE WAY!” Everyone moved to the side and two men covered with vomit headed through the room to the change room, their dominant strolling behind them.

“Oh where’s the celery.” Gina fussed, “It’s the only thing that soothes Jack’s stomach after a show.”

“Dena’s got it.” Said Ricky who was sitting beside them, she and her co-stars had been going over their show but they were having a break. “Silvio, go get it hun.” The youngest of the five men she worked with nodded and she turned to Rhys. “Rhys hun, knife or gun?”

“You can’t go past knife for sex appeal.” Geoff answered and Rae felt her stomach clench, “It feels more dangerous, it could cut your throat at any time, and you can use it to penetrate, just like a dick.”

“Back to enacting rape scenarios Ricky?” Rhys asked and she nodded. Rhys considered talking to Dena about his; he felt that perhaps their club should have no place for enacting traumatic and illegal events like this.

“Aye they’re so popular. Make a fucking fortune.” She almost lamented, “Makes me hope that it’s just extreme power play in me audience, not actual rape idolisation.” She sighed.

“They all know we’re all subject to the safe word Ric.” Wil answered.

“Aye.” She sighed. “I s’pose.” She shook her head. Rhys watched Rae and Chloe out of the corner of his eye.

“It seems to me that a lot of the men that enjoy the power play in enacting rape are the same kind of men that think feminism is ruining the country.” Phil said.

“Yeah, I know. It does get me worried.” Ricky answered.

“I quite enjoy it.” Wil shrugged, “But I know I couldn’t if I didn’t know she had the safe word.” He lit up a cigarette, “It’s the safe word that makes it still sexy even though she says no. Cos
wrestling and play fighting and holding down and all that stuff is sexy as hell as long as the person being held down is into it. Everyone knows that.” He sucked on his cigarette, “Rape play is taking that to an extreme. It’s definitely more violent.” He furrowed his brows, “but some people like pain and power being taken from them by a big strong aggressor; as long as they know that really they have the power. Cos the person doing the holding down in these scenarios is always subject to the word ‘no’ still; it’s just that we’re using a different word to mean no. So that we can pretend to ignore the ‘no’ and take power, or pretend we have total control by telling someone they can’t say ‘no.’” He shrugged, “It’s all power play to me and I like power play.”

“Oh me too.” Phil said, “I really enjoy power play… it’s just funny…” Phil said, “The pretend victim in rape play always seems to be a woman. To an outsider, and maybe even to some insiders it could just look like normalising rape. Especially because of the gendered nature of both rape and rape play.” Finn gave Phil an appreciative smile; he wasn’t fond of rape play either because the number one thing that turned him on in any type of sex from their most vanilla to their most kinky was that his partners were into it. Even when Rae got angry and had temper tantrums when she was being edged, she was still very clearly into it. That’s not to say he wouldn’t give it a go if Phil or Rae really wanted it; it just meant that he’d never be the one suggesting it.

“The BDSM world overwhelmingly has more female dominants than male ones.” Wil answered.

“Yes, and how many of them pretend to rape their subs as a specific and deliberate type of power play…? Or is that only a male dom trait?” Wil opened his mouth to reply to Phil but shut it again with furrowed brows.

“I actually don’t know.” He admitted.

“It’s a problem with men, not necessarily the world of kink.” Rhys said to Phil and Phil nodded. “So men need to be policing themselves and making sure the community doesn’t become poison.” Rhys shook his head slowly, “Rape kinks are really very… problematic for lack of a better word right now.” Rhys had been worried about bringing his two worlds together, but Chloe seemed to be coping with the discussion; she looked thoughtful. Rae’s eyes were focussed on the prop knife in Wil’s hand and Rhys felt a knot in his stomach. Kinks can sometimes trigger survivors and he wanted to protect the two survivors in his family. “Gun.” Rhys answered the question of gun or knife immutably. “Go with a gun. Don’t go with a knife.” He took the knife out of Wil’s hand and tossed it back in their prop bag. Chloe looked over at Rae and they each reached for the other’s hand silently. “Is there a warning before the show?” Rhys asked brusquely.

“Yeah there is.” She nodded, “Don’t wanna trigger any survivors.” She lit a cigarette, “I been trying to get a quick descriptor of each show said beforehand, for all of them, you know?”

“It’s a good idea.” Rhys said.

“Yeah so if whatever’s about to go on isn’t your thing, you can know in advance and leave earlier, rather than have to wait till you see some of it.” She spoke animatedly, “I mean a few years ago we only had a hundred members… we got thousands now. We need to be more inclusive and careful.”

“Dena’s thinking of capping the numbers.” Geoff said. “Not a bad idea.”

“’Ere, what d’you think?” Ricky asked Rhys, “You own half the club.” Everyone in the gang looked at Rhys, none of them had known this.

“Yes but I became a silent partner when I left Ric, all decisions are Dena’s; she still lives and works in this world, she has a better understanding of it. And she’s made excellent decisions all
along, we’ve grown and become quite profitable because of her.”

“VENDORS DONE! FIVE MINUTE CURTAIN CALL FOR PANDORA AND
ANDROMEDA!!” They looked at the door and saw Aiyana dressed as a vendor yelling back to
them, but she saw Rhys and grinned. “Hey hey baby!” She came into the change room. Most
vendors didn’t do that, preferring to hang out in the stockroom; tv, tables, chairs and food and
drinks were always provided. She kissed Rhys’s cheek and then Chloe’s.

“I didn’t know you worked here babe.” Chloe said.

“Didn’t Rhys tell you this is how we met, creamy goodness.” She answered, “I make so much
money vending at these things, it’s putting me through my second degree and I only do it two
nights a week.”

“Aiyana darling, tell Dena that Rhys will be going on the stage again.” Gina said it loudly and
there was a general commotion of excitement, “Unfortunately for all of you excited darlings, it will
only be in a vanilla show.”

“Your and Pandora’s shows were the stuff of legends.” Ricky said with a grin, “I’d love to see one
of them again.”

“We’ll see.” Rhys answered. “Anyway, we have to plan our show.” Rhys turned to Chop, Izzy
and the trio; Elsa and Raf were off in a dark corner still talking. “You five go out there and have a
lot of fun.” He grinned, “And remember that’s what this place is – fun. Don’t take it too
seriously. Take the community rules seriously, but not the sex, enjoy that, explore it; do something
you wouldn’t normally do. That’s the point of places like this; to let go and have fun.” He gave a
quick wink at Izzy when Chop looked down at his feet and Izzy realised that this talk was to Chop
alone, “I never take it seriously; it’s just fucking at this place. And think of all the stupid noises
you make while fucking, and the faces and the mistakes and… just don’t take it too seriously.” He
added, “See you at the bar at 6am for a check-in, see if we’re staying or going.”

“The orgy starts at midday.” Gina told them.

“Alright.” Chloe said and hugged Rae, “Piss off!” She grinned excitedly and turned back to the
group she was going to do a live sex show with.

The five of them, joined by Aiyana meandered out of the change room as Lys and two male
servants walked in.

“Rhys!” They heard her say as she saw him and headed over to him. They decided not to worry
about an introduction; they had plenty of time for that and instead they headed out to the bar, where
they were given free drinks. The trio led Chop and Izzy towards the chairs, and Aiyana excused
herself to go hang out with the other vendors out the back, telling Dena about Rhys’s upcoming
performance on the way; Aiyana rarely watched the shows because for some of them it would be
like watching her siblings fuck on a stage.

The five of them sat down, Rae between her boys and Chop possessively putting his arm around
Izzy’s shoulders.

“This place is fucking intense.” Chop looked around at the audience; a lot of them in various
states of undress, a lot of them fucking. Rae noticed that Elsa and Lys had sat down, front row, on
the other side of the stage, Raf was not with them. The music and lighting changed and Finn
grinned.
“Yeah, what you’ve seen so far is nothing in comparison to what you’re about to see.” Finn replied.
Diva

Chapter Summary

the gang are at the sex club
this one is really not for everyone - skip it if you want, you won't miss any plot stuff

‘Diva’ by Beyonce

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1rwO-N4FLk

... the number one Diva in this game...

People on the dance floor began to move aside. Pandora was in her carry sedan again; six men carrying her in it as she sat lounged back in stiletto thigh high boots, a g-string, and a severe corset that her breasts threatened to spill out of, her fire-engine red hair in a high, tight ponytail, falling straight down her back to her waist. She had two men in posture collars and heavy chains leading the sedan their hands behind their backs, their eyes lowered; the thick collars wouldn’t let them lower their heads and they looked very uncomfortable and restricted. Phil imagined breathing in those collars would be difficult. Rae felt so inspired by her after having met her a few times; she was like Elsa, if Elsa enjoyed hurting men. Rae noticed Dena slipping into the change rooms and wondered what was happening. Rae looked back at the men Pandora had chained and walking in front of the sedan like dogs. They were both naked except for a cock cage that held their cocks up and out of the way, leaving their testicle hanging free.

“Well it was something I could’ve gone me life without seeing.” Chop shook his head and Rae suddenly realised that Pandora’s ‘dogs’ were Tom and Archie.

“Well.” Rae chuckled, “Archie makes a wonderful dog.” Finn tried to not laugh, but instantly started sniggering.

“Shush Finlay.” Rae admonished, “This is very serious.”

“Aye Archie’s about to be brutalised.” Phil agreed and Finn’s face fell.

“Oh I forgot about that. I don’t think he knows what he’s gotten himself into.” Finn fretted.

“Course he does, he fucks Tom, and Tom can be quite brutal, d’you ever see some of the bruises and cane marks Tom gives him?” Rae soothed.

“Course I fucking did!” Finn laughed, “Where d’you think I got the idea from?” He shook his head, “But Pandora… she don’t love Arch like Tom does. Tom gives it to him the way he likes it. Pandora likes to find the kind of pain you don’t like and give it to you.” Finn bit the inside of his mouth.

“Which means Tom’s gonna love this.” Phil said and Rae started to giggle again.
“Stop it.” Finn tapped her knee and then started laughing, Phil maintaining a straight face for only a fraction of a second longer. It was so strange to see their two friends walking before Pandora naked.

“I feel like we shouldn’t be fucking watching this.” Chop grumbled as he saw Izzy’s eyes, wide with surprise, crawl slowly down Tom’s very well-muscled body.

“My god.” She barely breathed and then licked her lips.

“Aye well he’s gay.” Chop snapped and Izzy turned her eyes to him and then grinned.

“Don’t mean I can’t appreciate that package.” She teased and Chop scowled, setting Izzy off giggling.

Behind Pandora, women in high waisted pencil skirts and severe buns guided men in on leads, each one was laid down on the floor, pressed together, side by side, creating a human carpet to the stage. Pandora sat in the throne that had been built into the stage and Tom and Archie knelt on either side of her. As soon as she was still, Andromeda appeared. She walked alone, across the carpet of naked men, her stilettos digging into their flesh. Her walk towards the stage was accompanied by groans and grunts of pleasurable pain and when one man from the audience tried to touch her, she slapped his hand away and punched him square in the face. Andromeda was not to be messed with. Andromeda got to the stage and sat on the chair in front of the desk, her work box beside her. The twelve women in pencil skirts each picked one of the men lying on the floor to come and kneel before Pandora.

“I am Pandora and this is my show.” The audience went wild, screaming and cheering. Rae and Finn exchanged a look and Phil looked around the audience. They had only seen Pandora on the hetero nights where she was often a warm-up act. But she was usually on the domination or torture nights; and she had a huge following on those nights, and a lot of the audience were here for her and Andromeda tonight. Pandora, Andromeda, Dominick and Till where the most popular performers still working. Till was a pansexual male version of Pandora, but at present he was in Germany with his dying father, and had been for the past two years. He would be back when is ailing father died, however long that took, and the community would wait for him with support and love for him in their hearts. Every single one of these performers were adored. But some of them were worshipped and two of the worshipped ones were sharing a stage. The audience surged and pressed against the stage, Andromeda stood up and started pushing men away, kicking them in the face.

“You don’t touch this stage.” Andromeda warned. But Pandora’s eyes were on the audience stepping all over her subs lying as carpet still.

“Don’t trample my subs you fucking scum.” Pandora ordered and the audience calmed. She was mesmerising, powerful beyond anything Rae, Phil and Finn had experienced. She was turning it on tonight and the audience reacted accordingly.

“This is Andromeda, she is sharing my stage again.” The cheer was deafening. Pandora drew her finger across her neck in one short sharp movement and the audience was almost instantaneously silent.

“Pandora will be sharing my stage at 4am.” The crowd went wild when Andromeda announced that. The last time they had shared a stage men had bled and they had fucked each other while men screamed in agony. Many of the men in the audience desperately wanted to be used by these powerful women and even Finn, Phil and Chop felt strangely drawn to their power. Pandora’s mic could be clicked on and off and she clicked it off and said a few words to one of the women and
she nodded and headed backstage, stepping on the human carpet. Pandora flipped her mic back on and looked out over the audience.

“Safe words are in use,” Pandora said, “These subs are currently willing, we’ll see how many of them we can break, shall we?”

“We’ve got 14.” Andromeda said, “let’s get a dozen safe words yelled out.” She grinned sadistically as the audience cheered; baying for blood.

“Holy fuck.” Chop breathed in the atmosphere, “Alright, this is fucking amazing.” The energy was more electrifying than any huge stadium gig they’d been to and it was all held by this woman. And it was very obvious that when Andromeda was in charge, it was going to be exactly the same.

“There’s been talk about warning you scum about what’s coming up in some of the more violent shows.” Pandora said, “So here’s a warning, there will be screams. There will be crying. There will be men breaking and pleading and calling the safe word. The word ‘no’ will be ignored; the safe word will not. There will be blood.” She looked out over the audience as if they were literal maggots in shit and the audience lapped it up. “This goddess,” Pandora nodded to Andromeda, “And I are going to humiliate, demean and hurt these men until they snap under us.” The audience screamed again and Pandora silenced them. “Consider yourselves warned.” The lady that Pandora had spoken to off-mic returned with a hand held microphone and she clicked to each male as she got to them and they followed her, crawling. Rae noticed Rhys and Chloe following them, Dena slipping out behind them.

Rhys and Chloe joined them as the men all sat on the stairs to the stage, the woman with the mic going on stage to Pandora. But Pandora and Andromeda were staring at each other. Pandora stood up and Andromeda met her centre stage. Pandora’s ivory skin, and Andromeda’s ebony skin contrasted perfectly as they kissed slowly, their lips ruby red. The audience was halfway between screaming with excitement and watching with bated breath.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Chop yelled around the trio to Rhys and Chloe, “Aren’t you on after these guys?”

“Dena somehow convinced me to wait until Till got back to do a specialty show.” Rhys shook his head, “This is why I so rarely visit; that woman could convince an Inuit to buy ice.” Chloe laughed.

“We’re both doing a show when Till gets back in a few months instead of tonight. Dena says there’s more money in doing it that way; we’ve already got an audience tonight. They’ve all already paid, they’ll be getting Rhys for free.” Chloe shrugged, “Better to do a special show for him and Till, they’ll get another audience this size for that and they’ll all pay again then.” Rhys sighed as Chloe finished up explaining, “I’m so excited!” She grinned. “Will you guys come to it?”

“Do you want us to see you get fucked?” Chop asked.

“It’s not like that Chop, it’s a performance… although, it also very much like that.” She laughed. “You don’t have to come. But I don’t mind if you do. And I’d like someone in the audience rooting for me.”

“I’ll be there Chlo.” Rae told her.

“Me too if I can be!” Izzy agreed. “Us girls gotta stick together.”
“Thanks girls!” Chloe beamed at them. The audience started cheering and they all looked up at the stage. They were cheering because Pandora and Andromeda had gone back to their seats and the show was about to begin. Pandora had picked up a mean looking riding crop and Andromeda was snapping on some gloves.

“Get them in a line.” Pandora told the woman with the microphone. She got them all lined up and Rhys grinned when he saw Tom and Archie on the end, the woman with the microphone removed their posture collars.

“It’s strange seeing it from this side again.” He murmured to Chloe. She grinned and took his hand.

“What’s your orientation?” Pandora asked and the woman held the mic up to the first sub in the line.

“Straight mistress.” He answered immediately. She went down the line to find that she had 10 straight boys and 2 bisexual ones, until she got to Tom.

“Orientation.”

“Gay.” Tom answered with a wry grin and Rhys chuckled at his nerve; trying to rile up Pandora. She brought the riding crop down across his shoulders and he arched his back but made no noise. Rhys leaned forward in his chair and Chloe understood that the part of him that appreciated this type of play was enjoying this.

“How much are you going to fight me Tomas?”

“Enough for you to man up and make me bleed.” Tom would usually not use gendered challenges like this, his father had taught him to man up and disowned him for being queer because of this kind of toxic masculinity, but he wanted to rile Pandora. “Come on bitch.” Tom chose his words very deliberately. The audience was stunned. Without warning Andromeda grabbed Tom from behind by the hair and punched him hard in the kidneys.

‘How ’bout pissing blood for a week?” She punched his other kidney equally hard and this time Tom cried out. She pushed him to the ground and kicked him in the stomach. Pandora watched.

“Might get our first safe word.” Andromeda grinned.

“Not this one.” Pandora answered with a genuine look of excitement; Tom was the kind of sub she’d been looking for because he wouldn’t break. “Orientation.” She ordered again, with an expression that said she was expecting what Tom did.

“Gay.” Tom answered, again not saying ‘Mistress’ and thus breaking the rule of a respectful sub, and requiring punishment. Pandora whipped him hard, making him scream when it lashed across his neck.

“How much are you going to fight me Tomas?”

“Orientation.”

“Gay Mistress.” Tom panted, needing a minute with this pain before he could take more.

“Good boy.” She purred and stroked his face as he got back up on his knees. She turned to Archie, who had kept his eyes front and centre like he was supposed to while Tom had been beaten.

“Orientation.” Pandora asked. Archie raised his eyes to her, a grin coming across his face.

“Gay.” Pandora brought the crop down across his shoulders and Finn groaned slightly. Rae put a
hand high up his thigh and could feel the tension in his body; he found this to be very erotic. Phil was so attuned to his partners that he felt the heat emanating from Finn from where he was and put an arm around Rae to stoke Finn’s face; he was aware of Finn’s love of caning. They hadn’t done it together as a trio yet, but he was warming to the idea of hitting his man with a cane if it was what he really wanted.

“You two like this far more than my other subs.” Pandora pulled Archie up by the hair, “it’s my job to make you hate it.” She squeezed his balls and Finn, Phil and Chop all made noises of sympathetic pain, Chop covering his groin and opening his mouth in horrified shock as Archie gritted his teeth and eventually relented and cried out in pain. She pushed him to be on all fours and put a knee in his spine, pulling his hair back.

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“You, suck his dick.” Both men had declared themselves to be straight, and they both hesitated. “Do it, or Andromeda will make you do it.” Pandora looked at a nail she’d chipped as Andromeda strolled towards the men.

“Alright!” The first man said, “I mean yes mistress! Yes mistress!” He answered before Andromeda had chance to get to him, Andromeda turned to look at Pandora with an expression that showed how easy she thought this one was going to be to break.

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“F*ck his face.” Andromeda ordered.

“Yes Mistress.” The men stared to perform and Andromeda stood over them, the audience enraptured.

“You two.” She pointed at Archie and Tom and motioned for them to stand.

Pandora pointed at Andromeda’s table, she pushed Tom over it so he was bent gripping its edges.

“Lick his arsehole.” She told Archie, and Archie grinned, but said nothing to her, she whipped him with the riding crop, and even though he gritted his teeth against the pain, Archie said no words and instead bent down and started to lick Tom’s arse as ordered. She brought the cane down on both of them several times before pulling Archie up and sitting him on the bench. She spat in his face and motioned for one of the women to come over.

“Tie them.” Pandora sat in Andromeda’s chair and watched as the woman secured Tom, bent over the table, and Archie, sitting upright, tied by his ankles to the table.

Chop knew he should be watching Archie and Tom, but he couldn’t take his eyes off Andromeda with the two straight guys, she was smacking the back of the head of the guy getting skull-fucked quite hard and Chop felt quite sure he would have called the safe word out before they’d even left the change rooms.

“DICKLESS!” He cried out as soon as his mouth came off the cock. His voice was cracking with tears and Andromeda turned her mic off and touched his face, asked him a question and he nodded. She motioned for one of the women in the pencil skirts to come and she leashed the man that had called the safe word. He was allowed to walk from the stage, on a dog lead, the woman gently stroking his hand as he kept his head low, crying.

“One down.” Andromeda declared and the audience cheered; this is what they were here for.
They all knew that sub was getting taken care of back stage, they all knew that the subs had come here knowing that Pandora and Andromeda would attempt to break them. And they were loving it. She put her foot on the chest of the other one and he laid back on the floor. She sat on his face and Rae grinned as she pulled his hair, pushing his face into her cunt. She realised that Andromeda was suffocating him with her cunt and she felt an excited thrill go through her body; she was going to do that to her boys. She’d always envied that they could stop her breathing with their cocks, it had never occurred to her that she could smother them with her cunt.

Finn’s eyes were on Archie; the welts all over is body was doing things to Finn and he had to cross his legs to hide his growing bulge. Pandora had sat down in Andromeda’s chair.

“Pain is more than just a physical thing.” Her voice dripped with sex and power and menace.” There wasn’t a person watching Pandora that wasn’t turned on by her voice, “pain is also mental… emotional. And you boys very much like physical pain… so I need to give you other types of pain too.”

“Do your worst… Mistress.” Tom said cockily, still bent over the table.

“You two are very bad at taking orders.” She said softly as she snapped on gloves. Before Andromeda had been there, Pandora did all her own tattooing and piercing; she had pierced Rhys with her own hands; she preferred piercing but was very adept at both. Pandora wiped Archie’s testicles with an alcohol swab and Finn’s jaw dropped, his hand squeezed Rae’s and her and Phil turned their attention back to Archie. As soon as the needle appeared Archie balked.

“No!” He said instantly and she grinned triumphantly.

“You know what you have to say to stop me.” She clamped the exact same area that on Archie’s testicles that Rhys had pierced and Chloe leaned forward in her chair. Chop had to force himself to not put his hands over his eyes, and Izzy was holding her breath as Archie held Pandora’s eyes, Tom straining to look over his shoulder to see what was happening to Archie. Pandora paused, the needle poised over his skin.

“Do it.” Archie said and closed his eyes, rolling his head back. Pandora grinned and plunged the needle through his scrotum. Archie grunted in pain through his clenched teeth and Chop had to look away, his hands cradling his crotch.

“Every time you feel this piercing it’ll remind you of me, and how I owned you tonight. It’ll remind you to obey.” She told him.

“Fuck you.” He said through gritted teeth; his balls stinging.

“Ok.” Pandora smiled sweetly, “Let’s fuck… fucking requires penetration.” She pulled out the tattoo gun and the noise it made coming to life made Archie look back at her.

“The fuck?” He looked horrified as she pulled one of his hands to her, turning it palm up she prepped his inner wrist. Archie bit his bottom lip, deciding if he was going to let her do this. She smiled sadistically and put the tattoo gun to his skin, the needle not yet moving.

“Say the safe word darling Archie, and you’re safe.” Archie took a deep breath and shook his head. “I was hoping you wouldn’t cave.” The needle came to life and she started to tattoo something onto Archie’s wrist.

“Holy fuck.” Finn marvelled; he hadn’t expected Archie to go through with it.

“I gotta take a piss man.’ Chop stood up, “I need a fucking minute. I swear to god it’s as intense
watching this thing as being on the stage.”

“I don’t think so hun.” Izzy answered with wide eyes as she watched Andromeda piss in the mouth of the sub she’d been smothering only moments before. Chop saw that and his eyes got even rounder before he shook his head and looked at Finn, watching the stage calmly as if none of this was as incredibly intense as it was. He turned towards the three demountable buildings in the courtyard and snaked his way through the enthralled audience.

When he saw the three demountable buildings he had no idea which one he should go in. He saw a person with an empty cup heading into the middle one and shrugged; at least he’d figure out what the deal was with the empty cups everyone was taking from the bar. He walked in to see a man fucking another man on the floor.

“Wanna piss in my sub’s mouth?” The guy pulled back his sub’s head by the hair and the sub opened his mouth dutifully. A guy walked in behind Chop, looked Chop up and down and chuckled.

“Newb?” He asked and chop nodded. The guy put an empty cup under the sub’s chin and started to piss in his mouth. Chop understood the cup now; it was catching the piss the sub didn’t catch.

“I might just go to a cubicle.” Chop said and turned to look down a long corridor of cubicles. He walked right up to the end.

“Drink it bitch.” He heard from behind him, and despite himself he turned to see the man who had done the pissing holding he cup to the sub’s lips. He had expected to feel revolted by something like this. But he could feel he had the same expression on his face that Finn had had on his face watching Archie getting tattooed on stage. Polite interest, polite, non-judgemental, politeness. He turned into a cubicle to see a woman chained to the toilet and froze. He turned to look in the cubicle behind him and saw that there was a man chained to the toilet. Had Chop known the situation with the toilets, he would have known that the ones on the left were the ‘vanilla’ toilets. The middle ones were the water sports toilet, and the ones on the right hand toilets were the ones Lance liked to use. But he didn’t know that, all he knew was that if he wanted to pee, it was gonna be in front of someone’s subs. He went into the cubicle with the woman and closed the door. She smiled encouragingly at him and gently touched his foot as she laid her head down, mouth open over the open toilet. Chop stopped, his fingers on his fly awkwardly and looked around the cubicle as if there was going to be a magic answer to this conundrum graffed on the walls.

“Don’t be shy sir.” She reassured him.

“You like this kind o’ thing then?” Chop asked and she nodded her head.

“Love it. I’m a piss whore.” Her voice sounded pleading and Chop was bursting to go.

“Alright then.” He frowned and took his cock out, he tried to aim away from her face but she manoeuvred herself under the stream and in spite of himself he felt an odd, sick sense of fascination at the way she reacted to it. When he was done she licked the end of his cock, sucking it gently and he pulled back.

“Not for sharing.” He pointed at the stamp and she chuckled.

“Just getting it all sir.”

“Oh… right…” Chop answered awkwardly and put his cock back in his pants. “Well… thanks…?”
“No, thank you sir.” She purred. Chop nodded once and walked from the cubicle, the feeling of awkwardness following him. He washed his hands and headed back inside. When he sat down to see Pandora cutting the bottom of Archie’s foot, he simply sat down and nodded, as if this were the most normal thing in the world that he was seeing.

“Izzy.” He said softly, but Finn and Rae both heard and turned to look at him, “I don’t know what just happened.” Izzy tore her eyes away from the stage and looked at him.

“What do you mean Chop?”

“I just… pissed on a woman’s face…” Finn and Rae broke out in laughter, making Phil, Chloe and Rhys look over. Rae filled them in on what Chop had said and Chloe looked both amused and disgusted.

“How does something like that just happen?” Chloe asked.

“Well she were chained to the toilet and there was nowhere else to go!” Chop said.

“How do you know you weren’t cheating baby girl?” Izzy asked and Chop nodded his head.

“I mean she really liked it, so I dunno… I don’t really care… except for how fucking awkward it were… is stuff like that considered cheating baby girl?”

“Um…” Izzy’s head dropped to the side.

“Well that is sexual at places like this.” Finn said. “But then at places like this, all sorts of things happen, and you just kinda accept that before you get here.”

“Wait, so where am I gonna take a piss?” Chloe asked.

“On some guy or girl’s face.” Chop answered, “There’s nowhere else.” Rhys started laughing.

“It’s not funny!” Chloe laughed, “I don’t wanna piss on someone.”

“No Chop baby, it’s not cheating.” Izzy decided.

“Alright, then I’m fine.” He nodded. “And what are you laughing at fucker?” He shot at Rhys. Rhys pointed to three huge signs above the massive open doors that led outside. The sign on the right had a huge brown arrow pointing right. The sign in the middle was a huge yellow arrow with a black outline pointing straight down the centre. And the sign on the left had a plain arrow pointing to the left with a male/female sing for toilets under it.

“Oh fuck!” Chop shook his head, “How the fuck did I miss those signs?” He started to laugh at himself. “I’m real fucking glad I didn’t turn right!”

They were laughing when the next man called out the safe word; dickless. And was escorted from the stage by a woman in a pencil skirt. He was bleeding from a cut above his eye, and his entire body was shaking; he had been pushed to his breaking point. But that is what every man on that stage wanted. And that is what Pandora did best.

“Oh I’m so glad I got back in time for the arse fisting!” Chop laughed as Andromeda ordered one sub to fist another. Tom screaming as Pandora put a pin through the fleshy part of his thigh stopped their laughter. ‘

“Say the safe word Tomas.” Pandora cooed.
“You’re hilarious!” He returned. “I’m fucking loving this!” Andromeda looked over at them and knew that Pandora had found her entertainment for the next half an hour or so until the show was over; she would do her best to make them break. Pandora ordered for Archie to be tied down with his legs up in the air and she took out her huge 12 inch strap on. She turned her mic off and asked them both a few questions about condom usage on the strap on, and then turned the mic back on.

“After I’ve fucked your arsehole Tomas, I’m going to tattoo it.” Tom looked over his shoulder at Pandora.

“I don’t do tattoos.” He answered with an edge of panic to his voice. That was the mental pain Pandora enjoyed.

“Than say the safe word when I get to doing it.” She grinned and rammed the 12-inch strap-on up Tom’s arse. He grunted loudly, turning his eyes to Archie. Archie watched Tom’s mouth open in pain and pleasure and couldn’t wait to get fucked with that huge thing.

“One of the harnesses hanging from the cieling is free.” Rae noted and saw one of Mistress’s subs wiping it clean.

“I think I’ve seen enough of me best mate being tortured.” Finn answered. “He don’t need me in the audience; he’s enjoying himself too much to give a fuck about where I am!” He laughed.

“Let’s go.”

“Wait what?’ Chop asked as they got up.

“Gonna go try the harness out.” Finn patted him on the back and followed Rae and Phil to the harness. Chop watched them talking for a minute; deciding who would go on it first. Rae of course was the first on, she swung around in it, awkwardly leaning back while they all figured out how it worked, laughing the whole time. Chop looked away when Phil lifted up Rae’s skirt and buried his face in her cunt, Rae reaching up over her head to Finn’s fly. Chloe watched for a moment longer and turned to Rhys.

“I wanna fuck you and another guy.” She told him. He took a moment to consider this, an appreciative grin on his face.

“I’m sure we can arrange that.” He nodded to the stage, “After Pandora finishes a lot more people in the audience will be willing to play rather than watch.” As he finished his sentence another man screamed the safe word in agony, and Andromeda, as she had every time, asked him a question off mic before motioning for a woman to come and take him back stage. But this time the sub decided he had a bit more in him and Andromeda laid him on the ground and stepped on his back, steadying herself before she started caning a man chained to the upright strut. Behind her she had straight men fucking each other and other men fisting each other, and she had hung one man’s head over the edge of the stage and invited people to piss on his face.

“Well I did wanna watch Gina’s show, so after that one?”

“Done deal missy.” Rhys grinned and started scanning the crowd for a suitable man. Izzy furrowed her brow, hearing how easily they had discussed it. Chop had heard it too, and it wasn’t lost on him that he and Izzy were the only ones not planning some wild sex escapade.

Archie ended up calling the safe word with only a few minutes to go. He had been really
disappointed by how close he got to lasting the whole thing. Tom had had to be carried from the stage, grinning but completely fucked up with bruising over most of his body, bleeding wounds, possibly a cracked rib, two nipple piercings and a tattoo that said ‘rip me a new one’ on his arsehole. He’d nearly called the safe word when he’d heard the tattoo gun, but he was so glad he hadn’t; that pain had been exquisite. Every other man had called the safe word before Archie, leaving Andromeda to come over to help Pandora break Archie and Tom. Between the two of them they broke Archie, but not Tom. But they both had a feeling that with more time they could have made even Tom safe word them. But it would take a lot more time, and there was just as much chance he’d let them knock him out before safe wording them.

Archie left word with the bar staff for them that Pandora was taking he and Archie back to her house for aftercare and that he and Tom would see them all tomorrow at the flat.

Pandora covered them with blankets and had her carpet subs help them out to the car, Andromeda and the other ladies were taking care of the other sub’s aftercare, so she was free to focus on her gay boys properly after she’d come back and done Andromeda’s show. But Tom needed a bath; it was his come own and he wasn’t doing well without it, and he also needed stitches. Archie had objected to Pandora doing them, wanting to take Tom to hospital, until she told him she was a fully qualified nurse, and reminded him that it was New Years; the emergency department would be worse torture than what he’d already experienced.

She patched Tom up, checked their wounds and settled them into a bath with some food and water nearby.

“I’ll be back shortly. Duty, very fun duty, calls.”
Chapter Summary

the gang are still at the sex club

‘Slide In’ by Red Riders

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y1P7H7KQTWY

Sure, it's not all you're good for. But still, it's what you're here for.

When Gina, Tom and Alex came out to do their show, Chloe sat on Rhys’s lap and whispered all the things she wanted to do in his ear as they watched. Rhys acquiesced to her every suggestion; enjoying her desire to explore now that she was so much more comfortable with sex. He would not stop her, no matter what direction her desire took her in. Just as she would not stop him. Their bond continued to grow, their understanding, love and respect for each other strengthening constantly.

Chop watched this show with an open mouth again. But this time for a very different reason than for Pandora’s show. This was so sexy his cock was aching in his pants and he was seriously considering asking Izzy to fuck in a place that was so public he was mortified by his own desire and worried for what his girl would think of him for it. He looked around and saw lots of people fucking; he was sure that no one would notice them fucking, but he knew his Izzy wouldn’t do something like that.

It was taking everything Izzy had to not squirm in her chair. She was desperate to have sex, but she knew Chop wouldn’t do it here. She had seen the guy behind them eyeing her off, and she wondered if she could accidentally rub this stupid ‘not sharing’ stamp off her hand and subtly started to do just that.

Chop couldn’t help but admire the way they worked so well on the stage, they lifted and moved each other effortlessly to make sure everyone had the best view and the most pleasure. Seeing those three bodies rubbing up against each other made Chop look back over at Finn. He was laughing, his hand on Phil’s cock as he tried to figure out his turn in the swing, his other hand reaching out for Rae’s cunt as his mouth devoured Phil’s cock. Chop shook his head wishing he hadn’t seen that and looked back up at the stage. He decided that the minute they got back to the hotel room, he was going to fuck Izzy harder than he ever had before. She put a hand on his thigh, and from out of nowhere he found himself kissing her.

“Hmmm yes Chop!” She groaned and he was standing, pulling him to her, not sure how to fuck her in this setting, but she grabbed her chair and put it in front of them and bent over; he could fuck her from behind and they could both watch the show. Chop groaned and gave her an approving
nod of the head. He pulled up her skirt and scrambled with her underwear.

“Just tear ‘em Chop!” She yelled at him, making Chloe and Rhys look over. Chloe laughed at Izzy’s impatience, she wanted to yell encouragements at Izzy, but she didn’t think that’d help Chop’s performance. She looked back at the stage as Chop thrust into Izzy, his hands gripping her hips hard.

Within minutes, the man Izzy had seen eying her was standing in front of her, his cock out. Chop was stunned by what he was seeing and was about to point out Izzy’s stamp when he noticed it was gone; it had come off. Izzy looked over her shoulder at Chop.

“I love you.” She told him and he nodded, not sure why she was saying that now when they had to deal with this guy… who’s cock she’d just put in her mouth. Chop stopped thrusting and watched her sucking off another guy, a mixture of feelings whirring in his stomach. And then the man put a hand on the back of Chop’s neck and pulled him into a kiss. Chop kissed back out of instinct, and somehow he started to move his pelvis again as he kissed this guy, this guy who was a really skilful kisser. A woman approached and lifted up her skirt to Izzy, who stopped sucking the guy’s dick to try licking a pussy for the first time.

Chop’s head was spinning; when he’d stopped kissing the guy, he was breathless with desire and his girl was licking out another girl. The guy reached down and pulled Chop out of Izzy and went to bend down.

“I’m straight.” Chop said, not to stop the guy, he had no intention of stopping him. Chop wasn’t even sure why he said it.

“Oh well, shit happens.” He gave Chop a wink and started sucking his cock. Chop tried to resist the urge to run his hands through this nameless stranger’s hair, to no avail. Izzy turned to look at him again and her jaw dropped. Chop gave her a look that indicated he wasn’t entirely sure of what was happening and Izzy laughed and kissed his lips.

“Oh girl…” Chop groaned, “The taste o’ pussy on your lips is something else.” Izzy pulled the other girl in and they both knelt, the guy moving over so that all three of them cold suck and lick Chop’s cock and balls. It didn’t take long for him to forget how straight he was and to stop worrying about what was happening and instead just enjoy it. He wasn’t overly attracted to the guy that was now licking his arsehole, but he could appreciate how very skilful he was. And the two women; Izzy, and the nameless lady, were both astoundingly good looking so Chop didn’t mind that one bit.

When Chloe looked over at Chop and Izzy again her jaw dropped and she turned Rhys’s face to look. Rhys chuckled and imagined the kind of crap Finn and Archie were gonna give him for this. Chloe shook her head imaging the things her and Rae were gonna say to Izzy; it would be noted that Chloe had the most openly queer partner, and she would be the last of them to have multiple partners during sex. Chloe didn’t mind that she was going slow; she was still healing, and she wasn’t sure how experimental she wanted to get. The girl talk was going to be exciting and they’d probably have to reassure Izzy that she wasn’t a slut, or if she was one that being a slut wasn’t a bad thing.

The nameless man put some condoms in Chop’s hand as he stood up. He kissed Chop passionately.

“Different condom for each partner you fuck.” He grinned.

“My name’s Chop.” Chop tried and the man shook his head.
“We don’t need to know names.” He grinned and ran a hand down Chop’s back before gently pulling Izzy to her feet. Keeping his eyes on Chop he motioned for Izzy to turn around, put his condom on and slid into her cunt. Chop’s brows furrowed as a mixture of emotions exploded in his chest, but the other woman stood and kissed his lips, taking his mind off it as she rolled a condom onto his cock. She turned and looked over her shoulder. Chop bit his bottom lip and nodded slowly thrusting into her, gripping her hips hard. Izzy started to kiss the nameless woman and Chop watched for a moment before turning to the nameless man and pulling him in to kiss him. Chop figured if he was doing this thing, he might as well do it to its fullest.

Rhys had spotted a suitably attractive man in the audience that had looked over at them a few times. He nodded in invitation and the man approached.

“My name is Tong.” He introduced himself.

“Chloe.”

“Rhys.”

“I know who you are Rhys.” Tong answered, “Most people here do.” Chloe laughed with delight, “Pandora made us fuck a few years back.” He said and sat down beside them.

“Oh god!” Rhys laughed. “I’m sorry, I don’t… remember…”

“Oh you dirty slut.” Chloe kissed his cheek; she was really beginning to revel in this.

“I was wearing a gimp mask, it’s ok!” Tong laughed. Rhys’s eyes narrowed and he looked Tong up and down.

“I’ve put on weight since then.” Tong realised that Rhys was trying to figure out which masked man he was. “I don’t remember all of that show either.” He shook his head, “I was only Pandora’s sub for a few months’ I thought I like pain and could handle it, but she proved otherwise.”

“She does enjoy breaking men.” Rhys agreed.

“She never broke you, did she?” Chloe asked and Rhys shook his head thoughtfully.

“No… she did make me say the safe word a few times, but I was always back for more.” He answered.

“I’m considerably tamer nowadays.” Tong revealed, “But not vanilla.”

“Still got your piercing?” Rhys asked.

“Yeah right through the head of my cock.” Tong grinned.

“Oh she liked you.” Rhys answered, “She only pierces the head of the cocks on men she likes.” Rhys looked at Tong with a new found interest and respect. Andromeda pierced everyone wherever she felt like it, and Pandora would often ask Andromeda to pierce subs through the head of the cock. But back when Rhys and Pandora were fucking, Pandora did all her piercings herself. And she only used her own two hands to pierce men through the head of the cock that she liked, loved even. Rhys was the only man she hadn’t called her sub, she had always referred to him as
her equal, even as she had tortured and abused his body for her own pleasure. Afterwards they
would fuck, she would let him fuck her sometimes. Rhys was a man she could allow to have those
privileges because he would not abuse them. She had not met another like him.

“Yes she did.” Tong grinned. “She was very sad when she broke me.”

“D’you see her tonight?” Chloe asked.

“Of course.” Tong asked and shook his head, “I’m such a sucker for that woman!” He laughed,
“I’ll be seeing her again in a few days’ time.” He shook his head.

“Of course you will.” Rhys laughed.

“With Andromeda!” Tong started to laugh too. “I won’t be able to walk for a month!”

“That’s the great joy of being with those two women.” Rhys noted.

“You too?”

“Yes tomorrow.” Rhys answered. “Of course!” He laughed and shook his head. Chloe had
forgotten about that and suddenly got tingles in her stomach. She hadn’t realised what she was
getting in to before seeing the show, now she wondered what was going to happen at Andromeda’s
house. Unexpectedly, she found that it excited her.

“And what are you plans tonight?” Chloe asked Tong with a voice that made it very clear what his
plans for the night were going to be.

“Whatever you want Chloe.” He smiled saucily.

“Now that’s what I like to hear.” Chloe felt drunk with power. And she liked it.

“Alright…” Finn panted as he helped Phil out of the harness, “We’re definitely getting one o’
these when we buy our own house.”

“Agreed.” Rae answered.

“Get that arse o’ yours back in it girl.” Finn moved her around and she decided to kneel this time,
the strap of the harness going across her upper chest. She pulled Phil to her and started to suck on
his cock as Finn strapped her ankles into the harness. Phil strapped Rae’s hands in and she was
completely powerless. The lads grinned at each other and Finn spun her around to be sucking his
cock. Phil spun her back after a few moments and she groaned; they were edging her, not fucking
her cunt yet, wanting her to get very loud when she was finally allowed to cum.

“Bastards.” She moaned as Finn turned her back round to him and they laughed.

“Aye!” Finn agreed. Phil started to fuck her and she groaned happily; they weren’t going to be too
bad tonight.

But that silent understanding the lads had, made them both withdraw from her the minute she got
close to orgasm and turn her to face the other way, Finn waiting a few minutes to fuck her, Phil
already thrusting into her mouth.
Rae tried to hide that she was getting close; she tried to keep her vocal chords under control, but Phil felt her body tensing, and Finn noticed her toes curling, her hands fisting. They both noticed her breath becoming ragged and stopped before she came, turning her back around.

“You just wait till I’m in charge of you two, you fucking bastards!” She snapped at them before Finn slid back into her mouth. Phil silently held up four fingers to Finn, indicating how many more time he thought they should swap before letting her cum. Finn considered suggesting more, but it was late, they were exhausted, and four more time would produce a screaming orgasm loud enough to get a few looks so he nodded.

It was some time before Chop came; even though this had been incredibly sexy, the swapping and changing partners, as well as some very unexpected experiences, prolonged his orgasm wonderfully and the nameless woman had swallowed his load mixed in with the other guy’s load with a very sexy smile before disappearing into the crowd. Izzy still didn’t like the taste or texture of semen and had no real inclination towards swallowing that stuff. The nameless man high fived Chop, smacked Izzy’s arse, and then Chop’s, before also disappearing into the crowd. Chop self-consciously pulled his pants up, but all Izzy had to do was pull her dress down and sit demurely, unsure as to what would happen now. Chop sat beside her and they were silent for a long time, watching the stage being prepared for Andromeda’s show. Both of them felt awkward and were surprised and confused about what had just happened and how they’d just let it happen. They couldn’t make eye contact with each other and kept looking off in the opposite direction.

“Alright.” Chop said after several minutes, “I guess that when we come here… shit like that’s gonna happen” Chop said and Izzy snapped her face round to his, he was finally looking at her. “But only here, right?”

“Right.” Izzy agreed.

“But when we’re here…” He shrugged, “No rules?” Izzy nodded, grinning happily and kissed him.

Pandora appeared a little over an hour after she had left to find her gay boys washing each other delicately. She took her corset off, her heels, her fake eyelashes and let her long hair down. When she went in to join them in the bath, she was herself: Joni. Very few men got to see Joni; only those that impressed her, and these two had. Which brought the total to five men that had impressed her: Rhys, Till, Tom, Archie and Dominick. She wanted to get to know them better to decide if she liked them as well.
Island in the Sun

‘Island in the Sun’ by Weezer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=erG5rgNYSdk

As we drift into the zone

They had pulled up the three bean bags and had crowded onto the three seater lounge. They weren’t seeing anyone but the nine of them today. Danny and Grace were going to the zoo, the twins and Bryn had all planned for hangovers. Nina was off to Bath to see her family, Katie to Ireland to see hers, Renee and Latisha hadn’t told them what their plans were, but whatever they were, they weren’t with them.

Finn stepped over the back of the lounge and squeezed in between Rae and Rhys, who had Chloe on his lap. Finn had the bong that Kelsey had gotten Phil in his hand and Izzy, sharing one of the huge beanbags with Chop, had taken Tom’s bag of goodies from him when his bruised knuckles made him fumble with the zip. Finn leaned over and handed her the bong and she started preparing it.

“So how did everyone get on last night?” Chop asked, his eyes turning to Tom and Archie.

“Well I got my first blow job from a woman.” Archie said and gently dabbed at his split lip, “I think she will be the only woman that ever…” He shook his head.

“Why’d you…?” Chop asked.

“Part of aftercare for us is to make love.” Tom said, “But both of us were fucked up this time instead of just one of us, so neither of us could muster up the energy to get on it.” He was wearing a singlet and the lashing marks and bruises from last night were showing out from under it, as were his new nipple piercings. “So she was kind enough to give us that release after the punishment we took.”

“Gonna keep the piercings?” Rhys asked.

“Have no idea how to take ‘em out.” Tom gently touched his nipples through his singlet.

“The end screws, I can show you.”

“I’m keeping mine.” Archie said.

“What’d she tattoo on you?” Finn asked.

“‘Obey.’” Archie grinned and held up his hand, the wrist visible, bruises all down his arm, “I pretty much love it, even though people are gonna think it’s some shitty existentialistic, white boy philosophy about obeying social norms and shit.” He laughed, “But I’ll know what it really means.”

“Fuck Pandora is terrifying and so very inspiring.” Rae grinned and gave Phil and then Finn a meaningful look. Finn returned her look with a cocky grin and a sleazy flick of the eyebrows and Phil just chuckled; Rae could do whatever she liked to them.
“I couldn’t imagine that woman sucking a cock.” Izzy marvelled.

“She does it incredibly well.” Rhys answered and Tom and Archie nodded, “But extraordinarily rarely.”

“I just closed my eyes and leaned back.” Tom said, “She was so good I forgot she was a woman and my sexuality has been thrown on its head!” He joked.

“Pandora tends to do that to people.” Rhys laugh; they both knew that Tom’s sexuality wasn’t affected by spending a night with Pandora, it was just strange to think he had been with a woman in a sexual capacity. But Pandora seemed to transcend issues of gender and sexuality; there were many gay men who had had her as their only female lover.

“I figure I’m just gay, but you know, shit happens. Whatever.” Archie shrugged.

“Had a similar thought myself, last night.” Chop said with a shy grin.

“Oh right?” Archie asked surprised.

“Yes I did turn round to see Chop getting his cock sucked by some unknown bloke!” Chloe had been dying to drop that titbit.

“You know, I just figured, ‘well I’m straight, but sometimes stuff happens.’” Chop shrugged them off, “And what are you gonna do when it does, stand there and clench your arsehole or enjoy it while it lasts?”

“We had a foursome.” Izzy blushed, “That club… I think it brought out the slut in me!”

“Good!” Chloe said loudly, “All inner sluts need a good airing now and then.”

“No arguments from me!” Chop agreed loudly, “My inner slut feels very aired out now.”

“Did you lose your A-plates?” Rae asked.

“He did.” Izzy grinned.

“A-plates?” Chop asked.

“V-plates for anal hun.” Izzy said soothingly and Chop blushed.

“So who’s the vanilla one now?” Chop asked to deflect attention off his A-plates.

“None of us.” Rae answered.

“How was it?” Finn asked and Chop shook his head; he should have known Finn and Archie wouldn’t let it go.

“Well I’m probably not gonna encourage Izzy to get a 12 inch strap-on any time soon.” He said pointedly and Archie grinned; both he and Tom had had trouble sitting down today after the pounding Pandora had given them with her strap on. “But… I’ll probably get it again next time I’m at the club.” He shrugged.

“What about, just a 6 inch strap on?” Rae teased and Chop blushed again and mumbled. “What
was that?’ She asked in an innocent tone, and Chop rolled his eyes.

“Aye if she wants to.” He said louder and they all laughed.

“We had a threesome.” Chloe took mercy on Chop because she could see Finn and Archie eying him; they were going to give him hell.

“Which type?” Izzy asked and handed the bong to Tom first; he needed the pain relief that marijuana could give more than anyone here.

“Two men and little ol’ me.” She grinned.

“Did you get spit roasted?” Izzy asked

“DP?” Rae asked at the same time.

“Yes to both.” Chloe grinned happily. “And I was in charge.”

“I will need all the gruesome details.” Rae said, “From both of you.”

“Can someone light the fucking cone for me?” Tom asked, “The joints in my hand have seized up.” Andromeda had caned his hands until they bled, punched his face and body and carved his feet. He had been whipped, caned, tattooed, pierced and more. He could barely move today, but had hobbled determinedly from the hotel to the taxi when it had been time to come and spend time with the gang; these people were his family. And Archie was only marginally in better condition.

“I so wish I hadn’t yielded.” Archie lamented as Izzy crawled over to lighten the cone for Tom. “I just didn’t know how much more I could take.” He shook his head.

“See that’s why you keep track o’ time.” Tom answered. “You always agree to how long the heavy session will last, and you keep track of time.”

“Next time.” Archie nodded and dabbed at his split lip again; he kept re-splitting it. He and Tom had claimed a big beanbag each and were stretched out on them. Izzy helped Tom pull his cone and then helped Archie with his before re-packing the cone and handing it up to Phil. He hesitated for a moment before deciding that anything in moderation could be part of a healthy life and pulled the cone.

They had all smoked a few cones and were nicely buzzed and talking shit when the pizza came. Phil got up and paid with the mish-mash of money everyone had put in and Rae grabbed cans of drink for everyone.

“Do we need plates?” Phil asked and Rae giggled.

“I love you but you’re so dumb sometimes.” She laughed.

“No plates then?” He asked confused and put the boxes down on the table. They all started eating; Tom as grumbly about how unhealthy the food was as Phil was.

“Put the telly on.” Chop said around a mouthful of pizza.

“What d’you wanna watch?” Finn asked everyone.

“Something that won’t make me brains dribble out o’ me nose.” Rae answered.

“Wheel of fortune!” Izzy said looking through the tv guide and Finn obliged.
“Wheel of fortune?” Phil’s voice sounded slightly dismayed and his face was trying to hide his
distaste; game shows were the worst. Rae held Phil’s hand because he hated most tv, was quiet
when he did watch it and was probably not going to enjoy how raucous everyone was about to get
trying to guess the answers.

Phil had never gotten past the opening credits of ‘wheel of fortune’ before. Most of the time his
schedule was too busy for tv anyway, so when he did watch it, he wanted it to be something of a
high standard.

“Fuck the jokes are always crap!” Chop laughed happily. Phil looked over at Chop; how were
you supposed to hear how crap the jokes were if someone was talking? He didn’t say anything
and Rae squeezed his hand again, Finn’s hand reached over Rae’s shoulders to stroke Phil’s arm.
They knew their boy well. John Leslie, the host, told them that the topic was a famous couple.

“Famous couple.” Izzy cut over the general chit chat and they all quietly guessed which letter
would be chosen first while the wheel clicked on the screen.

“Well obviously you’d choose an ‘N.’” Phil said and Rae and Finn looked at him with surprise,
“The third word is obviously ‘and’ and between ‘N’ and ‘D,’ ‘N’ is the more common letter.”

The woman on the screen chose ‘R.’

“Why would she do that?” Phil asked, his brows furrowed, “That makes no logical sense.”

“Ah but you’re assuming people are logical on these things!” Chop grinned, “Part o’ the fun o’
these things is that they never are.”

A single ‘R’ came up and the wheel was spun again and she chose ‘T.’ There were no ‘T’s’ and
the control of the wheel passed to the next person. Phil leaned forward.

“Choose a fucking ‘N!’” He told the tv and Rae and Finn exchanged a bemused glance as
everyone else got on board with Phil and yelled at the tv for the next player, a lady in a black top,
to choose an ‘N.’ She did and everyone cheered, including Phil, as three ‘N’s’ came up,
predictably, one of them was in the middle of the third word. Finn traced out words on Rae’s
shoulders.

What the hell is happening?

Rae shrugged, as confused, bemused and delighted by Phil’s unexpected response to the show as
he was.

The lady spun again and Phil looked over the puzzle, his mind fighting through the fog of the pot
he’d smoked.

“Norman Cook and Zoe Ball.” Phil said and they all turned to look at him. Only Rae and Finn
weren’t surprised that he’d gotten it so quickly.

“How the fuck can you tell that from three ‘N’s’ and a fucking ‘R?’” Chop asked flabbergasted.

“Well the first name is obviously Norman.” He said, “How many Norman’s do you know?” He
asked, “And they want the answers to be obvious enough to be guessable, but hard enough to take a
while to guess.” Phil continued as the lady in the black shirt on the tv chose a ‘D.’ “Not everyone
knows Fatboy Slim’s real name, but even so, he’s well known enough to be recognisable after a
few letters have been guessed…” Phil continued, “So it’s logical that it’s Norman Cook, plus it fits
the puzzle, and he’s dating Zoe Ball, which also fits.” He shrugged. “Quite obvious really.” He
grinned and watched the tv, hooked on the show and its frustrating contestants. They all stared at him and then turned to the tv as the lady chose an ‘L’ and the last two letters of the last word lit up.

“That fucker’s right!” Chop said in awe. “You two are fucking a genius!” He said to Finn and Rae.

The woman on the screen asked to buy a vowel and everyone yelled at her that she didn’t need to buy a vowel. She bought an ‘O’ and as expected 4 ‘O’s lit up. After that it was on; everyone kept yelling at the screen, bemoaning that they didn’t know who it was. Even when the hot money was revealed under the letter ‘M’ and she could get that money if she solved it now; she didn’t know it. When she lost control of the wheel and it went to the guy, he obviously already knew it from his letter choices and was just putting money on the board. Eventually it was solved and everyone cheered.

“Phil wins this round!” Chloe piped up. Phil laughed and looked back at the screen. But everyone was talking over the chit chat of the host getting to know the contestants and the person choosing some prizes.

“A phrase!” Chop called out and everyone quietened down, and started to guess what the first letter would be.

“Aye but what letter should they choose?” Finn asked Phil.

“You should be so lucky.” Phil said softly, his eyes on the screen.

“You not gonna tell us?” Izzy asked.

“He means that’s the answer.” Rhys said with an appreciative tone. “Fuck you’re good!”

“Starts with a three letter word, has 2 two letter words…” Phil answered, “Proverbial phrases form part of our oral tradition, and are usually filled with old bits of wisdom and advice… so if you’re going to start a phrase with a three letter word…”

“It’s most likely gonna be ‘you.’” Rae said, “Cos you gotta give advice or wisdom to someone or else it’s meaningless.”

“But also ‘one,’ ‘who,’ ‘the,’ too.” Phil shrugged, “But I looked at the 2 two letter words as well…” Phil added, “It was really just a quick process of elimination.” He said as the woman chose an ‘S’. “I’m not entirely sure it’s right, cos I don’t think it’s technically a phrase…” Phil mused.

“Yeah but I don’t think this show cares about technicalities love!” Tom told him.

“And it is fairly common vernacular.” Archie added.

“Well the ‘S’s’ fit.” Rae said, “I reckon you’re right.”

They watched the phrase being slowly revealed and became more convinced that Phil was right with every passing letter; yelling at the tv loudly with every letter guessed.

“How can you not know it?” Chop yelled at the screen as one of the contestants guessed a wrong letter but used her free spin to keep going.

“This is actually so stressful.” Phil said to Rae. “I love it.”
“Stressful how?” Rae laughed.

“Not like real stress.” Phil replied, “I don’t know why, I just really care about the result and I want her to win.” He pointed at one of the ladies and Rae laughed as Phil leaned a bit more forward as the woman he wanted to win solved it. Everyone cheered and Chop started to invent a drinking game for the show as the host started trying to get to know the contestant that had just guessed this round. Ads were played and more drinks were gotten, the chatter reaching fever point with Chop convinced that Phil might be psychic.

The next puzzle came up; another phrase.

“2 letter word!” Chop yelled because it started with a 2 letter word, followed by a six letter and a seven letter word. Everyone looked at Phil as his brows furrowed. The man with control of the wheel picked an ‘S’ and Phil made a noise in the back of his throat.

“No spring chicken.” He shook his head, thinking he should have gotten it sooner.

“How can you know it?” Chop asked, “I’m telling you, he’s psychic!”

“He’s just smart Chop!” Chloe retorted. They went back and forward on that topic in between yelling at the tv, at one point it was very obvious what the solution was, but the lady bought a vowel instead, not knowing what it was and everyone groaned and got really stressfully frustrated at the tv. When it was solved by the next person only one spin later everyone cheered. When the special hundred quid puzzle came up and Phil instantly guessed it as Lily Savage the noise level in the room increased.

“Philly lad, you’re killing it at this game!” Chop said gleefully. They talked and laughed through the chit chat that followed until a speed round was started up. The host spun the wheel and each contestant got to guess a letter, and then got five seconds to guess the puzzle before the next person had to take a guess at a letter and the puzzle.

“Occupation…” Izzy mused and they all looked at the two words on the screen; the first word had 11 letters, the second 7.

“Well it’s gotta be some sort of engineer.” Finn said in a laugh; he had no idea what it could be. His mind just turned to engineering because of his degree. Everyone looked at Phil and he narrowed his eyes in thought.

“This one is trickier.” Phil acknowledged. “The second word will be the generic job, like engineer, plumber, actress, cashier, things like that. And the first word will be something that ‘specialises’ it. And it might even be a specialty that we’ve never heard of, like a…” He thought for a moment, “Publicising engineer.” They all turned back to the screen

The first letter the man tried was ‘T’ and there was one.

“First word is maintenance.” Phil said as soon as it came up. This was a logical guess based on the position of the ‘T’ and words that could be used in regards to occupations.

“Maintenance engineer is a thing.” Finn answered with a grin.

“Fuck yeah it is!” Chop said happily.

The next letter was ‘R’ and there was just one at the end of the second word.

“Finny lad, I think you got the engineer bit!” Chop said happily.
And then after a few wrong guesses, three ‘N’s’ came up and none of them were in the second word.

“Shit.” Finn frowned. “It’s not engineer.” Finn’s tongue went to the back of his teeth in unimpressed thought.

“What other types of maintenance jobs are there?” Izzy asked.

“You can call any kind of job a maintenance job.” Archie replied.

Everyone started trying to guess wildly, while Phil’s mind included the discounted letters in his systematic mental search of jobs it could be. When ‘L’ came up as the second letter in the second word he grinned; he had it.

“Maintenance plumber.” He said happily; he liked that this one had been slightly trickier.

“What the fuck is a maintenance plumber?” Tom asked as if Phil having guessed that made it a foregone conclusion. “I would have just called that a plumber!” He laughed and held his ribs, wincing with pain, but he loved it, so he didn’t complain one bit.

The yelling at the screen continued on until the answer was revealed; Phil had been right again. The results of who had won was revealed and the woman Phil had wanted to win had. He was stupidly pleased he even gave a fist pump sending Rae off into fits of giggles.

“Solo round!” Izzy declared happily. “Landmark!”

“Five letters in both words.” Chloe started wracking her brain. They all started calling out what constants and vowel they’d pick. Phil refrained from choosing letters for now; he needed to either have an idea of what the puzzle was (which he didn’t), or have watched enough of the show to gauge how difficult their final puzzle would be (and he hadn’t), before he would choose letters. He watched the woman, Sandra, choose her letters, and waited for what would come up on the screen. She chose ‘R,’ ‘T,’ ‘N,’ ‘P,’ ‘L,’ and ‘E.’ Five letters were revealed of the puzzle.

“Angel Falls.” Phillip said instantly and everyone cheered.

“We would’ve won it!” Chop laughed.

“They haven’t even started the clock yet!” Izzy grinned.

They started the clock and Sandra started trying to guess; she knew ‘angel,’ but couldn’t guess ‘falls.’ Everyone was screaming at the tv by the end of it, except Rhys who never screamed, but he was talking to the tv, along with Phil.

“Phil you should go on this show you’d win a stack of money!” Izzy declared and Phil shrugged.

“There’s a whole element of chance too Iz.” Archie said, “Phil’ll probably spin bankrupt all the time. He’s gotta have something he’s no good at.”

“You’d kick my arse at football.” Phil answered and Archie grinned.

“Oh yeah?”

“Well I mean, not right now.” Phil joked and Archie split his lip again ginning wider.

“Shit.” He hissed and dabbed at it. “I reckon I could still take you!” Archie threw out there bravely.
“No!” Rae said, “I love you Arch, you been through enough damage for now.”

“So shall we all have a long dinner separately and come back together for a night of drinking afterwards?” Chloe asked.

“There’s a couple o’ hours till dinner girl.” Chop answered.

“Just getting things planned now; we take forever to organise anything!”

“What you’re basically asking Chlo, is shall we have dinner and a shag then all reconvene here, yeah?” Rae asked and Chloe laughed.

“That’s exactly it! We’ve got our date with Andromeda and Pandora to go to, and I’m sure all of you wouldn’t mind some alone time.”

“You’re fucking brave!” Izzy told Chloe and looked over at Tom and Archie, literally black and blue with red welt marks from their encounter with them.

“Oh they won’t hurt me, I’m a woman.” Chloe stroked Rhys’s face, “Not sure what’ll happen to this man though.” She scrunched up her nose at him and he grinned.

“This man is gonna make sure we all leave satisfied, missy.” He stroked her face. “And will probably end up with a new piercing and tattoo.” He accepted his fate with a devilish grin.

“Oh no, I’m going to tell the ladies to hold off on that till the show.” Chloe said innocently and Rhys’s eye narrowed slightly in desire; Chloe’s growing confidence and sexual playfulness was extraordinarily attractive to him. He enjoyed her enjoying herself above all else.

“Sounds good to me!” Chop said, “Dinner at six, back here at midnight yeah?”

“Perfect.” Chloe grinned, “What are you guys gonna do for those six hours?” She looked at poor Archie and Tom.

“Fuck.” Tom grinned.

“Won’t that hurt quite a bit?” Izzy said.

“You forget how much I like pain Iz-girl.” Tom laughed.

“Yeah, just forget I asked, I forgot who I were talking to!” She laughed.

“Ooo, there’s another episode on!” Phil said excitedly when the next episode of ‘Wheel of Fortune’ began.

“Are we gonna have to mark it up in your diary?” Rae asked him with a cheeky grin; Phil had a diary with everything planned out in it. Since being with Finn and Rae he allowed a lot more free time than he’d ever allowed himself, but he was still very organised. Phil shook his head with an expression as if to say it was a preposterous idea, but then slowly his shake became a nod.

“Yeah.” He answered, “I think we will.” His eyes strayed back to the screen.
Saying goodbye to the gang again produced a lot of tears, but they were more sure now that they’d stay in contact; the daily emails and phone calls had taught them all that the bond in this group was strong. This really was their family; they all had more contact with each other than their parents.

Now Finn, Phil and Rae had to start thinking about preparing to head back to uni. They loved university, they really did, but they didn’t look forward to that first Monday after the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. But they were more accustomed to the workload now, and the time away had invigorated them and they flitted through their study timetables far easier than they had the first few months, when everything had been a horrible nightmarish challenge. Being more on top of everything gave them more time to hang out together at uni, to try and make friends and to look into the university social clubs.

Finn had been seeing the posters up with a rainbow flag and various inspiring quote by famous people all over the uni since they’d come back from the holidays a month ago. He was sat staring at one while he was sat in the cafeteria waiting for Rae and Phil to get out of their lecture.

“I was thinking we should join the LGBT club.” Finn pointed at the poster when they sat down. Phil turned and looked at the poster.

“Why?” He asked and turned back around.

“I dunno. I like the quote: ‘The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases.’ Seems to suit us.” He grinned.

“It’s a Carl Jung quote.” Phil said as if this explained his reticence.

“So?” Finn asked.

“I’ll give you another Jung quote: ‘Woman always stands just where the man’s shadow falls, so that he is only too liable to confuse the two. Then, when he tries to repair this misunderstanding, he overvalues her and believes her the most desirable thing in the world.’” Phil looked down at his salad and picked up an olive.

“Oh.” Finn scrunched up his nose.

“He also believed that a relationship was between a man and a woman. So if the LGBT club is using quotes from that wanker, I’m fairly certain they’re not being run well.” Phil shrugged and popped the olive in his mouth.

“It’d just be nice to meet other people like us you know?”

“I know.” Rae said sympathetically and Phil nodded his head.

“We’ll go.” Phil said, “Sorry I was such a knob.”
“You’re not a knob you’re just smarter than everyone.” Finn answered, “They probably just looked for quotes on acceptance or something and didn’t look up the history of Jung.”

“I know!” Rae squeezed Phil’s hand, “You think that kind of thing is well known and obvious.” She grinned, “It’s not.” She told him.

“Oh.” Phil lowered his eyes. “I did that thing again.”

“Aye.” Rae grinned, “That thing we both love, so no looking sad about it.” Phil had a habit of forgetting how smart he was and how good his memory was and thinking everyone else around him had the same knowledge he had or was wilfully ignorant of it. He grinned apologetically at them.

“Aye, but I gotta stop doing it.” He mumbled. Every time Phil said ‘aye’ Finn would smile happily; he liked to think it was his influence on his boy.

They went to the meeting of the LGBT club the following night. All three wearing jeans. Finn was in a grey t-shirt, Rae in an Oasis t-shirt and Phil was wearing his usual buttoned shirt Phil didn’t own many t-shirts, but all; the shirts he owned fit him like a glove. Rae looked from Finn to Phil and grinned happily. They were just so good looking.

Phil looked up and saw the way she was looking at them and made a soft noise that alerted Finn to it. The boys had both noticed that Rae sometimes went off into a fantasy world when looking at them. They loved it; all the facial expressions she would un-self-consciously emote while she was thinking about them in this fantasy world were stunning. Finn bit his bottom lip and watched as Rae’s face again took on that look of tragic lust that they saw so often in her.

When they got to the meeting Rae was the only woman in the room and she stood with Rae and Finn awkwardly looking around.

“Katie said that a bunch of people in writing call me a fag hag behind me back.” Rae said remembering the conversation quite suddenly as she looked around at all the gay men.

“What the fuck is a fag hag?” Finn asked.

“A woman who hangs around gay men.” Rae shrugged and shook her head when Finn rolled his eyes.

“It’s often used as an insult.” Phil said with a frown, “to mean a woman that wishes her gay friend was straight so she could shag him. Or a woman that is replacing hetero relationships with a gay best friend, because she can’t find a straight man.”

“Of course.” Rae tutted. “You know, for the first couple of weeks here I thought no one cared I was fat. But they do; they still judge me as less capable of getting a man cos I’m fat. Like that’s my sole purpose in life… get a man.” Phil and Finn both moved to put their arm around Rae’s shoulder in comfort as they had so many times in the past. They were so used to it now that they automatically adjusted their movements to accommodate each other without a thought; both of them getting their arms around her shoulders and squeezing her without any awkward positioning issues.

“Fuck ‘em.” Finn said soothingly and Rae grinned.

“I’m alright.” She shrugged.

Eventually a few women came in and everyone sat in a circle to discuss LGBT rights on campus
and the wider community and any activism they should be partaking in. First there were introductions.

Finn was silently elected as spokesperson for the introductions since this was his idea.

“Hey I’m Finn. This is Rae and Phil.” Rae waved and Phil nodded; he had noted the many hostile eyes looking at them.

“What are you doing here?” The founder of the club was a physically tiny man named Mike.

“Well, we’re bisexual, in a polyamorous relationship. This is a LGBT club, right?”

“You’d be our first bisexual members.” One of the women said eying them curiously.

“I think we need to reconsider naming it a GLBT club.” One of the other men said and the women there shouted him down.

“Men don’t have to be fucking first in everything!”

“Yeah. We’ve been thinking of dropping the ‘B’ and ‘T’ from our club name.” Mike said to them. “Didn’t have any of them…”

“Well now you do.” Finn answered pithily.

“What do you think of the argument that bisexuality doesn’t actually exist?” One of the women leaned forward, her tone seemed to suggest that she was intending for this to be a purely academic discussion, but her expression said otherwise.

“What do you think of the argument that lesbians don’t exist?” Phil shot back.

“Well of course we do. I’m one.” She answered as if his question was ridiculous, “But many academics have suggested that claiming bisexuality is simply a stepping stone towards actually coming out as gay.” She said it in a kindly voice and her eyes turned to Rae, “Which means, since you’re only shagging blokes, that you’re straight and you’re just in the middle of a gay relationship.” She cocked an eyebrow as if to say she was sorry to be the bearer of bad news.

“We can help you guys feel more confident and comfortable about your sexuality, help you come out in your own time.” Mike said welcomingly to Finn and Phil and then gave Rae a look as if to tell her she really wasn’t welcome.

“I think I might have an inkling as to why you’ve got no bisexual members.” Rae said with huge, disbelieving eyes.

“This were a mistake.” Finn got up. “Go fuck yourselves.” Rae stood up next to him but Phil stayed seated and stared at Mike and then all the others.

“I am a very proud bisexual man.” Phil said calmly, all his cultured education apparent in the way he spoke, “I am going to talk to the Chancellor of the university about cutting funding to your club if you continue to keep the ‘B’ and the ‘T’ in your name and continue to use the rainbow flag. You’re not representative of my community and should not be considered the mouthpiece of the LGBT movement on campus.” He stood up, his movements succinct and elegant as always, “As my boyfriend said, ‘go fuck yourselves.’” He took Rae’s hand and put an arm around Finn’s shoulders. They left the room already talking about what wankers everyone in the group was; Rae and Phil trying to cheer Finn up.
As they were leaving the building a poster on the student notice board caught Phil’s eye, but he wanted Finn to see it.

“Hey look at that.” He turned to the board, his eyes looking in the general direction of the notice he wanted Finn to see, but not seeing what he was actually looking at.

“Jazz band looking for a double bassist.” Rae read and pulled one of the phone number tabs off it. “I’d love to go to some jazz club and watch you play.” She grinned and kissed Phil’s cheek. But Finn’s eyes had dropped to the A4 poster with blue, purple and pink stripes.

“Bisexual Alliance.” He mumbled and looked up at Rae and Phil. “This is what I were looking for.”

“Hey look, they’re meeting tonight.” Phil said and Finn grinned.

“D’you wanna go?” Finn asked, his low mood evaporating.

“I’m up for another one of your wild schemes.” Phil grinned and Finn rolled his eyes. “Lead the way.” Finn started to head away from the student rec rooms and towards the doms. Rae gave Phil a look and Phil shrugged; she knew he’d done that deliberately.

“Can’t wait to see you play your double-bass with a band.” Rae teased, “You always say it’s meant to be enjoyed with a band more than solo.” Phil sighed and nodded.

“Yeah I guess I’d better find a place in my timetable for band practice.” He shook his head and they followed Finn.

“Hey I’m Kaybee!” She was tall, black, grinning so welcomingly that she made the sun look dull and had an Irish accent to die for. “Welcome!” The crowd in the common room for the dorm was huge and Finn looked around with a huge grin, Rae even felt a little choked up to see so many people there. Phil grinned happily. “I run the Bisexual Alliance. But I do have to let you know, we do have some people here that aren’t bisexual.”

“Yeah!” Katie called out and came over, “I’m a flat out dyke but I can’t stand that fucking LGBT club.” She hugged Rae.

“Why didn’t you tell me about this club?” Rae asked.

“It’s only me second time girl, I were scoping it first, make sure it were solid.”

“We just came from the LGBT club.” Finn gave them a look that indicated that he was not impressed.

“Yeah, they have some funny, old fashioned views about sexuality and the queer community. I’ve been petitioning the uni to take funding from them and give it to us; I’m considering changing the name to the LGBTQIAP plus alliance.” Kaybee told them. “What do you think?”

“The what?” Katie asked.

“Oh so you got LGBT, which everyone knows stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans.” Kaybee said, “But there’s so much more to the queer community than that. the QIAP stands for queer or questioning. I for intersex. A for asexual. Not for ally, no matter what anyone tells you! And the P stands for pansexual, polysexual and poly relationships.” Finn turned to grin at Rae and Phil.

“We’re in a poly relationship.” Finn told her.
“Well you’re not the only ones here.” Kaybee said and pointed to a group of four girls sitting close together, “They’re in a closed polyamorous relationship.” She pointed at a lad with two girls, “And that’s the other closed poly relationship here. But several of us are in other types of poly relationships. I’m in an open relationship with my boyfriend and girlfriend.” She finished and pointed at some seats, “Come and get to know everyone.” She excused herself and welcomed some other people behind them; clearly people that had been here before.

“There’s so many people here.” Finn said happily. “I had no idea our community was so big.”

The next week Phil was refused membership to the campus feminist club.

“I can’t believe it.” Rae grumbled, “You’re more of a feminist than me.”

“Academically knowing more about something than you will never give me the same lived experiences as you.” He shrugged, “It’s ok for women to want some women only spaces. I’m cool to support women and feminism in any way women want me to. It’s their call.”

“I know.” Rae groaned, “I just really wanted to be part of the feminist club but I don’t wanna spend too much more time away from me boys. So if you guys can’t join I probably won’t bother.”

“I wouldn’t o’ joined anyway.” Finn plonked his feet up on the table and lit up a cigarette. “I’m not a feminist.” Rae and Phil stared at him for a moment.

“I think you been spending too long with the engineers Finn.” Rae said with a surprised expression.

“What’s that s’pose to mean?” He furrowed his brows at her.

“That all the STEM boys hate women and hate feminists.” Rae got her heckles up. Phil put his backpack down and closed the front door; his mouth drawn into a tight line. It wasn’t the first time there’d been an arts versus sciences argument in the house. Finn’s group of acquaintances from his degree were very typical engineer boys and Finn knew it. Unfortunately he was very alone for most of his time at uni; he only had astrophysics with Latisha and he had to make acquaintances in his other classes too because of group work and the like. Sometimes he felt like Rae held him responsible for their bad behaviour.

“What does it matter what they think?” Finn shot back.

“They’re obviously rubbing off on you.” Rae said with a sneer. Phil didn’t want to comment because he didn’t want to make it seem like he was ganging up in Finn.

“Because I decided that being an equalist is more fair than being a feminist?” He rolled his eyes, “Fine whatever.” He looked away from her, “Guess I’m such a fucking engineer. Sorry I’m not all into fucking writing and shit.”

“Yeah. Y’are a fucking engineer!” She spat at him and he just shrugged in response, “I can’t even talk to you when you’re like this.” Rae stormed into the bathroom and slammed the door shut. Finn was instantly remorseful but stubbornly refused to get up and knock on the door to talk to her to apologise. He looked at Phil.
“Can you talk to her?” Finn asked softly.

“I will.” Phil said honestly; they both had a habit of getting on the defensive and attacking when they were grumpy and Phil was always telling them that after an argument. So far he hadn’t been part of a real argument with either of them; he wasn’t quite as temperamental as his two loves, but he had no doubt that eventually he’d argue with one or both of them. That happened in relationships. They heard the shower start and Phil walked toward the lounge where Finn was sitting.

“Ah fuck you’re gonna talk to me first aren’t you?” Finn sighed as Phil sat down next to him.

“Do you remember how Rhys was talking about how the whole ‘I don’t see colour’ attitude is actually super racist?” Over the New Year’s week the gang had been in London, Rhys and Chloe had ended up telling them about the latest dinner party with her parents they’d had to attend; Chloe’s mum claimed to not see colour in people and Chop hadn’t understood why that was so bad.

“Aye, cos it denies a person of colour their heritage, identity, culture and lived experiences.” Finn nodded, “I were paying attention.”

“Right, well the reason it does that is cos it’s usually used by white people and it kinda puts everyone into society’s default.”

“And society’s default is the white straight guy.” Finn nodded. “I get it.”

“So a lot of things like that, where people think they’re saying or doing something good, or equal, are actually based on everyone being the default and starting off in the same equal circumstances. Which we both know is not true.” Finn nodded at Phil’s words. “To be an equalist, rather than a feminist is to dangerously deny the overwhelmingly lower position women are born into all over this planet just by virtue of being assigned female at birth.” Finn sighed and nodded his head. “It’s the gendered equivalent of ‘I don’t see colour.’”

“Right.” Finn sighed again.

“You were wrong about feminism.” Phil said gently, “And sometimes you get very defensive with Rae, and you attack her. When you say things about her writing and the degrees she’s doing at uni, in that tone of voice, with that language, you make her feel like you don’t value or approve of her degree and the work she puts in.”

“Fuck.” Finn lowered his head and felt guilt wash over him.

“In this instance, you denied her her lived experiences by denying the importance of feminism, took the side of a bunch of guys that have given both her and me shit, and derided the degree that both of us are doing too. I understand you have to work with those guys Finn, but I think Rae is expecting more support from you. Sometimes you don’t act like yourself around them.”

“It’s fucking hard Phil. You and Rae have got your little in-club doing the same fucking degrees and I’m stuck by myself with the arsehole squad.”

“How can we make you feel more included?”

“Stop making fun o’ STEM boys, cos I’m one of ‘em.”

“You’re not one of the STEM boys we’re making fun of Finn.” Phil put a hand on Finn’s cheek. “But I’ll make an effort to stop. And I’ll talk to Rae about it too.”
“I feel like I am one of ‘em Phil.” Finn scrunched up his nose in disgust. “Sometimes I know they’re talking shit but sometimes the stuff they say makes sense… like the fucking equalist stuff.”

“That stuff makes sense if you don’t properly understand power structures. We’ve never had to understand power structures because we haven’t been part of any oppressed groups for most of our lives.”

“I feel like being part o’ the queer community should make me understand this shit better.” Finn said, “if someone said to me they was gonna treat everyone with different sexualities as equal, I’d tell them that’s nice in principal, but you’re probably only ever saying shit like that if your sexuality has no chance of being invisible. Hetero, mono sexualities are so pushed on everyone it’s easy to think that you can just treat everyone the same. But when you’re struggling to not be killed cos of your sexuality, to have any sort of legal status for your own relationship, to make it more visible cos no one takes it seriously… yeah fuck that equalist shit, I’m here for queer rights not straight rights. I get it… so why the fuck did I not get it with Rae and feminism?”

“Cos uni is kicking our arses and making us exhausted.” Phil said gently, “Cos you can’t get everything right all the time; mistakes are an inevitability. And cos you’re feeling a little left out and you didn’t talk to us about it.”

“Cos it’s fucking stupid.” Finn sighed.

“No it’s not.” Phil took Finn into his arms, “We miss you like crazy at those lectures. We both wish you were there.” Finn closed his eyes and listened to Phil’s heartbeat.

“I was kinda an arse to Rae just then.” Finn said morosely.

“Yeah, but she’s not always nice about those engineering lads.” Phil conceded, “And neither am I.”

“Aye but they are dicks.” Finn acknowledged. “I should say more when they’re being dicks. It’s just that it’s hard enough getting decent grades without having to fight the people I’m doing projects with as well, and you and Rae can’t talk through the course work with me and… I’ve only got so much in the tank. I just don’t have the energy to deal with them too.” Finn explained, “And I know you both understand it, it’s just sometimes it feels like you don’t…”

“Maybe sometimes it’s actually that you don’t understand it.” Phil looked him in the eye, “You can be very hard on yourself Finn, and I know you expect yourself to always get it right. It’s ok to have no energy to fight those guys too.”

“They think you and Rae are together. They think I’m a straight guy who just shares a house with you.” Finn lowered his eyes, “They’re so homophobic and I am so ashamed that I haven’t said anything to correct their mistake. But… I just need to get through this course, it’s so fucking hard, and I’m depending on them for the group work and…”

“Finn it’s ok.” Phil said, “It’s ok for you to choose the best and safest option for yourself.” Phil held Finn in silence for a while.

“Thanks.” Finn whispered. He sat up and wiped his nose. “Right I gotta go apologise to Rae.”

“I’ll do the talking about the not hacking on STEM boys anymore alright?”

“No.” Finn shook his head, “You two go for it. They’re turds, make as much fun as you want.”

“You’re not like them.” Phil said immutably, “You loving engineering and being good at sciences
“Thanks Phil.” Finn kissed him and got up, knocking on the door he called out Rae’s name, “Can we talk?” He was met with silence and he put his forehead on the door, he knew it would be unlocked and he could just open it up and go in, but he wanted for her to invite him in. “I’ve reconsidered; I’m definitely a feminist.” She opened the door, dripping wet and looked at him and then over to Phil sitting on the lounge.

“Sorry I called you an engineer like it were an insult.’ She said instantly; obviously very upset with herself.

“Nah it’s alright; we was both pretty shit just then. Me a lot more than you though.” He lowered his eyes in penance, “I’m sorry Rae. Can you forgive me?”

“You’d have to do a lot worse than that for me to not forgive you.” She looked over at Phil, “‘C’mon you two, shower with me?” Finn’s shirt was on the floor before she’d finished the question.

Phil was nothing if not a man who worked hard at everything that mattered to him. To stop Finn from feeling left out he started up their gym training again, for all three of them; Finn was qualified as a trainer, and Phil asked him to take he and Rae on as free clients, this got Finn thinking about taking on one or two paying clients.

He also started looking at amateur football clubs he and Finn could join, getting the two of them out and doing a sport they loved together.

When Rae saw that the uni radio broadcasting team needed a DJ team for a weekly music show and she had balked at doing it because that would leave Phil out, he’d finally joined that jazz band and moved their rehearsal times to coincide with the show, freeing Rae and Finn up to do it guilt free.

The last piece of the puzzle for Finn inclusion was he and Rae starting to learn the basics of Finn’s degrees; she took the sound engineering side and he took the stage technician side. Learning the basics meant that they knew just enough for Finn to have a sounding board with his thoughts other than the dickheads in his course.

In the space of a month he’d carved out time for Finn and himself, time for Finn and Rae and time for all three of them; each doing things they loved together other than sex, lazing about the house nakedly and going to the LGBTQIAP+ alliance meetings; Kaybee had renamed the club and the trio were getting very into queer activism.

Rae had also decided that they all needed some time alone, so she joined the feminist club; it met when the boys were at football training. Phil had his music practice and Finn volunteered at the uni theatre being the backstage gopher. The gopher was the person who had to ‘go for’ things. He spent rehearsals running around helping everyone. He loved it. He went to that during Rae and Phil’s writing sessions.

Rae had gotten a small part in the production of ‘King Lear’ Phil was in, and Finn had volunteered for tech, so they had those rehearsals to do as well as full time uni, keeping up to date with their friends lives and the pressures of parents wanting more phone calls.
They juggled, they switched and moved things and pissed people off with rearranging times, but they managed to get their timetables matching up nicely.

It had worked and the imbalance that had been slowly creeping into their relationship was righted. And after all the work Rae and Finn had put into their relationship when they were a duo, they noticed Phil’s effort and deeply appreciated it because he obviously felt relationships took work too and they matched him every step of the way.

Finn’s lack of confidence in his own intelligence had taken a beating in this course, but finally getting his first High Distinction had helped remind him that he could do it. Rae and Phil were getting plenty of High Distinctions, Rae’s mixed in with a few Distinctions, and Phil of course never dropping below the very high 90s percentage for anything he did was always getting High Distinctions and nothing else. Finn had been getting credits and the occasional Distinction, but this High Distinction had been on a particularly difficult subject, and the lecturer had told him that he was the only one to get the HD. It was a much needed confidence boost.

He looked at the comments one final time before putting the assignment in his backpack and focussing on the group work they had to do.

“You sort out the references.” Ryan said to James.

“I fucking hate referencing.” James grumbled.

“Stop being a whiny little poof.” Ryan shot back and Finn furrowed his brows while everyone laughed, James grumbling more.

“Keep whining James, just makes me wonder if you’re the mop or the bucket.” Zac laughed.

“Definitely bucket.” Ryan laughed.

“Actually you’re applying heteronormativity in a misogynistic way to gay relationships.” Finn suddenly said, “There’s often no mop or bucket, both partners are often both.” He shook his head, “It’s not like how it is with men and women, stop trying to make it that way.”

“How the fuck would you know?” Ryan asked with a sneer.

“Aye, you a faggot?” James added, keen to get the focus off himself.

“Aye.” Finn answered defiantly. “Well bisexual,” He corrected, “But it’s the same fucking thing to you lot innit?” He looked at them with as much disgust as they were looking at him with now, “I don’t just live with Rae and Phil; they’re me girlfriend and boyfriend. I fuck ‘em both.” He shrugged, “Now can we get back to work, but without the homophobic slurs yeah?”

The room was noticeably colder, and Mick, sitting next to him tried to subtly move his chair away.

“The fuck you doing that for?” Finn asked, “Think I’m gonna try and fuck you?” They all stared at him silently and Finn rolled his eyes. “I’m in a committed relationship.” Finn shook his head, “And none you lot appeal to me anyway, so get over your fucking selves.” Finn picked up the assignment outline and looked down at it. James, on the other side of him also moved his chair away and Finn slammed the paper back down on the table. “You know what, us fags aren’t as predatory towards other men as you lot are towards women, so you can unclench now.” He spat,
“and we also got better taste and better sense than to go after people who obviously aren’t interested. Something you straight fuckers could learn from us.” He glared at them all in turn, “Your arseholes are safe, can we do the fucking work?”

Two day later he was talking to his lecturer.

“Ryan asked to have you taken out of the group.”

“It’s cos I came out.” Finn answered with a defiant glare. The lecturer made an exhausted tone in the back of his throat that indicated he had expected something like this to happen.

“Homophobia, misogyny and racism are the three poisons of the STEM world.” He shook his head. “I’ll tell them you have to stay.”

“Can I just do the work by myself?” Finn asked.

“It’s a lot of work.”

“I’ll manage.” Finn retorted. The lecturer considered for a moment.

“Tell you what, get through this assignment with this group, because it’s good for you to learn how to deal with all sorts of people for work.”

“I shouldn’t have to deal with people whose opinions literally threaten the lives of people like me.”

“Agreed. And in a perfect world you wouldn’t have to, but this is this world, and I have a feeling you can handle it.” Finn sucked his teeth angrily, “Get through this one, it’s the last one for this class. And next semester when you do the 102 subject, I’ll assign you to a better group. There’s a couple of people struggling with this kind of thing, and I think you’ll actually do amazing work together.” Finn considered this for a moment and nodded his head.

“Alright.”

“I’ll also remind those lads that homophobia is against university policy and they can be expelled for it.” Finn’s eyes opened wide for a minute; if they didn’t already hate him they would after this.

“Thanks.” He said softly and turned to leave.

“I’m gay by the way.” The lecturer called after him and Finn turned. “You’re not alone. You’ll get through this.”

“Thanks.” Finn said, actually meaning it this time.

It turned out that most people assumed that Rae and Phil were dating and that Finn just lived with them; this was because Rae and Phil went to classes together so a lot more people saw them holding hands than the few people who had seen all three of them lunching together out near the duck pond; every sunny day saw them out there, every cold and rainy day saw them sitting in the cafeteria. They preferred outside because it was harder to canoodle at the table in the cafeteria. The three of them shared their history of theatre class because it covered theatre styles and genres, technical advances made by various theatre genres and typical staging styles for various styles of
theatre; they went to lectures together, but Finn had been forced to pick a different tutorial to Rae and Phil in the 101 class. Now that the second semester had begun Finn had been able to choose the same tutorial as them in the 102 class. Every class had at least two hours of lecture and one hour of tutorial a week and some had practical time or time in the theatre, but many had more depending on how much of the learning was hands on or required guidance, and how much of it was reading and research. And none of that included the hours spent reading, researching and doing assignments. This class had a three hour lecture and a 90 minute tutorial with a ten minute break in the middle. The tutorials typically had no more than ten to twelve students in them, whereas a lecture could have hundreds. Finn preferred the tutorials; they looked at things more in depth, and he very much preferred the tutorial for theatre history with Rae and Phil there.

Finn had been almost late for his first tutorial with Rae and Phil because he’d lost track of time working with his new group for engineering; a group comprising of himself, two white women, an openly trans woman, a black man and a gay man of Indonesian heritage; they had joked they were the outcasts of STEM. They were brilliant. There were three groups of 6 people that weren’t straight white boys in a class of over 200. The lecturer had tried to integrate them at first; tried to bring diversity into every group, but bullying and harassment had been rife and in the end he’d put them in 3 group of six to keep them safe. They were happier there, but the lecturer worried about how to make the STEM subjects more inclusive and welcoming to everyone even more now.

“How’d it go with your new group?” Phil asked as Finn sat down next to Rae.

“Great.” Finn answered, “I think I’ll get along much better with this group.”

There was no chance for any more chit chat; their tutor began the tute.

Forty minutes later, Finn was shaking his hand from taking so many notes and they were having a ten minute break. Rae had noticed a very pretty girl eying Finn throughout the tute and had to grin at how jealous she used to get at girls looking at Finn. She saw girls, and sometimes boys and other genders looking at both of her lads very often at uni. The old saying that university was a time for exploration seemed to be very true; all of the friends she’d made had had multiple sexual partners in the space of just over 6 months and all the bathrooms and student common rooms had both free condoms and 50p condom vending machines; even their orientation week info packs had had a packet of condoms in it.

“‘Ere Finn,” The girl said as she sidled over to him. Her name was Rachel, but she couldn’t be more opposite to Rae. “What’s it like living with them two?” She asked, “I mean do you hear them in bed together?” The tutor ate an apple and read through some notes as the class stretched and drank water and chatted, but everyone was all ears when it came to gossip. Except for their tutor; her eyes were on her notes. No one had ever asked Rae or Phil about their relationship, so they’d never clarified that they were not in fact a duo.

“Well I should fucking hope so since I share the bed with them.” There was a silence and the tutor looked up. Finn had just outing them all, but no one was really sure what he had outing them as.

“What does that even mean?” Charlotte asked confused.

“We’re all together.” Finn answered; he was 100% done with people’s shitty assumptions after what he’d had to deal with in engineering. Plus Elsa’s excellent teaching had made their little trio the undisputed champions of this class; they already knew everything they were covering in this class. So Finn’s confidence was very high.

“Polyamory?” The tutor asked, clearly intrigued.
“Aye.” Rae answered.

“Jesus.” Rachel answered, “That’s fucking intense.” She leaned back on her chair and Finn looked around at everyone staring at them.

“Not really.” He answered drily and Rae was struck by how much he had sounded like Phil when he used that tone.

“Yeah it is.” Josh said almost angrily, “You can’t just drop shit like that!”

“Why can’t I?” Finn snapped and the tutor sat forward, ready to intervene if needed.

“It’s not really the proper way to come out.” Rachel answered, “I mean… is it even called coming out for something like this?” Finn saw Phil roll his eyes and knew that his boy was about to get rolling in a minute.

“Oh, and how’s the proper way to do it?” Rae asked.

“You could have a little more consideration for everyone around you.” Ross had moved his chair away from Phil, and Charlotte, sitting beside Ross, gave him a dirty look for doing it.

“Why should I have more consideration for you?” Finn asked, “You homophobic?”

“No!” Ross answered, “You can do whatever you want I just don’t want anything to do with it. Y’know, I don’t wanna have it shoved down me throat.” A couple of people made noises of agreement.

“Right, and like the whole heterosexual thing isn’t shoved down everyone’s throat.” Finn replied dismissively.

“And so we’re shit for not coming out the way you want, but we’re also shit for coming out cos now it’s apparently down your throat, just because some people in the same room as you aren’t straight.” Rae added. “Alright.” She used the same dismissive tone as Finn.

“That’s n-”

“Why do we even have to come out?” Phil said softly, but as always, years of theatre training made his voice carry. Finn started to grin, because he knew that Phil was about to reign intellectual fire on everyone.

“What?” Ross asked incredulously, there were sounds of agreement again.

“What, you think we owe you something?” Phil asked pointedly. “When did you come out?”

“Well I don’t have to Phil; I’m straight.”

“Right, and straight’s the default, we all assume everyone’s straight.” Phil said. “And everyone who isn’t, is under the microscope. But you know what, until you have to come out, you can fuck right off. Cos if your sexuality doesn’t require coming out, neither should mine.” The tutor watched Phil, her head cocked to one side.

“Aye, who we fuck’s got nothing to do with you.” Finn added.

“Could you imagine it Ross?” Phil said, “Living your whole life with this secret inside of you until one day you can’t take it anymore, or you have no choice but to tell your family. So you go into the lounge room and you tell them outright, ‘mum, dad, I’m straight.’” He left that hanging in the
air for a minute, and as soon as he noticed someone about to retort he spoke over them, “Your voice wavers with fear, cos you know what’s coming. But you say it again, this time a little louder; ‘I’m straight.’ And your mum starts crying and your dad looks at you like you’re the maggots munching down on a piece o’ shit.” Rae kept her eyes on him; she loved Phil at full tilt. “You can tell they’re gonna try to pretend you never said it, try to make you invisible, so you yell ‘I’m a breeder, a butch boy, a macho man. I’m a titty-grabbing, arse-slapping, cunt-fucking hetero, dad, and there’s nothing you can do about it!’” Finn started to chuckle. “So your dad thumps you,” Finn’s chuckle died in his throat as he thought about Phil’s father trying to hit him, about all the beatings Tom got from his father, “he tries to beat the breeder outta you and tells you you’re not his son, you fucking stiff-upper-lipped tough-guy. And your mum tries to pray the straight away and tells you to just get married to the right fucking person and to live a lie… keep who you are private, cos god fucking forbid you upset someone for being who you fucking are.”

“Jesus Phil, there’s no need to-” Ross tried to say.

“Oh what? Did I make you uncomfortable by calling your shit out? By making you think about what it is you’re actually doing here?” He asked pointedly, “God I’m so fucking sorry Ross. I’m so sorry you got to feel uncomfortable for a minute, while the Nancy-boy has a rant. How horrible for you that this has happened… That you’ve been made to think for one lousy minute, cos nothing else is gonna happen to you from this rant. Cos what actually happens when you say you’re straight is everyone accepts that, they all say ‘so’s everyone else’ even when we’re not.” Phil was angry, and Rae and Finn were too now. Before it had been an annoyance, but Phil had put everything very clearly into perspective for them, they shouldn’t have to go through this every damn time. “But the response we get when we say we’re not straight is having our identities questioned, erased, degraded. Or violence, beatings, assault. Or people wanting all the pornographic details of our lives, wanting explanations, reasons and proof. Or disownment, eviction and threats. Assumptions, harassment, rape, death… but your discomfit is so fucking important, right?” He let the question hang for a minute, “Fuck you.” He said dismissively, “You moved your fucking chair away from me cos you’re scared you’re gonna catch the gay…? People might think you’re a faggot sitting next to me right? Or are you scared that you’re just too damn attractive for me to resist?” Phil actually laughed, “How about you move your straight-arse over to the other side o’ the room? We’ll both be more comfortable with that.”

“I think I’m in love with you Phil!” Charlotte laughed. There was some agreement with about half of the class siding with Phil and the other half either siding with Ross or thinking Phil had gone too hard on him. But the truth was that since Phil and Finn and Rae had been together, on average they had had some sort of issue from other people because of their relationship every single day; everything from violence, to threats of violence, to legal issues, to name calling, bullying, harassing, to disapproval, to assumptions about their relationship and how it worked and who fucked who and how open the relationship must be, to invalidation, people saying it was a passing phase, that they were young and one day they’d grow up and settle down, to the endless barrage of questions and curiosity demanding that they explain themselves and their relationship, often in pornographic detail. They were asked questions that no one would ask straight couples, from people who weren’t close enough to them to even think of asking. Living under the dictatorship of mono-heteronormativity was exhausting and at the end of it all you got accused of shoving your non mono-hetero status down their throats if you merely attempted to live true to yourself. Phil was a patient man, much like Finn in that regard, but when he was done with people’s shit, you knew about it.

“I think we’ll move on to queer representations in theatre.” The tutor said with a big grin and everyone turned their eyes to her, “We’ll finish up with Stanislavsky today and start it next week.” That marked the end of the break. Ross didn’t move his seat, but the gap between he and Phil stayed obviously wide, so Phil deliberately leaned towards Ross, filling in the space and making
Rae and Finn snigger in between deep discussions on method acting in the theatre.

Rae dropped her jacket onto one of the coat hooks Finn had put up by the front door and heard them laughing and fooling around in the shower. They would have just finished their football match; they chose to jog home and shower rather than use the change rooms at the uni. The door to the bathroom was open, as it almost always was and she looked in and saw them both leaning against the wall in the shower, facing each other and chatting animatedly. Phil had a bruised cheek and Finn had blood pouring out of his knee.

“Good match?” She asked.

“Aye!”

“Yeah!” They replied at the same time, “I got a fucking goal!” Phil said excitedly.

“And how’d you get the bruise on your cheek?” Rae asked and Phil nodded at Finn.

“This fucked jumping on me to celebrate me getting the goal.” Phil answered with a grin. Finn gave a fake demure look and then laughed. “Course, he got two goals.” Phil added.

“We won three nil.” Finn told her proudly.

“And how’d you get the knee scrape?” Rae asked.

“Might have gotten it sliding along the grass when I celebrated me first goal.” He turned so that she could see his other bloodied knee. She rolled her eyes at them as they laughed.

“Room for one more?” Rae asked.

“Of course.” Phil answered and Finn started to pull her in.

“Let me get me gear off Finn!” She laughed and they waited for her to get undressed and join them before continuing the conversation.

“How was your feminist stuff?” Finn asked.

“Good!” Rae said happily; she’d been really enjoying the club, and Giselle, the woman that organised everything was really inspirational. “Giselle says that being fat isn’t a bad thing and we need to change our way of thinking. She said that trying to force thinness on women wasn’t a health thing, it’s an obedience thing.” Rae said and Phil nodded his head to show he understood, “She also says a lot of money has been made off of making women hate their bodies.” She grinned at Phil, “Reminded me o’ what you said in Lincoln. About how you look forward to advertisers realising men have money and fragile self-estees that can be manipulated too.”

“Oh I think they have, how else can they possibly get so many car sales?” Phil laughed.

“Oh aye, you got a tiny tiny dick, here have nice new, big, shiny car.” Finn laughed.

“Eventually they’ll probably turn advertising cars to men into being all about prestige and power.” Phil sighed, “I prefer the eroding our self-esteem method. Makes me feel more equal with the ladies.” They laughed and Rae gave Phil a meaningful look that took him a moment to understand. “You know,” he changed the topic and tried to pick up what he thought Rae was
trying to tell him with that look, “you two have really done so much for me by telling me all about your relationship before I was with you both.” He said and Rae’s eyes said he was on the right track, “about how you got together, your breakups and why they happened and how you fixed it… by telling me why you broke up the first time I can fully understand and appreciate how amazing it is for Rae to be standing naked in front of us.” He reached out and put a hand on her hip. “It’s been so important and vital to me to hear all of your shared past.” Phil said and looked at Finn, “Thank you.” Finn shrugged with a big grin.

“You’re part of us, course you gotta know this stuff.” Finn told him.

“Right.” Phil nodded his head and looked back at Rae. “So I think it’s time Rae and I tell you what happened in Lincoln.”

“I swore to both of you I wouldn’t ask.” Finn shook his head.

“This isn’t you asking, this is us wanting to tell you.” Rae answered.

“You know at first, when it was just a single encounter with Rae that I’d get to have, I wanted to keep it to myself, to keep it in a private place in my heart.” Phil said, “But it’s not just a few nights I get spend with her and you two are together and I’m alone anymore.” He shook his head happily, obviously still having moments when he couldn’t believe his luck, “We’re together now, and Finn, you’re part of us, of what Rae and I had for that time in Lincoln; this is part of our shared history.” Finn considered this for a moment.

“I’ll listen if you wanna tell, but you don’t have’ta and I’m not asking; I will keep my word to both of you.” He answered.

“Right well, do you wanna do it or will I?” Rae asked Phil.

“Well I will remember every tiny minutiae of every single minute,” Phil considered, “And you will tell it with a fire, a passion and emotion that it deserves…”

“So both of us?” Rae asked and Phil nodded. “Ok well… I’ll begin.” She took a deep breath. “So just after I touched your hand through the window and the bus had driven off, I became very aware that Phil was next to me, and I knew you’d’ve told him to do the dinner in Lincoln even though we’d argued. I was feeling really hurt and angry but I tried to hide it and Phil…”

“I could tell you weren’t feeling very happy.” Phil grinned at her, “And Finn had told me anyway. Made me promise to keep your mind off him. So I tried to cheer her up by playing thumb wars, cos that’s what Kels and I used to do when we were very hungry when we little.”

Finn listened to their story, wondering how he would feel knowing how far Rae and Phil did or didn’t go at a time when Rae and Finn were supposed to be monogamous.

He found that he was moved by Phil’s heartache and Rae’s sacrifice of choosing one man she loved over another, and the intimacy they’d shared had been right for them at that moment and he was happy for them. He was glad he knew this part of their shared history now, because it meant that there really weren’t any secrets between them anymore.
‘Never Tear us Apart’ by Allday

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2hyhyp7K3s

We could live for a thousand years and if I hurt you I’ll make wine from your tears…

Finn’s 20th birthday was accompanied by the obligatory journey back to Stamford for family get togethers and gift giving. His birthday was on a Sunday so they drove down the Saturday afternoon before and would leave on Monday to avoid the three hour journey on his birthday.

“Fuck this bed is cramped!” Finn laughed as they all woke up on Sunday morning. Finn’s old queen sized bed was nothing in comparison to their huge custom built bed which was larger than a king sized bed.

“I never realised how small it were.” Rae was practically falling off the edge of the bed, But Finn was spooning her tightly and Phil was spooning him, so she was safe from falling out.

“Happy birthday Mr Nelson.” Phil grinned and kissed the back of his neck. “You’re no longer a teenager.”

“Oh god.” Finn moaned, “Whatever will I do?” They started to laugh, “’Ere, do it make me a deviant that I’m not a teenager and I’m shagging two teens.”

“Not really in this instance.” Rae chuckled.

“But we can call you a deviant if you’d like.” Phil added, “I mean there’s plenty o’ things we could call you a deviant for that have got nothing to do with the massive age difference in our relationship!” Finn was only 6 months older than Phil and 7 months older than Rae, but because of the way the British school year ran, the dates of their births put him in the grade above them at school; had he not been forced to repeat a year that is

“I’m gonna show you just how fucking deviant I can be at the club.” Finn shot back and got two very appreciative groans in reply. They were waiting until the midterm break in June to go to the sex show club for Finn’s birthday; it was bad enough playing hooky from uni tomorrow for the drive back, when end of year exams were starting to loom over them without having a kinky sex hangover as well.

“You could give us a little taster right now if you wanted.” Rae said with an innocently pleading tone.

Downstairs Gary was sitting at the kitchen table alone, reading his newspaper and enjoying the early morning quiet.

There was a bang, a loud laugh and few minutes later a rhythmic creaking that made the light fixtures sway. He looked up at the ceiling, sighed and shook his head. Rolling his eyes he looked
back down at his paper and tried to tune out the growing moans.

Chloe and Rhys had invited them and Tom, Archie, Chop, Danny and Grace over to lunch for Finn’s birthday, and they had two sets of parents for the dinner. The first outing had been brilliant with everyone in the gang on fire even though they all missed Izzy; but she telephoned during the lunch to say hello and wish Finn a happy birthday.

The second outing had been tolerable. Aiesha cried and screamed and babbled and talked and didn’t shut up for the entire dinner, cementing Rae’s decision to never ever have children. Although Rae had nearly cried when Aiesha didn’t recognise her at first, and everyone had agreed to try and see each other more; but with work and university, it was going to be a hard promise to keep. Not wanting kids was one thing, wanting to be close with her sister was another and Rae at the very least was going to try to call more often.

Rae and Phil had put in together to buy Finn an electric green bass guitar that he had instantly fallen in love with. Since Phil had started teaching him bits of cello and double bass, Finn had been occasionally mentioning that he might get himself a bass guitar one day. They also got him some much needed clothes.

Finn felt like he was supposed to have some moment of feeling like he was grown up now that he was in his 20s. But he didn’t. He just kept on feeling the same; in love, stressed out of his brains at uni, but overall unbelievably happy.

They drove past Phil’s parents’ house and Phil found that the pain was manageable; he was healing. He debated over whether to leave his phone number in the post box, but he remembered his lawyer saying that they had to have his address. They had his PO Box. They knew how to contact him. They just didn’t.

They headed back to uni after their nice two night break in Stamford and knew they’d have to try catch up with the missed day of uni while simultaneously planning for their 1st anniversary on the 15th of May. Not only that, they had to get ahead with their homework so they didn’t have anything to do for the weekend of their anniversary.

“Right.” Rae said to them before they’d even had chance to put their bags down. “For our anniversary; Finn you’re in charge of organising food. Phil, you’re in charge of organising entertainment. And I am in charge of the gift we’re giving ourselves.”

“Aye I know!” Finn laughed and collapsed onto the lounge; they had decided that months ago.
“Just making sure we’re all organised.” She sat down next to him and Phil went to the kitchen to put on a pot of tea. “It’ll be our first anniversary together. And I might be a little excited.” “Really?” Phil teased from the kitchen; Rae had been mentioning and planning her present for months, and in only a few days she got to show them what she’d gotten for the three of them. “I would never have guessed.”

“I have been keeping it under wraps real well haven’t I?” Rae refused to be teased and simply grinned.

“I know it’s my night to cook dinner, but can I just say pizza?” Finn asked.

“Money Finn!” Rae replied.

“Valid point.” Finn nodded his head, “But consider my rebuttal: exhausted laziness.”

“What’s everyone having?” Phil sighed and picked up the phone.

Saturday morning dawned, streaming sunshine in on them sleeping, tangled together in the bed. Rae opened her eyes first to see Phil facing her, the sun across his naked body, Finn’s arm draped over his waist. She propped her head up on her hand and took in Finn’s face, smooshed against Phil’s upper back. She liked that the boys took it in turns for who slept in the middle. A lot of people assumed that either she slept in the middle or that they all took it in turns, but Rae always got up to pee in the middle of the night and sleeping in the middle is bad when you wake up with a bursting bladder. Plus she’d probably die of heat exhaustion being between two boys radiating heat like boys do. She looked down at Finn’s hand, the fingers touching her stomach where it met the bed as she laid on her side facing them. Both boys always made sure they were touching her at night time as much as possible. When Finn was in the middle, Phil often snuck his feet under Finn’s and rubbed his toes on hers, or he would reach his arm under Finn’s head, becoming his pillow, and stroke her face gently. Finn was the same, but his favourite thing to do when Phil was in the middle was to drape his arm over Phil’s waist and touch her stomach, back or hip, depending on how she was lying.

She saw Finn stir and wake up. Usually when one of the boys woke up everyone woke up because the boys were so noisy when they woke up. Rae was quiet as a mouse when she woke up and never woke them up. Finn and Rae had a moment when their eyes met and they smiled happily, Phil stirring between them.

“Happy anniversary.” She said as soon as his eyes were opened. “It’s been a year since that party at your place Phil.” She stroked his face and then Finn’s. “We had an amazing 4 day weekend to celebrate the beginning of this relationship. We’ve only got 2 days to celebrate the fact that we’ve been together for a whole year…”

“So we better get started hey?” Finn asked with a suggestive grin. They were all morning erections, full bladders and stinky breaths. But that had never stopped them in the past and it didn’t stop them now. They had made love slowly and intimately, all clinging to each other whispering their love to each other, taking the time to let the feelings of happiness, contentment and love flow between them. They had become quite adept at making love together, in taking turns to stare into each other’s eyes, in whispering to two people the words caressing skin to goose bumps, in creating intimacy, and feeling like their souls had become one when their foreheads touched. A year of fighting the world for this relationship had not made it feel any less right.
After the lovemaking in the bed, and then the love making in the shower, Rae had sent the two boys on a morning run; they enjoyed running a lot more than her. She went at most three times a week. They both went for a run daily. They had wanted to skip it today, but she had a present to set up and when she told them to take at least an hour, they understood that.

She had swung into action the minute they were gone, preparing everything and asking her friend Katie to bring the present over to their apartment. She had barely gotten a chance to leave before they were back.

She was waiting for them at the door. She looked them up and down, panting and covered in sweat.

“Went hard?” She asked them.

“Might’ve gotten a bit competitive.” Finn admitted.

“A little.” Phil agreed demurely.

“Right well you both have to close your eyes and I’ll lead you to the bathroom. Get you cleaned up afore we do the pressie.” They both grumbled in response, wanting to see the present but Rae gave them an unimpressed look and they both closed their eyes. She led them to the bathroom and sat on the close-lidded toilet while they took a shower; she knew if she got in there with them they’d take forever to get out.

Eventually the two boys were done and the three of them stood standing looking into the study area where the present sat atop their cleaned up study desk.

“It’s a Christmas tree.” Finn said trying to sound more excited and less confused than he was. It was a gangly looking little pine tree, less than a metre tall.

“Norwegian Spruce.” Phil said and Finn turned his eyes to him.

“I s’pose you know all about them?”

“I know that they’re some of the longest living trees in the world.” He answered, “The individual trunks will die but the root systems live for thousands of years and put up new trunks when one dies off. It’s theorised that in the right conditions they might live indefinitely.”

“Immortal trees?” Finn started to sound a lot more interested now. Rae watched her lads figuring out the present.

“There’s quite a few species of trees that live for tens of thousands of years that we know of.” Phil answered, “But the Spruce is the hardiest of them and least endangered of them. It takes a lot to kill a Spruce.” And that was when he got it.

“So on the table,” Rae said softly, “You might’ve noticed three sheets of paper. One in blue for Finn, one in purple for Phil, and one in green for me.” She had given them each their favourite colour. “I wanted us to write on one side what we love about our relationship and on the other side where we see us going, what our hopes and dreams are for the future of our relationship.” She explained, “It’s safe, biodegradable paper,” She continued and then pointed out the massive empty pot on the floor. “I thought we could take these descriptions of our present and future relationship, our hopes and dreams and bury them, maybe with a lock of each of our hair in the pot.” She was hoping that they’d think this was as awesome an idea as she did. “This tree geminated on the 15th of May a year ago. This little tree came into existence the same day our relationship did. I made
sure of it.” And Finn got exactly where she was going now. Both Finn and Phil were grinning at her happily. “So I figured, on our first year anniversary, we could pot this little tree in this pot, with these wishes for our love and it could grow strong with our love and dreams for the future and represent our love. And it’d last beyond our lifetimes… And when we finally buy a place of our own, we could plant it in the backyard, and watch it grow huge…” She looked at the little tree, still in its infancy. “It looks so little and fragile now, but it can grow to over a hundred feet tall and live for thousands of years, it can live under the toughest of conditions, and just when you think it’s done and dead, it’ll send up another tree and live on.”

“Forever.” Finn said, “It’ll live on forever.”

“Immortal trees.” Phil added with a grin. “This is perfect. Thank you.”

“Aye.” Finn agreed. “I love this.” They both embraced her and kissed her deeply, Rae getting quite emotional.

“I got rollers for the pot so it’s easy to move, cos it’s gonna be right heavy when it’s filled with soil.” Rae said as they headed over to the table.

“It does make the house smell nice.” Phil touched its needle like leaves. “I love everything about this Rae.” Phil said happily, “It’s just such a beautiful idea… so poetic.” He looked at this tree that was going to grow for thousands of years and part of its growth was going to be from their hopes and dreams and their hair; they were going to be inside of this tree.

“I also got us a tree seed ashes urn. I had to get it specially made to take three sets of ashes, but…” She took it out of a bag beside the table. “It’s got another Spruce seed in it. I figured we’d get someone to bury this for us, once all three of us were dead and had put our ashes in the urn. We could put it near this one, so that it marked the beginning and ending of us together on this planet.” She touched the needles of the Spruce, “And then this guy could have a little friend too, when the second one’s buried.”

“Life will come from us.” Phil said as he took the biodegradable cardboard urn from her.

“This is so… by getting that urn Rae, you’ve told us that you full expect us to last a lifetime.” Finn said emotionally.

“I expect us to last an eternity of lifetimes.” Rae answered simply. There was more hugging and kisses and even a few emotional sniffles before they settled in to write on their paper.

“It almost feels like a crime to write on this paper, it’s beautiful.” Phil said.

“It’s hand made.” Rae agreed. “I had to buy a dozen of each colour, so you each have more sheets. But I figured when we put it in the ground we might want to add some more wishes and dreams.”

“We could also put our final words to each other wrapped around the urn.” Finn felt teary just thinking about it, but there was something so beautiful about the idea of their ashes mingling together and then bringing forth life for a tree that would consume them and live almost forever with them inside of it.

They wrote in silence, each pouring their hearts and souls out onto their pieces of paper. When they read them back to each other they were not at all surprised to hear that they shared a lot of the same hopes and dreams for their relationship.

They started to poor soil into the huge pot, already set up with a water base and on the wheels for
“So we need a house with a huge back yard for this little guy…” He touched the Spruce’s leaves, “And a big enough ensuite for a bath that’ll fit all three of us.” Finn said, “And a swimming pool…”

“Indoor and heated.” Rae added.

“Using solar power.” Phil said. “And grey water recycling and…” He stopped himself and realised they’d need to build their home from scratch. They grinned at him, knowing his mind was working over what else he wanted.

“And what else?” Finn asked.

“A library.” Rae said and Phil nodded emphatically.

“And a music room.” Finn said which garnered nods from both Rae and Phil.

“With enough room for a grand piano.” Phil mused.

“Right…” Finn said shaking his head, “So one of you two better get famous so we can afford all ‘o this!” Finn laughed.

“I think we might have to accept that we might not be able to get all of it in our first home… if we ever get it all!” Rae chuckled, “so we shouldn’t plant the tree until we know it’s our forever home.” Rae added.

“Oh aye.” Finn replied. As they talked about their perfect home and how they’d ever afford it, Phil appreciated it more and more how they forgot or just didn’t realise how rich he was going to be once November of 2000 came around and he turned 21. Kelsey turned 21 on the 30th of May, just 15 days from now; soon all of her financial woes would be sorted out. And in 2000, he’d be able to buy or build his partners pretty much any house they wanted. But they kept forgetting that and trying to plan his savings to last a little longer, and fretting about getting work. He meant a lot more to them than just a trust fund, so much so that they had never even looked to see how much money he had in there; even though they had had plenty of opportunities to do so. Phil was apprehensive about getting the money; he didn’t want to suddenly turn into his father and become obsessed with money, he was already the main financial planner in the house because he was better at saving and managing money. He fretted that he would become obsessed with making more money, with protecting and hoarding wealth like his parents had been. He’d talk to them about it later, closer to his 21st birthday; now was not the time to be worrying.

“And a kinky sex room.” Rae was saying.

“Like a dungeon!” Finn laughed. “Under the house…”

“I always imagined it more like an attic.” Rae said, “With windows that no one could see through, so we could get a breeze for when it gets very sweaty.” Finn laughed, “And I could tie you both up and watch a thunderstorm up there, time the cracks of my cane to the thunder.”

“Oh you’re so romantic!” Finn teased. “I’m sold! Our kinky sex dungeon shall be in the attic!”

“Harder to sound proof it up there.” Phil said with a serious tone, and a teasing expression.

“I’m sure I’ll figure something out.” Finn said, expecting to be the one to build it for them; he had good woodworking skills. “We just have to buy a house with a big attic and I’ll make it something
beautiful for us.”

“Oh we’re gonna have to make some real dosh!” Rae laughed, again worrying about money.

“Well you got Phil here,” Finn said and Phil looked up from looking at his piece of paper and wondered if Finn had remembered the trust fund, “He’s gonna be a famous actor and win all the awards… so that’s gonna help. And you girl, you’re gonna be a famous writer, and get all your books made into movies and stuff. So that’ll help.”

“And what about you Mr Nelson?” Rae asked.

“I don’t think I can get world famous as a radio DJ and part time theatre techie… maybe I can win an Oscar for sound engineering an independent movie in me spare time for free that goes on to be a runaway success?” He laughed, “Either way, I’ll have an income too… we’ll all be doing things we love so… fuck it we can afford this perfect house we’re dreaming off!” He said immutably, “We’re just gonna have to be patient and work for it. And Phil’s gonna have to keep us saving our pounds!” He laughed. Rae and Phil laughed with him, Phil the longest.

Once the soil was halfway up the pot Rae took the scissors and cut a few strands of hair from all three of them. She tied them together and then cut a few more; making 3 little knots of their hair, one for each piece of paper.

“Hair takes a really long time to break down.” Rae said, “So our hair is gonna be with our tree, for a lot of its life.”

“D’you think we should burn some of our hair, give it some of us to eat right now?” Finn said, “Cos ashes is good fertiliser right?”

“You’d need a lot of our hair to make ashes though.” Phil mused.

“We could not get a haircut for the next year, then when we go and get it all trimmed, collect the hair and burn that?” Finn said and Rae scrunched her nose; a whole year without a haircut would be a problem with her hair.

“Alright.” She said, “And then in a year from now, we’ll give it our hair ashes.”

“Alright.” The two lads agreed.

They each folded their piece of paper into a triangle, each with a knot of their hair inside and put them in the middle of the square pot; the points all touching. They took the Spruce out of its small pot and put it on top of the paper and started to fill the pot up with rich soil, each of them thinking about this tree living for thousands of years with their lives wrapped up in its roots.

“Right, and I got a watering can too!” She grinned and held it up.

A long shower with lots of kissing and holding each other followed. And then they made love for far too long, the whole day in fact, resulting in them running late for dinner.

None of them regretted it one bit.

Finn had intended to cook something for them for their anniversary but then realised he really
didn’t want to be in the kitchen when he should be with them. So he had made reservations at a very expensive French restaurant after a long time agonising over what all three of them would like. He chose this one because he knew they’d all eat it because the Summer Ball had served French cuisine both times and they’d done just fine with it. He had saved all the money he’d made from taking on two clients for personal training a few months back to pay for the seven course degustation menu he’d already personally planned and ordered. He’d even picked out a bottle of wine for them; sweet enough for Rae to enjoy but sophisticated enough for Phil’s palate. It was hard keeping his two loves happy; they had very different food and drink preferences. He was lucky that Rae was extremely easy going with food, Phil less so, but both were willing to try just about anything. So he wasn’t too nervous about his menu choices: pork assiette, gruyere soufflé, feta stuffed zucchini flowers, organic beef and salad, duck breast with vegetables, a fruit and cheese platter and caramel chocolate tart with white chocolate ice cream for dessert. He had chosen very carefully, things like zucchini flower and the fruit and cheese platter were for Phil, the steak and duck was for himself and the pork and soufflé were very Rae. And they all liked chocolate. The good thing about a degustation menu is that all the servings would be large enough to get a good taste of the meal, but small enough to leave room for the next course.

“Wow this is very swish!” Rae said as they stepped into the restaurant. Finn looked over at Phil, awaiting his verdict. Finn was worried when he saw that Phil’s brows were furrowed and he turned to Rae and Finn as if about to tell them something.

“Ah! Master Seymour!” A well-dressed woman greeted them.

“Djelka!” Phil said and she kissed his cheek, “I’m Mister now.” Rae and Finn looked over at him.

“Oh! So you’re an independent man now? How the time flies!” She cooed happily, “I haven’t seen you for far too long!” The last time Phil had been here was when he had spent his Summer Break between first and second year of college in his parent’s house in London. “But there must be a mistake, I have no Seymour reservation tonight?” Her very slight Eastern European accent lilted beautifully, her face full of concern.

“Nah it’s under Nelson.” Finn said and Djelka looked over at Finn, a smile coming over her face.

“Mr Nelson,” She looked at Rae, “And Ms…?”

“Earl.”

“Earl. Such a regal surname.” Djelka smiled as if she had known Rae for years and they were old friends, “Well I’m afraid to admit Mr Nelson, that the table I’ve allocated to you is not nearly good enough for Mr Seymour.” She smiled at Phil and Rae and Finn caught the twinkle in her eyes. “Let me just arrange a better table, it might take a few moment though, and of course your wine is on the house as always Mr Seymour.” She led them towards a waiting area with plush lounges and hurried away, Phil looked at his shoes while Rae and Finn watched her leave and then turned their eyes to Phil.

“My parents have been bringing me here since I was ten, so I know the place well.” Phil said, doggedly refusing to answer their silent, bemused question.

“Oh aye?” Finn teased in a mock polite voice.

“The last time I was here I brought Andrea and a couple of her friends. It was over the summer break.” Phil crossed his legs and gently brushed his pants to remove the crease, keeping his eyes on his hands.
“Is that right?” Rae asked in the same tone Finn had used.

“Yes. I haven’t been here since then.” Phil answered and cleared his throat. Rae and Finn allowed the silence to settle and Phil continued to look at his hands, now folded in his lap. “Yes I slept with her.” Phil finally said.

“Well that’s obvious!” Rae laughed.

“Is she in her forties Philly?” Finn asked and Phil sighed.

“If you must know, yes she is. But being her forties in no way lessens a woman’s worth or beauty.” Phil retorted and Finn laughed.

“I know. I’ve had plenty a fantasy about older ladies!” Finn told him, “I’m just amazed you actually… did it.” He looked at Djelka as she walked back towards them, but was stopped by a junior chef, telling her something animatedly. She was very attractive, but she seemed very unavailable as well.

“I was old enough and I knew what, or rather, who, I wanted.” Phil returned.

“So you went after her?” Rae asked with a grin.

“Yes.” Phil answered, “I wasn’t some poor impressionable teenaged boy who got statutorily raped by an older woman and then pretended it was so cool to fuck an older woman afterwards.” He made it perfectly clear. “I was legally, emotionally and mentally old enough to fuck whomever I wanted and I most certainly did so.”

“How many people have you had sex with?” Finn asked, deeply curious and Phil sighed.

“You both really wanna know?”

“Aye!” Rae replied and Finn nodded.

“Well I don’t keep count.” He sighed and looked up at the ceiling, “I first had sex with Andrea, you both know about that…”

“Aye, I remember that night well.” Finn said, he remembered telling Phil to let Andrea have him.

“Then…” Phil’s voice was soft and murmuring to himself as he named every woman he had had sex with, Finn’s eyebrows raising when he heard Chloe’s name; he hadn’t known about her, although Rae had. Rae and Finn kept count as Phil named every lover he’d had in order, “And then it was Rae, and Finn…” He finished up.

“Twenty-six. Including us.” Finn shook his head in awe.

“I’ve been the dirty harlot.” Phil shrugged, “I was ethical, I learned something from every single one of them, everyone knew I had no intention of starting a relationship because I was in love with someone else, I always used condoms, and I very much enjoyed all of it, even though I was using it as a diversion from feeling the pain of not being with Rae.” He smiled unapologetically, “I figured I might as well enjoy my emotional numbing, and I did.”

“Well my first experience was a bunch o’ blowjobs from so many women I can’t even count, then hatefucking me girlfriend cos she weren’t Rae, lots o’ guilt and misery, then Rae, then you.” Finn said with a bemused grin.
“And mine was letting a guy who really didn’t care one bit for me fuck me cos I hated myself, then Finn then you.” Rae added.

“Oh.” Phil said almost silently, “I’m really sorry you both had such horrible experiences.” Phil said sadly, “I am really glad you found each other and gave each other the love you both didn’t know you deserved.”

“Just like you.” Rae said, “You never used to know just how much you deserved to be loved.”

“And then we found you.” Finn said.

“Does it bother either of you that I’ve had that number of lovers?”

“No but it does explain a lot!” Rae laughed.

“Chloe, as in our Chloe?” Finn clarified.

“Yeah we had sex a couple of times, but it just didn’t feel right. She was starting out with Rhys, and we were keeping it secret and I was hopelessly in love with Rae.” Phil was glad to be talking about this, “The first time something happened she went down on me cos she wanted to practice for Rhys, but…” He scrunched up his face, “She told me to imagine it was Rae.”

“Oh wow.” Rae said in surprise.

“Did you?” Finn asked with morbid curiosity.

“At first I did, but I couldn’t… you know…? She told me that he knew I wished it was Rae and I told her I did wish she was Rae.” He took a deep breath, “It felt so wrong to be thinking about Rae while her best friend was sucking my dick and I told her that, but… I dunno. She’s very attractive, and she didn’t care that I didn’t love her. I wanted her, despite the fact that it was wrong, so I let her do it.” He shook his head. “She made me realise that I actually didn’t owe Rae anything because at the time, Rae had no intention of ever being with me. So when she came over again, and pushed me onto the bed and rode me… used me for her own satisfaction… I let her do it.” He swallowed hard, “But the truth is, Chloe is still Rae’s best friend, and it was very wrong of me to let her shag me and then declare my love for Rae. So I stopped it after only a few times. She’s the only one of all of them I have any regrets about at all. I simply should not have had sex with Rae’s best friend. It was immoral and unethical of me.” He looked at Rae, “I am very sorry.”

“S’alright.” She said, “Although the thinking about me when you was with her is…” She shook her head.

“That was only at first.” Phil answered, “For a few minutes. Then I made myself focus on her, because she deserved that.”

“Aye.” Rae answered honestly. “She does.”

“Well this got far too serious!” Finn declared, “I wish I’d chosen somewhere better for dinner!”

“There’s not many places better than this Finn!” Phil laughed, “I think you chose perfectly.”

“Me too!” Rae grinned, “Plus we got to find out what a dirty stop-out our boy is!” Phil laughed and shook his head blushing. Rae leaned over and kissed his cheek, both lads looking down her top as she bent to him. “Dirty perverts.” She laughed, neither of them trying to hide where their eyes were. Rae sat back down and snuggled into Phil, Finn changed seats to do the same.
“I love you both so much, I think me heart’s gonna burst from it.” Rae told them.

“God I hope it doesn’t, that’d be such a mess.” Phil teased.

“And I’d miss you quite a bit.” Finn added.

“We both would.” Phil agreed.

“Dickheads!” Rae returned.

“Oi, who you calling a dickhead, you’re the one who’s heart’s exploding!” Finn replied.

“Could you really imagine a person with a dick as a head?” Phil asked and they all stopped and stared at the opposite wall for a moment, contemplating that. And then they burst out in laughter.

“Alright, I’m giving in to the soppy stuff too!” Finn said through his laughter, “I love you both so much.” He kissed Phil and leaned over Phil to kiss Rae. “Y’are me happiness.” They both looked to Phil and he took both of their hands.

“I’m very lucky to be have been allowed this happiness.” Phil agreed, “You are the two great loves of my life, and I get to be with both of you.” He shook his head and they saw that moment he sometimes had where he still couldn’t belief his luck. “A whole year of something I never thought I’d know. Thank you both. I love you Rae, I love you Finn.” Finn and Rae both went in for the kiss at the same time, and the three of them kissed until they heard someone clear their throat.

“Ms Earl, Mr Nelson, Mr Seymour, this way please.” Djelka said with a professional smile. This was a woman who had seen a lot of things and had kept them all private. They walked through the main dining area; it was opulent and plush, each table lit with gorgeous hand crafted organic beeswax candles. Djelka ushered them into a private room with a round table, set up with three evenly spaced chairs, lit with those candles that sent a faintly honey aroma through the air. She told them that their waiter would be there shortly and left them alone.

“So how do we stop ourselves from fucking in here?” Finn asked.

“We remember that our waiter is coming soon, and that I’m starving!” Rae answered. Phil opened his mouth to say something when there was a knock on the door.

“Come.” He said and the door opened.

“Mr Seymour, pleasure to see you again.” The waitress said.

“Cindy.” Phil smiled with a slightly strained expression and Rae and Finn had to stop themselves from laughing; Cindy was a name from that list. “I wonder if we could have Andre see to us tonight?” Andre was the head waiter, so it was not unusual for important people to request him.

“He will be your waiter tonight.” Cindy reassured him, “I was just…” She looked around, “Coming to make sure you had everything?”

“Cindy?” Andre said as he approached the door.

“Sorry.” She said to Andre and disappeared.

“Mr Seymour, Ms Earl, Mr Nelson, here is the amuse bouche, today it’s oyster.” He presented a single oyster on a plate to each of them, “In garlic butter. We have organic homemade sourdough rolls and your wine, as pre-selected.” He moved in an orderly manner, placing things from his tray
into their table, “And chilled filtered water.” He finished by filling up their water glasses too. “Is there anything else you need?”

“Yes, change the music.” Phil answered, “My partners prefer contemporary music along the lines of Oasis.”

“Of course sir.” Andre bowed slightly, “Very good to see you again Mr Seymour.” He noted before leaving and closing the door.

“Cindy’s quite a buxom lass.” Rae teased and Phil rolled his eyes when Finn and Rae started to giggle.

“You can’t just tell them to change the music can you?” Finn asked.

“Yes.” Phil answered, “Or at least some people can.” He shook his head, “Which is ridiculously unfair.” He sighed. But they heard an orchestral arrangement of ‘what’s the story morning glory?’ start and Finn was amazed.

“I didn’t even know this existed on record somewhere.” He marvelled.

“On no they have a live quintet.” Phil said, “Good bunch of musicians with a very wide repertoire.”

“This place is definitely too posh for the likes of us Mr Finny and Mr Philly.” Rae told them. “How are we even affording this?”

“I saved up all the money from me clients.” Finn grinned proudly, “It’s just enough to cover it.”

“You’re amazing.” Rae told him and Phil leaned forward and took his hand.

“Thank you for this.” Phil said.

“Right are we gonna have these oysters?” Finn asked, trying not to blush.

“I think you two are gonna have to roll me to the next place.” Finn said as they left the restaurant.

“Lucky it’s not far.” Phil laughed as Finn groaned and put his hands on his stomach.

“Well you organised a seven course meal, what did you expect?” Phil laughed.

“Not to have to eat half o’ yours as well.” He shot back.

“You didn’t have to eat mine.” Phil countered.

“And how am I gonna leave food that good on the plate?” Finn asked. Rae enjoyed their banter. She used to be the one that talked all the time, but now she had two boys that talked a lot too. There was a nicer balance this way, she found, because sometimes she liked being quiet.

“So where are we off to?” She asked Phil, lacing an arm through his as they dawdled down the street, Finn grumbling and groaning about how full he was the whole way, his hands remaining firmly on his stomach.
Phil had organised tickets to very popular cabaret show in a club that served alcohol but no food. Finn, quite randomly, adored cabaret, and he and Rae enjoyed all theatre, so this seemed like the best option. He also had rented several weekly videos from the video store for the weekend.

“Holy shit!” Finn cried out in glee when he saw where they were headed, making Rae laugh and Phil grin at how excited he was. “I fucking love cabaret.”

They were shown to a front row table in the smoking section; chosen specifically for Finn, and a bottle of vodka and three shot glasses was put on the table.

“Holy hell!” Rae laughed.

“Well, things are gonna get messy!” Finn declared as he poured them all a shot. “But not too messy till after the show!”

They stumbled home drunk at two in the morning after a truly wonderful night. They fell into bed, Finn in the middle and started drunkenly kissing and undressing. Phil stopped in the middle of it all, a hand on Rae’s cheek, his fingers in Finn’s hair.

“Please tell me that nothing’s ever gonna come between us.” He said softly, “I need you two like I need air.”

“We’re forever.” Finn told him.

“You don’t have to worry one bit.” Rae added. “Anything that comes up against us, we’ll deal with and rip it apart.” He words were slightly slurred, but she knew what she was saying. “We’re forever us three.”

“Forever.” Phil breathed in the word.
The invite had come in the mail a month out from the beginning of summer holidays.

“He seriously can’t expect us to afford this?” Rae handed the invite to Finn, Phil read it over his shoulder.

“I did not see that coming.” Phil said and Finn shook his head.

“You know he’s probably only doing it to get citizenship right?” Finn said.

“You don’t know that.” Rae said, “Who are we to judge someone else’s love?”

“You’re right.” Finn took the letter that had accompanied the invite out of the envelope and read it.

“Well he’s gonna pay for our flights if we go.” Finn showed them the letter, “Apparently he won lotto.”

“Get fucked.” Rae read the letter. “Well I guess we’re going then.” She grinned.

“Morning Sprucey.” Rae wandered across the huge flat naked; they were almost always naked, the apartment held its temperature well and they were more comfortable this way. All three of them were very precious with their Spruce and Rae put a finger in the soil to make sure it had enough water. Phil was looking out the kitchen window, his hands wrapped around a mug of tea and standing on one foot as was normal when he was having a good think.

“Have the dead risen?” Rae asked, she was in the best mood she’d been in for the past two weeks; uni exams had finally finished, but her mood would remain slightly on edge until they got their marks in a few weeks. Their first semester marks had been as expected: Phil got 4 HDs (high distinctions), Rae got 2 HDs and 2 Ds (distinctions) and Finn had gotten 1 HD 2 Ds and a CR (credit). Finn and Rae both wanted to improve their marks but both were worried they’d dropped. Phil knew he’d get another 4 HDs; he was yet to be really challenged by the coursework.

“No not yet.” Phil replied. “I think I wanna start a little herb garden.” He added as Finn came out of the bedroom yawning and stretching.

“Where’d we put it?” He called as he went into the bathroom and Rae put on the kettle.

“I think it’d look good in front of the kitchen window.” Rae said, “We’d have to move the easel
out, but I don’t see why we couldn’t do that.” Phil nodded thoughtfully and Finn flushed the toilet. He came out moments later flicking his wet hands.

“When we get back from the wedding I can put some glass shelving up in front of the window.” Finn said, “It’ll let more light through and give us more vertical space to grow them in the light.” Phil turned to him with a grin.

“Thanks.” He said happily, “I was just thinking that I’d make much better scrambled eggs if I had some fresh chives.”

“Rosemary on lamb and sage on pork… there’s heaps o’ herbs we can grow.” Rae was so into this idea. They’d all enjoyed looking after Sprucey and were fretting about leaving it alone for a few weeks while they were away for the wedding; the whole extended gang were going so they were using this as their ‘gang holiday’ that they had promised to have.

“Hello kids!” Chloe called out when she saw Tom and Archie strolling through duty free, Tom’s eyes on the shopping, Archie’s on the lookout for everyone.

Hugs. So many hugs.

It had been since January for the New Year’s break that all nine of them had been together. And it was summer holidays; August.

“Is it just us nine on the plane?” Chop asked.

“No, I think there’s gonna be another 300 passengers too.” Archie answered and Chop narrowed his eyes at Archie.

“Ha ha bloody ha.” Chop shook his head. “I meant are the other gang people gonna be on the plane too?” He hadn’t taken his arm from around Izzy’s shoulders since he had shown up ten minutes before. The kiss had been epic and Chop was in a good mood; he expected to be driving to Italy with Izzy after they all got back from the wedding to gather her things and bring her home; her apprenticeship was finally over.

“I think it’s just us Chop.” Rae answered.

“How long till the flight goes?” Izzy asked.

“Another hour.” Phil answered; of course he knew, he was the most organised of all of them.

“Get us a drink babe?” Izzy asked Chop.

“Get us all a drink babe!” Archie said cheerily.

“Be fucked if I’m getting you all drinks!” Chop refused.

“Or you could just get some random bloke to suck your dick.” Finn, Archie and Tom all shot back.

“Oh fuck you!” Chop groaned. It had become a thing that whenever Chop said he wasn’t going to do something, to remind him of that other big thing he said he’d never do but had done; fuck a man.
“For the straight guy of the group, y’are kinda queer.” Phil said gently and Chop grumbled in reply.

“Fuck you’s all.” He grumbled, and then louder; “Fine I’ll get the fucking drinks. I’m fucking Admiral Drink-Getter!” He huffed off, the entire gang laughing.

Finn could not sleep.

Beside him Rae was leaning against Phil and Phil was leaning on him. He looked out of the tiny aeroplane window at the dark sky. This leg of the journey was 13 hours on a plane and he felt claustrophobic. After this they had 12 hours in Singapore and they had all agreed to stay in the airport and rest and sleep at the airport hotel so they could be fresh for the 8 hour flight they had after that.

Finn gently put Phil’s head more onto the headrest and got up to have a stretch and a wander around the plane. He saw that Archie was also wandering around.

“Hey.” Archie said as he approached.

“Hi.” Finn said tiredly. “Turns out, I really hate flying.”

“My cousin Emma says that the worst bit about travel is the travelling bit.” Archie said softly, as they tried to find a place on the plane away from sleeping people. “Contrary to what people say about the journey being half the fun!” They both chuckled.

“Not by fucking plane it ain’t.” Finn stretched and they took up residence near the least smelly toilets.

“So other than the aeroplane, how’re you going?”

“Pretty good.” Finn shrugged. “You know, I just wanted to say that I’m real sorry I disappeared to Leeds just after you came out. It were such a shit move.”

“Aye it was.” Archie answered. “But you had a lot of shit on and I already forgave you.”

“I should o’ been there for you, cos this whole coming out and being out thing, is one big pile o’ shit.” Archie laughed at the truth in Finn’s words, “It’s like no one gives a shit about your sexuality until you’re not hetero. And then you have to spend the rest o’ your life telling everyone about it cos, if you don’t, they assume you’re straight and it feels like you’re betraying yourself walking around letting people think you’re straight.”

“Yeah but sometimes it’s a fuckload easier that way. I did it at uni for the first semester.”

“Aye me too.” Finn admitted guiltily.

“I hear that tone; don’t feel bad for doing what you gotta do to survive. Your sexuality isn’t a choice, but coming out is.” Archie told him.

“Except it weren’t for you.”

“No. And Rae and I had it out over that already; it’s water under the bridge.” Archie said, “But I’m glad I’m out now. It sucks it’ll always have to be a fight and that being out isn’t always safe.”
“You should try being a STEM boy who’s openly bi.” Finn sighed.

“What’s… STEM?” Archie gave Finn a weird look.

“Oh it stands for science, technical, engineering and mathematics. It’s all those straight white boy subjects.” Finn wiped his tired face, “You told me I did well in the stereotypically male topics; you weren’t lying. But it’s like every lad in the course has to prove he’s a man, cos he’s not the alpha boy; STEM guys are the geeks that got bullied at school by the lads who were good at sport. So now they’re fucking hyper-masculine in the most close-minded, whiny little child way imaginable. And they really wanna get their own back on the world; bully someone how they was bullied, so it’s birds and poofers who cop it.” Finn sighed, “Course I am generalising. There are a few good’uns.”

“Like yourself?”

“Nah I were so worried I were failing I fell into the trap of trying to fit in a bit.”

“You?”

“I know I know!” Finn groaned, “But it’s all fucking group work and they bond over homophobia and misogyny.” Finn shook his head. “When I finally got my shit together and told ‘em I were bi, they actually physically moved their chairs away from me. Happened to Phil in theatre too. I mean what makes people that fucking daft?”

“I can’t believe Phil had a problem with homophobia in theatre?”

“Oh no, it were one of the techies.” Finn said, “None of the actors or directors have given him any hassles at all.”

“And lecturers?” Archie wondered.

“All fine.” Finn reported, “What about you?”

“Well me ancient archaeology lecturer made a pass at me.”

“Oh yeah, you interested?”

“Not really, since she has the wrong plumbing.”

“Which can be conveniently forgotten if her name’s Pandora.” Finn teased.

“Yeah but you forget your own name when you’re with Pandora… and Andromeda!” Archie added chuckling.

“So what’d you do about your prof?”

“Flirted. Tried to get ahead. Felt bad. Then told her I was in a relationship. But failed to mention it was a gay one.”

“Oh dear.” Finn laughed softly.

“I can only hope I don’t get her for any other subject again!” Archie laughed. “Cos I still haven’t told her, but all of my other lecturers know I’m gay.”

“You really wanted that good mark, hey?”
“All Ds.” He reported, “I was hoping for just one HD, but alas!” He said melodramatically.

“All that flirting for a mark you didn’t get.” Finn teased.

“That’s the way it is though innit?” Archie said, “You can try to protect yourself or get ahead by lying about who you are, but there’s always a price to pay somewhere for that. Usually that price is paid by your own self-esteem. And then there’s a price to pay for being true to yourself as well when being true to yourself means falling outside of society’s norms and expectations.”

“’Ere, I got told,” Finn thought of something that had been bothering him, “That I were transphobic for being bi?” Finn scrunched up his face.

“Yeah, there’s transphobic people across all groups of people, but bi people get told they are because people think bisexual means attracted to boys and girls; which can exclude trans people or intersex or any of the other genders.” Archie shrugged, “Was the person who told you that bi?”

“Nope.”

“The problem with a lot of the labels in the queer community is that they started their existence elsewhere and have been claimed by our community. So homosexual and lesbian and bisexuality were all words used in the medical and psychological community to pathologise us; turn us into a disease. Our community has had little to no control over the way the words were created or the structure of the words or their meanings. We just claimed them for ourselves as an act of defiance and empowerment. So people might wanna say that the word bi means two, and thus try to claim that that means bisexual people are bigoted by nature, but bisexual people themselves define bisexual as attracted to two genders, usually their own and another. Not as attraction to men and women. And really, are we gonna go with outdated medical and psychological definitions that described us all as ill, or are we gonna go with the people who actually live these lives? Don’t let other people define your sexuality for you Finn.”

“I just find a lot of it real confusing.”

“Yeah.” Archie agreed, “Me too. I’ll give you a list of some good resources to get you up on the info so you can argue back against some o’ these tossers in future.”

“Thanks.” Finn grinned, “You know I met a couple o’ gay guys that thought bi wasn’t a real thing and that I were just stepping stoning my way to being gay.”

“Unfortunately that’s extremely common in both the gay and straight community. They also assume that bi people stop being bi when they get into a monogamous relationship and assume that bi people are promiscuous and don’t wanna go out with you cos they expect you to cheat.” Archie shrugged apologetically. “Sorry.”

“What are you sorry for? You’re not the one that’s thinking that way.” Finn pocketed his hands, “You’re not the one that denies the existence of bisexual people.”

“No I’m not, but to be honest, when Chlo told me that you was with Phil as well as Rae, I just… I was sceptical if I’m honest” He shook his head, “I thought you must’ve decided to share Rae, or that you were just messing a little with Phil or something, not that you were actually with both of ‘em fully. And then I saw you with them at Chop’s house, kissing both of ‘em and hugging ‘em and the way you looked at them and touched them both… I realised how wrong I’d been. No one can deny you want and love both of them.” Archie hung his head, “I was right disappointed in myself for not believing you was bisexual right away.”
“Well we can’t all be perfect.” Finn shrugged. “You don’t doubt me anymore, so whatever.” He shrugged again, but Archie could hear from his tone that even though he had said the sentence to be a statement, it was more a question; a need for reassurance.

“I was completely 100% wrong to doubt you and your love for both Rae and Phil for one second.” Archie said and Finn gave him a small grin. Archie knew that for Finn that was the end of that but he still pulled Finn into a hug. “I’m sorry.”

“Ahh leave off.” Finn said but settled in for the hug. “We’re even then. I were a shit friend when I went to Leeds and you were a shit friend when you doubted me sexuality, alright?”

“Alright.” Archie agreed; both of them glad to be absolved and both enjoying the hug enough to stay there.

“No I am not willing to open up the relationship to another man, no matter how beautiful he is.” Rae said with a grin as she approached them. They looked up at her and both grinned lopsidedly. She returned the grin but went into the toilet, “Wish me luck.” She said grimly and closed the door.

Tom was positively chipper and Rae liked to think she wasn’t the only one that was ready to murder him after that fucking awful flight; there’s a reason they call it cattle class. Rae wasn’t the only one who had found the seats positively tiny and even Rhys’s usual good mood and calm composure had been sorely tested by the time they had landed at their final destination.

Tom and Archie had joined the mile high club, as had Chop and Izzy. But Rhys was too big to really get to it in the bathroom, and Rae found the bathroom cramped with just her in it without even considering putting two boys in there with her. She had told them to go and do it together but they hadn’t been interested in it happening unless it was the three of them and Phillip had seemed to think there would be plenty of future opportunities for it. Rae had grumbled that no matter how many time they flew the toilets would be too small and Phil had just smiled enigmatically. Once again they’d forgotten about his trust fund.

There were a lot of duty free shops before customs and Tom was eyeing them again and chatting animatedly, even though it was 6 in the morning, local time and they were waiting for their baggage.

“I think I need coffee for the first time in my life.” Rae said as they cleared customs and headed out to the arrivals hall.

“FUCKERS!” Woody’s voice cut through the noise of all the tears and laughter of people greeting each other. Rae expected someone, anyone to show a sign of disapproval but there was none.

“I’ve missed ya, ya fuckin’ cunt!” Rae looked to the left to see the man that had said that, a bronzed, blond haired, tatty looking bloke hugging another bloke that looked almost the same.

“Woody is it really alright to be swearing that loudly?” Archie asked as Woody embraced him.

“What the fuck are you talking about, swearing is basically the native tongue here. I even heard a poli swearin’ on aunty.” He replied.

“What?” Chloe laughed.
“Well aunty is the ABC, which is kinda like their BBC.” Finn said; Terri had explained this to him, “And they run triple J, remember I told you about them? The youth radio station that’s broadcast all over the whole country and plays fucking stellar songs. Terri said they’re gonna stream it online if the internet gets fast enough so we’ll be able to listen to it from home. Terri said they’d show me how it were done!”

“Oh the J’s are fucking rad dude!” Woody told them. “You gonna go see Terri?”

“Yeah they’re coming to Brisbane when we’re there.” Finn answered as they all burst out into the sun and slight chill of a wintry early morning in Sydney. They had all put jumpers and jackets on because it was the depth of winter in Australia. Archie looked up at the beautiful dusk colours and grinned.

“Fucking Australia.” He sighed.

“Yeah but where else was I gonna end up?” Woody laughed, “Me mum’s half Aboriginal from the Ngunnawal people in Canberra.”

“The capital!” Izzy said excitedly and Woody nodded.

“So you got dual citizenship?” Archie asked and Woody nodded his head again.

“Right so we’re off to the hotel, I booked a 4 star place in inner Sydney for a few nights, but you guys all gotta pay for yourselves. Place is called the Metro, I chose it cos one of the best venues in the world is also called the Metro and happens to be just down the road.”

Rae woke up to the boys laughing, obviously trying to be quiet so as to not wake her. They were in the spa bath together. Woody was coming for them after lunch to do some touristy stuff and they had all gone to their hotels to sleep.

“You two would wake the dead.” Rae grumbled and they looked out of the bathroom at her.

“Sorry!” They both called.

“Come join us.” Phil invited. Woody had done a mighty fine job of booking their rooms; Finn, Phil and Rae had the king spa room. It was expensive, but they were only in Sydney for a few days before they headed to Brisbane then the Whitsundays for Woody’s wedding.

“Not only am I getting in there with you, but I do believe I am going to need some extra loving after all the sex we’ve missed out on flying here!”

“Well if you insist.” Finn answered with a huge grin.

“That sure is a bridge.” Rae said as they looked at the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

“They call it the coat hanger here.” Woody said.

“Oh aye, I see it.” She replied.
“It would be incredible if they let people climb to the top of it.” Tom said with excited eyes.

“You’re a revolutionary thinker my friend.” Woody answered.

“Don’t get too excited Phil, but I just bought us tickets for a show tomorrow night.” Finn held them up and Phil looked at what he’d bought.

“Oh my god you love me so much.” Phil took the tickets excitedly. He had been enamoured with the Sydney Opera House; everyone had, but Phil in particular. He could imagine performing remarkable theatre here or playing in a symphony orchestra.

“So what are we seeing?” Rae asked.

“The Magic Flute?” Finn shrugged; he had no idea what that was, but it was opening tomorrow night.

“It’s an opera by Mozart.” Phil was in heaven.

“My god this is a beautiful city.” Izzy marvelled. All the green open spaces, the harbour, especially Darling Harbour, the buildings sparkling in the clear winter light, the impossibly blue sky with soft fluffy clouds. It was like a dream. They had long ago shed their jumpers and jackets; winter in Sydney was nothing like winter in England. It was 20 degrees Celsius and they were working up a sweat walking through the streets and shops, eating some of the best food they’d ever had at China Town, and marvelling at how relaxed the people were. No one even looked twice at Tom and Archie; Sydney did host one of the largest gay and lesbian Mardi Gras in the world every year, and Tom and Archie promised themselves to come back for it in Late February early March sometime in the future. And mercifully, no one looked at Rae Finn and Phil holding hands either. But then walking down Oxford Street; home of the queer and kinky community in Sydney had made them amazed at just how open queer identities and kinksters were in parts of the city. Rhys garnered a few looks, none of them seemed to be hostile, and they were stopped at the lights, waiting to cross when that was explained.

“You’re a tall fucker aren’t ya?” A guy grinned at Rhys.

“Yes.” Rhys grinned back and the guy nodded and headed across the road with the rest of the crowd.

Sydney was extremely multi-cultural, and for the most part it ran without too much hassle. There were, of course, incidents of racism, but for the most part, in 1999, when the city was revving up for the 2000 Olympics, everyone felt safe and harmonious.

“Bondi!” Chloe said excitedly.
“Nah too touristy.” Woody responded. “And honestly I could pull a better beach outta me arse. We got much better beaches here than that.”

“Cronulla!” Chloe had done her beach research, or so she thought.

“People around here joke that the turds float through the water there cos in the 80s the sewer pipe ran too close to shore!” Woody laughed. They had all decided that it was in fact, warm enough to swim in winter in Sydney, and that an afternoon beach visit was a must.

“I’m gonna take you to Bronte Beach, cos it’s smaller, prettier and no one ever goes there. Except for tonight – it’s beach party time, Aussie style.”

Woody had been right; the beach was deserted and gorgeous and Rae had immediately run for the water, Phil close behind.

“Ice cream!” Archie declared and Finn decided to join him to the tuckshop. When they returned the gang was laughing and joking, Phil and Rae were kissing passionately in the calm water, he had pulled her close to him, her arms around his neck, one hand hanging limp, the other on the back of his neck pulling him in closer, the kissing was undeniably sexual and when Finn saw it he knew that his boy would be hard as a rock under the water.

“They actually have an ice cream called a Golden Gaytime!” Archie laughed and tossed one to Tom, “I fucking had to have one.” Tom was in love with the ice cream; the only ‘unhealthy’ food he’d ever really loved.

“It tastes so perfect.” He said.

“So gay!” Archie gleefully revelled. “They have a type of crisp called twisties and the tagline for them is ‘life’s pretty straight without twisties.’”

“I think Australia’s trying to tell us something.” Rhys laughed. Finn sat down next to Chop and unwrapped Rae and Phil’s ice creams so he could take them to them.

“Still not used to seeing our Rae Rae kiss someone else.” Chop mumbled and looked away from the very intense kissing they were doing; it most certainly would need to lead to sex, but they’d probably have to wait until later, when the party was on.

“We’ve been together over 15 months now.” Finn answered watching his loves kissing, “but you’ve seen maybe 24 hours in total of all of that time cos we live in different cities now. You’ve had a couple o’ hours here a couple o’ hours there. So o’ course you haven’t had chance to get used to it yet.” Finn shrugged.

“So you’re actually happy?” Chop asked quietly, knowing that if Izzy heard him she’d be angry for his prying. He nodded at Rae and Phil, their kissing having increased in passion again, “there’s not too much of that going on is there?”

“Oh there’s plenty of it Chop!” Finn laughed. “And I’m usually involved in it!” He grinned. “There’s a lot of making out one on one; Phil and I made out for most of this morning while we had jetlag and couldn’t sleep and Rae were sleeping. And in Singapore Rae and I kissed for an hour straight while Phil curled up in a ball and slept like a baby. But none of us have fucked just as a duo yet.”

“How do you know?”

“They’d tell me.” Finn answered simply, knowing without a doubt that it was the truth, “it’s so
important to be open and honest in a poly relationship or else it just won’t work.” Finn licked his ice cream and held Rae and Phil’s, unwrapped in one hand. “Gotta work to not leave anyone out, not favour someone and all that. And there’s so many small, easy ways to favour one person by accident, like Rae and I have history that makes us close and music to bang on about forever. Phil and Rae do their degree together so they have a lot extra time together; they have literature to share. And Phil and me are such boys together sometimes we yabber on and Rae can’t get a word in!” He laughed, “We work to keep it even. Don’t worry about that kiss. It’s nothing I won’t be invited to be a part of later on.”

He got up and grinned at Chop before heading into the water with the ice creams. Chop watched as they both opened up their arms for him, seemingly not at all reluctant to embrace him in their intimate moment. They kissed quite sexually, Chop feeling like he should look away from the pornography, but not actually looking away. Finn stopped them after a while, his laugh echoing across the beach and Chop heard him explaining that the ice creams were starting to melt down his hand.

The gang had always had a sense of being excellent drinkers; professionals at the art of getting drunk. Or shit-faced as the Aussies said.

Australians made them realise that they had no idea and were in fact actually complete amateurs. There were about 40 people at the bonfire beach party in total, and all of the Aussies were drinking enough to get twice as many people off-their-face drunk.

The gang were still on their first bottle of shared vodka when the group of four rowdy Aussies beside them had finished their slab of beer; that was 24 cans between the 4 of them. Then they pulled out a bottle of vodka and started swigging it straight from the bottle. They had finished that before the gang had opened their second bottle, and one of them had vomited in the shrubbery off to the side, come back and started drinking again.

Aussies drank hard, they were rowdy, they talked loud, sang loud, danced and swore and puked and drank some more, and they didn’t stop drinking even as they were falling down drunk. It was messy and brilliant.

“Come on yer whinging poms! Get it down ya!” One of them called merrily before falling down onto his back and starting to sing Cold Chisel’s ‘Khe Sanh’ on the top of his voice, which started them all off, including half of the gang, none of whom knew the lyrics. But that didn’t seem to matter one bit. Chop looked at Finn and Archie; the original boys that had started this whole gang. They had all grown and taken on so much responsibility and seriousness… but all of them saw that ‘whinging poms, get it down ya’ as a challenge that could not be missed and started to drink as hard as the Aussies did. The rest of the gang decided that when in when in Rome you should do as the Romans do, and joined in too, even Rhys.

Most of them blacked out and didn’t remember most of the night. Chop woke up in a pool of vomit that he hoped was his own and all of them were still drunk whilst simultaneously being painfully hungover when they woke up.

When the Aussies woke up they grumbled, cracked open some more beer and talked loudly about getting some egg and bacon rolls or some kebabs with garlic sauce, while the gang could barely walk from being drunk and in pain.
“Oi, someone gotta house I can go to?” One of them called out, “I gotta after-grog bog!”

“We Aussies do this a couple o’ nights a week. There’s talk about us having an alcoholic culture of binge drinking.” Woody laughed, his British accent setting him aside from all the Aussie accents around them, calling each other cunts.

The following night had been wonderfully sober and the opera had been magical, much to Finn’s surprise and Rae’s delight. Phil, had of course, known every single note, and had been mesmerised for the whole performance.

Afterwards they had walked along the harbour with handmade gelatos, enjoying the beauty of this city before walking back through the streets to their hotel.

“I love this place.” Rae sighed, “We have to come back.”

The night after that though had seen the gang attend an Australian musical institution; the Metro in Sydney to see an Australian legend of a band: Regurgitator. They were described as alternative rock, electronica, pop punk, alternative hip hop, rap rock and post-grunge. Finn and Rae had been beyond intrigued and the band, nor the venue let them down.

The Metro was on the corner of a main road in Sydney and a small alleyway that led through to another main road, the one their hotel was on actually. The alleyway had small Asian eateries and kids smoking bongs and milk crates, and a line of people waiting to get into the Metro. Sydney was alive and awake at all times, but seemingly particularly so at night; people were keen to get to partying. Inside the Metro was painted black, the bathrooms were huge, clean and usually had someone fucking in them, and the bartenders were fast, efficient and friendly. Up some stairs and you were lead to a raked standing space looking down on a moshpit and stage. Another bar at the back of the audience and some more toilets.

Australians audiences knew how to appreciate a band; they were mental. People were crowdsurfing and stage diving and everyone was jumping up and down; even at the bar. The place was packed, the energy was frenetic, and up on the stage, Quan, the lead singer, was in a pink dress, headbanging, Ben the guitarist was wearing coke pants and the drummer was hidden behind the kit. When Quan stopped headbanging he nearly fell over before he started singing about a ‘blubber boy being rubbed up you cunt before coming back again…’ No one in the place understood the words, but everyone knew them, everyone was getting more and more blind drunk.

Most of them blacked out and didn’t remember half of that night too; an Aussie tradition it seemed.

They were sorry to say goodbye to Sydney, but it was time to go to Brisbane; the rest of the gang were meeting them there, and they’d get to meet Woody’s fiancé, although he’d slept with two women and a man while in Sydney…
Brisbane was a beautiful city set along the banks of a gorgeous river and Woody had gotten them all excited for Queensland beaches; apparently they were the true beauties of the country.

Finn met his Uncle Angus, Aunt Tina and cousin Terri in person over a strange lunch date in which Angus was interested to know whether he remembered Anka, or had seen her again, what their relationship was like and whether Gary was serious about getting back with Kenzie. Angus was a really serious man who looked exactly how Phil and Rae imagined Finn looking at 40. Tina could best be described as the eccentric aunt with the typical streak of Aussie, down to earth stubbornness. It was a strange mix of bizarre wildness and brutal reality-focussed thinking, but it somehow mixed really well in her and she was obviously the brains behind their marriage and company, and her black hair and large expressive eyes were stunning, making her definitely part of the beauty side of it as well. Terri was a remarkably attractive girl; a female Finn. She was also whip-smart and mischievous, focussed on fun and study. All three of them found that they liked Finn’s extended family, and none of them seemed to judge their relationship, so they all promised to see each other again as soon as money allowed.

Seeing the rest of the extended gang was a lot of fun. Macca and Bethany were still going strong after their year of travel; but weren’t looking forward to heading to universities in Edinburgh for Bethany and Hull for Macca, it was a long journey and the thought of being apart was not one either liked at all. Stacia was moving to Queensland for her degree next year to work on the Great Barrier Reef as part of her marine biology degree; she was so excited that she would talk at a million miles an hour if anyone asked her about it. Her and Kurt had immediately hit it off again as soon as they were near each other, and this was starting to lead to awkward questions about what they were going to do when Kurt had to go back to England. Kristi was in heaven on the Australian beaches, her eyes falling over the sun-kissed bodies of all the Aussie boys. But her eyes strayed to Bryn more than usual. The past year had seen a remarkable maturing in Bryn and he now stood tall and confidently, and had also come out as bisexual. The Aussie girls quite liked him too. He was planning on doing some travel for a year before starting university, studying medical research; he wanted to cure diseases for a living. James had been unable to come; he had placements to do with his medical degree, but he had sent his love, and Sam couldn’t come; he was on deployment somewhere, doing peacekeeping missions. They all spoke as if they hadn’t spent a day apart, laughing and joking as they explored Brisbane together.

The Whitsundays were so beautiful that it created a very physical response in each of them... the white sands and azure waters, the warm 26 degree days in Queensland with afternoon downpours, even though it was winter, the coral wonderland with thousands of colourful fish underwater; it was heaven on Earth.

Woody’s fiancée was an Aboriginal woman from Arnhem Land who called herself Kiki, and told everyone that wasn’t her real name. And she had been kissing a white girl who looked remarkably like Chloe, when they met her. Woody had landed on his feet; meeting a gorgeous woman who had the exact same life and relationship goals as him. They were intending to buy a camping ground or caravan park on the beach in Port Douglas or Cairns and make a living off renting them out to holiday makers, and surf and have lots of lovers, pot and children. They were perfect for each other.
The wedding had been on the beach, and it had been beautiful, the sun coming down behind them as they said their vows. The after party lasting long into the night.

Most of them didn’t remember that night too.

The nine gang members had another few days in Sydney before they flew out. They visited Taronga Zoo and learned about the conservation efforts the zoo was doing around the world; bringing many animals back from extinction in the wild. Rae and Finn started to appreciate Phil’s environmentalism when they saw yet another beautiful animal that was nearly extinct in the wild that the zoo was doing a breeding program for to try and save.

They weren’t looking forward to saying goodbye to Australia. Not only was it stunningly beautiful, but they had all agreed to have holidays together and leaving Australia would mark the end of the gang holiday for 1999.

Part of Rae missed her own home deeply, but part of her never wanted to go home; something had been awoken in her soul. She wanted to travel the world. Phil and Finn agreed heartily with her and they started to daydream together out loud about where they’d go whenever they were alone.

Rae decided to get ink while they were Sydney and preparing to go home; a phoenix Phil had drawn and Finn had done the colours for. It was a blue, green and purple phoenix, it didn’t look like peacock as you’d expect; it was clearly a bird on fire, and the flames were blue and green and purple. Phil had drawn the phoenix after Rae had said she identified with the bird, feeling like she was one after overcoming mental illness, even though she sometimes still struggled with it, she was mostly doing fine now, and Finn had chosen the colours and coloured it lovingly, based on their favoured colours.

They had given her the drawing and she had known she’d get it tattooed on her. She had intended something small, but when the tattooist looked at her she had told Rae it’d need to be big to do the details. In the end the phoenix went on her back. The head near her right shoulder, the wigs rising up the left shoulder and the tail feathers circling down over the top of her left buttock and hip. It had cost a fortune and taken hours to do. There had been a lot of blood and pain, and they’d had to do it all in one sitting because Rae was leaving the country in only a few days, and they didn’t want to do a second sitting where it was all scabbed over and healing. Her men had sat with her, holding her hands and soothing her. At first they’d both said they’d get one too, but after seeing the process and the blood, they both decided against it. For now.

Weeks later as they lay back in their own bed and traced the lines of the healed up tattoo and marvelled at how good it looked, they both agreed that it would be worth going through that pain to have something so beautiful. Both were now on the lookout for tattoos of their own; that would mean something and suit them.

Life returned to normal after the summer holidays, the second year of university was upon them;
harder, with a heavier workload, and Phil was starting to get a lot more acting gigs in theatre and ads, and small bit parts on tv. Finn and Rae’s DJ show was listened to by everyone on campus, and Finn knew he had found his calling; the second year of his four year degree was proving to be much easier for him. Rae wrote, got her first rejection letter from a publisher, was comforted by her lads, and kept on writing, but started to wonder why she had chosen to do a four year double degree; it was so much work.

Sadly, the next time all the gang were together was at New Year’s when they welcomed in the New Year 2000 in style. They still emailed and called often, but life was starting to get in the way and it slowed down from every day to once or twice a week. That was still twice as much as Rae called her mum; and didn’t Linda let her know all about it.
Rae did feel a little guilty skipping out on her feminism club to watch her boys play football. Not just because it didn’t feel like she was crushing the patriarchy by skipping intellectual feminist debate to leave a wet patch on her seat and try not to groan as she watched them, but also because this was the boys’ time. They had come to understand that they needed the most time as a trio, but they also needed time alone and time in pairs to maintain a healthy, balanced relationship and their own mental health. But it was such a pleasure to see her lads in action that she couldn’t resist coming to watch them play a game. She was debating whether she’d sneak off after or let them know she’d been there. She also decided that maybe it was smashing the patriarchy in some small way to come here and reverse the roles placed on them by society by sexually objectifying the hell out of her men.

She sat down part way through the first half and instantly saw Finn running up the wing, the ball in front of him. The muscles in his thighs moved powerfully with every long stride he took, his foot slamming down into the grass, making his calves flex.

Rae felt her innards go weak at the sight of him, she barely had the ability to bite her bottom lip.

And then he let rip a long, hard, fast pass diagonally across the whole width of the field and it was stopped by Phil, bringing up the other wing. He was further away, but Rae saw that self-possessed physical control over his body that Phil had, clearly on display as he ran the ball almost up to the corner. His long legs and speed getting him ahead of the defender quite easily. He stop and turned on a dime and Rae groaned slightly. That physical control Phil had came from years of discipline, and she knew that every muscle in his body would be working to move him that precisely, never making a move that wasn’t deliberate. He kicked the ball into the box in front of the goal with incredible force, and Rae saw Finn waiting for him, he leapt into the air; one of the things he’d learned to do particularly well because of the AFL matches they’d played in Stamford, and headed the ball into the back of the net, the goalie having no chance to stop it.

She was on her feet cheering loudly before she even got close to remembering that she wasn’t supposed to be here. Luckily the stands were filled with uni students cheering just as loudly as she did. Phil ran to Finn and they embraced exuberantly, Phil jumping up with his legs around Finn’s waist, celebrating the goal. It was not different to any number of goal celebrations she’d seen, but to Rae it was practically foreplay and she wondered if Finn could fuck Phil in that position like he had her, and vice versa; Phil’s strength was improving since they’d continued their gym sessions. The rest of the team ran to them and embraced them happily.

There was a moment, a moment most people would miss, when Phil jumped off Finn, where Finn’s hand lingered on Phil’s lower back and they exchanged a very brief but very lusty look, before maintaining their sporting professionalism and ran back to their positions before the goalie kicked off. No wonder they were always ready for sex as soon as they all got home.

She watched Finn make dozens of runs up the wing, Phil and Finn constantly stealing the ball and
trying to set the other up for the goal, but they didn’t score again before half time.

She watched them head down to the change rooms, both of her men taking their shirts off and wiping their faces with them. A group of girls were hanging around near the corridor from the field to the change rooms and she watched them giggling and trying to play it cool in front of the lads. She also noticed that her two lads were particularly popular amongst the girls, but they were chatting together and barely noticed the girls.

When the second half started Phil was on her side of the field now and she got to watch him up close and Finn further afield.

It was as equally erotic and Rae was positively clenching her hands around the edge of her seat to stop herself squirming in her seat by the end of it.

Every hard run.

Every straining muscle.

Every panting breath.

Every masterful bit of playing off each other they did.

Every rough bit of play, secret elbows, tackles, sledging.

Rae made a high-pitched tiny noise of pure lust in the back of her throat when Phil got a goal and Finn launched himself at him, knocking Phil to the floor, the two of them hugging and cheering in celebration. She only saw them for a moment before the rest of the team stacked on top of them equally as excited by the goal.

The audience was equally happy and disappointed by the 2-1 score at the end of the match, depending on who they were supporting, Finn and Phil’s cheering squad of very attractive girls were ecstatic. Rae watched as the finally managed to get her boys’ attention and they exchanged a few sentences with them. The girls breathless and ecstatic, both Finn and Phil awkward and disinterested; she could tell that this was a weekly event by the look of boredom on Phil’s face and the tight, uninviting smile on Finn’s face. The conversation lasted less than 30 seconds before they both headed into the change rooms, several of the other lads ribbing them about their groupies and the girls giggling delightedly.

Rae decided she had to see them now and deal with the consequences of invading their special boy-only sporting time after she’d had them both thoroughly fuck her.

She jumped over the fence between the stands and the playing field, rather un-elegantly, and walked along the fence line to the corridor to the change rooms. The girls saw her doing t and decided they could do it too. She saw them and didn’t care one bit. She knew she couldn’t go into the change room, but she could wait at the door for them. The other girls waited with her, giggling and excited, but her eyes stayed focussed on the door. Waiting.

When the first lad came out he saw all the giggling girls and called back into the change room.

“Nelson, Seymour, your groupies are waiting for you out here.” Rae grinned when she heard the groan from them inside. She knew they’d dawdle, hoping that taking a long time would make the girls get tired of waiting.

They wouldn’t.
And she wouldn’t.

They were actually really nice girls, Rae discovered as they waited; they invited her into their mini fangirl club but Rae politely declined and didn’t say much else to them. But that didn’t stop them from chatting happily and she learned that they were all 14 and from the local school. Rae remembered fondly what it was to be 14, she was 20 now and that seemed like a lifetime ago even though it really wasn’t. Finn would be turning 21 soon and later in the year Phil and she would also hit that mark. Rae tried not to listen to the girls, but their conversation was so animated it was hard not to; they were completely in lust with her two boys, noticing tiny details about them from their hands to the amount of stubble they had, to the outline of their cocks in their shorts. Some having a preference for one or the other, some for both. They all theorised wildly about what kind of girl they both liked, and given how obvious it was that they were friends, there was some conjecture that they might be more than friends, but there had never been any obvious sign of that on the field, which is the only place these girls saw them, until today that was. But most importantly, they were loving and supportive of each other, declaring they’d share the boys rather than fight over them. Rae preferred their attitude to all the girl hate she’d experienced in the past over being with Finn, and then Finn and Phil. She hoped their niceness didn’t disappear when they saw that the fat girl had those two delicious boys to herself.

As expected Finn and Phil waited for half an hour, all the other players filing out with their gear, their hair wet after the showers, grinning and shaking their heads at the girls. A couple of them recognised Rae from uni and said hi to her, setting the other girls off trying to quietly speculate how Rae knew them all.

Phil was already rolling his eyes when he came out, Finn following close behind, mid-sentence and resolutely ignoring the girls.

“Rae.” Phil’s expression instantly changed and all the girls watched as he and Finn went over to her and both kissed her hello on the cheek.

“What are you doing here?” Finn said happily.

“Decided to come and watch you play.” She said with an impish grin. “Sorry.”

“No you’re very welcome to come watch our games.” Finn said and bit his bottom lip; he knew just how horny Rae got after watching he and Phil play.

“Was your club cancelled?” Phil asked.

“No, but I can miss one every now and then to show me lads some support…” She flashed him a very saucy look and Phil’s expression changed again; he was very readable to Finn and Rae now, even though others might not be able to perceive what he was thinking.

“What’s your first names?” One of the girls said breathlessly; obviously terrified of asking and only doing it after having been pressured into it by her mates. Phil and Finn turned their eyes to them, Rae silently urged them to be nice; they were good kids.

“How old are you?” Finn asked gently, the girls tried to stop themselves from giggling; he was just so attractive.

“Old enough.” She said and jutted her chin in a way that was so reminiscent of Chloe that Rae felt instantly protective of this girl; she knew that Chloe would have done and said things like this, but the men she said it to were very different to these two men.
“Slightly rounded cheeks indicate you haven’t completely finished puberty yet.” Phil said softly and looked at Finn, “I estimate 13 or 14 at most.” The girls were all mesmerised by him; he sounded so sophisticated when he spoke. Finn gave him a grim look and looked back at the girls.

“Is he right?” He asked them and after a moment of hesitation they all slowly nodded. Rae wanted to take them all to her feminist club; teach them that they didn’t need to sacrifice themselves on the altar of being desirable to a male. Phil and Finn exchanged a look, wondering if every 20 year old lad had 14 year olds showing such a clear sexual interest in them.

“We are quite a bit older than you.” Phil said softly.

“Doesn’t matter.” One of the other girls said. “Loads of famous guys are with younger girls.” All the girls agreed with her and both lads looked at Rae. But Rae was looking at the girls; she had thought the same thing herself at their age. She was never brave enough to say it out loud and part of her admired their bravery, but she knew it was false bravado; she saw young Chloe all over all of them.

“We’re too old for you.” Phil answered.

“Far too old.” Finn backed him up.

“They’re stupid and immature.” A third girl said; all of them looked thunderstruck and they grasped hold of what this girl had said as if this was somehow going to make Finn and Phil agree to an orgy with all of them.

“Well I can’t argue with that.” Phil answered honestly, wondering how brutal he should be with the girls to make them stop. “But so are all of you.” He shrugged, “Because if you don’t realise that with 20 year olds they have all the power and you would be expected to have sex with him, but with boys your own age you’d have all the power cos they’d just be so excited that you might play with their knob that they’ll do anything for you, then you’re all fools.” Finn lit a cigarette and watched the girls crumbling; they had so hoped that Finn or Phil would instantly fall in love with them, “Girls the world round need to understand that dick is very easy to get. You have the power; don’t fawn after stupid boys just cos you think they’re pretty. Own yourself and your body and make any man that wants to even look at it fucking work for the privilege.” Rae watched Phil trying to get through to them, “Don’t crush on us, we’re just ordinary guys, there’s no reason for you to adore us or worship us. And on top o’ that we’re too old for you.”

“And we’re both also in a committed relationship.” Finn put the last nail in the coffin.

“With each other.” Rae added with a grim smile that made all the girls look horrified.

“And her.” Finn amended and pointed at Rae, “It’s threeaway thing.”

“Go home, find a 14 year old boy to drive crazy with the hope you’ll let him do stuff to you and
don’t waste yourselves on older men.” Phil said and turned back to Rae. “Did you wanna see the change rooms girl?” He too remembered how horny Rae got after watching them play. The girls turned away, disappointed, but one of them stayed, watching them.

“You’re wrong.” She said with a trembling voice. “You’ve just proven that y’are worth adoring, and not just cos you’re both pretty.” She looked from one of them tot the other, “I mean did you hear about the guy from Weezer? Wrote a song about fantasising about the young girl who wrote about how she loved him… he fanaticised about her in her school uniform.” She looked down at her hands momentarily and then back up at them, “Better to worship both of you than him.” She turned and ran to catch up with her friends.

“I think you got very determined fans.” Rae said as soon as she was out of earshot, “But she’s right. If you’re gonna fan over something or someone, better you two than fucking perverts.” Finn gave her a slightly unimpressed look and she laughed, “Better for them, you can’t deny it!”

“Aye alright.” Finn grumbled, having a feeling that those girls would be back at the next match.

“Now about the tour of the locker?” She asked saucily; that last girl had made her fears for the girls diminish. That girl was the ‘Rhys’ of their group; they’d be alright.

Phil pushed her up against the wall and kissed her deeply as Finn started to close the door to the change rooms behind him. He got halfway through closing the huge metal gate when a sudden thought came to him and he grinned deviously as he decided to leave it open; they’d be fucking with their eyes on the door; the fear of getting caught was a massive aphrodisiac for Rae. Finn went over to join them and Rae turned to him and kissed him passionately, all her pent up sexual frustration from watching the game was coming out now.

“No lube.” Phil lamented as his hand slipped over Finn’s arse.

“Oh this is all about fucking me!” Rae said unapologetically, “You two go running around out there and being so sexy; it’s your job to relieve my tension now.”

“Yes Ma’am!” Finn laughed and kissed her neck, his hands going to the buttons of her shirt.

“Finn the door’s open.” Rae gasped as Phil, kissing the other side of her neck bit her.

“I know.” He answered and pushed her down onto the bench, her shirt falling open. Phil looked up at the door and then down at Finn pushing up Rae’s skirt. She was reaching out for him, so Phil went to her and she unzipped his jeans, pulling his cock into her mouth.

Finn moaned happily as he buried his face in her wet cunt, licking and sucking at her and watching her suck Phil’s cock while Phil’s hands travelled over the now familiar landscape of her body, seeking out her sensitive spots to coax even more pleasure out of her.

Finn felt Rae starting to tense up with approaching orgasm and tapped Phil’s arse.

“Tag you’re it.” He grinned and they swapped places, eliciting an annoyed grunt from Rae. She always pretended to be more annoyed than she was when they delayed her orgasm like this and the lads knew that. She didn’t mind a little bit of it because it made her orgasms that much bigger. But too much of it led to so much frustration she’d yell abuse at them, which she had done at Phil when he was last in charge at the club and hadn’t let Finn or her cum for a full 6 hours. They
didn’t know he was very, very slowly building up to 12, 24, a whole weekend…

Phil played to his strong point and ran his fingers along her crack, sending shivers through her body. He’d had 20 months now to figure out her body, and he had a good idea of what to do to her, but he knew he’d be spending the rest of his life exploring and discovering her. He looked up at Finn and knew he’d be spending a lifetime figuring his body out too.

If you asked Rae or Finn they’d tell you Phil already had it figured out.

“Fuck!” Rae gasped and her eyes rolled back into her head; Phil’s fingers were deep inside of her. It took everything she had to keep sucking Finn instead of succumbing to the pleasure and becoming completely useless. Finn had to stop himself from chuckling as he watched her struggle and gasping for breath as she sucked his cock; Phil doing his best to render her incapable of movement. Rae didn’t know it, but it was a source of friendly competition between the boys; they took it in turns, today was Phil’s turn, next time they had sex it’d be Finn’s turn, and they timed how long it took them to make her go completely limp with pleasure.

And she was gone. Phil and Finn exchanged a quick glance silently comparing notes on who was currently ahead. Phil licked eagerly at her clit and Rae gasped again, but both lads knew what the absolute sweet spot was and Finn joined Phil, both lads taking a moment to enjoy the way Phil’s fingers looked moving around in and out of her vagina before Finn, the undisputed champion of oral sex, except for that deep throat thing, went down while Phil, the king of all things hand related, kept fingering her. This and double penetration, where one of them penetrated her vagina, the other her anus, were the things guaranteed to make her scream every single time.

They both felt that it was like she was built for the two of them. Not one of them; it had to be both of them. Which suited them just fine since they both felt like they themselves had been built for two people as well.

Rae felt a sense of losing control of her innards. Her chest felt light and her lungs worked overtime as she gasped through growing waves of pleasure. The usual shudders that came with orgasm rolled through her slowly and she felt every tensing of every fibre of muscle; slow contract, slow release and build, always the pleasure built. Her voice became ragged, gasping screams of pleasure as her orgasm, slowly but powerfully rocked her body; this was a tag-team specialty of the boys, the slow burn cum, keeping Rae in the state of orgasm for as long as they could. But they had to work together as a team, reading Rae’s physical reactions, and once she was orgasming, silently communicating with each other to shift who was stimulating her the most, the alternating pleasure points keeping her flying like a kite on the slow burning volcanic updraft of the waves of pleasure they were giving her. There was always a particular pitch and tone her voice took when it was time to speed up and turn the slow shudders into faster more violent shakes that would wrack her whole body, her loud groans of pleasure both urgent and exhausted, her hand squeezed into fists. And then Phil and Finn executed their squirt move; they were still perfecting it, but Phil would press up and finger her quite hard and fast, while Finn sucked and rolled her clitoris between his lips. The two things done together at the right time in the right rhythm seemed to almost always produce that final loss of control as Rae completely collapsed into pleasure.

Rae felt herself going blank. Being submissive and more recently being tag-teamed were the only things that shut up her mind; but it wasn’t just her mind it was her whole body, forgetting to hate itself and just collapsing into the pleasure and the love these two gave her. Everything she was, was momentarily on hold and all that existed were the waves of pleasure and then she felt herself lose complete control over herself and everything inside went lose and all of her muscles, taught with pleasure simultaneously collapsed into ecstasy and a clear fluid gushed from her cunt all over Finn’s face and Phil’s hand and arm.
Women can and do ejaculate, and Phil and Finn were learning that when they do, it’s something quite stunning to behold, let alone to have caused it. And they had been practising for months on how to get her to do it reliably…

They were always such smug pricks when they pulled it off.

The cleaner stopped his trolley at the door to the change rooms. He didn’t even bother starting to pull out his mop. He heard them, waited for just long enough to ascertain that the female voice he could hear was clearly a willing participant with the multiple male voices he could hear and left. He wasn’t paid enough for this shit; he’d just call security.

Finn didn’t wipe his face off before he kissed Phil, and Phil was glad for that; he loved tasting Rae on Finn’s skin and vice versa. Rae’s head was thrown back, her body weak, and still having aftershocks of pleasure, her breathing rapid, but deep. Finn pointed to himself and Phil nodded; Finn could go first, and Finn was inside of her before Phil had finished nodding. Rae started to groan again and Finn put his hands behind her knees, holding her legs apart. Phil kissed Rae’s lips and neck for some time before slowly licking his way down her body to her cunt. Phil licked all along Finn’s shaft and Rae’s pussy, paying special attention to her clitoris and Finn slowly thrust into her, tilting his pelvis up when he was in as deep as he could go and keeping it tilted up as he withdrew slightly before flattening his pelvis for the inward thrust again. Phil had discovered that Rae enjoyed the out as much as the in; they were both always trying different things, different rhythms, tilts of the hips, circular thrusts, deep grinding… it was never just a bit of the old in and out for them. It was an art form to be mastered.

“Go to finish.” Phillip said softly and Finn nodded; they had to hurry it up the cleaner would be here soon. Finn watched Phil’s face turn back down and felt his mouth riding along his shaft as it slid in and out of Rae. He focussed on Rae and the growing urge to cum tingling up through his balls.

The feel of Phil licking her cunt and Finn fucking her so passionately had Rae coming again and again; it always did.

When Finn got close he pulled out of Rae and pulled Phil’s mouth over his cock, burying his cock deep down Phil’s throat he thrust a few times and came loudly. Phil sucked it all up, not letting a drop go to waste, and because he knew how much Finn liked it, he went to Rae and kissed her messily, Finn’s semen moving between their mouths, Finn unable to take his eyes off it, his mouth open in lusty desire.

“So fucking sexy.” He murmured gutturally. Phil and Rae grinned at him, their mouths slick with his cum, Phil licking it from Rae’s lips and swallowing. Finn collapsed happily onto the bench as Rae sat up, ready to suck Phil’s achingly erect cock, but Finn laid down in her spot.

“Sit on me face girl.” He said, still panting with his orgasm. Phil motioned for her to do so, but the bench wasn’t wide enough to get her knees beside Finn’s head so she stood astride the bench. Finn ran his hands down her legs enjoying how long his tall girl’s legs were, and how thick her thighs were. Phil watched Finn lean up and bite on Rae’s labia gently before coming up behind
her, standing astride the bench and slowly curling his fingers through her hair, pulling her head back until she was looking at the ceiling, her back arching beautifully. Phil kissed her neck and Rae stared at the bugs flying around the light as Finn’s tongue slid the full length of her crack, licking her cunt and arsehole expertly before Finn moved on to suck Phil’s cock, lick his balls and his arsehole. Phil froze when Finn’s tongue rimmed his arse; he always did for a moment before being able to move again. The first time Finn had licked his arse Phil had frozen halfway between the clean freak in him screaming and the dirty whore in him melting into a puddle of ecstasy. The pleasure had won. It always won. And now the three of them had licked each other all over, including arseholes so many times that Phil had joked that the clean freak part of himself, on this topic, had been taken out back and shot in the head. They were dirty, and getting dirtier; and he was so into it, it surprised him sometimes. He groaned loudly as Finn pulled his cheeks apart and really got his tongue into it.

“Fucking hell.” He murmured; it was so good. One of his hands slid over Rae’s curves and found her breast, squeezing it hard, his fingers teasing her nipple. He pulled at her hair harder and she let a gentle groan leave her lips, his lips gently tickling her neck juxtaposing with his firm hands deliciously. And then Finn’s tongue was back on her clit and she was groaning loudly. It was just so incredible having the both of them focussed on her and her pleasure. Phil’s hand went from her breast to her hip as Finn’s hand came up to wrap around her legs to hold her in place while he went to town on her cunt. Phil slowly ran his hand from her hair to her upper back and gently pushed, Rae slowly bent down, her legs staying straight, as Phil’s hand travelled down her back. She placed her hands on the bench on either side of Finn’s hips and bent low enough to start sucking Finn’s cock; only semi-erect after coming.

“Don’t wake him back up.” Finn’s voice was muffled, “We gotta get going. The cleaner’s coming.”

“Oh huh.” Rae seemed to agree, her mouth around his cock, sucking the last few drops of cum out of him and feeling the blood pumping back into Finn’s cock. Finn sighed and knew he would be achingly hard again when they had to leave, especially since he was watching Phil slide his cock into Rae, close up. He was surrounded by the smell, sound and sight of them fucking while his cock was sucked. He groaned loudly as Rae moaned as Phil pushed in deep; Phil liked to fuck balls deep. Even blindfolded Rae could tell the difference between her men; they felt different and they fucked and made love differently. She enjoyed their similarities, but especially their differences. Finn licked from Rae’s clit, down along Phil’s shaft and balls up to Phil’s arse, and back; making love to their joined genitals with his mouth.

Rae was coming again almost instantly and her body was shuddering halfway between violent orgasms and too exhausted to move. She didn’t know how much longer she could stand like this and keep coming and not just collapse. She made an urgent sound in her throat and they understood her need. And of course set out to make her cum even more, Finn focussing his considerably talented mouth on her clit and Phil licked his finger and slid it into her arse. Her groaning became more urgent, her legs quivering, her breathing more ragged than ever, no longer able to suck Finn’s cock, she just had her mouth open gasping, his cock on her lips. Rae was coming loudly when her legs gave way and she collapsed onto Finn, both lads positioning her off his face as she collapsed and Phil withdrew and thrust into Finn’s mouth until he came a few moments later, Finn sucking at him hard to get it all.

“Oh fuck!” Phil shuddered as Finn sucked his very sensitive post-orgasm cock. Rae managed to get up and kiss Finn around Phil’s cock, his cum messily going from mouth to mouth. They both swallowed and Phil came down to them to kiss them both.

“You two aren’t ever allowed to leave me.” Rae said as she pulled her bra back down over her
breasts; they had all only partially undressed.

“I love you too.” Finn grinned and pulled his jeans up and zipped them.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t be happy without both of you. I love you both.” Phil pulled his shirt back down, he had lifted it and put the end over his head, leaving it on his arms but the entirety of his chest and stomach bare.

“Fuck you two are sentimental.” Rae laughed, “I just meant I don’t think I could go back to normal sex! It’d just be so disappointing and mono-dicked… I just wouldn’t see the point of doing it without multiple orgasms…” They all laughed, “But I love you both too. I’d be fuckin’ useless without the both o’ you.”

“You gonna come to all our games girl?” Finn asked.

“Some of ‘em.” She grinned, “But not the practice sessions. I can’t miss out on too much feminism. Plus this is your time; you need your boy time.”

“Just warn us the next time you’re coming.” Phil answered.

“Aye so we can bring lube.” Finn read Phil’s mind, “Would’ve loved to fuck your arse girl.”

“Aye.” Phil agreed and they all left the change rooms arm in arm. As they headed down the street towards home they saw security pull up and all had to supress their laughter and try to look as inconspicuous as possible as they saw him go into the change rooms to check it out.
Phil sat on the tube and contemplated that in the 27 months he’d been with Rae and Finn he’d come on such an extraordinary journey. He’d never been happier and it felt like all the dark, miserable parts of his soul had been excised. And he had come to understand what the idea of ‘home’ actually meant.

He reminisced about all the things they’d done, the daft things, the brilliant things, the small arguments, the huge arguments, coming to terms with Rae’s truly awful cooking, Finn’s complete inability to clean the kitchen to Rae or Phil’s liking, Phil’s obsessive need to organise everything making Rae and Finn crazy sometimes, the lovemaking, the deviancy they got up to at the club, them trying not to laugh at him getting annoyed at the people on wheel of fortune, listening to their radio show, falling asleep in their arms. They were his life those two dickheads.

But now he had to go away for two weeks. He’d just been in a meeting with his agent and he had been offered a small speaking part in a movie. It was only four scenes and maybe a dozen lines, but he had to take it. He wasn’t sure why it’d take two weeks in Greece for that, but it was paid acting, and such a huge opportunity; there were some big names in this movie including Sir Ian McKellen. He was in a slightly morose mood as soon as he thought about 2 weeks away from them.

He walked home from the tube station thinking about how he was going to tell them, and how happy and unhappy they’d simultaneously be. And how supportive and amazing they’d be too.

He took a deep breath and opened the door to hear them fucking.

Phil froze. They all knew that this could happen; they’d agreed it was OK for them to have sex in pairings. But to his knowledge, this was the first time it had happened.

He came in and closed the door quietly, not sure how he was feeling and sat down on the lounge as quietly as he could, wanting to let them have their time together. He started to wonder if they always fucked when he wasn’t around.

He tried to use his logic to get his raging emotions under control; they were all over the place and he didn’t know what to do with them. And then he heard Finn murmur something and Rae respond and he felt his heart ache. He tried to push down the negative thoughts starting to crop up in his mind; he knew these whispers were just jealousy, and they weren’t true.

He meditated and examined his feelings in the stillness of his mind.

He was jealous. And very concerned that they were doing this every time he wasn’t around. And very, very jealous.

He applied logic over the top of it; they’d agreed that this could happen, and it didn’t mean that
they didn’t love him… or that he was the side guy.

“What are you doing out here?” Phil was snapped out of his agonising, hopelessly circular, contemplation by Finn having come out of the bedroom to get a drink of water for both of them. He stood at the doorway, naked, erect penis glistening; they hadn’t finished yet, in fact neither of them had cum yet. Rae sat up in the bed when she heard Finn speak and looked at Finn’s back.

“I’m…” But how could he answer? Phil had no idea what to say. What was he doing out here? “I’m being ridiculous…” He felt the admission coming to his lips before he was sure that he wanted them to hear it, “I’m being jealous…” Finn moved further into the room when he heard that word, “it’s just… the first time two of us have sex without the third there… it… just had to be you two right? I know I’m being daft, I just….” Phil had stuttered through his admission and now he looked away, ashamed.

“Phil, you could’ve come in and joined us. We wanted you too, that was the point; we only just started fucking cos we knew you was gonna be home soon, and this was a kind of welcome home thing for you.” Finn tried to see Phil’s face, but he was looking down. When he spoke, his voice sounded strangled with emotion and doubt that he should even be saying these words.

“So… so you don’t do this all the time then?” Phil asked. Rae couldn’t see Phil from where she was sitting in their bed, but the tone of his voice made her heart break. She got up out of the bed and came to the doorway. Rae didn’t go into the room, she felt that this was something she should let Finn handle.

“What kinda machine do you think I am lad?” Finn asked with a bemused tone, “You know how often we three fuck?” He sat down next to Phil and Rae was struck by her two boys; Finn completely naked and Phil fully clothed, “On average twice a day for the last 2 fucking years!” Finn shook his head in amazement, “I don’t have the fucking energy to make it three times a day with everything else I got going on! I’ll work up to it if you wanna have pairings boy.” Finn put a hand on the back of his neck, “But right now I’m quite happy with it always being trio. I think we all are.”

“Oh fuck…” Phil groaned and covered his face with a hand, “I’m so sorry. God I’m a prick for thinking that way.’” Phil stood up, clearly very upset with himself, “Fuck, you weren’t even fucking for yourselves you were doing it to greet me… and I fucking sulk out here. I’m such a fucking melodramatic prick.”

“No you’re not a prick.” Finn said sternly and lit a cigarette, “And to be honest, in hindsight, it were probably a bad plan…” Finn blew out smoke, “I can’t imagine it were nice to walk in on us when you weren’t expecting it… and for it to be the first time there’s been a pairing, for it to look like it were going on behind your back.” Finn shook his head, “I think we owe you an apology. Not the other way round.”

“No Finn…” Phil was on a roll being deeply disappointed with himself now. “Over 2 two years we been together and I let… I let one thing get to me... make me think that… I thought I’d gotten over this pessimism that used to be inside o’ me…” Phil shook his head almost despairingly; he was so completely angry at himself.

“Stop being so hard on yourself!” Finn demanded and Phil turned to him with a confused expression; the concept of not being hard on himself was almost entirely alien to Phillip. “You didn’t have those feelings cos you’re a prick. How you feel never makes you a prick. It’s what you do with the feelings that makes you a prick.” Finn said the words so sternly you’d think they were arguing, “And you didn’t have those thoughts cos you’re a prick either. You had ‘em cos you’re still not sure you deserve this.” Finn sucked on his cigarette and watched Phil’s face as he
worked through his emotions, “You, me, Rae; we all had fucked up parents. You more than us two… and it makes us all have questions over our worth. You think I don’t see the similarities between us? I know I’m the dumbest one out of us but—”

“Don’t say that about yourself Finn, you’re fucking brilliant and-”

“But,” Finn cut in over Phil, “I been to enough therapy to know that the shit that happens to you, the real bad stuff your parents do to you, and fucking mental illness that just comes outta nowhere… this stuff… this stuff, it doesn’t just go away.” Finn spoke with a conviction that moved Rae. She understood that he’d already been through this shit with her; he knew what he was talking about. “It takes years to just come to terms with it, and then try to figure out how to live with it and cope with it. And it might never go away; you’ll just get better at managing it.” Finn put his cigarette in the ashtray and looked around the room as he thought of all the things he wanted to say to Phil to let him know it was ok, “and it’s ok if you… if you relapse… I don’t know if relapse is the right word.” Finn furrowed his brow and bit the inside of his mouth in thought before shaking it off and moving on, “Point is, you’re not a prick for having a moment.” He said it with absolute conviction, “You just gotta think better of yourself… cos having those doubts don’t say nothing about me and Rae, or how you feel about us; you’re in love with us… Having those doubts says everything about you and how you feel about you.” Finn watched Phil look down at his hands and slowly come back to the lounge to sit down, “Be kind to yourself Phil, alright?” He put a hand on Phil’s thigh, “I love you, and I won’t stand by and let anyone call you a prick. Not even you.” There was a silence that filled the room after those words. Phil felt tears stinging at his eyes. “So,” Finn continued slowly, “You know, it’s alright for you to feel however you feel, you should—”

“But Finn, it’s so ridiculous.” Phil answered sadly. Finn took a long moment to look at Phil, he had never really seen him beating himself up this badly, this openly; he normally did it in the private recesses of his mind and those closest to him had only the slightest inkling of it. Finn tried to think of what the best way was to shut down this cycle of Phil mentally beating himself up was. “It’s not ridiculous.” He finally admitted. “Sometimes…” He was about to say something he had not wanted to give any airplay to; he knew it was foolish, but it was still inside of him, so he knew it was time to air it out. “Sometimes I see the way you and Rae look at each other, the way you kiss and… it’s just… you two have such a special bond… such a special love and I…” Finn shook his head and Rae furrowed her brows; this was her fault, she was the one who had loved them both, who couldn’t let one of them go. She had dragged them into it, and now it was going to fall apart. Tears dripped down her face but she maintained her silence. “You never said anything.” Phil said sadly, feeling the same pain Rae did; terrified it was all beginning to unravel. “Neither did you.” Finn said pointedly, “But we both probably should have.”

“Why didn’t you?” Phil just managed to keep control of his voice, but he couldn’t stop his hand from shaking and he knew the fear in his heart was plastered all over his face. “Cos then I remember that I’ve got a special bond with Rae too.” Finn said with a grin that made Phil’s heart skip a beat, “and I’ve got a special bond with you.” Finn put his hand on Phil’s face, “And we all fit together.” Finn saw the fear in Phil’s eyes being replaced with reassurance. “We fit.” He pulled Phil closer and put his forehead on his, “We fit Phil. We all have these bonds together, and they’re all different. And none of our bonds are more important the other. I think that sometimes, the way this world insists that we all do the same thing just gets under me skin, and I have to just remember that it’s ok for us to be different. And I remember that these doubts…
they say more about how I feel about myself than you two. And I don’t beat myself up about having the doubts cos… well me ma taught me that the first thought we have is the way society taught us to think, and the second thought we have is who we are.” He met Phil’s eyes and saw understanding, “It takes time to unlearn society’s lessons and that’s on top o’ the shit we learned from our parents. It all teaches us to doubt ourselves, and that you can only have a special bond with one person, and if you love one person, you must forsake all others, and all sorts of other shite. It takes a lot to unlearn all this.” Finn kissed Phil’s forehead, “But we got each other’s backs and we’ll help each other through these moments.” Phil nodded his head slowly.

“I think we probably all need to talk about it more.” Phil said softly.

“Aye we do.” Fin said immutably, “cos stuff like this… it starts out as small nothings, but it can build if you don’t shine a light on it. Kester taught me that, shit grows if you don’t deal with it.” Rae heard his words and realised that the three of them had been living in a kind of fantasy for two years, and they hadn’t been talking about the hard topics; she’d been actively pushing down her own fears. Just like Finn and Phil it seemed.

“I sometimes worry I don’t have the right parts for you two.” She blurted out and they both turned to look at her; they hadn’t realised she was there. “I know, it’s completely daft, right? But something me mum said just keep staying with me.” Rae shook her head and shrugged as if apologising that her mother’s words had gotten under her skin, “she said that maybe you two was gay. She implied that you just couldn’t admit it, or that you both didn’t realise it yet and that you just loved me as a friend.” She looked down and saw herself pushing her nails under each other painfully; something she hadn’t done in years, and made herself stop, “and so many people, even in the queer community, talk about bisexuality like it don’t exist. Like it’s that you’re confused or greedy and you can’t make up your mind. So sometimes…” She couldn’t look at them as she admitted this, it just felt so foolish now that she was saying it out loud but it had been festering in her chest silently, barely noticed even by herself, “I get worried, even though I know how fucking daft it is. We wouldn’t even be here if you two hadn’t fallen in love with me… but I’m still the odd ne out.”

“You two are doing the same degree.” Finn answered, “It’s just not a sexual thing; you can be the odd one out intellectually, like me.”

“Finn no, you’re so fucking smart.” Phil countered, remembering how Finn had put himself down earlier, “You make very complex scientific theory look like a doddle.” Phil asserted and Finn shrugged.

“Aye I’m smart, I know that, but not at what you two are smart at and I miss relationship stuff that you two don’t; I’m dumb at the stuff you’re smarty at. And smart at stuff you’re not interested in.”

“No Finn-” Rae began but he held his hands up to say he hadn’t finished.

“That’s me at me worst… but then I remember that you two would be fucking useless without me!” He laughed, “Who’d put your fucking shelves up, or educate you on contemporary music. I know Rae thinks she’s good but really… we all know we need me to lead the way there.” He grinned at Rae’s narrowed eyes, “I’m the only one that can cook in a way that all three of us love, anything science related is me, and y’are both actually interested in that… and I’m quite a fucking genius at that stuff.” He shrugged, “Alright so Shakespeare beats me, and sometimes I miss the emotional relationship stuff, and I don’t know Chopin from Beethoven.” Phil grinned at Finn’s words and Finn shrugged, “We’ve each got out strong points, and we work well together. None of us would work alone, and I don’t think we’d work as a duo now either.”

“You’re right Finn.” Rae said, “We give each other different things and that’s why we work. You
know Kester would want us to talk it out, be honest right away, even on the smallest things; don’t let it fester and poison the relationship.”

“I think that sounds like the best thing to do. I don’t want anything to ever come between us.” Phil said earnestly and Finn took his hand, Rae sat beside him and took his other hand, both of them silently saying ‘me neither’ to him with that gesture. It was so comforting.

“Well the best relationships have people in them who are willing to do the hard work.” Finn answered, “So let’s begin. I’m sorry that Rae and I chose to shag without you, as a surprise for you to join in when you got home; it was actually a much worse idea than we thought it was.” Finn shook his head, “I totally understand why it made you jealous,” He paused for a moment and pressed on, “But you know sometimes Rae and me might shag without you being here… and sometimes it’s just gonna be you and Rae, and sometimes it’ll just be you and me. And we all have to either accept that, like we said in the past, or decide that it’s no go zone and it must always be trio sex. One or the other.”

“I don’t wanna ban us having duo sex.” Phil said and Rae and Finn agreed with him.

“Aim for it to always be trio or, but sometimes it’ll happen,” Rae agreed, “And we shouldn’t feel bad for enjoying each other,”

“I’m sorry.” Phil felt guilty for making this all happen.

“No Phil, that’s not what I meant, I’m sorry.” Rae squeezed his hand, “I just meant that having a ban on duo sex would make us feel bad for enjoying each other. How our partners feel is a valid and important thing at all times.” She told him.

“I just don’t feel like how I felt is valid.” Phil shook his head, “I know, I know!” He saw the looks on their faces, “I can’t help the way I felt, but I can work on it and stop being so unkind to myself.” He gave Finn a small smile and Finn returned it supportively, “So what’s the protocol for walking in on a duo?” Rae decided to let him have this slight change of topic and considered his question.

“Ask if it’s a duo moment or can it become a trio moment?” Rae suggested and the lads agreed.

“And respect the answer, but let your partners know if you’re feeling shit cos o’ it.” Finn added.

“Perfect.” Rae agreed. “But wait till they’re done?”

“Aye.” Finn laughed slightly. “No cum-blocking!”

“So is the ‘can’t cum if one of us can’t cum’ rule gone?” Phil asked.

“Nope.” Finn answered. “But one of us not physically being here, don’t mean they can’t cum.”

“Unless they’re in an exam.” Phil countered.

“Yeah but we can make them cum when they get back…” Rae said with a grin. “That rule was really just for when I had me period. I don’t see it being a rule we need anymore, like I already said.”

“We could just have sex during your period.” Phil shrugged. “Put a towel down, do it in the shower.” Finn looked at Phil like he was insane.

“Mate, there’s cramping and blood loss and-” Finn said and Phil looked at Finn like he was insane.
“Blood loss?” Phil asked, “I’ll give you cramping, and the ultimate decision always lies with Rae there, but blood loss is not usually an issue. The average amount o’ blood lost over a period is about two and half tablespoons.”

“Told you it were nothing.” Rae said to Finn.

“No I saw the amount o’ blood she lost.”

“Sometimes they’re heavier, sometimes dangerously so, but the average…” Phil thought for a moment and went to the kitchen, he put two and a half tablespoons of water into a cup and grabbed a tea towel before heading back to them. He poured the water on the table and Finn watched it spread out looking like a lot more liquid than it was. “You know this stuff Finn; liquids flow from an area of high-

“High concentration to low concentration… I… for some reason did not apply that to menstrual blood…” Finn shook his head as Phil put the tea towel over the water.

“Liquids spread. It’s what they do. Periods are messy, but not life threatening in most cases.”

“Fuck you, you had a sister and a mother around.” Finn retorted and Phil nodded.

“Yeah Kels made sure I knew all about it. Every time one of her boyfriends brushed it off as nothing, she made sure I knew about cramping and back pain and headaches and blood clots and all of it, including how the whole系统 works, and how much blood is lost.” Phil shrugged, “I had to try to explain to her why boys came so quick.” Phil started to laugh remembering that conversation. He’d been fourteen and Kelsey had barged into his room and asked him what was up with guys and their shitty dicks. “We didn’t have parents to talk to about dating or sex, so we educated each other. That sounds really wrong!” Phil pulled a face, “We verbally educated each other.” He clarified. “And it started cos Kelsey didn’t want her brother to be like all the other useless dickhead boys out there. She figured if she could make life better for one other girl out there, maybe she’d be blessed with a guy that didn’t cum in under a minute.” Rae laughed and Finn pulled a face.

“Under a minute? Holy fuck!” Finn shook his head.

“Yeah she’s had some bad luck with guys.” Phil agreed.

“Anyway!” Rae said, “This is what we always do; we’ve come off topic.” She looked at both of them as they lowered their eyes and acknowledged her, “We gotta finish the discussion afore we can drill Phil for all the details about this.”

‘Or before we just drill Phil.” Finn said with a saucy grin. Rae narrowed her eyes.

“What if we’re all here and someone wanna have a duo moment?” Rae asked determined to get the topic back on track, “Although I don’t see that happening…” She added. “I think if we’re all here we’ll all want all three of us involved.”

“Aye.” Finn agreed.

“Yeah I more imagine that if duo sex was wanted while we were all at home, it might be two of us wanting trio sex but the third person not in the mood…” Phil agreed, “But… but do we go ahead and do it then?”

“I think yes.” Finn answered.
“Aye.” Rae agreed slowly, “I think it’ll be hard at first, but one of us not being in the mood is not the same as one of us not being able to cum…” She turned to Phil, “And I don’t fuck during me period; I get shitty cramps and bad moods and me insides fucking hurt too much.” Phil nodded, obviously completely accepting that.

“Alright.” Phil answered. “No sex during period… no coming for any of us during period. But if I’m more interested in wheel of fortune than fucking my partners, then I kinda deserve to miss out!” He laughed.

“Or if we’re studying or whatever reason we’re not in the mood; that shouldn’t stop our partners from having fun.” Rae said slowly, “Like if I were in a monogamous relationship I wouldn’t mind you having a wank if I weren’t in the mood so…” She shrugged. “Same concept really.”

“Aye.” Finn nodded, “So are we all a lot clearer about duo sex?”

“We need to be talking a lot more about this.” Rae answered, “But I think we’ve covered it all right now?”

“Yeah.” Phil answered mulling over everything they’d said.

“So what can we do to make you feel better now?” Rae asked Phil.

“Well you two naked is always nice.” Phil answered with a saucy grin, “And I think someone said something about drilling me?” Rae and Finn both started to kiss Phil’s neck and he leaned back on the lounge, grinning contentedly. “Oh and I got a movie part!” They both sat up immediately and looked at him.

“OH MY GOD!” Rae squealed and grabbed him excitedly at the same time Finn had, both hugging him fiercely.

Phil had been infinitely grateful for Finn’s training on the action movie set; tiny role in terms of lines, but he had a few action sequences he had not been aware of when he took the role. He was loving every minute of the filming.

But hating every minute of returning to his hotel room every night, utterly alone. He would lie on his bed, staring at the ceiling, and wait for the agreed upon time to call them, missing them more than words could ever express. Every time he heard their voices on the other end of the line he’d almost cry.

After their huge discussion about duo sex, they had been wonderfully open about what would happen while Phil was away, and Rae had declared that nothing would. This was his first time away, it would be hard enough without thinking that they got to be comforted by their intimacy while he laid alone in his hotel bed. Finn had instantly agreed and Phil had found himself oddly arguing that they should be comforted, he wanted them to be…

“Fuck I miss him.” Finn threw his pen down and slammed his text book shut. Studying was impossible when he was this sexually frustrated and miserable. Rae made a sympathetic noise and
stroked his hair.

“It’s only been two nights.” She sighed, “We got two weeks o’ this bullshit.”

“You know, I been thinking Rae… we know he’s gonna be successful… we know he’s gonna have so many other movies and be away from home.”

“Oh god.” Rae sat down with a thud, “Oh fuck I hadn’t thought of it.” They had a lifetime of being away from Phil because of his work ahead of them.

“So I thought… you’re gonna be a writer yeah?” Rae nodded, “And well… I love being a DJ, but there’s other things I can do, like… I can be a freelance music reporter. Or I can work tech on his movies. Or maybe they’ll get better video hosting on line and I can do some sort of video series about music and make money from that… or somehow be a roving radio DJ.” Finn shook his head, “I’ll figure it out, cos this won’t do.”

“What are you talking about Finn?”

“I love this flat.” Finn said, “But it don’t feel like home when he’s not here.” Rae nodded, understanding what he meant, “So if you write, and I’m a roving radio DJ… we can go where he goes… make our home wherever he is.”

“You can’t give up what you love…” Rae said slowly.

“I won’t be.” Finn reassured her, “I just gotta figure out a way to make it non-location specific.” He answered, “Like your writing is; you can do that anywhere… I need to be able to do what I love anywhere. And somehow make money off it so we can afford hotel rooms in whatever city he’s in!” Finn shrugged, “There’s nothing else for it Rae. His career takes him all over the world. Yours can be done anywhere… and I’m willing to make mine go anywhere. Cos we miss him… we just don’t work without each other.”

“You’re right.” Rae agreed and kissed him. “I miss him so much I can’t even think straight and I gotta finish this fucking essay.”

“I’m having a bit of a crazy idea girl.” Finn said slowly.

“Oh aye?”

Getting a salad on set was surprisingly hard for a group of people that were so obsessed with their appearance; their whole careers depended on looking exactly like whatever was popular at the moment, which was relatively thin with a decent amount of muscle for men at the moment. He needed less pastries, which seemed to be all catering provided, and more salads.

He sat down on his bed and looked at the salad he’d had room service send up and picked miserably at it. His appetite was shot to shit and his acting had been shoddy today too. It was Friday, he hadn’t seen them since Monday and he felt like he was dying inside. In the back of his head he knew that they’d have to get used to things like this and that spending time apart could be very healthy for a relationship, and he didn’t mind the days, he enjoyed being on set. It was the nights that killed him. He imagined them snuggled up together in bed sleeping peacefully and smiled, desperately sad and missing them.
He looked at the clock. It was still an hour till the agreed upon time to call. He sighed and tried to imagine Finn’s voice in his head telling him to eat and picked up his fork.

There was a knock on the door and he looked up, utterly bewildered. No one had knocked his door the whole time he’d been in Greece.

He got up and opened the door.

And they were there. In the hallway, grinning at him.

“We missed you.” Rae said. There was a moment in which Phil couldn’t process anything; he was just so happy to see them. And then they were in his room, their arms around him the door slamming shut behind him.

They fell into bed, Phil in the middle and just held each other, all grinning like jackals. Phil also getting quite teary which set Rae off.

After a long time of just feeling all the emotions he had whirring inside of him, and holding them tightly, feeling their presence, smelling them, kissing them, Phil’s ability to think returned to him.

“What are you doing here?”

“Well we might have fucked up our finances, but we got a flight and we’re here for the weekend.” Finn shrugged, “I’ll take up some more clients to get us through.”

“I’ll get a part time job.” Rae added, “And plus, what you’re getting paid for this gig will do us nicely.”

“Just couldn’t stand another night without you.” Finn stroked Phil’s face.

“I’m so glad you’re both here.” Phil whispered.

Saturday morning dawned to the three of them slowly making love. They hadn’t slept one bit that night, they had been too excited to see each other. When Phil’s alarm went off an hour later he grimaced.

“I have to be on set soon.”

“What no weekends off?” Finn asked, disappointed.

“None. And sometimes they have us working super long days several days in a row… but they pay us well enough to not whinge about it!” He laughed. “It’s only a short day today though.” Phil said with a grin when he saw their sulky faces.

“What’s Sir Ian McKellar like?” Rae asked with a cheeky grin.

“I dunno, he’s not in this part o’ the movie, so he’s not here.”

“That sucks.” Rae frowned.

“That’s movies.” Phil shrugged, “My whole sequence might not even make it into the movie.”

“It better!” Rae laughed, “I wanna go watch it at the movies.”

“You still get paid if they cut it right?” Finn asked.
“Yeah, I still did the work.” Phil said and got up to shower, “I gotta be super quick, I’m already running late.”

He barely made it to set on time.

The second week was easier after their visit; he didn’t know how he would have made it the whole two weeks without them. He did not understand relationships that could go months without seeing each other and wondered how Izzy and Chop had survived their year apart.

When he finally returned home they had put decorations on their Spruce and had made a welcome home cake from scratch for him. They had kissed him deeply and hugged him for a long time before he even had chance to drop his bag.

“Gotta get back to the kitchen.” Finn grinned and Phil noticed what they were wearing.

Cooking aprons.

With nothing on underneath.

Finn turned to go to the kitchen and Phil watched his behind as he went before turning his eyes to Rae, the sides of her breast poking out of the sides of the apron.

“We’re making dinner for you.” She said, “Well Finn is, I’m just hanging around in me apron looking sexy. Want a glass o’ wine?” She grinned.

He was home.
‘You’ve Got the Dirtee Love’ by Dizzee Rascal and Florence Welch

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zixflls232M

I ain’t trying to see the bottom, because that’s where I came from, I ain’t forgotten.

“Happy birthday Mister Seymour.” The lawyer’s name was Gerard and Phil gave him a curt nod.

“Not the birthday morning I wanted.” Phillip replied.

“Are you sure Mister Seymour, I rather thought you’d be looking forward to this day?” Phil gave a tight smile and looked over at Rae and Finn, sitting beside him, Rae in the middle.

“Shall we get to the paperwork?” Phil asked politely. Rae and Finn had forgotten about Phil’s trust fund. They knew he had it, they just never figured it in their future plans. Even now that he was 21 and could finally get his hands on it, they didn’t expect it to be all that much money. More than they had ever seen in their lives for sure, but not a truly life altering amount. Their idea to have portable careers and make enough money to follow Phil around while he acted was still the plan, and this was just a formality; Phil getting a little extra in the bank to keep them going until the end of university.

“Of course.” Gerard ruffled through the papers and Phil looked at Finn and Rae again. He had been dreading this day. He worried if it would change everything like it had with his family; this thought had been playing on his mind more and more as this day had drawn closer. He worried that they might look at him differently… because they really had no idea about what was about to happen. “You know, I sometimes wondered if your mother knew your father would disown you both one day. The first thing she did when your father made some money was set up these trust funds; she told me to make them impossible for your father to revoke them. So I did. But she wanted me to make them possible for her to continue depositing money into them until you and your sister got them. And she did.”

“Sounds like her.” Phil said faintly.

“I understand why you’re determined to be angry at her. But you should know that she made three equal accounts not just two.”

“Does Phil have another sibling?” Finn sat forward in his chair.

“The third was for herself Mr Nelson.” Gerard responded and Finn was impressed that the lawyer remembered his name. Gerard handed Phil an account statement and Phil’s eyebrows raised momentarily before his usual calm exterior was returned.

“This is not the figure I remember it being.” Phil said softly.

“Your mother made that third account for herself so that when your father, according to her, inevitably left her for a younger woman, she would have some money he couldn’t touch. But when your father disowned Ms Seymour, Your mother split her account between the two of you, the final
amount to be paid when you turned 21. She has left herself nothing.” Phil looked up at him, momentarily stunned.

“What did Kelsey say when you told her this?”

“You know I can’t reveal that. But I see she didn’t choose to tell you.”

“It suits her sense of humour not to say anything.” Phil replied. “She’ll no doubt mention it at my party this weekend.” After the club on Thursday, they were heading to Stamford for a joint birthday party between the three boys born in November; Phil, Rhys and Tom. He crossed his legs and folded his hands in his lap to hide the deep breath he was taking before gently handing the statement to Rae. It took everything in him to keep his hands and voice steady as he watched her from the corner of his eye. She didn’t look at it yet, she was looking at him.

“So how shall we proceed?” Gerard asked.

“I’ll be allowing the firm to continue to manage my finances.” Phil answered, “A bank cannot give my two partners equal access to my funds, but you can draw up the legal documents to get around that if you’re managing our funds.”

“That’s correct.” Gerard’s voice had a slight warning tone, “But not even your father gave equal access to the money to your mother, and that’s a decades long marriage—”

“I am not my father.” Phil warned sharply.

“No, of course Mr Seymour.” Gerard eyed them all warily, “I’m not saying we don’t give generous access to your friends, just that—”

“They are both my partners. If the law was actually fair I’d be calling them my fiancés now and my husband and wife in a few years’ time. Don’t make the mistake of calling them my ‘friends’ again.” Phillip’s voice was sharp and authoritarian. Finn grinned slightly, giving Rae a look that she read easily; Finn always got a little horny when the commanding Aristocrat came out in Phillip like this.

“Yes of course Mr Seymour, I apologise.” Gerard replied, “But it’s my job to help you look after your money. Many relationships fail and—”

“This relationship is more important to me than money. Now please sort out the papers for me to sign so that my partners can have equal access to everything.” Phil sounded like a man not to be messed with when he used this tone, Rae squeezed her thighs together; enjoying the control and power Phil was displaying as much as Finn was.

“Of course.” Gerard said and Phil looked down at the second sheet of paper Gerard had passed him.

“These investments are terrible.”

“They’re making you a fortune.” Gerard defended the investments.

“Mining, fracking… gun manufacturing?” Phillip looked down the list. “I’m going to need to you to recreate my share portfolio now that I have control of my money. I want ethical investment, in research aimed at curing disease, wiping out poverty, protecting the environment, things like that. I don’t want investment in pharmaceutical companies making money for their cures by the way, I want the real deal; scientists and university researchers. I don’t want environmental studies aimed at how to best exploit nature for our benefit,” Phil knew he had to be specific, like making a wish
from a genie, “I want conservation work, breeding endangered species et cetera. I don’t want wiping out poverty by urban gentrification and destroying local economies, I want community consultation to be a part of the process of the plans I invest in. I’ll be keeping a very close eye on this portfolio.” He said firmly as he looked at the list again, “This textile company is known to basically use slave labour; they pay their workers so poorly and have incredibly deplorable work conditions!” Phil gave him a disgusted look, “I don’t want investment in companies that exploit workers, especially not in the developing world.”

“Yes sir, but I must warn you that this type of investment will not get you the high dividends that your current portfolio does.”

“I have plenty of money, how on Earth could I sleep at night knowing I had created more by destroying the lives of other people and the planet we all live on? You’d do well to remember that if you want to continue to manage my account.”

“Of course sir.” Gerard answered and Rae had to stop herself laughing when Finn shifted in his chair, trying to hide his erection. Phil was a kind, decent and sweet man; but when he got his power on like this, there was not much that could stop him.

“I want all the profits from my investment to be given to these charities.” Phil produced a sheet of paper from his folder. Rae again had to stop herself from laughing at the pained expression on Gerard’s face; charitable giving was apparently not in his vocabulary. Her eyes fell to her lap because looking at Gerard was too hard; she’d laugh. As her eyes dropped to her lap she saw the piece of paper Phillip had handed her to look at; his account balance.

“HOLY FUCKING MOTHER OF SODDING CHRIST; FUCK! FUCK!” Rae’s eyes were wide, her jaw dropped and Gerard and Finn looked at her with concerned expressions. Phil looked down at his lap and took a deep breath. He knew that would be Rae’s response. Finn saw what Rae was looking at and took the sheet of paper from her and scanned Phil’s account information. His eyes stared at the number labelled as ‘account balance’ for a moment, unable to understand it.

“Is this a fucking typo?” He asked bewildered. And Phil had known that would be Finn’s response too. “This…” Finn looked at it again and then up at Phil. “What?” Finn asked feeling as if he was almost hyperventilating. “What?” He reached over Rae and pulled on Phil’s hand. “Is this fucking real?” He looked back down at the balance and then back up at Phil, “it’s gotta be fucking joke?”

Phil took a moment to compose himself before looking up at them. They were both staring at him with wide open eyes as if they had seen something completely unbelievable.

“It’s real.” Phil answered softly, an almost sad expression on his face. This was it; everything had changed. The way they were looking at him was different already.

“I knew you was a fucking Aristocrat Phil, but I had no fucking idea you was this rich.” Finn shook his head. And Rae nodded hers in agreement.

“Come on guys, the violin I own is worth more than everything else in the flat put together, not including my cello and the Shakespeare…” Phil shook his head as they both shrugged, “Neither of you ever wondered how I could save so much money that we could live on it for a couple o’ years?”

“I just thought you were good at saving.” Rae answered.

“Well yeah I am. But no one’s that good, come on!” Phil answered.
“Ha ha! Fucking good joke Phil.” Finn shook his head. “There’s no fucking way this is real. No one we know is ever gonna have this much money. I didn’t even know you could legally have this much money.” Finn shook his head and Rae took a few deep breaths.

“It’s real.” Phil repeated.

“A hundred and eighty-seven million pounds!” Finn almost yelled. “That’s fucking real?”

“I can assure you both it’s real.” Gerard answered. “My law firm doesn’t have time to play practical jokes nor do we take on just any client.”

“Yes, only the wealthy can afford the best lawyers.” Phil said cynically.

“Yes.” Gerard answered. “Absolutely. I’ve got private school tuition, just like you will someday.” Phil gave him an unimpressed smile and was about to retort when Rae spoke.

“You let us bang on for hours about how we was gonna afford the house we wanted… or to travel… or… or…” She shook her head.

“I liked that you forgot about my trust fund.” He answered with his eyes downcast. Finn gave him an understanding smile while Rae still processed what Phil had said and just how rich he was.

“Well we can keep on forgetting about it if you want.” Finn answered.

“Well yeah…” Phil answered, “But I want you both to know that we don’t have to worry, as well…”

“Well now I’m fucking worrying about how to manage that much money!” Rae answered and then broke out into a grin, “I’m lying, you’ll just take care of the finances like you always have.” She shrugged, “I trust you to not be a jerk about it.”

“Aye.” Finn said, “I know you’ll never be a controlling douchebag like your dad, so obsessed with making more money you forget about us.” He shrugged, but his words made Phil so grateful and less worried, “Although I am gonna feel a little less guilty about how much I’m spending on fags now.”

They sat at the Lebanese kebab joint in the shops on the ground floor of their apartments. They’d gotten a real taste for kebabs in Australia; everyone got them when they were drunk, and right now Rae and Finn almost felt as if they were drunk.

“Why the fuck are you so glum Jill?” Finn asked with a grin.

“Did you really not know?” He asked, looking at his felafel morosely.

“Well… I mean we knew you was rich.” Rae answered, “but this is… as Chop would say, some next level shit… except it’s not shit… it’s definitely next level… I need to just… close me mouth.”

“My parents own a house in Kensington,” Phil answered, “It’s in sight of the royal palace… You really had no idea?”

“How fucking rich is Chop’s family then?” Finn suddenly remembered that Chop’s grandfather had a house right next door.
“I have no idea about Chop’s family.” Phil replied, “But my father was listed as one of the top ten wealthiest people in the world for the last five years in Forbes and no one from Chop’s family was; I know this because my father was ecstatic to be on that list and pointed out how all the rich people he knew would have to play nice now he was richer than them.”

“And he sent you to a public college in fucking Stamford?” Finn marvelled.

“He had work in the area.” Phil said, “And I insisted. Elsa King has a remarkable reputation and I wanted to be taught by her. Overall public schools have better arts education.”

“Aye, well none of this explains why you’re so fucking glum.” Finn took a big bite of his lamb kebab and looked at him while he ate.

“I just…” Phil looked up at them, “I just don’t want you to look at me differently, or think about me differently.”

“We don’t.” Rae soothed.

“Don’t worry about that Phil.” Finn said, “You’re still the same man I loved yester; I don’t see you any different. But I do see life a little different now. This time yester I was looking at our bank account and berating myself for blowing so much money on flying out to Greece to see you and then feeling conflicted cos it were so good to see you, but ugh, money!” Finn shook his head, “Today, I’m quite a bit less worried about that… not so much guilt about spending that money and dropping the bank balance so much.”

“But then you gotta worry about getting too complacent about money and overspending, getting a bunch o’ shit we don’t need. Doing stupid things…” Rae shook her head, “I really don’t want our lives to change that much.”

“They don’t have to.” Phil answered.

“Well they kinda do.” Rae said, “If we don’t wanna be money-wasting wankers or money-stingy bastards we gotta be more thoughtful and aware.”

“I just mean that it doesn’t have to be the way it was in my family.” Phil said gently, trying to hide the feeling of desperation in his heart, but Rae and Finn heard it.

“And it’s not gonna be.” Rae said immutably. “Like you said to what’s-his-face in there; you’re not your father. We don’t have the same relationship your parents had Phil. Nothing as tiny as money’s gonna get in between us.”

“If we really don’t want things to change, we can just give it all away.” Finn shrugged.

“Aye I s’pose.” Rae agreed easily. It was in that moment that Phil knew they’d be ok; they were willing to give it away. He wasn’t going to give it away though; he wanted them to never have to worry. “But really, Phil’s earned ten times that money by living with those fuckers for that long!” Rae laughed, “He deserves to not have to worry.” She turned to Phil. “You deserve to not worry.”

“We all do.” Phil said happily.

“But how d’you deal with the urge to shout everyone, everything, all the time? People like to pay their own way…” Finn mused.

“And what about buying everyone you love houses so they don’t have to have a mortgage.” Rae added, “How d’you stop yourself doing that?”
“You don’t have to stop yourselves; it’s your money, spend it however you want.” Phil shrugged.

“No but like Finn said, people like to provide for themselves, so there’s a balance right? Between being the rich arsehole that pays for everything that everyone hates cos you’re flashing it around, and being the rich arsehole that never pays for anything and everyone hates cos you never share it.” Rae said.

“How did you do it?” Finn asked and Phil laughed.

“What are you talking about Finn? You constantly reminded me what scum I was for being rich.” He put a hand on Finn’s face before picking up his felafel and taking a bite.

“Aye it were cos I were jealous.” Finn shook his head, “When I figured we was in competition for Rae, I was so aware of your wealth. I knew you could provide a luxurious life for her.” Finn grinned, chuckling happily, “And then we’re all together and I totally forget all about that money.” He shrugged his head. “It just didn’t matter anymore.” He looked a Phil, “You know it still don’t.” He shrugged again, “I’m happy to just leave you in charge of the money; you already know how to handle being rich and not being an arsehole about it.”

“Microwave needs replacing.” Rae said, “We been living on Finn’s repairs to the shitty second hand piece o’ junk, and we don’t need to.” She looked at Phil, “Can I get us a new microwave?”

“You don’t need to ask my permission.” Phil told her. “I only ask that you consider the environ—”

“Environment!” Rae and Finn finished his sentence.

“Am I going on about it too much?” Phil asked.

“Nope.” Finn answered.

“Oh my god!” Rae said suddenly excited, “This solves the problem of following ’im around the world!”

“Oh fuck yeah!” Finn suddenly laughed happily. “It does!”

“What are you talking about?” Phil asked.

“Look, we’ve decided that we’re not ok with you gallivanting around the world to be an actor.” Finn said sternly and Phil’s face dropped slightly.

“Cos we miss you too much.” Rae nodded her head.

“So we decided to figure out how to afford to follow you when you go and to both have careers that would allow so much travel.” Finn concluded and Phil grinned, ridiculously happy. Phil stared at Finn and then Rae and blinked a few times, feeling unexpectedly emotional. He cleared his throat.

“Yeah it solves the affording it problem.” He tried to hide how pleased he was and Rae and Finn started to laugh. “But what are we gonna do about your career Finn? Rae can write anywhere, but radio DJ?”

“Oh I got tons o’ ideas!” Finn said excitedly. “I’ll tell you all about ’em later. Now we gotta start thinking about celebrating Rae’s birthday and New Year’s.”

“Just before we get excited… Phil, are you gonna contact your mum?” Rae reached out and took his hand, “I know she’s been real shitty, and I know it can’t replace proper love; but she gave you
and Kels everything she had. She expects to eventually be kicked out like her children, but she’ll have nothing…”

“I’m sure she’s squirrelling aside some money.” Finn had little sympathy for anyone that hurt the people he loved; he was not an easy forgiver when it came to those people. He’d seen Phil’s mother crying over losing Phil, and he still had about the same amount of sympathy for her as he did for Liam.

“I dunno.” Phil replied with furrowed brows, “I’ll think about it.”

“Right,” Finn said, “Back to the important stuff; celebrations!”

“I dunno about you two, but I could go a shag. And it is Phil’s birthday, so I’d be keen to focus on him…..” Rae said softly so no one else could hear.

“Hm.” Finn agreed, “Go upstairs, you can fuck Rae’s mouth and I’ll lick your balls and crack.” Finn said to Phil. “Then you can pound us both till you’re done?”

“The oral; yes.” Phil mused. They had a tradition that during the 24 hours of one of their birthdays, everyone else did what the birthday person wanted, “then I want you both to take turns riding me.”

“Oh I think that can be arranged.” Rae grinned and looked at Finn.

“Sounds perfect. You just lie back and let us do all the work.”
“I’m gonna fucking die.” Finn whispered urgently, his hands going up Phil’s back, “how the fuck are you keeping it together?” The main airing closet next to the front door was deep enough to stand in. And they were both standing in it, the doors pulled closed. Rae was still sleeping and over the past two and a half weeks this closet had become their talking place in the morning as she slept in; they didn’t want to wake their light-sleeping girl.

“Meditation.” Phil answered, “And even then I’m hanging on by the skin of my fucking teeth.” Finn started to kiss him passionately; these little talking sessions almost always ended up in fevered kissing, both of them frustrated and desperately hard in minutes. Phil kissed down Finn’s neck, licking the sweat from his skin; they’d just come back from a very hard run.

“It can’t last much longer can it?” Finn pulled Phil to him, their hips both thrusting rhythmically, their bodies rubbing together through their clothes. Finn knew exactly how long it could last; but every day he asked Phil to tell him. Phil’s intelligence, just like Rae’s, turned him on so this was a kind of torture.

“It could last over a month.”

“Fuck no.” Finn sounded horrified and desperate. Part of Phil loved to torture Finn when he was like this; he was the one that suffered the most by far. But part of him was barely coping with his own suffering.

“Get out of the closet you two.” Rae grumbled as she headed into the bathroom. They both popped their heads around the door as she continued, “It’s not bad enough that people think I’m a beard for the two of you, but I have to wake to telling you fuckers to get outta the closet!” She was grumpy again. Finn kissed Phil one last time, desperately wanting to fuck him, before opening the doors and walking to the bathroom for the morning ritual. A morning ritual that Finn currently dreaded; he hated seeing the shower water at the moment. When they got in there, Rae had already peed and was waiting for the shower to warm up. They both looked at her underwear on the floor and Finn bit the inside of his cheek while Phil tried to ready himself for the continued lack of sex; it was harder than he had expected.

Sure enough as they showered together, the water on the floor of the shower was tinged pink; she was still bleeding. They would spend another day of desperate horniness and trying to pamper their girl while she grumpily told them she didn’t need pampering.

“How much longer do you think?” Finn tried to ask politely. He was worried, but he had grilled the gynaecologist about this and Phil had helped him get over his fear of Rae bleeding to death, so mostly he was just horny now.

“I don’t fucking know ok?” Rae snapped; he’d tried not to ask every day after the first seven days had passed, but he wasn’t succeeding very well since he’d finally started to believe that Rae wasn’t in any danger from her bleeding. And since the cramping had stopped after the first 2 days and she
wasn’t in pain anymore; he was of the opinion that they could just have sex now, in the shower; it 
was just blood, he didn’t mind blood. Of course it was Rae’s choice, but he had the feeling she was 
doing it for his comfort more than her own, since she wasn’t in any pain with it anymore.

“It’s just that it’s already been four days longer than last time.” Finn tried to sound like his 
question wasn’t all about the hard as steel erections they both had poking into her as they washed 
each other. Which it mainly was; the gynaecologist told them it was normal to bleed for a month 
or more.

“D’you think I’m enjoying the not fucking?” She retorted loudly, “Do you? Cos I fucking don’t!”

“Alright.” Finn capitulated.

“Don’t use that fucking tone with me!” She snapped.

“Maybe-” Phil started.

“Don’t you try to play peace keeper, Phillip Jarred Seymour! Not when I know you’re fucking 
gagging for it too. Look at it.” She reached down and slapped his hard cock. “I hate you both.”
She grabbed hold of their hard cocks and they both groaned as she stroked them firmly, “These 
beautiful cocks and… nice fit bodies and… and it seems completely unfair that an IUD needs 
changing every five years.” She whispered tragically. They both practically pounced on her Phil 
kissing her lips and Finn going for her breasts. “You need to stop.” She groaned, her voice 
melting with desire, but both men reluctantly stopped. One of Finn’s hands went from massaging 
her breast to groping Phil’s arse.

“I’m gonna have to ask you to stop that.” Phil said in a tone that said ‘please continue’ as Finn’s 
fingertips slid down his crack. Finn took his hand off Rae and Phil and put his hands behind his 
back contritely.

The water poured down on the three of them, close but not touching, all three looking down and 
just feeling the heat emanating from the other two.

“You two have turned me into such a horn-dog.” Rae shook her head, trying to get herself under 
control.

“Us?” Finn laughed, his hands going to Rae and Phil’s waists. “If your diary’s to be believed 
you’ve always been a lusty wench.”

“Lusty wench?” Rae asked bemused.

“You read Rae’s diary?” Phil asked.

“I told him to.” Rae answered, “You can read them all too if you want. Read all about my 
confusion about you unfolding on creamy white paper in messy hand-writing.” Phil laughed.

“Nah that’s alright.” He shrugged; knowing he had equal access to Rae as Finn did was enough for him.

“I only read a few pages,” Finn told Phil, “but that was enough to know the truth about your ever 
growing horn, Miss Earl!” Rae rolled her eyes in response, but then a devious smirk turned up the 
corners of her mouth. She grabbed hold of both their cocks and was on her knees before either man 
knew what was happening. She started to suck Finn’s cock first; he was always he one that 
suffered the most during times of forced celibacy.
“Oh god.” His head rolled back and he put a hand on the back of her head. “Fuck.” He groaned and leaned back against the wall. As always, Phil’s eyes went down to watch her when she started on his cock.

“You’re not making this easy.” Phil groaned.

“Oh I know.” She replied in mock sympathy. She pulled them both closer to her and tried to fit both cocks in her moth sucking and licking, both of them looking at her now, “I think I might have to tie you both up and tease and torture you tonight after classes. Like I used to do to Finn back in the days when I had regular periods.”

Finn sat down in his media ethics class; he’d picked up some journalism classes as a minor when he had decided that being a roving musical interviewer might be a possibility. He’d also picked up some web design courses and was confident he could create his own website for his career endeavours; he had so many thoughts and ideas he was far too excited and needed to buckle down and pick one path. So he’d picked up extra courses to learn more. Luckily Phil and Rae had picked up extra courses too; Phil in music and art and Rae in literature studies. When Phil had picked up music, his genius had been instantly recognised, and he was now playing with the university orchestra; he loved it. They were set for another year at university with the way they were going. But none of them minded the extra time at uni, especially since the money issue had been well and truly dealt with; even over a year with that amount of money at his disposal hadn’t made Finn any more used to the idea of not having to worry about money anymore and he hadn’t changed his spending habits that much. None of them had really.

Normally Finn enjoyed learning in all its forms; he had taken to uni life quite well in his second year and not looked back since then. But today he could only think about Phil’s fingers on his throat as they kissed in the closet again, and then the sweet taste of Rae’s lips in the shower. If it had been bad when it was just Rae edging him, it was easily worse with both Rae and Phil doing it. And three weeks was the longest he’d gone without sex in over five years. He felt like his body might cave in on itself with the giant super massive black hole of desire in his gut. He was beyond horny; he had to wear two pairs of tighty-whities to keep his almost constant erection under control while he was at uni. That and a long lose t-shirt, just like when he was 16.

And it was like his mind had returned to being 16 again; no matter how he tried, he couldn’t get sex out of his mind. Usually when he came to class he had his game face on and concentrating wasn’t hard for him anymore. Not like it had been when he was 16. He silently groaned with frustration as he tried to take in just one word the lecturer was saying. He gritted his teeth behind firmly shut lips as he tried, desperately tried, to not fixate on the image of Rae and Phil waiting for him in bed. Or the shower. Or the lounge. Or a train carriage. Or an endless variety of places. He could feel hands on him, kisses down his body. He supposed that Rae and Phil were faring better; it was well known he was the one who lost focus and got temperamental without sex, but he thought he was doing well this time. He had driven home on the weekends to have hard training sessions with Rhys and Tom; managing to knock Tom out and hit Rhys so hard that he almost lost consciousness yesterday. He’d been proud of it. But it had done nothing to kill the raging erection he had to drive home with.

And he had another right now. He tried to stare right at his lecturer. A middle aged man who some might find attractive in a silver fox kind of a way, but Finn had no attraction to him at all. And then he could almost taste and smell going down on Rae. He thought about that a lot. Since
redgate he’d sucked Phil a lot, edging and make him desperate to cum. But no oral sex for Rae and he was hungry for it. He had to concentrate on not licking his lips with desire. He closed his eyes to steady his mind and saw his partners kissing in the ocean, opening their arms to him to join them. He lingered with that image for a moment before taking a deep breath and opening his eyes.

He left the two hour lecture without having heard a word of it.

Rae had spent an hour last night with them tied down, riding them through her clothes, not letting them cum, licking their cocks. Finn had broken the handcuffs she had him in, in sexual frustration. That had just made everyone hornier. Phil was just as turned on by Finn’s strength as Rae was; his physicality was spectacular.

And this morning Rae had come on a jog with them. Phil was the fastest runner out of the three of them, and he could run the longest. But Finn did like to give him a run for his money and Phil knew that if Finn quit smoking he’d be quite a challenging running partner. Rae was the slowest runner, and the least committed to it. But she was, by far, the most flexible of the three of them. Phil considered this with a grin that he quickly got under control.

This morning, by some unspoken agreement, he and Finn had been oh so tired, and had had to jog slower than Rae, slightly behind her, both of them shamelessly perving on her. The way her body moved as her feet pounded the pavement was reminiscent of how she looked when he or Finn pounded her; the shake and jiggle throughout her body was so appealing and his mind wandered to all the things he wanted to do Rae when redgate was over. He was already doing a lot to Finn, teasing him to a frenzy with no release; they both desperately needed Rae for the release they all wanted.

His meditation was disjointed, his sleep disturbed, his mind almost completely taken over with thoughts of finally getting to have sex with the proper ending of all three of them coming.

Three weeks.

Phil figured this must be what it’s like to date someone you were deeply attracted to who wanted to wait… till fucking marriage; it felt like it had been that long.

Finn had joked about how fucking awful redgate was; but Phil had not been prepared for it. He’d always had a fairly large appetite when it came to sex, but with Rae and Finn, he’d come to depend on it like a drug. Knowing that they depended on it too was some comfort, but much like a junkie; he just couldn’t get his mind of his drug. He had never expected this from himself, but he found he didn’t mind this addiction.

“PHIL!” Phil suddenly snapped out of it and looked into the darkened audience; the director was sitting out there and she’d just yelled his name.

“What?” He asked bewildered.

“You dropped your line.” Maureen was standing across from him looking astounded; Phil never dropped his lines.

“Shit.” Phil had been thinking so much about fucking Finn and Rae he’d completely lost track of the script. “I’m sorry, I’m not feeling well.”
“Can you continue?” The director asked curtly.

“Yeah not a problem.” Phil assured her.

It had been a huge struggle to get through the rehearsal without fucking up again.

When Rae had been a teenager she’d had many fantasies about what and who was sexiest thing on the planet. But she’d never imagined the sight before her, and it truly was the sexiest thing ever; her two lads kissing on their bed. They had gotten home before her and were taking delight in torturing each other, lustily aching for more to happen, but not letting it go that far.

“Hey.” Finn held a hand out for her to join them.

“Nah I gotta study, but you two continue.” She grinned and headed to their study table. Let them edge each other to distraction; she’d somehow manage to keep her lust under control until this bleeding was over. It had been three and a half weeks so far and it was not a stretch to say that Rae felt like a woman lost in the desert, thirsty for water. Vital, vital water.

She sat down and took out her books making a face at them; there was no way she was getting anything done with them two in there. She could hear them whispering and wondered if they were planning something to get her back for all the tying down and teasing she’d been doing to them.

“Changed me mind; I’m gonna have a shower.” She called through to them and went to the bathroom. She knew that the shower always got them both going; she was turning the tables on them before they’d even started their plan.

As expected, she’d been under the water for less than a minute before they were both at the door.

“Can we join you?” Phil asked eagerly and she nodded for them to get in. As Finn got in she saw the devious grin he was trying to hide and realised she had played right into their hands; they had wanted to get her in the shower.

Almost instantly they started kissing her, both of them grabbing her arse lustily. Rae saw Phil reaching for the lubricant they kept on the shower ledge with the shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste and other shower essentials. Within minutes Finn had her breathless with his deep passionate kissing and Phil had gently penetrated her anally.

“You bastards.” She groaned between kisses; they knew that anal sex made her ache for vaginal sex beyond anything else they could do to get her horny. Finn pressed his body against her, his hands exploring her, his mouth not letting her get a breath.

When Phil got close to coming he stopped and motioned for Finn to take over, swapping places, he took Rae’s face between his hands and kissed her deeply.

“This is so unfair.” She groaned between kisses.

“It’s fucking us all over girl.” Finn laughed as he slid into her. Rae could feel Phil’s throbbing erection pressed against her stomach and knew Finn was right; this was torture for all of them.
Rae had let them begin their now daily torture of her; she knew it was just as bad for them so she had been letting them for the past week.

Four and a half weeks.  32 days.

No sex that ended in orgasm.

Finn was lying on his side behind her, violently pounding her arse, his lips around Phil’s cock. Rae was in desperate need and all she could think about as she sucked Phil’s balls was coming.

“Gotta stop.” Finn groaned and Phil nodded; he’d stop too. Rae rolled onto her stomach and groaned loudly, Phil leaned down and kissed the small of her back with a sympathetic noise.

“I think a cold shower?” Finn asked, gently tapping Rae’s round arse and stroking her back as he looked up at Phil; Rae had her face buried in the blankets.

“You gonna join us?” Phil asked and Rae made a noise to indicate she would.

“Alright, well I’m gonna go start it.” Finn kissed the back of Rae’s neck, sending shivers down her spine. “Love you girl.” He whispered to her and her response was muffled by the blankets but he got the idea, before kissing the side of Phil’s neck, “Love you boy.” And he was up and going as Phil replied. Phil gently kissed down Rae’s spine, stopping at her crack and sighing with frustration in unison with her.

“I’ll meet you out there.” He told Rae, “I love you.” Rae’s response was again muffled and he grinned; their teasing had really gotten to her, just like hers had to them.

Rae heard him leave and rolled onto her back grinning; she was pretty sure last night that the bleeding was finally over, but this morning she knew for sure. She had considered torturing them some more; taunting them, but in the end she decided to wait and see how long it took them to notice.

She joined them in the shower, where the kissing and frantic groping was becoming beyond frenzied.

“I keep thinking that eventually I’ll find some calm in this state.” Phil said when they had made themselves stop, “like I used to do with hunger for food when we had none or mum was withholding it.” He shook his head, “it hasn’t come yet.”

“Me either.” Finn answered with a smutty grin, “I think by the time I do cum, we’re all gonna drown in it.”

“That’s foul.” Rae laughed, “Although, I can think of worse ways to go out.”

“Than drowning in your boyfriends’ spunk?” Finn laughed, “You’ll have Bill’s as well.” Finn pointed at Phil, “And he produces plenty o’ cum without a near five week build up!”

“You both fucking do!” Rae shook her head.

“Aye and if we get you squirting as well… the sheets are gonna need changing!” Finn sighed and handed the soap to Rae.

“So what are we three going to do this fine Sunday morn?” Phil asked.
“Watch porn.” Rae grinned.

“What are you trying to do to us?” Finn asked in a serious tone that dissolved into laughter when he saw the look on Phil’s face and heard Rae’s giggle. She was in a really good mood and it was infectious. Finn noticed the good mood and wondered where the sexually frustrated grouch had gone.

When they sat down at the table Phil noticed Rae wasn’t wearing her granny-undies, which were the mainstay of redgate. He tilted his head to the side and stared at her bare bottom on the seat while he replayed the morning in his mind; he wasn’t sure she’d had chance to put a tampon in, but he supposed she must have.

“What?” Rae asked when she saw Phil staring at her; they hadn’t even had a single bite of food yet and she saw that Phil was beginning to figure it out. Although she wasn’t aware that Finn was still pondering her radical shift in mood.

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“Nothing.” Phil said in a voice that indicated that he was still musing.

“Fancy a tea?” She asked them and stood up.

“Yeah thanks.” Phil answered in that same voice.

“Aye.” Finn replied, his eyes dropping to her pubic hair.

“Right.” She said lightly and went to the kitchen side, both men’s eyes following her naked arse as she moved around the kitchen. Phil looked over at Finn and Finn returned the look, both of them with narrowed eyes. Rae was trying not to grin; it hadn’t taken them long at all to figure it out.

Phil gave Finn a look as if to say: ‘should we hold it and see if we can make her crack first?’

To which Finn gave a look as if to say: ‘are you fucking mad?’

There was the briefest of moments while Phil considered that silent question before they both shot out of their chairs, Finn almost tackling Rae in his eagerness to touch her. They had both knocked their chairs over in their haste and now both of them were touching and kissing her; the pot with the loose leaf tea Finn liked so much in it, held in her shaking hands. She was so excited that her whole body was trembling.

Finn slid a hand over her cunt and the fact that she said nothing to curb his actions emboldened him and he slid a finger between her labia, travelling towards her vagina opening. When his finger slid into her he groaned loudly and Phil knew they were in the clear.

“Oh thank fuck.” He mumbled. Rae was happy to let her lads go for it, and go for it they did; both lads attempted to pull their partners roughly, forcefully, to them at the same time, resulting in a tumble, a trip and a tumble to the floor for all three of them, Rae dropping the metal tea pot with a clambering racket, tea leaves going all over the floor. Rae started laughing as she realised that two extremely horny lads trying to get to it at the same time was not nearly as erotic as she thought it would be.

Finn started to roll onto his back, trying to get Rae on top of him, but the tea pots spout stabbed his back and he cried out, Phil wasting no time in getting her riding him while Finn swore and threw it across the room. He turned back and saw them, covered in tea leaves, already fucking. It was so sexy.

“Right.” He said lustily, “Lubricant.” He jumped up and sprinted across the flat to their bedroom,
yelling ‘lubricant’ again as he went. Meanwhile, the tea leaves were falling off Rae and fluttering into Phil’s eyes.

“Fuck.” Phil wiped his eyes but kept his other hand on Rae’s hip, encouraging her thrusting.

“Lubricant!” Finn called out as he pulled the top drawer next to the bed open. In his haste he pulled it too hard and it came completely out clattering painfully onto his foot. “FUCK!”

“Y’alright?” Phil and Rae called.

“Fine!” He called back, “don’t cum without me.” He sorted through the contents on the floor, “Where the fucking fuck’s the fucking lubricant?”

Back in the kitchen Phil was getting close to coming unusually very prematurely for him; Rae’s groaning was particularly arousing.

“Oral.” He said frantically; he needed to slow himself down.

“But I’m close.” Rae pleaded.

“Me too!” Phil answered and she stopped thrusting, tutting and rolling her eyes. “Sorry!” She got off him and bent to suck his cock but he pushed her over and onto her back. “Wrong type o’ oral girl.” He wiped his watering eyes and kissed down her tea leaf covered body.

“Oh well then that’s alright.” She took back her mild grumpiness at him and opened her legs, her fingers curling in his hair as she pushed his head down.

Back in the bedroom Finn was getting frantic.

“Where’s the fucking lube?” He dropped to his stomach and looked under the bed to see it had rolled under there. “Oh thank fuck.” He reached under but found that it was just out of reach, “Are you fucking kidding?” Luckily, some parts of his mind that weren’t associated with finally getting sex were still working and he pulled a belt out from the bottom drawer where they kept them all neatly rolled in coils. He used it to fish the lubricant out from under the bed, making a ‘u’ shape with the belt and pulling the tube of lube to him. “Fuck yes! Fuck yes!” He said happily. “I got the lube!” He called back to them and sprinted from the bedroom, tripping on the tea pot and twisting his ankle.

“Finn!” Rae yelled in worry and Phil, who hadn’t seen or heard a thing looked up to see Finn popping up like a jack-in-the-box.

“I’m fine!” He ran back to them, “I got fucking lubricant and we’re on oral now.” He grumbled as he knelt down beside them.

“Fuck me.” Rae groaned and he happily got himself into position, Phil shifting to be able to keep licking her clit while Finn fucked her.

This time Rae was already so close to orgasm she managed to get out an ear-splittingly loud one out before Finn had to stop; his body was betraying him too and threatening to cum too soon. When he stopped Rae pushed Phil back onto his back roughly, making him hit his head.

“I’m fine,” he answered her panicked fretting, “I’m fine; get on top.” He was seeing stars as he said it and the room was threatening to start spinning. Rae got on him and they started to fuck, Finn happily lubed up and thrust into Rae’s arse. When only a moment later both of them slowed she groaned.
“Keep going!” She ordered, “Get the quick one out of the way and we’ll fuck again in the shower.” Both of them sped up again and within minutes all three of them were coming loudly.

“Oh fuck.” Rae said through her orgasm as she felt her boys still coming hard; filling her up so to speak.

“Oh shit.” Phil laughed as he felt his cum pushing its way out of her because there was so much. They collapsed in a messy heap, Finn’s ankle singing out in pain, but his cock still hard. Phil knew that he probably had concussion, but he too was still erect and wanting more.

“Shower!” Rae ordered as she felt the sticky mess already dripping out of her.

They tripped and stumbled their way to the shower, Phil feeling dizzy, Finn’s ankle giving him grief, a strange stabbing pain in his back.

“Oh fuck you’re bleeding!” Rae said when she saw Finn’s back and he looked over his shoulder into the mirror.

“The tea pot. I told you that metal spout on it would be a good murder weapon.” Finn laughed.

“Y’Alright?” Phil asked looking at the wound.

“I’ll be more alright after me second orgasm.” Finn reminded them both and turned the shower on.

Within minutes Phil had his shoulders against the wall, his pelvis thrusting his hands holding Rae’s arse. Finn had one of Rae’s legs up around his waist and was thrusting into her cunt but couldn’t get as deep as they both wanted. She jumped up and he held her weight, his ankle protesting painfully. He managed to get Rae through one screaming orgasm before his ankle started to make him shift and move. Without thinking Rae reached up to anchor her weight, using the top of the sliding door to the shower and one of the shower heads. Rae enjoyed the freedom taking some of her weight off the lads gave her; it meant she could thrust between them.

And thrust she did.

Aggressively.

A total of eight times.

Before the shower head snapped off the wall, spurting water straight across the shower and sending the three of them tumbling to the floor painfully.

“Ow.” Rae could feel her elbow and shoulder painfully throbbing already. “Oh fuck.” She looked up at the gush of water streaming from the hole in the wall. Phil reached up over his head and turned the taps off, stopping the flow, Rae noticed blood on his hand.

“I can fix it!” Finn said about the shower head, “are we all able to keep going?”

“Yes!” Rae replied and pushed him flat onto the floor, both of them banging themselves in their frantic haste to continue. Phil shook his hand to try and dispel the pain and watched Rae get on top of Finn and as soon as she was, he joined in, his bloody hand leaving blood all over everything he
touched.
When you're with me there's a light and I can see my way. When you speak to me it's a song and I know what to say. When you listen there's a hope and I know I'm being heard.

“I probably won’t get the part.” Rae shrugged and eased into the seat. Phil sat beside her and groaned lightly; his bandaged hand was aching; all three of them were bruised and battered after yesterday’s sexual shenanigans. Phil felt like his cock was bruised; they’d fucked that much. But after so long without sex it had seemed very necessary to do it as much as possible when they could again. He’d never been like this; it was something Rae and Finn did to him. And he didn’t mind it one bit.

“Why wouldn’t they give you the lead? You had an amazing audition. We both know I’ll get the lead guy, and we both know you’ve got amazing chemistry with me.” He grinned cheekily and Rae stroked the slight bruise under his eye from where Finn had accidentally elbowed him. Finn had a pretty nasty split lip and Rae had a bruise on the back of her head from where her head had connected with his mouth.

“I dunno Phil; I’m rusty with acting, been focussing on the writing too much. I’m not even sure I wanna be in a play that Elsa’s not in charge of.” Rae grumbled self-consciously; but it was part of their degree and they had to. It was a play being run by the university and they knew most of the people involved. The director was a masters student and he was notoriously difficult and moody. He had run brutal, open auditions and stopped many people in the first thirty seconds of their auditions with a simple ‘no.’ But he was well-known, up and coming, and already respected and award-winning. Working with him was very desirable; he was an excellent contact and an almost guaranteed step up into the industry. Phil didn’t know it, but most of the actors and actresses in the room felt the same way about working with him. He already had eight movies that he had had small speaking roles in and he hadn’t even finished his degree yet. Plus all the numerous small tv roles and advertisements he’d done, and every play he was in was always a resounding success. He was like guaranteed gold.

“Right.” The director came and sat on the stage with scripts, rehearsal schedules and a cast list. “As everyone expected Phillip has been cast as Arthur.” Everyone clapped, the other male actors slightly grumpily but accepting and Rae grinned at Phil. The director had written the play and it was a modern take on King Arthur; set in East London. “And our lovely Gwen is going to be played by Marissa.” Phil looked over at Marissa; she was a svelte blonde with breasts that looked to be three time the size of her waist, with a semi-decent acting ability. She still wasn’t as good as Rae or at least half a dozen other actresses going for the role and everyone in the room knew it. Rae gave Phil a grim smile.

“You’re gonna have’ta make out with Marissa.” She told him and he gave her a pained expression. She chuckled and shook her head. Phil could tell she was acting brave, but she was really disappointed by not getting the role.

“Why Marissa?” Eliza called from the audience. She had done a particularly good audition and everyone made a noise of agreement; even Marissa, who wanted no favouritism based on her looks.
because she was working hard to be a great actress. “Rae did the best audition.” She added. Rae looked back at Eliza, surprised at her words.

“I agree.” Marissa said loudly.

“Rae doesn’t have the right look for the play.” He answered brusquely.

“You mean she’s too big to be the leading lady? To be the love interest?” Marissa called back, obviously outraged, and the director looked up into the darkened seats.

“Yes.” He answered in front of everybody without a qualm, “Some of you might find it hard to hear this, but looks matter in this industry. Lose a lot of weight Rachel darling, and I can consider you for leading roles. Cos no one’s gonna believe that a good looking guy like Phil could fall in love with a fat girl.”

“Except Rae’s my girlfriend of four years.” Phil answered.

“You’re gay.” The director shot back, “you’re with that techie guy.”

“Finn. He’s my boyfriend. He’s pretty fucking attractive,” Phil noted, “And he’s been with Rae longer than I have.” Phil answered and stood up. “I’m not gonna be in this play.”

“Phil.” Rae said softly. “You can’t do this.” Her voice travelled through the theatre; the acoustics where intense in this theatre.

“I’m not working with this bigoted fuck.” Phil answered.

“Phil…” The director said in a peace-keeping voice.

“It could damage your career if you do this.” Rae whispered, “I don’t want you to do that for me.”

“It will damage your career.” The director corrected and Phil laughed.

“I don’t give a fuck if douchebags like you don’t wanna work with me.” He shook his head, “I refuse to try to get to the top by leaving my integrity in the gutter. If I’m gonna make it in this industry Rae, I’m gonna do it without throwing the people I love under a bus, without selling myself out, without abandoning what I believe in. I won’t work with this bigoted nobody.” Phil held a hand out to her, “Come on, let’s go.”

“You need to be in a big theatre production for your final grade.” Rae reminded him.

“I’ve been in hundreds over the past four years. I’ll find something for this assignment. I won’t sell you out for anything girl.” He kissed her and took her hand, leading her from the theatre.

“The worst part of it isn’t how humiliating it was, it was knowing how badly I’ve fucked up Phil’s chances.” Rae said quietly, trying not to cry.

“No you haven’t.” Phil shrugged, “Don’t worry one bit.”

“Aye a sexy fucker with that much talent; he’ll be fine.” Finn comforted her and took her into his arms where she started to silently cry; she hadn’t thought of her fatness as a barrier to her success in so many years and today it had been thrust back up into her face. Finn looked over Rae’s head as
he stroked her hair and held her to his chest.

Are you ok? He mouthed the words to Phil and Phil nodded, dismissive of the concerns Finn and Rae had on this topic; it was not one he was going to compromise on. Finn was proud of Phil’s stance, but worried that it would affect his career and his ability to graduate.

Focus on Rae. He returned and sat down on the other side of Rae putting his hand on her thigh. She turned her wet eyes to him.

“I’m sorry.” She said miserably.

“What on Earth do you have to be sorry for?” Phil asked in a bewildered tone, even though he knew what sorts of things Rae was thinking; Finn did too, and he had a feeling Rhys might need to pay a visit over the next few weeks.

“If I ate like you Phil… if I exercised like you and Finn… I wouldn’t be…” She paused and looked down, “I wouldn’t be such a fucking embarrassment.” Finn lowered his eyes and tried to hide how painful it was to see her return to this territory. He hoped that Phil would handle it better than he had, but then reminded himself he’d been a teenager, barely stepping away from being a stupid little boy when he had had to deal with this stuff; he actually did alright. And he was 22 now, a strong, confident man, who knew a great deal more than he had then.

“The only person who should be embarrassed right now is Marco.” Finn said; he knew the director of that play pretty well because he’d been the assigned techie a few times for him, “for being such an arsehole and when his piece of shit play doesn’t have good enough actors to carry it and it flops I’m gonna laugh me arse off.”

“You’re not an embarrassment Rae, and your body is both beautiful and perfect the way it is. Some people are shaped like Marissa naturally, and some are shaped like you naturally and some are shaped some other way. If people are going to be so bigoted as to deny respect and opportunities to you because you’re not shaped like Marissa, that says more about them than you.”

“And you eat pretty damn well, and you exercise more than that Marco fuck.” Finn was pretty pissed off, “More than Marissa too I bet.” Finn added, “Not that it’s a competition.” He shrugged, “Marco thinks you can just go do more exercise and eat less like it actually works like that, but we see countless times that weight loss doesn’t work like that at all. Your body will sit where it’s supposed to sit and you just have to try to treat it the best you can.” Finn said firmly, “By not overeating, which people assume you do, and you don’t.” His voice was confident; he knew this stuff, “and more importantly by not undereating too.” He told her, “And getting the right amount of exercise for your body and abilities, not too much or too little. It’s all balance. And you’re in balance. Don’t let that knob put you out o’ balance girl.”

“I know.” She sniffled, “At least part o’ me knows. The other part of me is really…” She lowered her eyes, “Really not liking being me at the moment.”

“It’s understandable that when something like this happens it knocks us, it’s ok for you to feel whatever you feel. Just don’t let it seep into you and make you forget your worth ok?” Phil stroked her face gently and she nodded slowly.

“Aye, that tosser don’t get to define your worth Rae, only you do.” Finn backed Phil, “Even if what he said hurts, it’s no reflection on you; it’s not the truth of who you are.”

“Aye.” She nodded her head and took a deep breath. “So now we have to find a new play for both me and Phil.” She changed the topic. But Finn was having none of that.
“I don’t think I’ve told you all the things I love about your body in detail for ages.” Finn said, “I mean I love absolutely everything about you, so listing it all would take literally forever. But if I just focus on your body and try to not get into every tiny detail I love we should be able to get through it without dying of old age!”

“Every tiny detail?” She asked sceptically.

“Aye like the freckles on your shoulders; I love every single one of ‘em.” Finn looked over at Phil and Phil understood what Finn wanted.

“Space is mostly made up of nothingness.” He said and Finn furrowed his brows not sure that Phil had understood what he wanted from him, “interspersed with suns that are millions and millions of light years apart from each other. It must seem so lonely to be so far apart from others like them, but from our night sky the stars all look so close together, as if the sky is scattered with a dusting of diamonds.” His fingers went to her shoulder and gently pulled her shirt off it, “Nothing that currently exists could exist if stars hadn’t exploded; their atoms smashing together in a violent cacophony of stunning interstellar beauty. A chaotic song that swirled through time and space for eons to mirror itself in the dusting of freckles on your shoulders.”

“Holy shit.” Finn said and nodded his head, “Alright lad, you know how to bring the poetry.” Phil shrugged.

“It’s easy to bring the poetry when we’re talking about Rae… or you for that matter.” Phil added and Finn grinned and looked at Rae who was smiling and shaking her head.

“My freckles aren’t like the stars in the sky Phil.” She laughed.

“No, they’re better.” Finn retorted instantly and Phil cocked an eyebrow at her to indicate he agreed.

“Same scattering.” He ran his fingertips over her freckles, “To the skin cells in the freckles, they must seem light years apart from the other freckles.” Phil said, “They’re a thing of beauty, no less miraculous or enchanting than those burning orbs twinkling down at us each night.”

“Aye but if you touched a star the way you’re touching me freckles you’d die.” Rae countered.

“Orgasm has so often been called the small death. Do you know how many times I have looked at these freckles as I shook with the small death?” Phil returned. There was nothing Rae could do but laugh at Phil’s serious face, which is exactly what he’d hoped she’d do; she was already feeling better and they’d only done one body part. “Your turn Finn.” Phil shot at Finn happily, “And since my other hand is touching Rae’s thigh, I’d like to start you off by saying, I really love Rae’s thighs.”

Your thighs are beautiful. Finn traced the words on her thigh as he tried to think of the way to say what he felt.

“I like how they wrap around me head when you’re shaking with the small death!” He laughed and Rae blushed. “They’re so strong… kinda like tree trunks, they hold you up and they’re beautiful and stuff.” Finn grinned, “We all know that bastard’ll have something beautiful to say about ‘em.” He motioned at Phil and Phil chuckled, “But I’m not as good with words, I can say that it feels right when they’re wrapped around me all snug and how powerful they feel, it’s like safety, like the world can’t get to me.” He made a content sigh, “honestly that special Rae jiggle you got in your thighs when you walk makes me feel like everything is right with the world. You’re magic girl.”
“And you say you’re not good with words.” Phil said, “That was beautiful and honest, can’t ask for anything better.” Finn grinned and reached behind Rae to stroke Phil’s face momentarily before they both returned their focus to Rae.

“Ahh well I try.” Finn blushed, “When I started out with Rae I wouldn’t o’ been able to say anything… but I tried to learn how to speak for Rae.” He stroked her hair, ‘For you. And it’s weird, I feel like I kinda know what to say, cos I know you’ll hear me no matter how much I stutter or stumble over the words.”

“Our Rae brings out the best in both of us.” Phil agreed and they enclosed their arms around her, holding her close to them.

“Alright you two.” Rae said with a huge grin, “You win. I feel better.”

“We’re not finished yet are we?” Phil asked, “I’ve still got so much more poetry for you. And I know Finn could speak forever about how perfect you are…”

“We’re not done yet.” Finn agreed and Rae giggled slightly.

“I love you both so much.” Rae told them and bit her bottom lip, unable to contain her smile.

“Fuck I love that smile Miss Earl.” Finn said and Phil nodded and ran a finger along her bottom lip.

“There’s so much to say.” He said, “But can I kiss those lips first?”

“You can.” Rae answered.

They made slow, gentle, reverent love to her; pointing out parts of her they loved and worshiping them with words, caresses and kisses for hours before they got their penises involved in the lovemaking.

Phil read the scripts he had printed off at uni for the plays he knew of that he might have a shot of getting a big enough role in for it to count towards his final grade. He had looked wistfully at some of the West End productions going on, but had decided he wasn’t yet ready for those. Rae was learning a monologue for an audition she was dreading tomorrow and Finn was pouring over scripts for his stage technician final assessment; he had to design and perform the light and sound for one of the plays being run by the university, or a play run outside of the university if he could get it. There was only six months left of university and they’d all be graduating, with double degrees, done over 5 years on account of picking up extra subjects. They had just finished celebrating a brilliant New Year’s, they were all 23, until May when Finn would turn 24. And six days later they would celebrate their 5th anniversary of the three of them being together, and it was 2003; they had come so far and it was finally the final stretch of this part of their journey.

“My brain is going to dissolve with boredom.” Finn moaned, “Not one of these directors has an ounce of technical creativity, and none of them are willing to let go of the reigns enough to let their techie design shit.” He flipped through the scripts despondently, “The most interesting thing any of them ask for are accent lights, and we got one who asked for a gobo.” He shook his head, “hold the fucking phone, we got a party on our hands here.” He sighed, “there’s new technology that allows for dynamic moving lighting, but these guys are all for the static boring dimmer washes and floods. Ugh!”
“What’s the sound like?” Rae asked sympathetically.

“Over half of them have absolutely no sound requirements.” He said exasperated, “They can’t possibly expect us to get a good working experience with this selection!”

There was a knock on the door and they all looked at each other and then over to the intercom that was there so that people couldn’t just walk into the building.

“Just a minute!” Rae called and shot up to go to the bedroom to put some clothes on. Finn sauntered after her and Phil looked at the door for a moment longer before sprinting to the room to put on jeans and a shirt. Finn put his jeans on and sauntered out to the door while Rae was slipping a skirt on. He pulled the fly up carefully; he had no underpants on. He fished around in his pockets and pulled out a cigarette and lighter. He lit it up as Phil left the bedroom, his shirt still unbuttoned, but he was running his fingers through his hair. They both looked back into the room to see Rae slipping a shirt on. Finn didn’t bother to do his button up on his jeans, or to put a shirt on before opening the door as Phil started to button his shirt.

“Well you do know how to keep a girl waiting.” Elsa said with a grin and took Finn’s cigarette, sucking on it she looked him up and down, “but I’ll forgive you since you give such a good welcome.”

“Elsa!” Rae exclaimed happily.

“What the fuck are you doing here?” Finn asked, “Get your arse inside girl!” He grinned happily.

“You’re not the only ones who moved to London!” She laughed and came in, looking around openly. “Love the apartment. I can see all three of you in it.” Rae gave her a hug and Phil had stopped doing up his shirt because he was so surprised to see her. “Big fucking Spruce.” She looked at the potted tree and they shrugged in reply and she shrugged back with a grin, “It’s so nice to see you outside of school and the club… where I just try to not see you fucking!” She laughed and Phil felt himself blushing and looked down, wanting to get himself together before he spoke. Finn took a moment to appreciate the only other woman he’d found truly attractive since he’d fallen in love with Rae. He noticed that now that she wasn’t teaching, her clothing was more fitted and there was more cleavage. He gave her a hug and then grinned cheekily.

“Still looking good.” He said quite openly; Rae and Phil were aware of his attraction to Elsa, they both shared it to a lesser degree and their relationship was strong enough to handle him being open and honest with his thoughts and feelings.

“Oh I know.” She returned, “But I’m actually here to see Mr Seymour.” Phillip looked up with surprise.

“Pardon?”

“I heard a little rumour that Marco Deprivska had over half his cast walk out on him because a plucky, young upstart refused to work with what he called a bigoted fucker.” She looked at him with a piercing eye, “it didn’t take much digging to find out it was you and why you did it.” She glanced at Rae, “Some people say you’ve fucked yourself and that no one will ever work with you again. Marco is a favourite amongst many of the big names in theatre.” Elsa said and Phil tried to stop himself nodding his head; he didn’t want Rae or Finn to worry, but Elsa was right that he had certainly made things harder for himself. “I was visiting some friends in Stamford when the gossip finally got to me, and I just happened to run into your father Finn.” She gave Finn a grin, “Such a lovely man; he gave me your contact details and here I am to-”
“Did you fuck me da?” Finn asked, his mouth getting away from him before he had chance to stop it.

“Your father’s sex life is none of your business.” Elsa replied. “And you shouldn’t assume I fuck everyone just because I am very sexually open.” She added.

“Sorry.” Finn shook his head, “I just know me dad would o’ liked that.”

“Of course he would have.” Elsa replied with a saucy grin. “Anyway, as I was saying, I’m here Mr Seymour, to get your career back on track if you’d like to be in my production of ‘The Crucible’, I need a John Proctor…” Phil gave her an amazed look. “I also need an Abigail.” She looked at Rae, “And a very creative techie to help me bring this story into this century.” She looked at Finn. “But I’m mostly interested in getting my John Proctor as I do have other people in mind for Abigail and my techie if you two aren’t interested.” She returned her eyes to Phillip. “Now that you’re in your mid 20s and you’re looking like a man, not a teenager, I want you and your skills in that role. I wasn’t planning on doing the play until next year, but I’ve moved it forward so I can help you get the credit for your course, get your career back on track and also on a personal level, give Marco the finger, cos I hate that bigoted son of a prick.”

“Wow…” Rae breathed.

“And to sweeten the deal, it’s paying in the West End in the New London theatre. We have the whole month of May booked, it has over a thousand seats, and I have a lot of contacts already keen to come to opening and closing nights. The name Elsa King still has a lot more clout in this business than Marco’s. Let’s put it to good use.”
Hidden Place

‘Hidden Place’ by Björk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpaK4CUhxJo

He’s the beautifullest, fragilest, still strong, dark and divine. And the littleness of his movements hides himself; he invents a charm that makes him invisible, hides in the air. Can I hide there too? Hide in the air of him, seek solace… Sanctuary…

“You know Phil, I always admired how much control you have over your body.” Rae said as she came in and dropped the keys onto the key hooks Finn had put up. Phil let his epee drop slightly and turned to her.

“I’m not nearly as disciplined as I used to be. Before I had to keep the mask on even at home, now I get to be myself at home.” He kissed her hello, before he started to sheath his weapon. “I do miss competition.” He added looking at his swords lovingly; they had been one of the things Rae and Finn had managed to salvage after Phil’s disownment.

“You’ll have to start it up again.” Rae shrugged and went to the fridge.

“Oh I dunno. London is a very big talented ocean for a little fish like me to get eaten in.” He answered, “But maybe…” He watched her stripping off as she drank the chilled water she’d gotten from the fridge. “Where’s Finn?” He started to strip off his fencing gear; he liked to practice in it.

“Still at the theatre, up in the catwalks, going over everything, doing Finn the stage techie things.”

“He’s loving it.” Phil laughed and Rae nodded.

“Oh my god yes. It’s cos Elsa gives him complete control over everything.”

“How was the rehearsal?” Phil asked. Today they were going over every scene that didn’t have John Proctor in it. Basically Elsa was giving the hard working Phil a day off.

“It were great.” She replied, “Although we missed you.” They sat down on the lounge together. Rae flicked her bra across the room and leaned back into the sofa. “Why did I do that, I’m just gonna have to go pick it up now.” She sighed.

“It can wait.” Phil shrugged.

“Wait, you’re saying that?” Rae asked incredulously, “Becoming a party animal there Phil.” She teased, making him giggle.

“Yeah I know, you’ll have to do an intervention soon.” He let his hand fall onto her thigh, like Finn, he was a man who liked to touch the thigh of his partner in a non-sexual way while sitting around doing nothing in particular. Rae looked down at his hand, her faded scars beneath his fingers; still visible, but she was proud of how long it had been since she had cut.

“You never said anything about my scars.” Rae had often wondered what Phil must think about them; he hadn’t said anything about them when she had told him about them, but then they’d been telling him ‘everything’ that day and she supposed it had been a lot to take in. She had seen him
“When I was eight, my mother got her first round of cancer. It was a very emotionally difficult time for our family; my mother became withdrawn and Kelsey and I didn’t really cope well with that. My father called himself an inventor and he used to spend hours teaching us, but when mum got cancer, he withdrew as well.” Phil swallowed back his emotion, “I didn’t really understand it. But just before my tenth birthday they started to come back to us. The love was slowly returning to the house and I knew everything would be ok. Then one of my father’s inventions took off and the money started coming in and six months later our whole lives had been turned upside down and we were being move to the house in Kensington, I wasn’t supposed to talk to my old friends anymore and I was being given dozens of lessons, the most important one being language coaching to teach me to speak like I do now instead of with the East End accent I grew up with. I was being taught to be ashamed of what I had been, to deny it and pretend it never happened… to seek out new rich friends and embrace this new wonderful life father had created for us.” Phil furrowed his brows, “But I was, and still am an introvert at heart, training has taught me to invent a charm that overcomes that, but when I was ten, making new friends in this terrifying new world that had so many rules and disapproving faces…” He shook his head, “Kelsey was an extrovert and at first she enjoyed being the new girl on the block, it took about a month before she felt what I had been feeling from the beginning. That we didn’t belong there.” Rae took his hand and felt she finally understood that look Phil had been giving the cuts on her thighs “I started to feel…” Phil considered, “Somewhat dissociated from myself and my surroundings, like none of it was real… like I wasn’t real.” Rae watched his face closely, silently as he spoke, “I couldn’t feel anything properly.” He looked up at her, “I don’t know when it really started but, I used to rub my fingers along the brickwork of the new house until they bled. It was like, if I gave my blood to that house I would feel like I belonged there eventually. And the pain gave me a sense of being real. I felt… I just felt.”

“I understand.” Rae nodded her head; she had cut because her emotions were too intense; he had hurt himself because he felt nothing. But she wondered, knowing Phil like she did, if really he was just feeling so much that he had tipped over into numbness as a self-protection from it all, and his ten year old self couldn’t figure out a way out of that emotional wasteland.

“Every day, I’d rip all the wounds open again, rubbing my fingers along the house, bleeding on the brick walls, wondering if I could rub my fingers down to my bones. And I could cry, and I could find peace, and I could find me.” He ran his fingers along her scars and Rae felt closer to him than she ever had; the place where he had hurt himself was caressing where she had hurt herself.

“What did you do to stop yourself?” She asked and he gave an odd smile.

“My mother started me on violin.” Rae felt ill; she had seen him practice till his fingers bled. “I practiced every day, till my fingers bled, and I poured my emotion into that instrument.” He looked down at his hands, “When my fingers grew hard, strong, I started cello, and they bled again.”

“Phil…”

“Eventually, not even the double bass could make them bleed and it took everything I had in me to not start rubbing them along the house to make them bleed again, to feel that pain, and even then, I did end up doing it a few times. But in time, I felt that I didn’t need to; I had music now.” He nodded slowly, “And I slowly started to get it together emotionally. Sometimes I still make them bleed, but it’s not for the blood, or the pain, it’s for the music.” He reassured her, “I don’t need it anymore, I understand my emotions, I feel very deeply now. I know I don’t always express them the way you’d like… or the way other people do, but I do express them, often through my playing,
through the music.”

“I hear that in your music.” Rae touched his face.

“I know you do.” He whispered, “You’ve been to that place as well.” He ran his fingers down her cheek, “We’ve been to different hells, but they’re both still hell.” He kissed her lips, “And now we have each other and Finn.”

“Finn’s been through hell too.” Rae thought about his mother abandoning the family when he was a child. “He got a temper and was fighting. His father got him into boxing….” She shook her head sadly, “you were both lucky to have a parent guide you into a more healthy way to express emotions.” Rae said.

“No one can really guide you into being the world class writer you are Rae Earl; that’s a journey every author takes alone, within themselves. Your mother couldn’t help you down your path.”

“Which is just as well, considering how narcissistic she can be sometimes.” She chuckled. “You know I’m so glad it’s the three of us because I love you and Finn equally and I never thought I’d be lucky enough to have the both of you… but sometimes it’s nice to just be the two of us. Especially now that I know that you self-harmed too.”

“Yeah.” Phil said and put both hands on her face.

“And I think about our history and what we shared in Lincoln…” Phil nodded his head, looking into her eyes, “I wouldn’t change a thing, would you?”

“Not one thing.” He agreed.

“Not even when I turned you down? Cos for the longest time that was the one thing I’d o’ changed, but now I think it was a necessary part of our growth together as a threesome. Without it, you and Finn wouldn’t’ve grown as close as you did.”

“I agree.” Phil answered, “And I wouldn’t change a thing Rae. I never dreamed I could be this happy.” He told her and kissed her deeply.

Half an hour later Finn walked through the door and was greeted by the sounds of them making love in the bedroom. In their five years together, all combinations of duo sex had now already occurred and it had ended up being he and Phil that had been the first duo to actually do the deed, when Rae was late at her feminist club. Telling Rae had gone better than all three of them had expected. It turned out that the talk they’d had when Phil had first walked in on duo sex had actually done the job and they’d started talking much more openly about their feelings about these sorts of things. So when the first duo had come around, it had been an easy conversation followed by sex pampering Rae’s every need; it had then become the unspoken law that after duo sex, the un-fucked partner was pampered by the other two. It worked very well at removing the ‘feeling left out’ issue.

“Duo or trio?” He poked his head into the bedroom and asked if he could join in. They both looked up at him.

“This one’s a duo.” Rae said softly.
“But we’ll look after you when we’re finished?”

“Sounds good.” Finn agreed, “I’ll put some loud music on and cook dinner. Then after dinner it’s pampering Finn time!” He said happily and left them to it.

They waited for the music to resume their slow, tender love-making, pouring the kindness upon each other that neither of them had been capable of giving to themselves as a child.

They knew now that they had this shared place together, and that they could return whenever they wanted or needed.
"Some of that lighting was fucking terrifying!" Chloe told Finn as she settled down into the beanbags and checked her mobile phone, sighing; her boss had called. “This internship is going to fucking kill me.”

It had been a weekend of performances; it was the closing night of ‘The Crucible’ and Rhys and Chloe had finally gotten around to doing their show at the club, several of the performers had been involved, and the gang had come to watch both performances.

Friday night had been the closing night for ‘The Crucible’ and the gang were still talking about how good it had been; the newspapers had written about how electric the performers were, Phil had been heralded as the next big thing and Rae had gotten some praise, as well as some diet advice from some of the columnists, while the sound and lighting had been praised across the board as well. Their final performance piece for university had been a resounding success and Phil already had several movie offers, tv offers and theatre offers waiting for his perusal. Rae had gotten a few too, but she was more interested in writing and directing, regardless of her talent with performance. She enjoyed acting sometimes, but not as a career, and especially not while everyone was so obsessed with a woman’s appearance more than her performance. It was Finn that had been the most surprised with the outcome from the play; he had been offered paid work as a theatre techie from several directors doing West End productions, and he had also been offered junior positions on several television shows and a movie. Elsa had delivered on her promise to use her name to get Phil’s career back on track, after the incident with Marco, some directors had been unwilling to work with a difficult actor, but now he had no such problem, and all of them had benefitted from the show; they all knew they’d be getting HD’s for their marks too.

Saturday night had been dedicated to Rhys and Chloe’s performance and it had been something else; Rhys was something else, and by the end of it Chop declared he’d take it from Rhys when they watched him make Till, an incredibly attractive German man, orgasm from anal penetration only. Till was dominant, and like all the other performers had taken a perverse joy in Dominick’s continued infatuation with Rae, Finn and Phil. Having the three dominant men, Rhys, Till and Dominick share a stage and fuck had been an inspired idea, but when Pandora, Andromeda and Chloe had joined them; things had gotten even more phenomenal. The thing that Rae, Finn and Phil had noticed the most about Rhys was his eye contact. He seemed to hold the person he was penetrating in his glance, making them breathless just with his eyes. Watching Rhys was something akin to hypnotic and she’d never heard the audience be so silent; they were all enraptured unable to look away from Rhys, no one was fucking in the audience, no one was getting drinks, everyone was watching. Phil had decided that some people just seemed to have a chemical pheromone in them that made them irresistible; and Rhys was one of those people, Elsa was another one of these people that he had met. To him Rae and Finn had it, but they didn’t have it for everyone like Rhys and Elsa seemed to. Even when people were giving them shit for not being the stock-standard, bullshit, ‘ideal’ of beauty, you could still see a desire in their eyes for them.
Knowing that Rhys and Elsa had fucked did Finn’s head in; they were both so attractive to him, and it also did his head in to be thinking that way about Rhys who’s he’d known since he was ten; both of these people had taught him so much and had become wonderful, dear friends to him. But god he’d go there if he could. He was glad that he now knew that both of his partners would too; the look on their faces watching the sex show gave them away in regards to Rhys, and they’d both admitted it about Elsa during rehearsals for ‘The Crucible’.

The other revelation of the sex show had been Chloe’s incredible sexual confidence, although it had been weird at first seeing Chloe naked, after a while Rae simply revelled in her best friend having so much power; she was dominant over all these dominant performers, and what a show she’d put on for everyone.

“I think we can all go to a nudist beach for our next summer get together.” Chop laughed, “After that, nothing’s gonna surprise me.”

“My two dicks might surprise you.” Phil said and everyone laughed, but Chop gave Finn a look as if asking for confirmation that that was actually a joke and that made Finn laugh even more. The gang had set up sleeping bags and cushions on the floor of their huge studio apartment and had stayed there on Friday and Saturday night, they were all staying tonight too, but early Monday morning would see them all leaving.

“I’d like to see your two dicks.” Tom answered cheekily.

“One day.” Phil answered and started setting up the coffee table for their movie night.

“Who the fucking fuck got ‘Dirty Dancing’?” Chop asked unimpressed.

“Me.” Izzy answered; she had been quieter than normal after getting a phone call on her mobile on Saturday morning and Chloe and Rae had been trying to get out of her what the phone call had been, but to no avail.

“Of course it was you.” Chop replied.

“If she hadn’t I would have!” Tom answered.

“Yeah, me too!” Archie agreed.

“Serious?”

“Don’t dis the classics.” Rhys told Chop as everyone sided with Izzy.

“Aye, no one puts baby in a corner, Chop.” Finn said and Chop rolled his eyes and Rae led them all in a rousing version of ‘(I’ve Had) The Time of my Life,’ Chop folding his arms and shaking his head.

“Let’s order some Chinese food!” Chloe said when they’d finished.

“There’s an awesome Vietnamese restaurant downstairs.” Phil said, “I’m always keen for an excuse to get some Pho.”

“It’s breakfast food Phil.” Rae laughed.

“I know and I don’t care. It’s so good.” He got up and went to the ‘odds and ends’ drawer in the kitchen and got out a menu. “We can call down to them and they’ll bring it up.” Phil handed the menu to Chloe.
“We might get food from them a lot!” Finn looked adoringly at Phil; he’d been glad to find a food they could order in that Phil loved, but it was no surprise it was the vegetable heavy Vietnamese cuisine from downstairs that had taken him.

“Yes.” Chloe said happily and looked at the menu.

“So your internship is going to kill you?” Rae asked.

“Usual?” Phil asked her and she nodded, Finn also nodding. Everyone else read the menu and gave their orders to Phil, knowing he’d remember them and call them down the restaurant.

“Yeah, my boss basically treats me like I’m on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and when I tell him I’m supposed to be doing a 50 hour week, he tells me that human rights don’t wait for when I’m ready to work.”

“You should tell him it’s a violation of your human rights to not be permitted to have home time.” Archie answered with a grin and Chloe nodded.

“You say that as a joke, but I’m thinking of telling him that.” Chloe answered, “How’s academia treating you?”

“Oh I’m not an academic!” Archie blushed, “Not yet anyway. Not till I’m a greying old duffer. But I am working on getting a grant to dig in Mongolia and I might pee my pants with excitement, cos it’s the hunt for artefacts surrounding Genghis Kahn and the Mongolian government just got on board with my proposal, so it’s probably going ahead.”

“Will you be going with Arch?” Rae asked Tom and Tom looked at Rhys.

“If I can be spared; we’re still in discussion about how long I can be gone, because Chloe’s off to Geneva too.”

“And I’d like to go along, so we need to time it with each other.” Rhys explained, “We can’t both be away at the same time too often and we have the summer break coming up.”

“Alright, quiet down while I call!” Phil called over to them as he picked up the phone.

“How’s the mechanic going?” Finn asked Chop.

“Fucking great!” Chop grinned, “We got a couple o’ mobile mechanics now and we’re thinking of doing some franchising or something to spread out past Stamford.” Rae turned to Izzy while the boys talked shop and Chloe leaned in too.

“What about you?” Rae asked Izzy.

“Costume design for local theatre groups.” She said softly, “It’s kinda uninspiring, but I’ve been doing the occasional show in Italy, just as a junior with them.” She sighed and both Rae and Chloe saw the longing in her eyes.

“You wanna work there.” Chloe said and Izzy nodded.

“Yeah. More than anything. I miss Milan.” Her eyes dropped, “Which is why—”

“Movie’s going on!” Finn said loudly and they all looked up at him, “Time to have the time of our lives!” He laughed as Chop groaned.

“Pick this up later?” Rae asked and Izzy nodded.
A few hours later they were stuffed full of Vietnamese food and merrily teasing Chop for being the one with bad taste in movies.

“Alright Chop!” Chloe laughed as Chop rolled his eyes at them, “I’ll change the topic.” She said as if she were doing him a huge favour, “In light of my recent sexual endeavours, I’m interested to know what everyone’s favourite sex thing is. Mine at the moment is orgies!” She laughed, “Lots of bodies to enjoy.” Rhys’s eyes were on her as she spoke, a smouldering desire in them as always, a smile on his lips; she could have said almost anything and he’d have enjoyed hearing it. Chloe looked to her left and Izzy grinned.

“And I don’t mind that one bit!” Chop laughed merrily and held up his shot glass to her.

“Tag you’re it.” Izzy said to Rae.

“Ah D.P. for sure.” Rae answered, “although I’m probably as equally fond of the Finn licking, Phil fingering combination, and also the combination of being fucked and gone down on at the same time.” Rae answered and Chloe shook her head laughing.

“Oral has a special place in my heart too.” Tom agreed, “But nothing beats Mr Archibald’s cattle prod.”

“You’ve got a fucking cattle prod?” Chop said in awe.

“You’ve got a fucking cattle prod?” Chop said in awe.

“Gotta keep my man happy.” Archie grinned. “He likes all the electrical things.” Archie said and ran a loving hand down Tom’s cheek. Tom grinned happily and nodded.
“How d’ypu even get your hands on one o’ those?” Finn asked.

“Keen for a try?” Tom laughed.

“I dunno, maybe!” Finn laughed.

“I’m getting a Taser next.” Archie said.

“Be still my beating heart.” Tom groaned. Tom and Archie’s unashamed sadomasochism was well known in the gang, and everyone had grown from being horrified, to worried, to curious to now thinking it was kinda cute between these two; even though they were aware that it got quite heavy sometimes.

“I quite like my electrical devices too.” Archie grinned, “but the chair… I love the chair.” They had a chair at their house that was designed to be brutally uncomfortable and they would tie each other to it for hours at a time, “that and just plain anal.”

“Aye but giving or taking?” Chop asked.

“Both.” Archie replied.

“Hey this guy at work said that gay guys always had like… mops and buckets or tops and bottoms… or like basically one guy that always took it and one guy that always gave it…” Chop said, “And I told him, not all the time, and that heaps of gay relationships do it equally, and that thinking otherwise were just straights putting heteronormativity on gay folk.” Archie and Finn looked at him with wonder. “Did I make any sense when I said that?”

“Yeah that’s fucking perfect.” Archie replied honestly and Chop nodded happily, “Good, cos I didn’t think I made much sense when I were talking about how heterosexuality were all made up, so I at least wanted to of gotten that right.” He said, “it’s like I get it in me head, but I can’t quite get it out me mouth right.” He explained.

“You’re doing great.” Finn told him and Chop looked pretty pleased with himself. “What’s your favourite sex thing?”

“Hearing her cum.” Chop said nodding at Izzy, “It might surprise some o’ you lovely lads and ladies that early on in our relationship I weren’t so good at getting her to cum… so every time I do it’s extra sweet that she getting to enjoy it now.” He looked over at Phil, “Your turn lad.” Phil took a deep breath while he considered what his answer was.

“I really don’t know.” He furrowed his brows, “I think I’m still in awe that I get to even touch the two people I love; I honestly never expected to have that privilege.” He lowered his eyes, “I had convinced myself that I was doomed to love and not be loved in return, and I had accepted that, cos you know, people don’t owe you love just because you love them.” Rhys gave Phil a supportive smile, “but you don’t get to choose who you love and I’d been unlucky enough to fall in love with two people who for various reasons, I believed I had absolutely no chance of ever being with. And I was just very lucky that they knew someone like you Rhys,” Phil said, “Because of you they understood what polyamory was, and Finn was the one who reached out and made it a reality.” Rhys’s eyes went to Finn, and there was a very subtle hint of feeling proud of Finn in his eyes. “And even though we’ve been together for just over 5 years now, I still can’t quite get over how fucking lucky I am… so… my favourite sex thing, is all of it.” He said and shrugged unapologetically, “Just getting to touch Rae and Finn is…” He laughed and shook his head, “I sound like a love-sick idiot.” He laughed. “And I am.” Finn kissed him and Rae leaned over and kissed him too, whispering words of love to him.
“Love is such a grand thing!” Chop said and raised his glass in a toast, “To a splendid cunt love!”

“Chop.” Izzy woke him up as quietly as she could.

“What is it?” He asked groggily.

“Come out on the balcony and talk.”

“I gotta pee.”

“I’ll meet you out there.” Izzy said and got up. Chop grumbled and groaned and went to the bathroom. By the time he’d unintentionally stomped his way back through the lounge room, still half asleep he’d woken up everyone. But he hadn’t noticed and just went out to the balcony where Izzy stood looking down over the graves.

“What’s up baby girl?” He said and lit up a cigarette.

“Carlo has offered me a job.” She said softly. Inside Chloe sat up and looked out the window at Izzy and Chop talking.

“Like another couple of weeks thing?” Chop asked; since Izzy had come back a few years ago, every year Carlo hired her to do shows a few times a year, she was usually gone for a few weeks at a time.

“No longer.” Izzy answered, not sure how to say what she had to say.

“That’s alright baby girl, we’ll deal with it. We already done a year, nothing can be much worse than that.” He grinned.

“It’s a three year contract.” Izzy said, “And he’s considering running a second three year contract right after that one.” Inside Finn had sat up and was looking out the window to see Chop’s thunderstruck face.

“What the fuck did Izzy just say to Chop?” He asked curiously.

“You’re not gonna take it are you?” Chop asked Izzy, horrified, because he already knew the answer.

“I am.” She answered. “I’m sorry Chop.” She felt the tear drip down her cheek, but she didn’t break down; she knew she had to do this.

“That’s alright, we’ll do the long distance thing again and-”

“No.” She whispered, “It’s not fair on you. You deserve to find someone that wants the life you want. I don’t want kids, I don’t want to stay in Stamford. I never will.”

“Don’t you love me anymore?” He asked, thunderstruck.

“I still love you Chop.” She answered honestly and handed him her engagement ring, her hands closing around his, “But I want this career too much to let this opportunity go.” She told him, “Getting cancer, nearly dying… I’m not gonna live my life for someone else Chop… cos I probably don’t have much of a long life left. I don’t want kids; I don’t wanna live for them, be
relied on by them… I don’t want dependency… I don’t.” She felt the emotion bubbling in her as she saw a tear drop from Chop’s eye, “I don’t want the life you want. And I can’t keep doing this to either of us. It’s over.” She kissed his cheek, “I hope you can find someone who loves you the way you deserve Arnold.” She turned and went to open the door.

“Izzy, please don’t.” His voice was broken and she couldn’t turn to look at him, “We can work this out… I love you…”

“I’m going to get the train home, and clear my clothes out today.” She said without turning. “If you take your time getting home, you won’t ever have to see me again.” She opened the door and closed it again before she could hear what Chop was starting to say. She saw everyone’s eyes on her and noticed how wet her cheeks were. “I’ve been offered a job in Italy for three to six years. I’m going. I just broke up with Chop… so I guess I have to break up with you guys now.” Her voice started to thicken out. “I love you all. Goodbye.” She grabbed her bag and headed for the door.

“Izzy wait!” Chloe called after her. Rae went to the door to follow her.

“Let her go.” It was Chop, his eyes fixed on the door she had just gone through, his face wet with tears, “This is what she needs to do. We have to let her go.”
‘This Everyday Life’ by Speedstar

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYFkysUXMhg&feature=youtu.be

Make me laugh in panic like a crowd; I fell in love, yeah I fell in love.

Dear Izzy

I dunno what rubbish you were talking thinking you need to break up with us cos you broke up with Chop. Chop won’t ask us to take sides, and I know you won’t either, and fuck we oughtta be adult enough by now to handle it. I don’t wanna lose you as a friend Iz, please write back. And I know we all wanna see you in Australia for the summer break in 6 weeks. I know Woody’s already put aside a separate room for you in his hotel thingy. And Bryn’ll be there if you’re feeling like a rebound summer fling...

Please write back Iz. I miss you.

Love Rae.

“Alright the carburettor’s fucked on the Benz.” Finn said and sat down at the kitchen table. Rae put on a pot of tea and Phil looked up from the computer.

“I’ve been having problems with it since before I was with you guys.” Phil replied. “Brand new when I got it and still dodgy as fuck.” He shook his head.

“Which is actually not like a Mercedes, you should o’ taken it back.” Finn replied and Phil shrugged.

“I didn’t really care, you could walk everywhere I needed to be in Stamford.”

“Alright well, if we get stingy for the next few months we should be able to save up enough money to replace it.” Finn planned, “Which means we’re back to the one ply loo paper and-” Rae groaned loudly.

“I hate that stuff!” She complained. Phil watched them with a happily bemused look on his face. It had been over two years since he had gotten his trust fund and they’d barely touched it. His boy and girl were not used to thinking about having money; they still thought in terms of having to worry about it. They still maintained a fairly tight weekly budget that was covered by the bits of paid work they cobbled together here and there; Finn had three clients, Rae did a day of work a week at a local record store, the radio show Rae and Finn did got a small wage, and Phil’s paid acting bought in large monthly sums. They worked because they wanted to and only so it didn’t interfere with their study; they had no monetary reason to work.

“Finn, just buy a new carburettor.” Phil cut over the top of them as they discussed how to save on their weekly budget.
“Can’t.” Finn answered, “You’re not making any new money, and if we get in the habit of just spending it without replenishing it, we’ll end up spending it all.” Phil had to stop himself from smiling; Finn and Rae really had no idea how much money they really had. They knew a figure, but not what that meant.

“Pardon?” He had to ask to stop himself from grinning like a fool.

“Didn’t you say all your money were in stocks?” Finn said, “And you’re giving all the profits of that to charity?” He wiped his hands on his jeans making Rae roll her eyes’ it was always her job to get the car grease out of his jeans, neither of the boys had figured out how to do it adequately.

“No.” Phil answered, “I wouldn’t put all of our money into stocks, because then we wouldn’t have easy access to it.” He explained, “80 million of it is in stocks. 100 million of it is sitting in a high interest bank account earning us 6% per annum paid monthly so it compounds. And the other 7 million was transferred to our shitty low interest bank account so we could all get at it with our bank cards, and is earning us 1.5%.” Phil answered, “The interest is paid monthly… do you know how much we get paid in interest each month just from having 7 million pounds in the bank?” He asked.

“Over £10,000.” Finn said in awe.

“Aye.” Phil replied, “I know you two are happy with me doing the finances but you two should check our accounts more often.” Phil advised.

“Oh my god.” Rae marvelled.

“There’s a reason I hate the capitalist system and want it destroyed.” Phil said with a grim smile, “it is completely inequitable. But while we have the capitalist system in place, I’m gonna be a complete hypocrite, cos you best believe I’m going to take advantage of my privileged position to give you two the life you want with absolutely no stress or worries.” He answered, “So the buy the carburettor. Don’t worry. We’re fine.”

“How much are we giving to charity?” Rae asked.

“We make 7% profits on our 80 million of investments, paid monthly; I let it get interest for the year then pay it into charities annually, including the interest it made.”

“So… several million.” Rae said and sat down at the table with a thud.

“Yes.” Phil responded.

“We give more away every year than most people will ever have…” She shook her head slowly.

“Yes.” Phil said, “There’s a saying that it’s very expensive to be poor, but very cheap to be rich. We make more money, just from having money in the bank doing nothing, than most people will ever see in their entire lives. When we all die, I’ll give it all away if you both approve. But until then, I am making sure that we never have to worry about living under a capitalist society.”

“Every time I think I got me head around how rich y’are Phil, I get me head turned around again.” Finn lit up a cigarette and shook his head.

“How rich WE are.” Phil corrected. “It’s your money too. Buy the carburettor. Buy a new car if you think it’s best. Just consider the environ-”

“Environment.” Finn finished the sentence almost silently, his eyes staring off. “Alright, I’ll get
the new carburettor, and I wanna pay me dad’s home loan off?”

“Sure.” Phil nodded, “The lawyers can organise to pay it directly so it can be a surprise for him?” Phil answered and Finn nodded grinning.

“Can I do the same…?” Rae asked, “Except probably buy me mum something that’s not a council flat!” She laughed.

“If you want.” Phil said, “Just consider the cost of upkeep on any new house you buy her, will she be able to afford council rates and the bills associated with that house on her own, or do you intend to be paying those costs for her?”

“Alright… I’ll have to have a think about it.” Rae grinned. Phil nodded happily; it had only taken two years for them to finally start to get their heads around the money and accept it as theirs too. He wasn’t sure what that would mean in terms of long term spending, but most certainly the bank account was about to take a hit. And he loved it, he as so glad that he could give them this. But more than anything, the two of them accepting ‘his’ money as ‘their’ money felt like unity, it felt like how a relationship should be to him because he believed they should share everything like that.

“Turn around!” The three of them turned on time, “look at what you see…” They pulled their left fists down dramatically, their shoulders jiggling in time. “In her face…” They swept their right hands out, palm up. “The mirror of your dreams.” They all stepped to the left, their heads dramatically dipping to the right, “Make believe I’m everywhere,” And they spun, very messily, “Given in the lines,” a shimmy, Rae’s considerably more impressive than Phil or Finn’s, “Written on the pages,” And now the double fist being brought down, “Is the answer to a never ending story.” They sang the ‘ahs’ wonderfully off key and Rae and Phil stepped forward and Finn groaned.

“I forgot the move!” He laughed.

“FINN!” Rae and Phil both cried out in mock admonishment.

“I still think we need microphones.” He laughed in reply, “How can this be a proper fake performance without one?”

“But then how can we do our slow motion fist pumps and sweeping hand gestures?” Phil asked with a serious face that set them all off laughing again.

“Switch hands.”

“Double slow motion fist pump?”

“Alright… I guess we have those headset mics?” Finn asked. Rae was laughing too hard to even comment. They were all naked, with lipstick drawings on their bodies, including cherries over their nipples, slightly tipsy on cherry liqueur that had been a disgusting tasting gift from one of Finn’s lecturers after he’d helped him out with some research for a paper he was submitting to a journal; he’d also been paid a thousand quid and gotten his name included as an author of the paper. And for some reason that none of them would remember, they had somehow decided that choreographing a dance to Limahl’s ‘Never Ending Story’ was a brilliant idea.
“Uh I’m gonna boak if I keep drinking this shite.” Finn took another big swig and made a disgusted sound.

“Gimme.” Phil said and took a swig when Finn handed it over. “Ugh.” He made a disgusted noise, “I think it’s gonna make me puke too.” He still took another sip just like Finn had, before handing it to Rae, “Right my beautiful woman… shall we start from the top again?” Rae took a long swig of the sickly sweet liqueur.

“Yes kind sir.” She said through her throat closing up in disgust and her eyes watering from the high alcoholic content, “I believe we shall.”

“For fuck’s sake!” Finn yelled through the apartment, “Why the fuck d’you gotta clean up me stuff? I can’t fucking find a fucking thing!”

“Your shit is constantly falling down off your shelves onto mine!” Phil replied, “And I like to look after my stuff, not have it fucking thrown in a cupboard!” Rae looked up from her studying and watched Finn and Phil yelling at each other; it was the first argument Phil had had with either of them, and she knew it was the stress of the impending exams that was doing it. Although, them two sharing one of the shelved closets so she could have most of the hanging space in the wardrobe was bound to be a recipe for disaster in the end.

“My stuff being messy literally does not affect you in any fucking way!” Finn yelled back.

“Did you even just hear what I said?” Phil shot back.

“You’re just so fucking uptight!” Finn said, “Everything’s gotta be neat.”

“I just wanna take care of my things!” Phil retorted, “What the fuck’s wrong with that? And you should take care of your things too.”

“Don’t tell me what I should do with my things.” Finn said, “Or are you worried I’m gonna spend your money replacing my broken shit?” There was a silence in which Phil’s mouth was open with obvious hurt.

“You know I don’t care if you spend the money.” Phil said thickly halfway between truly angry and just too hurt to talk.

“Then why do you give a shit about whether I take care of me things to your standard?” Rae could see that in his frustration Finn had missed how badly he’d hurt Phil’s feelings. She looked over at the open closet and tried to decide if she should intervene or let them have it out.

“There’s two very good reasons.” Phil sounded unsure, but in reality he was wondering if he even wanted to talk to Finn right now.

“Oh right illuminate me with your genius.” Finn retorted sarcastically.

“Mass consumerism is extraordinarily damaging to the environment, and it’s not only the planet that pays for the consumeristic lifestyle, poor people the world round, but especially in developing nations are suffering for it because their environment is degraded for resources and their labour is used in conditions that we in the wealthier wouldn’t tolerate for ourselves; endangered animals are having their only habitat strip-mined or hacked and slashed or filled with industrial waste so we can
have soft, bleached white three ply toilet paper and a brand new band t-shirt that was sewn by a
desperately poor woman, probably in Asia somewhere, for 3 pents an hour in a 14 hour day with no
fucking breaks and no windows in the stiflingly hot or freezing cold factory!” Phil retorted and
Finn looked murderously furious, “So you know, maybe you could try to look after what you
own?” He asked in an accusatory tone. Phil’s anger was winning his internal battle. “And the
second reason is that…” Phil paused, not sure if he wanted to talk about this, but he pushed
forward, “When I was little my mother was always on at me and Kels about looking after our stuff
and I didn’t take her very seriously… and when I was 8, I left my only jacket out on the floor, and
when Kels was vacuuming, she got is stuck in the machine and… it tore. Very badly.” Phil’s
voice dropped, “We couldn’t afford to buy me a new one, or even some thread to sew it properly,
so my mum tried to repair it the best she could, without having any thread… and it was really bad.
So I spent the entire winter in this horribly torn jacket with a glued on tea towel that kept falling
off. I was more freezing than usual and all the kids made fun o’ me cos I was the poorest in a
school of really poor kids.” Phil remembered how many beatings he got that winter, how the girls
would pull at the tea towel till it came unstuck, how he would shiver and he could never quite tell
if it was from rage or freezing in the snow. But more than anything he remembered how angry his
father had been, and how disappointed his mother had been. He remembered Kelsey getting
spanked for his mistake. “You should take care of your stuff, even if you can afford to replace it.”
Phil said and got up.

“Phil.” Rae said softly but he threw up his hands, he didn’t want to talk, and left the flat.

“Fuck I’m an arse sometimes.” Finn shook his head.

“It’s alright, we all are sometimes.” Rae said and got up. “Let’s put your stuff on the bottom
shelves so it doesn’t fall down onto his, and put his on the higher shelves yeah?” Finn nodded.

“I think I might also just, fold me fucking shirts instead of throwing them in there.” Finn said
softly.

“Might be a good idea.” Rae said gently and Finn nodded. “I mean they are your shirts and you
can do whatever you want with them... but he does make a compelling argument.”

“Course he does, fucking Aristocratic brilliant genius.” Finn said slightly sulkily. “That’s the first
time we’ve seen my temper in a bit.” Finn lit up a cigarette.

“It’s just final exams. It’s stressful. And then uni’s over and everything changes and that’s
scary.” Rae answered.

“I hope so.” Finn answered, “I do not wanna see a return of angry Finn.”

“You haven’t even said anything a bit hurtful since our first year at uni.” Rae reassured him, “and
you know, everyone has moments.” She went over to the closet “Come on, let’s get the shelves
done afore he gets back. You can offer it up as an apology.”

“Aye.” Finn answered.

“And he will have to apologise for messing with your things.” Rae said, “It’s kinda passive
aggressive to just fold up all your things and reorganise your stuff, no matter how good his reasons
are.”

“Well that makes me feel a bit better.” Finn’s mood picked up slightly and they both set out to
fixing the closet problem.
Rae stood in the middle of their flat while Finn and Phil stood to the side.

“STOP!” Finn called.

“HAMMER TIME!” Phil added and then they tried to do the hammer foot shuffle dance from side to side while Rae re-enacted the dances the girls did.

They had been watching a show about one hit wonders on a Sunday morning, and re-enacting the video clip to ‘You Can’t Touch This’ by MC Hammer seemed far more important than studying for their final exams.

“I gotta look up this video online.” Finn exclaimed, “It’ll take ten minutes to load, but it’ll be worth it.” Finn had become quite the expert on computers and they crowded around the computer.

“Then we gotta learn the whole dance.” Phil said and Rae agreed.

“I reckon that songs still holds up you know.” Rae said and Finn laughed.

“Aye!” He agreed.

It was a Sunday well spent.

Finn bit at the cuticle around his nail while he read his text book. He had his first exam tomorrow. Rae and Phil had just come back from their first exam and were not in any sort of mood for study or seriousness. They sat at the study desk looking over their notes, surreptitiously looking up at Finn, who was so focussed on his book he didn’t notice their looks. He had his four exams over three days; it was horrific and extraordinarily stressful. He had a three hour exam tomorrow. Two three hour exams the next day; one in the morning, one after lunch. And the last exam, a four hour monster, the day after that. He’d finished off the last of his three practical exams when he’d finished the run of shows with ‘The Crucible’, unlike Rae and Phil, who had had several other practical performance pieces to do during the following weeks, while Finn had no classes and no practicals, performances or exams. Rae and Phil’s exams were better spread out then Finn’s. They had the one they’d just done, two days off, then two exams over two days, and the last one three days after that. All of their exams were three hours long.

Phil got up and plopped own in Finn’s lap and Finn looked up at him.

“What are you doing?”

“Just getting a hug?” Phil shrugged. “Doesn’t interfere with your study does it?” He asked innocently and Finn shook his head and returned to reading. Rae made a slightly sulky noise and Finn looked up at her.

“You want a hug too?” He asked and she nodded. He sighed deeply and held out his other arm. Rae moved the chair over to be beside him and Phil lifted his legs so she could sit closer, before he laid them across her lap too. Finn put his arm around her shoulders and kept reading. “Can someone turn the page for me?” Phil obliged and Finn continued reading while Phil and Rae
looked at him lovingly.

“Oh my god! I forgot who Stanislavsky was! Who the fuck in theatre forgets who Stanislavsky
is? It’s the most basic shit in this world! It’s like forgetting how to fucking breathe!” Phil opened
his notebook, one hand on his forehead, the other frantically turning pages, “Shit! Shit! I’m not
ready for this exam… how can I not be ready? I’m always ready!” Rae gritted her teeth and tried
to ignore Phil’s meltdown because if she didn’t he’d set her off. Finn had finished all of his exams,
but Phil and Rae had one left to do. When Finn had put his pencil down at the end of his last exam
he had felt both lighter and strangely sad; university was over for him now. He had done it. He
had finished his massive double degree. It had taken five years and he’d picked up so many extra
subjects it had threatened to spill over to six years, but he’d done it. He had never thought he’d
even get to uni. Now he’d finished an extraordinarily difficult and varied degree and he’d done it
with remarkably good grades.

“You’re ready.” Finn soothed and prepared two of the three footbaths they had with hot water
calming and essential oils. He put them down under the table and put their feet into them before
bringing over the fruit and cheese platter he’d made for them.

“Thank you.” Rae said gratefully while Phil made a strangled noise of panic.

“Ibsen!” He looked up at Finn and looked back down. The problem with this last exam is that
they really had no idea what the exam was going to be about, the subject had been a theatrical
performance heavy subject with very little written work. The lecturer had not helped when his only
comment on the exam is that it could be about anything from the performance world and that he
always decided on a whim each year.

“Oh god!” Rae squeaked, “IBSEN!” She fluttered through notes from first year and even back to
Elsa and College to try and remember everything about theatre ever.

Finn picked up his guitar and played some soothing music to try and calm them; it was all that he
could do to help them.

“It’ll be over soon.” He soothed and they both acknowledged his words the best they could as they
focussed on their studies.

“I just love the drama and passion of their work,” Rae said as she sat down cross legged on the
lounge, her bowl of ice cream in her hands, “It’s like a melodrama for your ears but with real rage
and intense passion not overacting, and I love it. I mean he’ll probably run out of intensity
eventually, but I really think he’ll become more polished and cynical, and a little bitter, rather than
just crappy and sold out, you know?”

“Eh, he’ll probably lose his passion and kill himself like Kurt Cobain did.” Finn shrugged and Rae
and Phil looked at him, “What? Sometimes I’m cynical.”

“That’s more pessimistic than cynical, I reckon.” Phil said and took a spoonful of his frozen
yoghurt.
“Yeah I don’t think Matt Bellamy is at risk of killing himself… doesn’t seem quite as depressed as Kurt did.” Rae answered and Finn shrugged.

“Right, so you think he’s more likely to marry a Hollywood starlet and start a family then?” Finn laughed.

“Alright. Probably not that option either!” Rae laughed. “But come on who doesn’t love Muse?” Rae asked, “‘Showbiz’, ‘Origin of Symmetry’, ‘Absolution.’ These albums are all just brilliant.”

“‘Symmetry’s’ the best album.” Finn said, putting a movie in the machine.

“‘Absolution.’” Phil disagreed with a single word and Finn looked across the coffee table at Phil. Rae’s jaw dropped; Phil had never disagreed about contemporary music with either of them. He looked at both of them.

“What?” He asked. “The drama of Muse music is reminiscent of classical music… I like them a lot.” Phil explained.

“‘Absolution’ it is then.” Finn said still amazed.

“You can have your own opinion.” Phil shrugged, “You can even fight me on it if you want.”

“Alright, the opening riff to ‘Citizen Erased.’” Finn made his move and Rae imagined them playing an odd kind of chess.

“The vocal pattern in ‘Time is Running Out.’” Phil countered. Finn opened his mouth to reply but the movie started.

“Movie.” Rae said and tried to hide her happy grin; Phil and Finn arguing about music was wonderful.

“What movie we watching?” Finn asked.

“Um… something called ‘Donnie Darko.”’ Rae said and held up the cover.

“I hear it’s delightfully existential.” Phil grinned.

“Which means I’m not gonna understand any of it.” Finn laughed.

“Don’t underestimate yourself.” Phil said commandingly.

“You finished uni just like we did. That makes you as smart as anyone else in this room.” Rae said.

“Yeah but education isn’t a sign of intelligence Rae. Bigots can be educated.” Finn answered.

“Aye education isn’t a sign of intelligence. But knowing that, is.” Phil said immutably and Finn had to smile at his man. Phil would never let Rae or Finn declare themselves to be stupid and he was always questioning just what exactly it meant to be intelligent.

“Aye but getting through university requires that you either have a good head on your shoulders or know the right people.” Rae continued, “We certainly don’t know the right people!” They laughed.

“Alright, let’s watch this movie, so we can debate what it means.” Finn said with a huge smile.
Finn looked around the sound engineering lab; he’d learned so much here. His lecturer had called him to come up to the uni because he had some work he wanted Finn and a couple of other graduating students to do over the next two weeks.

“Hey.” Chris walked in, “You here for Duncan’s work too?”

“Aye.” Finn answered.

“How d’you think you went on the exams?”

“Pretty good.” Finn answered with a smirk, “You?”

“Same.” Chris answered, “Hey I just wanted to say that…” He paused and took a deep breath, “I think it’s awesome that you were openly gay all these years while you were in a STEM subject.”

“I’m not gay, I’m bi.” Finn had to stop himself from sighing with annoyance.

“Same thing innit?”

“No.”

“Right… well… you like men right?” Finn looked away and tried to not roll his eyes. “I just…” Chris cleared his throat, “I just wondered if I could take you out for a drink, and maybe get into your pants?” He laughed nervously and Finn flicked his eyes back to him and tried to emulate Phil’s ability to keep his thoughts off his face.

“I thought everyone knew I’m with Phil and Rae.” Finn answered with a calm expression.

“Everyone knows Phil and Rae are theatre and writing royalty together.” Chris answered, “Where does that leave you? The third wheel stuck up in the biobooth or the catwalks with the other techies?”

“Turns out being the third wheel is a lot of fun if you know how to do it right.” Finn quipped with a grin.

“So you guys are always having the kind of sex that only exists in pornos.” Chris shook his head as if disgusted, but also very obviously jealous.

“I don’t really talk about me sex life with people who aren’t me mates… but I will say that pornos are fucking tame,” Finn leaned forward slightly for emphasis, “In comparison to us.”

“Hey!” It was Susan, one of the girls Finn had worked with numerous times. “You guys here for Duncan’s work?”

“Aye.” Finn said with a grin, not taking his eyes off Chris, who looked slightly uncomfortable.

“Apparently it’s another paper. Lots of research needs doing very quickly.” Susan said with a grin.

“I’m up for it.” Chris said.

“I’m up for most things.” Finn enjoyed seeing Chris squirm slightly.
“Hey guys!” Latisha wondered in yawning, “Didn’t think I’d be back here after I finished my degree, but hey, it keeps me in the country for another few weeks.” She sighed.

“You gotta find someone to do a sham marriage with so you can stay!” Susan said and Latisha rolled her eyes.

“Don’t you think I been trying girl?” Latisha bemoaned.

“So to be clear…” Chris said hesitantly as quietly as he could to Finn while the girls chatted, “Are we on for drinks or not?”

“Are you fucking serious?” Finn said shaking his head, “I just told you I’m in a relationship.”

“Yeah but you also said you were up for most things.”

“Aye I’m up for most things if it’s with me partners.” Finn answered and cocked an eyebrow, “That’s why pornos are tame in comparison to us. Keep the fuck up Chris.”

“Fuck you Finn.”

“Only in your dreams.” Finn gave him a satisfied grin and nodded to the door where Duncan was motioning for them to come into his office. “See you round Chris.” Finn headed off in front of Chris, pocketing his hands and lowering his head in a grin; he so enjoyed saying ‘no’ to people who made assumptions about his relationship and sexuality.

“Open yours first.” Rae said and Phil looked down at his envelope.

“I dunno, I always have to open mine first.” Phil pouted slightly.

“That’s cos your results are never in doubt.” Finn replied, “4 HDs.”

“I dunno, I think I didn’t do so well in that final exam.” Phil fretted.

“I bet you a week o’ blowjobs that it’s 4 HDs.” Finn replied and Rae sat down on the lounge still looking at her envelope.

“Fuck off, you’re gonna give me week of blowjobs anyway Quinn. Like you could stop yourself.”

“Aye alright.” Finn acknowledged laughing and sat down next to Rae, Phil dropping down on the other side of her.

“Wanna make it an interesting bet?” Rae asked and Phil shrugged looking at his envelop, “I’m so sure it’s 4 HDs that I’ll do all your housework for a week if it isn’t.” Rae offered.

“And I’ll do all your cooking.” Finn said.

“Fuck and what do you two get in return if it is and I’m wrong?” Rae and Finn looked at each other.

“You gotta start doing fencing competitions again.” Rae said and Finn nodded.

“Sounds good.” He agreed with Rae.
“Why would…?” Phil shook his head. “Why would you make that your bet?”

“Because you miss it.” Rae said, “I know you stopped to make more time for us, but Uni’s over now, and we can come and watch you.”

“I dunno…. London has a much harder competition than-” Rae tutted loudly and rolled her eyes.

“You’ll do fine!” She told him, “Is it a bet or not?”

“Are you really so sure that it’s not 4 HDs?” Finn asked, “in 5 years of university, every single grade you’ve had so far has been a High Distinction.” Finn reminded him.

“There’s a first time for everything.” Phil retuned, “Bet’s on.” He held up his envelope, “Be prepared to pamper me for a week.”

“Pamper you?” Rae laughed, “That wasn’t the bet!”

“Is now!”

“Fine Dilip! We’ll pamper you for a week and do all your jobs if you get one single mark in five years of university that isn’t an HD. Open the fucking envelope! Finn shot back.

“Alright, you two are gonna regret this bet when I make you my servants for a whole week.” He said as he tore the envelope open. Rae and Finn rolled their eyes.

“Alright, graduation information…” Phil handed the forms to Rae, “I think I’ll just invite Kelsey.” Rae narrowed her eyes in thought and looked down at the forms. In an instant she decided to send one of the invites to Phil’s mother.

“Quit stalling!” Finn ordered and Phil sighed and slowly started to open the sheet of paper that would have his final grades for his last semester of university ever, printed on them. “We all know it’s gonna be a clean sweep of HDs!” Finn said happily. Rae bit her bottom lip and watched as Phil read the results.

“C’mon it doesn’t take that long to read results.” Rae urged excitedly.

“It’s a letter.” Phil blushed holding up the letter that had been folded up with his marks. “From the university chancellor.”

“You got 4 HDs!” Finn teased.

“Yes.” Phil answered, “I got 4 HDs.”

“We win the bet!” Finn gloated happily.

“What’s the letter?” Rae asked.

“Well, I am one of a few students to have received an HD on every item of assessment, exam and performance I completed whilst at university. 98% is in fact the lowest mark I received during my time at university. I’m one of a handful of students to have done that in the whole country. Since they started keeping records of these things.” He looked slightly baffled. As if confused as to why everyone else didn’t just get these marks.

“Holy shit.” Finn said softly.

“I’ve been awarded first class honours in both of my degrees.” Phil said, “And an honorary
masters of arts.”

“Holy fuck.” Rae marvelled; that usually required a further two years of study.

“As well as a full scholarship to continue my academic training; they want me to become a lecturer at the university and that will require further study and they are going to pay for that as well as my living expenses while I do that study.”

“Oh my god Phil.” Rae shook her head.

“Apparently this is unprecedented.” Phil looked at his letter stunned.

“That’s our man.” Finn said proudly and Phil looked up at him.

“I can’t believe this.”

“You gonna do it?” Finn asked and Phil looked back down at the letter.

“I think I might. It’s a good back up if I can’t get anywhere with acting. And it’s such an honour…” He looked at his marks, “When they give you an HD you never realise what your mark actually is… I had no idea I was doing this well.” He was clearly overwhelmed and Rae hugged him, bringing his head to her chest. Finn wrapped his arms around Rae and Phil and they hugged on the lounge.

“Congratulations.” Rae said, “I think we can find it our hearts to go to that horrible raw food restaurant you like in celebration.” She told him and he looked up at her.

“But there’s nothing there that you really like.” He shook his head, “And I think I might prefer it if Finn cooked his vegetarian wheat-free lasagne instead?” Finn had learned how to cook a great many vegetarian and wheat free things for Phil. Phil looked hopefully at Finn and Finn nodded with a grin.

“I’ll even put together that pear, rocket and parmesan salad you like to go with it.”

“With the balsamic dressing?” Phil sounded excited. Finn liked it when Phil was excited about food. Finn had worked hard to learn to cook food that would keep both Phil and Rae eating.

“That’s the one.”

“Thank you.” Phil leaned over and kissed him.

“My pleasure.” Finn grinned, “And I look forward to seeing you in that sexy fencing gear.” Phil blushed and laughed.

“Yeah alright.” He nodded and took a deep breath. “Who’s next?”

“I’ll go!” Finn said and tore open his letter, “Graduation information.” He handed the invites to Rae who tutted and rolled her eyes. “And, drum roll please!” Phil obliged and banged his hands on the coffee table. Finn unfurled his marks and once again they had to wait. “It’s a letter.” He said, “Just from the vice chancellor though!” He laughed. “I’ve also been awarded first class honours on both of my degrees.” He took a deep breath and grinned, “Um, she mentions the three published papers I’ve helped research and write too… so…” He shrugged but couldn’t keep the grin off his face. “Da’s gonna put this on the fridge for sure.” He started to blush at the thought of how his dad was going to react.
“And your marks?” Rae asked, her stomach filled with butterflies. Finn looked at the other piece of paper.

“Hardly matters now, I got a double degree with first class honours.” He grinned, “3 HDs and a D.” He nodded, “I’m happy with that!”

“That’s fucking brilliant!” Phil said happily.

“Your turn.” He tried to deflect the attention away from himself to Rae.

“I think you get to have a celebratory meal too.” Rae said and Finn nodded.

“I really like that posh French place we go to for our anniversaries…” He answered, “That or a steakhouse. I’ll have a think.” He nodded, “Stop putting it off girl.”

“What if I didn’t get first class honours like you guys?” Rae said worried.

“If I did, you will!” Finn answered and Rae took a deep breath and opened the letter, slipping out the graduation information and holding it in her other hand as she looked down at the folded results. She shuffled all the papers in her hands and slowly opened the piece of paper.

“Who’s your letter from?” Phil asked, not doubting for a second that Rae had a letter.

“Vice chancellor o’ course. I think you’ll be the only one getting a letter from the actual chancellor.” Rae gave him a look and Phil blushed again. “Well we got a hat trick.” She grinned and both boys cheered for her. “First class honours in both of me degrees, and the university wants to use two of me plays in their performance curriculum so are funding their printing.” She shook her head, “I can’t believe this, surely this don’t happen to other students?”

“We worked hard.” Finn told her, “We deserve the credit and praise now.”

“Which plays?” Phil asked.

“Um… ‘Abbie,’” Rae read from the letter, “And ‘the pack.”’ ‘Abbie’ was loosely based on her own life and required the lead actress be fat and that the two lead males be super fit. ‘The pack’ was based on Chloe’s rape and her own experiences with that group of guys including Saul. She’d ended up having nightmares writing it and Chloe had come and stayed with them for a few nights to read over it and give her approval. It had reminded Rae very forcefully that Saul had never been found and had never been seen since he had sexually assaulted her in her bedroom at her mother’s house. She’d been jumpy for nearly three months after that, sure she had seen him in the crowd at a farmers market they went to, and worried he’d come back. Finn had again bundled them into the car and driven them to Stamford to see Kester and she had improved after that. Every time one of the scars took her off guard and she thought about Saul she reminded herself how many years it had been since he attacked her and told herself he wasn’t coming back. And statistically it was now so unlikely he’d come back that even Finn wasn’t too worried about the risk, although the remaining remnants of PTSD they still had was still something that sometimes flared up and that was something he worried about more. Finn had come to understand just how important mental health was.

“So what’s your celebratory meal?” Phil asked.

“I dunno, Finn’ll figure out what to cook me. Something with pork.”
“I ain’t happy, I’m feeling glad, I got sunshine in a bag, I’m useless, but not for long, the future is coming on, it’s coming on…”

Sammy looked up at Rae singing and Phil grinned and shook his head as Finn started to rap. Jason scrunched up his face and shook his head.

“The essence, the basics, without it you make it-” Finn rapped badly, although he had improved over the past few days.

“You live with these guys?” Jason asked with a laugh. Sammy and Jason had already sat through the first verse as Phil set up the chess board and Rae and Finn made tea and snacks for Phil’s friends. It was Sammy’s first visit to London because university had been kicking her arse, she was doing 8 years to become a chartered engineer. No one else in the chess club had been brave enough to come without her. But Phil had visited them every time he had gone back to Stamford, and they emailed.

“Rae’s had that song stuck in her head for the past two weeks.” Phil answered and Jason groaned. “And no matter what she does to get it out it won’t go and it was driving her nuts. So Finn started rapping with her to make her feel better.” Phil looked over at them with a grin, “it works.”

“I think it’s awesome.” Sammy said. “How supportive he is of her; so she don’t; feel alone in anything.”

“That’s Finn.” Phil answered, “That’s what he does. And Rae brings all the spontaneity to the three of us.”

“And what do you bring?” Jason asked.

“I dunno.” Phil mused, “I’m probably Morticia Addams when she hands Wednesday a bigger knife for her brother.” He laughed. “I’m the voice of reason.”

“Now that’s a voice o’ reason I’d enjoy.” Sammy grinned. “So what’ve you been doing?”

“Enjoying our last summer break!” Phil answered, “Making it a super long one this time… Then it’ll be looking for work.”

“Bust a few rhymes so motherfuckers remember where the thought is. I brought all this so you can survive when law is lawless. Feelings, sensations that you thought was dead. No squealing, and remember that it’s all in your head.” Finn finished, Jason watching him with a slight smile.

“I saw that movie with Sir Ian in it!” Sammy said, “You were amazing King Phil.”

“Thanks!” He beamed.

“Hey,” Jason said softly his eyes not leaving Finn, “Are you guys still in a closed relationship?” Phil followed Jason’s eyes to Finn and saw Finn kiss Rae and grab the metal teapot that had left a small scar on his back, to bring it over to their guests.

“Very closed.” Phil said, “But you can ask him, I don’t own him, and if he wants to go there, we’ll all talk about it and see how we feel.”

“I might do that.” Jason said, his voice breaking slightly and Sammy started to laugh.
“Uh huh.” She teased and he slapped her thigh.

“Shut up!” He looked back at Finn as Finn put the teapot on the table. “Thanks so much.” Jason said almost dreamily. Finn’s eyes flicked to Phil and Phil gave him the slightest nod to confirm Finn’s unvoiced suspicion. Finn turned his eyes back to Jason.

“No problem.” He answered and sat in between Phil and Sammy.

“Right,” Rae said, “So you guys are teaching us to play chess?” Sammy nodded and Rae noticed Jason’s eyes on Finn. Sammy noticed that Rae turned her eyes to Phil to get that same almost imperceptible nod and then to Finn who also nodded, and realised that these three knew each other so well that there was a silent conversation going on right now.

“Aye and who’s gonna teach me?” Finn asked jovially, his eyes going back to Phil and then to Rae.

“I will.” Jason answered. Sammy figured out by watching them closely in those few seconds that Finn had agreed to be merciful with Jason at Phil’s behest and that Rae was going to try and run interference so that Jason never got around to asking Finn. At least that’s what she thought was going on.

“No I want you to teach me!” Rae said, “Phil always goes on about how good y’are.”

“Really?” Jason asked, his ego suitably massaged, his eyes turning to Rae for a moment. Sammy shook her head in awe and appreciation at what master chess players these three already were.

“I’ll teach Finn.” Sammy said, “Leaving Phil to watch that all the rules are being adhered too.” Phil scooted over to let Finn and Sammy sit opposite Rae and Jason.

“Alright, let’s begin the game.” Phil said.

“Where’s the graduation invites?” Phil asked as he walked from the bathroom across the flat.

“I sent them already.” Rae answered, “Oh right. Sorry, I meant to do my own.” He pulled a face.

“It’s alright, what are partners for?” Rae grinned, “I just did ‘em all at the same time.”

“You are brilliant. Thank you.” He kissed her lips and Rae wondered if she should tell him she sent one to his mother. “D’you think we should start packing for Australia yet?”

“Well we head out next week, so probably.” She pulled a face, “Oops!” She laughed at how late they’d left it.

“Have you heard if Iz is coming?” Finn asked as he walked towards them from the kitchen with a plate full of sandwiches.

“No.” Rae answered sadly, “I haven’t heard from her at all.”
They had decided to go to the club on Tuesday, which was the extreme BDSM night; they had gone to all sorts of nights now, some of which had not been to their liking at all, but all of them were getting ideas to explore, even if they sometimes had to tone them down a little. They were off to Australia in two days time; they had two weeks with the gang, then another two weeks of just the three of them. They were heading inland to see Uluru and the Olgas and then over to Ningaloo to swim with whale sharks. Tomorrow was their graduation, and Phil had grumbled a bit about wanting to get a good night’s sleep, but the prospect of kinky sex at the club had won out and he was on board 100% now.

“Here as equals Mistress.” Rae said and Dena smiled at them.

“I think it’s time you became members, what do you think?” She asked them and they looked at each other.

“That’d be great.” Finn said with a happy grin. Mistress clicked and a subordinate male with a horsetail butt plug and pony ears crawled over to them. It was the same man that had taken their names the first time they’d been there.

“Would you all like to be under the same last name or different last names?”

“I’ll be Nelson.” Finn shrugged, expecting Rae and Phil to go with their own last names. Phil looked over at Finn and then at Dena.

“Me too.” He said and Finn looked at him in surprise.

“Me three.” Rae agreed And Finn grinned, very pleased with the idea of both of them taking his name. And the subordinate nodded as Dena reintroduced them to the sub and told him to remember that they were originally O’Daires and as such they retained the privileges of being an O’Daire, namely everything was free for them, but that their guests would not receive those privileges.

“We don’t expect everything to be free.” Phillip said, “We can pay.”

“Oh I’m very aware that you can pay Mr… Nelson.” Dena showed her knowledge of his actual name with that pause, and of his family’s wealth. “But you were O’Daires, and that will always matter.” She stamped their hands, “Dominick will be sad he missed you tonight.” She motioned for them to go through the door and turned to the next person.

As expected there were people tied up and tied down and having all sorts of things done to them. Pandora gave them a slight nod when she saw them as they settled into their chairs. Three chairs along a man had another man kneeling before him in a gimp mask, a funnel taped into his mouth. He was being used as a urinal, the dominant pissing into the funnel and making the sub male drink it. Rae looked over and scrunched her nose slightly.

“You know I’m not so bothered by water sports anymore.” Rae said and Finn gave her a surprised look, “I mean I’ll never drink piss, that disgusts me, but I kinda get the power and domination involved in it.” She shrugged, “Maybe I’ve just seen it too often at this place!” She laughed.

“Don’t forget the porno Chop gave us.” Finn said and that stopped Rae laughing, and Phil pulled a face. There had been what they had called a piss bukake scene in that one; 20 something guys standing around pissing on a woman. She had ended up crying and retching by the end of it, but the guys had kept making her open her mouth. The three of them had watched it with unimpressed
looks on their faces. Phil had been the first to look away, and Rae had been the last.

“That fucking movie.” Phil shook his head. “Is pretty much a summary of everything that’s wrong with the porn industry.”

“Oh aye!” Finn agreed, “90 minutes of men figuring out new and painful ways to degrade and humiliate women for their sexual gratification.” He said, “I’m positive that over half of the crying and saying no wasn’t faked.” Finn looked up at the stage to see a man crying as another snooker ball was inserted in his arse. “I mean it’s not faked here too, but these guys have proper safe words and communication and understandings in place. These guys go into this wanting to be made to cry.”

“Yeah some of that stuff looked like real abuse.” Rae agreed, “I feel like I know the difference, cos sometimes I ask you two to be pretty rough with me and… there’s just a look in their eyes, you know? And there’s something about the way the guys do it… like they mean it when they treat these girls like they’re nothing.”

“No. And he said he got it from Ronan; Mike and Bryn’s older brother, and not from one of his older brothers.” Finn answered. “I told him not to watch it, told him the sort o’ stuff in it and he seemed disinterested in watching it after that.”

“Yeah I was surprised, cos his brothers usually have the goods!” Rae said with a slight grin. The pornos they got from Chop’s brothers were great.

“The industry needs cleaning up.” Phil said, “They need to not let misogynistic, abusive men get control of their industry.”

“I reckon it’ll only get worse.” Finn said,

“Stop being so pessimistic.” Rae said.

“Just being realistic.” Finn answered, “I reckon people will forget how to recognise real abuse because you got people saying that talking about safe words and aftercare and all that important stuff isn’t sexy enough to include in porn flicks.”

“Ugh.” Rae rolled her eyes, completely unimpressed, “That stuff’s important, if newbs coming up the ranks don’t know about that stuff they’re just gonna get abused and have their self-worth eroded.” Rae looked over at the gay dom and sub a few seats away the sub was getting quite a rough face fucking; Rae sometimes got in the mood for even rougher than this guy was getting right now, so she understood how this world could look like abuse to someone on the outside; especially if you removed the proper context like safe words and communication.

“It’d suck if the BDSM world got taken over by the same misogynistic abusive fucks taking over porn.” Finn said, “Cos there’s more female dominants than male, but I bet in five years’ time all you’ll ever hear about are the men doms controlling the women subs cos they’ll be outright abusive.”

“This is a depressing talk to be having while a mistress of pain in the goddess form of Pandora is
on the stage.” Rae said.

“You’ve got a crush on her.” Finn teased.

“Can’t help it, look at them boobs!” Rae shot back and Finn and Phil laughed. They scooted in closer and took each other’s hands and watched the show.

“Hey do you guys wanna piss in my subs’ mouth; he’s still thirsty.”

“Nah that’s fine.” Phil answered and held up his hand that showed the ‘no sharing’ stamp.

“Oh sorry!” The dom grinned and talked to some people a few seats back. They agreed to come and piss in the subs mouth but when they got there, one of the guys wanted the gimp mask taken off; he wanted to see who he was degrading. Rae watched out of the corner of her eye. Finn sitting beside her was transfixed on the stage; Pandora was caning a sub and Rae could feel Finn’s excitement. Finn loved watching caning almost as much as he loved to be caned. Phil sat on the other side of Finn and a person had sat next to him and asked him if he was the guy that has challenged Dominick and would he please fuck her and all her group of six friends.

Rae saw the mask drop to the floor in the corner of her eye and saw the pissing begin again, the motion of swallowing much clearer without the mask. A morbid fascination made her turn her eyes back to the funnel of pee sticking out of the subs’ mouth. She scrunched her face again, but instantly smoothed it out; she reminded herself that it wasn’t her place to judge consenting adults’ kinks. She wouldn’t drink piss, but if this guy dug it, then good for him. She started to look away, but her eyes returned to the sub.

There was something about him.

She recognised him.

But with the funnel of piss in his mouth it was hard to place where she’d seen him. She tried not to stare, but when the next guy pulled him into a different position she felt her eyes wanting to turn back to look at him.

And as she did, she saw his big blue eyes for the first time that night and instantly recognised him. Her jaw dropped and her mind froze, unsure of what to do.

She looked away, her eyes falling on Phil as he was shaking his head but laughing with the group of girls. She didn’t know if the sub had recognised her or not, she didn’t know if he’d even really seen her; did you really see people when you were being treated as a human urinal and drinking piss?

Rae saw Phil turning away from the girls and didn’t know how to stop him from seeing, or even if she should try to stop him from seeing.

“Finn…” She said softly, wondering if he’d know what to do.

But it was too late. Phil had looked at Rae’s shocked face and tried to ascertain what had caused it and instantly looked to see what was happening on the seats beside her.

“Phil’s eyes fell on the same big blue eyes that he shared, eyes he had inherited from his father and his insides froze, his mouth opening in shock.

Jarred saw his son and choked, sending piss back up the funnel and all over the doms and the surrounding seats.
“Ugh!” Rae said as some of it landed on her. Finn looked over and saw the piss going everywhere.

“What the fuck?” He asked as some of it landed on him. He looked up at the sub as he reeled the taped on funnel from his mouth and turned his face to Phil. “Oh…” Finn said softly, his eyes opened wide in shock. Phil stood up slowly, his eyes never leaving is father’s.

“Keep this kind o’ thing private huh dad?” He asked. Jarred Seymour stood up and glared at Phil.

“Do not come back to this club again.” He ordered and Phillip laughed.

“I haven’t seen you in over five years.” Phil sat back down and crossed his leg, folding his hands over his knees, Finn leaned back so that Phil could see his standing father easily, “And when I finally do, I see you being treated like the toilet you are, while I’m still in the same loving relationship you disowned me for.”

“Do not come back to this club again.” Jarred said louder.

“Not gonna happen.” Phil said, “It’s you who’s not gonna come back.”

“Do you do scat as well?” Finn asked, taking on the same polite tone that Phil was using. “It seems like something that you should do.”

“Get out of my club!” Jarred snapped.

“This isn’t your club.” Rae answered; she knew it was equally owned by Dena and Rhys. Jarred opened his mouth to retort when his dom kicked him in the back of the knees forcing him onto his knees.

“On your knees sub.” The dom barked at him. Jarred glared up at his dom.

“You don’t understa-” The dom put his hand over Jarred’s mouth and the other around his throat.

“I understand exactly what’s happening here.” The dom said, “and I don’t care about your fucking home drama. I care about my cock and whether you’re going to service it properly. If you’re not gonna be a proper urinal and good fuckhole, then you can fuck off, I’m not interested in playing with you anymore.” They all saw the fear in Jarred’s eyes at the thought of that, “And Dasha won’t play with you again either; we’re a partnership, if I get bored of you, she does and vice versa.” The dom gave Jarred a moment with those words before he spoke again, it was painfully obvious that Jarred wanted to keep playing with Dasha as well as this dom by the look in his eyes, “So if you wanna stop with me and Dasha so you can deal with your son, fine, that’s your choice and you can fuck off. But if you wanna stay, you’re gonna beg those three to piss in your mouth.” The Dom nodded to Phil, Finn and Rae. Phil gave an openly disgusted expression.

“Fuck it I’ll do it.” Finn said and put his hand on his fly.

“Finn!” Rae said horrified and then started to laugh and shook her head.

“So I’m gonna take my hand off your mouth, and you’re gonna tell me what you wanna do.” The dom said and he slowly peeled his fingers off Jarred’s mouth. Taking his hand off Jarred’s neck the dom straightened up and kept his eyes on Jarred.

It only took a moment for Jarred to stand up and shake his head. Without saying another word he turned and left.
“I’ll still piss on you!” Finn called after him, but he didn’t reply. Phil’s eyes were lowered and he waited for his father to have left the huge room before he looked up at the dom, expecting him to be looking furiously at his father’s back as he left. But he was actually looking at Phil with sympathy.

“Sorry you lost your sub.” Phil said as the other dom’s that had been about to piss in Jarred’s mouth left, grumbling under their breaths.

“Fucker disowned his own son for being kinky like he is. There’s no excuse to disown your children. But to be so hypocritical is just disgusting.” The dom said, “I deliberately gave him an option he wouldn’t take to humiliate him and make him feel as worthless as I’m sure he made you feel. You must have been a baby when he threw you out; you’d barely be in your twenties now… I don’t want a man like that as me and me wife’s sub.” He held out his hand to Phil and Phil shook it. “My name’s Dane.” He added as he finished, “And I’ll talk to Till about getting him banned.”

“You know Till?” Rae asked; they’d all gotten to meet him after Chloe and Rhys’s show.

“Yes he’s a good friend.”

“D’you know Rhys?” Finn asked.

“Of course.” Dane replied, “Do you?”

“Yeah I’ve known him over a decade.” Finn replied and Dane’s head cocked to the side.

“You’re Finn.” He nodded, “Which makes you Phil, and you Rae.” He laughed, “You should fuck Dominick; he’s particularly good. And quite besotted with you three.”

“Ah we’re a closed relationship.” Phil answered.

“I understand. Dash and I were monogamous for a few years. Sometimes that’s what suits a relationship, or a person, and sometimes you change and need something else. You should never be afraid to change and embrace what it is you need at the time, even if it’s different than what it was yester, or than what it will be on the morrow.” He nodded and put his hands behind his back before he walked off with a grin on his face. They saw him exit the room, but within minutes he was back and had found another willing man and bought him back to his seat to get on his knees and get the gimp mask put on. They had watched him walk away, and even return, in complete silence, not sure what to say.

“Gimp mask is suck ableist language.” Rae said, “But I never know what else to call it.” She furrowed her brows and they all instantly started laughing. “Y’alright?” She turned to Phil and he nodded his head.

“Whenever I imagined seeing him again, I always imagined him still having all the power and humiliating me… I tried to think of the things to say to… I dunno… get my own back!” Phil laughed, “Oh my god, my father drinks piss!” He laughed, but Rae and Finn both knew he’d be emotional about this encounter once he’d had chance to get over these first shocked emotions.

“Maybe we should just go home.” Rae said, “I’m not feeling it tonight… we can come do the BDSM show another night. And Pandora’s finished up now so…” She shrugged to indicate it was less interesting now. “Plus I really need to wash the pee off me!”

“Yeah home’d be nice. I need a shower too.” Finn agreed, “Followed by a nice hot cuppa on the lounge, old reruns of wheel o’ fortune.”
“Snuggles and gentle making love followed by an early night afore our graduation tomorrow… how sensible of us.” Rae sweetened the deal and Phil caved in.

“You two know me too well.”
Naughty Boy

‘Naughty Boy’ by The Mavis’s

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sGl631IpLQ

Just take it off, just shed your skin; it's all your dreams and all your fantasies

Finn had the black robe held between his chin and his chest, his hands frantically undoing his jeans. He spun Phil around and kissed Rae’s lips passionately as she took over getting his pants down. Finn reefed at Phil’s jeans and there was a tearing sound. Rae pushed Phil’s graduation gown up again and it went up over his head as Finn finally got Phil’s pants down, not bothering to lower them past his thighs. Rae handed Finn the lube that had been in his back pocket and he took a little less time than he should prepping before he thrust into Phil.

Phil gasped loudly.

“Fuck!” He yelled, his eyes watering from the rough thrust and the pain it had caused. But his hand went to Finn’s hip and pulled him in deeper. “Oh fuck!” He yelled again when Finn obliged, thrusting brutally hard and deep. Phil gripped the sink in the disabled toilet and gritted his teeth as Finn fucked his arse violently. Rae dropped to her knees and licked Phil’s cock. “Fucking hell.” Phil said through gritted teeth as Finn fucked him as hard and fast as a jackhammer, still holding his own gown up with his chin. Finn grabbed hold of Phil’s gown and pulled it taught, Phil’s head still caught in it, and used it for purchase so he could go harder and faster still.

Phil groaned and grunted and oozed pre-cum into Rae’s mouth. Finn pulled the black robe off Phil’s head, but still used it as leverage with one hand, the other going to Phil’s hair and pulling it brutally hard.

“You wait till I’m fucking you, you fucking bastard.” Phil said through gritted teeth and Finn laughed. But Rae decided she wanted to prep Finn for Phil.

“You love it Bill.” Finn laughed loudly.

“Oh fuck yes I do.” He moaned. He reached back pulled Finn’s hips again, his fingers finding the belt loops of Finn’s jeans and pulling him in closer. “Fuck me balls deep.” He ordered and Finn pushed Phil to bend over more and spread Phil’s arse cheeks, pushing in deeper. Rae, likewise was spreading Finn’s arse cheeks and began to lick his crack; deciding that spit was all the lube Finn was getting this time. Phil groaned loudly, and Finn let go of one of his arse cheeks to clamp a hand around his mouth.

“Shut your pretty mouth.” Finn whispered in Phil’s ear and slowed down so Rae could do her thing properly; grinding his cock in deep and hard and slow while he groaned with the pleasure of being rimmed while he fucked.

Once Rae felt like Finn had had enough she returned to Phil and got his cock nice and sloppy.

“Swap.” She said softly and Phil elbowed Finn in the ribs, pushed him back grabbed his wrist before he had time to go anywhere and slammed him into the all, his hand going to the side of Finn’s face, pushing his head into the wall.
“Your turn.” He said and Finn groaned; Phil was getting to be a good and quick fighter. Phil rubbed his cock along Finn’s crack.

“It’s only spit.” Finn said slightly alarmed but totally into how hard they were pushing each other, Phil’s hand still on his face, the cold wall on his cheek.

“I know.” Phil said and thrust into Finn.

“Fuck you!” Finn yelled, “Oh fuck!” Rae chuckled as she saw Finn’s eyes roll back in his head, his teeth gritted, grunts escaping him involuntarily as Phil thrust into him hard and fast. Rae pulled Finn’s robe up and draped it over his shoulders and watched for a moment before she dropped to her knees and took one of their wipes out to clean Finn’s cock before she sucked it. “Holy fuck.” Finn gasped as Phil pushed in balls deep and Rae started to suck his cock. Finn was gasping loudly and that only made Phil go harder. He pushed Finn hard into the wall, the movement shoving Finn’s cock down Rae’s throat, her head against the wall, Finn’s pelvis pressed against her face as Phil pressed himself hard against Finn, keeping himself deep inside Finn and pulling Finn’s head back by his hair viciously.

“Is this to your liking?” Phil asked softly.

“Oh fuck.” Was all Finn managed to squeeze out of his throat, “Fuck, fuck, fuck…” Phil started to withdraw almost all the way out, and then slammed his cock all the way back in, making Finn yelp and Rae cough around Finn’s cock, her eyes watering as she tried to turn her head to breath. Phil kept pulling out and slamming back in as hard as he could, puling Finn back by the hips, freeing Rae’s mouth and she took a huge gasping breath.

“You right girl?” Phil asked.

“Aye.” She jumped up and got herself between the wall and Finn, bending over and lifting up her robe and skirt. Phil slowed down, his cock deep inside Finn to let Finn tear Rae’s underpants aggressively and slam his cock into Rae’s cunt, making her gasp loudly. As soon as he heard Rae gasp Phil grabbed Finn’s hips and began thrusting as hard as he could again. Rae pushed back and proceeded to fuck Finn as hard as she could, using the wall to give herself a much force as she could muster. Finn could barely stand under the onslaught. He gasped loudly, groaned with pleasure, one hand on Rae’s hips as she fucked him, the other going up to Phil’s neck as Finn let his head roll back onto Phil’s shoulder.

Finn reached forward and pulled Rae’s hair until she arched her back the way he liked so much and Phil reached forward, his hand going up under Rae’s robe and blouse to her braless breast, squeezing hard, the fingers of his other hand digging into Finn’s hip hard, making him stay as still as possible so that Rae and he could fuck Finn hard.

When Rae started to groan louder, getting closer and closer to orgasm Finn put a hand over her mouth. And when her screams of ecstasy could still be heard, Phil took his hand off her breast and curled it over the top of Finn’s hand, both of them opening their mouths ready for him. He wanked for only a second before he came long hot streams of cum into first Phil’s then Rae’s mouth. Rae laughed happily and swallowed before kissing Phil, who barely had time to swallow before she did. Finn stood up to let them move and watched them kiss, Rae licking cum off Phil’s face.
“Stealing my cum!” Phil laughed and licked a dribble off the side of Rae’s face before pushing her down onto her back and position himself between her knees. He used her legs to pull him to her and Rae made a lusty noise that Finn echoed; Phil was getting physically stronger too. It was unlikely he’d get as strong as Finn unless he put size on, but fuck he was sexy when he showed the strength he did have.

Finn dropped to his knees as Phil used the wipe to clean his cock before thrusting hard into Rae. Finn started to lick and suck on Rae’s clit aggressively and she gasped at how hard he was licking.

“Fuck!” She said making both men grin saucily at her, Phil pulling her to him and wrapping his arms around her legs, slamming his cock into her hard and fast. Finn pulled on her nipples mercilessly and licked her clit harder still, making Rae try to squirm, but Phil had her legs held hard. “Fuck! FUCK!” She cried out and her body started to shake violently as she came hard and unexpectedly. Finn laughed happily as he kept licking, feeling her back arch and her body bucking as much as it could when her legs were held still. He put his hand over her mouth as she kept screaming and her fingers curled into his hair painfully, but he kept licking, even as her other hand grabbed his arm, her nails scraping his skin through his graduation robe. “FUCK!” Her voice was muffled through his hand, but her tone was frantic, so Finn tried to stop to look up at her, concern on his face. But her hand pushed his face back down and he again laughed greedily lapping at her cunt. Phil started to groan throatily and Finn knew that sound well; he was getting close.

“HARDER!” Finn order him and Phil obliged fucking Rae so hard her whole body rocked upward. Finn used his shoulders against her legs to keep her in place as Phil drilled her harder still. His pelvis rolling impressively and so fast it was mesmerising; Finn watched it for a moment before Rae pulled his hair painfully enough for him to cry out and he started to eat her again. Phil started to groan in earnest.

“Fuck.” He said impressed at the strength of his own orgasm. He often was impressed by how hard these two made him cum; still. Finn kept licking Rae even as Phil’s cum started to seep out of her as he kept thrusting. Finn lapped it up, swallowing their mixed juices as much as he could. When Phil withdrew he sucked Phil’s cock hard, trying to get every drop out of it and Phil shuddered with post orgasm sensitivity. Finn licked Rae, sliding his tongue into her hole as deep as he could, tasting Phil’s salty semen in side of her sweet cunt. Phil went from kneeling to standing in one movement and stood panting, looking down on Finn eating his cum out of Rae’s cunt.

“Holy fuck.” He said happily. “Some quickie.” They all laughed, panting, exhausted, Finn looking up; his face glistening messily with cum. Rae caught sight of Finn’s watch and grabbed his arm to look closer.

“Ugh,” She groaned, “Not nearly quick enough.” Finn looked down at his watch and pulled a face.

“We’re running late.” He confirmed.

“All my getting a good night sleep was for nought!” Phil laughed. “I gotta go up there and give a rousing speech about graduating, and my breath smells like cum and I look like a mess!” He laughed.

“I tore your jeans.” Finn added.

“And his robe.” Rae pointed out the tear along the neck.
“Here, swap robes.” Finn offered.

“There’s cum stains on ours.” Rae pointed out and Finn looked down at his robe.

“Oh shit!” He laughed and tried to wipe it clean with little success.

They cleaned and tidied themselves up as much as they could and Rae and Finn put their hats on; Phil’s was on his seat in the auditorium, before leaving the toilet… to see a man in a wheelchair waiting for the bathroom with a completely unimpressed look on his face.

They looked at him, completely horror struck by what they had done while he was waiting to use the bathroom.

“Arseholes.” He said angrily before he started wheeling himself towards the open door.

“Oh my god, I am so sorry!” Phil answered, “We all are.”

“Aye.” Finn nodded his head rapidly, his eyes wide open with disbelief, embarrassment and shame.

“Can we do anything, to…” Rae’s words trailed off.

“What? You wanna help me shit?”

“No.” She answered softly.

“Fuck off.” He said and they moved out of his way as he rolled into the bathroom, he spun around in his chair, “These bathrooms are not for you sick fucks to get off in. Between people like you and the fucking junkies I can never find a place to go to the fucking toilet!” He slammed the door and they stood staring at the closed door for a moment.

“I feel like shit.” Finn said softly.

“Aye.” Rae agreed and Phil nodded his head.

“I don’t think there’s anything we can do other than be more mindful in the future. Everyone deserves a place to shit.” Phil answered. Suddenly the absurdity of the sentence he had just said, their situation, the pressure of running late to their own graduation and the fact that university was finally actually over got the better of them and they started laughing.

“Shit! Shut up!” Finn said, trying to stop himself laughing which only set him off more.

“We’re running late. Come on.” Rae said between her giggles. The jogged off towards the auditorium and were horrified to find out that the ceremony had already begun when they got there. Phil’s eyes were the most wide with stress as they all realised they had to try and get into the audience without being noticed.

“You’ll do amazing.” Finn said straightening Phil’s robe and Phil moved Rae’s hat tassel around.

“Break a leg.” Rae whispered to Phil and kissed his cheek before heading into the audience. Finn gave him a cheeky grin and kissed his other cheek before following Rae. The graduates where organised into honours levels then alphabetically by surname, so Rae and Finn went to the one area of the audience and then separated, Rae on one side of the group, Finn on the other. But Phil? Phil had to get up onto the stage. He had been supposed to be sitting there since the beginning. The problem was that the stairs to get onto the stage were at the front. He slid down the audience and
stood to one side, waiting for a chance to get onto the stage unnoticed.

The Chancellor’s speech droned on and Finn took the chance to look at the side of Rae’s face as she sat two rows ahead of him. He looked around and saw Phil standing to one side looking up at the stage and with a sudden realisation saw that the back of Phil’s hair was messed up; it looked like someone had grabbed him by the hair and pulled his head back. Finn’s eyes opened wider and he clamped his mouth closed, his tongue going to his back teeth like it so often did when he looked at Phil. He heard Rae cough, but it was clearly covering a nervous giggle and noticed she had seen his hair too. Finn kept his lips firmly together as he cracked into a smile. Phil heard Rae’s cough and looked back at them. He saw Rae trying to stop herself giggling and looked over at Finn, who both saw Phil’s eyes open wider and then the casual hand rising to the back of his head to try to surreptitiously pat down his wild hair.

Luckily for Phil, the chancellor saw Phil and gave him a slight nod, indicating he’d introduce him to come onto the stage in a moment, and that went ahead without any hitches, Phil smiling apologetically to the audience as he bounced up the stairs and took his seat next to the head of the arts department, and put his hat on.

Gary had seen Finn and Rae weaving their way through the audience, had seen Phil standing at the side, had seen the hair and shook his head.

Linda had heard Rae cough and wondered why Phil was standing like a fool instead of finding his seat. It was quite a surprise to her when he took a seat on the stage.

Kelsey had seen Phil and instantly started grinning; she knew what that dirty bugger had been up to. She looked around just in time to see Rae and Finn sitting down. And looked away trying not to laugh, to see the side of her mother’s face three rows ahead. She narrowed her eyes and looked away, crossing her arms moodily.

“Only 10% of students in our university are granted first class honours, this is much lower than the national average, because we want to honour those students that have truly worked hard and earned high marks and a place on the university honour roll.” The Chancellor was about to start introducing all of the first class honours students up to the stage to receive their degrees.

Finn felt a sudden swell of self-pride, the likes of which he’d never known before, and wished he’d told his father beforehand that he was in that small group of students. But he was also glad, that like Rae’s parents, he’d left it as a surprise.

Rae had cum dribbling down her thighs as she stood to receive her double degree, the chancellor also noting that two of her plays would be used in future curriculum.

Linda had been surprised to hear Rae’s name, but then instantly she shifted to having known all along Rae would do this well. Karim stood up and clapped loudly, Aisha, her legs dangling off the seat beside them clapped too, not sure what she was clapping for, but excited nonetheless. Gary clapped and grinned happily, and when he saw Karim stand a row ahead of him he stood too. He personally was hoping for a level one second class honours for Finn. There were two levels in second class, then third class, then just a normal degree. He’d be pleased with any result; Finn would be the first Nelson to finish university, and he’d done a double degree at that. Gary couldn’t be prouder. Finn had stood up and cheered when Rae took the rolled piece of paper from the Chancellor and Phil had to stop himself from standing, but he clapped loudly, his support very obvious.

Finn wiped self-consciously at the cum stain on the front of his robe and wished water had gotten
more of it out. When Gary heard Finn’s name, he had to make himself take a breath. He was bursting at the seams with pride, and before Finn had even had a chance to stand he heard his father whoop and when he stood he looked back to see his mother and father standing and clapping wildly. Karim got to his feet too, and Phil again was clapping as wildly as he could, sitting on the stage with the academics. Rae stood up and cheered as well. This was far more exciting than she had expected it to be. The Chancellor mentioned the papers Finn had been a part of getting published as he shook Finn’s hand and Gary had to sit down, tears in his eyes.

When Phil was announced the chancellor spent quite some time talking about Phil’s accomplishments before inviting him to get his degree. Phil would be making his speech after everyone had gotten their degrees. Finn and Rae were on their feet, Gary, Karim and Kelsey were on their feet too, Kelsey wolf whistling loudly, making Phil blush.

Phil’s speech had been suitably rousing, refreshingly funny and wonderfully brief. The hats were thrown, tears were cried and they were finally done.

Gary surged through the milling audience and grabbed hold of Finn, pulling him into a suffocating bear hug.

“Why didn’t you tell me? You trying to kill me?” He said, tears of pride streaming down his face. Kelsey jumped on Phil’s back as he stepped off the stage after a conversation with the Chancellor asking him if he could take up the offer to study further on a part time basis; the university was willing to accommodate him. He piggy-backed her through the crowd, Kelsey pointing towards Rae and Finn and pretending to whip him like a horse, yelling ‘tally ho’ and ‘onward’ every time someone looked at her funny. When he got to Finn and Rae they kissed each other, Kelsey staying on his back but looking around the audience for their mother.

Linda, Karim and Aiesha finally got to them and hugs were had all round, Kelsey finally jumping off Phil’s back to talk to Aiesha, whom she adored and didn’t get to see enough of. Rae, Finn and Phil stood in each other’s arms as everyone congratulated them and commended them and their achievements; Gary couldn’t stop mention that only the top 10% got first class honours, his face covered in a huge grin.

“I think a celebration meal is in order!” Linda declared.

“ICE CREAM!” Aiesha demanded and Linda rolled her eyes while everyone laughed.

“I think ice cream sounds wonderful, and I’ll shout us all some later on.” Kenzie said to Aiesha who jumped up for a hug. Linda had allowed Kenzie to become Aunty Kenzie to Aiesha, and it had done a lot to heal Kenzie to watch Aiesha growing up strong and healthy.

“Where to for lunch? My shout!” Gary asked. They stood around arguing and debating where to go for some time before agreeing on a new Nigerian restaurant that had opened up near their flat that they had been wanting to try out. And Kelsey had managed to get Gary to agree to let her pay half, with Linda demanding it be thirds.

As they left, Rae turned and looked at the university one last time, Phil beside her doing the same. Finn saw them and stopped to take in the moment as well. They clasped hands and grinned at each other, they’d done it.
Meredith Seymour watched them talking happily and then walk off together and crossed her arms across her aching chest. She lowered her eyes and turned away, leaving without saying a word to her babies. It was better that way.
“Woody… you’re naked.” Chop said and Stacia started to giggle delightedly. Sammy looked at Jason with wide eyes and they both pulled a face.

“That’s right my friend! Me partners and I are running a nudist colony and beach.”

“You couldn’t warn us of this before we got here?” Macca asked. Everyone was a little grumpy after the long flight. The extended gang was here with Woody for a week before the main gang headed off to Melbourne for a week together. Then Phil, Finn and Rae were on their way on their two weeks holiday together. And the extended gang had become even more extended with the addition of Sammy, Jason, Renee, Latisha, Nina and Katie.

“What’s to warn you about?” Woody asked and lit a joint.

“That’s a joint in the middle of the fucking beach?” Latisha asked and Woody nodded. “Where the fuck’s mine?”

“There’s plenty o’ pot in me back pack.” He pointed to it, “Help yourself.”

“The beach is beautiful.” Rae marvelled.

“That’s Byron Bay for you.” Woody said. He had intended to buy a tourist park up north, but this opportunity had come up and he’d decided on this instead. He’d shown them their rooms, let them settle in and have a nap before bringing them to the beach after lunch.

“Join us in the water?” Woody said, “It’s very freeing to go nude.” He wondered off, no one being able to stop themselves looking at his pert arse.

“Nah I don’t think I will.” Chop said softly, watching Izzy from the corner of his eye. Izzy grinned, undid the top of her swimmers and flung them to the floor as she stepped out of her bikini bottoms. She laughed and ran after Woody. Chloe and Rae shared a surprised look. They hadn’t even been sure Izzy would come and now poor Bryn was nearly falling down trying not to stare and Chop was looking off grumpily as she laughed with Woody. Latisha rolled a joint and lit up, considering the prospect of going naked on a beach in Australia and decided she’d do it when she saw Nina stripping off her clothes.

“This is heaven!” Renee took a puff of the joint and stripped off, running down the beach and doing a cartwheel.

“Oh well, most of you have already seen it.” Chloe shrugged and took off her top, Rhys joining in with taking off his swimming clothes.

“How have most of them already seen i- holy mother of god!” Bethany tried to stop herself from
staring at Rhys as he tucked Chloe’s clothes into his carefully.

“We did a live sex show.” Chloe grinned.

“Oh right.” Bethany tried to sound unaffected, but the truth was Rhys was an incredible sight naked. Macca shook his head and laughed; he had learned to not be jealous when it came to Bethany and her wandering eyes; they never led to touching, so he didn’t mind so much, and she was wearing his engagement ring, so it didn’t matter how attractive Rhys was; her love belonged to him. And Bethany returned the favour, Macca took a quick look at Chloe and then at Rae as she shrugged and took her top off and Bethany didn’t mind one bit; she just laughed and started to take her own top off.

“So why isn’t James here?” Bryn asked as he hesitated with his pants.

“Something about his medical degree.” Macca replied as he took his pants off. Danny’s pants were up in the air and he ran laughing and hooting across the sand. Grace watched him go and rolled her eyes.

“Of course he’d love this.” She shook her head and put her hand on her swelling stomach. They had had sex for the first time only five months ago; Danny’s urge to have sex was dependent on a close emotional and mental bond with his partner, Grace had learned that this was called demisexual, and she was so glad she’d held out for him, even though it had nearly killed her and her high libido; she’d gone through several vibrators after heated making out sessions. The pregnancy had been an accident; when he had finally gotten his desire to have sex and had wanted to actually go through with it too, neither of them had thought about contraception, they’d just been too bloody excited. And had remained stupidly excited for the whole weekend of their beginning of sexual exploration. Danny had a decent libido now that he was sufficiently bonded with Grace for it to show and Grace was well satisfied and hopelessly in love. They were planning to get married after the baby was born. Grace sighed and looked around before stripping off too.

“Warning; this is what you’re gonna look like if you get preggers ladies!” She said and took her baggy t-shirt off.

Finn was taken with Rae’s skin in the sun and he pointed it out to Phil, who had been busy fussing with their towels. They both took a moment, utterly spellbound and breathless to watch her moving un-self-consciously.

“Ah I’ve already seen it a billion times.” Kristi laughed at Kurt as he hesitated.

“Me too.’ Stacia added as she undid Kristi’s bikini top for her; they had become like sisters since Stacia and Kurt had started going out and went on many shopping excursions together, trying on clothes and bras in front of each other.

“And so has half of fucking England; the amount o’ times you done nuddy runs.” Kristi teased.

“Yeah but I were drunk then.” Kurt reasoned. Kristi shrugged and walked off towards the sparkling water, Sam watching her.

“Oi!” Kurt said, “Don’t be a fucking perv, that’s not the point of a nudist beach.”

“Aye sorry.” Sam lowered his eyes and Latisha narrowed her eyes at Sam; he was the sort of boy in a man’s body that would be up for a crazy scheme like getting married for citizenship; she wanted dual nationalities.

“Oh and how the fuck would you know?” Stacia laughed and kissed Kurt before pulling his board
shorts down.

“Oi! Stas!” He laughed, half terrified of being naked and half hopelessly in love with her nerve.

“Oh well, cat’s outta the bag now.” She laughed and slipped her swimsuit off. “Coming in the water?” She asked saucily, Kurt was completely taken with her once again and he stepped towards her without taking his pants completely off and nearly fell flat on his face. Stacia laughed joyously and sprinted down to the water while Kurt scrambled with his pants and stripping off.

“When I first met you… there was no way…” Finn said to Rae as she slipped her pants off.

“I know!” She laughed. Phil was stripping off as she spoke.

“Hurry up Quinn!” He laughed.

Archie looked at Tom, to find that he already had his pants off and was grinning cheekily, waiting for him.

“Serious?” He asked and Tom grinned saucily.

“About to ask the same thing.” Sammy said. It had been Finn’s idea to try and get some of Phil’s friends to hang with the gang; they’d all taken the same flight and gotten to know each other loudly on the flight over, annoying the crap out of the other passengers. Jason had his clothes off and was already in the water, but Sammy was hesitating. Bethany got her pants off and looked over at Sammy and then Katie, who was also hesitating.

“Don’t worry babes, no one on this beach is judging. Besides; you’re both total foxes.” She took Macca’s hand and Sammy watched their bare arses as they headed off towards the water.

“Oh well! Better bite the bullet then.” Katie said nervously and stripped off, covering herself as she tried to walk with dignity to the water.

“COME ON BRYN!” Izzy called back to them.

“Oh fuck.’ He said and shook his head. He pulled his pants off, and covering his groin ran across the sand to the water. Chop watched Izzy greet Bryn with an unimpressed glare. Rae put her arms around Finn and Phil’s waists and Phil put his around her shoulders, Finn put his around her waist. Rhys and Chloe, holding hands, joined them in the walk to the water. Tom and Archie catching up and joking about how much they knew about each other know.

Chop looked at Sammy and Sammy gave him a sympathetic look.

“How long have you been broken up?”

“Just over six weeks. After six years together.”

“Ouch.” Sammy said softly and looked back at the water. “Alright, I reckon we should do this Choppy Chop.”

“Aye I s’pose.” He grumbled and they got undressed, Sammy holding out a hand to Chop.

“Can you keep me company?” She said, “Cos I only know Phil and Jason…” Chop looked at Phil, firmly in conversation with Rhys, Finn and Rae hugging up with him. Then he looked at Jason, Woody was obviously flirting with him and Jason was eating it up.
“For sure.” Chop said and let his pants drop before he took her hand.

Phil watched Bryn and Izzy talking and recognised that look on Bryn’s face; he knew it intimately. It was the same expression he’d no doubt bourn when he and Rae had been in Lincoln.

“I think they’re gonna fuck.” Rae said softly and Finn sucked his teeth. “Don’t you go judging her.” Rae said sternly.

“I’m not.” Finn answered, “She can fuck who she want. But does it have to be in front o’ Chop? That’s all I’m saying.”

“How’s it front o’ him? He’s not here!” Rae retorted and Finn looked around the room. “Plus I’m positive he’s fucked Sammy.”

“He wouldn’t. She’s a newb.” Finn answered and Phil took a deep breath and looked over at Woody and Jason making out, Woody’s wife stroking Jason’s hair.

“Your newb-law is not stopping Woody.” Phil said and Finn looked over at the scene and rolled his eyes.

“How are your friends s’posed to feel all welcome and stuff if everyone’s fucking them?” Finn sighed. “I’ll go find Chop.”

“I’m sure they are fine.” Phil answered, “And also adults capable of making their own decisions.”

“Aye.” Finn grumbled and kissed Phil and then Rae before he headed out to search for Chop. Phil turned his eyes back to Izzy and Bryn; they were kissing. Quite passionately, Bryn’s body breathless with anticipation and pent up love. Phil understood exactly how Bryn felt. He understood how reverently he touched Izzy, how deeply he kissed her, why he had to stop to catch his breath.

“Reminds me o’ Lincoln in a way.” Rae said softly. Phil nodded his head and looked away.

“It’s private.” He said, conflicted for Chop and Bryn and Izzy. It was very obvious that Chop and Izzy still loved each other, even though they were no longer in a relationship. And none of them would do polyamory, so someone, if not everyone, was going to get hurt. Rae nodded and looked away too, just as Bryn lifted Izzy and they stumbled, kissing, out of the door.

“What are you doing out here?” Finn sat down and shuddered slightly; he wasn’t used to his balls touching everything every time he sat down and the grass tickled him. None of them had put clothes on over the past two days, and they had all agreed to try and make it the full week without clothes. Chop handed him a cigarette and continued staring up at the sky.

“I fucked Sammy.” He said softly.

“You’re not supposed to fuck the newbs in the group Chop!” Finn said and shook his head.

“Aye I know.” Chop cleared his throat and looked down at the grass, “But she knew what the deal
was, so it’s alright.”

“Oh right?” Finn asked.

“She’s the first girl since…” Chop said softly.

“Fuck.” Finn lit the cigarette and took a drag. Chop opened his mouth to speak but a giggling Izzy and Bryn were tripping and frolicking across the grass towards her room. They stopped, Izzy throwing her arms around his neck and Bryn slowly running his hands up her sides, kissing her with a deep passion that Finn knew Phil would understand.

“Alright, well I think I need to go for a walk.” Chop got up and Finn went with him. It had ended up turning into a long, brutal run, with a round of bare-knuckle boxing at the end, Finn letting Chop get a few in. Finn found that running and boxing naked were odd experiences that he wanted to experience again; under better circumstances.

Rae had rolled her eyes when she saw the black eye Finn was sporting; it had been a long time since she’d seen him bruised up. Phil had played nurse and looked after him, while Rae had gone to find Chop to chat to him.

“I dunno Rae… it feels weird trying to have a heart to heart in the nud.”

“Well too bad cos we’re gonna have one.” She insisted.

“What’s to say?” He asked. “She dumped me cos she gotta go do her thing.”

“Well I suppose the cancer-”

“Yeah we blame her caner don’t we? She got a taste o’ death so now she gotta live. But I think she would o’ left even if she didn’t get it. I think we were doomed to fail from the beginning; she never wanted to stay in Stamford, and I never wanna leave. It were never gonna work out. And I knew it from the get-go… and still couldn’t help but fall in love with her.” He looked at Rae, “And now I wanna cut me own fucking heart out. How do you stop it… hurting so much?” Rae put her arms around him and Chop finally let himself cry over losing the love of his life.

Chop stroked her hair slowly. The sound of the ocean was so soothing, and the beauty of the rising sun, the softness of the sand, it was all so perfect. Even if there was sand in his arse crack. He could live with that if this moment would never end. She opened her eyes and looked up at him. Her hand touched his face and he kissed her deeply. He could feel her emotion for him and he stopped, breathlessly, looking into her eyes, more in love than ever.

“What now?”

“I go back Milan at the end of our two weeks.” She said and shrugged.

“Iz…”

“Chop don’t.” She sat up and looked out at the ocean. They were heading down to Melbourne in a few hours. “You can choose how you want this week to go.” She said, putting on the bravest voice she could muster and jutting her chin like she saw Chloe do when she used to fake all that confidence and bravery she had now. “But no matter what you choose, I’m going back to Milan at
the end of it.” She looked back at him and Chop nodded slowly.

“Alright girl.” He furrowed his brows and sat up. “What’s going on with Bryn?”

“That’s none of your business.” Izzy answered curtly and Chop looked away angrily. “Fuck.” She whispered. “I shouldn’t have slept with you; I just haven’t…” She paused and got up, not wanting to look at him again. “I haven’t figured out how to stop loving you yet.” She started to walk away.

“You don’t have to.” He said, “I’ll come to Milan.” Izzy stopped dead in her tracks and turned to him.

“You would?” Her voice was high pitched with impending tears.

“I would.” Chop’s mouth felt numb; he wasn’t sure what he was promising here.

“You’d be miserable.”

“I’d be with you.”

“You’d end up resenting me. Just like if I stayed in Stamford for you, I’d resent you.” Izzy shook her head. “Just cos we love each other, it don’t mean it’s enough to make it work.” She left and Chop wished he knew what the right thing to say was to get her to come back to him.

Finn held Phil’s hand more firmly than was strictly necessary as they watched Izzy and Bryn saying goodbye. Rae laced her arms around Phil’s waist as they watched the heartache on Bryn’s face. A pain Bryn had very obviously known was coming, but he had embraced the pain for the moment of joy.

“He’s got no regrets.” Phil whispered softly and Rae made a sympathetic noise. Finn understood that the situation with Bryn, Izzy and Chop raised the memories of not being chosen for Phil, and poked at his fear of being the outsider in the relationship, of being the one on the side. It raised the question of who Rae would choose now if she had to. Because back then, when it had been put to her, she had chosen Finn. Phil took a deep breath and looked away.

“I’m so sorry.” Rae murmured to him. Finn looked away and saw Sammy giving Chop a huge friendly goodbye hug, Chop grinning, embarrassed but happy; they’d be good friends.

“I wouldn’t change a thing, remember?” She nodded her head slowly trying to believe him, “And it happened years ago Rae.” Phil continued, “We’re worlds away from that now.”

“And I’ll never stop being sorry.” She said honestly. “I didn’t understand myself properly, or what polyamory really was, or what we could be together us three… I just didn’t know… and… I had history with Finn, so…” Finn lowered his eyes and Rae stopped. She shouldn’t say that she only chose Finn because there was history.

“I understand that it was a confusing time Rae.”

“For all of us.” Finn added.

“I just wish I could have that time again… I wouldn’t make that mistake.” She squeezed his waist
and he smiled sadly.

“I wouldn’t change anything Rae.” He repeated, “Having that decision forced us all to really look at what was happening; before that we were all in denial.”

“I wish I’d just said both of you from the get-go… it’s what my heart wanted, I just didn’t think I could do it.” She shook her head, “I thought you’d both hate me if I said both.” Finn looked away, trying to maintain his serious mood; this was a serious conversation. But Phil started to chuckle and then Finn couldn’t help himself. “What?” Rae asked and Phil kissed her as he laughed.

“You thought that either of us could actually hate you?”

“Well I thought a lot of stupid things back then.” She shot back and they both gave her an appreciative grin. Phil sighed.

“I should stop identifying with Bryn.” Phil said, “I haven’t been him for over five years… that love triangle is not us.” Phil felt a sense of a weight lifting off his shoulders as he finally started to really let go of the fact that Rae had chosen Finn; he knew that in her heart she hadn’t wanted to choose, and that if someone tried to force her to choose now she wouldn’t.

“Come on, we got Melbourne to explore with the gang… a big rock in the middle o’ the desert to look at and some fucking big fish to swim with.” Finn said and they turned away. Phil looked over his shoulder at Bryn, he was looking down at his hands, the pain on his face was almost palpable, but he took a deep breath and managed a smile when Chloe hugged him goodbye.

Izzy had left for Milan like she said she would, and Chop had drunk himself to oblivion on the flight home; Archie told Finn all about it when they had their daily phone call on the first day they’d gotten back from their holiday. Apparently they had been fucking the whole time they were in Melbourne, and despite what Izzy had said, Chop had hoped they’d get back together because of it.

Izzy finally started writing again, and her emails seemed to be the same as they always had been, except now she asked after Chop about once a month.

Phil got an agent, studied part time at university and LAMDA. He got a role as a minor recurring character in a ten part series, and continued theatre and career building.

Finn walked into a job as the stage manager of the Soho theatre. It was a demanding but enjoyable job, and in his spare time he worked on his ideas for his online career.

And Rae wrote.

And wrote.

And got multiple rejection letters from publishers.

And tried to keep writing.

And tried to stop the ever increasing sense of just not knowing what she was doing with her life.
Gary dropped the magazine he’d gotten at the newsagent this morning on the table and Finn, smoking, looked at it.

“Holy fuck!” He said.

“What is it?” Rae asked; they were visiting Stamford for a few days and staying with Gary.

“‘Hunting Witches’ star gay.’” Finn read out the headline and Phil looked up. Phil had a major role in the 12 episode show; six had just aired and the other 6 would air next year.

“I’m what now?” Phil asked and Finn held up the magazine. There was a huge picture of Finn and Phil holding hands on the front cover. “If they’d waited 5 minutes they’d have gotten a bigger scoop.” He shook his head; he recognised where the paparazzi had taken the picture and knew that they were on their way to meet Rae for lunch. Rae had gotten a job in the London branch of Curvy Girl on a Budget so she could feel like she was at least contributing something to the household; her writing was going nowhere. Phil had quite a lot of female fans on MySpace and this was going to be big news. A few minutes later Phil’s agent rung in a panic, by the end of the conversation Phil finally agreed that it was time to get a publicist to control these kind of ‘PR disasters’ as his agent called the photo. Phil turned his mobile off when he saw it ringing again.

“Producers from the show.” He said, “They can talk to my agent about it.”

“Are we still good to go shopping?’ Gary asked; he had it in his head that he had to buy them all new clothes every year, even though Finn kept trying to tell him that he didn’t need clothes, and money wasn’t a problem. But it was Gary’s thing, and he would not be waylaid.

“Of course!” Phil answered.

“Not gonna get mobbed or something?” Gary said with a cheeky grin.

“I’m not that famous.” Phil answered drily and Gary chortled happily; he appreciated Phil’s dryness.

“Alright well Rae first!” He said and opened the front door for them to pile out into the car. They all sat on the back seat, Rae in the middle.

“So what’s happening with you and mum?”

“What d’you mean?” Gary asked as he backed the car out the drive.

“Well you’re together but you still don’t live together?”

“That’s right.” Gary answered.

“Well… well what’s-”

“That’s not really your business son.” Gary looked in the rear view mirror and gave him an apologetic look.

“Alright.” Finn grinned cheekily. “And what about Janice…?”

“Also none of your business.” Gary replied, “You have your own relationship with your mother and Janice. What mine is to either of them is between me and them.” Finn and Rae exchanged a look that showed that they were determined to know and Phil rolled his eyes but couldn’t help but
grin at them.

She heard it for the first time walking along the mall to the Stamford shop of Curvy Girl on a Budget.

“Oh my god is that Phil Seymour?” It was barely a whisper but Rae had heard it and looked back at two incredibly attractive teenaged girls looking excitedly at Phil, who was completely oblivious; too busy making Gary laugh and commenting on the yellow checked skirt he thought Rae would look good in. The skirt was in the window and she decided to try it on, along with half of the store. She’d only get a few items, but she liked to make sure of which ones she wanted by trying everything on. Before Curvy Girl on a Budget she’d hated shopping. But it was impossible to hate it in this store; everything fit perfectly and looked amazing.

She didn’t know the person behind the counter anymore, and even though she flashed her employees card, she still wasn’t allowed to take more than 10 items into the change room. So she left Finn and Phil holding all the other things she wanted to try on and headed in with her ten favourite things. All three rooms were occupied, so she sat down on the waiting bench and put the clothes next to her.

After a few moments a familiar face emerged from the change room, several dresses and pairs of pants on hangers in her hand.

“Rae!” She sounded pleased to see her.

“Hey.” Rae said and had to mentally tell herself to sound a bit happier to see her. “Hi Olivia… what are you doing here?” Olivia’s hand went to her huge stomach.

“Maternity clothes are just so ugly, so I was hoping some fat clothes would look better.” She replied with a happy laugh and Rae took a deep breath. She still hated hearing the word ‘fat’ from most people; they used it as an insult. The gang were really the only people she could stomach using it because they said it as either a neutral descriptor or as a positive.

“Spending a lot of money when you look like you’re due any day.” Rae tried to sound happy, interested, conversational, anything other than how she actually felt.

“Are you calling me fat Rae?” She laughed and Rae couldn’t bring herself to even smile. But Olivia didn’t notice and kept on talking, “This is only 5 months; quadruplets! What a disaster!” She laughed.

“Wow!” Rae answered, genuinely horrified by the thought.

“Oh I just wanted to say how sorry I am… you must be devastated.”

“What?”

“I mean I’m happily married now, but it still knocked me for six. He had me fooled too! But I’m so glad he’s happy now, and that’s the thing you need to remember.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Finn.” Olivia answered as if that explained what she had just said. “He’s gay.” She rummaged around in her bag and produced the tabloid magazine and Rae sighed.

“He’s bisexual.” Rae answered and Olivia laughed.
“Is that what he told you?” She asked and then held up the magazine again, “You have seen this right? He does have good taste in men, I’ll give him that; I’d climb Phil Seymour like a tree! They are a very sexy couple.”

“Aye I ‘m going out with both of ‘em, we all live together.” Rae went into the change room and Olivia turned to her with an incredulous look on her face.

“What?” She asked.

“Go ask ‘em yourself.” Rae said, “They’re waiting for me outside.” Rae closed the door to the change room and ran her hand through her hair. “Fucking Stamford.” She muttered under her breath and started to sort through the clothing.

Olivia looked at the closed door for a moment and went out into the store to see Finn and Phil laughing with an older, attractive man. She marvelled that Rae could have so many attractive men following her around and took a deep breath before going to the counter.

“Finn what a surprise to see you and your boyfriend here.” She looked at Finn; he looked good, with a hint of stubble on his face; being in his 20s looked good on him. She turned to look at Phil, every bit attractive in real life as he was on the screen, “Phil Seymour? I’m a massive fan of your work!”

“Thanks.” Phil said genuinely and looked towards the change rooms momentarily before looking back to Olivia, “So how d’you know Finn?” Finn smiled tightly as Olivia answered.

“We used to date.”

“Oh right?” He asked and looked at Finn.

“This is Olivia.” Finn said and, to his credit, only Finn could see the moment of recognition in Phil; Rae and Finn had told Phil all the details of Finn’s relationship with Olivia.

“Oh aye, Finn had mentioned you.” Phil said politely, his smile still apparently genuine.

“Good things, I hope?”

“Of course.” Phil sparkled with kindness and Finn knew he was a star in the making when Olivia giggled.

“I saw Rae in the change rooms.” She said, still smiling, but both Finn and Phil saw the look in her eye and Finn spoke before Phil had the chance.

“Did our girl manage to get all those clothes in the change room then?” He asked pleasantly, but still trying to make it clear that Rae was still with him, and was with Phil too.

“Yes.” Olivia answered, hesitating slightly, not sure how to broach the topic. “I was surprised about you being gay… given our relationship.” Olivia blurted out and looked breathlessly at Finn. She would leave her husband in a second if he asked her to, he was just so attractive and she still had feelings for him.

“I’m bisexual.” Finn answered, glad Olivia had given him the opening to make it perfectly clear, “I’m with Rae and Phil.”

“Oh.” She said softly, “Don’t you think that’s a little-” She stopped herself and looked away.

“Difficult.” She answered, “And time consuming… and don’t you get jealous?”

“No.” Finn answered flatly and Phil turned his eyes to Finn. Gary was awkwardly fidgeting with fluff in his pocket and looking at his shoes.

“Well I guess I was so boring for you, with all that monogamy and stuff.” She tried to sound like she was joking but Finn rolled his eyes.

“You weren’t boring Olivia, I just wasn’t in love with you.” Finn answered, “I’ve apologised for how I treated you. But it all had nothing to do with you wanting monogamy; back then I did too. People’s needs change… people change. Monogamy can be the greatest thing in the world for some people but a living hell for others.” He saw his father musing over what he was saying, “For me it was unthinkable to be any other way until I fell in love with two people at the same time.” He shrugged, “And I decided I didn’t have to choose. None of us had to choose.”

“Sounds simple.” Olivia said in a small voice. Phil caught sight of the ring on her finger.

“How long have you been married?” He asked and she looked up at him.

“Just under a year.”

“Congratulations.” Finn answered and she smiled.

“Yeah, he’s a really wonderful and successful man.” She reported in a stronger voice.

“I’m glad.” Finn answered, “You deserve it.”

“I know.” She tried to sound more confident than she was, “And we’re expecting.” She stroked her stomach.

“Soon by the looks of it!” Gary said, happy to be in territory he could comment on.

“No.” Olivia said, “Quadruplets.” She explained. She was terrified of her body stretching horribly out of shape; stretch marks and lose skin, but she made herself glow happily with impending, terrifying motherhood.

“You’ll be a great mum.” Finn said.

“You think so?” She asked, touched by his words.

“Of course.”

The conversation petered out naturally and Olivia paid for her clothes, feeling both happier and sadder than she had in a while. Phil watched her leave and turned to look at Finn; he looked grumpy so Phil kissed his cheek and the woman behind the counter watched on, way too excited.

Aiesha was babbling in three languages, giving Linda and Rae a headache. Finn and Phil were both enchanted with her, but couldn’t follow what she was saying; she switched between English, French and Arabic so often that it was impossible to follow her when she was excited like this and she forgot to stay in just one language. Karim’s English was so good now that he easily translated
for her and gently reminded her to speak in English for everyone as she picked up her spring roll in her tiny hand and mashed it into her mouth, still talking.

Gary had had no choice but to accept the payment on his mortgage; it was done via the banks before he even knew about it, but Linda had refused for a long time to take their money for a new home so she could get out of that council flat. She didn’t want to spend their money and put them in financial difficulty. They didn’t want to say exactly how much money they did have, and reassuring her they’d be fine didn’t work; Linda couldn’t comprehend her Rae having so much money that buying her mother a nice three bedroom house simply wasn’t a difficulty.

In the end Phil had broken the deadlock between the arguing women by simply buying a large, and beautiful double brick, three bedroom house and putting it up for rent. The rent was slightly cheaper than what Linda was paying in her tiny two bedroom council flat and nearly everyone in Stamford who was renting had shown interest in renting the house. Linda had agreed to live in their ‘investment property’ as long as she was paying rent. Phil paid the rent into a trust fund for Aiesha Rae had set up. Eventually they’d try to get the house into Linda and Karim’s name and stop the rental payments; but Linda was proud, and it would take time.

Linda was also smart and she knew that she was being undercharged with the rent. So every time they were in Stamford, she insisted on taking them out for a huge dinner and paying. She also refused to let them pay for repairs even though legally, as the owners of the property it was their obligation to do so. Rae countered that by getting things like solar water heating installed. These women often yelled ‘I love you’ at each other like this and it left the men in their lives looking on perplexed.

“Phil?” Aiesha asked and Phil leaned down to be eye level with her.

“What is it pumpkin?” He asked her with a serious face. She asked something in French and Phil responded in French; he’d decided to learn it a few years back. But when Aiesha said something in Arabic he shook his head. She continued in French.

“English Aiesha!” Linda said firmly but lovingly.

“Why are pumpkins orange?”

“Because they have carotene in them like carrots.” Phil answered. Aiesha considered this for a moment and then said exactly what they all knew she was going to say.

“Why?”

“Because some plants synthesise it.”

“Why?”

“Because it helps them photosynthesise. And they need to photosynthesise.”

“Why?”

“Because that’s how they get nutrients.”

“Why?”

“Because they don’t have mouths or stomachs or intestines like us.”

“Why?”
“Because that’s how they evolved.”

“Why?”

“Because-“

“Alright pet that’s enough.” Linda said to Aiesha. “Don’t bother Phil.” Phil didn’t really mind; he’d played this game for hours with his father when he had been that age. It was one of the few really positive memories from his childhood he had. His father would never stop him and if he didn’t know an answer he’d take Phil to the library to find out. But he wouldn’t contradict Linda in front of her child so he grinned at Aiesha and watched her sulk slightly as she ate more of her spring rolls and Linda started chatting about her new job. Phil could see Aiesha’s mind ticking over, trying to figure out how to do what she wanted. She chattered in French and Arabic and Karim replied.

“Finn…?” She asked suddenly and Linda narrowed her eyes.

“What is it little one?” He looked around Phil to look at her.

“Why are Chinese people Chinese?” They were in a Chinese restaurant so this wasn’t an entirely unprecedented question but Finn looked at Phil who tried to hide his proud grin.

“Because they were born in China?” He didn’t feel confident about that answer and Phil covered his mouth to hide his mirth.

“Why?”

“Because their parents were in China, and were probably Chinese, when they decided to get together and have a kiddy.” He answered slightly more confidently.

“Why?” Linda narrowed her eyes further and shook her head.

“Well living organisms are driven towards self-reproduction.” Linda rolled her eyes and put her head in her hands.

“Why?”

“Because one day we’re all going to die.”

“Why?”

“Because organic matter can only exist for so long before it inevitably decays.”

“Why?”

“Because cells only last so long, so they constantly copy themselves to keep the larger organism alive, but this means we have a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy. Eventually all the information fades into nothingness; the body wears out.”

“Why?”

“Alright Finn that’s enough.” Linda had to stop herself chuckling, “You’ll give her nightmares!”

“And existentialistic angst.” Rae joked. Phil burst into laughter and Aiesha looked at them all with a very serious face. But they could all see her sharp mind working through the problem; Phil was off limits, and noe Finn was off limits…
“Rae?”

“What d’you want baby lion cub?” Rae looked around Finn and Phil to see her little sister, a cute cheeky grin plastered on her face.

“Her name’s Aiesha…” Linda said wearily; these three had so many nicknames for Aiesha it was hard to keep up with them sometimes. Only Finn continued to call her the same thing; ‘little one.’

“Why is that waitress staring at us?” She asked and Rae looked over to see Stacey, in the restaurant uniform glaring at their table. Finn looked over and groaned.

“Two in one day.” He muttered and Phil looked over and started to chuckle; he knew Stacey from college.

“Because she used to date Finn?”

“Why?”

“Well wouldn’t you date him?” Rae asked and Aiesha scrunched her nose. So Rae tried another answer, laughing while Finn pretended to be offended, “Because she thought he was attractive.”

“Why?” Aiesha asked, her tone clearly saying she thought Stacey was crazy.

“Because he has nice eyebrows.” Rae said and Finn turned to her with a bewildered expression.

“Eyebrows?” He laughed. Phil, nearly losing his shit, had to put his serviette up to his mouth.

“Why?”

“Genetics you little skittle.” Rae answered.

“Why?”

“Cos his parents past his genes down to him.”

“Aiesha pet, can we play another game?” Linda asked and Aiesha gave her mother a grumpy face and turned to look around the restaurant.

“What’s gay?” She asked and Linda nearly choked on her drink. Rae looked over at Stacey to see her holding up the tabloid magazine pointedly, pretending to be cleaning up the waiting area where people who had ordered take away sat to await there order. “Are you gay?” She looked at Finn and then Phil. Linda looked over and tutted.

“Don’t ever believe the trash you read in tabloids pet.” Linda said to Aiesha and Aiesha looked perplexed for a minute.

“What’s gay?” Everyone looked at Linda and she looked like she had no idea how to explain it.

“It just means you like someone who’s the same gender as you.” Finn said.

“So if you liked girls Ash, you’d be gay.” Rae added. Linda particularly disliked ‘Ash’ as a nickname for Aiesha.

“It’s I-EE-SHA!” Linda said, “Ash is a daft nickn-”

“Then I’m gay.” Aiesha exclaimed with a happy grin. Rae started to laugh.
“No you have to like them…” She tried to figure out how to have the sex talk without having the sex talk.

“You have to like them in a very special way.” Phil helped.

“A very special adult way.” Karim added. Aiesha considered this and then looked at her mother.

“I’m gay.” She declared, “I like girls in a really special way.”

“You’re not gay pet. What about Jacob; you like him a lot.” Linda said, “You can’t possibly know if you’re gay yet.”

“Oi mum how can you say that to her?” Rae said softly, “If she can’t know she’s gay yet, then she can’t know she’s straight either.” Linda opened her mouth to reply and then stopped, stumped by that.

“You’re right, I just didn’t think…” She shook her head, “If you wanna call yourself gay Aisha, you can.” She said and Aiesha beamed happily. Stacey approached with a fake smile and her notepad.

“Are you ready to order your mains yet?”

“Where’s the other waiter?” Finn asked rudely.

“Seeing to those tables over there.” She pointed and then returned to looking like she was ready to write something down. Phil, as always, ordered for everyone because he remembered what everyone wanted. Stacey gave him a suggestive smile and looked at Finn who scowled grumpily.

“How strange to see my ex on the cover of a magazine.” She said and looked at Finn and Phil, “And with none other than Stamford’s own success story Phil Seymour.”

“I was born in the east end of London and have lived in London for 21 of my 24 years.” Phil said with a smile, “So really I’m London’s own success story, although that doesn’t sound nearly as impressive because London has had millions of success stories who are far more successful than me.”

“Although they’re not more successful at getting the D.” Rae said, shortening the word ‘dick’ to ‘the D’ for Aiesha’s sake. Linda still gave her arm a slap. Phil and Finn started laughing at Stacey’s confused expression and then dawning realisation.

“Amy said that you three was together.” She looked disgusted.

“Aye that’ right.” Finn answered, “So you can’t blame me not wanting to be with you on me being gay. Cos I’m not.”

“Why not?” Aiesha asked, “Don’t you like boys? I thought you liked Phil?”

“I’m bise-” Linda gave him a dirty look; the word ‘sex’ wasn’t being said in front of Aiesha yet. “I’m bi.” He said and Linda looked heaven-ward as if asking for strength. “It means I like boys and girls.” He simplified the definition for her, and then looked up at Stacey with a grin as he dropped an arm around Rae’s shoulders and then Phil’s. Stacey took a few empty entrée plates and left as Aiesha considered this for a moment.

“You like them both in that special way?” She asked.
“That’s right little one.” Finn answered.

“I’m still gay.” She nodded her head.

“Boys are gross.” Rae said and Phil and Finn gave her a look. “Me loving you two doesn’t change facts.” She shrugged.

“Right well my bladder needs emptying.” Finn answered.

“Why?” Aiesha asked.

“Cos I drunk too much beer little one.” Finn answered.

“Why?”

“Cos sometimes I’m a poo-head.” She started to giggle. “And occasionally I’m a butt-face.” She laughed louder, “But tonight I’m being a fart-brain.” She laughed with the gleeful abandon that only children can laugh with and Finn grinned as he stood up. “Any other questions afore I go?”

“Why did that lady sound mean?” Aiesha’s curiosity was always greater than her desire to laugh and Phil felt that her personality was like his in that regard.

“Well we have a long history of being mean to each other.” Finn answered.

“Why?” Finn furrowed his brows.

“Oh…” He sighed, “Well… we wanted different things and didn’t communicate very well and…” he looked up at the ceiling for the right answer.

“Why?”

“Some people just aren’t very good at getting on together.” Finn answered.

“Why?”

“I’ll take over.” Karim answered, “Go, go!” He waved Finn off, and Finn could hear Karim’s explanation as he walked off.

“Because there are lots of different people in the world, and that’s alright. And sometimes they won’t get along. And that’s alright, as long as we all respect each other’s rights and treat each other with dignity.”

Finn pulled his zipper down and stepped up to the urinal.

“Oh…” Stacey came in with a roll of toilet paper. “Just had to put this in here.”

“Right.” Finn shook his head but kept peeing; she’d seen it before.

“I remember that beast.” She looked fondly at his cock and Finn sighed and pushed his bladder to go faster. They’d never gotten around to penis in vagina sex, but there’d certainly been a lot of fooling around, and she’d gone down on him. “If I’d known how kinky you are I could have offered you that.” She said softly.

“You shouldn’t assume bisexual people are kinky.” Finn answered and finally finished up, zipping his fly gratefully.
“You telling me you’re not kinky, being with them two?”

“I’m telling you it’s none of your business what I am or what I’m not. And it never will be.”

“I know.” She answered, “I’ve moved on anyway.”

“Great, so why are we having this conversation?” Finn went to the sink and washed his hands.

“I’m with Simmy now.” She said and Finn couldn’t help but scrunch his nose up.

“That’s scraping the barrel, even for you.” He answered, “I’m sure you’ll be very happy together.” He flicked his hands dry and headed for the door.

“I’m pregnant.” She said desperately.

“And why are you telling me?”

“Cos I wish I wasn’t… I don’t know how I fucked everything up so much…” Her fingers fidgeted with the toilet paper. “I just wish…” He saw the tears on her cheeks.

“Stace…”

“Can we try again? I’m different now… and I’ll… I’ll do whatever you want.” He looked at him with a pleading face and Finn put his hands on her shoulders.

“Stacey, I am in love with Rae and Phil.” He answered, “I don’t wanna be with anyone else. If you’re unhappy, you gotta try and change it… if you don’t wanna be pregnant, get an abortion. If you don’t wanna be with Simmy, leave him. He don’t hit you, do he?”

“No.” Stacey answered, “He cheats a lot and he’s such a… racist, misogynistic arsehole…” She laughed slightly, “I’ve been afraid to say that out loud.”

“Leave him.” Finn said, “Take some time to get to know you, be kind to you. Learn to actually love yourself.” He said, “I got a mate named Kester who works up at the hospital. Go see him. He helped me a lot. But he’s hard fucking work, and you gotta be committed to the work… and to yourself. Alright?”

“Alright.” She nodded.

“But don’t do any o’ this for any other reason than for yourself.” Finn clarified, and she nodded, crying openly now, “Don’t think that seeing Kester is what you have to do to be with me. That’s never gonna happen. Go see him so you don’t need to be with anyone.”

“Thanks.” She whispered. “Do I just ask for Kester? Will they know who I’m after?”

“They’ll know that old fucker, don’t worry.” Finn answered. “Truce?” He held out his hand and Stacey took a deep breath.

“Truce.” She said and shook it. “Sorry for coming in here.” She mumbled, ashamed.

“You’re not the first person to do something daft when they was miserable.” He answered. “Go find your happiness so you can do daft things when you’re happy instead.” She laughed shakily. “Right, well, I’m gonna get back.” Finn said, “Bye.”

“Bye.” He left without turning back to see her looking longingly after him. When he got back to the table Rae gave him a knowing look.
“Did she come into the bathroom?”

“It’s like you’re reading her mind.” Finn answered, “I told her to go see Kester.” He added.

“I hope she goes.” Rae said simply and Finn nodded.

Rae looked at the empty flat. Finn was at work in the theatre and Phil was filming another movie, but locally, so he was coming home, exhausted, every night. She had spent a lot of days alone in the house, staring at the computer screen. She had finished one novel, but no matter where she sent it no one would publish it, and this second novel was refusing to be written. She wanted to call someone but she knew they’d all be at work. She sighed and looked at the computer screen, then at the wall clock.

“Well now I understand why so many writers are heavy drinkers.” She said to the empty apartment.

Silence replied.

She got up and walked around the apartment, checking the Spruce’s water level, then going to Phil’s herb garden and smelling the beautiful cacophony of smells before pulling off a chocolate mint leaf and eating it. No one messed with Phil’s herb garden spaced out on the glass shelves Finn had put over the kitchen window; it was all Phil’s to look after. And it was magnificent.

She sat back down at the computer and stared at the screen, biting the inside of her mouth. Finn had been putting a lot of their music onto the computer, so she trawled through it, feeling lost.

Without realising it her fingernails were sliding under each other and pressing into the flesh, gently at first but getting firmer.

She loaded up ‘Diablo 2’ and started to play the computer game mindlessly. She hated playing the game instead of working on writing, but she just couldn’t bare looking at that screen with a half-finished sentence on it. She played for an hour without even realising the time had slipped past her. She played through lunch and only when it was starting to get dark and there were no lights on did she realise she’d spent the whole day playing and hadn’t had lunch, or any water, or prepared dinner even though it was her turn.

She tried to tell herself that it was ok to sometimes have a wasted day like this.

Except all her days were being wasted now.

She flicked back to the word document with the half-finished sentence and stared at it for a few minutes with no idea how to finish the sentence. How to even begin this book.

“What am I doing with my life?”

The growing sense of wasting her life was taking over Rae’s mind; when she hit 25 years old, she silently joked with herself that she was having a ‘quarter life crisis.’
But the truth was that that half-finished sentence remained. And she dreamt about it now.

The first time she’d woken Phil and Finn up they watched her murmuring and crying in her sleep with grave concern; they’d both noticed her mood slipping and had discussed it with each other, but when they broached with her, she just said she had writer’s block.

‘Maybe we can do a self-publishing thing?’ Finn said and Phil cocked an eyebrow.

“We could start our own publishing company for under-represented voices and stories.” He answered. “But if she knew it was her own publishing company, I’m not sure she’d think it’d count.”

“You’re right.” Finn answered with a sigh. “Good idea but.”

“One for the future.” Phil answered, meaning that they’d think about starting that company in the future.

“Maybe we can take her mind off it somehow?” Finn suggested.

“We can ask Elsa if she’s got a play that needs a leading lady?” Phil replied and Finn nodded.

“Not a bad idea; it’d get her outta the flat and doing something she used to love.”

“Maybe if she gets her mind off writing for a bit she’ll be able to get over her writer’s block.” Phil mused.

“I don’t understand why they rejected her.” Finn said, “She’s so good.”

‘Every writer gets rejected.” Phil answered, “Every writer knows that. But it’d still be devastating when it happens; to be told you’re not good enough at the one thing you know you’re good at. The one career option you really love…”

They both stared at the floor.

“We’ve kinda had it relatively easy with our career stuff.” Finn answered and Phil scoffed.

“Have you seen some o’ the shit I’ve had to do?” He laughed. “And you’re not exactly interviewing a Gallagher.”

“I’m impressed you know who they are.” Finn said, “You do know who-”

“Yes.” Phil answered unimpressed. “Still Rae’s had it much worse than us.” He sighed, “Much worse… we’ve both been very lucky in comparison, you’re quite right.”

“But you’re right too; we’re not where we wanna be. Although… I think I’m the only one who’s happy with where I am right now.” He said and Phil nodded. “I love running that theatre.” Finn said, “You hate the tv you’re doing and the small movie roles…”

“I don’t hate ‘em…I just don’t wanna stay here.”

“Oscars and super-stardom?”

“Of course.” Phil laughed. “It’s not the fame I want. But I do want critical acclaim and to work on amazing and challenging scripts.” He sighed, “And Rae just wants to be published.”

“I read her book; it’s heartbreakingly good… I’m not just imagining that am I?”
“It’s nothing short of brilliant.” Phil answered, “But she doesn’t know that.”

“Isn’t that the girl who started the gossip mill that got Phil disowned?” Rae asked and nodded towards an incredibly beautiful and thin woman in pink and Finn narrowed his eyes in thought.

“Aye, I think it is.” Finn pulled a disgusted face and turned back to watch the competition. Phil was on next and he and Rae had learned all about fencing so they’d get what was going on at Phil’s competitions. “Isn’t her name Penelope? What a fucking stereotype of a name for a rich girl.” Finn said and shook his head. He looked at Rae but she was only giving a small smile; her mind clearly elsewhere as it always was lately. Stuck on that half-finished sentence.

“Maybe you should stop thinking about it?” Finn said. He and Phil had decided not to say this outright to her because it might make her feel like she was defeated or like they didn’t have any faith in her.

“It’s like smoke.” She said softly and Finn looked at her, worried.

“Smoke?”

“The story… it’s like smoke… and every time I try to grasp it, it’s gone…”

“So stop trying to grasp it girl.” Finn said simply and Rae looked at him as if the thought had never crossed her mind. “Just look at it.” He shrugged, “See what it shows you.” Phil was announced and they both looked forward, Rae deep in thought.

“Go’ I can’t believe I’m 26.” Finn looked in the mirror and then at Phil and Rae, “4 years till the big 3-0.” He grinned as Rae rolled her eyes at him, she was peeing, not worrying about them seeing her anymore and Phil was flossing his teeth while Finn shaved. “So have we all decided we’re heading to Australia again for summer?” Finn asked. It had become a yearly tradition, with James finally getting enough time off med school to head out too.

“3 weeks end o’ July, beginning o’ August and my agent hates it.” Phil replied and then shrugged, He’ll survive.”

“What are we doing for our anniversary?” Finn asked as Rae flushed and started to wash her hands.

“Shouldn’t we be thinking about your birthday?” Phil asked.

“Seven years.” He said and put an arm around both of their waists. And suddenly Rae’s eyes went wide.

“Because the ocean divides them!” She suddenly cried and sprinted from the bathroom to the computer. “That’s why it doesn’t get there.” She said excitedly to them. “Why didn’t I think to make it over more than one fucking continent from the get-go?” She asked loudly and started to type frantically the minute the computer loaded.
Phil and Finn leaned on the bathroom door and watched her.

“Um… I think we might postpone my birthday celebrations til tomorrow.” Finn said with a grin.

Two days later as she sat still typing frantically, Finn having postponed his birthday celebrations another day as he and Phil just tried to get her to sleep for more than a few hours and take time to eat, they got notice that her first book was being picked up for publishing; they were offering £10,000.

Rae had broken down and cried with relief and then slept for the rest of the day.

Four days after his actual birthday, a rested and fully-present Rae and Phil pampered Finn all day and Rae managed to make no jokes about Finn’s age or the possibility of going grey or bald in his old age.
The Lighthouse Song

‘The Lighthouse Song’ by Josh Pyke

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GquroFVb_48

And though our doors may knock and rattle in the wind, I'll just hold you tight and we'll not let those fuckers in.

Rae looked at the recipe and frowned. She was covered in flour, her fingers sticky with dough.

“Why the fucking fuck is it so fucking sticky… what did I miss?” She looked down the list trying to figure it out. She’d seen Finn make pizza base before without this problem. The phone rang and Rae glared at it. “Are you fucking kidding?” She groaned and looked up at the empty flat.

“Alright!” She told the phone, “Hold your fucking horses.” She tried to wipe the dough off her hands and picked up the phone.

“Hello?”

“Hi, I need to speak to a Rachel Earl or a Finlay Nelson?”

“This is Rachel.” Rae answered trying not to get her sticky fingers near her hair.

“It’s about Phillip Seymour.”

Rae cried as quietly as she could and stroked Phil’s hair. Finn paced, trying to unclench his fists, his teeth grinding.

The police had come and gone, until Phil woke up they had no idea who did this to him.

A nurse came in to check Phil’s vitals.

“You folks ok?” She asked gently and Rae could only sniff.

“No.” Finn snapped angrily and the nurse sighed and looked at Phil’s chart.

“D’you get Prostolowski?” She said, “I bet he made swelling of the brain sound very ominous.” The nurse said, “And it can be really serious. But I seen a lotta fellas come through these doors beaten black and blue like this one and get up.” She reached out and took Rae’s hand, “You just gotta believe he’ll be fine pet.” Finn turned to look at them, but as soon as he saw his Phil’s bruised and broken face he was terrified and furious again.

“Thanks.” Rae tried to sound actually thankful rather than just frantically anxious. Rae looked up and saw the man in jeans and a plaid shirt go past the door again, looking in, lingering in the hall, for just the right amount of time for you to not be sure if he was deliberately looking in. Except this was the eighth time Rae had seen him go by.
“What the fuck do you want?” Finn yelling at him.

“Sir, please keep your voice down.” The nurse said.

“Are you fucking paparazzi?” Finn lurching towards the door and the man shot off down the hallway. “Fucking hell.” Finn growled halfway between rage and bewilderment, “What is fucking wrong with people?”

“I’ll ask the hospital admin to send some security guards up.”

“Thanks.” Rae said again and tried to contain her sob. Finn nodded stiffly at the nurse and turned to look at Phil. He felt a sob catching at his own throat. “We have to ring Kels.” Rae said, “And the gang.”

“And Sarah.” Finn said reluctantly. Sarah was Phil’s publicist; and she was a hard-natured realist; her and Phil butted heads a lot, but she was good at her job. Besides, Phil didn’t pay for her, his agent did, so he didn’t really get a choice. He refused to pay for a publicist on principal; his career aim was to be an actor, not famous. Sarah constantly reminding him that his public image directly affected the acting offers he’d get, was the only thing that made him play nice with her at all.

“Did I hear my name?” She asked and walked in’ it was 11 at night, but she was on the job. “I search my clients everyday on the internet and photos of Phil have already emerged on the online tabloids. I’ve already called Kelsey, it’s important he has family here for his image, I’ll also need you to ring all of his friends; the more people rallying round him the better. I’ll go into damage control.”

“Damage control?” Rae asked.

“Yes the two men who did this have done an anonymous interview with a tabloid magazine and claim that he showed predatory behaviour towards them.”

“What?” Finn asked and Sarah rolled her eyes. “They’re gonna go for a gay panic defence, I suspect they’ll be handing themselves in tomorrow morning with pre-written, lawyer approved statements. We need to hire a very good lawyer.”

“This is unbelievable.” Finn shook his head and Rae started to cry harder. Finn put his arm around her shoulders.

“Welcome to fame kiddo.” Sarah said and looked at Phil, “Fuck I hope he gets better. He’ll be a great cash-cow; no matter how determined he is to fuck up his image with honesty, he’s still in high demand… he’s going to the top.” She sighed sadly and patted his foot before pulling her phone out, “Get the friend crowd and the lawyer here for tomorrow, I wanna do a statement at 10am.”

“Sarah…” Finn started to protest.

“Let me do what I’m paid for.” She said firmly. “I’ll call his agent.” She said and walked from the room. Finn thudded into the chair, his eyes on Phil.

“What the fuck is gay panic?”
He opened his eyes in the middle of the night. Rae was asleep with her head on the bed, but Finn was awake looking straight at Phil’s face. He jumped up and Rae started awake. Her hand still in his. He squeezed her hand and she looked up at him.

“Phil.” She started to cry with relief when she saw that he recognised her from the spark in his eyes.

“Had me worried there Jill.” Finn said and Phil almost grinned.

“I’m fine.” He croaked and tried to sit up.

“Oh no you don’t.” Finn rushed over.

“I’m thirsty.” He said, his mouth gluggy and foul tasting. Rae took the jug of water and filled the glass, Finn using the bed to help Phil into a sitting position. He sipped the water slowly. His injuries were severe; 4 broken ribs, a broken wrist, two broken fingers, broken nose, two back teeth shattered, head trauma from being repeatedly kicked in the back of the head, bruised kidneys, cuts and bruises all over him. But James had assured them he was doing well, and in the end he only spent 10 hours unconscious after the attack; both Rae and Finn had been expecting longer. Nina had looked after his wounds, resetting his nose so it would heal straight and calling on her boyfriend, a dental surgeon to agree to fix Phil’s teeth. Their friends had really come through for them; milling around Phil’s bed and offering not only comfort but real support and help. Sammy was on her way home from her holiday in Malaysia, Izzy was flying in from Italy; everyone was rallying around them.

Kelsey, like Rae and Finn, had refused to leave when visiting hours had been up, was sleeping on her jacket in the corner of the room; she was used to sleeping rough so she didn’t stir as they quietly talked to Phil, not wanting to wake her because she had exhausted herself with worry. She’d been beside herself and baying for blood when she’d seen her baby brother and it was her fury that had made the nurses acquiesce to the three of them staying in the room; none of them had wanted to insist that she leave. Even Finn’s cold glare hadn’t matched Kelsey’s fiery anger at the thought of leaving Phil’s side for even a minute. The nurses had managed to eject everyone else, but the partners and the sister were permitted to stay. Rae and Finn already loved Kelsey quite a bit, but after this, their bond with their sister-in-’law’ was even closer.

“They jumped on me and called me a fag.” Phil said softly, “They knew who I was.”

“That tabloid picture.” Rae said and Phil nodded he tried to shift and groaned.

“Don’t move.” Finn commanded and Phil cocked an eyebrow at him.

“Fuck even cocking an eyebrow hurts.” He grumbled, “Keep up that voice though Finn and I’ll have to have you.” Rae finally grinned through her tears.

“You won’t be having anyone for a while.” Finn said in the same commanding tone and Phil gave an appreciative groan.

“Ugh.” He sighed, “I need to pee.”

“Just go, you got a catheter in.” Finn stroked Phil’s hair and pressed the button to call for a nurse.

“Oh fuck.” Phil gently picked up the blankets to look under them and Rae pulled up his gown for him, “Well that looks fucking terrifying.” He said and let the blanket drop. “Although I’m glad I don’t have to move.”
“Aye they’re fun to get in an’ out.” Finn finally sat back down and pulled his chair in closer.

“How long?” Phil asked and neither of them needed clarification about what he meant.

“About 10 hours.” Rae answered.

“The people who did it are claiming gay panic…”

“I didn’t.” Phil shook his head.

“We know.” Finn answered, “You don’t need to say it, we know.” Finn stroked his hair and Rae remembered the last time something awful had happened to Phil; when he had been drugged. Finn had been so sure Phil was cheating that night. But now he was even more sure that he didn’t try to hit on anyone else. Rae realised that the idea of any of them hitting on someone else really was unthinkable. Sure they flirted with the idea at the club, but in reality this was a very closed relationship, they were completely devoted to each other, and they were all so sure of it now that it was completely unthinkable that any one of them would even think about cheating.

Phil gave him a slight smile, his eyes grateful; it was good for Phil to see the faith they had him in, because last time something bad had happened they’d stumbled over fear and jealousy. Not this time. They believed his version of accounts completely and it didn’t matter what Phil’s attackers said, even if he hadn’t gotten one bruise on him, they still wouldn’t believe them over their Phil. They’d never believe anyone who accused Phil of hitting on them; they knew who he was. Phil closed his eyes contently and then fought to re-open them.

“You should get some sleep.” Rae said, “We’ll be right here.” He took both of their hands and let his eyes close again. Rae looked up at Finn across the bed and saw tears on his cheeks.

“I’ll kill them Rae.” Finn said when he saw her looking at him.

“No you won’t.” She ordered, “Because you’ll remember we need you here. Not in jail.” Finn’s nostrils flared and he nodded once.

“Gay panic?” Chloe asked shaking her head and stroked Phil’s hair; he was sleeping soundly after waking up long enough this morning to see Kelsey swearing at the doctor and demanding the best doctor in the country attend her brother. Finn had told him she was definitely his Aristocratic sister and he’d gently smiled and drifted back off to sleep.

“Portsmouth defence.” Archie gave it its more commonly known name, but everyone he knew who was in the queer community called it ‘the gay panic defence’. “Who the fuck thinks it’s alright to beat a gay man to near death cos he hits on you? Oh right, the law! Forgot about that.” He laughed bitterly.

“He doesn’t actually have to be hitting on you… you just have to think he is.” Chloe answered and shook her head, “I don’t know the legislation very well, but I’ll take the case.” She said, “We have an older partner in the firm, Sarita, who is an expert in gay rights, and she’s been trying abolish that fucking law.” She called Sarita while Nina gently changed Phil’s wounds. She was a fully qualified nurse; working part time at that and part time at trying to crack the acting industry. She’d insisted that she take care of her dear friend and Rae had been infinitely grateful; she was gentler than the overworked nurses bustling in and out. They were all also very grateful when James had showed up in a bustling hurry; he actually worked at this hospital and had Phil transferred to his
care permanently; even Kelsey had calmed down a bit when Rae and Finn knew James and trusted him.

Sarah walked in and stopped in the doorway.

“Hm.” She said. “Who’s the lawyer?” Sarah asked bewildered as she looked at them all.

“I am.” Chloe said.

“Oh we can’t have this stupid little girl play lawyer on camera. This isn’t ‘Legally Blonde.’”

“I graduated first in my class!” Chloe answered outraged.

“That’s nice Elle.” Sarah called Chloe the lead role of ‘Legally Blonde.’

“I work for a prestigious-”

“I don’t care who you work for, I need a senior partner down here now.”

“There’s one coming.” Chloe answered and Sarah smiled.

“Excellent. You’re not as dumb as you look.” She answered curtly.

“Wow.” Archie said, shaking his head and Rhys glared at her with extreme distaste.

“It’s not my job to coddle your emotions.” Sarah snapped at them all, “It’s my job to make sure my client comes out of this smelling like roses.” She turned to Chloe, “Please tell me it’s a human rights law firm?”

“We work with the UN to-”

“Excellent.” Sarah said. “Any other gays in the room?” She turned to look at Finn, “We can’t use you Finn.” She said.

“Not gay. Bi.” Finn said and Sarah continued as if he hadn’t spoken.

“Conjecture over his sexuality is the best thing right now. I’m so glad he’s so proud.” Phil had refused to confirm nor deny rumours about his sexuality; as far as he was concerned, he shouldn’t have to. Nor did he hide his partners in public, but luckily, the laws in England were fairly good and he was able to not end up with too many paparazzi photos showing up in the tabloids.

“I’m gay.” Archie said, “And I’m now regretting admitting that.” He said as she turned to him.

“Are you happy to call this a hate crime against your kind on camera? And say you’ve been friends for many years?”

“Sure.” Archie answered, “Cos both those statements are true.”

“Our kind?” Tom growled under his breath.

“Great, who’s your partner?”

“Me.” Tom said. “Oh good.” Sarah smiled, “I was hoping to get you on camera the minute I saw you. The nation’s just gonna love you.” She looked him up and down and nodded appreciating his looks. “Now tell me the senior lawyer is gay too?”
“I don’t know her sexuality.” Chloe answered, “Because it doesn’t matter in our law firm. It shouldn’t matter anywhere.”

“I admire your wide-eyed daydreaming girl, but unfortunately here in the real world it does matter.” Sarah shot back at her and Chloe narrowed her eyes. “We need to make sure that these fabulous people of colour in his friendship group are on camera when the lawyer talks; let’s play the minorities up.”

“Excuse me?” Latisha asked with a disgusted expression.

“Again, I’m not here to make you happy, I’m here to make him look good.”

“Sarah.” Phil croaked from the bed and she turned to him, Kelsey’s eyes lit up and she went to the bed, “can you just once, pretend you’re representing my wishes and interests instead of my agent’s?” Sarah pursed her lips and shook her head.

“The person who pays me gets the service. You might be the client, but you’re not the person who-”

“Fine.” Phil said softly, “I’ll hire you myself.”

“Well than that’s a different thing honey.” She said and smiled. “Everyone out, he does the interview alone.” She said.

“We’re not leaving.” Rae answered,

“You’ll be standing behind the camera. But Phil Seymour should be standing alone against the injustices of the world.”

“But I’m not alone.”

“No, but now’s not the time to come out about your relationship; that’ll come in a few years.”

“You’ve always said not to.” Finn said, “To hide it.”

“And he never did, and he never will.” Sarah answered, “But there’s still no official word, so it’s all conjecture. Which we can use in our favour for now. But if I’m representing Phil instead of his agent, I’m trying to figure out a way to keep his reputation squeaky clean while admitting he’s into polyamory; something most of the nation still pretty much hates. Give me time to build a plan of attack with that, and also, give the nation time with you maybe admitting your sexuality, and we will definitely tell them that you’re in a committed relationship; they’ll need time with that too.”

“Alright.” Phil answered wearily.

“And you’ll need to tell your agent.” Sarah continued, she turned to Chloe, “Tell me everything about your law firm.”

“The gentlemen in question have handed themselves in and seem to be genuinely filled with remorse.” The interviewer held the microphone under Phil’s mouth, the station logo clear on the handle.

“They didn’t show much remorse yesterday.” Phillip answered, “When they attacked me
unprovoked.

“Well that’s not what they’re claiming.”

Rae showed Finn the magazine cover, it was a telescopic photograph of Phil and Finn kissing, naked, their penises barely blacked out, on Woody’s beach in Australia. There was a lightening effect down the middle of the cover with the word ‘vs’ in huge letters and a picture of two men smiling innocently in graduation gowns. At the bottom of the cover was ‘who’s telling the truth, and who’s a dirty liar?’

“Oh my god.” Finn looked at the picture and then flipped the magazine open to see numerous photos of he and Phil cavorting together naked, their penises not blacked out inside. “How is this legal?” He snapped at the magazine angrily, “Why are there no photos of you?”

“It doesn’t suit their purpose to show him with a woman.” Rae answered. “They want him to look gay. And they want gay to look immoral, and over-sexed and evil.”

“How is this legal?” He asked again, “why do they even think they can do something like this?” Finn looked at his penis on the page and felt his heart sink.

“People think that they kinda own famous people.” Rae answered and Finn shook his head, “Phil’s pretty famous… right on the verge of being hugely famous. He’s got an international fanclub, tv, movies, minor awards…” She shook her head, “It’s only a matter of time before he starts getting nominated for the major awards too. He’s already been cast as the main part in a movie… we have to start defending ourselves against this stuff. They’re not gonna leave us alone. Especially with the poly stuff.”

“We can’t let him see this.”

“We have to fight this.” Rae answered, “I’m gonna ask Chloe about filing a lawsuit against the magazine.”

Phil hobbled around their kitchen slowly, snipping his herbs gently, the phone on loud speaker.

“The police investigation is going very slowly, there’s a lot of legal shenanigans happening in the background, and I’m not sure where that’s all going. I’ll keep you posted.”

“Thanks.”

“The magazine are offering to retract their story and offer a full apology, but Chloe thinks it’ll be better if we beat them in court and I agree. However, if they win, people will think their story was true.” Rae sat at their kitchen table and watched Phil with worried eyes. Finn was at work; he wasn’t able to get any more time off, but he was expected home at any minute.

“What are their chances of winning?”

“Chloe thinks narrow.”
“Then proceed.”

“Roger.” Sarah said, “I’ll check in again tomorrow.”

“Alright, bye.” Phil turned the phone off before Sarah had had chance to reply. That was rude. Phil was rarely rude; he liked manners.

Rae’s brows were furrowed with worry when Finn opened the door.

“Hey.” He kissed them both.

“How was work?” Rae asked.

“Same old.’ Finn saw Phil getting frustrated as he tried to hang the herbs to dry; his still mending broken fingers were not co-operating.

“I’ll do it.” Finn offered and Phil shook his head, trying to tie the sting around the bottom of the bunches of herbs. “Both James and Nina have told you not to use those fingers if you want them to heal proper.” Finn scolded gently and took the herbs from him. Phil just let his hand fall to his lap and looked down.

“Phil.” Rae said softly, “We just want you to take care of yourself.”

“I know.” He said and stood up, going to sofa and opening up a book. Finn looked up at Rae, his fingers tying the knots easily. She smiled grimly in response and looked over at Phil.

“Obviously this is a repugnant result. I’m bisexual,” it was the first time Phil had told the media his sexuality because he had believed it was no one else’s business. But now he felt that he needed to speak up, “And gay people, bisexual and pansexual people, transgender people… we’re all getting beaten and some of us are being killed because straight men are claiming to be terrified of us… of the mere idea that we might be interested in them. And the law is letting them get away with this. This is bigotry; this is legalised hatred. I absolutely support the abolishment of the gay panic defence. Straight men don’t beat supposedly unattractive women who show interest in them; they just say no. So the idea that they are incapable of doing anything other than panic when a gay man shows interest is beyond ridiculous and is founded in nothing other than homophobic nonsense. In my case in particular, two men attacked me, yelling homophobic slurs at me, because they recognised me from tabloid photograph with a story that had erroneously declared me to be gay. They then claimed that I had hit on them and used the gay panic defence to dodge all punishment for their actions. I repeat, I am bisexual, and I’d like to add that I am in a long term committed relationship. I have absolutely no desire to proposition strangers in the middle of the night when I’m walking home after a long day of filming. And given that straight men can legally get away with beating me and men like me, why would I risk my life propositioning them, when apparently the simple act of walking home is dangerous enough? So I need to ask every single person hearing this; are queer people’s lives worth something in this country?” Phil walked away from the media and Sarah took his place and looked back at the police station they were standing in front of for a moment before beginning.

“Then proceed.”

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“The police made the decision to not press charges because the perpetrators of this violent attack can claim ‘gay panic’ and will most likely win if this went to court. We as a nation have a lot to think about. And as you consider this issue, I urge you to consider the broken bones and bruises of
one of our favourite sons; Philip Seymour. And he would urge you to consider the countless nameless victims. Especially those who died while we protected a man’s right to commit homophobic acts of violence.” She looked at Sarita who stepped forward.

“Regardless of whether you believe my client or his attackers’ version of events, we need to be asking if it is appropriate to beat someone when they make an unwanted advance.” She was a powerfully persuasive speaker. “We need to be asking if barbaric laws such as these have any place in our legal system. We need to be asking ourselves what it says about us as a nation, and as individuals that we tolerate such a law in our great nation.”

“I ask the paparazzi, who have profited nicely off the back of this crime and their own invasions of privacy, to please respect Mr Seymour’s privacy as he heals. There will be no questions, and no further interviews or public statements on this topic.” Sarah finished up.

Phil read about them on the internet; unsolved murders, one just a few days back in the park down the road from where they lived, motivated by homophobia. There was an ongoing inquiry into police handling of the matter and preliminary results indicates that there was widespread homophobia in the police force. Phil considered the way the police had asked him questions, the way they had addressed him... the way they hadn’t even bothered to press charges even though the perpetrators had handed themselves in.

When he had been drugged the police had refused to press charges then too, and the university had declined to expel the perpetrator. This wasn’t a one off thing. No one cared what happened to people in the queer community.

How was he supposed to heal and get on with his life when he couldn’t feel safe? The people that were supposed to protect him where practically in on the crime. The fact that this could happen at all was enough to make a person feel unsafe, but knowing that the perpetrators had little to no consequences for their actions made it even worse. He looked out the window and a shudder went down his spine; fear clenching his stomach.

They won the court case against several magazines Chloe had started. The magazines were forced to retract the statements made and admit they were false as well as make apologies and pay quite large fines. Chloe wanted to go after the person who took the nude photos of Phil and Finn, but they were Australian and the legal situation was tricky. And besides, Phil seemed disinterested. So as outraged as Finn still felt that his private parts had now been seen by half the country, albeit in grainy poor quality photos, he let the matter drop.

Sarah reported that the wins against the magazines seemed to sway studios to want to hire him more as public opinion finally settled in Phil’s favour.

Phil listened to her phone call and stared out the window, Rae having to do the talking.
Finn looked at the plate full of food Phil had returned. And raised his eyes to watch him sitting quietly, staring off.

Phil turned off ‘Wheel of Fortune’ still in the middle of the second puzzle, Rae and Finn watched him get up, the bruises gently fading, and go to the window.

“D’you wanna come out for a jog?” Finn asked and Phil looked up from his book.

“No. You go ahead though.”

“We was thinking we could head out to that posh French restaurant?” Rae sidled up to Phil with a grin as he stood looking out the window at the graveyard.

“I think I’d rather eat in.” Phil answered without looking away from the gravestones.

“You sure?” Rae asked and looked back at Finn with a concerned expression.

“You two go on without me.”

“Nah I’ll cook us something.” Finn answered.

“How do we even address it with him?” Rae asked softly, the closed-in closet was not her most favourite place, but she had to admit that it was a good place to talk quietly while Phil slept.

“I dunno, but it’s been nearly a month.” And in all that time the only time he’d left the house was to go to the police station to discover they weren’t pressing charges.

“He’s depressed.” Rae answered.

“Bit o’ PTSD too.” Finn agreed, “We gotta get ‘im to Kester.”

“Aye but he’s not leaving the house.” Rae fretted, “So how?”

Finn furrowed his brows at the amount of food still being left on Phil’s plate. He didn’t know how to address it with Phil when he was so broken down.
Phil looked down at his broken fingers in their splints.

“How am I gonna play violin?” He asked with a piercingly sad tone.

“You’ll find a way.” Rae answered as bracingly as she could muster. She’d heard all the stories about master pianists no longer being able to play after breaking their fingers. James had assured them that his wrist and finger breaks were surprisingly clean and should heal with little long term problems. But she saw Phil fretting, and not coping without his ability to express himself through his violin.

James was more worried about the rib breaks; they were messy.

Finn put the boxes on the table.

“Right, once I set these up, we’ll all have our own computer.” He grinned and Phil turned from the window to look at him. “I’m gonna set up a local area network so we can play ‘Warcraft’ and ‘Diablo’ together.” He grinned.

“Great.” Phil said and turned back to look out the window. Finn watched him as he went out onto the balcony; his fingers running along the bricks between the windows. Finn grinned and happily started to work on getting the computers up and running. He was so glad to see Phil going outside, even if it was just the balcony. He saw Phil run his fingers along the brickwork of the banister and pull his hands away, pocketing the one without broken fingers and hurrying back inside.

“I’m gonna need you to just have one more mouthful.” Finn said gently when Phil handed back his plate with over half of the food not eaten.

“I’m not hungry.”

“I understand, but try one more-”

“No.” Phil looked away.

“Finn.” Rae said almost imperceptibly and he turned back to the kitchen; he’d talk to Rae about it tonight, in the closet as Phil slept fitfully.

“Do you fancy going out dancing?”

“No”
“What about we go to the zoo?”

“No thanks.”

“They’re doing ‘King Lear’ at the-”

“I think I’ll just stay in.”

Rae sat up in the middle of the night. Something wasn’t right. She looked at the bed beside her and realised that she’d woken up because there was no one right next to her like there normally was. Finn was on the other side of the bed and the middle of the bed, occupied by Phil since the attack because Finn had decided they could stop taking turns for a bit, was empty. The winded gushed and rattled the windows. She put her hand down on where Phil was supposed to lay and felt that it was cold; he hadn’t been in bed for a while.

Fear hit Rae in the pit of the stomach and she got out of bed, grabbing her dressing gown; it was unusually cold inside. She went out to the lounge room and saw that the door to the balcony was open. She could see a figure standing out there and felt relief wash over her; she’d know Phil or Finn’s figure anywhere, under any circumstances. She hadn’t realised until then that she had been afraid that Phil might kill himself; that that was the fear that had hit her stomach when she felt the bed cold beside her. She hadn’t realised how bad it had gotten; she had been living it with him, slowly sinking deeper. It took that moment of fear and relief to let her know it had to stop. She went to the door and looked out.

Phil was standing, staring out at the graveyard, his back to her. He was naked, shivering and slightly swaying. His hand moving rapidly out of her line of sight. She would have almost thought she’d caught him masturbating, but his hand was up too high – it was clearly on top of the brick balcony banister.

Realisation came to her and she rushed to his side, her hand going to his before she’d even looked down at what he was doing. Her touch made him start, and she realised he was snapping out of an almost trance.

“Rae?” He asked as if he had been lost and had no idea where he was.

“What are you doing Phil?” She asked and gently stopped the movement in his hand. She could feel moisture; blood, as she gently lifting his fingers off the bricks. He looked down at his fingers; the darkness making it impossible to see how bad the damage was. “You and I… we don’t do this anymore Phil.”

“I didn’t… I…” He shook his head slowly and looked out over the graveyard. She felt his fingers twitch slightly in her hand. She saw his hand with the broken fingers laying on top of the bannister and gently pulled him around, away from the brickwork.

“Come inside.” She said and gently took his other hand, not feeling any moisture. He was
shuddering with cold, pain and emotion now that she had woken him from his trance.

“Rae…” His voice cracked.

“I understand.” She said, “I really do. But you’re not gonna do this anymore.” She pulled him inside and he tripped on the railing for the sliding door. He fell over onto his hand and knees. “Come on.” She said and got him to his feet. “Bathroom, come on.”

“What’s going on?” Finn asked as he came from the bedroom. He turned the light on and saw blood dripping from Phil’s hand, it was all down the front of him, on Rae’s dressing gown, and there was a handprint of it on the floor.

“Oh my god!” The exact same fear Rae had have hit Finn hard as he thought Phil must had slit his own wrist. He rushed to Phil and put his hand on Phil’s wrist to put pressure on it, again not looking at the wound, instead looking at Phil’s face.

“Finn!” Rae said with a slight warning tone and removed his hand from Phil’s wrist as subtly as she could. But in that action Phil understood what Finn had been afraid of, what Rae must have been afraid of. What he was putting them through, and he hated himself for it. Rae had been worried of Phil realising what they had feared for that exact reason. But it finally made him crack; and he started to cry. Finn finally looked down at the wound he expected to see and saw the ends of Phil’s fingers rubbed raw, the flesh mangled, the nails ripped and chipped raggedly, far below the top of the nail bed.

“Oh my god.” Finn understood what was really happening and looked up at Phil’s face as he wept. And because Rae’s arms were already around him, Phil fell into her arms sobbing and she struggled to hold him up.

“Help me get him to the table.” She said and Finn helped hold his weight up. They sat him down at the kitchen table and Finn instantly took off to pull the blanket off the bed. He brought it back and wrapped it around Phil, leaving the one hand out. Phil kept his eyes down as Rae started to clean the wounds. Finn was disturbed by how much Phil didn’t flinch even though it must be excruciating, especially around the nails. And Finn knew that this pain was something Phil was accustomed too, that his man was still numb, even now as he cried. And he realised that he hadn’t been helping Phil deal with his emotions after the attack, that he’d just been expecting that the usually self-composed and ‘with-it’ Phil would just somehow magically deal with it himself, that he’d overcome this depression easily. He understood that he had just not seen Phil as someone who could suffer from this kind of mental illness; he just always seemed so in control. But then that was the problem; this attack had taken his life out of his control. He could have so easily been killed.

Finn stood up, filled with emotion and went to the kitchen to make a pot of Phil’s favourite herbal tea, using leaves from the strung up drying herbs.

Rae could tell that he did each finger individually; prolonging the pain, he’d done his thumb, forefinger, middle finger and had just started on his ring finger when she had come out.

“Here.” He put a mug of tea in front of Phil but Phil couldn’t look up at him.

“Thanks.” He said in a small voice. Finn recognised shame; he’d felt it enough to know it, but he’d seen it on Rae even more.

“I’ve let you down Phil.” Phil’s brows furrowed and he shook his head.
“We both have.” Rae added as she continued to clean up his wounds. He looked up at her and it pained Finn that he could look at Rae but not him. He understood why; Rae was a self-harmer too.

“No.” He said, “I’ve been awful to live with since…” He stopped and lowered his eyes.

“And I kept thinking you’d figure out how to get over it, cos such a fucking genius.” Finn said. “We both knew you weren’t really coping.” Finn felt ashamed, “But… I thought you just needed time and space… so I waited. And I didn’t keep a close enough look, even while the fear that it was getting real bad was growing in me.” Finn lifted Phil’s face to look at him but Phil lowered his eyes. “You’ve got nothing to be ashamed of Phil.” Finn said and Phil looked at him momentarily before his eyes shot away, “You find ways to cope with things. Sometimes they’re not good ways, but they help anyway. This helps. But…” Finn tried to find the words Kester might say, “But it’s not very kind to yourself. So we need to help you find other ways of coping.”

“I need my violin.” Phil answered miserably and held up his broken fingers. Finn thought of the times he’d seen Phil learning a new piece of music and practicing until his fingers bled and felt conflicted.

“Ok.” He said tentatively, “So that’s one way of coping. But you can’t just yet. So we’ll find another coping strategy to add to that one. It’s good to have a couple don’t you think?” Phil looked up at him, Rae understanding how brave it was of him to look at Finn.

“Ok.” He said softly.

Kester sat down on the chair opposite Phil, who was sitting in his usual spot on the right hand side of the lounge. He had been inclined to come out to London to help Rae in any way he could before they’d offered to pay him an obscene amount of money to do it. He’d seen the debacle with Phil unfold on national television, in the newspapers and in the tabloids. He’d had a feeling that Rae might crack under the pressure; but she was fine. It was Phil he was called to see. Even Kester hadn’t expected Phil to crack under the pressure; he had suspected that Phil might have a history of mental illness, perhaps even self-harm. But he seemed to have recovered in a way that Kester wished he could give to all of his patients. He seemed to be honest with himself in a way that facilitated good mental health. But if anyone knew that anyone could fall victim to mental health woes it was Kester, so his surprise was muted by the knowledge from his long career reminding him the truth of mental health; it didn’t discriminate, it could and did pick anyone, regardless of any other factors in their lives. If anyone could break a bone, anyone could need help with their mental health.

Rae and Finn went to leave the flat.

“Stay?” Phil said softly, “Please?” They came to the lounge and Rae sat in the middle like usual, Finn on the left hand side. Phil slowly unwrapped the bandages Rae had put on his fingers and showed Kester. “It’s been about a decade since I last did this to myself.” He said almost emotionlessly. But Rae and Finn knew him well enough to know now that often, the more emotionless he sounded the more filled with emotion he was; until there was too much screaming through his mind and it became nothing but white noise in his skull, a numbing snow storm spreading over his being. “Um, between the ages of 13 and 15 I did it sporadically. And between the ages of about 10 and a half and 13 I did it pretty much every day. When I was 13 I replaced it with playing stringed instruments, but slowly it became not about blood and pain, but about the music and my emotions becoming one.”
“How old were you when the music became more important than the strings making you bleed.”


“And you never saw a therapist?” Kester asked amazed that he had stopped self-harming without therapy.

“Music was my therapy… is… but…” He held up his broken fingers.

“I see.” Kester understood, “Your coping strategy was taken from you.”

“I need a new one.” He looked over at Finn and then back up at Kester.

“Well let’s start with self-care shall we?” Kester said, “Remind you to be kind to yourself. Because I have a feeling you’ve never really been kind to yourself. You’ve always demanded the best from yourself.”

“Because I can deliver.” He answered immutably.

“Undoubtedly.” Kester answered with a smile and reminded himself that Phil was most definitely smarter than he was and he’d have to stay on his toes. “But you shouldn’t have to.” He saw a look of confusion on Phil’s face, as if he’d never considered this, “You shouldn’t have to deliver all the time. You don’t expect it of others do you?”

“Of course not.”

“So why the double standard?” Phil was silent for a few minutes and Rae had to focus on not crying because she knew what the answer was; Phil at his core, still felt worthless.

“I don’t know.” He whispered. Finn could hear what a struggle it was for Phil to say those words. Phil knew pretty much everything, or his logical brain could figure it out very quickly.

“When we first met, you had a very good handle on all the mental health and emotional issues you were facing. What did you do to overcome all of those?”

“I…” Phil looked off. “I don’t… I didn’t think they were much of a problem anymore… I was focused on university and acting and my relationship. I was happy.”

“Sometimes we’re so accustomed to our problems that when we’re happy it seems like they’re gone. But when things go wrong, as they inevitably do, they tap us on the shoulder and remind us that they were always there, informing our decisions, dogging our steps, just waiting in the shadows.” There was a long silence, Phil staring at the floor.

“I have to prove I’m worth all of this.” He sounded like he was far away and Rae had to stop herself from putting a hand on his leg and begging him to come back to them. This was important.

“To who?” Kester asked. Silence again.

“I…” He said softly. “My parents.” He shook his head, obviously angry that that was still inside him. “To them.” He reluctant ly raised his head to look at Rae and Finn. His eyes shot back down to the ground, “To everyone.” Finn had a moment of remembering how anxious and nervous Phil had been about meeting the gang at their first get together at Chop’s place. He’d been shaking. But he had created a confident façade and they’d all believed that face. Rae remembered Phil telling her he had learned how to invent a charm that hid himself. She remembered him saying that he got to be himself at home and wondered if he truly was himself at home, she
wondered if he really knew what it was to be himself without having to prove he was worth something.

“How did you feel when you were attacked?”

“The usual.” Phil answered, less emotional; this was something that was less close to his core, “angry, like the whole thing wasn’t fair and the cops were fucking wrong, and ashamed that fighting training I’d done with Finn I still got my arse kicked…” He paused, “Powerless…”

“Would you say that one of the ways you cope with feeling worthless is to have an inordinate amount of control over yourself?”

“I wouldn’t say inordinate.” Phil responded and Kester knew that his normal techniques were not going to work with Phil.

“You have complete control over yourself so you can always deliver, prove you’re worth all of this.” Kester said and Phil considered this then reluctantly nodded, “You didn’t have any control over what happened when you were attacked, and you feel like you should have.” Rae felt Phil taking a deep shuddering breath, “You even had training. Shows how worthless you are that you couldn’t even remember what your perfect partner Finn taught you… and now you just can’t seem to get over it, and you just can’t understand while they’re still here with you when you proved how worthless you are by letting yourself get beaten, and then the cops agreed that you kinda deserved it and then you’re so fucking worthless you can’t even leave the house now, cos you’re too much of fucking scaredy cat.” Rae and Finn stared at Kester in disbelief, beside her Phil seemed to be almost hyperventilating “and you haven’t even told the media about the two people you’re in a relationship with, two people who are infinitely better human beings than you are and you can’t even be a decent enough person to acknowledge them publically and now you’re so fucking pathetic you gotta go fuck yourself up and make them worry about your worthless arse and-” Phil shot to his feet, his breathing ragged and his hands coming up in a stop gesture, his whole body shaking. Kester was on his feet, “I sit like I’m reading your mind.” Phil stared at him, strangled sounds coming from him as his body shook with sobs. “Say it out loud.”

“I don’t deserve… any of this… I don’t deserve it!” He yelled through his sobs, “I don’t deserve this home! I don’t deserve my career… all the praise I get… why do people think I’m worth anything? Why do they say all that… stuff. Why did I get all of this? I don’t deserve it! I’ve done nothing to earn any of it.” Phil paused panting, and Kester could see him starting to put a lid on it again.

“But you totally deserve Rae and Finn right?” He stabbed deeply.

“No.” The word was out of his mouth before he’d had chance to close the Pandora’s box of self-hate and feelings of worthlessness he had at his core, “of everything, this relationship is the thing I deserve least. I don’t understand why… or how… I don’t deserve love.” He started to cry again. Rae went to stand up but Kester shook his head quickly and instead took Phil into his own arms and it was like something broke in Phil, he sobbed loudly. Finn squeezed Rae’s hand hard and she looked at him to see tears on his cheeks, she had hardly realised that she was crying too. Kester felt Phil trying to stop the shuddering sobs wracking his body and held him tighter, Phil was trying to get himself under control again and Kester had to stop him from doing that.

“Let yourself cry, I won’t let you break apart.” Kester tightened his arms around Phil again, almost like a bear hug and Phil felt safe, like he had as a child when his father used to hug him. He wept, Kester holding him as he slumped to the floor weak with emotion.

It was 2 hours before Phil, too weak to keep crying, finally stopped. But he didn’t stop because he
got himself under control, he stopped because he was too exhausted to continue. Kester held him the entire time. Rae and Finn sitting silently, wishing they could hold him.

When Kester finally helped him sit back on the sofa, he looked exhausted, his eyes swollen and sore, but still slowly leaking tears, his whole face and body aching from sobbing. Kester arms were shaking from the excursion of holding him so tightly for so long. Kester knew that this was the most emotionally and mentally vulnerable Phillip had been since he was a small child; he’d learned to control himself very young and right now he was emotionally wiped out and had absolutely no self-control. He sat down and looked at Phil, who simply looked back at him.

“I think Rae and Finn have had something they’ve wanted to say to you for the last 2 hours.” He said and Phil turned to look at them, there was something almost childlike in the simple look he gave them. “Just one sentence each huh?” Kester said softly and Rae turned to look at Finn and he nodded.

“Y’are worth it.” Finn said, “So worth it.”

“And you do deserve love.” Rae said. Phil looked at them, tears escaping his exhausted eyes, and nodded.

“Ok.” He answered still nodding. Rae and Finn surged forward and hugged him. Kester saw their heads on Phil’s shoulders, their arms around him protectively, Phil’s head down, nestled between theirs safely.

“The things I said to you… how similar are they to the things you almost unconsciously say to yourself constantly? How like your internal monologue are they?”

“Exactly the same.” Phil said from the safety of their arms. It had broken Rae’s heart to hear Kester saying those things to him, but to know Phil was saying these things to himself everyday was far worse.

“And you’ve never really given a voice to those thoughts have you?” Phil shook his head, “Now they have a voice. And when you hear those thoughts, you know what to say back to them now.”

“You’re worth it.” Finn repeated, understanding Kester’s message.

“You deserve love.” Rae whispered fiercely.

The following week, Nina and James came to remove Phil’s cast finally; Phil still wasn’t able to bring himself to leave the house. It have been two months since the attack and his agent had started to call with offers of work, but Phil told her he was taking a few months off to recover.

“It’s looking like it’s healed really well.” James said. “I’d like another X-ray…” He said, “But I’ll wait.” James understood why he was doing this as a house-call, even if no one had spelled it out for him.

“I’m gonna teach you some exercises for your wrist and fingers to strengthen them back up.” Nina said, Finn looked over; he’d already been researching that, but he kept his mouth shut and offered James a cuppa. Rae, James and Finn sat in the kitchen as Nina sat on the lounge next to Phil and taught him the exercises.
“You know Phil… people process and deal with trauma in all sorts of different ways… I’ve seen shit you wouldn’t believe as a nurse… that’s both metaphorical and literal unfortunately.” Phil smiled, almost able to really feel the mirth in his heart. “The point is, whatever you’re doing to deal with this, to get over. It’s valid.” She looked him in the eye, “It’s ok. It’s fine. Do what you gotta do.” She told him, “Just make sure you stay being Phil.”

“I feel like I don’t know who Phil is.” He said softly.

“Course you do. He’s you, he’s inside of you, always has been, always will be. If you feel like you can’t find him it’s probably because you’re looking for a version of you that’s out of date or is someone else’s idea of you.” She answered, “You be today’s version of you. Your version of today’s version.” She laughed, “You get my drift.” Phil nodded with a grateful smile. “Maybe the Phil before this attack is gone, maybe he’s altered, maybe he’ll be back as if nothing happened. Who knows? Who cares? The past and the future don’t exist right now. This is what exists right now. Be the best you, you can be at this exact moment.”

“Thanks Nina.”

“And just know that if I ever see those scumbags I’ll kick their fucking arses!” Phil actually smiled and she was happy to see that smile. “I’ll come back in a week to make sure it’s progressing; so you better do your exercises.”

“Yes Ma’am.” Phil answered.

Rae noticed Phil’s plates were still coming back with over half of the food untouched. Rhys had suggested cooking larger meals with calorie and nutrient dense foods to help stop him getting ill. And he had continued to eat the same amount, which was a blessing, because it meant he was eating more calories and nutrients than he had been. But he was still not eating enough, and his frame was becoming alarmingly thin.

Finn looked over at Phil to see him staring outside at the balcony bannister, his fingers twitching.

“You’re worth it.” He said.

“You deserve love!” Rae called from the bathroom. Phil smiled and looked down.

“Ok.” He answered again.

“Say it!” Rae called out before she flushed the toilet.

“I’m worth it. And I deserve love.” Finn kept his eyes on Phil as he said it out loud. Phil took a deep breath and nodded slowly before looking back down at his book.

Kester came three times a week; he was getting paid enough to justify it, but also he knew that
using such a confrontational method of therapy on Phil was dangerous, so he was determined to back it up with quality and regular Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Besides, Phil had been holding onto his tears since he was a boy, starving because his father kept spending all the money his mother earned on his inventions. And Phil could cry when Kester held him. Really cry. And he needed it. Over half of their sessions were Phil in a stream of conscious tirade of hatred against himself, crying it all out as he finally gave voice to all the thoughts in his skull. Kester wasn’t confrontational with him again; Phil was more than willing to actually talk now. Previously he was talking, but only at a shallow level, and Kester knew Phil could outwit and outwait him, unlike Rae or Liam or Tix, or any of the other patients he’d had; they’d always end up cracking just by him sitting there silently waiting for them to speak. That would have never worked on Phil; he had no compulsion to talk about himself unlike the vast majority of other people on the planet. Even the ones who thought they didn’t want to talk about themselves, like Rae, ultimately did. But not Phil. He’d do it if he had to, or if he thought it would benefit to the situation or the people around him. Kester knew that from the previous few sessions they’d had back in Stamford before they’d all moved to London. Phil was great at speaking about himself if it was things people already knew from the public persona he shared with everyone, but useless at talking about his true inner being. But he was learning, very rapidly of course, how to talk about all that poison at his core, and soon he’d be ready to start rebuilding himself.

The violin sounded beautiful for several notes until he had to push his weaker fingers into doing something difficult then they had a dying cat on their hands. But worse than the god-awful dying cat sound the violin made was a pissed of Phil angrily repeating the same sequence over and over, swearing and yelling at his fingers in a way they’d never expected to see from Phil; his self-control was gone.

He played it over and over, stopping when he got to the bit his fingers just couldn’t do yet and then starting again.

They put up with it until Finn saw Phil’s fingers bleeding; he hadn’t even noticed.

“Alright.” Finn said.

“What?” Phil snapped, “I’m worth it until you have to listen to my shitty fucking violin playing?”

“You can play shitty fucking violin until your fingers bleed.” Finn replied gently, Kester had warned them Phil’s temper would become uneven, “And you are worth getting me head bitten off to ask you to stop and take care of your fingers.” Phil snapped his eyes to his fingers and stopped everything for a moment; his mind taking a moment to catch up. He hated how everything was so slow in his head at the moment; but he tried to be kind to himself and remind himself that he was re-learning how to do things without hating himself.

“I’m sorry.” He said desperately upset. “I… I didn’t mean to…”

“It’s fine.” Finn said soothingly and took the violin from him.

“It needs wiping down…”

“I read up how to do it all properly.” Rae said and jumped up, taking the violin from Finn.

“Let’s take care of your fingers.
“No it’s fine, don’t worry.” Phil answered and Finn gave him a stern look. “I mean…” He stopped and took a deep breath. “I should wash them and care for them myself.”

“Alright.” Finn answered, “And afterwards we’ll do some of your finger and wrist physio yeah?”

“Yes, thank you.” Phil answered and went to the bathroom. He took the iodine out and felt foolish for a moment. They were such minor cuts, why put all this effort into… but with great effort he stopped the thought.

“I am worth it.” He looked into the mirror. “I’m worth it.”

Finn looked at Phil as they sat at the table eating. Rae kicked him under the table to remind him not to stare, but even she was struggling not to look; he was eating. He ate about three quarters of the plate of food, quite rapidly and then stopped quite suddenly because his body was threatening to reject the massive increase in food. But he kept it down. And the next morning he actually had breakfast, the first time since the attack. He even managed half a sandwich at lunch, but his increase of food during the day made him eat less than half of his dinner. But Finn didn’t mind; his appetite was back, it would take time for his body to be able to handle enough food, and Finn had already guided him through this process before, albeit not from this bad a starting point, but he knew he could do it again.

Four and a half months after the attack Phil’s libido returned.

Rae and Finn had been surprisingly calm about over four months without sex, and it was because they were so worried about him and his mental health. The difference between redgate and this was infinite; during redgate Rae was just as desperate as them for sex, and was mentally fine, but Phil’s breakdown and recovery had destroyed his libido, he had shown no interest in sex at all, and was not mentally ok. Sex had been the last thing in their thoughts, although they missed the physical intimacy sometimes, there was a lot of mental and emotional intimacy being rebuilt. As usual Phil was being a total work-horse about everything; nearly every waking hour was dedicated to his recovery, either mental, emotional or physical. He did Kester’s homework diligently, keeping journals now and reading books about psychological theories and mental health.

He was sitting reading about toxic parents and their effects on their children when an old familiar feeling started to tickle at his lower abdomen. He looked up from the book; not the kind of reading material that would normally result in that warmth spreading through his groin. But then, he knew the book had nothing to do with it. In the back of his mind he whispered to himself that he was getting better. And then he stopped and took a deep breath.

“I’m healing.” He said out loud, not wanting that voice to be a soft whisper; he wanted it to be a loud roar. “I’m healing!” He yelled as loud as he could. Rae had been writing and she looked up, startled, from the computer to the lounge where Phil was. Finn had been chopping vegies for a vegetarian lasagne and he jumped and nearly cut his thumb off.

“The fuck?” He whispered to himself getting his heartbeat under control as he turned to look at Phil.
“I’ve put a fuckload of work into this. I totally, completely 100% deserve to heal.” He was saying. “I’m worth all of this.” He nodded his head. Rae looked back at Finn and Finn grinned and shrugged, turning back to his vegetables. “And I deserve to feel this way and…” He looked over at Rae and Finn unsure how to initiate sex anymore, but the urge was growing. He looked down and tried to figure out a plan of action.

After twenty minutes he had a whole plan worked out, right down to what he would say and where he’d stand and when. His whole body had grown more and more horny as he thought. He was finding it hard to concentrate as memories of how they both felt under his fingertips, how they tasted, the way they kissed him, kept crashing through his thoughts. He was shaking with nerves and desire when he finally decided he was ready to get up and attempt to initiate sex with his partners. His cock was throbbing and he’d dribbled pre cum onto the lounge. He pulled a face when he realised but was determined to not let that undermine him; he was learning to be confident again, but not the façade of confidence he had had before. He was learning to be confident without self-hate.

He gave himself a pep talk and then, excited at how successful and positive his pep talk had been he shot to his feet, forgetting his plan of where to stand and went and rushed over to Rae.

“Hey…” He said loudly, Rae looking up, coming face to face with his erection, but Phil was looking over her head to Finn, trying to get both of their attentions.

“Aye?” Finn turned around and saw Phil standing with the first erection he’d seen Phil have for four months. Phil saw Finn’s eyes drop to his cock and followed his eyes down to see how badly he’d placed himself, with his cock in Rae’s face.

“Oh I’m sorry.” He took a step to the side, “Um… I was thinking…” He tried to capture the plan he’d had, but it seemed to be gone from his memory. He swallowed hard, and his desire simply grew; all he could think of now was how it felt to be inside both of them. “Um…” he blushed, “I was…” He looked away, “Never mind.” He started to turn away.

“D’you wanna fuck?” Finn asked, his body responding instantly to the sign of arousal in Phil’s body.

“Finn…” Rae said softly; they’d agreed not to ask about sex because they didn’t want him to feel pressured.

“I know, I’m sorry.” Finn answered, “I been doing alright with the celibacy until…” his eyes went back to Phil’s cock, a look of unadulterated hunger on his face. His cooking apron started to tent at the front and Rae, who had felt horny the minute she saw Phil’s erection crossed her ankles and tried to find the right words to tell Phil that there was no hurry and no pressure.

“Phil…” Rae said, “You don’t have to worry about the issue of sex.” She said delicately; her cunt throbbing almost painfully as it woke back up.

“No I’m sorry…” Finn interjected, “But I think it’s ok to ask in this circumstance, we’re not asking for it, we’re asking if he wants it.” Rae turned and gave him a dirty look, as if to say you’re saying this stuff in front of him?’

“Yes.” Phil answered. Rae and Finn both turned to him and he moved his arms awkwardly as if he didn’t know what to do now. “Yes?” He nodded his head, hoping they’d understand what he meant.

“Yes what?” Rae asked, but Finn was across the room kissing Phil before Phil had a chance to
reply. Rae watched them kissing ferociously, their hands rapidly touching each other everywhere, gasping and groaning loudly, her jaw dropped. “Oh.” She said as she realised what Phil had meant. She looked down trying to get her ever-growing horn under control a little, but before she had a chance Phil reached out and yanked her to her feet by pulling her to him by the wrist.

“Oh my god.” She groaned happily as they both embraced her and she kissed Phil passionately.

Finn was tracing patterns on Phil’s side as he spooned him. Phil was grinning happily, spooning Rae, his hand cupping her breast. Their bodies were pressed together tightly as they laid on the floor where they had started their lovemaking; the first sex, the first orgasms in 18 weeks.

“I didn’t even realise how much I’d missed this.” Phil said softly. “How is that even possible?”

“Depression.” Rae answered.

“Bit of anxiety.” Finn added.

“With a PTSD chaser.” Rae added and Phil sighed.

“I want it over.” He said, “I’m tired of being unwell.” Rae turned to face him.

“It has to take as long as it takes.” She stroked his face. “And recovery’s never a straight line. But we’ll help you get there.” He pulled her closer with the arm he was lying on and held her against him, his other arm pulling Finn closer by the hip and smiled happily at the feeling of this much-missed physical intimacy. “It’s so nice to see you smiling again.”

“I didn’t even realise I wasn’t smiling.” Phil said. “I just wasn’t feeling anything at all.” Rae stroked his long raggedy hair, her fingers coming down to his 4 months of beard growth.

“D’you think I can do something for you?” She asked and he nodded. “I wanna shave you, I miss seeing your beautiful face.”

“Yeah.” He said softly. He wondered if it would be harder to look in the mirror and tell himself he was worth it if he looked like how he used to look; clean shaven and ‘well put together.’

But she got up, her angelic beauty captivating him and silencing his concerns. Finn followed them to the bathroom and watched Rae sit Phil down on the lidded toilet. Finn let himself really look at Phil’s body, something he had been avoiding to stop Phil feeling self-conscious, and was horrified at how thin he’d become. Finn had felt the change in Phil’s body just then, when they had made very passionate love. But seeing it made his eyes sting with tears.

“Why d’you stop eating?” He asked as Rae prepared the shaving equipment. She shot Finn a glance but Phil was replying in an even tone.

“Control.” He answered. “I felt like I had no control over anything else… and hunger…” Phil stopped and had to steady himself, “Hunger was my proof that I had control.” He nodded slowly, “I welcomed feeling hungry. I saw myself getting thinner and… It was just proof that I had control over everything.” He looked up at Finn, “But hunger was the thing that frightened me most too; cos it was the thing that threatened to make me lose this last tiny bit of control I had.” Rae knelt down in front of him and put a hand on his knee. “But I found that I could sit with that fear… and I couldn’t sit with my other fears. My fear of going outside, of it happening again, of losing
control… I couldn’t handle them. But I could handle my fear of hunger. So it made me feel powerful, in control… and the trailer I got, the stronger I felt.” Finn didn’t know what to say, “I got into the habit with my mother.” Phil said, “I know it’s not healthy. I know I should stop.” He took a deep breath. “I will stop… I am… I am stopping.” Finn wrapped his arms around Phil, Phil’s head resting against Finn’s stomach and Raw laid her head on his knees, wrapping her arms around his waist. They held him and Phil felt safe again; they had such a wonderful ability to make him feel safe. It was a different kind of safe than what Kester gave him. Kester gave him the safety to fall apart into misery. Rae and Finn gave him the safety to be whole and happy.

“Alright, let’s get this beard off you!” Rae said, wiping the tears from her face. “I think we might have to trim it first!” She laughed. Finn sat down on the floor and held a bowl for Rae to put the longish beard hair in as she slowly trimmed away his 4 and half months of growth. “Starting to get sight of your chin again!” She joked as she finished up the trimming, dropping the scissors in the bowl with the trimmings. Finn got up and went to the sink, handing Rae the shaving cream. She staying kneeling and gently put an even layer of cream on Phil’s face. Both Phil and Finn preferred a classic one blade razor, which were relatively hard to find in the modern market of multi-blade razors, but they both believed they gave a better shave, and they lasted longer, probably because they didn’t get clogged with hair Rae supposed. Rae remembered when Finn had discovered Phil’s single blade razor and had whispered to her that this was the proof they were all soul mates because he didn’t know anyone else that used a single blade razor. He had been joking, but Rae could still see the excitement of the first early discoveries about each other in his eyes. Six years on and all those early discoveries had long ago been made. But there were other exciting delights, small victories to celebrate. And sometimes there were huge victories. And the excitement of an ongoing intimacy was far more rewarding to Rae. Shaving Phil was intimate. She would make a stroke, slowly, carefully, and then Finn would take the razor and rinse it in the hot water in the sink and hand it back. They worked together in perfect unity, and Phil watched them with silent, intent eyes. Rae was vry careful to take the time to slowly reveal Phil’s face again, every small detail that had been hidden was breathtakingly intimate. She ran her finger along his jawline, happy to feel the slight rising of a tiny, almost flat mole he had there; it was pale brown and barely worth calling a mole, but she loved that little mole. Especially after not having seen it for so long. She held his chin and slowly removed the hair from his top lip, her eyes forced to focus on his beautiful lips. It was nice to see them without untrimmed beard hair all over them, and he’d be much nicer to kiss too. She was careful to get his slight sideburns even and then took a close look to make sure she got everything.

“Perfect shave.” Finn said; he’d found the whole thing to be strangely erotic. He grabbed Phil’s after shaving moisturiser and handed it to Rae after she’d wiped his face clean. She gently rubbed it into his skin, knowing it would need extra care after so long without a shave.

“Alright, did I do a good job?” Rae asked and Phil stood up. He’d been struggling to look in the mirror, but since Kester had come he’d been slowly doing it again. He stepped in front of the sink and looked up at the mirror.

It was strange; it was like looking at an old friend after he hadn’t seen him for years and now knew a few secrets about him. Phil found that he was glad to see that familiar face looking back at him; it made him feel even more like he was himself again. He pretended to be closely inspecting the shave, but really he was wondering how he could broach the topic of maybe having sex again. Shaving had been so intimate and oddly erotic.

“Perfect shave Miss Earl.” He declared and Rae grinned, glad to see him looking at himself in the mirror. But then his eyes dropped to his body, his brows furrowed, and Finn was afraid to see conflict in Phil’s eyes; part of him wanted to keep going with the not eating. And he looked back up at his face and ran his fingers down his overly defined cheek bones. He sighed and went to look
away, but Rae and Finn saw him stop himself and look in the mirror again.

“You’ve been pretty cruel to yourself… I’ve been pretty shit to me. But… I’m worth the effort and time it takes to heal.” He told himself. Rae and Finn put their arms around him. “And I deserve the effort.” He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, taking a moment with that before opening his eyes again and looked in the mirror with a mildly cheeky grin. “And I might even deserve some oral.” He let his eyes wander off as if he hadn’t said that and couldn’t wipe the grin off his face.

“What’s this word ‘might?’” Finn said and happily started to kiss down Phil’s body.

“I do hope you meant giving and taking…?” Rae asked and Phil’s grin widened.

“I did.”

Phil picked his paintbrush up tentatively; it felt like it had been forever since he had last painted. The first thing he did was produce a splotch on the pristine canvas the colour of a deeply painful bruise.

“I managed to get him to let me look while he was on the scales.” Finn said into his mobile as he shot through the supermarket on his way home from work.

“Why do you even own scales?” Rhys asked. “You live with two people with eating disorders and body image issues, seems like you’re tempting fate.”

“Oh we don’t.” Finn said, “James brought them when he came to do a check-up. He says Phil is anorexic.”

“And what’s the damage?” Rhys asked.

“He weighs 48 kilos.” There was silence on the other end of the phone.

“And he’s 190 centimetres tall?” Rhys asked with a sad tone.

“Aye.” Finn knew that Rhys would know exactly what Phil looked like from just those two figures.

“He’s naturally built thin,” Rhys assessed, “so he needs to add about 20 kilos to be anything even near healthy.”

“He’s about 75 kilos when he’s at his healthiest.” Finn answered.

“That’s still built small; the average tennis player that’s his height weighs 80 to 90 kilos.” Rhys gave an example.

“He’s got a fencer’s body.” Finn answered, “They’re usually about his height and weight between 75 and 85.” Finn picked up an apple and smelled it. Phil had a thing about smelling fruit before buying it and Finn was trying to pick the best fruit he could for Phil while he was still unable to
leave the house.

“What’s your plan to get him healthy Finn? Anorexia’s like a hydra; just when you think you’ve cut its head off and gotten rid of it, it back twice as strong.”

“Thanks for that encouraging thought.” Finn answered.

“I’m not saying it’s not possible to recover, I’m just saying it’s difficult.”

“And like Rae, he’ll be fighting an eating disorder for the rest of his life. But hopefully I can get him as good as Rae is now. She hardly thinks about it anymore.”

“It’s not you that gets them there Finn.” Rhys answered sagely, “You can support and guide and help all you want, but Phil’s gotta do the work himself.”

“He’s a self-harmer too.” Finn said softly, looking around to make sure no one was listening in. More silence on the other end of the phone.

“How are you coping with everything Finn?”

“I’m fine.”

“That’s a lot of pressure on your shoulders.”

“We got Kester.” Finn said confidently, “I feel far more fine than I should. I’m worried for my man, but I’m confident Rhys; I know we can get through this together.”

“Alright.” Rhys answered, “Tell me your plan then?”

When Finn got home Rae met him at the door with a worried expression. She took the bags of groceries and nodded towards Phil, sitting on the lounge shaking, rocking slightly. Finn went over to him and saw him biting at his fingertips, his other hand holding a huge booklet, open about halfway through. Finn gently took his hands away from his mouth and sat beside him.

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“Can I see?” Finn said and Phil closed the booklet and handed it to Finn. It was a photocopied booklet and Finn opened the first page to see a quick note from James saying that he didn’t entirely approve of their plan, and that he felt a short (3 months or so) stint in a psychiatric care facility might be helpful for Phil. The note then went on to say that if he was insisting on keeping Phil at home, this booklet had the medial guidelines for diets and some basic therapy guidelines. Finn knew Phil would have been looking at the dietary guidelines and Finn opened up to the centre of the book and saw the diet plan on this page; a month into recovery. He flipped forward and the food content was gradually increased, it was sensible, but the end diet was more than Phil ate when he was at his healthiest. That was what had caused the anxiety. Finn looked over at the computer desk where the paper recycling bin was and threw the booklet in the general direction of the recycling bin. It hit the edge of it and slipped to the floor. There was instant relief in Phil’s eyes.

“Let’s just get one thing real clear Phil; we all know you wanna recover.” Phil nodded that he did, “And you’re in charge of that recovery, not some medical expert, not me, not Rae, not Kester, not Rhys. You. You’re in control here, alright?” Calmness returned to Phil’s eyes. Rae looked over from the kitchen and smiled gratefully for Finn. She didn’t know what to say when it came to food issues; she still struggled with her own relationship with food, but she was much better than she had been. She didn’t think what could make Phil better. She could help with the self-harm, but not the food. Food was still too sensitive a topic for her.

“Alright.” Phil said. “I will eat more.” He told Finn, “I promise.”
“It’s not me you have to promise to.” Finn reminded him, “You have to be kind and good to yourself.”

“I know.” Phil said, “I’ve already made that promise to myself, I just wanted you and Rae to know… I am trying.”

“I know.” Finn answered, “We know.” Rae came and sat down on the lounge on the other side of Phil and put a hand on his lower back. “Now I’ve got a surprise for you.” Finn said, “And she’ll be arriving any minute now.”

“She’ll?” His brows furrowed.

“Petra. She’s a martial arts expert. It’s time to start your training again. With me 5 days a week, and Petra two.”

“Martial arts?” Phil asked softly, and then felt slightly excited; he could imagine he would feel more in control of himself if he mastered martial arts; there was discipline, like Finn’s boxing. He loved boxing with Finn.

“You good with that?” Finn asked.

“Yeah.” Phil grinned as the intercom went off.

They woke up to a heartbreaking piece of violin music. Phil had pushed and pushed and his fingers were almost back to normal; a few more weeks of pushing and he will have succeeded in reclaiming his hand. Rae watched him play and put her hand to her mouth; it was heart piercingly sad. Finn stood beside her, feeling quit affected by the music, as they watched Phil play; his eyes closed. Quite suddenly the music turned violently angry and Phil slammed the bow on the strings and dragged them hard and fast; the rage clear.

“I think he’s making it up as he goes.” Finn said softly and Rae nodded her head. The music suddenly turned melancholy with a slight tinge of hope. He opened his eyes slightly and saw them there, the music stopping abruptly.

“Oh fuck.” He said softly, “I’m sorry I was working on my fingering and… I just started playing, I didn’t mean to it’s just… the music had to be played.”

“Good way to wake up.” Rae said with a grin, “But you owe me a pot o’ tea now.”

“Of course.” He gently laid the violin down and headed to the kitchen as Rae went over to sit at the kitchen table.

“You should write that down.” Finn said and Phil blushed.

“I don’t even really remember what I played.”

“I’ll record it the next time you get creative so you can hear how beautiful your creations are.” Finn answered and Phil smiled, strangely pleased.

“Alright, if you want one of my creations, I’m gonna make breakfast.” Phil said and Rae shot her face round to Finn as Phil pottered in the kitchen; he hadn’t been able to do any food preparation
since the attack. Finn grinned in response to Rae’s excited look.

“Oi fuck you!” Finn roared with laughter and Phil was giggling like mad. They were playing Warcraft; their computers connected by Finn’s local area network, and they had decided to play a map in versus mode; each of them on their own, versus the other two. They’d all decided to be orcs. But the problem was that Rae was a master at this game and she had swept in and taken all the gold supplies on the map except for the one Phil had managed to get. Every time Finn sent a peon to get gold Rae killed the peon; it was hilarious to everyone but Finn. Except Finn was enjoying Phil laughing so hard, so he laughed even harder. She banged up some towers and threw a huge army of mage orcs around each gold mine she wasn’t using. Next she was going to put up town halls so she could quickly empty all the goldmines.

“We gotta unite Phil to take one of the goldmines, or she’ll grow too powerful!”

“You can try.” Rae teased. “But I’m not sure what you’re gonna do against me and my five goldmines when you’ve just got one…”

They played all day, and no matter what they did, the boys couldn’t beat Rae, but they sure did laugh and concentrate and yell at her little orc mages and necromancers a lot in the process.

Phil hadn’t laughed that much since before the attack.

“Ah well I love you more than the amoebas on the maggots eating the poo.” Rae said and Finn considered this.

“I love you more than the parasites that cause gastro.”

“I’m not sure I understand the premise of this.” Phil answered, “Do you love me more than these disgusting things love me, or do you love me more than you love these disgusting things?”

“Both.” Rae answered and Phil was suddenly struck with a case of the giggles.

“You’re also better looking than the amoebas on the maggots that eat the poo.” Finn said.

“And the gastro bug.” Rae added.

“Oh I’m glad!” Phil answered through his red faced giggles.

“I love you more than poo combined with glue and stuck on something.” Rae said, “And you are definitely better looking than that particular combination.”

“So does that mean that there are some combinations of things that involve poo that I’m less attractive than?” Phil asked, still not able to control his giggles.

“Oh no mister!” Finn answered, “You’ve gotta go through all the poo combinations with us before you get to find out the answer to that.” Phillip put a hand to his mouth and tried to get his laughter under control but couldn’t.
“This is absurd!” He said delightedly.

“And I love you more than a turd sandwich.” Finn replied. “And you are-”

“I love you more,” Rae interrupted on rapid fire, “than a turd sandwich that you thought was a chocolate croissant.”

“UGH!” Phil blurted in disgust, but his laughter wouldn’t stop. Rae copied the look of disgust Phil had just done and exaggerated, then held it as she spoke.

“Would you love me if I looked like this all the time?”

“Yes.” Phil answered still giggling. Finn pulled an even more absurd face.

“Would you love me if-”

“Yes!” Phil said happily.

“Would you still love me if I talked like this?” Rae asked with a super deep voice; the deepest she could manage.

“Yes!”

“What about this?” She asked in a squeakily high voice,

“Yes!”

“What are you talking about; I’d love you even more!” Finn laughed, “Especially if you alternated between the two with each word.” Rae started to speak, one word high, the next low, the one after that high, alternating between them.

“Would you love me if I talked-”

“Oh yeah girl!” Finn pretended to be turned on and dramatically played with his nipples while Phil lost his shit.

“If…” Rae tried to ignore them and not laugh, “If… I talked…” she nearly lost it when Finn started to over exaggerate licking his lips at her, “Talked… like… this?”

“Yes!” Phil gasped through his laughter.

Phil read the email, Kaybee was planning on doing a protest rally on the 30th of May; the anniversary of the Admiral Duncan gay pub bombing. She was asking him to be there and to talk to the crowd. He didn’t reply yet.

He couldn’t quite bring himself to answer her.

Not yet.

There was still plenty of time to reply.
“You know I kinda liked myself.” Phil said softly, “I didn’t even realise I did. But I liked that I kept my true self private for only a few people to see, I liked that I had self-control, it felt good. I liked... I guess... I guess I’m kinda...” Phil stopped and closed his eyes, forcing himself to say the next sentence, “I’m very intelligent and I like that.” He made himself say it.

“Why is it hard to say that?”

“Because it comes from my father.”

“Your intelligence?” Kester asked and Phil nodded.

“There’s so much about me that comes from him.”

“I don’t think your intelligence comes from him.”

“Uh... genetically speaking...”

“Genetically shmenetically.” Kester dismissed his words and Phil gave him a surprised look, “Intelligence is a plank of wood that you work into the shape you want it to be. Does your wood look like your father’s?” Kester asked the deliberately suggestive question and Phil stared at him for a moment before starting to laugh.

“No.” Phil said through his laughter.

“No.” Kester said, “Because there’s only so much you can blame on your parents, and only so much you can credit them with too. Our parents give us some building blocks, and many people are completely built by their parents. But then many people can and do choose to build themselves. I mean, you and your sister were both disowned for that... for refusing to be what he wanted to build you into, so why do you wanna give him the credit for what you built?”

“But...” Phil considered what Kester had said, his brows furrowed.

“He gave you a blank piece of wood as a building block. What did you turn it into? Because he wanted you to turn that building block into one thing... and the way you tell it, you didn’t. The way you tell it, you created something very different. So why are you giving him the credit for your creation?”

“I don’t know.” Phil furrowed his brows.

“So tell me about the things you like about yourself. Not liked... like.”

“I like that I’m,” He paused, “Really intelligent. I’m really, really intelligent.” Phil waited for the urge to qualify that, or soften the strength of the sentence, but it didn’t come. There was a moment of relief that was completely overwhelmed by the wonderful feeling of just enjoying being Phil. “I work really hard at my studies, I... I deserve to enjoy my own intelligence.” He said and waited for the feeling of shying away from the sentence, but again it didn’t come. “I deserve some of the praise I’ve had.”

“Why only some?”

“Well lots of people are intelligent and work hard and get nothing... They don’t have the wealth and access to education that I’ve had, so...”
“The money thing is a big issue for you huh?” Kester asked.

“When I first went to private school, I was surrounded by boys, who honestly felt entitled to anything they saw. There was this attitude amongst them that everything would just come to them. And the annoying thing was, it did. And they were just so fucking snooty. They honestly believed that having money made them better. Money? It’s literally something we made up and now the majority of people are fucked up by this system, and the ones that aren’t fucked up by it have no idea what it’s like and they don’t care one bit; they think they’re above it. And I was stuck with them…and the bullying never stopped. Not once, not for a second. Not until when I was about 15, when my father started to get richer than their fathers.” Phil spat the words with real disdain, “I was so glad when I got to go to public school in Stamford. It was such a battle with my parents, but honestly the best thing I ever did. But the education, the private schooling, it had changed me; I stood out…the way I spoke…I fence and play violin and tennis for fuck’s sake…” he shook his head, “People knew I ‘came from money’ they just didn’t know how much.”

“You really resent that money?”

“No the money; the life my parents forced me into because of that money… and I’m not fond of the unfair advantages it’s given me.”

“Does it make it harder for you to enjoy your successes?”

“I suppose. I just don’t think I deserve as much… as much of anything that I’ve had.”

“Phil, you’re allowed to enjoy your good qualities and the hard work you do.” Kester lit up a cigarette, having seen Finn’s ashtray on the table, “you don’t think you’re better than others and you are aware and mindful of the privileges you have had and you do have, and you try to counter that privilege” Kester told him firmly, “having privileges doesn’t take away from your hard work, or your qualities or your struggles. Being a person who denies those privileges and the struggles of others would. Now an intelligent person such as yourself can see that we live in a world that requires that there be a massive amount of ‘losers’ so that there can be a few ‘winners’. Can see that there are structural inequalities in this world designed to keep some people down and help others up. Can see how he has benefited from these structural inequalities. But ask yourself this: if the world was truly equal, and there was no structural power given to a certain few and people all genuinely had the same starting point, would you have worked any less hard or been any less intelligent?”

“No.”

“No.” Kester agreed, “In a truly equal world, money wouldn’t determine a person’s access to education or anything else, nor would their skin colour, their gender, their sexuality…” Phil nodded his head, “but none of this changes that you’ve worked hard and you’re intelligent. It’s not a bad thing to enjoy the results of that. And it’s not impossible to simultaneously acknowledge that privilege got you some of your success, while still acknowledging the hard work you’ve put in.”

“I think I’ve always kind of dismissed my successes as being because of my father’s wealth. But in reality, it’s been me who’s done it all. Not his money.” Phil said tentatively. “Oh fuck, now I’m afraid that these positive thoughts won’t last.” Phil said.

“You will have struggles. But when you do-”

“I am worth it. I do deserve love.” Phil answered firmly.

“Yes.” Kester answered. “And you deserve all the accolades you’ve received, you deserve to feel
good about yourself, you deserve to be happy.” Kester told him, “There’s a myriad of things you
deserve. But I can tell you some things you don’t deserve…” Phil furrowed his brows, scared of
what Kester might say, he was kind of hoping he deserved everything. “You don’t deserve to have
been beaten for your sexuality. You don’t deserve to feel unsafe. You don’t deserve to have your
life stop because some bigots decided to harm you. You don’t deserve the unfair judgment the
police made. You don’t deserve the tabloid treatment of you.” Kester said, “I can keep going on,
but I think you are more than capable of deciding what you do and don’t deserve, don’t you?” Phil
stared at him for a moment.

“Yes.”

Rae put her joggers on and headed to the door; Finn and she always made sure that one of them
was home with Phil, so she rarely got to go out since Finn worked full time. She was taking the
weekend opportunity to go for a run. She felt a hand barely on her elbow and turned to see Phil in
clothes. He hadn’t worn any for months.

“Can I come with you?” He asked nervously. Finn popped his head out of the bathroom, his
toothbrush hanging out of his mouth.

“Aye of course.” Rae responded.

“Can Finn come?” Phil asked but Finn was already back in the bathroom hurriedly drying off and
spitting out his toothpaste, and then he shot out of the bathroom to their room; rushing to get
clothes on. He went to the cupboard he shared with Phil and took out one of his roughly folded,
but folded nonetheless, shirts. He was at the door and grinning at Phil.

“Where are we going?” He asked and Phil shrugged.

“I haven’t jogged in over 6 months, I probably won’t last long.”

“We can walk.” Rae said, “Baby steps are ok.”

He opened the door, Rae and Finn looking on and stared out at the hallway. Without hesitation he
stepped out; he didn’t deserve to be stuck in the house, filled with fear and self-doubt because he
was beaten and had had a break down. He went down the lift and left the building, stepping out
onto the busy London street and taking a good look around; he hadn’t seen any of this for months.
Some things had remained the same, but others had changed; there was a new Japanese restaurant
that Phil decided he wanted to try out. There was a chill late February breeze and Phil set out at a
gentle jog, Rae and Finn following. He slowly built up speed until he was sprinting as fast as he
could, both Rae and Finn struggling to keep up and falling far behind as he ran until his lungs were
on fire.

He stopped, not entirely sure where he was, entirely alone, and felt a moment of panic. But he
talked himself through it and looked around, enjoying being outside. Eventually Finn was beside
him, and a little while later, Rae very unimpressed, joined them. Finn hugged Phil and
congratulated him while Rae caught her breath.

“Missed your birthday.” Phil sad sadly to Rae,

“And yours.” She replied and he shrugged. “And New Year’s.”
“And Sarah thinks you’ll probably be nominated for a BAFTA next near for best supporting actor in ‘The Anarchist’s Fall’, she says there’s a lot of buzz around it; hugely popular film, your mug’s all over the place, people wondering where y’are and stuff. Newspapers and mags are running stories every other week about you being the poster boy for gay rights and all that.”

“Really?” Phil shook his head, “Wow…” He marvelled, “Fuck everyone must be worried.” Phil muttered.

“Aye.” Rae said tentatively, not mentioned that Kelsey had been beside herself with worry; but Phil hadn’t wanted visitors, not even her. He looked worried, guilty. Rae and Finn both tried to think of the best thing to say.

“It’s our eight year anniversary coming up,” He said suddenly. They both nodded, “The number eight is typically used to symbolise eternity… infinity.” He said and looked at them both meaningfully and then, a crooked smile lit his face, and in the middle of a street somewhere in London he dropped to one knee. Finn’s face betrayed complete surprise but Rae broke out into a grin.

“I know we can’t get married, but we can do a commitment ceremony, and I wanna do one on our 8th anniversary, cos you two are my forever. My eternity.” He looked down and shook his head, “Not too romantic either, but…” he took a deep breath, “Will you two do me the honour of committing formally to each other in front of our friends and family… of, exchanging rings and saying vows and… doing all those things that people in love do?”

“Of course!” Rae laughed, “Get up!” She kissed him as he stood up and Finn put his arms around them and they kissed him.

“Jesus Christ, Phil, when you make a comeback, you don’t do it by halves!” Finn marvelled.

“What’s your answer?” Rae demanded and Finn laughed.

“Yes!” Finn answered as if it were an obvious answer, “Of course it’s yes! Like it’d be anything else. I can’t be without you two.” They celebrated and kissed in the middle of the street.

“So um… maybe I’ll do most o’ the organising?” Phil asked and Rae raised her eyebrows.

“I’m not gonna mind not having to do any of the wedding-type stuff.” Rae said, “I’m not a wedding type o’ girl. But it’s only four months away; you can’t get it all done alone.”

“Well I’m sure I’ll need help from both o’ you… especially to write the vows.”

“I got a location in mind.” Finn added and Phil grinned.

“I bet it’s perfect.” He answered.

“Well I think it is.” Finn replied. They started planning out what sort of commitment ceremony they wanted, eventually walking arm in arm towards home.

“Sorry for running so fast.” Phil said to both of them, but particularly to Rae

“Ah it’s alright, I’ll forgive you this time… you turd.” She grinned.

“I thought you love me more than turds?” Phil said with a cheeky grin. They started to laugh.

“I do!”
“Well then how can I be a turd?” Phil laughed.

There were still days where Phil could not face the world, but he didn’t beat himself up when he had them. And slowly he became himself again and healed as they planned the commitment ceremony in four months, on their anniversary.

Rae got her second book published and it ended up on the best seller list.

Finn continued to manage his theatre, but also got a job with a hugely popular radio station as a DJ and became the voice of London, and he enjoyed it, even though people rang up to ask if he was Phil’s boyfriend; the official line was still no comment until after the commitment ceremony when they’d be dropping that bomb on the world, probably at the BAFTAS; Phil intended to take them both if he was nominated. However it was done, the three of them had decided they were coming out before their ninth anniversary, and they were preparing themselves for the storm that would cause.

Phil was working again; he was the lead in a movie that was coming out next year, and was doing a few tv specials. Work offers were pouring in; he had his choice of scripts, although there had been some comments about him needing to regain his old physique, and focusing on his needs for acting made it much easier for him to commit to gaining the weight. He wrote to Kaybee declining her offer to speak because he’d be on his honeymoon, and she suggested a rally later in the year; he accepted that offer. He trained, he worked, he slowly started to eat more, he got out of the house most days; forcing himself into his movie or tv character while he was still at home on the days he felt like he couldn’t leave the house but had to for filming. He talked to Kester about that, and everything else. Kester dropped back to weekly visits, Petra upped her visits to daily, and Finn maintained his training regimen for Phil.

And life slowly returned to something akin to normal.
Real Love

‘Real Love’ by Regina Spektor

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVq7fm1oyok

From this moment on I know exactly where my life will go. Seems that all I really was doing was waiting for love. Don't need to be afraid… No need to be afraid… It's real love, yes it's real love!

“Tell me again why I’m wearing a white fucking dress!” Rae cursed as they slowly traipsed through the bushland. Finn in front, going backwards, holding up her dress, Phil behind doing the same. Rae carried the flashlight and shined it past Finn to try and illuminate the dangerously uneven terrain. It was pitch black, and in some places the path swept along the edge of sheer drop into Jamison Valley below, with no fence to stop them going over.

“Because your mother insisted… loudly… multiple times, on having something traditional at the ceremony and this is what we chose to give her.” Finn answered through gritted teeth as he reached out and took hold of a tree branch to move it out of her way.

“Why couldn’t we have just had a band like she wanted?” Rae grumbled.

“It’s not too much further.” Phil noted. Rae would normally be anxious about something as big and important as this ceremony, but she seemed to be incapable of feeling anxious here. They had arrived a week earlier than everyone else, and Rae had been incredibly tense and anxious. But the minute she smelled these trees the tension left her; they had some strange soporific effect on her nerves, and Finn and Phil noticed how deeply she breathed, because she loved the smell in the air. And while her nerves seemed to be knocked unconscious her mind was wide awake, her energy high, her mood wonderfully happy. The smell of the forest worked wonders on the two men as well; this place was just magic. And all the quaint, little hippy villages had the best tea houses. They ate tea and scones and relaxed in the days before their ‘wedding.’

Izzy had made a classically elegant dress for Rae; no frills, no lace, but layered against the 13 degrees Celsius maximum temperature they were expecting today. The full skirt fell to the ground smoothly, and the top was fitted, with long sleeves, a plunging neckline, but a high collar at the back of Rae’s neck, that made the dress positively chaste by Izzy’s standards for Rae. She’d been up since 5am; Chloe curling her hair and piling it on top of her hair in a lose bun with curls falling down her back. Her makeup was simple, barely there, and the only jewellery she wore was her black diamond, contrasting magnificently with the dress. Finn and Phil had decided to opt for a white tuxedo jacket, Phil double breasted, Finn single breasted, both with black trim and black pants. They hadn’t wanted to wear black tuxedos with very good reason.

When they finally got out to the uneven stone stairs Rae felt tense, it was dangerous footing here.

“We’re fucking mental having the ceremony here.”

“Well two of us have a formal diagnosis.” Phil said, “So it was bound to happen.” Rae and Finn both looked at him, Rae with an appreciative grin of mirth; it was the first time he’d joked about his breakdown.

“I’m mental too, I just haven’t gotten a doctor to say it out loud yet, that’s all.” Finn gave a cheeky grin and carefully stepped down the stairs, refocusing himself.
“Well that’s only a matter of time really.” Phil answered with a matter of fact tone. They started to giggle and joke, Finn making them stop while they laughed.

“We’re gonna be late!” Rae said as they stood still laughing.

“I’m not falling to death on our commitment day!” Finn said, “It’ll put a right dampener on the whole thing.”

“Might change the tone of the day.” Rae giggled.

Eventually they managed to make it safely to where the lookout opened up to the most stunning view over the forested valley, the worn sandstone cliffs rising from the dense green blanket of sweet smelling gum trees.

They had first seen Sublime Point when they had decided to visit the ‘world famous’ Blue Mountains on a day trip from Sydney; they always spent a few days in Sydney when they came to Australia with the gang. And the Blue Mountains had been worth the drive, all three of them falling in love with the rugged beauty of the landscapes; the flat topped mountains, the wild birds chattering in the trees, the majestic waterfalls, the hippy villages and the insane lack of safety precautions on all the walkways that wound along the cliff tops. They were driving around in a hire car, enjoying the winding roads through the intense eucalypt smelling forests when they saw a sign that said ‘Sublime Point.’ They had laughed and said they had to see a place that declared itself to be ‘sublime.’ And sublime is exactly what it had been. At the end of a winding and rugged track a huge slab of rock opened out amongst the trees to the most stunning vista imaginable; a short, chain-link fence was the only thing to stop you falling the hundreds of feet down the sheer cliff into the valley. Finn had suggested Sublime Point for the ceremony, but really there couldn’t be any other place for it. On that day when they had first accidentally found this place, seemingly forgotten by the rest of the world, they had stared for hours, watching the fog roll out across the valley as the sun set. There was more than a touch of magic about the place, and on their walk back up to the car park in the dying twilight a Lyre bird stopped in their path, calling to a mate, ignoring them completely as they watched in awe as its mimicry echoed out through the trees; they were sure they heard a car alarm, the sound of a radio being tuned, magpies and a very human sounding cough in its calls.

It was dark now, the very first suggestion of light barely kissing the sky to their left.

“Even in the dark this place is stunning.” Rae said, breathing in the air.

“There’s just something in the air… the energy of the place.” Phil agreed. They stood staring out at the dark valley in the cold dawn air.

“I wish this was a legal wedding.” Finn said softly.

“One day.” Rae answered, “But it’s as much a sign of our love and commitment as the legal ceremony that grants us rights under the law.” They embraced and huddled together against the cold. “Are we really gonna do this thing barefooted?” Rae asked; she was currently wearing joggers, her dress hiding her footwear.

“We don’t have to.” Phil said reluctantly, “it’s just… we spend so much of our lives together, just hanging out naked. And I wanted to feel the stones of this place beneath my feet as a reminder of
our preferred way to be around each other. Plus…” He felt a little foolish but he pressed forward, “There’s something special about this place that I wanna feel connected to.”

“Aye I feel it too.” Finn agreed.

“Aye I just wanna have all me toes by the end of the ceremony!” Rae joked about the possibility of frostbite. But it wasn’t really that cold; not to a Brit anyway.

They were laughing and joking, the sky slowly lightening, the fog rolling in, when the 8 ribbon knot makers arrived; Chloe, Rhys, Archie, Tom, Sammy, Izzy, Kelsey and Chop dawdling along last, excitedly talking about the group of tiny kangaroos they’d seen in the car park.

“They’re swamp wallabies.” Phil said and Chop gave an excited sound.

“Fucking cheeky little buggers!” Chop said, “Took some of me muffin when I put it down on me bag!” Chop had half a toasted English muffin in his hand. “I can’t get rabies or something if I eat the rest of me muffin will I?”

“Rabies doesn’t work that way.” Archie responded.

“There’s no rabies in Australia.” Phil backed him up and Chop nodded happily and started to eat his muffin again.

“Those wallabies are cute as anything.’ Sammy said happily and Chop agreed through a mouthful of food.

“You look stunning Rae.” Chloe said and hugged her.

“We scrub up pretty well too.” Finn said to Phil.

“Fuck off.” Chloe laughed. She turned to the gang, “Right is everyone ready?”

“I memorised what I gotta say.” Chop answered. Everyone reported the same.

“And everyone knows what order they’re in?” Everyone said they did and Chloe looked back and the path that led to the lookout, “So now we wait for the guests. Macca and Bethany are in the car park to let us know what’s going on.” Chloe had been in charge of making sure everyone in the gang knew their roles, and Kelsey and Archie had organised the ‘pre-commitment-ceremony-party.’ Kelsey had called it that as a pointed gesture at Phil’s expense because he so hated the common vernacular for these parties: bucks and hens nights. They had the party last week back in London and flown out to Australia the next day; with hangovers directly from hell.

“Alright.” Archie said and stepped forward, “I just wanted to say, as the other relationship in the gang that can’t legally get married; fuck the government, fuck bigoted laws and conservative suburban jerks guarding the moral fabric of society.” They laughed in appreciation, “This is as real a relationship as there is. As real a love as there is anywhere. And this ceremony marks the beginning of a marriage, regardless of what the absence of a piece of paper says.” The gang clapped happily, “It’s not lost on me that Finn is getting married before me!” He laughed, “I would not have believed that a decade ago. But it’s testament to the strength of this bond, the depth of this commitment, the importance of this relationship, and the truth of the love that exists between the three of you, that you are the first of the gang to be getting married.” Tom looked at Archie with a slightly sad expression; they had decided to wait until it was legalised. Finn, Phil and Rae had discussed doing the same instead of rushing to put together the ceremony in 4 months, but the chances of polygamy being legalised in the UK seemed to be about zero. At least gay marriage had a movement supporting it, and popular push towards marriage equality in that
regard. They had decided to go ahead with it; it was probably the only ceremony they’d get.

“I don’t need to wish you luck.” Archie said, “Your relationship doesn’t need it, it has the vows you are making today and the three of you stubborn bastards to guide it and make it work.” Their laughter echoed across the valley. “It’s a real honour to be a part of your ceremony today, and we all wanted to thank you for including us in your happiness.”

“Alright… there’s nothing for it,” Rae declared, “Time for a soppy group hug!” They made pretending sounds of protest but all eagerly embraced.

“Oh I wish Danny and Grace could be here.” Izzy lamented. Grace and Danny were expecting their second child; Grace was due any day now, and was still busily planning their dream wedding for early next year despite having pre-eclampsia and being on bed rest.

They stood, all arm in arm, watching the sun starting to caress the rising fog. They looked out over the valley, filling with fog that looked like soft fluffy clouds; the mountains tops emerging from creamy fairy floss.

“It’s like we’re standing on top of heaven.” Sammy breathed in awe as the fog rose to be right at their feet.

Chloe’s phone made a noise to indicate she had a text and she took out her phone and looked up at Rae.

“The guests are starting to arrive.” Chloe told them. Rae slipped her joggers off and swore under her breath at the chilly rock. Chop held open his bag and three sets of shoes were shoved in and the bag stowed away, hidden to the side.

“Right on time.” Archie said. As they all took up their positions, they heard the sound that Chloe’s mobile phone had just made from the trees on the path that led to the lookout.

“The fuck?” Chloe asked, bewildered.

“It’s a lyre bird.” Phil said, “They mimic everything they hear.”

“That’s fucking eerie.” Chop said shaking his head.

Phil, Rae and Finn stood with their backs to the fence in front of the gorgeous view and their friends stood off to one side. Rae stood between her two men, their hands not yet held. Twenty minute later Aiesha appeared, wearing a tuxedo, her hair cropped short. She was nine years old, but with Rae’s gentle prodding, Linda had allowed her to express herself as she wished. Linda appeared behind her, her hand protectively covering her belly; she was on her third, very unexpected, pregnancy at the age of 49. A pregnancy that had, again, been mistaken for ‘the change.’ Karim followed, chatting over his shoulder with Gary.

“Oh Rae.” Linda mumbled and instantly started crying. But she managed to contain herself and didn’t throw her arms around her first-born. A steady stream of friends and family arrived; everyone that they loved was there except Danny and Grace, but Macca was making a digital recording, and Danny had already asked for a copy. Everyone was softly talking about how beautiful the setting and the trio were, several people were already getting teary and that just told Rae that people were accepting this as being as real as a legal wedding.

In terms of how weddings normally went it was a small crowd; Rae, Phil and Finn didn’t have huge families, and they shared all of their friends. Family, all their school friends, all their university friends, a few work friends, and in the case of Phil’s work friends, a couple of names
that made people turn their heads. Everyone crowded in and, in the spirit of friendship, everyone made sure everyone could see. When everyone was still and the fog started to spill onto the rock they were standing, giving the impression of standing on clouds, Rae gave a small nod to Aiesha and she stepped forward and turned around to look at the crowd.

“Welcome everybody!” She said loudly; her voice carrying well. A smile instantly popped onto Phil’s face; they’d been working on her stage voice for this very purpose. “We are gathered here today to attend the commitment ceremony of Rachel Earl, Finlay Nelson and Phillip Seymour.” They had chosen the order of the names alphabetically, and it also happened to be the order they were standing in, so it worked well. Aiesha took a breath, clearly finding the next line in her mind, but she maintained composure and continued, “If marriage equality ever happens, we’ll all be doing this again with a celebrant!” She said, “And I’m gonna be that celebrant!” That was a line she had added herself. They all laughed happily and Aiesha took another deep breath and looked over her shoulder at her big sister. Rae gave her an encouraging grin and Aiesha turned back to the audience. “But because the people who make laws are jerks,” Rae burst out laughing; this was another Aiesha addition to her speech. Aiesha continued unperturbed, “We are returning to a very old form of marriage; a hand-binding or hand-fasting ceremony. Hand-fasting was a legal marriage contract in the UK until 1753;” As she spoke, the fog continued to rise like beautiful clouds, beginning to surround them, “it’s speculated that Shakespeare’s marriage to Anne Hathaway was a hand-fasting.” When Phil had read that he’d declared that if hand-fasting was good enough for Shakespeare it was good enough for him. “And it dates back to the time of the ancient Celts.” Aiesha had stumbled over a few words, but the message was clear, “It has been used both as an engagement ceremony and a legally binding marriage. Which is fitting.” She paused to swallow and take another huge breath, “because this hand-fasting is as binding a commitment for the three partners involved as a legal marriage is, but it also bears the promise to partake in a legal marriage should they ever be permitted to.” Aiesha searched her memory. The fog had risen so high now it felt like they were in a dreamy, ethereal fantasy world, “Um…” She said and Rae could tell she was starting to panic. She reached forward and put a gentle hand on her shoulder and she took another breath, “Um… and the hand-fasting will be done with 8 ribbons, each symbolising a different vow Rae, Finn and Phil make too each other.” She nodded and beamed; happy to have finished her role in the ceremony. Chloe nodded at Aiesha and she stepped back into the audience, Karim putting his hand on her shoulder, the other holding Linda’s hand.

The fog was chilly, but not enough to make anyone shiver, it was magical, like being deep inside of a cloud. A cloud that surrounded them, but didn’t get in between them; visibility was fine, unless you wanted to see the spectacular Jamison Valley; that was a complete white out.

Aiesha looked at her big sister and her two husbands. Aiesha had been calling Finn and Phil Rae’s husbands since she could properly speak, and she had no intention of stopping even though she understood now that they were not married, and couldn’t be. In her mind they looked like angels; Rae in her white dress, Finn and Phil with their white jackets, the clouds slowly swirling around them. They were beautiful. They stepped closer and put their right hands together, Rae’s in the middle, and curled the fingers through each other’s. They huddled in closer, moving to the side so the light of the rising sun filtered in through the fog behind them, standing with their clasped hands before them as if they were one person. It was carefully staged by Phil so that he, the tallest, was furthest from the audience; they staggered themselves so all three of them would be in the photos.

Chloe approached them with a yellow ribbon in her hands. The ribbon was wide, satin, and very long and it fluttered slightly in the lazy breeze. She stood opposite them, so everyone could see her carefully tie the yellow ribbon around their clasped hands as she spoke.

“Finn, Rae and Phil, do you vow to foster a relationship in which open and honest communication is encouraged and nurtured?” Chloe slipped the ribbon around their hands and tied it in a firm knot
that could not come undone, but held onto the ribbon ends as she continued, “Do you promise to always talk with each other about all things, no matter how big or small? Do you swear to always support each other in speaking up about anything and everything, to make yourselves available to listen to each other, to always try your hardest to communicate clearly, truthfully and respectfully with each other?”

“I do.” Their voices were in unison; three clear, distinct, individual voices making one answer. Chloe let the ends of the ribbon fall and gave them a huge smile before walking back to the gang, wiping tears away from her eyes, careful of her mascara and putting an arm around Izzy’s shoulders as they watched on, both sniffling with delight. As she stepped away Tom stepped had forward.

“Finn, Rae and Phil,” Tom wrapped the red ribbon he held around their hands, “do you vow to help each other keep your passion afire, for each other, for life and for the other things you love?” He finished his knot but held onto the ends of the ribbon. “Do you promise to support and encourage each other’s passions, especially if they are something you don’t understand, don’t care about, or think is foolish?” Finn and Phil both looked at Rae out of the corner of their eyes; she had been very insistent on that part of the vow and they both knew it was because she often felt very foolish and that was part of what they loved about her, “Do you swear to share your passion with each other equally, to bravely and enthusiastically enjoy your passion together, to accept the times when passion is lacking and help each other overcome those moments?” Tom beamed at them, he was happy for them, but it also wasn’t lost on him that a good deal of that vow was about all three of them agreeing to have good sex for the rest of their lives together.

“I do.” They again answered in unison. Rae wondered how much of that vow her mother had understood. Tom let the ribbon ends fall and turned away as Rhys stepped forward, his blue ribbon carefully held in his hands, his finger marking the centre of the ribbon so it would fall evenly to the floor.

“Finn, Rae and Phil, do you vow to support and protect the mental, emotional and physical health of each other in every way possible?” Rhys tied the knot around their hands, carefully ensuring that his knot matched the other knots perfectly, “Do you promise to meet each other’s needs and together, foster a healthy environment in which you can each thrive and be happy, remembering both your individual needs and the needs of the relationship? Do you swear to treat each other with respect, dignity, kindness, compassion and understanding, to seek guidance and help when needed, to partake in self-care and always try to remember that you a worthy and deserving of health, love and each other.”

“I do.” Each one of them felt the vows deeply as each knot was tied, it felt as though their souls were being bound to each other. Rhys let the ends of the ribbon fall and gave them a single, solemn nod of the head before cracking a smile. Above their heads there was a break in the fog and a startlingly azure blue sky peeked through. Izzy practically bounded across the uneven stones and Finn, Phil and Rae had to stop themselves from calling out a warning to her; the fog this morning meant that no one else had seen the view yet, no one understood how sheer the cliffs were, how deep the valley that had been filled with cotton wool fog, actually was. Anyone who had seen that would not be bounding along on this uneven surface. But she was there, standing across from them safely, barely able to contain herself. She started to loop the green ribbon she had around their hands as a ragged opening in the fog showed the deep green of the trees in the valley. But it was swirling across the valley and the gaps in the fog closed as quickly as they opened, creating moments where the earthly beauty around them pierced through the heavenly beauty of the clouds surrounding them.

“Finn, Rae and Phil, do you vow to explore each other’s fertile imaginations and embrace the creativity you each have within you? Do you promise,” Izzy paused, her eyes going to the side as
she tried to remember what she had to say; she’d been making the dress and suits the whole gang wore as well as learning these lines, and they gave her sympathetic smiles, “to help each other set and achieve goals so that you can gain the successes you each want, both professionally and personally? Do you swear that you will never ask each other to go against your natures, but instead will rejoice in each other’s free expression of self, and support, defend, explore and take delight in your identities, desires and goals while helping each other to remain true to yourselves and each other?”

“I do.” Izzy let the ribbon ends fall and made a small noise of delight before heading back to the gang, Chloe embracing her again so they could share their happy tears. Archie took his time walking to them, taking them all in, the way they looked standing united together, their hands bound with richly coloured ribbons that swept down to the ground. He was overwhelmed with happiness for them and felt tears stinging his eyes. Finn cracked into a smile when he saw Archie’s fingers slip under his glasses and rub his eyes. He took a steadying breath and grinned foolishly as he gave up trying to hide his emotions. He sniffed as he looped the purple ribbon around their hands, Tom watching on with a huge, loving grin.

“Finn,” his voice cracked and the audience made supportive and sympathetic sounds, making Archie laugh slightly, “Rae and Phil, do you vow to be loyal to each other above all others? Do you promise,” He took a deep breath, his voice shaky with emotion, “To be committed and fidelis to each other and the relationship you are building? Do you swear to work towards a relationship that will last forever, while being open to the possibility of change and growth, mindful of individual liberty and remembering that ownership, entitlement and jealousy have no place in any relationship; that you must trust, treasure and respect your partners without putting them on pedestals?”

“I do.” They each answered clearly at the same time. This had been the vow that Finn had been most insistent about and Rae knew it was because of his previous jealousy issues over Phil and Rae’s friendship. Neither Rae nor Phil were even slightly worried it’d return; Finn had grown far too much for that. But Finn felt that he needed to maintain vigilance to keep that darker part of his personality at bay. Sammy swallowed hard, her hands trembling. She was a confident woman in front of people she knew, but this was a big crowd for her and she was nervous. She looked down at the black ribbon in her hand and then up at the lifting fog, she could see glimpses of the valley in the eddies of the air current as it playfully frolicked through the fog. She looked up at Phil; her closest and dearest friend, and found the courage she needed to speak as she gently knotted the ribbon around their hands.

“Finn, Rae and Phil, do you vow to remember and understand that circumstances change and you don’t know what the future holds for you as individual or as a relationship? Do you promise to accept change and to be as flexible and adaptable as you can be? Do you swear to be as supportive and understanding of your partners when they embrace change and growth in their lives as when they struggle with it?” Sammy gave a grin when she got through it all, her nerves finally leaving her now that her lines were done.

“I do.” The minute the three of them had affirmed this vow Sammy started to cry, she let the ribbon ends go and had to force herself to not hug Phil; she was just so happy for him. As Chop stepped forward, the silver ribbon clutched tightly in his hands the fog grew wispy and the breathtaking view of the stunning Jamison Valley finally started to be visible. A huge gang of cockatoos screeched across the valley and settled down in the trees near the path, eating, peering at all the humans and chattering loudly. And a pair of brightly coloured parrots landed on the railing of the fence that surrounded the lookout just behind the trio and seemed to show no interest in the humans at all, they made beautiful chirping sounds that echoed faintly across the valley. Chop fumbled slightly with the ribbon, chuckled and started again.
“Finn, Rae and Phil, do you vow to work your arses off for this relationship? Do you promise to take your time to build your relationship like you would a house,” in the audience Elsa gave a fond smile; she had told Finn that a relationship was like a house many years ago, “with a solid foundation of trust, walls made of communication and a roof built of love? Do you swear to have patience, to be gentle with each other, to encourage each other’s differences, to applaud your unique methods of relationship building, and to wait for each other when you grow, change and build at different rates?”

“I do.” In the audience Izzy lowered her eyes and Chloe hugged her tighter. Kelsey held the final ribbon of the eight ribbons, one for each year they’d been together. It was gold, and Kelsey had the simplest vow to say. Simplest, and she thought, most beautiful.

“Finn, Rae and Phil, do you vow to never forget your love for each other and to always act with love in your hearts? Do you promise to put your love for each other above all things? Do you swear to love each other for all eternity?”

“I do.” They knew that even if they could not be together, they would still love each other forever; they could never stop loving each other. This was the simplest vow to say, and the easiest one to make; it would be impossible to break it. Kelsey returned to the gang and Finn, Rae and Phil turned to the clapping audience. The fog had lifted and the sky was vibrant blue, the trees deep green, And their white clothing stood out magnificently in front of the dark colours behind them. The colours of the ribbons were also shown off perfectly against the white backdrop of their clothing as they fluttered in the breeze.

Finn, Rae and Phil had each agreed to say a few words before everyone headed back up to the car park and the luxury buses they’d hired to move most of their guests around. The sun was offering a decent amount of warmth as it shone directly on them, even more birds were fluttering about and the scenery was nothing short of spectacular. Finn, Rae and Phil all kissed; they had decided on a trio kiss rather than several duo kisses for this first kiss after the hand-fasting. Then they all lifted their left hands to the ribbons and gently pulled them off; keeping the knots intact. Rae held them up and Chloe stepped forward to hand Rae a tie so she could tie them all together. They would never let these knots be untied. Chop supplied the bag, and the front pocket was zipped open a zip lock bag inside and Rae looked at Chop with a grin. She lovingly put the ribbons in the bag and then slid them into the front pocket. She turned back to look at the assembled group of loved ones. What a group of people she had now.

“We just wanted to say a very quick thank you to all of you for taking so much time out of your lives to come to Australia to attend our commitment ceremony. It means so much to us that you all came, and we love you all so much. Thank you.” She received a huge applause, and turned her eyes to Finn, who stepped in between Phil and Rae and gave a huge grin.

“Oh…” He laughed, “I’ve been honoured by both of my partners choosing to legally take my last name.” There was another clap and Gary beamed happily, “Because they’re both famous, they’ll keep working under their previous surnames, but all legal documents and that jazz, will now be under Nelson for all three of us.” He kissed Phil and then Rae, this was followed by Rae and Phil kissing. “We discussed the idea of having the same last name as a kind of uniting force and decided we wanted to do it. And after much debate, Nelson was chosen.” He turned his eyes to Phil who reached inside his top pocket with a grin.

“And so now, the final part of our commitment ceremony.” Phil held three silk bags, one green, one blue, one purple; their favourite colours. “On our first anniversary, Rae got us a beautiful Spruce tree. A tree that can live for thousands of years, and she said it was symbolic of our relationship. We wanted to give it some of ourselves to nourish it, so we would be inside of our
tree. We grew our hair for a year, with the purpose of cutting it, to burn it and make ash for the
tree.” Finn and Rae were giving him quizzical expressions, not sure why he was talking about this;
he was supposed to be showing them the rings he’d chosen for them. “We got our hair cut on our
second anniversary and got three separate bags of hair. Which we never did burn, and we never
will now. Because a few years back, I heard about something and the hair was used for that, and
I’m sorry I didn’t tell you guys.” Rae and Finn furrowed their brows at him, “And I’ve just been
waiting for this exact moment to show you what I had done with our hair.” He took the green bag;
Rae’s favourite colour, and pocketed the other two bags. He handed the bag to Rae and Finn
moved in closer to see as she opened it. Phil explained as she untied the strings on the bag. “There
are several companies that can make diamonds from the hair of your loved ones.” Rae looked up
before she’d even opened the bag, her eyes wide and surprised, “They are real certified diamonds,
indistinguishable from naturally occurring diamonds that are mined. Except they’re a little piece of
us.”

“Oh my god.” Rae was in awe and she hadn’t even see the rings yet.

“When we got engaged, I had these diamonds set in rhodium, which is the most precious metal on
Earth.” The rhodium was silver in colour and the ring was an elegant and classic signet style ring,
simple, clean lines, the perfectly round top section housing a huge diamond, Rae’s jaw dropped at
the size of it. But as she moved it around she saw that it was three diamonds, cut into triangles
with one curved side, the tips of the three diamonds touching to form a circle. It was symbolic of
them. She looked closer and realised that the three diamonds were subtly different colours, one
was a shade of green, one blue and one purple. You didn’t see it at first glance; they appeared to
be one diamond, a symbol of the unity in their relationship, but they were each their own being,
their own colour, their own diamond. It was very much a unisex ring; but she knew how each ring
would be slightly different; if she wore it one way it would be all green stone facing her, but if she
turned it, it was half purple half blue diamond facing her. She knew Phil did that deliberately and
that on Finn’s ring it would be half green and half purple or solid blue, and on Phil’s half green and
half blue or all purple. Phil gently took the ring from her and took Finn’s hand, the two of them
sliding it onto her finger, with the half blue, half purple side of the gem closest to her, both of them
quietly telling her they loved her as they did it. And as quietly as they spoke, everyone still heard
it; some people got quite emotional. Phil took out Finn’s bag and handed it to him so he could take
the ring out. After Finn had taken a look at this ring, Phil and Rae slowly slid the ring onto his
finger with the half green, half purple side closest to him, both telling him they loved him as they
did it. It was so silent that it seemed like the birds had even stopped their mischief; the world had
disappeared, it was just them, taking in the rings and the symbolism of them and the vows they
represented. Finally it was Phil’s turn, and the side with half blue, half green was closest to him
after Rae and Finn had put the ring on his finger together, saying they loved him. The three of
them kissed again, this time laughing with happiness, and everyone applauded.

“Oh everyone.” Bethany said loudly; it was her and Macca’s job to get everyone between the
ceremony location at Sublime Point lookout, and the car park where the luxury buses awaited
them. “We’re off to Byron Bay for the reception! Careful on the trail back up to the car park, and
you’ve got plenty of time to take in the view and take photos of the happy trio.”

“Isn’t it a ten hour drive to Byron By from here?” Woody asked with an unimpressed face.

“Aye, I hope you’ve already been to the bathroom!” Bethany shot back and people laughed, but
they also internally groaned at the journey to come; 10 hours on a bus was hell no matter how
luxurious.

But Finn, Rae and Phil paid no attention, they talked and kissed and had photos taken and hugs and
well-wishes given. They had a limo waiting for them that they intended to make love in; they
were happy, and that’s all that mattered today.
“You have got to be fucking joking?” Rae shook her head and Phil tried to keep the satisfied grin off his face. “How?”

They had spent the two hours it had taken them to get here making out; Phil stopping them from making love, saying it was weird because of the driver, but this was actually the reason he had stopped them. Before them, on the tarmac of the private terminal of the Sydney Airport was a Boeing 767 aeroplane. Stairs leading up to its door, a plush white carpet rolled out like a red carpet up to the stairs. But the most eye catching part of it was the magnificent art work on the plane of them, their names, the date, and it was mostly in blues, greens and purples.

“Kelsey.” Finn said and Phil nodded. Phil had asked Macca to do a lot of photos and video sweeps of the plane and its artwork, because Phil had to have the plane re-painted when they were done.

“So you hired us a plane?” Rae said in awe and Phil grinned and cocked his head to the side. “Yeah. I did.” He couldn’t wipe the grin off his face; their responses were perfect.

“Will you stop being an Aristocrat for five goddamn minutes?” Finn turned to him and attempted to look serious but the grin wouldn’t leave his face either.

“I can only knock it off for as long as you can stop being a Neanderthal.” Phil shot back, making Finn laugh.

“C’mon Lady Og.” He said and laced his arm through hers.

“You know, I think I need a name that isn’t derived from your two names.” Rae replied and reached out to take Phil’s hand.

“Like?” Finn asked.

“Like supreme master of the universe.” She replied.

“Aiming high. I like that.” Phil said.

“Or I could just be supreme master of both you undergarments…” She said with a cheeky grin.

“Well you’d have no complaint from me.” Phil answered saucily. They set off together on the white carpet.

“Phil, how much did this ceremony cost?” Finn asked as he started to really think of everything Phil had organised for them.

“How much does it cost to fly in most of your guest from and back to the UK, put them up in a
luxury five star hotels in Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Byron Bay, with each room having stunning views for a total of ten days? Then providing several guided tours, day trips, luxury spa and massage treatments, hired luxury buses and cars to get them everywhere they need to go, private plane to get them all to and from the reception, massive party, huge amount of food and drinks for all of them for every day of their holiday…? The cheapest thing about this whole event was getting the permit to get married at Sublime point: 150 Australian dollars…”

“Even the material for our clothes cost more!” Rae shook her head, “Oh my god we’ve overspent.”

“We’ve given everyone we love a ten day all-expenses paid luxury holiday in celebration of our ‘couldn’t-quite-be-a-marriage-cos-of-fucked-up-bigoted-laws-commitmrnt-ceremony.’” Phil said, “And to be honest, our love and our commitment to each other is worth a lot more money than they could ever print.” He grinned at both of them, “And I felt like celebrating. In style.”

“Well can’t argue with that.” Finn answered with a grin equalling Phil’s and Rae rolled her eyes.

“Fuck I love you both.” She gave in and laughed.

Inside the plane was a dining hall serving a buffet lunch and a bar with a huge selection of drinks, both alcoholic and not. The chairs were luxurious, and fully compliant with Australian aviation standards. There was a dance floor, tvs, and most importantly a private bedroom with a king sized bed and a private ensuite bathroom.

“So we’ll be having lunch with our guests as we do a scenic flight over the coast of Australia.” Phil said. It was only an hour to Byron Bay, but they were doing a three hour scenic flight, “Then we’ll be retiring to the private bedroom…” He gave them both a cocky grin, “if anyone wants to join the mile high club with me?”

They had grabbed a quick bite of the delicious food on offer, before sneaking off to the bedroom to make loud, multi-orgasmic love. Phil had had the room decked out with wildflowers as per Finn’s request, and beeswax candles as per Rae’s request. There was also a change of clothes for all three of them hanging in the wardrobe. The music and the chatter in the dining hall and the engines of the plane meant that no one heard them as they passionately devoured each other, and they didn’t hold back one bit, not caring if anyone heard them. They were gone for an hour and a half before they returned to get more food, promising each other to tick off other forms of public transport in their sexual shenanigans.

They sat at a table together and ate.

“The rings are beautiful.” Rae told Phil, “This whole day has been perfect.”

“I didn’t plan it alone.” Phil reminded them, although he had planned the vast majority of it; Finn had organised the location, Rae the clothing and they had done the vows together. “And besides, you two are always doing thoughtful things for us, and I tend to be so busy with my long days at work that I don’t think to be as romantic for us on a daily basis as you both are. So I gotta do big things like this sometimes. And you both looked after me when I wasn’t at my best, so… you deserve something magnificent, to match both of you.” He lowered his eyes “I just worry that I’m like my mother, not able to express my feeling properly so I’m throwing money at you both.” “So these diamonds you got made from our hair…” Finn said pointedly, “Am I right that the blue ones were made from my hair? The green one’s from Rae’s and the purple…”
“Me.” Phil nodded his head.

“It might o’ cost a bucket, but it’s incredibly thoughtful and expressive of how you feel. This whole day has been, and I bet it’ll continue through to the honeymoon too.” Finn answered.

“Where are we going by the way?” Phil gave him a mysterious grin and a look that indicated he would not be revealing that.

“Your mother just threw money at you and Kels. You use your money to do thoughtful things for us that express your feelings.” Rae said, “Entirely different things.” She said immutably, “And what about all the violin playing for us and little post-its with love letters on them and text messages and thoughtful acts of romance and love, that don’t cost much, if anything?”

“And fuck man your poetry does me head in.” Finn said, “it’s so clear that you love us when you write it. And so fucking beautiful as well.”

“I don’t write poetry or do any of that stuff as often as I’d like.” Phil said with a blush and slightly lowered eyes.

“You being hard on yourself again?” Finn asked pointedly. “You do so much. Stop setting yourself impossibly high bars.”

“I knew there was a reason I love you.” Phil said with a cheeky grin and Finn scrunched his nose at him, Phil returning the gesture.

When the plane landed at Byron Bay airport, luxury buses awaited everyone to take them first to the hotel, and then to the beach for those that wanted to go. There was a few hours before the reception; a BBQ on the beach at Woody and Kiki’s nudist resort; they were in the process of making it a five star resort. Woody had decided to make the party ‘clothing optional’ after midnight, and babysitters had been provided for all of the children, so adults could remain; with or without clothing. Phil had even hired lifeguards to patrol Woody’s beach at night to ensure that no drunken people drowned.

But while everyone else was at the beach, the trio were off to a tattoo parlour. They were all getting the date they began their relationship, 15.05.98 on them. They were all getting it tattooed across the inside of their ring fingers, just above the band of the ring, in the smallest numerals the tattooist could manage.

Rae already knew what to expect from the tattoo needle, since she had been inked previously. But both of her men hadn’t yet decided on their right tattoo yet; Rae was starting to plan her next two or three tattoos. But she had wanted this one to be her next tattoo, and this was the perfect day for them all to get it.

Finn had gotten an erection during the five minutes it took to get the tattoo etched into his skin; the pain had caused the pleasure centres in his brain to flood into overdrive. He’d definitely be getting more tattoos and he understood the men who willingly allowed Andromeda and Pandora to ink them for sexual gratification.

Phil went a little red in the face and tried to hide the fact that he got the giggles; for the same reason that Finn got an erection. Phil before the breakdown would have controlled that response, but post-breakdown Phil picked what he controlled rather than controlling everything about
“Why did we agree to let Woody decide the theme of our reception party?” Finn asked.

“Oh I dunno, I don’t mind it.” Phil looked at himself in the mirror.

“Well you wouldn’t you’re the kinkiest fucker out of us!” Finn laughed, “I’m just not sure I wanna see me dad in drag.” Rae burst out in laughter, and Phil started a chuckle that quickly turned into a deep belly laugh, even Finn had to start laughing at the thought. Woody had decided that before midnight the party was a cross-dressing party, and after midnight it was clothing optional. And they’d just let him stay with that decision. Phil swished the skirt on his red dress and noticed the way his shoulders stuck out of the halter neck so sexily.

“I quite like the dress you chose for me.” Phil told Rae, “I should wear dresses more often.”

“Should I dress you up in dresses more often? Fuck you with a strap-on?” Phil turned and gave her a saucy grin.

“Can I fuck him with me cock instead of a strap-on?” Finn asked as he tried to tie his halter neck; his dress was almost identical to Phil’s, also in red. Rae handed them stockings and garter belts.

“Oh no,” Rae shook her head, her tone imperious, “You’re getting the strap-on too.”

“We don’t have a strap-on.” Finn shrugged, his tone teasing, as if to say ‘you can’t get me with a strap-on, we don’t have one – ha!’

“Yet.” Rae said seductively, the ‘t’ in the word ‘yet’ hanging in the air. “But I might get a big 12 inch one…”

“Oh fuck no!” Finn answered laughing. Phil grimaced slightly and shook his head.

“12 inches, and as thick as me fist.” She said and held up her fist.

“NO!” Finn laughed, Phil was laughing as he tried to figure out his garter belt.

“But really,” Phil said, “we should at least get a strap-on for Rae the size of our cocks, so she can do to us what we do to us and to her.”

“Aye I s’pose.” Finn agreed, “D’you want one girl?”

“Yes.” Rae answered in a clear voice with a cheeky grin.

“Done deal.” Finn answered and started to try and get his stockings on his legs. Rae had been impressed with her lads daring each other to get a full body wax for this event, and both going through with it.

“Why are we wearing fishnets; you never wear fishnets…” Finn said when

“Cos they’re sexy.” Rae answered.

“Then why have you never worn them?” Phil asked, “We should all wear all the sexy things.” He grinned and rolled up a stocking almost as if he’d done it before.
“Logical?” Finn asked and Phil nodded; how to put on stockings had seemed logic to him.

“I think I shall wear them more.” Rae answered as she plaited her hair tight at the base of her neck.

“You look very sexy in a suit.” Phil said and Finn nodded. Rae wore a very stylish tuxedo, the jacket with tails and a red waistcoat to match her men. Rae looked at both of them and bit her bottom lip; they did look good in dresses.

“Alright, so this is why Woody chose this theme!” Rae said.

A barbecue on the beach was an Aussie tradition, and their wedding reception ended up with quite a few gate-crashers, coming for a beer, a snag and a gander. But everyone was well-behaved and the food was amazing and the weather was unseasonably warm, thankfully. There was a huge cake with black frosting and white details; like stars in the sky. But when it was cut into it was rainbow colours inside.

It was traditional to give speeches at the reception, and this is where they had conceded to Gary; he had very much wanted speeches. Everyone had agreed to short speeches.

Linda was the first to stand up, she looked magnificent in a bright purple suit with a lime green tie, her hair slicked back, she’d even gotten herself a stick-on moustache for the night.

“Finn, I used to think you were an absolute turd.” Everyone laughed loudly, but Linda kept her stern gaze on him before turning them to Phil, “And then you turned up Phil, and I thought you were the gay lover stealing him away from my girl.” Phil grinned in reply, “Shows what I know!” She laughed merrily. Rae laughed as her mother put her hands on her belly. “All I’ve ever wanted for Rae, is that she would be happy. That’s what I want for all my girls.” The ultrasound said that the child Linda was carrying was another girl. “Over the years, I’ve come to see you both as not only vital to her happiness, but also as two young men that are a vital part of this family. I am so proud of all three of you, and all you’ve accomplished.” She held up her glass of non-alcoholic champagne and everyone raised their glasses, “here’s to the happy trio!”

“The happy trio!” Everyone drank.

“Take good care of each other. You all mean the world to me, Karim and Aiesha.” She went over to them and gave them a hug, handing over the wireless microphone to Gary, resplendent in a teal cocktail dress, his hairy legs sticking out the bottom, a blonde wig on his head. Finn tried to not shake his head. He and Phil hair spiked their hair up into very rough mohawks for the night and wore brightly coloured punkish/vamp make up, Finn had hung a cross off his earring, Phil wore a black lace choker necklace. Gary, however, had red lipstick and blue eye shadow, with a cheap strand of fake pearls. The dress was beautiful though. He was so daggy it was deliriously cute. Finn’s tongue went to the back of his teeth as he fought to keep his laughter in; his father was wearing heels, and he walked well in them. Rae looked down the table and saw Chloe, sitting in a very manly pose, her hair in a tight bun, a glorious drawn in moustache, her eyebrows darkened; she was smoking a cigar and in the moment the cigar touched her lips Rae had the urge to kiss her again. She just looked so sexy. She blew out the smoke, Rae’s eyes turn to Rhys. He had grown his hair out over the last few years and tonight he’d styled it into a very 70s inspired Afro, the ends dyed hot pink. His face was clean shaven at the moment, and his makeup was divine, deep red lips, gold eye shadow, long fake eyelashes. And he was wearing the most glorious gold, halter
neck jumpsuit in all of existence; Izzy had made it for him of course. And the man knew how to wear a pair of 6 inch stilettos; he’d had them specially made for his large feet several years ago. Rhys liked heels, ever since he’d begun his ‘self-defence in heels’ course; he did the whole class in heels, just like the students. Rae thought about the time they had been dancing, high, at New Year’s and how there had been a moment where they had nearly ended up having a fivesome. She wouldn’t argue if it ever came up again, but she wouldn’t go chasing it either; she was happy with what she had.

“Finn was always a grumpy sod until he met you Rae.” Gary said and Finn shook his head. “I can understand why you thought Finn was a turd early on Linda!” Gary laughed, “But let me just say, he was head over heels in love and had no idea how to handle such a firebrand of a woman!” Finn and Phil both grinned at Rae, “But he learned, and they grew so close that I knew this was my daughter-in-law. And I couldn’t have been happier for my son. And then Phil showed up.” Gary turned his eyes to Phil, “It was a bit of a surprise, because I’d always believed that love was between two people. But it turns out that love is far more mercurial than we could ever imagine, and it won’t be held by the limits of our brains, our educations, or our exposure to the world and different ideas. If you let love in, if you simply allow it to do what it does best, to guide you down unknown paths, to help you grow in unexpected ways… then you might be lucky and be blessed with the perfect relationship; balanced, nourishing and truly happy. And that is what Finn, Rae and Phil share. A relationship that is unfairly maligned by mainstream culture and society, but should be held up and lauded as an inspiration to us all on how to communicate with each other, accept and love each other and how to find and keep happiness in our hearts and souls.” He raised his glass, “I may be ever so slightly drunk right now… but that in no way affects my deliriously happy mood, because you three are a blessing to each other and.” He sniffled slightly and Finn nearly lost it, he held his lips together to stop the giggle. “And you truly bring…” His breath hitched slightly with tears, “Bring the best out in each other. And I love all three of you so much!” He raised his glass higher, “To the wonderful trio.” He downed his glass.

“To the wonderful trio!” Everyone said with huge grins and took a drink. Kelsey was wearing an AFL uniform; St Kilda football club. It was an Australian party, so she chose to wear something quintessentially Australian bloke. But the hot blokes, not the slobby blokes who hung out in some of the pubs she’d been in here. So an Australian Football League uniform seemed right and she’d just liked the way this one looked.

“When I first met Rae I knew instantly that she was meant to be with Phillip. It took a few days longer to realise that Finn was too. And mostly that was because Finn and Phil absolutely hated each other back then.” Everyone laughed at Kelsey’s words, “I’m Phillip’s sister. And you’ve probably noticed that our parents are not here to celebrate their son’s union to the people he loves or to give the ‘parent’s speech’ right now.” Kelsey looked around at them all, “And some of you already know that it’s because they disowned him because of his sexuality and for being in love.” She looked at her baby brother, “Well fuck them because eight years later you’re thriving, and I’m thriving, and none of their hatred can touch either of us anymore.” Phil smiled sadly, “So Linda said that both of Rae’s partners were vital parts of the family, and Gary said how much he loved all three of you and… well it was all happy family stuff. But I’m sorry to say Rae and Finn, that there isn’t much of a family to invite you into when it comes to the Seymours. Just me… and it’s not me inviting you into my family. It’s me being un-fucking-believably thankful that Phil found you, and you welcomed us two lost Seymours into your lives.” Rae felt tears sting her eyes, “Linda and Gary have already said the parent stuff, far better than I could; I’m not a parent, and I bloody hope I never am! But I can say that you three are my favourite people in this whole world, and you give me hope that damaged people, like me, can find happiness and love. Thank you.” She raised her glass, “To Rachel.” She tipped her glass to Rae and took a sip.

“To Rachell!” The guests took a sip.
“To Finlay.” She tipped her glass to Finn and took a sip.

“To Finlay!” The guests followed suit.

“To Phillip.” She tipped her glass to him and they shared a smile.

“To Phillip!” The guests called out.

Speeches were over and people came over to congratulate the trio again. Rae hugged her mum tightly and thanked her before grinning at Karim in his green long dress and hugged him too. She noticed Aiesha looking around excitedly at everyone and Rae took the chance to really look at how everyone was dressed too. Tom made a beautiful drag queen, and he and Archie had gone all out in fully sequined, skin tight ball-gown-type frocks, in bright blue green and purple; the colours of the trio. They wore huge wigs with tumbling curls and they even had speciality contacts in that gave them yellow cat’s eyes and butterfly false eye lashes; they were walking works of art. Izzy wore a steel grey suit; the jacket buttoned with no shirt under it, and her short hair, recently cut, slicked back, her brows darkened like Chloe’s. Chop wore a very pretty yellow sundress, and looked radiant in it, but he hadn’t bothered with makeup. When Izzy and Chloe decided that wasn’t good enough, he hadn’t argued and had allowed them to make him up. The situation between Chop and Izzy was still messy; they often slept with each other when the gang had their huge gatherings, but they were not together, and Izzy was having a long string of affairs with very sexy sounding Italian lovers. Although not all of them were performing as well as Chop, which is why, she claimed, she still kept coming back to him. Chop had had a few flings, but like Izzy, he hadn’t committed to anything. He was still holding out for Izzy, even though he never said a word to her about it anymore.

A huge bonfire was prepared on the beach and everyone threw off their shoes and started to dance.

“Nice speech da.” Finn said and Gary threw his arms around Finn, drawing Rae and Phillip in too. “Da!” Finn laughed, “It’s alright.”

“You three.” He sniffled as he let them go.

“Actually da.” Finn said as he slipped his heels off and put an arm around his dad’s shoulders, guiding him towards the beach, “I wanted to chat to you alone.” He looked over his shoulder and saw Janice and Kenzie talking stiffly, Janice in a pinstripe suit, his mother in one of his father’s work suits. “I, well, we all wanted you to know that there actually wasn’t that much debate about the last names at all. At first I were quite keen for us to be Earls, and Phil just didn’t want Seymour, obviously. But Rae wanted Nelson, and she put forward a very convincing argument that made us all unanimously vote for Nelson. And her reason was you.”

“What?” Gary asked, a sense of happiness welling up in his chest.

“We chose Nelson because of the way you took us all in under your wing in the early days of our relationship. This is actually for you dad.”

“Oh go on.” Gary waved Finn off, but still had a massive grin on his face.

“No I’m serious da.” Finn answered, “I’ve put a lot o’ shit on you over the years,” Gary laughed, “and you’ve always met it with a calm, loving attitude. Thanks.” Gary put a hand to his mouth and nodded in response; too choked up to even think of saying anything. “You know, Phil’s parents disowned him and Rae’s mum called her a whore and… well you? You… asked some questions and accepted it. You didn’t understand it, I don’t think you liked it or thought it were a good idea back then, but you kept your mouth shut for my sake. And more than that you gave us all a roof
over our heads and food in our bellies. What you’ve done for me, for us, is-

“Is what any father should do. And one day you’ll be doing the same.”

“Nah Rae don’t wanna have kids.” Finn shrugged.

“Oh?” To his credit, Gary only sounded upset momentarily before he grinned, “Alright, no being an annoying grandda then.”

“Unfortunately not. But I’m sure one of me mates’ll let you pay grandda to their kids.”

“Finn…” Gary said seriously, “I haven’t wanted to ask… but the bank keeps assuring me it wasn’t a mistake…?”

“Aye I paid your mortgage off.”

“How rich is he?” Gary asked, knowing that Phil had gotten his trust fund a few ago now.

“You never have to worry about us again da.” Finn answered.

“Aye but it’s his money son.”

“No. It’s our money; he’s legally made it ours, and if we break up it gets split three ways equally.”

“Oh.” Gary said. “Wow… even though Phil’s a good man, I still…” He shook his head, “It’s not my experience of rich men that they share their wealth.” Gary said.

“Well he did. And you never have to worry about me going hungry or living on the street, cos even a third of it is more than enough for the rest of me life.”

“Wow.” Gary said softly, “Well then. I don’t feel so bad about you paying me mortgage then.” He grinned, “And you’ll be glad to know that I’ve been able to scale back the amount of hours I’ve been working; with no mortgage and no Finn to feed.” Finn laughed, “I only work four days a week now, and I’ve saved so much that me and your mum are staying in Australia for another four weeks after this.”

“I am so glad da.” Finn hugged his dad. “You deserve a break after looking after me for so long.”

By 1am a lot of the guests were dancing around the bonfire on the beach in a state of semi or compete undress. Including Finn’s dad. A couple of huge roving spotlights were strafing the water so the lifeguards could keep everyone safe. Rae was mortified to see Karim and her mother in the ocean, very obviously shagging. But they weren’t the only ones; it seemed like Woody’s beach had some sort of spell on it that killed people’s inhibitions. There were about fifty guests and they stayed late into the night dancing, some of them making out, some of them shagging, most of them removing some of their clothing before the end of the night.

Phil, Finn and Rae had left before everyone else; they went to their hotel room and made love before settling in to get as much sleep as they could before they flew out to their honeymoon destination tomorrow.
‘40 Day Dream’ by Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7nD1T7mjp8

She got sunset on her breath now, I inhaled just a little bit, now I got no fear of death now

It was a 12 hour flight to LA Airport, Rae and Finn bewildered as to where they were going for their honeymoon. They had a daytrip into LA, Finn joking the whole time that Phil’s career was going to bring them here, and Phil looking mildly unimpressed. Which of course only made Finn go harder with the teasing. It took an entirely surreal turn when a tour guide for one of those ‘find the stars homes’ tours recognised Phil and then, of course, all the tourists with the guide also recognised him, attributing many films to him, even a couple that he’d actually been in. That had amused all three of them, but in the back of their heads they realised that being recognised in public was going to happen more and more, and Phil being asked for autographs and to have photos taken with him was going to continue to happen with increasing frequency.

They stayed at the Mondrian hotel in California in the Penthouse, Rae loved the hotel a lot more than she liked seeing all the ‘perfect’ women around her. She noticed how Finn and Phil both fit right in, in terms of appearance, but she felt like California and LA weren’t that welcoming to her. Although, no one gave a second glance to them when they walked arm in arm on their city tour and the hotel staff didn’t seem to think it weird that they stayed in the Penthouse all together. It was strange, but Rae ended up liking LA for the 36 hours she was there; but she knew if she stayed there too long, her self-esteem would take a battering. Next they were heading of on another four hour flight to Miami, and then quick as anything onto another flight; they had guessed by now that they were off to the Caribbean.

“A bit of a stereotype, I know.” Phil had said, “But I just couldn’t go past the beauty and the romance of the place I chose… and the privacy and luxury are also nice. I did wanna spoil you both a bit.” He grinned cheekily. Phil had hired all 11 rooms spread over three buildings of the Sanctuary villa on Parrot Cay in Turks and Caicos. They had that part of the island to themselves; the beach was wonderfully private and had white powdery sand and azure, calm water. The house was luxurious and they had their own wait staff to do their every bidding. They had a private Jacuzzi and swimming pool and Rae had lost her mind a little when she saw Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher in one of the restaurants on the island. Finn and Rae could not fathom how much it would have cost to hire the Sanctuary villa and its guesthouses for 40 nights, but they knew it was obviously a lot; they were treated like royalty. Every night fresh fruit and local flowers were delivered to their room. Every morning breakfast was served on their private balcony overlooking the ocean. They had massages, fine food, lazing on the beach, swimming, snorkelling, diving lessons, island hopping, rainforest walks and making love… whole days of making love… in every room of the Sanctuary. On the beach, sand getting all over them. In the ocean, floating around. In the forests. On dance floors. On the balcony. Hard, slow, gentle, vicious, fast, barely awake…

It had been exactly the way a honeymoon was supposed to be.
They had all been sad to say goodbye to that paradise, but also excited to finally be heading back to their flat, sleep in their own bed and check out how Sprucey was going; Kelsey had agreed to look after their tree. They all felt truly rested; it had been so good for them to really get away and just rest for an extended period of time. Phil had benefitted the most from it; he seemed to be back to his old self, but still allowing himself to have less control of his emotions at appropriate times. He also had gotten a very amused attitude towards his public image and his career; he had been angry about the issue of him coming out in the past, but now he seemed amused that their relationship was going to offend so many people; he saw it as their problem, not his.

When they had flown back into Los Angeles, Finn and Phil had both decided to finally get tattoos, other than their relationship tattoo. And Rae got her second, technically third, but they didn’t count the relationship tattoo in with the tally because they all had that.

Finn got the notes as stave music to ‘Wonderwall’ by Oasis; it had a ribbon effect, and was artistic, with geometric shapes in colour underneath the main black ink, snaking down his side, beginning just under his armpit ending at his hipbone. That one had hurt a fair bit and he had had a raging erection for the whole thing; tattoos where wildly arousing for him. Tattoos on places where the bones are closer to the surface of the skin are always more painful than those that are on fleshy areas and Finn considered the possibility of getting his ribs or spine done next.

Phil had gotten a Shakespeare quote on his left upper, inner forearm, just under the elbow crease: ‘there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.’ It was a reminder to him when anxiety struck him, and also Hamlet, where this quote was taken from, was his favourite Shakespearean play. His was a plain text tattoo in cursive script. He bit his bottom lip and managed to stop himself from giggling the whole time, but he went red and Rae and Finn spent the whole time cackling at him, even as they got tattooed themselves.

Rae got a dragon, snaking up her right inner ankle; dragons symbolised balance between the elements, and Rae needed to remind herself to keep her balance, because it was when she was internally balanced that her mental health was at its best. One of the ways she struggled to maintain balance was between how much she gave others and how much she gave herself; her little ankle dragon was there to remind her to take care of herself more than anything. The dragon was very medieval looking and she had it coloured very subtly, again in greens, blues and purples. They had lazed around the pool that afternoon feeling sorry for themselves because swimming was out of the question.

“Alright we have to stop with the extravagant spending after this.” Finn said when they finally got past customs and there was a limo waiting to drive them home. Phil gave him a grinning nod of his head and they piled into the back seat as the driver dealt with their bags.

“You know,” Rae was saying as the limo driver got into the car, “That whole thing about vaginas stretching out with use is clearly a myth. Just from the amount of dick I’ve had in me in the past 40 days alone.”

“We did give you a good dicking didn’t we girl?” Finn said dirtily.

“Oh yeah and what about getting a good vaging?” Rae answered.

“Oh we got a fucking amazing vaging… multiple vagings…” Finn answered.
“Best vaging.” Phil added. “Great arsings as well.”

“Fucking fantastic arsings!” Finn agreed.

“Definitely a lot o’ arsing around.” Rae shot at them and they all broke out into laughter. Rae and Finn were acutely aware of how good this break had been for Phil; how he seemed to be finally healed, and they were so grateful. Phil looked up and saw the limo driver looking back at him in the rear-view mirror. There was no doubt that the limo driver recognised him. He supposed the story of his polyamory would break soon; he worried about protecting Finn and Rae from the worst of what was to come; he wished they didn’t have to suffer for his career. But they had spent a lot of time reassuring him that they were ready for this.

“So to help ease us back into the real world,” Phil said, “I had some little gifts made for us when I had our rings made.” Phil said, “The first set of diamonds they did from our hair came out quite bright in colour and looked very garish when put together on the ring, so I had these made.” He pulled out a cloth gift bag from his backpack and emptied it into his hand. They were key chains, made from rhodium and brightly coloured diamonds. Rae’s was a book which was partly opened, the cover encrusted with bright green diamonds. Finns was a guitar, with bright blue diamonds. And Phil had gotten the drama and comedy masks for himself, deep purple, almost red diamonds encrusted his.

“Holy shit.” Finn said.

“You can’t expect us to take these out o’ the house!” Rae marvelled.

“We take our rings out!” Finn pointed out.

“Oh fuck!” Rae laughed. “I feel like a bloody jewellery store.” She grinned as she took the key ring. “It’s so beautiful.”

“I really didn’t know what to do with the spare diamonds.” Phil said, relieved that they liked them, “This seemed like an ok idea.” Rae looked at the details etched into the book, pages, bindings; it was a work of art. Finn’s had six strings and frets; the back of the guitar layered with diamond.

“I love it.” Finn said, “Even if it is a little bit extravagant.”

“Just a little.” Phil agreed and they laughed, hugging up on the backseat, staring at the London traffic.
Get Down Make Love

Chapter Summary

there’s sex

‘Get Down Make Love’ by Queen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2vk3gOjm6I

You say you’re hungry… I give you meat.

When they opened the door, there was a huge ‘welcome home banner’ over their windows, and a
path of wildflowers on the floor to the bedroom. Rae and Finn looked at Phil and he grinned.

“Last thing, I promise.” He answered, “Although I asked Kels to get wildflowers, not to make a
path to the bedroom.”

“I just think she knows us too well!” Rae laughed and dumped her bag on the floor, Finn and Phil
doing the same and following her to the bedroom. They went into the room to find a huge bottle of
very expensive champagne in an ice bucket but no glasses. The bed had a huge sheet of black
plastic laid over it and Rae grinned as she turned to undress Phil, but Finn had already stripped
Phil’s shirt off, his lips devouring Phil’s mouth. So Rae started on his pants.

“Let me undress you!” Phil laughed as Finn and Rae got his clothes off.

“We’re focusing on you.” Rae and Finn had silently agreed to it the minute they’d seen the
welcome home banner; they hadn’t even needed to look at each other to know that’s how it was
going down. Phil had planned most of the ‘wedding’ and the most incredible honeymoon, and
now the homecoming was special too. This was going to be all for him.

As soon as they had him undressed Finn picked Phil up off his feet and threw him onto the bed,
still covered with the plastic sheet. Rae made a surprised, excited noise, matched by Phil’s noise.

“I will never tire of your strength.” Phil said with a lustful gleam in his eye. Finn jumped onto the
bed, kissing him and holding his hands above his head. Rae reached into the bottom drawer of the
bedside table and pulled out their handcuffs. She snapped one around Phil’s wrist and Phil made
another surprised noise as Finn pushed him up higher on the bed so Rae could thread the handcuffs
through the bars on the ornate bedhead; it had been designed just for this purpose. She snapped
the other cuff around his other wrist, securing him to the bedhead. Finn ran his nails down Phil’s
ticklish sides and Phil gasped and then gritted his teeth, his body writhing with pleasure, his eyes
locked on Finn’s; his desire clear.

Rae was quite used to seeing her men play now, and turned to look at the champagne; the riddle of
the black plastic over the bed was quite obvious of course, the champagne was meant to be drunk
off each other’s bodies. She opened it, popping the top easily and without any mess and sat down
beside her men, Finn now kissing Phil’s toes and Phil screeching with ticklishness, but unable to
get away.

“You have such an oral fixation.” Rae said to Finn and Finn nodded and gave a lusty chuckle as he
licked the arch of Phil’s foot.

“You complainin’ girl?” Finn asked with a cheeky grin.

“It’s an addiction of yours I actively encourage.” Rae returned as Finn put Phil’s foot down and
watched as Rae poured champagne on Phil’s stomach.

“Oh fuck that’s cold!” Phil started to laugh again, but realised he had to keep still. Rae licked the
champagne off his stomach.

“That looks like fun.” Finn poured some champagne on Phil’s chest and stomach and they both
licked it of him, Finn’s tongue delicately tracing along Phil’s collarbones and finding the hollow
between them.

“Save some of it, I wanna lick it off you two.” Phil pleaded and Rae took the bottle from Finn after
he poured more out and put it back in the ice bucket.

“See how much I love you.” She told him before kissing down his sticky stomach to his pelvis.
Finn kissed Phil’s lips as Rae slowly licked along Phil’s abdominal muscles; the ones that made a v
shape into his groin. Phil could taste the champagne on Finn’s lips. Phil’s fingers curled as Rae’s
lips teased him, slowly getting closer to his cock. Finn ran his hand down Phil’s body as he licked
Phil’s tongue. At the moment Rae’s lips closed over the head of Phil’s cock, Finn cupped Phil’s
balls firmly.

“Rae says I have an oral fixation.” Finn whispered in Phil’s ear. Rae slid the entire length of
Phil’s cock down her throat; she had a true gift for deep throat, her lips touching Finn’s fingers, her
nose touching Phil’s pelvis. Finn looked down at Rae enjoying herself, his lips near Phil’s ear.
Phil raised his head and watched her too; it was a true privilege watching Rae do many things, but
watching her suck cock was both a privilege and a pleasure. “But I dunno…I reckon our girl has
one too.” Rae looked up at both of them, the pleasure she got from doing this was in her eyes, the
desire she had for both of them was by far the sexiest thing imaginable; the desire they all had for
each other seemed to be an indestructible beast, barely domesticated, still two thirds wild, often
entirely out of their control, and always the most incredibly erotic thing any of them could
imagine.

Rae ran the very tip of her tongue around Phil’s glans, her eyes on his eyes, his abdominal muscles
flexing with pleasure and the desire for her to take his cock into her mouth again. Finn squeezed
Phil’s balls a little tighter and Phil groaned, Rae taking the opportunity to again slide her lips down
his cock while he was already groaning in bliss.

“I think you should put your oral fixation to good use Finn.” Phil breathed and turned his eyes to
Finn.

“Aye I bet you do.” Finn teased and kissed his lips gently. Finn kissed Phil’s neck as he got on all
fours, crawling backward down the bed, kissing down Phil’s body. Rae moved over instinctively
as Finn kissed along Phil’s inner thigh. Phil’s head dropped back when Finn’s tongue finally tickle
along his perineum before he sucked Phil’s balls into his mouth. Rae started to undress herself as
she sucked Phil’s cock, Phil watched and could see snippets of her clothing coming off.

“FUCK!” He screeched as Finn tickled the bottom of his foot, his mouth still firmly sucking on
Phil’s balls, Rae’s mouth moving up and down in Phil’s cock. “You know historically, tickling has actually been used as torture?” Phil said forcefully.

“Aye you tell us every time.” Finn answered before swapping places with Rae and licking the head of Phil’s cock.

“We can stop?” Rae said innocently. She always said that when he told them. But they all knew it was his kind of torture.

“Don’t stop… even if I say ‘no.’” Phil said and Rae ran her fingers along his inner thighs. There was a moment where Rae paused, they’d never had that kind of rule in play, and even though Phil would giggle through tickling when they fucked, he’d never told them to stop. But Finn kept sucking Phil’s cock; he’d learned the slow, hard way with Rae that you just accepted and respected a person’s sexual wishes. He’d once tried to protect Rae from his own sexuality, thinking it was too dark for her, but Rae had shown him the way and now Finn just accepted what either of them said.

“Safe word in play.” Rae said and Finn acknowledged that with a grunt before taking as much of Phil in as he could; still not the entire length, but Finn was still pleased with himself. And besides, it was what Finn did with his tongue that mattered; wrapping it around the head of Phil’s cock, in between rapid up and down deep throating. Rae sucked Phil’s balls happily, her nails tickling the inside of his thighs, making him squirm and giggle in between groaning with pleasure. She took hold of Phil’s cock and tapped it against Finn’s face before sliding her hand up and down the wet shaft while Finn worked over the head with his mouth. And Finn was still the expert with his mouth; in no time at all Phil was groaning loudly. Finn reached under Phil and slid two fingers, wet with saliva, into Phil’s arse, stroking his prostrate. Phil alternated between giggling and moaning loudly as Rae and Finn alternated between sucking his balls and his cock, their fingers finding ticklish places and making him gasp and giggle, his cock pulsing with pleasure, pre-cum flavouring the blow job perfectly.

“Me first.” Rae said and Finn nodded kissing down Phil’s thighs as Rae crawled up his body. She kissed his lips as Finn helped slide Phil’s cock into Rae’s pussy. There were groans all round as Rae very slowly slid Phil’s length into her, Finn watching, his face almost buried in the action. Rae continued to kiss Phil and very slowly grind her hips while Finn licked Phil’s balls, the shaft of Phil’s cock as it slid in and out of Rae; up and down he travelled licking and bringing even more pleasurable moans out of them.

Finn was gently rolling one of Phil’s balls around in his mouth when Rae dramatically sat up, flicking her hair back, roiling her torso erotically, raising her hands above her head, her eyes not leaving Phil’s eyes as she fucked him. Finn kissed down the inside of Phil’s thighs, his calves down to his feet, he looked up a watched Rae riding him like he was bucking bronco, Phil moaning and watching her body move. Finn laughed when he saw Phil pulling at the handcuffs, very obviously desperate to touch Rae; she was very good at making them want to touch her. Finn ran the tips of his fingers along the arch of Phil’s foot and he gasped. So Finn got up and undressed hastily before he grabbed the rope from the wardrobe; they had a plastic tub of sex toys in the bottom of it, and sometimes they got left in the bottom draw with the lubricant as well. He tied Phil’s feet to the end of the bed so that his legs were parted. Finn had to stop and watch Rae in unadulterated lustful appreciation; that woman knew how to fuck a man. The way she ground her hips and rolled the motion through her body not only looked amazing but it felt incredible. And when she went wild like she was now, flinging her hair around with absolutely no self-consciousness, her breasts jiggling, her hips thrusting rhythmically, her eyes either closed in pleasure or looking at you so lustfully you knew she was going to devour you; it was everything a man could do to stop himself from coming, and Finn could see the struggle in Phil as he panted
heavily and stared at her. Finn grinned cheekily and decided to help Phil out by tickling the bottom of his feet.

“Fuck!!” Phil yelped pulling his foot back violently but not being able to move it because of the ropes. Finn tickled his feet mercilessly. “FUCK!” Phil screeched, his eyes flicking between Rae and Finn. Finn found the sadist in him was delighted by this type of play, Phil struggled beautifully, pulling against the ropes and crying out as he laughed and gasped and groaned. And Rae didn’t stop fucking him for one moment, simply ignoring his laughter.

“Oh fuck yes!” Rae cried out as she started to cum, Phil groaning as he felt her muscles pulsating around his cock. So Finn bit the arch of his foot. Repeatedly. The result was immediate. Phil bucked and pulled on the restraints and laughed and cried out.

“NO! NO! DON’T!” He cried it out and Rae, just out of her orgasm stopped moving and looked down at him. She looked back at Finn who had just started on Phil’s other foot making Phil screech with laughter and renewed calls for Finn to stop.

“Finn?” Rae said. And Finn looked up.

“He hasn’t said the safe-” Finn started to say.

“DON’T STOP!” Phil yelled desperately and Finn laughed and bit Phil’s foot again before licking in between his toes. “NO!” Phil screamed out laughing. Rae slowly started to grind her hips again, watching Phil laughing his arse of and screaming for Finn to stop. She saw his muscles tensing up, but saw the bliss on his face as she started to really fuck him again. Maybe Phil needed to be able to say ‘no’ and have it ignored in a safe way like this because he was always so in control of himself? Rae didn’t know what it was, but Phil was clearly loving it, even as he tried to writhe away from the torture Finn was inflicting upon him. And if he was loving it, then all was good.

“My turn.” Finn said and grabbed the lube. Rae licked Phil’s cock as Finn rummaged through the bottom drawer; giving Phil a chance to catch his breath. Phil was still giggling when Finn straddled him. Finn reached behind himself and got everything nice and slippery with the lube, his eyes on Phil’s. Rae laid down beside Phil and kissed his neck gently as Finn slid Phil into his rectum, his eyes rolling back with pleasure as he pushed himself to take Phil fast; not giving his body the usual time it needed to open up and accommodate his cock, causing bolts of pain in Finn’s lower abdomen that he quite enjoyed. He knew how to do this so it caused just the right amount and type of pain; both when he was giving and getting it up the arse, because he did this with great frequency. Phil gave him a satisfied grin, knowing Finn was hurting himself in that good way they all liked, impaling himself on Phil. He liked the way Finn looked as he gave himself that particular kind of pleasure. When Finn had gotten Phil balls deep inside of him Finn opened his eyes and looked at Phil as he started to move himself up and down Phil’s cock. Finn put his hands behind him, onto Phil’s thighs and fucked Phil hard, pushing Phil’s cock deep into himself as they locked eyes. Rae started to gentle tickle Phil’s sides and he gasped.

“Let me taste you.” He said to Rae quite suddenly and she cocked an eyebrow.

“Never gonna say no to that.” She said as she got up and knelt over Phil’s face, facing Finn. Phil groaned in satisfaction as her scent filled his nostrils and he licked her clit greedily. Finn was quite brutally fucking Phil; hard and fast and deep, and Phil’s satisfied groans of enjoyment were muffled by Rae rubbing her cunt into his face. He reached his fingers down in between Phil’s thighs and started to tickle him. Rae giggled as Phil gasped but she took her cunt off his face.

“I’m gonna hold your hand, let go of my hand if you’re safe wording us ok?” Rae asked and Finn
ceased moving and listened.

“Alright.” Phil answered, and when Rae put her fingers in his he squeezed them.

“Need to say anything, before I get back on you?” Rae asked.

“Get on me.” Phil replied eagerly and Rae laughed as she lowered her cunt back onto his face. With one had twisted behind her holding his hand, she ground her cunt into his face and began to tickle his ribs, Finn continuing to tickle between his thighs. Within a few minutes Phil was screaming again, his cries muffled, but it was still clear he was laughing. His hand squeezed Rae’s tightly and he began to buck under Finn, trying to escape their ticking fingers. Phil’s pelvis thrust up so hard that Finn’s eyes opened wide.

“Holy shit.” He groaned, “I don’t think I’ve ever had it slammed in that hard afore.” He laughed.

“Should we slow down?” Rae asked.

“No go harder!” He laughed and they tickled Phil, making him buck under Finn violently, but his hand stayed held onto Rae’s. Finn’s head rolled back, “Oh fuck…” He groaned slowly, deeply in pleasure. But when a few minutes later Phil’s hand started to loosen on hers, she stopped.

“Possible safe word.” She said and Finn stopped and watched as Rae stood up and looked down at him. Phil was gasping for air, from laughing so hard and being semi smothered.

“I just need a few minutes without tickling, please,” He said between pants. “So I can focus enough to make Rae cum. After that, back to it yeah?” He gave them both a cheeky grin.

“You’re just stopping to make me cum?” Rae asked.

“Good reason to stop.” Finn commented. Rae gave him a mildly unimpressed look.

“And you’re sure that you’re fine to continue after that?” She wanted to make sure.

“Oh aye.” Phil answered, “I don’t need to stop now other than really wanting to make you cum.”

“Alright.” Rae said with a grin and knelt back down, this time facing the other way. Finn continued to fuck Phil as Phil focused his attention on making Rae cum. He wished he had his hands free; he was guaranteed screaming orgasmic results there; his broken fingers had healed up with no lasting effects it seemed, and he had res-strengthened over the past few months, his ribs on the other hand ached in the cold weather and the doctor was still considering possibly re-breaking them in surgery to realign them better. But Phil wasn’t thinking about that now, right now he was looking up at Rae’s beautiful pussy, and he had only his mouth to satisfy her with, which always did the trick, but not as well as his hands, so he tried to channel Finn as he sucked on her clit, rolling it between his lips, revelling in her groans.

Finn rolled his hips lavishly, taking the opportunity to try different types of thrusts; they were all always doing this, even going over old territory, because as they got older their tastes were always changing. He tried a few different things and heard Phil groan gutturally; he knew he was onto a winner for Phil and it felt quite good for him too. Finn kept doing it, making Phil groan happily, his sounds mingling perfectly with Rae’s deepening groans. They all knew what that deepening moan meant and Finn heard Phil pulling against the handcuffs, wanting to touch her as the orgasm he was giving her started to shake her body. Finn ran a finger down her spine as she shook, intensifying the shudders wracking her. She grabbed hold of the bed head and rode Phil’s face, crying out loudly. She looked over her shoulder at Finn, still gasping.
“Do we need to untie him to make a Phil sandwich?”

“Nah I can get under ‘im.” Finn replied and stood. Rae stood as well and they both jumped off the bed, Finn to grab a mouthful of champagne, he kissed Phil with his mouth full of the liquid while Rae cleaned Phil’s cock, preparing it for her to ride him again. Finn moved the cuff chain up the bar slightly.

“Hold onto the bar and lift you upper body as much as you can.” Finn said. Phil did so and Finn put one leg under him, the rest of him lying across the bed at an angle. “Rae, untie his feet?” Rae did so and Phil lifted his pelvis, Finn pushing Phil’s pelvis even further up as he scooted underneath him, the plastic sheet crumpling up with his movements. When Finn was finally under Phil, Phil had no choice but to lie on him, but he used his legs to lift his pelvis slightly so Finn could move his hips. Finn slowly slid his cock into Phil’s arse, Phil groaning, his eyes rolling back as Finn pushed slightly too fast and it hurt a little. Rae pulled out the ‘sex blocks’ they’d bought; firm rubber blocks she put on either side of Finn’s hip and knelt on them. With the extra height the blocks gave her she could ride whoever was getting fucked in the arse beneath her; in this case Phil. She slid Phil’s cock in to her vagina and instantly started to thrust while Finn thrust up from under Phil. Phil’s head rolled back onto Finn’s shoulder. They each enjoyed being the filling, the meat, in the sandwich, and for Rae it was always fun watching the ecstasy on the face of Phil or Finn as they were double fucked. Rae and Finn got into a rhythm, Phil’s head rolled back, but his eyes were on Rae as she again threw her hair around, her hands going to her breasts this time and Phil pulled on the cuffs violently. Rae enjoyed that he struggled against his restraints; but these had been specially made so that Finn couldn’t break out of them, so Phil had no hope. Rae kept her eye contact and pulled at her nipples, a teasing look in her eyes. And Finn started to tickle Phil’s sides. He struggled and cried out, yelling ‘no’ at them, but they only fucked and tickled him harder. Rae tickled between his thighs, his stomach, his armpits

Rae felt tingles in her groin and started to grind harder and faster.

“YES!” She cried out as her pleasure started to peak.

“NO!” Phil gasped through his laughter.

“YES! OH FUCK!”

“NO! NO!”

“OH MY FUCKING GOD YES!”

“STOP!”

“AAAAAAAAAAA!”

“ARGH!”

Rae came forcefuly and a second orgasm followed straight after; she was very good at giving herself orgasms nowadays. As soon as she was done coming she returned her attention to Phil and started to help Finn with the tickling again. Phil was crying with laughter when his gasps of mirth and pleasure started to turn to deep moans.

Phil came quite spectacularly in between laughing and gasping for air.

“NO! STOP! OH. MY. GOOD! YES! YES!” He sounded delirious as he came. Finn made a few lusty noises and sped up just as Phil was finally finishing up. A few thrusts in a gasping and happy Phil and Finn was coming. They collapsed together awkwardly; Phil still cuffied to the bed,
but all of them exhaustedly panting happily.

“Welcome home.” Phil grinned. Rae kissed him and got up to get the keys to the cuffs. “So shower?” He asked as Rae released him from the cuffs and he got up off Finn. His eyes landed on the champagne, “Then I have champagne to drink off my partners.”
Finn was designing his page to be more user friendly; the internet was evolving fast and he very much enjoyed keeping up with it. He was getting quite a following with his music reviews; he uploaded videos of him talking about albums. And he was thinking, now that he had quite a few contacts in the music industry from all the DJ work he was doing, that now would be a good time to put a call out for musicians to start doing interviews with him; he wanted to do deeper interviews that poured over the details. And there were plenty of musicians that wanted to explain all the technical things they did with their music. And for those that didn’t he would do a lighter series of interviews. He had figured out how to put in a few advertisements on his page so that it created revenue, but since he didn’t need money, he kept them small and only put up ads for band albums or musical instruments for sale, or gigs. He felt like his career in this industry was really starting to take off.

Rae was on her third published book now, and was writing her fourth. Her publisher was providing a publicist for her, and she had done several book signings now. That had actually been so amazing; to see how many people her work had touched.

And Phil? Well the last six months had seen him return to full glory with his work and he was doing low budget movies, tv and theatre, was scheduled to do a huge budget movie in America in March, and, as Sarah had suspected, had been nominated for the best supporting actor BAFTA; she always knew what awards her clients were going to be nominated for. He had dozens of scripts thrown at him daily, and it was now rare for them to leave the flat without being recognised. But most people were very lovely and not rude or too demanding; so far it had been alright.

He was looking over scripts now, Finn and Rae weighing in on the decision to be made.

“I’ve got a couple of radio plays in the works.” He said happily, “Keen to try it.”

“Keen to listen to them.” Rae answered.

“Elsa’s theatre company is doing a production of Pride and Prejudice.”

“Well you have to do that.” Finn replied without looking up from the computer.

“She wants you to do lighting and sound and Rae to direct.”

“I’m up for it.” Finn answered.

“I haven’t directed in ages.” Rae said with a grimace. “But I miss it…”

“So this goes in the ‘yes’ pile.” Phil laughed, “And I get to play Mr Darcy!”

“You’ll make a sexy Darcy.” Rae replied as she researched Celtic traditions; her story was set in the times of the Celts.
“Oh he knows.” Finn teased. Phil grinned but continued to read through scripts.

“Movies…” he went through the scripts and pulled a few out, “In this one I’d be a porn star who got AIDS; lots of sex and some full frontal nudity.” He pulled out a different script, “I’ve been invited to audition for this one, it’s a drug addict. This one’s a cop in a crime thriller. And this one-” His mobile phone went off and he answered it.

“Sarah.” He said and stopped and listened for a long time, “I don’t care, you have to make it happen.” He answered and pulled the phone away from his ear to put it on speaker phone.

“… for the best.”

“Pardon?” Phil asked, having missed part of it to put her on speaker.

“I said that I think it’s for the best.”

“And you’d be wrong.” Phil answered as he ruffled through his scripts.

“It’s bad enough that you won’t answer the rumours with a ‘no.’ Confirming those rumours will harm your career.” It wasn’t just Phil’s publicist that didn't want them to come out. Rae’s believed that any girl that dated Phil Seymour would get a lot of hate from some of Phil’s female fans and that it would harm her sales. Rae’s publicist, Bianca, a feminist, also bitterly noted that if it was just Finn dating Phil, those same female fans would love and support Finn and write steamy fics about their sex lives.

“Then you’ve got a challenge on your hands; I know how you like those.” Phil was unmoved by Sarah’s concerns that no studio or director, or even actors would want to work with him if his relationship was confirmed.

“Phil, I don’t think I’m being clear enough. This industry barely accepts people of colour and openly gay actors. Being polyamorous is something they just can’t understand; they will not accept it. Job offers will dry up. Your career will die if you do this.”

“Sarah, I’m not going over this with you again. We are not answering the rumours until I show up on the red carpet with my two partners.” Phil had never ‘come out’ about his relationship because he didn’t think he should have to; it should have no bearing on his career. But now that he was nominated for a major award, he was absolutely taking his two partners. And that meant dropping his relationship on everyone like a bomb.

“Well the BAFTAS are reluctant to give you two partner seats.” Sarah repeated what she had explained in detail at the beginning of the phone call.

“Well you’re an excellent publicist Sarah; I am positive you’ll find a way to spin it so that they think they’ve been wonderful in allowing me the extra seat.”

“You’ll be the death of me Phillip J Seymour!” She answered grumpily and Phil laughed.

“Just remember how much you love this shit.”

“I hope you three are prepared for the intense media and fan scrutiny you’re about to get.” She said, “I’m out.”

“Goodbye Sarah.” Phil answered and waited for her to hang up before picking up his phone.

“You sure you’re ready girl?” Finn asked Rae. So far there hadn’t really been any photos of Rae
circulating, but Finn had seen some comments on fan pages dedicated to Phil that they thought he was with ‘some fat minger’. Finn had already had his penis show up in a magazine alongside Phil, and he had no doubts that there would be nude pics of Rae somewhere; people were just waiting for the most explosive time to reveal them.

“I’m ready.” She answered, “And Kester’s on standby.” She reminded them. When the nomination had come through and Phil had said he wanted to take them both, they’d gone to Stamford and made an appointment to see Kester. He’d laughed and told them that this was outside of his area of expertise, but had helped them immensely nonetheless. Like always. “You ready?”

“Oh they’ve already seen me todger, what else can they throw at me?” Finn shrugged.

“True.” Rae replied. They both turned their eyes to Phil.

“I’m ready.” He answered.

Izzy was measuring them for their clothes for the BAFTAS when Sarah called to tell them that the organisers of the BAFTAS were pissed off, but he could have the extra chair.

“The whole gang is getting together; they’re playing the BAFTAS at the Swan.” Izzy said with a grin and Phil blushed slightly and put the back of his fingers to his mouth; he did that sometimes when he was simultaneously pleased and embarrassed. “Stamford is definitely claiming Phil as theirs. All three of you are getting claimed actually.”

“Aha brilliant; fame by association.” Finn laughed and lit a cigarette.

“No way Finn. You’re totally internet famous.” Izzy laughed.

“Aye Rhys tells me that all the teenagers who go to the boxing joint comment on the photo of me.” There as a photo of Rhys and Finn sparring on the wall at the boxing joint; most of the gang had photos up on the wall. Phil and Rae weren’t up on the wall, but they’d agreed with Rhys that they’d put some photographs taken the next time they were in Stamford. Petra and Phil were going to get theirs taken together sparring; Phil was one of her favourite students because of how hard he worked.

“All of my apprentices know your stuff.” Izzy said to Finn, “The guys wanna be you and the girls wanna do you.” She gave him a cheeky grin and took a pin out of her mouth; she had taken several out of ‘pinbear’ her pin cushion that was shaped like a teddy bear, and put them between her lips while she pinned the tricky bust area on Rae’s dress. She had learned to expertly speak with Pins hanging out of her mouth. “You’re all famous in your own circles.” She finished up Rae’s bust and then shrugged, “Course Phil’s famous in most circles.”

“And he probably cares the least about it.” Rae answered and Phil gave a nonchalant shrug.

“Although I do like the idea of the gang watching the BAFTAS for me.” He grinned, a blush colouring his cheeks.

“Right well, I’ll get these done fairly quickly.” She said as she shoved the spare pins back into pinbear. “I’m quite pleased with what we’ve come up with.”
Finn had decided to wear Scottish Highland formal wear in the modern interpretation of the Mackay Clan tartan; dark blues and greys, his tie matching the palest colour in the tartan. Phil was wearing a silver grey suit with waistcoat, in the finest material as usual, with a deep purple tie and pocket handkerchief. And Rae was in a deep green dress, full through the skirt, cinched at the waist with a black belt, and tightly fitted, sharply angled sweet heart bust line with a very low neckline. When Rae had decided that she didn’t want her breasts to be the main attraction at the BAFTAS because it was Phil’s night, Izzy had added a lace, tight fitted ‘shirt’ over the top in the same colour but with a hint of black in it.

“I’m quite chuffed by the idea of my clothes being on tv!” Izzy grinned.

Rae looked out the window for a moment as the limo chauffeur came around to open the door. There were a lot of people lining the red carpet.

“Oh god.” She laughed shakily; ‘the red carpet.’

“Are we ready for our first, of many,” Finn winked at Phil, “red carpets?”

“As ready as I’ll ever be.” Rae muttered.

“We don’t have to go if you don’t want to.” Phil said and took her hand. They both looked at him and saw that he genuinely meant it; he’d give up this night celebrating all the hard work he’d put in if they’d prefer to not go.

“Don’t be daft.” Rae answered as the door to the limo opened. “You first.” She told Phil. Phil gave her a smile and stepped out of the limo. They heard a cheer go up and Rae looked at Finn wide-eyed. Sarah said that his wonderful solo interview in the wake of his attack, followed by the gross miscarriage of justice he’d suffered had given Phil a huge amount of public sympathy, couple this with incredible performances in increasingly bigger tv shows and movies, his great looks, and his somewhat mysterious and mercurial public persona and he was hugely popular. Phil acknowledged the cheer with a slight grin and the back of the fingers going to the lips momentarily before he turned around and took Rae’s hand. She tried to be as elegant as she could as she scooted across the seat and stepped out of the car. She didn’t wait to see if there was a response to her; she knew there wouldn’t be, she wasn’t really known by appearance, and turned to Finn, holding out a hand to him. Finn took her hand and tried to not flash his lack of underwear. Chop had dared him, Archie had backed Chop on the dare; he couldn’t back down from that. The reporter closest to them had her jaw hanging lose as Phil took Rae’s hand in one of his, and Finn’s in the other. Rae tried to think of every fierce and confident woman she knew and channel them all. She wanted to smile and be happy, but she also wanted to look imperiously at anyone who gave them trouble. Rae found it far easier than she thought she would to settle the nerves in her stomach and smile genuinely; excited for Phil and for the fact that he was still getting cheers.

The closest reporter had managed to get herself together and motioned for them to come over for an interview. Phil acquiesced with a happy smile; he was as excited as Finn and Rae, and it felt so good to have them both here with him.

“Phil Seymour, it’s great to see you here!”

“Thanks.” Phil answered.
“Because there was some suggestion you wouldn’t come?”

“Ah yes, that rumour came about because the organisers of the BAFTAs and myself had a discussion about the seating arrangements. But they were incredibly gracious and accommodating, and it was never in question that all three of us would be here tonight.” Phil answered diplomatically.

“All three of you…” She said suggestively.

“Oh yes, how rude of me!” Phil laughed, “Allow me to introduce my partners; Rae Earl and Finn Nelson.”

“Yes!” Oh my god I love your books!” The reporter gushed and Rae laughed and blushed.

“Thank you.” Rae answered.

“And my sister just adores you.” She said to Finn.

“Aye, I hear that I’m internet famous.” He answered cheekily.

“So there’s been a lot of rumours about this…?” She said tentatively.

“Yes.” Phil answered unhelpfully. And Rae and Finn knew he was refusing to play nice when it came to questions of his sexuality or relationship.

“Yes.” She said awkwardly, “Why did you never address those rumours?”

“Why should I?” Phil answered, “A person’s sexuality and relationship are their own business. Neither stop me from doing my job properly. I just didn’t consider the questions these rumours raised to be valid questions.” He answered in a breezy charming way, and the reporter kept grinning at him foolishly; like she couldn’t believe she was talking to him.

“Perhaps some people felt like you were hiding it?”

“I never hid my relationship, we go out together, we live together, we had a commitment ceremony in a public space in Australia. We go to that nudist beach in Australia, where those photographs of Finn and myself were taken, together.”

“You still go there?”

“Most years.” Phil said with a cheeky grin, “May just gone, we had our reception there.” He put a hand in his pocket, “We’ve been quite open about our relationship, we just never answer gossip.”

“I’m sure there will be a lot of open questions about it now that you’ve, sort of, come out…?” She asked.

“I suppose so.” Phil said with a roguish shrug and a crooked smile. “Such as?” He offered her the chance to address some of the questions she thought might be going around.

“Well a lot of people think that relationships like these are a passing phase and that-”

“Well to those people I would like to say that we’ve been together for eight years, so please do tell me how long a passing phase is exactly?”

“Nearly nine.” Finn added.
“Wow.” She said delightedly, “And does it work just like a normal relationship?”

“I reject that question.” Phil said with a carefully manufactured smile that Sarah had made him promise to wear when he got pissed off at reporters.

“What?” The reporter sounded confused.

“What’s a ‘normal’ relationship?” Phil replied, “To us, this is our normal.” She laughed slightly self-consciously.

“Of course!” She answered and nodded her head. “Sorry.”

“No at all.” Phil replied. “But we can’t take all of your time up, lots of people to interview.” Phil added, “Thank you for the interview.”

“No, thank you!” She replied happily and Phil kissed her cheek before continuing up the red carpet, Finn holding his hand, Rae with an arm laced around his. They stopped and had some photos taken, people were screaming Phil’s name, and then Finn’s from the audience. And they went over to people to give autographs and have photos taken with them. Phil talked graciously with his fans, and Finn laughed and joked with his. And when people realised who Rae was, quite a few people excitedly gushed over how much her books had changed their lives.

They continued up the red carpet.

“People are gonna get to know your face girl.” Finn said and Rae groaned.

“Not looking forward to that.” She said through a smile as people took photos. They stopped at another reporter.

“Oh my god it’s the trio!” She laughed, “I heard you three were here together; it rippled through the audience. So the rumours are true?”

“Depends which rumours you’re talking about.” Rae shot cheekily and they all laughed.

“Did you keep your relationship quiet because you’ve had a lot of haters?” She asked, “I just think a lot of people are not gonna get this thing.” Phil chuckled slightly and lowered his head, scratching his eyebrow as he considered how to respond; this was another thing Sarah had told him to do when he felt himself wanting to retort in his slightly snooty way that he sometimes had.

“There’s been a lot o’ people who gave us shit about it.” Finn answered instead, “But we never kept it quite, we never hid it, we just never did interviews about it. The fact that the press got nude pics of me and Phil on a beach show we never hid it; Rae was there that day, and there’s probably photos somewhere of the three of us making out that day.” Finn shrugged. “We don’t really care what haters think.” He said, “But sometimes haters can do things that aren’t nice.” He said pointedly.

“Like beat people up.” She replied. Finn had been meaning ask ignorant questions on live television and expecting to be answered politely, but that was even more important.

“Aye, like that.”

“Well I hope you guys don’t get any haters tonight.” She declared happily, not realising that the way she questioned them was part of a larger pattern of societal hate; she wouldn’t have asked these questions of straight, monogamous people. “So who designed your dress? It’s gorgeous!” She changed the topic.
“Isabella Reid.” Rae answered, “She designed and made what all three of us are wearing.” In the Swan, where they were streaming the whole event, including the red carpet interviews, a cheer went up and Izzy sat blushing happily.

“And what drew you to the script of ‘The Anarchist’s Fall’?” She asked Phil. There were a couple of serious questions about the script and acting with certain actors, especially the leading lady Miranda Holbert.

“You must have been quite jealous to see him kissing Miranda Holbert!” She said to Rae, “She’s so stunningly beautiful. And she was voted sexiest woman alive this year in several magazines and-”

“Oh I’m the jealous one.” Finn said in what seemed like a jovial tone, but Rae and Phil both heard the edge of danger underneath it; the implication of the reporter saying that to Rae was that Rae was less beautiful than Miranda. He gave her a grin, his eyes not leaving her face and the reporter seemed to pick up that she was on dangerous ground.

“We don’t get jealous of Phil doing his job.” Rae answered in a warm voice that put the reporter at ease, “Miranda is a wonderful woman, and a fabulous actress. I rather think her acting ability is far more important than her looks and how well she fits into the stereotype of what’s considered beautiful. Plus why do we have to pit women against each other in some sort of battle over men? She got to kiss Phil as part of her job… lucky her; he’s a great kisser when he’s acting. Even better when he’s not.” Rae answered with such aplomb that Finn’s cranky mood dissipated instantly. He looked over at Rae and saw her natural looking smiling.

“We talking about me?” Miranda strode up alone, in a stunning yellow dress, her black hair tumbling down her back to her waist.

“Oh yes, of how jealous we must be of you kissing Phil.” Finn answered with a cheeky grin, diplomatically changing ‘Rae’ to ‘we’ as the jealous party.

“And how we’re out now.” Rae added.

“Oh right?” She laughed, “Britain’s best kept non-secret.” She said, “Everyone who’s worked with Phil knows these two!” She kissed Rae and then Finn on the cheeks, saving Phil for last, cleaning her lipstick off their faces as she continued, “And what on Earth would they have to be jealous of? Everyone knows that Phil is devoted to them, it doesn’t matter who he kisses in movies, that’s acting; that’s nothing.”

“What was it like working with Phil?” She asked Miranda. Phil started to chuckle as Miranda gave him a look.

“Well…” She said, “How diplomatic should I be?” She asked Phil and he shrugged, grinning happily, “He’s such a hard worker he makes the rest of us look like literal sloths!” She laughed, “I hated him some days because he’s so good I had to work much harder just to keep up. But it’s the best performance I’ve ever done, my first BAFTA nomination, and I feel like I’ve improved as an actress.” She said, “Plus he is a truly wonderful kisser, which made that whole, cheating on my husband with you even though I know he’ll literally kill me for it much easier to act out!” Phil lowered his eyes and blushed, “When can we work together again Phil?” She laughed.

“We’ll have to plan something.” He said and she nodded her head still laughing. “Well, we better press on.” Phil added and shook the reporter’s hand before they walked away as the reporter asked Miranda about her dress.
“You were built for this shit Rae.” Finn said in awe.

“You did answer that particularly well.” Phil agreed.

“Thank fuck for Miranda coming over.” Rae answered, “I had nothing left to say after that!”

“And she did manage to make our man blush nicely.” Finn laughed.

“Shurrup!” Phil groaned.

“Was she a good kisser?” Finn asked.

“Yeah alright.” Phil shrugged. “I’ve kissed much worse.”

“Like?” Finn asked.

“Phoebe Lutz like to just leave her mouth wide open and swirl her tongue around your mouth.” Phil said and shook his head, “I had no idea what to do with her…”

“The ol’ washing machine kiss.” Finn nodded his head.

“Who’s phoebe Lutz?” Rae asked.

“A girl I kissed when I was 15.” Phil answered.

“I wanted the dirt on famous people you’ve kissed.” Finn answered and Phil shrugged.

“They’re all alright. No one has been amazing or terrible.” He answered as he zeroed in on a reporter for the BBC.

“How many more reporters do we have to talk to before we’re done?” Rae asked.

“Sarah said five.” Phil answered. “And I told her I’d do it. You two don’t have to come to talk to them with me if you don’t want.”

“Uh huh.” Rae replied, “We’re in this together.”

“And between the three of us we do seem to be doing a good job o’ shitting over all ‘em.” Finn said with a gleeful grin.

“These guys are being polite cos it’s their job.” Rae said, “I imagine people on the street are going to be very bad with this ignorant, biased shite.” Rae thought about what Elsa had said to them the very first time they had come out, they were more open to violence now, and Phil had already suffered because of the kind of violence bigoted people had in their hearts.

“We’ll be fine.” Phil said confidently, “We’ll take precautions and continue our training.”

“I’m proud o’ you.” Rae said and Phil gave her a crooked grin. Finn squeezed his hand.

“I’m here with Phil Seymour, up for a BAFTA for best supporting actor.” The reporter said, her eyes went from Phil, to Finn, and then Rae. “Tell us what ‘The Anarchist’s Fall’ is about?” She asked, her eyes flitting back to Finn.

“It follows Miranda Holbert’s character, and it’s set in the projects,” Phil answered. Rae and Finn watched the reporter, barely looking at Phil as he answered, the cogs in her mind working over as she figured out what she was seeing.
“Sounds great,” She said in a pause in Phil’s answer, but Phil had been mid-sentence, “And what’s coming up next for you?” Phil smiled, ignoring that the reporter had cut him up.

“We’ll be spending a year in America to work on a film called, ‘Iago’ it follows the story of Iago and how he came to be the man that he was in ‘Othello.’ It’s a modern take on Shakespeare’s play, and there will be three films in total, including a modern take on ‘Othello’ and what happened to Iago after what transpired in the play ‘Othello.’” Phil said, “It’ll be the first time I play the bad guy, I’m really looking forward to it.”

“And you’re contracted to do all three?”

“Yes.” Phil answered.

“It’s a small budget film?”

“Yes and we’re filming all three films in the year, the first one will be released.”

“In time to possibly be up for Oscar nominations?”

“I know Toni Peters, the writer is hoping to bag one. And her scripts are wonderful so I truly hope she does.”

“If she were to be nominated, she’d be the first trans woman-“

“Openly trans.” Phil corrected, “You can’t tell if a person is trans just by looking at them. There may have been other trans nominees and we don’t now because they have chosen to keep their gender private; which is everyone’s right.” Phil said with a reassuring tone, he made being corrected seem like something enjoyable he was so polite about it.

“Of course,” The reporter replied with a genuine smile, “She’ll be the first openly trans woman to be nominated, if she gets an Oscars nod.” The reporter continued, “You seem to enjoy working on projects that are by and about… marginalised groups?”

“I really do enjoy increasing diversity in media. Representation matters and a lot of different types of people never see people like themselves represented in any form of media, and if they do it’s often stereotyped or tokenistic. If I can help get different voices out there in a meaningful way, then I’m all for it. I love my work, I’m not in it for money or fame, I love acting, and I love doing meaningful, interesting projects that promote diversity and ideas and things like that.” He finished with a very ‘trademark Phil’ self-deprecating smile and shrug of the shoulders. As Rae watched him speak, she realised that Phil was unaware of that smile and shrug combination he did; it made her treasure it even more, it had been a part of his body movements since she had first met him when they were 16.

“I’m sure you wouldn’t mind seeing a polyamorous relationship represented?”

“Of course.” Phil answered, “more than one!” He laughed, “If we had seen realistic representation of people like us on television or in books or film or anywhere, it might have saved us a lot of heartache several years ago when we just didn’t know if this really was a viable option, or if it could work.” Phil answered honestly, “Proper representation opens people’s eyes to other ways of thinking, to other people’s lived experiences, to different realities and concepts. It questions the way things have always been done and the stories that have always been told. And it makes people happier too; tells people that we don’t have to all be the same and all reaching for the same stars.”

“Great message, but a lot of people feel like messages like yours are brainwashing kids into being
like you.” She made sure she sounded sympathetic when she asked the combative question, but Phil gave her a tight smile.

“Funny, if you only allow kids to be shown one way of doing things, how is that anything other than brainwashing?”

“People feel that children are too young to understand…”

“Yet they’re old enough to understand heteronormativity?” Phil said, his polite tone holding up admirably.

“Well people are allowed to raise their children as they want, they’re entitled to their opinions.”

“Children are never harmed by an honest, open-minded, diverse and non-bigoted education. I believe that parents are mostly afraid that their children will not make the same choices they made. And this scares them for 2 reasons,” Phil said, his mind reminding him that Sarah asked him not to get into too much debate, “Firstly because the choices they’ve made are tried and tested, and produced presumably satisfactory results… since that’s what they want for their kids. And secondly because we think that people choosing differently to us is somehow a judgement on the choices we’ve made, and we wonder then if the choices we’ve made were right… I think it’s a mostly subconscious insecurity, but we mostly don’t what our purpose is here, unless we have a great deal of faith in a higher power. There’s safety in staying in a group; we all chose the same thing, so this must be right, this must be the thing we’re supposed to be doing. People choosing otherwise, makes us question that, and it’s quite scary to question this path you’re supposed to take. Even scarier to know that unlike everyone else you know, you’re not meant to be on it.” The reporter nodded thoughtfully, “In regards to people opinions… well yes people are entitled to their opinions as long as they are neither threatening nor disrespecting other people’s lives, their mere existence. It’s worth noting that opinions can still be bigoted, and often are. Do we not wish to fight bigotry?”

“Very true!” The reporter answered, “You’ve definitely given me some food for thought. Is there anything you wish to say to people who may be judging your lifestyle?”

“Oh…” Phillip laughed, “I think that the people who are outright judging us aren’t going to be really interested in anything I have to say…” He considered that for a moment, “But… but I urge you to consider how our relationship really affects you… in anyway whatsoever. And if you can’t think of a way that it genuinely affects you, perhaps you could consider not judging us anymore?”

There were a few more pleasantries before they walked away from the BBC reporter.

“Oh my fucking god.” Rae shook her head.

“It’s like fucking quicksand out here.” Finn marvelled.

“Aren’t they supposed to only spend a few seconds with each person asking fluff questions about your dress and your movies?” Rae asked bewildered.

“Oh they got a bigger story now.” Finn said cynically. Phil sighed.

“Perhaps we can leave the other two interviews for at the end?” Rae said and squeezed his arm.

“I promised Sarah five before and two after.”

“They’re sucking my enjoyment out o’ me.” Finn answered and Phil nodded his head. “Can’t even mess with ’em.” He took a deep breath and Phil furrowed his brows.
“If you wanna mess with them Finn, then you can.” Phil said, “I don’t want either of you thinking you need to change to protect me or my reputation. I love you both the way you are.”

“Aye I know, but we’re here for you Bill.” Finn said, “And I got me tartan on, gotta do me Clan proud.” He gave Phil a huge grin. They stopped and talked to fans who told Phil how much they loved him, one screamed at him to sit on her face and Finn and Rae did all they could to not screech with laughter. Phil’s eyes opened wider slightly, his smile stuck on his face as he looked at the crying girl.

“I’d much rather take a photo with you.” He said and took her camera, turning it around, he took a selfie with her and then kissed her cheek, “You’re lovely, never let anyone, not even a cute boy, tell you otherwise.” He told her before continuing down the line of fans. Finn was surprised and overwhelmed by how many people recognised him; he had his own moment of wide-eyed shock when a girl begged him to take her virginity and yelled that she wanted him to have it.

“Listen girly, no one takes anything from you when you make your sexual debut, alright? But you should probably choose someone that knows your name… if you wanted to… I s’pose.” He furrowed his brows at himself. “How about we take a photo?”

No one recognised Rae and she was happy that her fame was in her name, not her appearance; she’d never put a photo of herself in her books for that reason. If her name was said near any of Phil or Finn’s fans, there would inevitably be a lot of gushing and excitement about her books. Her book signings were always packed, and the 25% of sales deal that Gerard, their lawyer, had negotiated had paid off.

“Good lord.” Phil laughed slightly as they continued up the red carpet.

“Girls like talented, hardworking, good looking, thoroughly decent and kind lads.” Rae said, “They’re a rarity, so they’re all keen on you two.” She informed them, “I, however am immune to your charms.” She said smugly, as if she herself had never been a fangirl.

“Oh right, say that to us tonight in bed girl.” Finn challenged. Rae laughed and shook her head. They had another interview, but other than asking Rae and Finn’s names, no mention of their relationship was made, they asked only the fluff questions and Rae happily plugged Izzy again. They had also asked Phil what he thought his chances of winning were and he had told them he did not believe he would win because it was his first nomination and the other actors were amazing, but that he was excited to be there anyway. Rae and Finn had of course said they believed he’d win. As they turned to leave the interview Rae looked over the other people traversing the red carpet.

“Oh my god it’s ten!” Rae hissed as she saw David Tennant chatting with an interviewer up ahead. Phil’s jaw dropped slightly and his hand went to his chest. They all loved Doctor Who of course, but Rae and Phil were the bigger fans of ten; Finn wished nine had hung around for longer, not that he didn’t love ten… it’s just there was only one season of nine.

“We have to remain calm.” Phil said, “And maybe we can meet him…”

Unfortunately, they didn’t get the chance to meet David Tennant but Finn did get to mess slightly with the last reporter; a very obviously homophobic male. Finn was subtle about it, he just kept
touching Phil, at one point running his fingers slowly down Phil’s chest as he answered a question about their clothing, but the look of discomfiture on the reporter’s face had been hilarious.

They had giggled like children for the rest of the red carpet walk; only talking to fans now and starting to enjoy themselves again as they fangirled and fanboyed over all the stars they were seeing.

When they finally sat down in their seats. Rae took the aisle seat, Phil sitting beside her and Finn beside Phil. They were decent seats, and the rest of the cast was seated all around them.

“I had no idea how well known I was.” Finn said softly.

“Famous.” Rae corrected and he scrunched his nose up.

“You too, drop your name and people are crying their eyes out about your books.” He said with a grin.

“I know!” Rae answered, “It’s so strange. I never know what to say or do when people give my work compliments.” She pulled a face, “But then I’ve never had people tell me to sit on their face…” She said to Phil.

“Yes you have.” Phil answered, “I frequently tell you to sit on my face. And Finn tells you even more often.” They giggled together.

“I meant a stranger!” She laughed, “And you Finn! You can be the great deflowerer.”

“Oi fuck off!” He said in a low, unimpressed tone but started cackling almost immediately. “How do you even…?” He shook his head, “Like I get fanboying, but it’s so weird to be on the other end of it.”

The awards ceremony was quite long and people got up to go elsewhere a lot more often than any of them could believe. They whispered to each other and giggled silently in between awards, but other than a bathroom break, they went nowhere; the whole thing was still too new and exciting to them.

When Phil’s category was announced, Finn and Rae gripped Phil’s hands excitedly and he felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for them being in his life. He found that he was surprisingly calm; he had utter certainty that he wouldn’t win, not only was his competition amazing, and it was it his first, and possibly last nomination, but he had really pissed of the organisers over bringing both of his partners. He knew that the academy played politics, and he wasn’t sure that they were willing to give him tacit support by giving him an award, or another nomination. But he wasn’t in it for awards, they were nice and he’d treasure them if he got them, but he truly loved acting, and that was what mattered to him the most.

So sure was he that he wouldn’t; win, that it took him several seconds to reply when his name was called out. Rae had leapt up and jumped up and down several times while he looked utterly surprised. Finn was on his feet as quickly as Rae and he reached down to pull Phil up as he looked
stunned.

“YOU WON!” Rae was crying out.

“Pardon?” He asked as Finn got him to his feet. Rae threw her arms around him, Finn doing the same after he was sure Phil had his feet. He felt a sudden burst of butterflies in his stomach, then it dropped as he remembered that he had not prepared a speech. He felt his partners both kissing him, their mouths touching the corners of his mouth. He turned his head and kissed them both quickly before clearing his throat, straightening his waistcoat and heading up to the stage. Rae and Finn looked around to see a surprising number of the audience on their feet. They knew he had become a poster boy, of sorts, for queer rights, after the assault and that sympathies were high for him, but they had not expected this, especially not after the reporter’s responses to them.

They watched Phil take his award, still standing and clapping and cheering loudly. Looking down at the drama mask shaped award he approached the microphone. They watched him take a deep breath.

“I’m very surprised that I won this.” He sounded cultured and humble, “Not quite as surprised as I am at myself, for I managed to get through my education by being rather organised; I was always prepared. However,” he chuckled slightly and the audience laughed with him, “I did not prepare a speech, so sure I was that I could not and would not win this.” He looked out at the audience. “So I would simply like to thank everyone. To those who have hated me, have sought to harm me,” there was a whisper in the audience, “and have harmed me, to those who wished me ill and told me I would fail… I say thank you to you. You set a spark of determination in my belly. I am stronger now.” There was applause, everyone obviously thinking of the brutal beating he’d had a little over a year ago. “To those who are indifferent or do not know who I am to me, I thank you, some days people’s indifference can be a blessing. To those who have offered support, kindness, love, to my sister, to my parents-in-law, to the gang in Stamford, my chess club friends, my mates at university and LAMDA, my work friends, to my agent and publicist, I say thank you. You all gave that spark the fuel it required to become a fire. You fed my passion and you have made me the man I am. And to Rae and Finn, the two loves of my life… you are not the air in my lungs, or the blood in my veins… you are my lungs, you are my veins, my heart… I cannot exist without both of you. I love you both, you are my life. And I thank you for absolutely everything, but especially for allowing me to share your lives with you, together.” There was loud applause and Rae was crying even as she tried to stop herself, Finn put his arms around her and grinned up at the stage. “And last, but never least; thank you to the academy, I know I was pain in your arse.” There was a laugh and Phil nodded once and held the award up before leaving the stage.

Rae and Finn could barely contain themselves as they waited for him to return. They went out to the bar so they could excitedly chatter and wait for him. People watched them closely, some of them reporters, some fans, some actors; all of them curious as to how this arrangement worked. Phil had known they’d need to leave their chairs and found them at the bar. The minute they saw him they both simultaneously threw their arms around him, knocking Phil back a few steps, Finn pulling him back towards them powerfully.

“Oh MY GOD!” Rae said through tears. Finn couldn’t find words to express how happy he was for Phil so he just held him as tightly as he could. When they finally stopped holding Phil and took a good look at him Finn found his tongue.

“You beat Phillip Seymour Hoffman!” He said laughing.

“Oh fuck! I did as well!” He laughed. Back in College Phil had decided he’d have to change his name so he’d be more distinguishable from Phillip Seymour Hoffman, but he’d started making a
name for himself before he’d had chance to change it. So even though he wished he didn’t bear his father’s name, for his career, he was still Phil Seymour. Legally, he was Phil Nelson now.

“I told you.” Finn said firmly.

“I knew you’d say that!” Phil laughed and handed them the award to look at, “Yes you did tell me. You both did. The day I have as much faith in me as you two do, is the day I finally have true belief in my own worth.” He said and kissed them both. Rae stroked his cheek and they hugged again.

“We are gonna have one fuck of a celebration in Stamford tomorrow when we head in for a visit!” Finn said, “Imagine them all at the Swan!” He held onto the award, so Phil didn’t have to carry it tonight.

“Well we have to do something special tonight?” Rae said and looked from Finn to Phil.

“Let’s go see if Miranda wins, then go to an after party or three.” He ginned, “Then I think we should make love.”

“Whatever you want!” Rae replied, Finn agreeing readily.

“I think it’s a great day for women led movies that ‘The Anarchist’s Fall’ won three BAFTAS, and I’m really proud that I was a part of this film.”

“It must feel like quite a victory, to come out tonight, and to win a BAFTA, after the events of the past 18 months?”

“Do you men, does it feel good to win this as an openly queer actor, when I was beaten and hospitalised in an attack motivated by homophobia?” Phil smiled tightly, “I like to think that my private life has nothing to do with career. I do hope that the various producers I’m in talks with now feel the same way.”

‘Are you concerned that now you’re open about your polyamorous relationship, acting roles will dry up?’ Phil took a deep breath as he considered how to answer this; Sarah wanted him on the record as concerned about it, to put the challenge to producers and casting agents to behave themselves. But Phil wanted to have faith in them, despite ample evidence that producers and casting agents rarely used anyone from any sort of minority group.

“Who knows what tomorrow will bring?” He answered mysteriously, “And at the moment, I am honestly just thinking about celebrating with my partners tonight.”
‘No Diggity’ by Chet Faker

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1JsBhRCRH0

*I like the way you work it.*

- 

Finn unlocked the door but leaned against it rather than open it. He shoved his keys back in his pocket and pulled Rae and Phil closer, the three of them kissing messily; they were all slightly drunk. They grinned at each other, giggling, drunkenly kissing and groping each other, Phil holding his award, Rae and Finn occasionally running a finger over it.

“Evening guys.” David, their neighbour from across the hallway called boozily.

“Evening!” They called back as David stumbled into his flat. David was a great neighbour, never complained, never judged, just said hi to them when he saw them, didn’t even seem to notice Rae’s hand pulling up Finn’s kilt and exposing his cock… As soon as the door closed behind David they all looked down at Finn’s cock and started to laugh, desperately trying to be quiet. They opened the door and tumbled into their flat, laughing merrily.

“You gotta wear that kilt more often!” Rae said. Finn grabbed some beers from the fridge and poured a glass of wine for Phil. He handed Rae the beer and sipped his own as Phil looked down at his BAFTA award.

“Your first BAFTA.” Rae said and they all stood staring at it.

“Holy fuck.” Phil shook his head.

“I expect that by the tenth one it’ll be less of a shock!” Rae replied.

“Alright we have to find a good place to put it.” Finn declared.

“Top of the music cupboard.” Phil suggested.

“Perfect.” Rae and Finn agreed and they watched Phil put it up there, the award sitting next to his closed violin case. Phil looked up at it and allowed himself a short moment of self-congratulations, a small proud smile on his face, before turning his focus to Rae and Finn. He put his wine down on the table and took their cans, putting them beside his wine. The entire night thus far had been about focussing on him; it was time to focus on them.

“So did you both intend to have such easy access for me?” Phil asked with that confident air he could just pull out of nowhere. He bit the inside of his lip and looked them both up and down, Rae kept her eyes on Phil, knowing he was planning on drunkenly seducing both of them, although he didn’t seem nearly as drunk as he had when they got home. Finn looked at Phil and then Rae.

“I was just winning a bet… easy access is cream on the cake.”

“Interesting choice of words.” Phil replied as he slowly took Finn’s jacket off, letting it drop to the floor. That’s how you knew Phil meant business; he let the clothes hit the floor when he was undressing you, rather than laying them on a chair carefully; Phil had the utmost respect for their
possessions and was a neat freak. If Phil could ignore his need to fold the clothes or at least put them on a chair it meant he was very, very horny. Finn’s attention was now completely taken by Phil; the jacket hitting the ground was like a signal that made something click in his brain. Phil let his hand run up Finn’s chest, to his neck, the tips of his fingers brushing his jawline as he reached his other hand for Rae, strong but graceful and controlled in every movement, an intensity in his eyes that sent little shockwaves of lust through Rae’s body. Eight years together and they could all still send each other weak at the knees. She stepped closer and his fingertips traced along her cheek reverently. Very gently he let his hands suggest to them that they should kiss; he took his own jacket off and watched the slow passionate motion of their lips as they kissed, his eyes smouldering with desire. He slowly undid Finn’s tie, Finn turning his attention to Phil, kissing him with slow feverish intensity. As soon as Phil had the knot of Finn’s tie undone he slowly pulled it out from under his collar in one long motion, again letting it drop to the floor. He unbuttoned Finn’s shirt until he got to Finn’s vest, and pulled the shirt apart so he could kiss Finn’s chest and neck. Rae and Finn kissed and Phil turned his attention to Rae kissing along her neck, his hand running up her thigh to her hip as his other hand slowly unbuttoned Finn’s waistcoat, his dextrous fingers handling the buttons with one hand quite easily. He kissed up Rae’s neck to her jawline and she turned her face to him kissing him deeply as he ran his hand up Finn’s chest to his shoulder and started to slip Finn’s waistcoat off his shoulders, Finn happily helping him. Rae barely noticed Phil’s hand on her back, the fingers slowly pulling the zip down, so precise and soft were his touches, when he wanted them to be. He then used both hands, firmly caressing down her shoulders, pulling the dress with him and letting it fall down around her to the ground, the skirt flaring out gorgeously as it fell. Rae had worn no bra, her beautiful full breasts were now on display, coupled with black lace knickers, a garter belt and stockings, her short but stylish heels almost making her as tall as Phil. Finn let his eyes crawl over Rae’s body as he kicked his shoes off, eternally grateful he had declined to wear the traditional Scottish shoes that would require a lot of untying to get them off, and instead had opted for a modern take on these shoes. Rae stood before the two of them, watched them both fuck her with their eyes, her dress forming a beautiful circle around her on the floor, like she was in a spotlight. She bent, slowly, keeping one of her long legs straight, the other slightly bent attractively, and gathered up her dress, throwing it across the room, both men watching her unashamedly the whole time. Phil took his waistcoat off and dropped it before pulling at his tie, something he rarely did, preferring to undo ties than pull them off over his head like he did now, before unbuttoning his shirt partway, but his attention was back on Finn; he was wearing far too much. Phil kissed down Finn’s body as he unbuttoned his shirt further and finally got it off him. Phil knelt before them and kissed Finn’s stomach, his mouth wide, his tongue savouring Finn’s salt. Rae and Finn kissed passionately, her fingers in Phil’s hair, her other hand on the side of Finn’s neck, enjoying the stubble her fingers could feel when they brushed his jawline. Finn kissed along Rae’s neck, her head tilting back as she felt Phil’s hand run up the back of her leg and then back down, Phil gently removing her shoes from her feet. Phil turned to kiss Rae’s stomach, pulling at the garter belt slightly with one hand, the other pulled up a chair beside Rae, Finn removing his sporran carefully and dropping it to the floor off to the side. Rae looked Finn up and down, wearing nothing but a kilt and his socks, she bit her bottom lip and enjoyed the view of her men, Phil on his knees, kissing her, removing his own shirt now, the muscles in his shoulders moving beautifully, Rae was glad to see his body filling out again, this progress had not been without its struggles, but the rewards were countless.

Phil had a way of touching them both that was gentle, yet insistent, his fingers caressed the back of her calf and they suggested to her what he wanted; she lifted her leg and put her foot on the chair he had provided. Instantly he began kissing up her thigh, his hand travelling up her leg again, while his other hand started to rub Finn’s cock through his kilt. Finn stepped in closer, his hand going to Rae’s arse, enjoying its roundness, as his other hand settled onto Phil’s shoulder, gentle groans starting to emanate from his throat, as Rae started to breathe heavier; Phil’s lips were traversing up her inner thigh and were getting tantalisingly close to her vagina. Finn kissed Rae as
Phil’s tongue traced along the line of her knickers, Rae making a slight squeaking noise at the way Phil teased her. Phil licked along her cunt, through her knickers and Rae couldn’t help but look down at him, her fingers curling in his hair as Finn kissed her neck and Phil licked her through her knickers, biting her gently, leaving her wet.

“Phil…” She groaned with a breathy, pleading tone, Phil looked up at her and slowly licked the corner of his mouth, the desire in his eyes to eat her cunt was clear. But he turned, with equal desire to the tent in Finn’s kilt, all three of them chuckling lustfully at it.

“Glad that didn’t happen at the BAFTAS.” Finn laughed, but the mirth was quickly replaced by desire as Phil put his mouth to Finn’s cock through his kilt. “Oh fuck.” Finn groaned, watching Phil lick along the outline of his cock. Rae kissed Finn’s neck and jawline and Phil put the tip of Finn’s kilt-covered cock in his mouth making Finn moan with frustration. Phil looked up at him and bit down gently on the tip, the pressure of Phil’s teeth through his kilt was exquisite and he grabbed Phil’s hair tightly, his pelvis thrusting slightly, showing his deep desire. As Phil teased Finn with his mouth, his fingers were rubbing Rae through her wet knickers.

Phil turned back to Rae and pulled her knickers aside, his fingers slipping over her clitoris made her body shudder excitedly, and she groaned breathily as he easily two fingers into her cunt, his tongue tracing along her labia, making Rae clasp the back of the chair violently. As he teased Rae, licking everywhere but her clitoris and slowly sliding his fingers in and out of her, but not doing any ‘Phil-finger-magic’ yet, he reached under Finn’s kilt and started to rub his cock. Finn’s head dropped back and he groaned happily. The sound of Rae’s happy groan joined Finn’s when Phil finally stopped teasing her and licked her clit properly, his fingers moving inside of her in a way that made her lose her knees, and Phil turned the chair slightly so she could easily sit without him having to stop eating her for too long. Finn watched Phil going down on Rae, watched the way her breasts heaved as she gasped in pleasure, he was so turned on by watching them together. Phil stopped stroking Finn for a moment to quickly lick his palm, getting it very wet before continuing; he knew a wet wank felt better than a dry one, and Finn’s groan made him grin as he continued to eat Rae.

Rae was groaning loudly when Phil had his thumb take over for his tongue; fingering her expertly as he disappeared under Finn’s kilt, his tongue teasingly licking up his shaft and around his glans before Phil engulfed Finn’s cock, taking in as much as he could. Finn kept his eyes on Phil’s fingers in Rae’s cunt, and the way her body was moving and let out a deep guttural groan when Phil deepthoated him. Both men were continuing to improve with that, but Rae would always be the best at it. After a moment of just enjoying Phil sucking his cock, Finn undid his kilt and threw it across the room; he needed to see his cock sliding into Phil’s mouth, Finn loved to see what was happening during sex. Which was why blindfolding him was so much fun. Phil made a lusty humming noise as he sped up sucking Finn’s cock, his hand squeezing Finn’s balls, his other hand bringing Rae closer and closer to the brink. He quickly wet one of his fingers and let it slide into Finn’s arse, pushing into his prostate as he cupped his balls and continued to suck so eagerly at Finn’s cock that Finn could barely keep himself on his feet. Rae was gripping the seat underneath her, her legs quivering, her breathe coming in loud gasps, her stomach tense with the anticipation of impending orgasm. Phil listened closely to the sounds they were making, speeding up Finn as much as he could, because Rae was close and he wanted to make them cum simultaneously. He circled Finn’s prostate and then pressed into it rhythmically, off-tempo to his sucking rhythm. Rae started to cry out loudly, her body shuddering and Phil sped up on Finn when he felt Finn’s fingers curl in his hair, urging him to go harder, deeper, faster. Finn came with his cock deep in Phil’s throat, crying out loudly, his groans mingling with Rae’s as Phil fingered her to a second orgasm. Phil swallowed and sucked Finn’s cock as Finn shuddered through his orgasm, helping him collapse safely to the floor as soon as it was over, his other hand gently easing Rae through her second orgasm, nice and slowly.
They both looked at him with content post-orgasm faces, but Phil was only getting started. He got up and handed them their beers and drained his glass of wine before heading to the fridge for some water.

“Are either of you hungry?” He enquired as he handed them both bottles of chilled tap water. They both shook their heads. “Can I take you both to the bedroom?”

“Please do.” Rae held up her hand to him and he took it, she stood up and kissed his lips, they both turned to Finn who grinned up at them and took Phil’s proffered hand. Phil kissed Finn once he stood up and he put and arm around both of their shoulders and they walked towards the bedroom.

“It might take me a whole minute to be ready to go again but.” Finn laughed, “I’m not as young as I used to be!” They all laughed. It was being noticed that the two men took a little longer between risings than they used to, but that just meant more playing around in between.

Phil laid them both down on the bed and they started to kiss as Phil kicked his shoes, socks and then pants off, leaving them crumpled in a pile. He crawled onto the bed and joined in with the kissing, his cock hard and aching.

“Hmm, come here.” Rae groaned and pulled him on top of her. She wrapped her stockinged legs around his waist and guided Phil into her while Phil pulled aside her knickers. They kissed and slowly moved their bodies in unison, Rae reaching out to put an arm around Finn and he scooted closer, joining in with the kissing, his hands happily travelling all over their bodies as they made love. Finn was so satisfied watching them make love; it gave him physical pleasure, tingles spreading all over his body, to see the pleasure they gave each other, the love they shared. And then to know that they loved him just as much, and that any minute now, if the growing heat in his groin was anything to go by, he’d be part of that pleasure, gave him so much happiness. Phil’s movements were slow and grinding and Rae returned the movement, thrusting her hips up into his, they kissed and stared into teach others eyes, and then, as if psychically linked they simultaneously turned to Finn and kissed his lips together, both staring lovingly into his eyes, Finn staring at one then the other.

“I’ll just get the lube.” Finn told them in a soft voice and leaned over the bed to the bottom drawer, Phil and Rae both made noises to indicate that they were keen for him to join in.

Finn knelt behind Phil and gently penetrated Phil, making sure to go slow and carefully; this was making love, not fucking, there was no room for making it hurt a little here. This was as much about closeness and bonding as it was about pleasure, and as soon as Finn started thrusting he couldn’t help but hold himself close to Phil, Rae coming up on her elbows to be closer too. Phil looked over his shoulder and Finn kissed him. Rae rubbed Finn’s hips with her feet, and with one arm pulled both of her men closer, still staying lifted to meet them part way. Rae stroked Finn’s face and then Phil’s and Phil slipped one arm under Rae his hand splaying on her back, helping to hold her closer, his other hand going to Finn’s hip. They easily fell into synchronicity, falling into that sacred space where only the three of them existed and time itself melted into insignificance. In this place Phil reached a transcendent state of mind; he knew, regardless of what his logical mind told him, that their souls were real, and they were deeply connected, he could feel their souls, feel their love as a living, breathing entity that sustained them. It was bliss far beyond the physical state of pleasure, and he could feel that they were right here with him, drinking in the magic of this love of their souls so irrevocably entwined; how secure that felt. How comforting to know that the energy that made them up, the sparks that gave them each life, were forever tangled together.

When the physical reality and ecstasy of orgasm crashed through the three of them, their entire being; mind, body and soul was caressed with their shared pleasure, everything that they each were
was so enraptured with the joy in this moment that they were simultaneously completely aware of every tiny detail and completely oblivious to everything from where their feet were to how loud or quiet they were being as their bodies shook in unified ecstasy.

They collapsed together, rolling onto their sides and embracing each other tightly, whispering how much they loved each other, their hands gently caressing each other, kissing each other gently before slowly falling asleep, still embracing.

They woke up the next morning to hear Phil’s phone ringing out in the lounge room. They were still tightly entangled, Phil covered in sticky semen on both sides, but grinning happily as the late morning sunlight streamed through the windows and warmed them.

“You still got your socks on Finn, you could be an 80s porn star.” Rae joked.

“Stocking and garter belt…” Finn replied, “A classic look that’ll never go out o’ style. Cos it’s sexy as fuck.” Rae lifted one of her long legs and undid the stocking snaps, slowly rolling the stocking off, both men watching closely.

“I’m thinking this morning is going to be very productive.” Phil said as he put his hand on her hip and let it run down her thigh, Finn kissing him in between his shoulder blades.

And Phil’s phone rang again. He groaned but ignored it as Rae rolled onto her back and slowly rolled off her other stocking, her underwear following. They rolled around in bed, kissing and caressing each other passionately.

“Shall we continue this in the shower?” Phil asked with a smutty voice.

“Aye.” Rae replied as she undid her garter belt and flicked it across the room. They started to get up and Phil’s phone rang.

“It’s gotta be some sort of an emergency.” Finn said, “Why else would they ring so much?” Phil groaned and scooted out of the bed to go and get his phone. Rae and Finn followed, yawning and stretching.

“Morning Sarah.” Phil had seen her name as the caller, and even though it wasn’t an emergency if it was just Sarah calling, he knew she would just keep ringing until he answered.

“Phil.” He voice sounded very serious, “7 of the 10 movie offers you’ve had have been revoked.” She told him. Phil felt the colour draining from the room. They had discussed the very real possibility that he would lose maybe up to half of his offers, but neither of them had imagined it would be this bad.

“I see.” He said with a dry mouth. “So what is our course of action from here?”

“Release formal statements saying that unfortunately you won’t be working on these projects but give no real reason as to why.” There had already been statements coming out that he was starring in some of these, so something had to be said. “Then we unofficially leak the reason why. Hope that people see how unfair it is, hope that the queer community supports you. Which is unlikely; poly people are universally unpopular it seems.”

“Thanks.” Phil answered.
“Just telling you the hard facts kiddo.” Sarah said, “Prepare for lean times.”

“It’s ok I’ve still got the ‘Iago’ project in America.” Phil knew that they would not withdraw their offer; they were well aware of his sexuality and relationship and openly supported him. “That’ll help with having something to do.”

“Well it better be brilliant; anything less than that will be signing your career death warrant.” Sarah told him; if the films were brilliant and well received, studios, producers and casting agents would slowly overcome their reticence to choose him. But anything less than brilliant would not be able to dam the tide of bigotry coming at him and he’d be buried. “There’s a lot riding on your time in America kiddo; don’t fuck it up.”
Circles

‘Circles’ by Birds of Tokyo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vby84W0PU6k

I'm being followed by my shadow, he's been creeping around, asking where I've been

Finn dropped several magazines and newspapers on the table.

“You’re back from work early.” Rae said as Phil gathered all the magazines and newspapers together.

“I got fired.” He said, “Apparently I no longer represent the radio station’s family values. This from a station that plays Cannibal Corpse songs at 2 in the afternoon.” Finn sat down, “The only reason I’m not totally devastated is cos I were gonna quit in a month anyway.” Finn shook his head.

“I thought you were gonna try and do the broadcast from America rather than quit?” Rae said and Finn shrugged and looked away.

“I’m so sorry.” Phil reached out and took Finn’s hand.

“Don’t you be sorry for one minute.” Finn answered. “It’s not us, it’s them.” Rae took Finn’s other hand.

“You’ll find an amazing job in America, don’t worry.” She said, “And you can help me organise the move.” She said, “It’s only a year over there, but it feels like we’re moving forever with how much fucking work it is.” Phil looked down at ‘The Sun’, a tabloid, on the top of the pile as Rae spoke.

Britain’s once favourite star shagging hot fag and minger fatty.

He read the headline and his jaw dropped. Rae saw Phil’s jaw drop in the corner of her eyes and looked over.

“How bad are they?” Phil’s mouth drew into a tight line and he put that one on the bottom of the pile as he read the next one silently;

Polyamory! The new craze sweeping the UK

Phil cocked an eyebrow and put that one on the bottom to read the next one.

Polyamory: What are the symptoms and how can you protect your children?

“You’ve got to be joking.” He mumbled, Rae and Finn watching him. He kept reading the headlines.

Movie roles set to dry up for deviant movie star.
Was Phil Seymour lying about the homophobic attack to get our sympathy? We reveal Seymour’s web of lies.

BAFTA makes fatal error supporting immoral star.

The hidden dangers of polygamy.

Is Phil Seymour the head of a secret cult? The shocking evidence.

The secret sex lives of polyamorous people: just what is your favourite star getting up to?

Exclusive interview with Nelson ex; ‘he was always into kinky things.’

“Who’s the interview with?” Phil looked up at Finn.

“Olivia.” Finn said grimly. “They did one with Stacey too, but she were very careful about what she said. Olivia though… I think she didn’t think she was saying anything bad… but…”

“In the current climate anything candid or unguarded is not a wise thing to say.” Phil answered and Finn nodded his head. “I’m surprised they’re not going after my ex’s; I’ve got a lot more than you.”

“It gets better.” Finn said, and Phil looked grimly back down at the magazines.

Nelson a womaniser: long list of used women tell all.

“Oh fuck. A long list?” Phil said and Finn nodded slowly.

“Pretty much every girl I got head from has come out o’ the woodwork wanting their 15 minutes o’ fame.” Finn said cynically. “But there’s still worse.”

Rae Earl, supposed sexual assault victim, may be blackmailing Nelson and Seymour into a relationship.

Rae Earl, long history of mental illness, emotionally blackmailing our Phil!

Nelson and Earl sexual predators that have preyed upon vulnerable heartthrob after vicious attack left him in hospital.

That was the end of the pile and Phil put his face in his hands for a moment, trying to find a peaceful place; he was pissed off.

“Can I see them yet?” Rae asked.

“I don’t know if you wanna see them girl.” Finn answered.

“We’re in this together.” She answered firmly and took the magazines and newspapers from Phil. It was two days since the BAFTAs and the story of their relationship was blowing up; it was much bigger than Sarah or Phil had expected.

Rae read through the headlines silently.

“They’re grasping for a story.” Rae answered. “The problem is, people will believe these stories. She said sadly, “For a while, but they’ll slowly be replaced by the truth.”

“We can get a couple of them on defamation I think.” Phil said, “I’ll get Gerard and Sarah to co-
ordinate our response to this.” He added.

“That’s probably the only real thing we can do.” Finn agreed. And they sat staring at the papers.

“All these years, everything I’ve achieved…” Rae said, “And I’m still just known as the fat, mental bird.” She looked up at them, “The way they talk about me… they way they talk about both of you, about us…” Rae shook her head, “It’s disgusting. They should be ashamed of themselves. And instead they’re making money off it.”

“I want Gerard to go after ‘em like a starving wolf would hunt an injured deer. Rip ‘em apart.” Finn said and Phil nodded slowly.

“I want to pack some clothes and leave early for America, we can settle into our new place… or we can play tourist; I hear they have some lovely scenery we can enjoy, in relative peace, cos I’m not that well-known over there. And we leave this pile of shit to Sarah and Gerard, whom we pay very well, and they both enjoy challenges like this a lot more than we do.”

“Don’t that feel like running to you?” Finn asked and Phil shrugged.

“Maybe it is, but we’ve all been through enough to last us a lifetime and we’re all still a few years shy of 30.” Phil replied, “And I’m sure we’ll have to do an interview, but fuck it, we can do that from America. Let’s go.”

“We just have to let Kelsey know so she waters Sprucey and the herbs.” Rae said and Phil nodded; they all trusted that Kelsey wouldn’t let their tree or their herb garden die for the year they were away.

“Alright, fuck this shit, let’s go.” Finn agreed.

The airport was nice when you got to go to the member’s lounge. Rae sat in a plush chair and checked her email to see lots of love and support from the girls and a rather unsupportive email from her mother asking her to maybe retract their openness about the ‘whole thing’ because people in Stamford were looking at her funny. Rae didn’t bother replying before she closed her personal email and checked their joint email account, the first email made her roll her eyes.

“Audrey emailed.”

“Pardon?”

“What? Why?”

Rae had given Audrey their joint email when they had first left Stamford; this was the first time she was writing, and it was just a heads up because she liked this trio.

“Apparently she’s been approached by the media to speak about Phil, but she refused. She said Jenny contacted her; a list of people you’ve slept with is going around the tabloids.” Jenny was one of Phil’s ex-lovers, she was also a newspaper editor, “She has no idea where it came from but it has 15 names on it, and apparently no one on the list is willing to talk to the press.” Rae looked up and grinned. “Well that’s finally something going our way.”

“You chose which girls to mess around with better than I did.” Finn sighed.
“It was under different circumstances.” Phil said, “You were being a kid exploring sex, most of my sexuality played out in a post-loving Rae world. My choices were based on discretion and no emotion.” He shrugged, “I mean, I did mess around a little before I knew Rae, and I’m sure some of them were more like the girls you messed around with… The media will probably find them eventually.”

“Hopefully not.” Rae said. “Hopefully some other story will come along and this one will just die.”

Except Phil was no longer relatively unknown in America; in anticipation for him working there, Sarah and his agent had been drumming up publicity. And on top of that ‘The Anarchist’s Fall’ had been moderately successful, garnering a cult following. Some of his tv shows and movies were also doing well in America.

They hadn’t even cleared the airport before they’d seen their faces plastered on some magazines, and worse, had been recognised.

They decided to just try to settle into their new home rather than go explore the country; they felt emotionally exhausted.

Their new apartment didn’t feel like home. It was a furnished apartment overlooking the ocean, the bed was king sized, the shower huge; on paper it was perfect. But they missed the apartment they’d been making a life in for the past 8 years.

“Did you not say that heterosexual people are brainwashing their children?”

“No, I was merely stating that the presence of other forms of relationships, other sexualities, could not be seen as brainwashing when-”

“And I quote: ‘if you only allow kids to be shown one way of doing things, how is that anything other than brainwashing?’ That sounds a lot like you think parents can’t raise their kids the way they want to. Like you’re judging parents.”

“I am merely saying that children are not harmed by exposure to-”

“Are you a parent?”

“No…. But-”

“So how would you know?”

“Because I am more than capable of reading scientific journals on the development of the human brain.” Phil snarked.

“There’s been this idea going around of straight-phobia… are you a proponent of radical, reactionary straight-phobia?”

“There is literally no such thing as straight-phobia.” Phil had to stop himself from rolling his eyes,
“That is the exact same thing as reverse racism or misandry…”

“Racism against white people and the hatred of men!” The reporter said as if he had caught Phil out.

“There’s no actual power behind it.” Phil answered, “It doesn’t exist.”

“But bigotry based on sexuality does exist. So by denying straight-phobia, you are showing yourself to be a bigot against straight people.” Rae and Finn watched from behind the camera, both seething with anger. And they both saw the moment that Phil snapped… but not in the way anyone expected he would.

“Nah man. I got heaps o’ straight friends. I can be a straight-phobe.” He answered, his eyes twinkling with bitter mirth.

“So would you say that straight people should have their own pride march then?”

Phil started to laugh.

“Sure, why not. I mean you they already own everything, why not all the pride marches as well? Obviously having your own ‘ally’ section in the march wasn’t putting yourselves into queer spaces quite enough… so just take ‘em all over. End straight-phobia.” He shrugged, “In fact, I’m sure that the only way you can be sure that straight people and their precious monogamous heteronormativity is safe would be to wipe all us queer people of the face of the Earth right? Cos we have pride-”

“No one is suggesting th-” But Phil was done with this reporter and he kept speaking over the top of the interruption.

“We can’t have pride marches cos poor straights feel left out. We can’t have representation cos poor straights think we might infect them. We can’t have jobs,” Phil alluded to calls for the American government to deny Phil a working visa, “cos I dunno why… straight people don’t need a reason right? Cos questioning them is straight-phobia. I understand now.” He stood up and took his mic off, dropping the battery box on the floor quite deliberately and leaving without looking back.

“We’re just not looking for new DJs at the moment.”

“You advertised the job this morning… I been checking for this kind o’ work regularly.” Finn answered. The minute he’d seen the job he’d jumped in the car and driven to the station, so excited to see a perfect opportunity for him.

“Yes well, that was an error.”

“I have a lot of experience.”

“Yes I’m sure you do Mr Nelson.”

“I didn’t tell you my name yet.”

“I recognised you.”
“SLUT!” It was the giggles that made Rae’s skin crawl. “FAT SLUT!” She dropped the pasta into her basket and continued up the aisle without responding or even looking around, her face burning. But she refused to do anything but hold her head up high.

“D’you wanna come for a jog?”

“No.” Finn answered, pouring over the online ‘jobs available’ pages.

“Alright… well I’ll be back in an hour.”

“Be careful.” Rae answered and looked up from her writing. “I love you.” He kissed her lips.

“I love you too.” He looked over at Finn, “I love you Quinn.”

“Love you too Phil.” He answered without looking up. Phil furrowed his brows and didn’t bother trying to get a kiss; it was almost impossible getting Finn off the job-hunt at the moment.

He left, setting off at a brisk pace straight from the front door, heading around the building and up the beach. It was a rainy day and only a few people were on the beach today, mostly waiting for the impending sunset.

He hadn’t even gotten 100 metres from the building when he heard people calling his name. He kept jogging; running faster.

Until he was tackled to the ground.

But Phil had had several months of training daily with Petra and Finn, as well as weekly training at fencing and fortnightly with Rhys. And even though he was in America right now, he had managed to keep his training up. He was out from under his attacker and on his feet before his attacker even realised Phil was twisting free of his grip. Phil bent his knees immediately and watched as his attacker rose to his feet.

“Fag!” The guy laughed drunkenly and tried to tackle Phil again, Phil sidestepped him and turned to see his attacker skid to a halt, turn and look angrily at Phil. He tried to punch Phil but Phil blocked the punch. He tried again several times with the same result every time. He continued to yell homophobic slurs at Phil, and Phil gave ground to him, letting him tire himself. Phil made no attempt to hit him; he had no desire to do so, he only wanted to not be hit. Eventually the homophobe stood before Phil panting, looking confused.

“Turn around and leave.” Phil answered, “I’ve only been on the defensive. You do not wanna see me on the offensive.” Quite suddenly something clicked in Phil’s head. His attacker was screeching something at him but he turned and jogged back up the beach; he’d been on the defensive about his relationship since they’d come out. It was time to go on the offensive.

Sarah would be so proud of him.
“So in regards to the accusations that Phil Seymour faked his injuries…?”

“It is an absolute lie.” Nina replied firmly, her beautiful face stern, “I tended his wounds myself, I saw the physical and mental damage done by such an attack with my own eyes. Further attacks on Phil in regards to this by the media show you all to be nothing more than a pack of rabid hyenas.”

“Fuck… don’t mess with Nina.” Rae muttered. They were watching the interview on Youtube.

“A man was beaten because the attackers thought he was gay,” She said when the reporter opened his mouth. “And now because you think there’s a story in hating his relationship, because you think there’s money in breeding hatred, you are showing yourselves to have all the empathy of a sociopath.” She stood up, “My name is Nina Bellamy and I am black Briton; a nurse and an actor. And I stand with Phil Seymour.”

Rae closed the window and opened the next one.

“I just want to add to the end of this interview, that I’m Miranda Holbert, a Briton and an actress. And I stand with Phil Seymour.” This was from the ‘I stand with Phil Seymour’ Youtube channel that Sarah had begun. It had been Phil’s idea, to garner some public support beginning with his friends and hope it caught on, and he was doing several interviews this week. Rae clicked the next video.

“I’ve known Phil for years, I know him to be a moral and intelligent man who is deeply in love with his partners. I am Archie Milton, Briton and Archaeology lecturer at Leicester University. And I stand with Phil Seymour.”

“Phil’s an angel, anyone who says otherwise is flat out wrong. He makes me best mate, Rae, so happy; that trio is honestly one of the healthiest relationships I’ve ever seen. I’m Isabella Reid, a pansexual Briton and designer and owner of Bella Fashions. And I stand with Phil Seymour.”

“There are some serious human rights issues with the demonization of any minority group and we as a country need to consider what kind of people we want to be. Do we wish to be a safe place for all, or only for a select few? And if you choose that we should be safe only for some; were does the line in the sand get drawn? I’m Chloe Harris, Briton and leading human rights lawyer for the United Nations. And I stand with Phil Seymour.”

“We’ve got an impressive bunch o’ friends.” Rae said.

“It’ll be better when we can get people who aren’t our friends doing it.” Phil said. Rae refreshed the page to see if Sarah had uploaded any more photos.

“Oh my god!” She said and her and Phil’s eyes fell upon the names David Tennant, Phillip Seymour Hoffman, Sir Ian McKellar and Cate Blanchet.

“It’s gonna work.” Phil said with a growing grin. “Now we need to get you two out o’ the shit.” Phil said and Rae shrugged.

“It’s weird, I keep getting called a fat slut in the streets but my sales have gone up.” She said. They both looked over at Finn still trawling through the job sites.

“Finn?”

“I’m proud of you both.” He answered. He had been partially listening, but mostly he was focused
on trying to get some work. Rae and Phil shared a look; Finn was not happy.

By the end of the day, Sarah had uploaded over 100 videos that were not their friends, some of them were just people on the street, some of them politicians, some of them famous actors.

Phil woke up in the middle of the night to see Finn still on his laptop, sitting at his desk. He was re-writing his resume.

“You gotta come to bed Finn.”

“I gotta get a job. I can’t stand not having one.”

“What about your website?”

“Like anyone’ll wanna talk to me now.” Finn said. He had been hoping that he’d get to do some interviews with American bands, that he’d finally be able to get his site to what he wanted it to be.

“We’re changing public opinion.” Phil answered and Finn didn’t reply, he just went back to typing his resume out again. Phil watched him for a moment and sat down at the table. “I think that the moment we feel that loss of safety is a really hard moment. It’s when you really lose your innocence… Real childlike innocence. Sex doesn’t make you lose your innocence like everyone thinks…”

“I got stabbed by a guy who was stalking Rae. I know what it is to not feel safe. I feared for my fucking life Phil.” Finn retorted in an almost bored tone. Phil raised his eyebrows in acknowledgment.

“Yes you did… but when stuff like that happens, we tend to chalk it up as being one man. An extreme case; one crazy guy. We probably shouldn’t do that because there’s actually a lot of men that hurt women…” Phil replied and he could see Finn’s jaw working, he didn’t want to be in this conversation. “The point is; he seemed to be an extreme for you… not the norm. Not a person you’ll come across every day.” Phil paused, “but your boss? He’s just a normal guy, and yet he can fire you… take away your passion, your living, for being in love.”

Finn looked up at Phil, pain and fear in his eyes, his lips drawn into a tight line, “It’s the moment that you realised that all the hatred in the world actually does apply to you. And unlike those in power, whom all that hatred will never touch… it can come and get you. And there is nothing you can do to stop it.” Phil watched a tear escape from Finn’s eye. “It doesn’t matter how strong you are. How smart. All the things you achieved are nothing. This world isn’t fair. And the moment you first really know that is fucking awful.”

“I know that world’s not fair, I’ve known it for a long time.”

“You probably first suspected it when your mother left.” Phil answered. “But our brains often know things that our hearts deny.” Finn put a hand up to his mouth, “and this was the last straw. Now your heart knows it too.”

“How can he get away for firing me for who I love?” Finn spat, “And no one’ll hire me Phil. No one!” Finn looked away, “And keep trying to tell myself I don’t need the money, so why am I freaking out? But I love Radio DJing… I love my website and theatre tech and stuff too… but I can’t imagine me life without being a DJ.” He shook his head, “How do things like this even happen? Why is this even allowed? And you know…” Finn was ranting, his emotions pouring for
him, “I’m sitting here feeling sorry for myself and all I can keep thinking is that I’m a white guy… SO many other people have got it worse than me!”

“There’s a good reason we don’t run the Oppression Olympics every four years.” Phil answered and Finn looked at him surprised, “It’s not a competition Finn. Yes some people will have it worse, but others won’t. Someone might have it worse in one way but still be able to get a job. It’s not simple and clear cut. An injustice is an injustice.” Phil watched Finn light up a cigarette, “A lot of the time, people like to remind you that others have it worse to shut you up, to deny the problems that exist in our part of the world because other places apparently have it worse. It’s guilting you into silence. And you might even begin to believe that what happened to you isn’t a big form of homophobia when you look at the huge range of things that happen to queer people, including being killed.” Phil picked up Finn’s pen and drew a triangle on his notepad. “But we need to think of small acts of homophobia as the base of pyramid, that leads up through larger acts of homophobia” Phil traced the pen up the pyramid, from the base towards the tip, “like being fired, like being beaten, like being correctly raped, like being killed.” His pen reached the tip of the pyramid, “it’s all part of the same thing, and yes being killed is objectively worse than being fired, but they are all still acts of hatred and violence, and they are intrinsically linked; the society that allows you to be fired for being a bi, poly person, is the same society that will produce people that will kill you for that reason.” Phil dropped the pen onto the page. “You feared for your life with Saul. But you knew who he was. Who’s the guy that’s gonna kill for being in love?” Phil let that question hang in the air, giving Finn time to come to terms with his vulnerability. “You might not have had the words to explain it Finn, but your boss firing you, reminded you that anyone you met, anyone you see… anyone out there… they could be someone that will harm you or kill you because of who you love.” Phil looked at his hands, “It’s terrifying… they don’t have special markings, they’re not easily identified. It could be anyone. At any time. You’re never safe. That’s what homophobia does. It’s what racism, sexism, trans-phobia… any kind of bigotry you can name, does. It makes us unsafe at all times. It tells us that the next attack could come from anywhere. It turns people we love into apologists who play devil’s advocate and can’t ever understand what this is like, while they try to tell you it’s just their opinion or it’s just a joke. But we know it’s not.”

“They beat you.” Finn said softly, his hand reaching out for Phil. “I thought you were gonna die… and I’m crying cos I lost me job.” He shook his head.

“You cried a lot when I was in hospital.” Phil reminded him and Finn smiled sadly.

“Might of.” He said, “When I got over how furious I were.”

“Your anger back then protected you from the realisation of just how fucked up this world is. And then I was alright, so you could just push it all down. But this job thing… you were unfairly dismissed, and now no one will hire you, it keeps coming back to hit you in the face, you can’t push it away; you know now that world hates you. Even the media keeps telling you that every day.”

“I know we keep saying it’s not us it’s them… but… but I keep wondering if there is something wrong with me.” Finn stabbed his cigarette into the ashtray having barely smoked it, “and then I hate myself for thinking that, cos it means that on some level I must be questioning if there’s something wrong with us.” Phil felt a stab of sorrow in his heart.

“If you have seemingly the whole world telling you they hate you and that you’re wrong, you’re bound to have some moments of doubt Finn. That’s why you’ve got people getting rich off ‘gay cures’ like ‘pray the gay away’ camps.” Phil soothed him, “but do you…?” he really didn’t want to ask “Do you think there’s something wrong with us? Do you want us to split up?” Phil made
himself mentally prepared to deal with Finn’s doubts; it was only fair that he have some; he’d been through a lot.

“No.” Finn answered simply. “So I guess it’s me there’s something wrong with.”

“D’you think there’s something wrong with me?”

“No.”

“Rae?”

“No.”

“Archie?”

“Well maybe.” He grinned, “No, there’s nothing wrong with Arch. I get what you’re saying.” Finn said.

“If there’s nothing wrong with us, why is there something wrong with you?” Phil asked the question anyway. Finn paused and then slowly shook his head.

“I really don’t know why I think that way.”

“Maybe we should Skype Kester?”

“Not sure he knows how to Skype.” Finn replied with a grim smile.

“We can ask Chlo to teach him, it’s not that hard.” Phil said, “She’ll be more than happy to help out. She can see what immense pressure this public scrutiny is putting on us all. It wouldn’t hurt for all of us to talk to him.”

“For about six months yes.” Phil said, “I decided that I really wanted to speak out about my mental breakdown because I think that mental health issues are very much ignored or misunderstood in Britain and I wanted to let young LGBTQIAP people know that the world is fucked up. It’s not you. It’s them. You’re fine. And I wanted to say, to all the homophobes, and homophobe apologists: we’re not going anywhere, we’re not gonna shut up, we’re not gonna turn straight. We’re only getting stronger.”

“An admirable message.” The reporter said, “Can I ask what all those letters stand for?”

“Sure.” Phil answered, “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and Pansexual, Polysexual, or Polyamorous.”

“I thought the ‘A’ stood for ally?”

“No.” Phil said flatly.

“Oh?”

“Allies are important and very appreciated. But the movement is about queer people, not straight people. Queer people deserve queer spaces. True allies understand this and don’t fight to be a part of every single queer thing. Because it’s not about them; it’s about us.”
“So no straight pride parades?”

“No!” Phil laughed, “No they get to have straight, monogamous relationships be all around them at all times. It’s in the media, it’s the default expectation. They have the feast. Gay pride marches are the crumbs. We’re not only gonna take those crumbs; but we’re coming for a place at the table.”

“In the video you can see that you clearly do not fight back. And a warning to our viewers, there are a lot of homophobic slurs in this footage.” The reporter said as the tape played. Phil watched it and was amazed; he hadn’t realised that the altercation on the beach was being recorded. To the credit of the person who recorded it, they didn’t try to edit it to make Phil look bad; the video showed the whole attack, from the tackle to Phil running off.

“I was only defending myself against another attack.” Phil said, “I had no desire to hurt him. And people should understand that when people from oppressed groups fight back. We aren’t actually doing it to hurt you, but to defend ourselves.”

“Some people are saying that this footage proves that you were not beaten the first time.”

“Some people clearly have no understanding of the passage of time. I learned to defend myself properly after the first attack so that it did not happen again. Also the first time it was two assailants, this was just one, possibly drunk, homophobe.”

“You speak like this was barely an attack?” The reporter sounded surprised.

“When you’re openly queer, things like this happen far too often. I actually don’t know a queer person that hasn’t been verbally or physically attacked by homophobes.”

“…Over a thousand new videos overnight, what do you think makes the ‘I stand with Phil’ campaign so popular?”

“I think it’s a couple o’ things.” Rae answered, “Firstly I think everyone who’s not a complete bigot, can see what a decent human being Phil really is. Secondly, I think a lot of people around the world are thoroughly decent human beings, and when they get the chance to support someone or a group of people who are being unfairly discriminated against they jump at the chance. And thirdly I think people are really sick of how much hate there is in the world. ‘I stand with Phil’ is really about countering that with a bit of love and not just for Phil, but for the entire queer community.”

“Now I have to ask, what is polyamory like?”

“It’s just a normal relationship David.” Rae replied. “It’s the same as everybody else’s relationships except there’s three of us. We’re equal in every way, we support each other in every way. We love each other, we snuggle in front of the tv and argue over who’s turn it is to wash the towels.” Rae was absolutely charming; Phil was so impressed that the studio audience and cameras weren’t phasing her. Finn sat beside him biting his cuticles. Every time Phil noticed him doing it he’d take Finn’s hand and comfort him; he was still sorting through his loss of self-
confidence and faith in humanity. Finn was still able to do all his daily activities, and he was talking openly to them about it; but it was still a crisis, and Finn was anxious fairly often these days.

“Just an ordinary relationship.”

“That’s exactly it.” Rae answered.

“And your latest book ‘Peacock’ has a polyamorous relationship in it?”

“Aye.” Rae answered.

“And how much is it based off your experiences of polyamory?”

Phil and Finn gave each other a grim look; this was why Rae’s sales were skyrocketing recently. People wanted to read all the gossip and they thought it would be in her books. Phil understood that people were curious about things that they had never experienced before, but he didn’t understand why they couldn’t just google things. People asked the rudest, most intrusive questions of people that were ‘different’ and thought that it was perfectly ok to do that, to ask questions that they themselves would be unwilling to answer about their own private lives. But worse than the questions were the expectation, the entitlement; people felt entitled to their answers, like they had to earn their right to exist by being a never-ending library for some people. He didn’t mind the conversations with friends, asking how it all happened. It was the strangers that irked him. He smiled fondly at the amount of times he’d heard Rhys tell Chop to go to a library. That phrase had been replaced with ‘just google it Chop!’ Even friends asking sometimes got to be a bit too much. It was vastly unfair that the ‘different’ people didn’t get to just live their lives in peace and quiet like the ‘normal’ people did.

“Not really.” Rae answered, “The poly relationship in this starts off unhealthy and out of balance, there’s bad communication. Throughout the novel they manage to rectify their problem. Our relationship is quite healthy and for the most part it’s stayed that way from the beginning to right now. There’s only been a few hiccups.”

“Well no relationship gets by without some hiccups!”

“Exactly, and we’re just a normal relationship.” Rae reminded everyone, “The other thing to note is that in the book it’s a lesbian only polyamory set up. Five hot as hell ladies kicking arse and getting shit done!”

“I can’t wait to read it!”

Rae came back from her jog and grabbed some water from the fridge. Phil was filming again today. He was on the last day of filming the first movie of the “Iago” trilogy, which was very exciting for him. Finn was still at the computer. This time with his personal website open, some computer code jotted down on the notepad beside him. He looked so lost.

“Hey.” She kissed his head and sat down at the table. The furnished apartment had provided a computer, and they each had a laptop as well. Finn preferred a computer; he liked the big screen. Back home they all had a computer; Phil’s was the one that got used the least.

“I don’t know what I’m s’posed to be doing.” Finn said and shook his head. “I don’t even know if
I’m in the right direction Rae.” Finn said.

“Remember that little community radio station job you got back in Stamford?” Rae asked and Finn shook his head.

“I tried the community stations, they don’t have any positions either.”

“I was just meaning that it’s been a long time since you haven’t been a DJ. Even at uni you was DJing.”

“Aye.” Finn stared at the code. “But I’m focusing on my site and just… trying to do other things.” He sighed and looked up at the screen.

“If they won’t hire you to work at their stations… create your own station. Online.”

“It’s kinda what I’m trying to do.” Finn said, but it’s just a bunch o’ videos on Youtube. I mean it’s popular but…”

“Livestream it. Like a radio station. You and me can do the morning shift, cos we’re funny fuckers. Then you can have someone else do the next shift; pay them a wage… you’ve got a lot o’ followers; they’ll come over. Sell airspace for ads to make money. Run an actual online radio station…”

“The logistics and cost of actually getting something like that together would be…”

“Within our means.” Rae gently cut him off and Finn looked at her astonished; he still forgot about their wealth.

“Don’t you even feel bad for spending his money?” Finn asked.

“It’s our money Finn.” Rae answered. “All the money we make goes to the same account.”

“Aye but the millions… they’re his.”

“They were his. And he made a choice about what he wanted to do with his money. And that choice was to share it with us. You know he’d love it if you cut a huge chunk out of the money to make this happen.”

“The licensing alone…” Finn bit his bottom lip and started googling the licensing regulations.

“You can get Gerard to help you through the legal stuff.” Rae prompted him gently and Finn made a noise of agreement and opened up his email.

“Can’t hurt to just email him and see…” Finn mumbled as he shot an email off to Gerard. Rae grinned as she watched him typing things into google and opening tabs with purpose.

“I think it’s a great idea.” Archie said, “Fuck working for someone else!”

“I don’t know if I can pull it off yet!” Finn laughed, “It’s just in the planning stages.” He lit up a cigarette, grinning genuinely for the first time in four months, “How’s Italy?”

“Well the dig is fucking amazing. And Izzy is a force to be reckoned with!” Archie laughed, “It’s
real nice having her around a lot.”

“Missing Tom?”

“Well he’s here a lot o’ the time. The boxing joint’s going so well and they’ve got a great manager in so Rhys and Tom have both got more free time now, so they’re thinking of opening up another one in London, I’ve been offered a job in London, and Chloe’s work takes her there so often it’s ridiculous to stay in Stamford anymore.”

“Oh my fucking god! You’re coming to London?” Finn looked at his computer screen in disbelieving joy. The picture was slightly pixelated, but Skype was coping ok today.

“Probably!” Archie declared, “And you’re in fucking America!”

“Only eight more months!” Finn replied.

“And every time Phil gets another American role!” Archie reminded him.

“Aye there’s that, but London’s our home so we’ll be there most o’ the time!” Finn said excitedly and then quite suddenly his face dropped, “Oh but Chop.”

“Yeah.” Archie said slowly. “He broke up with Pam.” Archie said, “He’s just real unhappy. Danny says the business is doing great and that he could run it himself if Chop wanted to go to Italy…”

“He won’t go after her.” Finn said. “He knows how to take a no.”

“And Izzy keeps saying ‘no’ to him.” Archie agreed, “But she hasn’t dated anyone since him. Actually, she’s acting a bit like Phil did when Rae said no to him; having a bunch of lovers and not getting emotionally attached to any of ‘em.”

“Maybe she’s still in love with Chop.” Finn knew what Archie was hinting at, “Maybe she’s just living the life she wants with no man tying her down.”

“Or woman.” Archie said and Finn cocked an eyebrow.

“Aye I know; she pansexual right?”

“That’s it.” Archie answered. “I don’t even know if Chop’d know what to do with her if they got back together now anyway.”

“I’m sure he’d figure it out.” Finn answered. “But he won’t go after her. It’ll only ever happen if she goes back to him.”

“I really don’t see it happening.” Archie answered, “Even if they are still fucking every time they’re in the same country as each other. Izzy’s enjoying her life far too much to ever go back to Stamford and I don’t see Chop ever leaving there.”

“I dunno. People can change.” Finn shrugged.

“Anyway, I’ve got some monumentally big news.” Archie said.

“Bigger than coming to London?”

“Well yeah.” Archie said. “Much.” He cleared his throat and Finn looked at him expectantly.
“Tom and I are-” The screen froze and Finn’s eyebrows furrowed. He waited to see if Skype would fix itself, but the call dropped out and he rolled his eyes and tried calling Archie again.

“Hey.” He said when they reconnected. “I didn’t hear your big news, it cut out before-”

“We’re gonna be fathers.” Archie cut in over Finn and Finn stopped dead, his mouth still open.

“Wha-” He stopped himself from asking ‘what’ and suddenly chuckled, “um… congratulations?”

“I know, I know. Tom hates kids and never wants them…” Archie said and they both laughed. “But Lindy got in a bit o’ trouble.” Lindy was Archie’s youngest sister, she turned 21 this year.

“Trouble?”

“Yeah... and she doesn’t want to abort it so…”

“Wow.” Finn marvelled as he realised what Archie was telling him.

“She was looking into putting the baby up for adoption and… I dunno. I just… I offered to be the one to adopt it when it comes.”

“Did you ask Tom first?”

“No.” Archie said with a tone that denoted that the conversation that he had had to have with Tom had not gone well.

“So is he seeing himself as a parent yet?” Finn asked and Archie shook his head.

“No, he’s seeing himself as an unwilling participant in my fuckbaggery.”

“He’s obviously very impressed with your decision.”

“Very.” Archie said. “But he knows I won’t go back on the promise I made my own sister, so… he has very begrudgingly agreed to go along with it. And our baby will come along in late May.”

“What about the father?”

“Shithead skipped out as soon as he found out.”

“Is Lind ok?”

“She will be. She was a lot happier when I said I’d adopt it.”

“So when you get a place in London, you’ll be looking for one with a nursery?” Finn asked, there was a small stab of desire in his heart and he realised he was envious. Rae didn’t want children, but there was a part of him that would love to be a father.

“Yep.” Archie said with a grin that he couldn’t keep off his face, “I know Tom’ll come around… I’m so fucking excited to be a dad!”

“It’s a pleasure to have all three of you in the studio tonight!” There was a live audience and the clapping was rowdy and supportive.
“Thanks for having us!” Phil answered.

“Now your film ‘Iago’ has just been released, you’ve finished filming the second movie and almost finished working on the third?”

“Yes that’s right.” Phillip answered.

“Getting the filming all out in one go!”

“Well we had a very small budget and that limited the timeframe we had to work in.”

“The first film has received critical acclaim and there’s already Oscar buzz surrounding it.”

“Yeah it’s a great movie. Fantastic script, amazing cast, the director knows how to get most out of us… the whole experience has been infinitely rewarding.”

“Well I’m glad America’s treating you well!” He smiled winningly. “And what about you Finn, you’re quietest of the trio. How’s being here been for you?”

“Ah it was shaky at first.” Finn said and took as subtle a deep breath as he could manage; he was very nervous, “But it’s been amazing overall.”

“You recently interviewed Flea from Red Hot Chilli Peppers on your online music station called ‘three’ and he declared himself to be a supporter of your relationship; have the American people been generally supportive, do you think?”

“I think once the initial shock wore off, and the sensationalist elements of the media moved on to the next story, people in general started to really ask themselves if they were comfortable with the sorts of attitudes and behaviour that followed in the months after we came out.” Finn said and his eyes flicked to the glass of water the studio had provided. “And most people found that they didn’t like it and have since come out in support of queer relationships.”

“The Youtube channel dedicated to supporting Phil has millions of followers, views and videos uploaded, it must be gratifying to have had such an outpouring of support?”

“I think we’re all just glad that we get to continue our lives, and careers.” Finn answered.

“Now your online station runs 24 hours and has several different types of shows and it costs just £1 a year for a subscription?”

“Aye that’s for covering licensing costs and other expenses like presenter salaries.”

“You have millions of listeners, from around the world. And you’ve gained this success in just six months?”

“Aye.” Finn answered with a grin.

“There was some controversy about one of your presenters?”

“Aye that’s Qirfa.” Finn said, “She works out of her home in Yemen, presenting the best of the underground movement of punk and hip hop music on the Arabian Peninsula.” Finn said, “It’s cutting edge, raw as fuck music. I love her show. People was saying I had a terrorist on me show. That’s flat out racist. She a 16 year old girl who loves her music, she not a fucking terrorist cos she an Arab or a Muslim. People need to chill the fuck out.” Finn said passionately and then his eyes opened wide, “Oh shit, I’m not allowed to swear!” He said and Rae and Phil broke into laughter,
the host blushing also chuckled, “I’m sorry!”

As January progressed Phil was nominated for a SAG, a BAFTA, a golden globe, a critics choice award and an Oscar for best leading male in a movie for ‘Iago.’ Movie roles were back to rolling in and both Rae and Finn broke into being millionaires in their own right with the success of their careers. Rae opened up a centre dedicated to helping rape victims; free counselling, places to stay, treatment etc. Finn started a charity aimed at getting music into the lives of very poor kids; helping them learn instruments, singing, rapping, whatever they wanted and to give them opportunities to perform, get airplay on his music show, and get recorded on his own record label; which he was in the process of creating.

The hard part of coming out; doing it to a nation, and in fact to the world, had been done. They had met it head on, and conquered it with style.
Without You I’m nothing

‘Without You I’m nothing’ by Placebo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqbQ_I-HuQ

I’m unclean, a libertine, and every time you vent your spleen I seem to lose the power of speech

“You know you are allowed to look at them.” Rae said when she caught Phil trying to stop himself from looking at his awards clustered together on top of the music cupboard. Phil broke out into a grin. February had seen them travelling between London and America so often they barely knew where they were half of the time. But early March saw them finally back home after a huge night at the Oscars.

“Pity you didn’t do a clean sweep Jill.” Finn teased and Phil turned his eyes to Finn.

“I got time.” He answered cockily.

“You know I like your confidence right?” Finn said, “We’re just gonna end up fucking if you keep that attitude up.”

“Well I better keep it up then.” Phil replied as equally cockily and Finn broke out into a grin. Rae’s phone went off and she looked at the text she had gotten from Chloe, just as Phil’s phone went off with texts from Nina, Sammy and Kelsey, and then Sarah called.

“Oh shit.” Finn said rolling his eyes, “What’s happened now?

“Put the tv on.” Rae said and Finn did as Phil decided to ignore the call from Sarah and instead watch the tv.

“Kelsey’s text says ‘those fucking fuckers,’” Phil said, “so I’m guessing-” His voice stopped when Rae stopped flicking channels and an image of his father, talking to a reporter, his mother sitting beside him looking uncomfortable, flashed up on the screen. “Of course.” Phil said with a tight smile.

“…So in the end, I asked him to leave the family home because he was selfishly ignoring the needs of the Seymour family.” Jarred was saying, “But as time goes by, I have come to see that perhaps we should put that aside and make peace. Families need each other, because without our family, we’re nothing. So I urge my son Phil Seymour, to apologise to his family, to accept my apology, and to come home so we can talk this through and be a family again.” Phil’s phone went off again; it was Sarah. Phil dropped his phone onto the side and shook his head.

“We have dinner reservations.” He said thickly. Rae stared at the screen, unable to even fathom how Phil must be feeling. Finn watched Phil putting his jacket on and decided that a nice dinner out to let Phil digest this latest parental travesty might be best.

They headed downstairs and were met with a barrage of reporters. Phil’s nostrils flared, but he kept his mouth shut as they started to throw questions at him. He just felt like he couldn’t say a word. His father had again fucked him over and he just didn’t even know what to say.
“No comment.” He eventually squeezed out and continued to walk through the crowd, wishing that they had decided to drive to the restaurant instead of walk.

“You know what? I got a comment.” Finn said, “That man, tried to beat my man when he came out. He’s a violent homophobe,” Finn considered revealing what he had seen at the club, but knew they had an agreement to not reveal things there, and no one from that club had said a word about what Phil got up to there. “He disowned his son for being in love. And now those bastards wanna get back in his life so they can have a piece of his success and fame. Well they can fuck right off!” Finn said and pushed through the crowd. Rae, maybe having heard Sarah’s speeches about public relations too often, stayed in the crowd and took a deep breath.

“As you can see this is a very emotional time. Finn gets right pissed off when people hurt the people he loves… most people get pissed off under those circumstances.” She told them in a diplomatic and soothing tone, “But I can assure you that what he said was true. I was there when Jarred Seymour attempted to beat his son for being in love; it was Finn that stopped him and protected Phil. Jarred Seymour does not care about his son. He cares about money and success.”

She was bathed in a barrage of questions and she held her hands up, “We have a dinner reservation, please leave us in peace.” She was allowed to get past them without having to push and caught up with Finn and Phil who had kept walking, having not realised that she wasn’t following them.

To their grateful surprise the media had moved on when they returned from their meal; they’d had dinner with Nina, James, Renee, Bryn and Latisha. To Phil’s credit he’s maintained a pleasant demeanour for the entire dinner. Nina had been wonderfully comforting, meeting them at the door, saying a few private words to him and giving him a huge hug and leading them through to their table. She’d heard the news on the simultaneous radio broadcast while she was driving to the restaurant and had immediately texted Phil.

In the end it had been a great evening. And returning to the flat to see no media had been the icing on the cake.

When they got into their flat Phil picked up his phone ready to call Sarah. There was a text from an unknown number. He furrowed his brows and opened it up, his lips pursed in curiosity.

_I saw your little performance on national television. Always trying to make yourself look better than you are. But I know what a filthy piece of trash you are. You embarrassed me by not replying appropriately. You slapped the olive branch I offered. I should have known better than to try and talk sense to an idiot like you. You disgust me._

“What is it?” Rae asked when she saw the look on Phil’s face. He handed her his phone and she read the text with a stunned face. “Your father?” She asked and Finn came over from turning on the Xboxes to see what was happening. “How did he get your number?”

“If you have enough money Rae, there’s not many things you can’t find out.” Phil said thickly.

“Fuck that shit.” Finn said, “If he didn’t wanna get embarrassed he should o’ just called you instead o’ trying to guilt and shame you on tv!” Phil looked at Finn as if he had said the most amazing thing and he took his phone back from Rae, calling the number that had texted him before either of them had a chance to realise what he was doing.

“Hi Jarred.” He paused, “I just called to tell you to go fuck yourself, you insufferable piece of
trash.” Rae and Finn heard a torrent of abuse come from the other end of the phone. All three of them were taken aback; it wasn’t really the Seymour way to have huge outbursts like this. Small outbursts occasionally, but not this. Phil seemed to lose his ability to speak again as he listened to his father tell him the most awful things. But he took a deep breath and gathered his emotions together. When he spoke, it was in a calm voice. “You never saw me as a human being did you?” He asked. There was a moment of silence before the voice started up on the other end of the phone. The tone had changed slightly but Phil just took the phone from his ear and hung up.

“I’ll get us a drink.” Rae said and Finn led Phil to the lounge.

“D’you think killing shit will help?” Finn asked, referring to the night of x-box gaming they had planned.

“I wish I’d told him that he was gonna die a sad, lonely old man and no one was gonna carry on his fucking legacy or even mourn his death.” Phil said, “I wish I’d told him that he’d never get of my success because it had nothing to do with him.” Phil said and Finn kissed his temple.

“That piece o’ shit don’t even deserve to hear your voice.” Finn stroked his hair and Rae returned with the beer and wine.

“I should call Sarah. Get a formal statement out there as soon as possible so we can shut his bullshit down.” Phil sighed. “Then we’re killing shit. You pick which game.” He got up and called Sarah while Rae and Finn silently argued over the limited games they could choose between that all three of them could play, Finn setting up the two spare screens so they could play on their individual Xboxes.

“I have absolutely no intention of ever having contact with my father again. The reasons for this are manifold and extremely private and I will not be answering questions about this. My sister Kelsey has given me permission to speak on her behalf, so I say very clearly to our biological father; you will never see either of us, in person, again. You will never share in our successes or our lives. Should either of us have children, you will never know these children; they are not yours to carry on your ridiculous legacy. You will see how brightly we shine, but we want you to know that how brilliant we are, has nothing to do with you. You are nobody to us now. We disown you.”

Kelsey looked up at the huge artwork she was painting for the Whitechapel Art Gallery; she was becoming a very well-known artist now, and her work sold quite well. Certainly well enough to pay for her lifestyle without the need to ever dip into her trust fund.

“More yellow.” She mumbled as her phone went off. “Fuck.” She wiped her hands on her overalls and looked at who was calling; an unknown number. “Hello?” She recognised the voice immediately. “What do you want?”

She listened silently, turning away from the artwork and looking out the window of her penthouse apartment. Her brows furrowed momentarily, a hint of the deep emotion she kept hidden within her flashing in her eyes before she shook her head and lit a cigarette. She hung up without saying a
word and stared out the window for a while, not sure how to feel.

After the year in America, living on the beach, Phil had taken to swimming laps most mornings; Finn and particularly Rae, joined him most mornings, but this morning he was alone.

He’d just gotten out of the pool, noticing the girls off to one side whispering and staring, when his phone rang.

Another unknown number. He rolled his eyes and answered it.

“Hello.” He said tersely, towelling himself with his other hand and then gathering his things together. “Why are you calling?” He asked when he recognised the voice.

A few moments later he sat down with a thud on the silver benches that lined the wall. He had no idea what he was supposed to feel.

“I’m sorry I were too lazy to come with you this morn, so I made you a nice omelette.” Finn said as soon as Phil opened the door.

“Thank you.” Phil answered distractedly but sat down at the kitchen table with them.

“How was your swim?” Rae asked and poured them all some tea.

“He’s dead.” Finn looked up, the bacon he’d been biting into still between his lips. Rae put the teapot down. “He killed himself.” Phil kept his eyes on the centre of the table. “My father killed himself.”

“Are you ok?” Rae asked while Finn swallowed the bacon in his mouth without chewing at all.

“What d’you need?” Finn asked as soon as the bacon was gone. Phil shook his head.

“I don’t know.” He answered, “Is the answer to both of those questions.”

“Have some tea.” Rae said and Phil took a sip of the tea.

“I have to call Kels.” He said and put the cup down. They watched him ring Kelsey. “Hey.”

“Fucker had to get the last fucking word in.” Her words were slurred.

“Bourbon?”

“Fuck yes.” She answered.

“I’ll come and get you. You shouldn’t drink alone.” Phil answered. But Finn shot up and shook his head, then pointed to himself to indicate he’d go and get Kelsey. Phil nodded and Finn kissed them both on the cheek before heading out.

“It’s fine. I’m fine. I don’t give a fuck, right?” She said, “Why should either of us give a fuck?”
He heard that pain in her voice and felt a jolt of the same pain.

“I dunno. But we both do.” He answered and heard her sniffle slightly.

“He doesn’t deserve it.” She answered.

“I know.” Phil answered with a numb mouth, “look Finn’s coming to get you.”

“D’you he’d be interested in changing siblings?”

“No I don’t think so Kels.” Phil said with a sad smile.

“He’s just so attractive. I’m so glad you found two such beautiful people.” She said, “I mean they’re so good to look at, but they’re so good to know as well.”

“I know.” Phil answered simply; she was already very drunk.

“I only ever wanted them to love me.” Kels said the sound of her tears stifling her voice. Phil squeezed his eyes shut and tears dropped down his cheeks. Rae stood up and went to him, putting her arms around him, he squeezed her hand. “They never will. He’s fucked off and she’s so… cold. Even when she called… she was so…”

“I know.” Phil said, “There was no emotion from her at all.” Their mother had delivered the news to them in a polite, emotionless tone.

“What the fuck is wrong with them?” She asked.

“I don’t know.” Phil answered. “I wish I did.”

The pews were incredibly uncomfortable, and Rae kept wondering if they should stand up when everyone else kept standing up, since none of them believed in God. Rae had been born into a loosely Protestant household that became loosely Muslim, and Finn had been born into a very loosely Catholic family. But Phil’s father had been an atheist, his mother a born-again Catholic. Rae and Finn had been surprised that Meredith had opted for a Catholic service; Rae had even questioned if the church would let it happen since he’d committed suicide and Finn had shrugged because he had no idea. Phil and Kelsey though had not been at all surprised that there mother had chosen to do what she wanted without any thought for what someone else might have wanted. Both of their parents lacked empathy, lacked understanding of other people’s needs.

Most of their friends had come to the funeral to support Phil. Only Chop really knew what was going on with the standing up and saying prayers, he even kneeled when everyone else did for prayer. But when Phil didn’t kneel, Finn and Rae who had been wondering if they should, chose not to. Phil stood when everyone else did, so Rae and Finn did, but he did not say the prayers; he didn’t know them. Kelsey did not stand. She sat with her arms resolutely folder over her chest, refusing to look at their mother, who was sitting next to her.

She hadn’t wanted to come to the funeral, but Phil had asked her to come, so she did.

When the priest invited everyone to come up and receive holy communion Phil crossed his leg and folded his hand over his knee politely, the priest looking at him expectantly, his shook his head once, subtly. His mother rose and went to the priest, many other people in the church joined them,
Chop among them. It had been years since he'd been in a church and it surprised him how well he remembered the old routine.

The priest spoke a lot about god and god’s plan and only said a few words about Jarred leaving that to his friends and family. Only Phil was speaking from his family. And he was speaking last. He put a hand down on Kelsey’s leg when another speaker got up and spoke about what a wonderful man Jarred was, what a loyal and devoted husband and father he was.

“And now Jarred’s son, Phillip, will say a few words.” There was a moment of silence and Phil nodded to the priest. He turned and looked at Kelsey.

“Come stand with me?”

“Phil…” She shook her head.

“Please?” She looked away from him, clearly not wanting to be any part of this, but she nodded and got up. He took her hand and they walked up to the dais together. Phil moved the microphone slightly, and Kelsey stayed back, away from the microphone, standing behind him, her eyes staring off to the side, her mouth drawn in a tight line. Phil didn’t have any notes; he had not prepared a speech, he was intending to speak entirely from the heart. He took a moment to gather his thoughts, looking down at his hands.

“The fondest memory I have of my father is when I was a little boy. I would ask him the question ‘why’ for hours, and he would always answer, never growing tired of my curiosity. Indeed, he considered it to be one of his most important life missions to foster genius in both of his children. And we both stand before you as people with genius level IQs.” Kelsey moved her head as if she was bitterly disappointed in what Phil was saying, but her chin jutted proudly; she was determined not to say anything here. “Those who know me well, know how much importance I place on that fact.” Rae and Finn gave a slight smile, and Rae looked over her shoulder to see Chloe put a hand over her mouth to hide the grin she had. All of the gang knew that Phil considered IQ testing to be ridiculous. “I understand at funerals, we all come together and mourn and talk about the old happy memories we have of the deceased.” Phil said, “Unfortunately, that is the only happy memory I have of my father.” Kelsey turned her eyes to Phil, clearly surprised; after that opening, she had believed he was going to be diplomatic in his speech. “I understand that we are not meant to speak ill of the dead. But I don’t believe that this is a valid piece of etiquette, because it denies the living their experiences and emotions about this person. And if they are this dead person’s victim, they should not be silenced out of a misplaced sense of decency. What is more decent; caring for a dead person or caring for a living person? He had his whole life to defend himself against the things I’m about to say but in our last conversation, all he could muster up the courage to say to me was that I was an embarrassment to our surname.” There was a stir in the audience. “And honestly, if he wanted me to speak better of him, he should have treated myself and Kelsey much better.” Kelsey took a small step closer to Phil, wanting him to feel her supportive presence. “My father was so obsessed with inventing a money maker, that there were whole weeks I didn’t see him for more than a few moments when he came out of the bedroom to go to the bathroom. We lived in a one bedroom council flat, and he took the bedroom as his own, often not even letting our mother sleep in there. She had the lounge, Kelsey and I slept on the floor. And when she was permitted to sleep in the bedroom, Kelsey and I would fight over who would sleep on the lounge, both of us desperately wanting the other to have the comfortable night’s sleep that was to be had on a filthy, broken lounge that sagged in the middle. We both thought it was heaven to sleep on that lounge.” Phil cleared his throat and Kelsey smiled sadly, “My mother worked long hours, leaving her young children effectively alone, but we looked after each other. Kelsey learned how to make food very young, and she fed me more often than I have yet repaid her for.” Kelsey shook her head slightly, “And the vast majority of the money my mother made, went to his endeavours.” Phil looked over
at the coffin, “We starved so that he could create.” Phil looked out at the mourners with absolutely no remorse for what he was saying. He saw his mother looking down at the floor and looked away from her, instead finding a rock steady support in the looks Rae and Finn were giving him. “I was told that my physical development was stunted from malnutrition when I was nine years old.” Phil said, “And Kelsey had similar issues.” He gave a small smile, “Ah but what a small price to pay for the wealth he gained for us all. How immeasurably better our lives were made by his relentless acquisition of wealth…” The snarky tone of Phil’s was undeniably bitter, and Rae squeezed Finn’s hand, both of them worried for their man, “But we were happier when we were poor, because from the moment he became rich, our father attempted to groom us into clones of him that would continue his legacy; he wanted us to become something, someone, we weren’t. Kelsey and I can both attest to his mental and emotional cruelty, to the unhealthy interest he took in our relationships and sex lives, to the way he planned our entire lives out for us and when we both wished to be our own person, how we were both met with physical violence and disowned, thrown out of our home, left to fend for ourselves. I was very lucky that Mr Gary Nelson, Finn’s father, took me in. But Kelsey suffered horribly when he took everything in her life from her and cast her out onto the winter streets of London. We were never human beings to him; we were just an extension of his delusions of grandeur, whom he easily tossed aside the moment we were done with being pulled on his puppet strings.” He looked back at the coffin, “And for all this, I can guarantee you.” Phil took a calming breath, “That all his two children ever wanted, was to be loved. But that was more than he was ever willing to give us.” Phil looked down at his hands, “People have been asking constantly since Wednesday, why such a successful man would kill himself. And I can tell you why; because he realised that for all his money, he had nothing. He had achieved nothing because he no longer had any children. Because he knew that he was empty. He was nothing.” Phil looked up at the mourners, “I don’t know how to end this speech, other than to say, I so wish that I could not care about his death. I wish that my sister and I hadn’t gotten blind drunk the day we found out and cried our eyes out over a man that deserved no tears from us. I wish that I didn’t so desperately still want his love.” Kelsey put a hand on his shoulder, “I wish I didn’t want to have my father look at me and tell me he’s proud of me, rather than tell me that I’m a faggot.” The priest stirred uncomfortably. “I wish I could hate him as much as he simply didn’t love me.” Phil looked back at the coffin, “But I don’t. I loved my father, more than he deserved. And right until I heard that he had killed himself, I hoped… wished… that he’d…” Phil stopped and the silence that hung in the air was filled with Phil and Kelsey’s pain, “And now he never will.” Phil turned away from the dais, and Kelsey hugged him. They returned to their pew and the priest took a moment before heading back to his pulpit. The minute the priest started talking Rae squeezed Phil’s knee and Finn reached his arm around Rae’s waist, Phil moving his hand to hold Finn’s hand near Rae’s hip. Finn squeezed Phil’s hand tightly as the priest spoke about the divinity of forgiveness. Kelsey and Phil shaking their heads the whole time he spoke.

His mother had spared plenty of expense, buying their father a very simple gravestone with nothing but his name and dates on it. Rae noticed that the gravesite was not a double plot; Meredith had no intention of being buried with her late husband.

The priest said a few more words as the coffin was lowered into the ground. Meredith watched silently, sucking her teeth; she had not shed one tear yet.

Phil had an arm around Kelsey’s shoulders, his other hand held Finn’s hand tightly while Finn held Rae closely. More than a few people at the funeral had given them odd looks; Phil was famous enough for them to recognise him, but it was obvious that people thought he would not bring his partners to the funeral of his father out of respect for the church. They were wrong. Phil had no
respected for institutions, opinions, people that would oppress him, deny his identity, erase his existence, threaten his life, tell him to not love.

Kelsey shed her first tears of the funeral as the coffin descended. But Phil was painfully struck of the deep realisation that everyone he loved was going to die one day. He felt panic rising in his chest and squeezed Finn’s hand tighter. Finn whispered to Rae and Rae nodded, letting go of Finn, she stepped behind Phil and put her hands around his waist, resting her head on the back of his shoulder, holding him tightly. They had learned from Kester that Phil needed to be held tightly when he felt deep emotions; he was so afraid the emotions would tear him apart. Rae held his pieces together

They nearly didn’t go to the wake, but Kelsey had a morbid sense of curiosity. It was being held at the house in Kensington.

When they got there Rae and Finn looked up at Chop’s grandfather’s place; it looked empty and then turned to go into the Seymour house.

Servants guided them through to the entertaining room where everyone milled around the very expensive canapés and drinks.

Their mother stood in the corner of the room, smiling politely to people who gave her condolences. Finn could see more than a little Phil in her; the way she was so in control and polite. Kelsey was more like her father; demanding and outspoken.

An unspoken understanding passed between Phil and Kelsey; they were going to wait this thing out and talk to their mother at the end.

There was no beer or spirits on offer, only expensive wines, so Finn was drinking wine, sucking his teeth, looking around, unimpressed, at all these rich people. And then he remembered that he was rich now; in his own right. He felt intensely like he did not belong amongst these people, he’d seen them giving dirty looks at them when they spoke. Finn knew that Rae and his accents weren’t cultured like all these rich people. But rich people had a way of giving a particularly filthy look to those they deemed to be below them, and Finn had a moment of feeling his cheeks burn with embarrassment at himself before his own pride surged through him and he shook his head, speaking to Rae louder about how nice the wine was; not hiding his accent. He looked over at Phil and Kelsey, people going over to give them condolences, very tentatively, unsure how to approach him after his speech in the church. Finn couldn’t imagine how a ten year old would cope with getting those looks. How alienated he must have felt from himself, his family, his surroundings. He saw the strength, control and grace with which Phil handled himself now as those same people that once glared condescendingly at him when he was a poor child, now fawned over him as a rich adult.

It was an hour later before everyone had finally left, leaving Meredith, Phil and Kelsey looking at each other silently. Rae and Finn waited near the door, watching as Meredith’s children looked at her, Phil almost expectantly, Kelsey with clear disdain.
“Lovely service.” Phil said eventually, “Exactly what he wouldn’t have wanted.”

“I know.” Meredith replied. Kelsey stared at her mother; she had sworn to never talk to them again and she had no intention of starting now.

“Well. I find myself being completely unsurprised that you managed to become the epitome of passive aggression.”

“Your father had no will.” Meredith ignored Phil’s snipe. “I am having Gerard sell all of our assets, including the share portfolio. I will have him divide everything three ways.”

“I don’t want your money.” Phil answered.

“No. Neither of you need it. You’ve been so successful at your chosen careers.” Meredith noted.

“I’m sure you’ll note that our successes have nothing to do with you?”

“I know how angry and hurt you both are.” She answered, “I know that I failed you both as a mother, countless times. I always told Jarred that I would never be a good mother.” She looked down at her hands, her face completely emotionless, “But I do love you both. And perhaps the greatest gift I can give you both is the knowledge that I will never shed one tear for that man. And I am sorry. And I am so proud of both of you. You both turned out far better than your parenting. Please take anything you want from this house before it goes on the market next week, and expect your third of his money before the end of the year; you may not need it, but it is yours. You have earned it.”

“Earned it…” Phil shook his head and looked away, “Is that how much our childhood was worth, is that the cost of tears and emotional trauma? Is that the price of Kelsey’s life as she slept on the streets, my body as you starved me? Is that what your children are worth?” Meredith looked at him silently for a moment before nodding, taking his words in, but not addressing them.

“I just wanted to try one last bit of mothering before I go.” Phil made an unimpressed, disbelieving noise in the back of his throat. Meredith turned her eyes to Kelsey, who looked at her with reluctance, “Kelsey… let go of this anger. Let yourself be happy. It’s not your fault that we failed you. There’s nothing you could have done to change it. Let it go. Not because it’ll make me feel better or let us off scot free, but because it will make you feel better without this poisoning you anymore.” Kelsey narrowed her eyes at her mother but Meredith had turned to Phil, “Phil. You need to believe in yourself more. You are enough. You are. And please don’t let your fear of being a bad parent like your father and I stop you from having children; should you chose to have them, you won’t poison them like your father and I nearly did with you two. Neither of you will. You’re both such good people, filled with the light of god. But now you must both learn to forgive, just as Jesus taught. You must forgive us for the crimes, both real and imagined, that your father and I committed against you.” She took a deep breath, “And finally, should either of you choose to be forgiving, choose to let your future children have a grandmother, choose to make our family whole again… you can contact me; my mobile phone number will never change, and you both have it.” She turned and walked up the stairs without anther word, neither of her children calling out to her to stop, to ask where she was going or what she would do now.

“I just wanna burn this house to the ground.” Kelsey seethed.

“Let me get the grand piano out before you do.” Phil answered, “Then I’ll help you.” Kelsey looked up at her younger brother and felt instantly calmer.

“After everything she just tries to emotionally guilt us.” Kelsey said and Phil cocked an eyebrow.
“She makes it seem like a real apology, but there’s still all of her bullshit underneath it all.”

“Let’s go.” Finn said, “We’ll organise some removalists tomorrow and Rae and I will come and take a bunch o’ stuff; we can put it all in storage if we’ve got no room.” Finn noted, “You two write a list of all the things you want us to take, so that neither of you ever have to come back here.”

They finally got home, and Phil went to the kitchen to get them all drinks.

“It’s ridiculous, but I keep thinking it’s my fault he killed himself.” Phil said softly as he sat down at the table. Rae leaned forward and took his hand, Finn scooted over his chair and put his hand on Phil’s thigh.

“No.” Rae answered, “It’s not your fault.”

“That official statement I made to the press was pretty harsh.” Phil said.

“That statement was survival.” Rae answered, “He was emotionally and publically trying to manipulate you; you know how much damage he’s done to you already. You ensured your survival by being honest.”

“Aye and if that fucker can’t handle that statement he should try going through what he put you and Kels through.” Finn backed Rae.

“The thing is…” Phil said softly, “I don’t care if what I said did make him do it.” Phil put a hand to his face, “I’m such a bad person, but I don’t care. And even if it did make him do it; I’d still say it. I’d still refuse to have him in my life.”

“How are you a bad person by keeping the poison out of your life? That’s self-preservation. You are not responsible for his actions Phil.” Rae said sternly and wrapped her arms around him. Phil rested his chin on her arm and put his hand on Finn’s hand. “It’s ok for you to keep someone who harms you out of your life. You don’t have to have anyone in your life; even if they’re related to you. You don’t owe anybody anything.”

“I don’t understand how I can love him and still not care that he’s dead.”

“He hurt you.” Rae answered.

“How can I love ciggies even though I know they’re killing me?” Finn answered, “Human emotions never make any sense.”

Phil looked up at Finn sharply and got up and went to the window. He looked out silently, Rae and Finn watching him. He had started looking out the window after he had been attacked, just before he had a breakdown. Finn felt a moment of panic that Phil was slipping into depression in front of him; they’d already let that happen once. He got up and went to Phil.

“Please don’t leave us again.” Finn said softly. Rae put her hand to her mouth at the rawness of emotion in Finn’s voice. Phil turned to him.

“I won’t.” He said with a voice strangled by emotion. “I won’t Finn.” Finn threw his arms around Phil and they clung to each other. Rae felt tears in her eyes and got up to go to them, but Phil
pulled out of the hug and held Finn’s by the shoulders. “I need you to quit Finn.”

“You what?” Finn asked confused.

“You said it, and we all know it. The cigarettes. You need to quit. I can’t handle the thought of either of you dying. I can’t…” He shook his head and Rae crossed the room to them, embracing both of them, drawing them back into a hug. “I’m nothing without you two.” Phil said with a strangled voice. They stood holding each other, by the window, overlooking the graveyard. After a while Phil pulled himself together enough to let his thoughts catch up with him. “I’m sorry.” He said to Finn, “That was kinda emotionally blackmail-y, and I didn’t mean that… I just. I love you. And I worry. But you, of course, can choose, whatever-”

“I’ll quit.” Finn said gently. Phil couldn’t hide the happiness in his eyes, even Rae felt lighter thinking that Finn would quit smoking. “I’ll quite smoking, except for when we go out drinking, alright? And I’ll even drink less in between our nights out.” Finn held Phil’s face, “I intend to be around for a long time, alright?” He turned his eyes to Rae and put an arm around her shoulders, “You two can’t get rid of me!” They kissed each other, tasting Phil’s tears, and desperately clung to each other tightly, until Phil’s fear and anxiety that Finn or Rae would die soon dissipated.
Rae stared at the face in awe. Bayon was incredible. She looked over her shoulder and saw Finn clambering through the insides of the temple, monks in bright orange robes sat nearby in the shade of the temple. A bit further back, Phil stood with his fingers hovering over the stones, looking closely; he desperately wanted to touch the carvings but he would not. The Cambodian government had made pleas for tourists to stop touching the temple carvings because they were being degraded by constant human contact, Phil would respect that, even as all around him tourists touched the carvings. What Finn was doing was okay; going inside was encouraged, and the monks watched him with grins. It had been a wonderful experience to see how contemporary monks visited the ancient temples. Phil, ever the font of knowledge, had explained that the monks could not touch a woman, not even their robes when they had seen a woman selling food, put the food on a cloth rather than hand it to a monk. Rae had been careful not to get to close too the monks, but she noticed that they seemed to be fascinated with her. In fact, she noticed that a lot of Cambodian people were fascinated with her, some pointed and laughed. But yesterday at Angkor Wat, when a group of women had been pointing and laughing at her while the she decided to sit and wait for the boys as they climbed up to the top of the temple and a guide had explained to her that they did not do it in the same spirit as white people did that kind of thing, that in fact they thought she was cute and wonderful, it had reminded Rae to not make assumptions about what other people think, regardless of their actions, and especially when cultural differences could exist. It had also made her think of some of the things Kester had tried to teach her; that often when we make assumptions about what other people think about us, we’re actually just telling ourselves what we think of ourselves. This thought was still swirling in her head when they had headed out this morning and it had made today much more enjoyable. When she looked back at the monks to see them staring at her she gave them a slight wave before she went back to staring at the faces. The Bayon temple had hundreds of faces carved out of stone, facing in all different directions, huge beautiful and serene. It was a magnificent temple and Rae was just as enthralled by it as she had been by Angkor Wat.

“Can we have a photograph with you?” Rae turned to see the four monks that had been watching her before.

“Sure.” She answered. Rae hadn’t really seen any monks in Cambodia interacting with women or westerners.

“You are very fat.” One of the monks said with an earnest face. Rae’s initial reaction was to be hurt and defensive. But she stopped herself and nodded instead.

“Thanks.” She replied. It was so strange to thank someone for calling her fat; like it was a compliment. “You’re quite skinny.” She replied, not knowing what else to say and thinking it was a pretty appropriate compliment in the circumstances.
“Too skinny.” The young monk said and lowered his eyes.

“Wait… no, that’s not what I meant!” Rae suddenly laughed at the absurdity of the situation, and the guide’s words came back to her, and then Kester’s, “No you’re fine exactly the way you are.” She told the monk, saying it just as much to herself as the monk. It was a strange moment of healing a long dormant wound; she had not let her weight stop her from doing anything for years, but she still had hated her body size. But somehow telling a monk that he was fine the way he was, finally made her believe those words; she finally believed that her fat body was perfect. He looked up at her with a genuine smile; it was strange how quickly some people could believe that they were fine.

“Where are you from?” One of the other monks asked; all four of them staring at her, and Rae didn’t mind one bit. In fact she became wonderfully aware that her size had given her an opportunity that few westerners, especially women, got.

“England.” She answered.

“I would like to visit.”

“Yes.” They all agreed.

“How long have you been monks for?” She asked them.

“Two years.” He held up two fingers.

“1 year.”

“3 months.”

“18 months.” Rae noticed the slight differences in colour of their robes and wondered if that had something to do with how long they had been monks.

“Shall we do this photo?” Rae asked.

“Your accent is funny!”

“Aye I know!” Rae laughed. She stood beside the monks as one of them held up his phone to take a photo. The monk closest to Rae was very careful to keep his robes from touching her but stood as closely as he could. Rae held up her camera.

“Can I get one of you guys?”

“Yes!” They said happily. This felt much nicer to Rae than when she saw all the tourists snapping photos of the monks behind their backs without their permission; here they had exchanged photographs and conversation, both as equally fascinated and in awe of each other and the differences they had. They spoke for several more minutes, exchanging questions and knowledge, three of the monks more talkative and with better English than the apparently younger fourth monk. Rae so wished she could speak their language past a few usual phrases she had learned before coming here for their holiday.

When Phil approached, interested in speaking with the monks, they politely excused themselves and with a final look at Rae, they left. Phil watched them leave longingly.

“Sorry Philly.” Rae grinned, “That experience is for fat ladies only.”
Three days later, the hotel they were staying at had left rose petals all over the room, filled the spa bath up with hot water and rose petals and left a heart made of rose petals on their bed. Champagne, chocolates and a delicious 5 course meal served in their room. It was their ten year anniversary, and Finn had organised for it to be done in style.

They did not hold hands in public because it was not a common practice in Cambodia. But even though one of the hotels had paused for a just a second when booking their largest room and having three people in the one bed, not one word was said to them. It had been wonderful.

“Wow.” Finn barely breathed the word as he took the newborn into his arms. She was barely a day old. He looked up at Archie, beaming.

“Have you got a name yet?” Rae asked as she sat beside Finn. Phil looked at Finn holding the baby and felt a deep stab of desire in his heart; the desire to be a father.

“Not yet.” Tom said excitedly and he and Archie shared a look, “We’re not naming her Alexandria...” Tom said with a shake of his head and everyone laughed. Finn grinned at Archie and Archie gave him a knowing smile; he’d been right about Tom coming around. The minute he had seen her Tom had fallen in love with her, and a surge of protectiveness had taken grip of him. He knew he was meant to be her father. Papers had been drawn up, things had been signed, agreements made with Lindy and Daniel, the biological parents. Daniel had immediately relinquished all paternal rights and Lindy did too, but she had a verbal agreement with her brother to let her little girl know who her mother was, and to have Lindy around a lot.

“You’re gonna have to give the menstruation talk.” Chloe laughed as she gave Archie and congratulatory hug.

“I know.” Tom said, “I actually googled it this morning.”

“Jumping the gun a bit.” Rae laughed. Tom, Archie, Chloe and Rhys had recently moved to London, and it was so wonderful to have their Saturday nights filled with the old gang... minus Izzy and Chop, both still living elsewhere. Friday nights was extended gang and uni friends nights, Saturday nights, just the original gang.

“Gonna have to start growing up and slowing down.” Chloe teased.

“Fuck that.” Tom replied.

“Language.” Archie gave Tom a stern look.

“Oh shit this is gonna be hard.” Tom mused and Archie rolled his eyes. Rae saw the way everyone was looking at the baby. Her two men were enamoured with her and Chloe turned her eyes up to Rhys who gave her such a look of deep love; she knew it was only a matter of time until Chloe was announcing the arrival of her and Rhys’s first child.

“Can I?” Phil asked and Finn handed the little girl to Phil. Finn looked up at Phil holding the baby and simultaneously they both turned their eyes to Rae who rolled her eyes in response.
“We’re not having one.” Rae rebuffed their looks.

“But maybe-” Finn started.

“If you two wanna have a kid, I suggest you get a dog and lavish your affection on it, cos it’s not happening’!” She retorted.

“If you don’t want to be pregnant, we could adopt?” Phil said tentatively.

“Right, so you two gonna raise it without my help?” Rae asked, “I don’t want kids. They’re very cute, but only cos I can hand ‘em back to their parents.”

“She’s never wanted kids.” Chloe said, “I think you’re fighting a losing battle.” Phil and Finn let the topic drop and Rhys had his turn holding the new addition to their family.

“Well that’s that decided.” He said with a slight laugh and Chloe laughed beside him; holding the baby had cemented their silent decision to try for a child.

“Are you gonna get married first?” Archie said as he moved around their kitchen making up formula. Everyone had caught the silent conversation between them; they all knew each other so well now that they never missed much of anything that silently passed between two people. Rhys and Chloe shared a look and they both shrugged.

“Probably not.” Chloe said.

“Who’s last name?” Rae asked.

“Harris.” Rhys answered. “O’Daire is a name my brother and I made up when we first ended up on the streets and we wished to get rid of that stain of our step-father’s surname. I keep it because I am proud that I survived and thrived. But it is not a name I wish our children to have. And if Chloe does not want Harris, we shall have to think of another surname.”

“Oh well that’s that decided.” Chloe answered. “Harris it is.” She said, “Although I’m also open to them having your mother’s surname.” Rhys considered this for a moment, his huge hands protectively cradling the sleeping baby.

“That would be…” He smiled, and the sense of happiness that thought brought him was clear on his face, “I think we should discuss this further.”

“Sure thing daddy.” Chloe teased. Rhys laughed; Chloe had never called him daddy before today and it pleased him of think of being a father. Archie finished the bottle and turned to baby, but Tom whisked the bottle out of his hand and gently took the baby from Rhys.

“What?” He asked with an innocent face when Archie glared at him in disbelief and shook his head, “It’s my turn to feed her. I’m just being a responsible parent. Sheesh.” He said as if Archie’s look was unfair and then looked down at their daughter, “Hello little jelly bean.” He said in a soft gentle voice.

“Alex.” Archie said suggestively in a very soft voice and Tom looked up at him with narrowed eyes.

“No.” Tom said firmly and looked back down at their child lovingly, gently feeding her.
Rae ran her hand across the back of the chair and sat down. She was making her ‘directorial debut’ for a play in the west end with a play she had written ‘That Four Letter Word’ a collection of interwoven stories about how people deal with love when they have too much hate in their hearts, or have experienced a lot of hate. Elsa’s theatre company had bank-rolled it, and Phil had been cast in the ensemble cast with a bunch of lesser known but talented actors. The first run of shows had already sold out before rehearsals had even begun; Elsa liked to put a week’s worth of tickets on sale the month before rehearsals began to give her an idea of how long the run of shows should be. It was the first stage play she had written alone, without Phil’s as her writing partner. Today was the first rehearsal, and she was so glad to be back in the theatre.

“I have Noel.” Finn said, “Noel Gallagher… he’s gonna do an interview.”

“Holy crap!” Rae jumped up and down and Phil watched on; he understood how exciting that was to Rae and Finn, but he thought the Gallagher brothers were dickheads. Sure they made good music with Oasis, but they were inexcusably rude.

“I can’t fucking believe it!” Finn said in awe. “Holy fucking shitbags.”

“Shh.” Rae said, “Watch your language.”

“Oh do we have a baby in the house?” Finn looked around.

“She’s in our room. Archie dropped her off an hour ago; they had the need to have loud sex.” Rae explained.

“I think we’re gonna be looking after he on average twice a week.” Phil said and Rae nodded.

“Seems like it.” Rae agreed, “I could not imagine dropping down to sex twice a week.”

“They’re still having sex every day.” Finn answered, “They only bring her over for the loud sex.”

“We’re still not having one.” Rae said.

“Didn’t say we was.” Finn answered as he went through to look at Alex; Archie had won.

Of course.

“They want you to direct it.” Rae couldn’t respond to Gerard. She’d left him in charge of getting the best deal for the rights to her play; they wanted to make it a movie. “They want Phil in it too.”

“His schedule is full for the next year.” Rae answered.

“They’re willing to wait. The stage production is going so well, they think they’re onto a winner.”

“Alright. Let’s do it.” Rae answered; she knew Phil would be on board, he loved this play.
“Oh my god, I can’t believe it’s you!” She practically screamed, “Can I get a selfie with you?”

“Of course.” Phil replied. Rae and Finn watched on as Phil talked to fans. He was always so polite, even when he was exhausted.

“So are we gonna be the legal guardians?” Finn asked.

“I s’pose.” Rae answered, “I mean, it’s a lot of responsibility, but if Tom and Archie think we’re the right people for it, then fine. We just gotta make sure they don’t die!” She laughed. “Or we’ll be lumped with a kid.” She grimaced and Finn opened his mouth to speak.

“Oh my god, is that Finn and Rae?” There were some screams of excitement.

“Oh we’re being called into the fray.” Rae laughed and they moved closer to the fans and Phil, ready for more autographs and selfies.

They spent August in Australia again, and they went to the club for everyone’s birthdays still, and New Year’s was lost in a blur of LSD, the sex club and partying too hard. They had a routine, and it was good, balanced routine. They were happy. The addition of little Alex to the gang meant they needed more planning, but there was always someone willing to babysit, usually Lindy on a Friday or Saturday night, which worked for everyone; she got some time with her daughter, without the full responsibility that she hadn’t been ready for, and Archie and Tom got to blow off some steam partying with their friends. On the nights no one was available to babysit the gang stayed in.

Phil, Finn and Rae were infinitely grateful for the peace; their lives had been so hectic for so long, this was nice.

“I’m pregnant.” Chloe said with a grin. Rae, Bethany and Izzy made excited noises and congratulated her.

“When are you due?” Bethany asked, her own stomach swollen with a baby.

“October.”

“How’s the nausea?”

“I haven’t had any yet.” Chloe said with a shrug, “But I need to pee more already. What’s that about?”

“Just wait!” Bethany said with a knowing tone of voice.

“Adding that to my long list of reasons why I’m never spawning…” Rae said and they all laughed.
“What about you Iz?” Bethany asked.

“No chance.” She answered, “Far too invested in my business. Bella Fashions is my baby.”

“I used to think I’d never want kids.” Bethany said, “And then I hit 29 and a desperate urge came over me!” She shook her head.

“Haven’t felt that yet.” Rae answered emotionlessly.

“You might never feel it.” Chloe answered, “It’s fine to not want kids. It’s bullshit how we make motherhood the pinnacle of female achievement. Fuck that. I’ve freed prisoners of war!” Chloe laughed. They all laughed with her; Chloe’s career had seen her do many remarkable things like that, through her work with the United Nations and Amnesty International.

“It’s the big 3-0 next year.” Izzy sucked on the straw to her milkshake. “And I haven’t had a boyfriend since Chop!” She said with a satisfied grin. “If those two things combined don’t make me desperate to procreate, it’s never gonna happen.”

“Oh well, at least we’ve always got babysitters!” Bethany laughed.

“Yeah I’ll have ‘em for a few hours.” Rae agreed.

“Girls I do have some news!” Izzy said, “Not quite as drastic as Chlo’s… but…. still good!”

“Oh aye?” Rae asked, Chloe and Bethany looking at her with expectant grins.

“Bella Fashions is moving to London!” The girls cheered loudly and the other patrons at the cafe glared at them as they hugged Izzy happily.
Chapter Summary

there's sex again

‘Pictures’ by Timo Maas
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUazp5FC7c0

Boy

I won't hurt you, unless you ask me to hurt you

Boy

And take off your clothes

Finn looked up at Phil. He was doing push ups. His new movie required him to put on about 5 to 10 kilos of muscle. Finn was getting paid a small fortune by the producers to bulk him up. Phil had an exercise warm up routine he woke up to, and did with no assistance from Finn; Finn would get involved when the weight training started.

“Right lads, I’m off to Chloe’s house.” Chloe had decided she needed Rae to be in the room when she gave birth, and she had decided on having a water birth at home. So this morning she was off to do a run through of all of her duties and to go over the birth plan. She saw Phil do another push up and then jump up to give her a kiss goodbye. He was only wearing sweatpants, his upper body naked. “Bloody hell Phil, you make it hard for a girl to do her duties.” She kissed him goodbye.

“And what am I, chopped liver?” Finn joked.

“Only if chopped liver is extremely tasty.” She replied and kissed him goodbye. “I won’t be too long.” She trilled as she closed the door. Finn turned his eyes back to Phil to see him turning away and getting back onto the floor to continue to do his push ups. Finn felt his tongue travelling along the back of his teeth as he watched the muscles work in Phil’s shoulders and arms. He knew he was looking at Phil with open lust and he had no intention of hiding it.

Finn had always found all sorts of bodies attractive, and he had been blessed with Rae’s full bodied figure juxtaposed against Phil’s wiry frame. Phil was slender through the waist with compact, but powerful muscles through his torso. This extra weight Phil was required to put on would finally restore him to his healthiest weight; the weight he was before his breakdown. And the closer he got to the weight the more Finn found himself completely unable to stop perving on him; he’d almost forgotten how incredible Phil’s fully healthy body was. Phil was beautiful no matter how he looked, but there was something about a body that was at its healthy size that aroused Finn. Rae’s full figure was at its healthiest size and he could barely look away from her at the best of times, but when she exercised, he’d nearly cream his pants; he loved seeing her full body moving and glistening with sweat. And Phil had been beautiful at his thinnest, but him taking care of himself, eating well, doing exercise and returning to his healthy ‘fencers’ body was just doing it for
Finn. That narrow waist, those broad shoulders… Finn started to bite his thumb nail as he watched the muscles on Phil’s back working. He pulled out his phone and clandestinely videoed Phil as he worked out. An involuntary sound of lust escaped his throat and he cleared his throat to cover it. Phil looked up but continued with the push ups and Finn pretended to be texting.

“Pardon?”

“I was just thinking you should do some boxing today.” Finn said.

“You gonna put gloves on?” Phil asked and Finn nodded, his eyes not leaving Phil as Phil widened how far apart his hands were and continued his push ups exactly as Finn had taught him. Finn’s mouth opened in desire and he carefully turned the web camera atop of his computer monitor around and set it to record Phil. He picked up his mug of tea and watched in delight as Phil continued, his eyes not leaving Phil even as he took sips of tea.

As soon as he finished his tea, Finn got up, not taking his eyes of Phil and walked up to the exercise equipment shelves behind him. He pulled out Phil’s gloves and dropped them in front of Phil before grabbing his own.

Phil had worked hard at learning how to defend himself since the attack; his ribs still gave him trouble on cold days, so he had no intention of ever letting someone else break one of his bones again. When Phil finished his set of push ups he got up and wiped his face with a towel before putting his gloves on.

“I’ll have to teach you fencing.” Phil said, still too focussed on his exercise to have notice the way Finn was staring at him.

“Aye.” Finn replied and took his own shirt off and stood opposite Phil as they both put their gloves on, Finn still not taking his eyes off Phil.

“Alright then.” Phil said as he raised his gloved fists, “How hard are going?”

“Hard.” Finn replied and raised his own gloved fists. His eyes flicked to the webcam momentarily and then turned back to Phil to see a fist hurtling at him. He dodged and returned the punch, which Phil blocked easily; Petra had hit him hard on knowing how to block attacks. In the same movement as the block, Phil raised his leg to kick the side of Finn’s legs out from under him. Finn had been expecting a quick counter attack like this and he braced himself against the blow; it was too high to jump over and too fast to dodge. Finn grunted as the kick made contact and gave Phil a dirty grin. Phil cocked an eyebrow, finally catching the look in Finn’s eye.

“Good kick.” Finn said in a tone so suggestive he might as well have been saying ‘fuck me.’ But in contrast to his tone, which had Phil frozen, staring at his face, a smile creeping onto his lips, Finn punched Phil in the side of the face.

“Fuck.” Phil shook his head, slightly dazed.

“Don’t drop your guard.” Finn said in a tone even more sexually suggestive than the last one.

“Alright, I see how it is.” Phil answered with a lusty grin.

They sparred, neither going easy on the other; Finn’s better offensive skill tempered by Phil’s incredible defensive skill, Finn’s superior strength countered by Phil’s superior speed. They punched each other at full strength, the pads of their gloves only mitigating the force slightly. The web cam recorded every blow, their muscles working as they put their whole selves into every punch, every impact caught on digital video.
Phil planted a good, hard hit in Finn’s stomach and Finn doubled over, grabbing his wrist as he bent, making Phil jolt forward; the two of them tumbling to the ground. Phil twisting around and managing to slam Finn onto his back. Phil straddled him, his knees on Finn’s hands. Finn looked up at him, panting, a cocky, challenging look on his face. Phil looked down at him and slightly moved his pelvis, feeling Finn’s hard cock beneath him.

But it was only a moment’s pause, before Finn twisted his body, reefing one of his hands free he punched up at Phil’s jaw, Phil dodging and laughing as he tumbled off Finn, the two of them wrestling and thumping each other.

Eventually they lay panting and laughing, Finn pulling his gloves off with his teeth.

“We’re so not done.” Phil jumped up and slid his gloves off his eyes not leaving Finn as he put his gloves away and pulled out his epees.

“You can’t train me with a real blade?” Finn asked as he took the proffered blade and Phil only cocked an eyebrow in response.

“I’ll go slow.” He said indulgently and Finn shook his head and grinned.

“You love being better than me at something.” Finn replied.

“There are several things I’m better at than you, this just happens to be one of them.” Phil teased.

“Oh aye?” Finn laughed at Phil’s teasing. Phil was always the first to champion the things that Finn was amazing at and happy to admit when Finn was best at something; he only returned to their college days like this when he knew it would be sexy as hell. Like right now.

“That’s right shorty.” Finn gave Phil an unimpressed look and Phil merely cocked his eyebrow again.

“Oh it’s on now.”

“Oh I do hope so.” Phil replied as he stood, so like an Aristocrat, side on to Finn, his head turned to him, one hand on his lower back, the other holding out the blade. He didn’t bend his knees yet; there was no need to. Finn took a moment to admire him, even in tracksuit pants he looked like an Aristocrat. Finn tentatively hit Phil’s blade with his own, acutely aware that they wore no shirts, no protective gear of any kind. Phil parried it with ease and gave him an unimpressed look.

“Straighten your back.” Phil drawled the words out with that same tone he used when he was dominant. Finn looked Phil up and down and copied his pose, jutting his chin up. Finn again tapped at Phil’s blade but Phil, with a mere flick of his wrist, spun his blade around Finn’s, taking control of it and moving it out of the field of action, Finn still grasping it. Finn let the hand holding the epee drop, the blade nearly touching the floor and Phil narrowed his eyes at him. Finn gave him an amazed look.

“How the fuck, did you do that?” Phil gave him a smug smile and held up his epee.

“Lunge at me.” He replied; now was not the time for real training, they were both too horny for it.

“I’m gonna get myself fuckin’ killed.” Finn shook his head. “Alright.” But epees had no sharp edges so Phil was unconcerned; it was unlikely either of them would suffer a blade injury today. Finn took a moment to try and figure out how to lunge at Phil and then leapt into action, his blade held out in front of him. Again, with the smallest of movements, Phil had engaged Finn’s sword, but this time he moved it diagonally down, forcing Finn to either drop the epee or follow it. And follow it he did, bending down. Phil smiled; he’d expected this. He whipped his blade out from
his prise de fer parry and smacked Finn on the arse with the flat of the blade. Finn turned around, a stunned and excited look on his face. Phil again cocked a smug eyebrow at him. Finn narrowed his eyes.

“Alright you definitely have to teach me that.” Finn settled back into the starting position.

“That’s not strictly an acceptable counter attack.” Phil answered with an amused tone.

“What, you don’t see them bringing that in at the Olympics?”

“Unfortunately no.” Phil replied.

“I think I’d like the Olympics a whole lot more if they did.”

“I think we all would.” Phil returned saucily and gently tapped Finn’s epee with his. Finn tried to flick his wrist like Phil had and wrap his blade around Phil’s as Phil somehow seemingly did to him, but instead his blade just jolted to the side. As was to be expected from just flicking one’s wrist without knowing how to control the tip of the blade. Phil grinned.

“Not bad.” He encouraged.

“Should I try blocking you?”

“No, far too much training required for that.” Phil said considering their current playful mood, “Try to hit me,” Phil said, “And don’t stop.”

“But you haven’t got any protective gear on.” Finn worried.

“You’re not going to hit me,” Phil said, “I trust us both enough to know that.” He trusted his own skill, and Finn’s superb reflexes; he’d pull back if it looked like he was going to land a blow.

“Alright.” Finn answered and tapped Phil’s blade gently.

“Don’t hit my epee, hit me.” Phil ordered. Finn swept the blade toward Phil, in a motion that was more reminiscent of a sabre match than an epee match. Phil smiled; he was proficient in all three disciplines of fencing; foil, epee and sabre. Even if they were using the wrong blade. It didn’t surprise Phil that Finn would be more inclined to fall into sabre naturally; if foil was the details-oriented, neat and obsessive sibling of the fencing world, sabre was the wild, messy and free one. Of course, Finn didn’t know the rules and swept his sword high and low, in sabre, one only aimed from the waist up, and Finn was fencing like he was using a sabre even though he was using an epee.

Phil blocked Finn’s advances and allowed him to gain ground very slowly. In the back of his mind, Finn was aware of the webcam recording them and backed up when they got close to the edge of the camera’s line of sight.

Finn swung his sword, growing more and more aggressive and confident and Phil blocked easily, mounting no counter attacks just yet. After a while, Phil saw Finn’s arm dropping in exhaustion. He hit Finn’s upper arm with the side of the blade.

“Don’t let your arm drop!” Phil commanded and Finn straightened himself up before continuing to strike at Phil with no luck.

After nearly forty minutes, Finn put his epee on the table and held his hands up; he hadn’t even gotten close to landing a blow and he knew it. In boxing he was the stronger fighter, although
Phil’s improvement could not be denied. But in Fencing Phil was the better fighter by far. Finn wanted to go back to fighting without weapons; he had a chance of winning then. And when he thought about winning, he thought about pinning Phil down and kissing that fucking smug smile of his.

Phil caught the look in Finn’s eyes and slowly put the epees away, drawing the process out with subtly teasing glances and taking his time to clean the blades.

“Well I suppose we should do some weight training.” Phil said with a teasing grin, “I hope you’re not too tired?” Finn narrowed his eyes in response and Phil turned towards the shelves that stored all of their exercise gear.

And Finn pounced, tackling Phil to the floor. But Phil had been expecting something like this and twisted before he hit the ground, wrapping his arms around Finn’s head, Finn’s arms around his waist. They wrestled on the floor until they were both puffed out and sweating, but neither willing to yield. When Finn, at one point, had the upper hand, he pulled at Phil’s sweatpants, and as soon as one of his buttocks was out he grabbed it and they both laughed; they both knew where this was going, but they were taking their time and enjoying their physicality. Finn was especially enjoying Phil getting back to full strength. Their bodies writhed together, their muscles strained as they rolled around on the floor, laughing now as they fought to get physical domination over each other. Finn was definitely stronger, but training with Petra had increased Phil’s speed and ability to defend himself. Phil did sneaky attacks, pulling Finn’s pants down a little every time Finn thought he had Phil pinned. Soon they were both constrained by their pants around their thighs, the wrestling slowly was giving way to rubbing against each other while still trying to pin the other, their laughing giving way to panting groans, their mouths unable to do anything but violently kiss. And somewhere in this battle, they managed to completely undress each other, though if you had asked either of them about it, they would not be able to tell you how or when it happened.

Since the painfully clumsy sex they’d had after Rae’s last IUD insertion, they’d set up three sets of drawers in their home dedicated to things they might need if they were having sex; one next to the bed, one next to the lounge suite that acted as a side table, and one next to the exercise shelves; the open expanse of floor where they did exercise and kept bean bags was a great place to fuck. And the minute Finn finally got Phil pinned down well, he was so glad for those drawers; he’d put some rope in there a while ago. He put his knee into Phil’s back and Phil grunted with effort as he tried to free himself, but as the rope came out, Phil’s struggle became decidedly less emphatic, and when Finn grabbed his wrists to tie them behind his back Phil almost helped him. Finn started laughing when he realised Phil was letting him tie him up; he always liked it more when he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that the other person was into it. He could play fight with either of his two lovers, he could even hear them say ‘no’ during sex sometimes now as long as the safe word was in play, but moments like this were what he lived for; the things that told him that the person he was about to dominate was completely into it.

Finn rolled Phil onto his back and his tied hands stayed uncomfortably under him, but he was biting his bottom lip in anticipation. Finn kissed that mouth aggressively, Phil returning the kiss with equal fervour. Finn bit Phil’s bottom lip hard, and squeezed his nipple, pulling it until he heard Phil’s sharp intake of air; it was hurting just the right amount.

Finn grabbed Phil’s hair and pulled his head back, and bit his jaw, his neck, his ear.

“They body is incredible.” Finn whispered in Phil’s ear and Phil bit his bottom lip and savoured Finn’s words, feeling the tickle of his breath, the pull of his hand in his hair, the smooth glide of Finn’s hand over his abdomen. “What are you gonna let me do to your body?”
“A wide variety of things.” Phil teased. Rae was always very quick to tell her men they could do whatever they wanted to her body; part of it was being too turned on to care, and part of it was trusting them to look after her. But Phil liked to hold out for as long as he could before he gave in completely to lust. Finn gently tickled his way back up Phil’s abdomen and chest until his fingertips caressed Phil’s neck and jawline while his tongue, lips and teeth found all of Phil’s sensitive places on his neck and delicately stimulated them while keeping a brutally tight grip of his hair. Phil closed his eyes and let himself get lost in the sensations of what Finn was doing to him. Finn let his fingers trace along Phil’s collar bone, while his lips kissed along the other one, the motion ended with a delicate lick in the hollow between his collar bones that elicited the tiniest of whimpers from Phil. A tiny whimper that turned into a soft groan when Finn licked up Phil’s neck, biting his Adam’s apple gently and kissing up his chin to his mouth.

“Beg me to kiss your chest.” Finn ordered and Phil bit his bottom lip and shook his head. Finn made a noise as if to say that it made no difference to him and softly licked Phil’s lips. “Beg me to kiss you.” Finn could see the desire in Phil’s eyes and he resolutely kept his mouth shut. Finn slowly kissed the corner of Phil’s mouth, he could feel Phil wanting to turn his head to kiss him properly, but Finn pulled his hair and kept his head still. Phil groaned with desire and Finn made a noise of sympathy and kissed the other corner of Phil’s mouth. Finn returned to kissing Phil’s neck, his pelvis starting to grind into Phil’s. That electricity of pleasure that Phil had become accustomed to since being with Rae and Finn started to spread over his lower abdomen. And when Finn kissed up his jawline almost to his mouth, the words to beg were on his tongue, but he managed to hold them. Until Finn let his lips just brush Phil’s. Finn made a lusty, needing sound and tried to move his head forward to capture Finn’s lips. But Finn had him held and he chuckled in reply to Phil’s desperate attempt to get a kiss.

“Beg.” He whispered, his lips brushing Phil’s. “Do you wanna taste me?”

“Yes.”

“You want these lips on your lips…” Finn again let his lips brush Phil’s.

“Yes.” Phil swallowed hard and closed his eyes, aching for Finn’s kisses. “Please.” He breathed the word in a humble, pleading tone, but his eyes were still defiant when he opened them. Phil knew how to turn Finn on; Finn adored Phil’s pride still being on display when he begged.

“Please?” Finn teased.

“Please.” Phil’s tone became slightly more insistent, and Finn couldn’t resist him. Their kiss was like lava violently erupting against a night sky; vivid, exciting, heated. Phil pulled at the ropes binding his wrists and Finn laughed, enjoying the thrill of having control over his man.

“D’you want me to kiss your chest, your stomach…?”

“Yes.” Phil whispered urgently. Finn kissed along Phil’s shoulder, biting hard when he got to the end of it, making Phil gasp loudly. Finn ignored the gasp and just kissed along Phil’s other shoulder, his fingers gently dancing up Phil’s thighs until they were caressing his balls. And then Finn bit Phil hard on the shoulder again. This time Phil groaned. Finn let the tips of his fingers run up the shaft of Phil’s cock.

“You want my lips on you?” He asked suggestively.

“Yes.” Phil said as Finn let his fingers dance along the tip of Phil’s cock. “Please Finn…” Again Phil was pulling at his restraints but Finn just kissed his lips, even as he was saying please again. As soon as Finn stopped kissing Phil, he begged again, “Please Finn… please…” Finn put his lips
to Phil’s ear.

“No.”

“Please.” Phil pulled at his ropes and Finn chuckled, kissing his neck again, his fingers barely touching the head of Phil’s cock, feeling it throb under his fingers, desperate for proper attention. Finn kissed Phil and he groaned in frustration. “Please!” He demanded, “Please?” He instantly changed his tone back to begging, knowing that demanding only made Finn even more determined to make him wait. Finn kissed Phil deeply and slid his own cock up and down Phil’s their pre-cum making it deliciously slippery. “Please.” Phil gasped between kisses, absolutely desperate for Finn to use that brilliant mouth of his on his body, his cock. “Please.” He pleaded, but still Finn didn’t give Phil what he wanted. And then it came to Phil; what he needed to do to get what he wanted, “Please kiss my chest!” He remembered the previous command Finn had given. “Please, please, please kiss my chest!”

“There it is.” Finn said triumphantly and finally let his kisses lead down to Phil’s chest. Finn released Phil’s hair and Phil let his head roll back in bliss as Finn’s tongue flicked his nipple, Finn of course followed that up with a sharp bite.

“Please kiss my stomach.” Phil said urgently before Finn had had chance to tease him.

“Eager.” Finn laughed and Phil groaned in response, still pulling on the ropes. “What would you do now if you were untied?” He looked up at Phil as he slowly snaked backwards down his body.

“Push your mouth down onto my cock.” Phil answered instantly and Finn let his tongue run along his lip slightly, suggestively, his chin almost touching Phil’s navel. Phil watched as Finn started to kiss his stomach, alternating open-mouthed wet kisses with gentle grazes of his teeth. As slowly as possible Finn kissed down Phil’s stomach, following his ‘snail trail’ downwards. Phil started to thrust his hips upwards slightly as Finn’s tongue got to his pubic hair.

“Please…” Phil said as Finn’s mouth got closer to the base of his cock. “I am begging you…”

And that was Finn’s cue to use his strength on Phil and flip him over. “NO!” Phil groaned, dismayed that he wouldn’t be getting a blowjob just yet. “Come on Finn! Please!” But Finn ignored him and bit Phil’s arse hard. Phil laughed slightly; he was ticklish when Finn did things like that. Phil let his forehead bang down onto the ground when he felt Finn part his cheeks and start licking his balls, his perineum and his arse. He moaned with pleasure and frustration as Finn settled in to give him a rimjob. Finn made a triumphant chuckling sound when Phil started to thrust back into his face with a deep need. “Oh god either fuck me or suck me Finn, this is killing me!” Finn’s response was more of that triumphant chuckle and more licking of his arsehole, and balls. “Please.” Phil begged, “Please.” Phil begging was doing things to Finn and while he eagerly lapped at Phil, he reached for the lube in the bottom drawer. He started sucking Phil’s balls while he slid a lubricated finger into Phil’s arse, stroking his prostate. Phil groaned loudly, his cock throbbing for attention. Finn watched Phil struggle against his binds as he slid another finger up his arse.

“You want me to suck your dick?” He teased.

“YES!” Phil replied emphatically and Finn straddled Phil, pulling his legs in tight and slid his cock up Phil’s arse in response. Phil groaned and grunted and Finn took hold of Phil’s wrists and pulled them back, lifting Phil’s shoulders off the floor. Phil grunted, but lifted his arse in response, giving Finn easier access to go deeper.

Finn fucked Phil hard, pulling on his tied wrists andspanking his arse, Phil groaned and grunted
with wild abandon, enjoying every minute of the aggressive fuck he was getting.

“Spread ‘em.” Finn said as he put Phil’s tied hands on his own arse and Phil complied, spreading his arse cheeks so that Finn could go deeper. Finn leaned forward, putting his hands, and weight, on Phil’s shoulders as he crashed into Phil as deep and hard as he could. Phil put his forehead on the ground again and closed his eyes, giving himself over entirely to Finn’s desire for him; Finn could do whatever he wanted to Phil’s body right now. Finn could always tell that moment when Phil had become truly submissive because his whole body loosened up and his moans became far more guttural.

“Yes…” Phil moaned deeply.

“What are you gonna let me do to your body?” Finn repeated his question from before.

“Whatever you want.” Phil replied instantly. Finn slowed and moved his body closer to Phil’s, his stomach and chest pressing against Phil’s back, and licked the sweat from Phil’s neck. Phil turned his head to the side so he could see Finn in his periphery as he kissed and licked Phil’s upper back and neck, the hard fucking slowly turning into love making. Finn untied Phil’s hands and flipped him back over, slipping back inside of him as Phil’s legs wrapped around him and their mouths came together passionately. They held each other close, Finn stroking Phil’s hair lovingly, while Phil’s hands pulled Finn closer to him. They could only stop kissing when they both desperately needed to look into each other’s eyes, and then they could only stop that when the need to kiss became too great.

“I love you.” Finn whispered to Phil, “I love you so fucking much.” He kissed Phil’s face as he thrust deep and slow into Phil; he wanted to be as deep inside of his Phil as he could be.

“I love you Finn.” Phil answered, feeling like his chest would explode from all the love in it. He stroked Finn’s face and looked into his eyes until they couldn’t bear to not be kissing anymore and their lips joined again.

They were still kissing, their mouths opened wide, trying to kiss as deeply as possible, when Finn withdrew and pulled Phil’s legs together so he could easily straddle him. He sat up to grab the lube, but they couldn’t take their eyes off each other, so he fumbled around for it, not looking where his hands were searching and they started laughing, but they both refused to look away from each other. Eventually Finn found the lube and Phil helped prepare him for anal sex, both still staring at each other as Finn slid Phil’s cock into him and slowly started to ride him. He leaned down and they kissed again as Phil thrust up from under Finn, making Finn groan in pleasure. Over the last decade they had learned what to do to each other to bring pleasure, or the right type and amount of pain, to each other and they took great delight in doing so. Phil ran his hands firmly up Finn’s sides and slid them up his back until they were on his shoulders, Phil’s fingers curling over Finn’s shoulders, until the tips just caressed his collar bones. He pulled Finn simultaneously closer and firmly onto his cock deeper, his pelvis coming up to meet Finn as he came down, their rhythm perfectly in time. Their eyes locked. Finn couldn’t help but kiss Phil and again their kisses were heated and passionate, their lovemaking becoming rougher. Eventually Phil’s hands came back down to Finn’s hips and Finn sat up, keeping his eyes on Phil’s eyes he leaned back, putting his hands on Phil’s thighs and fucked Phil hard, bouncing himself up and down on Phil’s cock wildly, both of them groaning loudly now. Phil started to stroke Finn’s cock and Finn’s groans grew instantly louder as Phil’s expert hands went to work on his cock.

Finn slowed his thrusting slightly as he got closer to coming; wanting Phil deep inside of him when he came. When Phil heard that tone in Finn’s groans that meant he was getting close he opened his mouth and rubbed faster, aiming Finn’s cock at his open mouth. Finn’s orgasm was incredible and
his cum spurted forcefully out of him, as it always did, splashing along Phil’s chest and face, quite a bit getting into his mouth.

Finn wanted to collapse with spent energy, but his man wasn’t done yet. He grabbed the disinfectant wipes and got off Phil, Phil groaning in frustrations.

“T’m so close!” He laughed, his mouth still full of cum because he didn’t want to swallow until he was coming; it turned them both on to do that.

“I thought you wanted a blow job?” Finn teased.

“Oh fuck yes!” Phil answered and watched as Finn wiped his cock clean, and then without any teasing took Phil’s cock into his mouth. Finn couldn’t deep throat like Rae, but he still knew what to do with his mouth and he had Phil groaning loudly within the first few seconds. Phil watched Finn sucking his cock, Finn’s semen glistening on his chest, dribbling from his mouth slightly. Finn cupped Phil’s balls firmly and dug a knuckle into Phil’s perineum; he loved that, it made him cum hard. Phil could barely keep his eyes open; there was too much pleasure, and his head rolled back as finally the waves of ecstasy crashed through his body, Finn lapping up all his cum as it exploded from him. Finn crawled back up Phil’s body and laid atop him, kissing him deeply, both of them still with cum in their mouths, Finn’s semen sticky between them.

When Rae came in a few minutes later they were still kissing, semen dripping from their mouths, their legs tangled, their bodies pressed together.

“Fuck yes!” She said and they both looked up, “Rae pampering coming up!”

“You better fucking believe it.” Finn replied. “I got a little something for us on the computer.” He grinned. Whenever two of them had sex without the third, they would spend some time pampering the third to make sure they didn’t feel left out; this invariably mean a lot of oral sex for the third person. “I think you might enjoy watching it, while we… pamper you.” Finn said as he got up, swallowing the remnants of cum in his mouth. Phil got up and followed him to the computer and they watched as Finn played back what the computer camera had been recording. Rae watched with a grin as Phil did his push ups.

“Dirty perv.” Phil laughed.

“Couldn’t help myself!” Finn scrunched his nose at Phil. “Sorry… Should o’ asked permission.” Finn pulled a guilty face and Phil shrugged his lack of concern. Rae watched the boxing start and Phil narrowed his eyes.

“My right arm is still weaker.” He noted, and Finn shook his head.

“That’s not the purpose of this.” Finn said. “Look at our bodies. Both of ‘em.” Finn said, “We’re good lookin’ blokes.” Rae made a noise of agreement and kept her eyes on the screen. She took her shirt off, and then stood to take her pants off.

“Aye I’m gonna enjoy watching this.” She said as she sat down naked in front of the computer.

“We fight for a couple o’ hours afore we fuck.” Finn said.

“Well you two are gonna be very busy for a long time under the table then, aren’t you?” She replied with a grin and nodded for them to go down before turning her eyes back to the computer. Finn and Phil looked at each other, Finn biting his bottom lip and Phil with a cocked eyebrow. They both broke out into a grin and dropped to their knees, crawling to Rae, ready to give her as many orgasms as they could while she watched what they had just done.
The Repairer

Chapter Summary

content warning - sexual assault

‘The Repairer’ by Adalita

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4P6Sd2dq0c

I am the grim repairer. I come to your door. I’ve arranged to pull out your pins. I'm your man to end all things

Dear Diary

It’s been nearly a decade since I wrote to you. I'm sorry it’s been so long, I just got carried away with all the good things happening in my life and I guess I just forgot you. I’m so sorry.

I feel like I forgot a part of myself.

A part of me that was sometimes scared to leave the house. Scared of what people thought of my body.

A girl in pain that cut herself to cope with the constant roar in my heart and mind.

I haven’t thought about tracing red lines on my skin for years. Not until recently anyway.

I need to stop. I need to just stop this.

And then memories of Saul get intermingled with the memories of him…

And I’m lost again.

Rae’s mind thought back to two weeks ago. The hot water system had broken. The real estate agent sent a guy around to fix it. Some guy in his early twenties by the looks of it.

“I’ve never met an actual famous person before.” He had said these words to her and she had felt oddly flattered. She was used to Phil and Finn being the real celebrities. Writers were seldom famous in the way actors, or internet personalities were. Their faces were all over the place and she still didn’t put a picture of herself on the sleeves of her books. She preferred anonymity, although as the partner of Phil Seymour and Finn Nelson, that just didn’t happen. Still, people rarely recognised her when she was on her own, or least they never said so.

She had nodded with a small smile.
“I wouldn’t say ‘famous!’” Rae joked.

“Oh I would.” He answered, “I love your books.” It was always such a wonderful thrill when someone said that; even after all the success she’d had. “Name’s Gus.” He held out his hand and Rae shook it. “It is a real pleasure to meet you.”

“Thanks.” Rae never knew what to say to her readers.

“I seen you round with them two fellas. I had no idea you lived so close to me.” He said and Rae was sure he subtly checked out her breasts but she shrugged it off as her imagination.

“Yes we live here.” Rae said awkwardly. “Anyway, the hot water system’s out here.”

“A’ight.” He said without taking his eyes off her. Rae gave him another smile, slightly uncomfortable now; but that was ‘fame’, people stared, people got excited, people thought they knew you… people loved their celebrity crushes. She walked towards the sliding doors to the balcony; the hot water system was out there, leaking down into their downstairs neighbour’s balcony.

But he hadn’t followed her, he’d just kept staring.

“So you really with them two fellas?”

“I am.” Rae answered slightly defensively; was this going to become some sort of morality lecture.

“I thought it might be a publicity stunt?” He asked with narrowed eyes and his mouth slightly agape.

“God no!” Rae laughed. “Why would we do that to ourselves for publicity?” She thought about the public outcry, the taunts, Phil’s attack. No one would do this for fun.

“So you with them at the same time…, or separate?”

“That’s a little private.” Rae shut him down, “And not helping the water heater.”

“You’re right, I’m sorry.” He replied but still didn’t move.

Diary, why didn’t I know?

“So them two fellas you with…?” He asked, “They not around?”

“Phil’s on set.” Rae said thinking that Gus just wanted to meet them; everyone wanted to meet Finn and especially Oscar / BAFTA / SAG / golden globe, but not yet a critics choice award winning actor Phil Seymour. “And Finn’s doing an interview with Matt Bellamy in some hotel.” Rae shrugged, “Sorry, they probably won’t be back before you’re done.”
“Right.” He answered thoughtfully.

And then he had followed her out onto the balcony to look at the water heater. He had stared at it from a distance and nodded.

“Need a new one.” He said with a grin and pulled out his phone to call the real estate agent. After a brief conversation, delivery of a new water heater was organised for the same day.

Rae stepped inside while the repairman tried to get the heater delivered sooner. She had a text from Chloe. She was reading it when she felt his hand on the back of her neck. She jumped and turned to him.

“What are you-” But his lips were crushed against hers. She tried to push him away, but his strong hands had held her to him.

*Diary, was it my fault because I was flattered that he thought I was famous?*

“Get off me!” She tried to pull away and they toppled to the floor, him on top of her. Rae screamed and he put a hand over her mouth.

“This is what you do isn’t it?” He whispered with a laugh in his throat. He tore her shirt violently and Rae struggled to get out from under him, to free her limbs so she could defend herself. When she finally got a hand free she pushed his face away from her, trying to gouge his eyes.

So he punched her in the face.

Hard.

Rae had never been hit so hard. She saw stars for a moment and before she knew it his hands were around her wrists, his legs between hers.

“STOP!” She yelled at him as he tore at her pants. She heard the material tear and felt tears on her face. “Don’t…” She gasped as he reefed at her underpants.

But he fumbled with his own pants, letting her wrists go and she punched out at his face as hard as she could, knocking him off balance. And the minute he was off balance she twisted and got her knee between his legs.

She raised it as hard and fast as she could and heard an anguished cry of pain from him. He curled up, his hands cupping his balls. Rae scrambled up to her feet, holding her tattered clothes close to her, she grabbed her phone that had fallen only a few feet away. She called the police.

*Did I ask for this to happen? Am I a whore like my mother said? By being open about my relationship with two men, did I make myself deserve this?*
“Is it possible that he was just confused?”

“Confused?” Rae asked bewildered.

“Does her broken nose look like confusion to you?” Finn asked angrily as he paced the floor and Phil sat beside Rae with his narrowed eyes trained on the police officer.

“Well obviously he crossed a line, it’s just… everyone knows what you are Ms Earl.” The officer was trying to sound explanatory, helpful.

“What I am?” Rae asked in hurt bewilderment.

And her mother’s voice came to her mind, unwelcome, unwanted…

Whore…

“I mean… the whole of Britain knows what you do…” The officer tried to explain, “Is it possible he just thought-”

“Thought what?” Phil asked in a dangerous tone.

The police didn’t pursue charges; they didn’t think there was enough of a case. And he had a black eye too from where I’d defended myself, so it was ‘he says / she says’ with him claiming it was rough sex gone wrong and then I regretted it because I was afraid Phil and Finn would find out.

Phil’s been assaulted.

I’ve been assaulted.

No one’s been charged.

Because of our relationship. Because of what we are. Because all of Britain knows what we do.

They know what I am.

Rae looked at the yellowing bruise under her eye. There had been discussion about going public over this miscarriage of justice; but Rae hadn’t wanted to.

The most expensive surgeon in London had been secured to fix her nose; she had wanted to have no reminders of what he’d done. She didn’t want to look in the mirror and see a physical reminder.
But now, since he’d attacked her, her eyes kept falling to the faint line of a scar on her neck.

A sudden sense of dread would overcome her when she looked at it. This repairman was just one of many who would do this to her given the chance… but none of them where the big bad. Saul was still out there. And the more famous she was, the more her face was out there; the more likely it was he’d find her again. The media already knew where she lived. It wouldn’t be that hard for Saul to find out.

And Rae suddenly became absolutely sure that Saul had been stalking her all these years.

Watching.

Waiting.

Some days she would sit and stare at the empty computer screen; writers block was back with a vengeance.

And she wasn’t leaving the house. At first it had been because she had the bruises on her face and wrists.

But now she had no excuse other than she didn’t want to.

It just seemed like too much to leave the flat.

She put on a brave face for her men, but they knew she wasn’t ok and begged her to skype with Kester. But Kester never really had taken to Skype and she didn’t much feel like talking anyway.

There was a strange feeling that she didn’t know, burning a hole in her gut. It made her uneasy. Made her restless.

Some days she’d sit and stare at the place on the floor where he’d had her pinned.

How close she’d gotten.

Again.

When would those men finally get lucky? When would she finally get unlucky?

When was her rape going to come?

It had been dancing around the outsides of her life since she was 16 and Saul had locked her in the bathroom with him.

She was 29 now.

When was it going to happen?

When was it going to destroy her?
It was strange; when both of her men were home she almost felt normal, other than this burning sensation in her guts. More than anything she wished she could understand what was happening in her insides, her head was a locked book she couldn’t get into.

She didn’t know how she felt.

She knew how she was supposed to feel: afraid. Rape was all about power and keeping women in their place, it was primarily a weapon of fear and control.

She was supposed to be crying and weak. But she wasn’t. There were no tears; just this odd numbness, and the growing heat in her guts.

“I don’t do that anymore…” she whispered the words feverishly. “I don’t do that anymore.” She sat in the shower, the water streaming over her face. “I don’t do that anymore.”

She thought about cutting almost every day; the burning coal in her guts was roaring through her body and she needed peace and to feel and to be calm and…

But she didn’t do that anymore.

A month after the attack Phil and Rae found themselves alone in the flat. Phil sat, taking a rare break from filming or reading scripts, reading Rae’s latest novel; she never let them read them until they were published. Rae sat at the computer, still horribly blocked and unable to write.

“Please don’t do it.” He said softly without looking up from the book. Rae didn’t need him to give her any context or explanation; she knew what he was talking about.

“I won’t.” She answered firmly, but with a sense of relief flooding her; she had been playing brave, and they had been letting her, but both Phil and Finn knew what she was really going through. And that was so comforting. She loved them both so much. “I promise I won’t.” He looked up at her and she saw the relief on his face. “You two been worrying about that?” She asked and Phil nodded. “I’m not gonna cut Phil. You and me don’t self-harm no more.” She answered and he nodded.

“No we don’t.” He agreed. She got up and joined him on the lounge, he put his arms around her, leaving the book opened and on the arm of the sofa. “Tell me?”

“I don’t know what I feel.” She shrugged, “I’m worried about you two worrying about me.”

“Don’t be.”

“You’re both probably going nuts without sex.”

“That is literally the last thing you need to worry about.” Phil had a matter-of-fact way of saying
things that resonated with Rae; he never said things like that with pity; he said them as black and white facts. It was nice. There were already so many emotions running around in her, she didn’t need to be dealing with other people’s emotions too.

“I just feel blocked. My brain, my body, my heart. Everything about me.” Rae said, “I just don’t know.”

“I think it’s ok to not to know.” Rae let her head drop onto his shoulder and he tightened his arms around her.

A few minutes later Finn got home, right on time. He’d been doing interviews with up and coming bands as they recorded their first studio albums; he’d spent all morning in the studios with them. He put his digital camera on the computer desk, dropped his jacket onto the jacket hooks and sat down next to Rae on the other side and without a word, snuggled into the hug.

They hugged in silence for several minutes.

“You know what the worst thing is?” Rae asked, they both looked at her, their arms still around her. “My head knows that this isn’t my fault… but I still keep coming back to my own mother calling me a whore.” Rae finally felt tears on her cheeks. Phil looked over at Finn and saw that Finn wanted to respond, so he held his tongue.

“Rae, even if you was a whore, like a literal whore who took money for sex... you know, a prostitute… you still wouldn’t deserve to have some guy tryin’ to rape you.”

“A woman’s sexual history has absolutely nothing to do with rape. No woman is deserving of rape.” Phil backed Finn up.

“I know.” Rae said simply, “I’m a feminist, I know this stuff. But it’s like there’s a different set o’ rules for me.” Rae said, “I’d never blame anyone else that this happened to. But me? It’s my fault.”

“Well you need to fight those thoughts Rae.” Finn said, “Replace all that negative shit with positive stuff like Kester taught you.”

“Aye.” She answered. “Cos it’s not my fault.”

“Did you ever tell your mother how much she hurt you when she called you a whore?” Phil asked astutely and Rae shook her head, “So she never apologised?”

“No.” Rae answered sadly, “But I got her to apologise for kicking you out. I thought that were quite a win. And her speech at our ceremony,” Rae said, “she obviously accepts us now. She doesn’t think that way anymore.”

“Doesn’t change how much it hurt.” Finn noted and Rae nodded.

“Aye but I don’t wanna dredge it up with her.” Rae said. But both men saw that she understood something more now. “It’s hard not to blame yourself when so many other people are saying stuff like that to you though.” She said slowly, “it’s easy to think I’m the exception to the rule when my relationship is seen as abnormal and reviled in society.” She shook her head, “I’m blaming myself cos other people can’t handle us.” She sighed gently and wiped the few tears that had fallen. She just didn’t have that many tears in her for this, and she didn’t know why.
She was starting to get tired of being in the house all the time. But she still couldn’t bring herself to leave.

It was strange to feel safe in here even though he had attacked her in this home. She’d just learned not to let strangers into her home when she was alone.

She still wasn’t writing; besides her diary entries. She hadn’t seen Kester; she wanted to get through this herself. But her mind was slowly working through things.

*Dear Diary*

*Scrap that last entry old friend. This shit is not my fault. Fuck that.*

And finally she realised what this emotion that had been burning a hole in her gut was: rage.

So Rae took up boxing again.

And she hurt Finn’s hands, and he grinned like a jackal as she screamed and hit the shit out of the pads.

And she took up running and made Phil set the pace; wanting to run as fast as she could until her lungs burned with the rage she was working out of her system.

But it didn’t work.

It was like the rage was going to forever be a part of her. But she didn’t want that, and she desperately sought an answer for how to deal with this rage.

Three months after the attack she was sitting at the computer, the novel she had been writing before the attack was half finished, but she still couldn’t finish it.

And finally, finally, from nowhere it came to her; what the answer was.

And she finally took up writing again.

A book: ‘*The perils of polyamory.*’

She was going to detail every shitty thing that this world had done to them because they were in love. She was going to call out all the mono people and challenge them to stop their oppressive behaviours and attitudes. She was going to spill all, tell everything, put it all on the table.

She was done with people’s shit.

She was enraged with people’s shit.
When Phil came home from filming it was nearly 3am. Finn was curled up on the lounge, dead to the world asleep. And Rae was typing furiously at the computer.

It had been this way every night this week. He looked at his watch and sighed; he’d have to be back at the set in a little over 4 hours; it had been that way all week too.

“How was filming?”

“Good, more details after sleep. Come get some?” Rae looked at the computer, and for the first time this week she nodded.

“Yeah I’m fucked!” She laughed softly. She looked over at Finn, the tv was still on and he was snoring slightly. “Poor Finn.” She fretted.

“Between the two of us, I think he’s more exhausted than both of us!” Phil agreed. “We need to give him a pampering when we’re all up to it.”

“You saying we have no sex life at the moment Mr Nelson?” Rae teased and Phil, exhausted could not pick her mood.

“I dunno what I’m saying; I haven’t slept more than 4 hours a night for the past fortnight. And I don’t think you’ve slept at all this week.”

“No I’ve slept. I been falling asleep at the computer.” She grinned guiltily. “Gotta get myself back into a rhythm.”

“I gotta start being more demanding in my contracts.” Phil yawned, “No 20 hour days.”

“Aye you’re a very big star now, I’m sure you can get away with it.” Rae grinned as she undid the buttons on Phil’s shirt.

“It’s the low budget films that do it; trying to get as much filming done as quickly as possible.” He yawned again, “Sorry.” He said but Rae ignored his yawns and they kept undressing him, Phil collecting the clothes to leave on the chair until tomorrow when he’d put them in the wash.

Hand in hand they walked over to Finn.

“C’mon.” Rae said gently to him and he woke up with a sleepy start.

“Aye?” He mumbled.
“Let’s get some sleep.” Rae whispered and Phil helped him get up.

They took him to the bedroom and cuddled up together with Finn in the middle; it was the first time this week they’d all slept in bed together.

Dear Diary

I reckon our little trio have been through enough trauma to last us a lifetime. I really think there can’t be anymore left. Which is quite an uplifting thought.

I finished my book about polyamory. Only took me two weeks, and practically no sleep.

My new publisher loved it. I really thought she’d hate it, but she says people have been curious for a long time about polyamory and since I was quite candid about some of the stuff involved with being in the relationship, as well as quite scathing about heteronormativity and… (what should I call it mono-normativity?) mono-normativity, she thinks it’ll sell well, which means a lot of people will be reading my very angry message.

How does one become an activist?

I mean I’ve gone to heaps of queer and women’s rights rallies and talks, but how do I become the person running them? How do I change the world?

Because our little trio has had enough trauma, so how do I make sure there’s no more?

The day after Rae’s publisher said she liked the poly book Rae left the house.

She felt like she had worked through a lot of her pain and anxiety by writing that book and knowing it would be published.

She was still anxious about Saul magically re-appearing, and the feeling in the pit of her stomach that he was still around hadn’t left, but she’d gotten it under control. She had been logic with her anxious thoughts and all the therapy she’d done with Kester came back to her and she had gotten through it.

She chose her clothing and make up carefully. Janice had taught her that things like this could be like armour against the outside world and since her stomach was broiling with anxiety, she wanted the best possible armour.

She wore boots and jeans, her leather jacket, and a face that told the world she was not to be fucked with.

It only took five minutes for someone to recognise her; that was some kind of record, but with Phil and Finn’s continuing success, and her appearance at every red carpet event there was, it was bound to happen. There was a brief moment of panic; a thought of Gus and how he had spoken about her fame. But it passed, replaced by the fire in her gut. She smiled and waved and continued onto the grocery store.
She wandered through the aisles of the small independent grocery store, looking for things they needed, a basket hung from her elbow, carefully tuning out the world. She was completely oblivious to the world around her when she felt a hand on her arse. She froze; fear in the pit of her stomach. But the fear turned ice cold and froze over, solid, in a cold fury at this world and the entitlement so many men felt. She turned her eyes to the arrogantly grinning man in his 40s.

“Hey baby.” He grinned, “I’ve seen you on television.”

“Take your hand off my arse immediately or I’ll head butt your teeth down your fucking throat.” Rae said it calmly, but there was an icy rage underneath the calm, almost pleasant tone she used that made the man snatch his hand off her. “Don’t ever touch women without their permission.” Rae added.

“I thought you were down to fuck… you’re with two men…”

“The fact that you think I’m down to fuck bears no resemblance to reality. I am in a committed relationship. Get the fuck away from me with your plastic Ken-doll grandpa looks.” Rae didn’t really think he looked like a grandpa, she just wanted to put him in his place.

“Fuck you; you’re fat anyway.”

“Aye I am. And sexy as fuck, and you’re never getting anywhere near my knickers, so piss off.” And it suddenly dawned on Rae that all this time she’d so wanted to be like Elsa, and she always had been like her. And now she understood that Elsa’s confidence was born of rage mixed with a desire to want to have faith in this world. Elsa’s attitude and confidence came from the same sort of pain Rae had been through. She lowered her eyes momentarily as she realised that just a few days short of turning 30, she’d reached one of her life goals. And she wished she hadn’t. At least not like this. “I said get the fuck away from me.” Rae said firmer and the man turned away mumbling angrily. “Jesus Christ, you sound like a spoilt brat who couldn’t get his way. Sod off!” She said to his back.

“Fuck you, fucking fat cow!” He said loudly, drawing stares. Rae glared at him and then looked at the people staring at him in shock.

“Moooo!” Rae said mockingly. A fat woman started to laugh; completely taken by surprise by Rae’s response and Rae laughed with her.

Rae left the store feeling like she understood something about strong women; they all got there because they had no other choice, no option but to be strong. And they probably didn’t even realise how strong, how powerful they were all along. Most only realised it when they were tested. And to them, they were just getting on with their lives the best they could. Sometimes they felt weak and powerless. Sometimes they felt ice in their chest and fire in their bellies. Sometimes they felt bone-tired and like they might cry at any moment. Sometimes they felt nothing. But there was nothing special that happened to make a women strong; they were all strong just by virtue of being born in a world that was going to tell them how worthless they were for being born, for not fitting a very narrow definition of what it meant to be a successful, beautiful woman, for living in a world that was constantly judging, evaluating, keeping an eye on them and commenting to let them know how valuable they weren’t.

Women were strong simply by being women in this world.

And she finally understood that, and understood her own strength. And Elsa’s and Chloe’s and every other strong woman she knew. Understanding her strength, all women’s strength made her feel more able to tap into it. Made her feel more confident, more able to stay afloat in the ocean of
shit that surrounded women.

So often in her life people had sought to take her strength from her, to make themselves feel more in control or strong.

She wasn’t going to let that happen again.

106 days after the attack Rae was cooking dinner listening to Finn’s online radio station; new releases night. Finn didn’t do this show; he was all for the interviews now and they went both on the radio and on the video page. A lesbian couple named Tamara and Kirsty did this show and they always brought in the best tunes every week. The girls were playing 5 new British synth-pop releases in a row and the beats were completely irresistible.

Phil was teaching Finn fencing with gorgeous French commands while Rae was chopping the vegetables she’d just picked up at the store that morning.

“Oh do stand still.” Phil said to Finn and Finn grinned at him as he gently moved to the music, his foil held up towards to Phil. “Riposte.” Phil said.

“Counter attack after a successful parry!” Finn replied.

“Excellent.” Phil replied, “Let’s teach you how to do a few basic-”

“Ripostes?” Finn grinned as he tried to do a French accent, still dancing slightly. Phil rolled his eyes and was about to retort when they heard something they hadn’t heard since the attempted rape on Rae; she was singing slightly. The chorus to this new release song was catchy and easy to understand and remember, and she was softly singing, her body moving unconsciously, in rhythm to the music, as she cut the vegies. They both turned to look at her, but her back was to them.

“Stop! Well I just dance the way I feel. Stop breathing. Imagine none of this is real. Stop!” She got slightly louder as the song continued.

Finn felt quite choked up; this was the second time he’d gone through the healing process with someone he loved, and this was the first real sign that she was feeling happy again. The rage had been a good step forward, writing had been when they knew she’d be okay, sleeping in the bed again had been a blessing… but this, this was her happiness returning right in front of them. Phil tossed his foil onto the nearest beanbag; a wholly un-Phil-like thing to do and went to her, he put a hand on her waist and she turned, surprised, almost hitting him in the face with her knife. He took the knife from her hand and put it on the bench. He put her hand on his chest and took her other hand and started to lead her in a very basic Cha-cha. She burst out in laughter and Finn laughed too, tossing his foil onto one of the other bean bags, he went to them and stood behind Rae, his hand on her hip, his other hand taking their hands and let her feet dictate where his feet went. They moved closer together and danced in time to the music, they still laughed, but the closeness had awoken something else in Rae. She leaned back on Finn, turning her head to him, bringing the dance out of time, stepping on Finn’s feet.

“Oi you’re messing up the da-” He started to laugh, but she kissed him passionately, Phil watched and instantly, the parts of himself he’d put on stand-by while Rae healed awoke too. “Oh right.” Finn said when she stopped kissing him and turned to Phil, Phil’s hands were on her face, drawing her into the kiss. Finn’s hands tentatively travelled up Rae’s body as she kissed Phil, his libido
coming back to life as he saw their tongues snake around each other. Rae pulled Finn into the kiss and let her hands drop to the waistbands of their sweatpants; it took no time at all for her hands to have snuck under the hems and into their pants, both man groaning simultaneously as she curled her fingers around their cocks.

“Oh fuck I’ve missed you both.” She murmured. She was met with enthusiastic murmurs from Finn and Phil, both emotional but so very happy to see Rae happier.

Rae woke up to the sound of screams wafting in from the open balcony door. She got up, Phil stirring, but Finn, the heaviest sleeper of the three of them was out cold as usual, stretched out on his stomach. Phil was so exhausted that he didn’t wake just murmured something about worrying about her, in his sleep, and was silent. Rae had been in the middle which was unusual for them, she usually slept on the edge, closest to the bathroom. She got up and opened the flyscreen to the balcony, closing it quietly behind her. The balcony to their house went along the entire length of the flat with a couple of sliding doors out onto it. The scream went up again followed by a loud laugh. Rae saw the flashlights down in the cemetery. Every couple of weeks some teenagers would jump the fence at night and wander around the cemetery, sometimes just out of morbid curiosity. But some would fuck, others would do weird photoshoots on the gravestones, some would try to commune with the dead and some would drink, like these ones. If they made too much noise, someone in the units would call the police or yell out at them to shut up. Either way, these screaming kids would be quiet soon enough. She looked in at the bedside table; it was 2am. They’d made love, showered and Finn had whipped them up a speedy omelette for dinner, not the vegetarian lasagne Rae had been planning; but far quicker. They’d eaten on the longue watching tv and snuggling. And then she’d been exhausted and in need of more cuddles, so they had headed to bed.

But now she was far from tired. She went back into the room.

“Guys?” She asked softly but they both woke up, Phil first, and Finn after an obvious struggle back to consciousness. “D’you think…? it’s just…”

“Spit it out girl.” Finn said groggily.

“I wanna go dancing.” Rae answered, “Now.”

“At a club?” Phil clarified.

“Aye.” Rae answered. They stared at her silently for a moment. “I know. Utterly daft!”

“Well let’s go then.” Finn said and got up.

“Aye for sure.” Phil agreed.

Both Phil and Finn had to take a step back and watch Rae dancing, flinging her hair around her, in a bright yellow dress and bright red sky-high heels in the middle of one of London’s best nightclubs at 3 in the morning.
They had been recognised, of course. And photos had been surreptitiously taken. But they ignored it and danced; an almost tangible feel of things slipping back into place. It would be like it had been with Phil; things would return to the way they had been, but there would be slight differences. People don’t go through things like this without changing. But strong relationships like theirs always weathered these storms and bounced back into shape after the struggle.

They danced until dawn; the whole world didn’t even exist for them. It was just the three of them, how they felt, and the music.
And I am done with my graceless heart, so tonight I’m gonna cut it out and then restart…

And it’s hard to dance with a devil on your back - so shake him off!

“I reckon it’s you next.” Chop said to Finn and everyone turned their eyes to him.

“CHOP!” Chloe exclaimed. This was Chop’s response to Rae telling them why she had been very absent for the past few months.

“What?” Chop asked defensively, “They came for Phil first, then Raemundo… It makes sense Chlo.” Chop said, “And forewarned is forearmed!”

“Ah it’s alright Chlo.” Finn waved off Chloe’s outrage and turned his eyes to Rae, expecting her to look anxious but she was shaking her head.

“Finn’s already been stabbed Chop.” Phil answered. “And he has a very sexy scar.” Phil said with complete seriousness, making both Finn and Rae grin; this was one of the many things they loved about him. He had instantly seen Finn’s scar not as a sign of his near death, but as a sign of his healing, his health, of his survival, of his heroism. He had seen Rae’s scars in the same light. And signs of health in his partners were incredibly sexy to Phil.

“Aye but that was when it were just Rae and Finn right? She was all cut up by that sick fuck too right? They both got their shit in that relationship. Now it’s the three o’ you... it’s Finn’s turn.”

“Not gonna happen Choppy.” Rae shook her head confidently, “The nine of us have been through enough pain and trauma; there’s gonna be no more. We’ve been through enough.” She shrugged to denote that she just believed that to be the truth. “Not one of our relationships hasn’t been touched by shit. I’m done with it; it’s not happening anymore.” Chop and Izzy shared an uncomfortable glance; everyone seemed to keep forgetting that they were not together anymore even though it had been a few years now.

“Not sure what trauma we’ve been through.” Tom said with a cheeky grin.

“You play brave Tom, but we all know that getting disowned by your parents is fucking traumatic.” Rae retorted and Tom lowered his eyes, “I know you’re wondering how you’re gonna explain it to Alex one day.”

“Yeah alright.” Tom answered, he was getting better at acknowledging the things that hurt or scared him since he’d become a father. “Way to bring down New Year’s!” He teased.

“I think I’m gonna get blamed for that.” Chop said with a toothy grin, “Guess I’m getting the next round!” Chop said as he got up. He turned to look at the bar to see how busy it was and saw dozens of sets of eyes on their table. “You know the good thing about you getting famous Phil?”
Chop asked, “At least we all know why people are staring at our table now.” There was a camera flash as he said that and Rae rolled her eyes. They were far more accustomed to fans nowadays, but it was still frustrating sometimes. Generally people were still well behaved, but incidents of being mobbed had been on the rise and both Phil and Finn had ended up under a pile of fans reaching to try and touch them; Phil more often than Finn. They had each had their freedom of movement curtailed by media, fans and various safety issues. Sometimes getting a night out was difficult. But that was what happened when your partner was a multi-award winning star with multiple box-office hits and multiple movies and television productions receiving critical acclaim, who also happened to be very good looking. And then there was Finn, not only was he a famous music reporter, but he had also done some music scoring and sound engineering on a film for Elsa, which was starting off a new career avenue for him that he was enjoying. Rae’s books continued to sell like they were made of pure heroin and sometimes Rae had to admit they had not only had their fair share of trauma but also their fair share of success.

They all had.

Chloe was currently heading up an investigation into rape as a weapon of war in all current conflicts throughout the world for the United Nations. She was also doing work for Amnesty international petitioning for women unfairly incarcerated in various places throughout the world. Her workload was huge, so Rhys had requested that she get an assistant to help her, and between them they were earning enough money to pay for it. So she had brushed up on various international laws and begun a new chapter in her career not as the underling, but now as the person in charge.

Rhys and Tom had not only opened up three more gyms in various areas of the country, but both were picking up famous clients who were paying top dollar for their training. They were both smart enough to know that it was because of their close friendship with Phil and Finn and the fact that they used their gyms. Finn still saw clients out of their London gym; only five a week, but they were a mix of two old clients that he’d had since university and three new clients that were paying an obscene amount of money to be taught by him how to box and how to be fit. Only the two old clients got to see him most days, the other three were just twice a week.

Rhys and Chloe’s first child was a beautiful baby boy they had named Isaac. Both Isaac and Alex were with Kelsey tonight; she was painting at her place and in no mood to party, so she’d been fine to take them.

Archie was a professor and had his doctorate now too. He went on yearly digs and loved his job at the university. He was a published and respected scholar and considered to be a preeminent expert on Alexander the Great.

Izzy’s business was huge and her fashion label; Bella Fashions was renowned for fitting all sizes and heights with beautiful clothing. And it wasn’t just Rae, Finn and Phil she was clothing on the red carpet anymore.

And Chop’s business was making a tidy profit; Danny was pushing to open up more mechanics in other parts of the country, especially with the mobile mechanics.

Life had been both good and bad to them as they hit their 30s, although Rhys and Tom were 36 and 37 and staring at hitting their 40s soon.

“Are you guys going on stage tonight?” Izzy asked Tom and Archie.

“Yeah.” Archie said, “We questioned if we should since Alex is 2 now and knows what a bruise is. But we only do this heavy sort o’ thing once a year now, and that’s with Pandora, so… I think
we just decided we’d have to lie to Alex…”

“We have to come up with a good lie that won’t traumatiser her.” Tom said, “I mean, we still have pretty brutal sex often enough to keep me in check… but nothing that really leaves marks anymore, so I kinda need this.” Tom sighed, “I suppose eventually… when she’s much much older, we’ll have to tell her?”

“No.” Rae shook her head.

“Yeah don’t tell her.” Chloe said, “Rhys and I aren’t gonna tell Isaac what we do on that stage every New Year’s.” Chloe said, “Your sex life should be kept private from your kids.”

“I dunno, I read somewhere that it’s healthier for your kids to know that their parents have sex and are, you know, intimate and in love and all that stuff.” Izzy said.

“Knowing that your parents have sex is a whole different world to knowing what exactly it is they’re doing.” Rae answered.

“Having kids is hard.” Tom laughed. “Like Alex cries like nothing else if I don’t give her ice cream, but she’s lactose intolerant… it’s like, I know you should let kids make some decisions for themselves and have expression from as young as you can… but you gotta stop ‘em from harming themselves too. It’s tricky.”

“Here’s to never having kids!” Rae raised her glass and Izzy raised her glass gleefully.

“I’ll fucking drink to that!” They both drained the last dregs of their drinks and slammed their glasses down.

“It’s tricky but very rewarding.” Rhys answered.

“Aye but I bet you got all the answers.” Finn teased and Chloe started to laugh.

“First night Isaac came home, Rhys couldn’t sleep because he kept watching the crib saying he was too silent. Woke him up three fucking times seeing if he was still alive!” They all laughed.

“Ah parenthood: the great equaliser!” Archie said, “We are all as equally useless in the face of children.”

“I think the first time he got a fever was the worst.” Rhys shook his head and started to chuckle. “It doesn’t matter how many books you have read or good advice you have taken from friends,” He acknowledged the several months of having a child Tom had drawn wisdom from to give to Rhys when Chloe had been close to giving birth, “Nothing can prepare you for it.”

“Where’s Chop, I need a drink so I can make another toast to never having a child!” Rae shook her head. Finn and Phil exchanged a glance; they both had an urge to be fathers, but they had discussed it and the urge wasn’t great enough to warrant trying to have a discussion with Rae about it.

“So enough about kids.” Izzy said, “I love you all, and your little devil spawns too. But tonight is about us getting out and letting lose. That’s what we promised all those years ago, summer break together and New Year’s… So what’s the plan?”

“Ecstasy.” Tom said, “Dancing till about one, then off to the club.”

“Kelsey isn’t expecting us till dawn.” Phil said, “So we got all night.”
“So our usual New Year’s.” Archie said, “I’m always glad to see us maintaining our traditions!”

“I just wish we was all living in London now.” Finn said and looked back at the bar, Chop was chatting up a very attractive girl who couldn’t be a day over 18 and Finn shook his head. Chop had told him that he had a case of fame-by-default from being seen with Finn, Phil and Rae so often and getting girls was a lot easier nowadays. Chop wouldn’t bring her back to the table, not while Izzy was here; he was still hopelessly in love with Izzy, whilst being a realist about the possibility of them ever getting back together, which he saw as zero. Chop was the only one of them now that didn’t live in London.

“I’m beginning to wish we all lived in the country in a huge manor house.” Chloe laughed, “London can be very ugly.”

“Could you imagine all living in the same house together?” Izzy asked.

“We drive each other fucking nuts!” Rae answered and they all laughed.

“What’d I miss?” Chop asked as he sat down with the tray of drinks.

“The chance to get laid.” Izzy said with an arched, perfectly manicured, eyebrow. Chop’s tongue went to his back teeth and he looked away without a word. Everyone looked around at each other while Izzy looked at Chop with a completely unreadable expression and Chop looked everywhere but at Izzy. Phil started to chuckle and everyone turned their eyes to him.

“Don’t pretend you two aren’t gonna shag tonight.” Everyone started to laugh while Izzy and Chop protested.

“I always took your side and this is how you repay me!” Izzy slapped Phil’s arm, “I would’ve never believed you’d say something like that.” She turned her eyes to Finn as Phil put an arm around her and made her break out into a grin, “You’ve been a bad influence Finlay Nelson.”

“Fuck I hope so!” Finn answered bawdily and looked Phil up and down, fucking him with his eyes. Phil laughed and gave him a saucy look before taking a sip of his wine.

“Excuse me? Can I get a selfie with you?” Everyone turned to the girl, she was trembling, holding her phone up as if it would make everything less scary. It had taken a lot of bravery for her to come up to Phil at a table surrounded by his friends. Her eyes fell to Phil’s arm around Izzy’s shoulder and then to Finn and Rae, a confused expression on her face, but she didn’t say anything. Instead she just sat in Phil’s lap.

“Ok!” Phil said in a laugh that indicated that this wasn’t really ok, but the photo was taken and the girl, blushing and eternally grateful ran off to her friends and they all giggled together.

“Jesus Christ.” Chop shook his head, “the things you could do if you weren’t in a committed relationship.” Chop looked over at the girls and Phil shrugged. He took his arm off Izzy’s shoulders and took Rae’s hand.

“I’m happy.” Phil answered. Finn slung his arm around Rae’s waist and lit up a cigarette; he was still smoking when they went out drinking which wasn’t that often. It had been a good compromise because Finn was struggling with quitting at all; at least if he knew he could occasionally have one without breaking his word to Phil, he could get by the times when he itched for one and they weren’t out drinking. They were sitting in the outside, smoking section of the pub underneath one of the heaters. Chop lit up too and he banged his hands on the table.

“Right, we having dinner here or somewhere else.” His eyes fell on Phil with a wry grin.
“Oh why are you looking at me?” Phil laughed.

“Well you are an Aristocrat.” Finn replied, “You do prefer restaurant food to pub food…”

“I am perfectly fine with some pub food.” Phil retorted. They all started to laugh but Chloe shook her head.

“I’m with you Phil. Give me food not drowning in grease and oil please!”

Rae watched her family laughing, joking, teasing each other. This was just what she needed to shake off the last of her lingering anxiety over Gus and Saul. She was feeling more and more like her old self and the prospect of dancing on e and fucking at the club had made her forget that there even were bad things in the world.

She had come to understand that a good supportive, loving family like this was healing nourishment; it was how you moved forward after something terrible had happened. Uncomplicated, unconditional, completely supportive love; that was the gang. And they were also totally fucking mental sometimes.

Phil dropped the newspaper on the table and Finn and Rae looked at the headline.

“‘Trio become quarto?’” Rae read the headline and looked at the picture of Phil with his arm around Izzy. “You called it.” She said to Finn.

“Excellent one blowjob anywhere I want.” He grinned like a hyena that had stolen food from a lion but Rae fixed him with a smug look.

“We can’t do it anywhere that might get photographed and end up on the internet.” She said and Finn’s grin became an unimpressed frown. Phil shook his head; Finn had bet Rae that there would be a picture in the press of Izzy and Phil within 3 days, Rae had thought they’d wait for a few extra days to wait for the holiday period to be over. They had bet sexual favours. Rae had bet 100 hours of Finn going down, and Finn had bet a public blowjob. Finn figured he was winning either way.

“Damnit.” Finn sulked. The phone rung and Phil sighed.

“Hi Sarah. Yes I’ve seen it… no I am not in a four way relationship, she’s just a friend.” Phil opened the fridge, “That is my public statement, there’s no story in this, it’s ridiculous.” Rae and Finn gave each other a look; the fact that it was ridiculous meant the press would try to make as much of a story out of it as they could. “I’ll talk to Izzy about her public statement. No Sarah, you don’t need to do it, I’ll do it; she’s my friend. Ok. Thank you. Yes. Goodbye.” Phil hung up his phone and turned to Rae and Finn. “I think I might take August and September off from filming so we can do some travel after our two weeks with the gang in Australia.” Phil said, “What do you both think?” He asked as he shot a text off to Izzy.

“Sounds good.” Finn answered and Rae nodded, happy at how easily they took the media’s rubbish now.
“Sarah says the talk is that I’ll get all five major nominations. If she’s saying that it means I will.” Phil said as he hung up the phone from Sarah. Public announcements regarding the nominations for the Oscars and BAFTAs would come later but the SAGs, golden globe and critics choice had announced their nominations in December. Phil already had a hat trick of nominations.

“Chop says betting odds are that you’ll finally get a clean sweep this year for ‘That Four Letter Word.’” Finn said around a mouthful of French toast. “He’s put 500 quid on you doing a hat trick and another 500 quid on you getting the clean sweep of all five.”

“Fucking hell.” Phil mumbled and looked over at Rae. She’d gotten an unexpected phone call not long after Sarah had called Phil. She was out on the balcony. “Not many actors have done it.” He shook his head, “Especially not for the same role in one year.”

“Aye but you’re nominated for more than one role.” Finn reminded him and Phil nodded. He was up for two Oscars that year, best lead and best supporting male actor, for two different movies, but all the buzz was for ‘That Four Letter Word.’ Phil knew it was going to win big; at least best movie and he suspected he’d be getting his second Oscar. It was an incredible movie, written and directed by his Rae.

“Only four letter’s gonna win though; I just think the Iago series got all it’s awards in the first movie.” Phil said and Finn shrugged.

“‘Resurface’ was bloody good.” Finn said and Phil nodded; the third movie in the Iago series had been a work of art. “What does Sarah say your odds are?” Finn asked. Phil had won some sort of award every year since his first BAFTA, even occasionally taking out two or more major awards in a year. “If you get all five nominations it’ll be the second time you got all five nominations.” ‘Iago’ had been the first time Phil had been nominated for all five major awards, and it was widely accepted that the only reason he hadn’t won more than two of those awards was politics surrounding his sexuality. He’d won his Oscar for that role; he was incredibly proud of that. He was proud of that film. It had been a gamble to work on a low-budget, no-name film when his public reputation and career was hanging in the balance, and it had paid off. His favourite film to work on had been ‘That Four Letter Word’ because both Rae and Finn had been working on it, and he’d done it on stage, and the script was amazing, and the cast and direction had been perfect. It had been a dream movie from start to finish; and now he was being well rewarded professionally with award nominations.

“She’s betting on me too.” Phil blushed slightly, “I wonder who Rae’s on the phone to?”

“Probably her mum given the range of emotions she seems to be going through.” Finn replied and they both pulled a face. They watched as Rae hung up her Phone and took a deep breath. “Oooh, it looks bad…” Finn said.

“Or really good.” Phil added and Finn nodded.

“Assume the ‘we didn’t see you on the phone outside’ positions.” Finn said and Phil grinned and picked up his latest script and sipped his tea. Rae walked in looking shell-shocked and sat down at the table. She looked down at her breakfast and then back up at the wall.

“Guys…” She said softly and Finn and Phil looked at her as if they were surprised to hear her voice.

“Aye?” Finn asked.

“My publicist says I’m going to be nominated for an Oscar and BAFTA for my writing…” Finn
and Phil looked stunned; it had never occurred to either of them to move outside of the actor box and consider the awards Rae might be up for, “For best adapted screenplay…” It had been an adaptation of her own stage play.

“Oh my god!” Finn said still stunned.

“That’s wonderful!” Phil was up hugging her and Finn followed.

“Oh my god!” Rae laughed, “Fucking hell!”

As it turned out, when the award nominations were announced a few weeks later, Rae was also nominated for a BAFTA for best director. And the phone didn’t stop all day that day.

“No it’s not simply a case of people’s opinions or preferences.” Rae spoke passionately, “People’s wilful ignorance and misconstructions lead to outright bigotry and that often leads to violence. If you tolerate bigoted opinions, you are allowing a society that breeds hatred, distrust and aggression towards certain people. This is a form of violence. You are being violent in your silence, in your lack of opposition to people whose opinions disrespect and endanger other people’s lives.” This was the first interview she had given since her book had come out in February, other than the usual fluff interviews on the red carpets at various awards ceremonies, charity events and premieres.

“You’re making it sound like you expect people to embrace things that… maybe they don’t approve of, like perhaps polyamory?”

“If they don’t approve they’re part of the problem.” Rae answered, “Who made them the boss, the expert on relationships, or any topic? Why does my relationship require other people’s approval? Why does our society think that such a concept as requiring other people’s approval to be in love, when it comes to consenting adults, is in any way an acceptable thing? And how does my relationship affect their lives in any way that they even need to decide if they approve or not?” Rae said, “If you are doing anything less than embracing things that perhaps aren’t your cup of tea, then you are part of the problem, because you are buying into the notion that you even have a right to judge, pass comment or reject things that are not your cup of tea.”

“People have a right to make decisions for their own lives…”

“I’m not talking about embracing it or rejecting it in your personal life, I’m talking about in the larger scheme of things. Of course people will have what feels right to them in their personal lives, and I’m not suggesting otherwise and neither is anyone from any movement that is demanding better treatment. It seems quite abhorrent to me that every time someone from an oppressed group speaks about being treated equally and not merely tolerated like some sort of pebble in your shoe, we are accused of wanting to take something away from those who already have everything. What does that say about you and the way that the system is set up? I mean let’s talk about the hot topic; gay marriage in Britain. How does a gay couple having the right to get married, even possibly take anything away from straight people getting married? Really? Is it just some special club you guys wanna keep to yourselves? And then poly marriage? Well that’s not even being talked about yet. Straight people sit there and basically think that because we can hold hands in public without being taken away by the police that equality has been reached; this is not true.”

“But you cannot deny that the situation has greatly improved for gay people?”
“Did you know that the hate crimes against gay people are on the rise?”

“No, I didn’t…”

“Do you know what the CSEW dataset is?” Rae asked.

“It’s a set of statistical results based off surveys performed.” He answered.

“The surveys are victimisation surveys, done face to face in British households. People are asked if they’ve been a victim of a crime in the last 12 months and what their attitudes are to certain crimes and the police…”

“Yes I think we all know what it is.”

“Right well 39,000 homophobic hate crimes were reported in the CSEW dataset last year.” Rae answered. “That over a hundred every single day.”

“I… I did not know that.”

“And organisations like Stonewall who do their own surveys say that as many as 3 in 4 people don’t report to the police because they don’t trust them or because their past experiences with them have been so poor. And given that the police have had 4362 homophobic hate crimes reported to them last year, I would agree that most people don’t tell the police.” Rae watched the reporter stutter for a moment, “And even this drastically reduced number is still over 10 homophobic hate crimes committed every day, with real human victims, and nearly half of these are violent crimes. Every day in this country five people report to the police that they have had a violent homophobic, biphobic or transphobic hate crime committed against them. And we need to note that these crimes are committed by straight people; we need to name the perpetrators in these crimes. Straight people are committing these crimes. Straight people really need to get their house in order and reign this shit in!” Rae said firmly, “And I can’t help but wonder what would happen if the figures were the other way around?” Rae’s eyes showed her fiery rage and cynicism, “I mean even just talking random crime; gay people are more likely to suffer it than straight people. So even just getting your house robbed seems to be more targeted at us queer folk than you straight folk.”

“Even the lower figures seem so high…”

“And it all begins from people thinking that they even have the right to judge another person’s relationship in the first place. Flat out truth: you don’t. Ever. But let’s be 100% clear, if you are straight and monogamous, and you are doing anything other than enthusiastically embracing those in relationships different to yours, you are part of the problem. Your silence is violence. You are choosing the side of the oppressors. You are siding with the man that kicked Phil so hard they broke his ribs, and these are breaks that are still troubling him; he’ll probably have to undergo surgery to have them re-broken and realigned soon. You are siding with the man that broke my nose while he held me down and tried to rape me, and with the police officers who did nothing because they thought he might be confused because all of Britain knows what I am. You’re not thinking rationally or being intelligent or playing devil’s advocate or being funny, edgy or clever, it’s not a joke and you’re not even just keeping your nose out of it; you’re siding with oppressors, you are being violent. You are part of the problem.”

“Do you think that the same could be said of gay people supporting straight relationships?”

“The whole of society supports you, why do you need our help? I just got through telling you that somewhere in between 10 and over 100 homophobic hate crimes are committed every day and you’re worrying about straight people? There’s no crimes committed against straight people just
because they’re straight! I mean for fuck’s sake, it’s 2010! Why are we still having this discussion? How can you not understand power structures?” Rae asked, “If you come into work tomorrow and told Rupert Murdoch who owns this fucking channel that he were fired, one of two things would happen: 1, nothing and you’d be laughed at. Or 2, you’d be fired, and also laughed at. But if tomorrow Murdoch told you that you were fired, only one thing would happen; you’d be fired. And that is because he has all the power. So why would you support Murdoch?”

“So I don’t get fired!” The interviewer laughed.

“Right.” Rae answered, “But it doesn’t really do you any good with him having all the power does it? I mean don’t it stick in your throat that you’re expected to bow down to a multi-billionaire who’s got everything?” Rae asked, “Why are you asking queer folk to support straight folk? You are Murdoch in this scenario. You have all the power, all the privilege. So fuck you; I’m not gonna bow down. Move over and give us some room.” Rae said calmly, “And everything I’ve said holds true to all oppressed groups.”

“You’ve been accused of being overtly aggressive towards straight, mono people… people say it’s just as bad as what you say is being done to gay people, how do you respond?”

“Again, we’re getting killed and beaten and raped for who we love. You’re getting your feelings hurt! It’s a false equivalency.” Rae answered, “Again, you guys are Murdoch, who has the power? An oppressed group’s reaction to their oppression, their demands for equality, their demands that you take your hands from around their throats, is not the same as you having your hands around their throats.”

“Surely you’re not saying that every straight person has their hands around your throat?” The reporter almost laughed, “I know I’ve never said a homophobic slur to anyone, or attacked them…”

“But you are part of and benefit from a system that denies us equal legal rights, you uphold a society that allows hundreds of homophobic incidents and crimes to occur every day, you support a police force that basically runs on stereotypes and doesn’t in anyway take crime against any oppressed group in this country seriously at all, and often is the perpetrators of some of that violence, you revere religious establishments and allow political debate that actively denies us our humanity and chalk it up as opinion. You are a part of this. Choose a side.”

“You were fucking brilliant.” Finn said.

“Aye but I’m getting tired o’ saying the same thing over and over again.” Rae said and Phil nodded while Finn gave an understanding, sympathetic noise in reply. “It’s like they’re too busy assuring us that it’s not them that’s doing it to us to actually give a fuck about what’s being done to us!”

“More concerned about being called a bigot of some kind than whether they’re actually being one.” Phil agreed. “They think that if they’re not overtly a bigot, not the ones out there yelling the homophobic insults, that bigotry doesn’t apply to them. Like the power structures they benefit from don’t exist.” Phil sighed, sounding exhausted. “I like that you said it holds true to all oppressed groups.” Phil said, “Very true.”

“When I were looking into the statistics of hate crime against queer folk I was struck by how
similar the story was, how close the figures where to those statistics Rhys was saying to the rich racist prick in Kensington, over a decade ago. Racist hate crimes have gone up as well… there’s twice to three times as many reported incidents of racist hate crimes than homophobic ones, every day…” Rae shook her head.

“You know, I don’t know a person of colour who hasn’t copped it.” Phil agreed.

“Some people say the increase in the stats is cos more people are reporting, but independent statistical research seems to indicate that there’s just more hate crime.” Rae said, “It’s like fighting a losing battle, but we’re fighting for our literal lives…”

“And then there’s crime stats against women…” Phil added, “Those are getting worse too. The thing most likely to kill a woman in the western world is her intimate partner. For men it’s heart disease. That’s truly horrifying.”

“Yeah I heard Chlo saying that the UN says that half of all women killed every year in the world are killed by their husband or boyfriend.” Finn added.

“I in 4 women in the UK will suffer domestic violence in their lifetime; and that’s government figure, so you have to know the real figure is higher.” Phil added, noting the level of under-reporting that everyone knew existed.

“Ugh this is so depressing.” Rae said. “But you gotta keep fighting… I have to keep fighting.”

Phil got the clean sweep; all five awards in one year, but he got three for ‘That Four Letter Word’ and two for ‘Resurface’ the third movie in the ‘Iago’ series. Rae didn’t win any of the three awards she was up for; Oscar for best director and best adapted screenplay and BAFTA for best adapted screenplay, but she didn’t mind; her movie won the best movie Oscar, and that was worth something, and nearly all of the actors involved had been nominated for various acting awards. The big surprise was when Finn, the one without a publicist was nominated for a Golden Globe for best original song; he’d snuck one of his songs into the score for ‘That Four Letter Word’ when he’d done the soundtrack and sound engineering. He’d won it too. “That Four Letter Word’ had been one of the most highly awarded movies that critics actually adored. But the fact that Rae was not awarded any awards did not go unnoticed and feminists wrote much regarding the nature of the film industry that such a talented woman should go unnoticed. Rae had gotten her lust for playwriting back; she had loved writing plays in college. And even as she was writing her latest book, she was working on two new plays.

“Holy fuck they’re loud.” Chop said and scrunched up his nose. Finn sat with a beer next to him and looked on with disdain as dozens of three year olds ran around the party.

“I am so glad we hired this place instead of having it at home.” Archie said as he came over.

“They’re so loud.” Chop said and Archie nodded.

“I can feel my balls crawling back up inside of me in an attempt to kill off all o’ me sperm so I never spawn one o’ them!” Finn said, a loud scream coming from the throng of children, “Go’ Rae
were right, the best contraception is being around the wee little blighters.”

“You should make sure you tell Alex that.” Archie teased.

“Oh no but I like Alex.” Finn said, “She’s quiet.”

“Not all the time.” Archie laughed and watched as Tom ran around with the kids, play-acting at being a monster, this was what was making the kids scream with delight. Tom had endless energy for Alex. Except for when he demanded that Alex stay with an aunt or uncle for the weekend so he could sleep. Tom complained about missing sleep a fair bit. And sex. They still had sex every day, but it was silent and barely sadomasochistic anymore. They both missed it, and once a month Chloe took Alex, and the next weekend, they took Isaac. Kelsey had offered to take them more often too; she enjoyed teaching them about art and had no intention of having her own, so she wanted to be the ‘bad example’ aunty. When Alex was with Chloe and Rhys they slept and fucked brutally and loudly… and slept some more. And once a year, at New Year’s, they hired a nanny for a week, and let Pandora fuck them up. The nanny helped them with all the parenting that required moving; the bruising that woman left was not something that they got over quickly. It was getting them by, but neither of them were happy with it. Tom was talking about building them a new house with a sound-proof basement. Archie was worried about Alex’s safety while they were down there; they were still smoothing out all the wrinkles, but they’d figure something out. They loved Alex, neither of them regretted having her. But they also wanted to preserve all the things they loved about their relationship too.

“You miss her.” Finn said as the three lads looked over at Rhys, Rae and Izzy chatting. Tom and Chloe were playing with the kids and Phil was due from the set any minute now. Grace and Bethany were laughing together while Danny and Macca chased after their kids. Several other members of the extended gang and university crowd were due to come in about an hour. The place was chaos, with children, toys and entertainment everywhere. Everyone under ten years old was loving it, while every adult in the room was already nursing a headache.

“Course I do.” Chop answered honestly. “She was the love of me life… still is really.” He looked at Izzy longingly for a moment and looked down at his beer, “But I’ve gotten over regretting all the mistakes I made and thinking of all the things I should o’ said.” He shrugged, “I’ll never get over her, but…” He couldn't bring himself to say it, but he’d gotten over thinking he’d ever get to be with her properly again. Finn stared at Izzy thoughtfully but Archie was shaking his head.

“So when are you and Iz getting back together?” Archie asked and Chop shook his head.

“We’re not.”

“You fuck every time you’re near each other.” Finn said, filled with a sudden need to back Archie on this.

“Language.” Archie rolled his eyes.

“Aye but fucking don’t make a relationship.” Archie glared at Chop. “Sorry.” Chop said to him. “So we won’t be getting back together.”

“Aye or you could just go and get your cock sucked by a stranger.” Finn said and Chop groaned.

“You’re never gonna let me live it down.”

“Never.” Finn replied.

“Ever.” Archie added.
“Alex!” Tom sprinted down the beach, “Alex!” The panic in his voice was visceral; his baby girl was running towards the water. Archie watched on grinning. He knew Tom would get there in time and if not, Rhys was in the water with Isaac on his shoulders; Rhys would get to her before anything happened, he was already moving towards where the three year old girl would enter the water.

“It’s funny how you were desperate to be the father but I always see Tom doing the parenting.” Rae said and Archie turned his grinning face to her.

“You’re not at our place at four o’clock in the morning!” He answered and raised his eyebrows to indicate that that was often when he did his parenting.

“Oh Archie, you’ve just given me another reason to not join the ranks of our friends!” Rae said as she looked over at Woody and Kiki snuggling in the golden sun, Kiki’s swollen belly telling the world that another baby would be coming into the world within the month. Then her eyes turned to Macca and Bethany, Macca’s hand on Bethany’s stomach, she rolled her eyes at the stereotyped imagery, they were expecting their second child; their daughter was playing in the sand near them, her name was Claudia and she was just over 2 years old.

“That’s alright you can be Aunt Rae for my brood.” Chloe replied.

“Brood?” Rae asked unimpressed.

“I think I’m gonna have a couple more.” She said and Izzy pulled a face of distaste, “Oi don’t pull that face! I’ve loved having Isaac.” Chloe said, “Between the excellent childcare facilities provided by my law firm and Rhys, I don’t have to give up my career to do it. So I’m gonna do it.”

“Well you won’t be the only one having a brood.” Rae looked over at Grace and Danny, surrounded by their three kids, Danny making up stories about how shells came into existence; something about a battle between mermaids and sirens. Grace was pregnant again, this time with twins. But Izzy supposed that between Grace’s job as a vet and Danny’s job as a now fully accredited accountant and part owner of a mechanic, they could afford to birth half the British population. Their eldest son Jacob was turning seven this year and was looking more and more like Danny every day, although he had a gorgeous mop of red hair that no one could account for. Their five year old daughter was named Theodora; Tix’s name had been Theodora, Tix was the way she chose to shorten it into a nickname, and she had Danny’s huge eyes but Grace’s oval face and dark brown hair. Their second son was named Arnold after Chop and he had just turned three.

Bryn and Renee had continued their flirtation but Renee was extremely demanding and Bryn barely felt as though he was keeping up, and his eyes often returned to Izzy. Neither of them were interested in committing to a relationship just yet, but they were enjoying each other’s company.

James had moved to Australia and had his own practice in Byron Bay, staying close to Woody and his ‘clothing optional’ beach. It had been nudist once, but they’d recently changed it to ‘clothing optional’ for shyer guests. James had declared he was going to die a bachelor and seemed happy with that choice. But both Phil and Finn noticed how often his eyes were on the three of them; they both knew he had feelings for Rae. But despite their close friendship with him, none of them felt that way about him, so they would not consider inviting a fourth person into their relationship.
Stacia and Kurt were engaged. Typical to their relationship Stacia had asked Kurt and he had been more than happy to follow her wherever she went.

Kristi had two boyfriends now, both of them younger than her. She declared that she had been brave enough to do it because Rae had been brave enough to go public. Her mother had just said, ‘like that lovely Phil Seymour?’ to her and there hadn’t been any problems. This had been wonderful news to the trio; it felt like their struggle with coming out publically had had real benefits.

Katie had become a very successful journalist, and was dating a few people but nothing was serious yet. She was considering becoming a single mother and was agonising over sperm decisions; it made for hilarious conversations.

Nina had been cast in the lead role, a nurse, in a tv series set in the future in outer space. Her degree in nursing was a real help with the filming. Although Phil never said a word about it, and never would, she strongly suspected he’d used his fame to circumnavigate some of the racism in the industry for her. She had also become a single mother, quite by accident, and her 3 month old had been passed from person to person on the flight over, everyone getting a chance to meet the newest addition to the family.

Sammy, Jason and Sue from Phil’s old chess club was also joining them for these holidays all three of them on the lookout for a summer fling, although Jason seemed to be gravitating back to Woody and Kiki, and there was talk about him staying in Australia indefinitely.

Aiyana and Nikki had also become fairly permanent fixtures during these now month long sojourns to Australia and like the chess club friends, they enjoyed the sun, surf and flings of their group holidays.

It was Latisha and Sam who had brought the most unexpected news with them to Australia; they were engaged. Latisha told them all as everyone got into various states of undress, Woody as always was naked, but most of the gang were choosing to wear swimmers now that they had kids, although the kids didn’t seem to care yet, indeed Alex was constantly stripped her clothes off and went running naked across the sand at every chance.

“Don’t fucking congratulate us. It’s just a citizenship thing.” Latisha waved off their confused congratulations. But Rae caught the way Sam was looking at her; he looked like he had fallen in love with Tish. As everyone chased after kids and headed down to the water Rae turned to Phil and Finn.

“As if our friendship group wasn’t complicated enough.”

“So it wasn’t just me that caught that.” Phil noted.

“No I’m pretty sure we all caught it.” Finn replied.

Spending the day on an Australian beach was not only a national past time it was also an incredibly easy thing to do. They’d all learned over the years the pain of sunburn so bad it blistered, so the SPF 30+ was passed around and the kids all had hats and shirts to protect their skin. A barbecue was produced and food was grilled and handed out. There were bags of toys and eskies filled with drinks and tropical fruit for the kids. After so many years of coming to Aussie beaches for their mid-year break, they had gotten it down to a fine art, and they looked just like the locals did.

At a time when everyone was either off at the shops buying ice cream, swimming, or playing beach cricket; a very Aussie tradition, Izzy and Sam found themselves sitting together.
“Hey.” Sam and Izzy hadn’t had a real proper talk for a few years. Not really since Sam had tried to convince Izzy that she should be with him in Lincoln during the drama camp all those years ago. It had been on his mind a lot since then.

“Hey.” Izzy answered. A lot had changed about Sam; the air force had made him far more disciplined, and muscular, but Izzy still wasn’t interested in him, and not just because he was engaged now.

“You know, I wanted to apologise for what happened in Lincoln. I’m sorry I was such an entitled fuckboy. I’m even more sorry it took me until I were 30 to really understand what an utter crap-hat I was and then grow the balls to apologise to you.”

“Entitled fuckboy?” Izzy raised an impressed eyebrow.

“Yeah… try being engaged to Tish; she doesn’t let shit like that slide… every single micro-aggression I have she tells me all about it. At first I was proper pissed at her… but I leaned a lot and… and I know she’s right about all the stuff she says about straight white boys.” He laughed slightly and shook his head, blushing slightly.

“What you blushing for Sammy?” Izzy teased and Sam shook his head in reply; the air force had whipped him into shape in one way, Latisha had whipped him into shape in another way.

“She says to me she only telling me this stuff cos she don’t wanna have to live with a fuckboy while we’re married.” Sam says, “She says I can go back to being a fuckboy when we both get dual citizenship and get divorced.”

“You don’t wanna be a fuckboy though.” Izzy said and Sam looked down at his hands.

“Am I that obvious?”

“To everyone but Tish.” Izzy answered.

“I like myself for the first time in me whole life Iz.” Sam said, “I’m happy.” He pulled his lips into a tight line, “back in Lincoln, I thought I deserved everything I wanted and I thought having it all would make me happy.” Sam said, “Now I know that happiness comes from within yourself not from anything or anyone on the outside. But… some people could greatly increase my happiness.” His eyes took a fleeting glance at Latisha, laughing loudly with Nina and piggybacking Alex. “I actually understand what having everything is now. It’s being genuinely at peace with yourself, finding your path through this world and finding the people, friends, family, partners, that you wanna walk this path with. That’s everything. You can’t always have it though.”

“But you should try.” Izzy answered, “Not in the way you tried with me!” She teased, “But you have to tell her.”

“Iz… I don’t think you should be telling me that I have to try.” Sam said honestly and looked at her with a frank expression, “You didn’t.”

“What?”

“Stop thinking you can’t have it all Iz.” Sam turned his eyes to Chop and Izzy made a noise of understanding and scrunched up her face.

“I dunno Sam.” She said in a non-committal tone.
“But you should try.” Sam repeated the advice she had just given him.

“It’s not fair to him.”

“Even less fair to not ask him.” Sam said, “To not tell him.” He looked over at Chop, “You’re probably less obvious than me, but I have been quite interested in looking at you for quite some time, so I noticed. I noticed that you still love him.”

“Sam… it’s not fair to him to put this on him. To ask him to-” She stopped herself. “It’s not fair to him.” She said with finality.

“That’s for him to decide.” Sam said, “I get that you’re not willing to ever move back to Stamford; me either. And I dunno what kind o’ relationship you can have if he refuses to leave. But I don’t think he will.” Sam shrugged. “You have found peace with yourself, you know your path… and you already know who you want to walk that path with. We’re all here on this beach with you; we’re your family. But one of us is your partner, and always will be, even if you don’t let him be.”

“Did he ask you to talk to me?” Izzy asked softly.

“No. And if he had, I wouldn’t o’ done it.” Sam said, “Even though I’ve fallen in love with Tish, it don’t change that you matter to me Iz. I’d like to see you happy.” He watched Izzy lower her eyes. “And I know how happy your career makes you, and some people don’t need or want a partner, and that’s fine. But you’re not one of those people.”

“Sam-”

“Did you feel happy last night?” Sam asked. He had the room next to Chop and had heard Izzy visit Chop last night; the sex had been explosive and loud.

“Sam!” She blushed, “Oh my god.” She put her face in her hands and started laughing. She had become more open about sex, but that didn’t mean she wanted everyone to know about her sex life; that was still a topic only for her inner circle; the nine members of the gang.

“Or were you more happy when you woke up this morning?” He asked pointedly, “But I have been far too nosy; it’s not really my business.” He shrugged, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine.” Izzy said softly, “I accept both of your apologies.”

“I’m glad.” He grinned, “And I’ve challenged myself to tell Tish how I feel by the end of our Australian holiday… just so you know I’m not all talk and no action.” He laughed softly. “Oh fuck.” He shook his head, “I’m nervous as fuck about it.”

“I really can’t predict how she’ll respond.” Izzy said, “When the girls get together and talk, she talks about being a black woman in STEM, and fucking.” Izzy said, “and tv shows she likes… and race relations in America… and music… and computer games…” She added, “She actually talks about a lot o’ things, but men she might have feelings for is not one o’ those things.”

“That’s not her style.” Sam nodded his head, “She keeps her emotions close to her. Protects herself.”

“Too many fuckboys?”

“Too many fuckboys.” Sam agreed. They both looked out across the beach and sat in silence for a while.
“I am happy.” Izzy said finally, “But I do miss him.” She admitted. “And I do think I could spend the rest of my life happily single…” She turned her eyes back to Sam, “But I could also spend my life happily with him. And I don’t know which is the better decision. But I do know it’s not fair on him to ask him to move for me. Cos I’m not going back to Stamford.” She shrugged, “I got a lot of thinking to do. But I can tell you Sam that I’m not gonna rush into anything. I’m not gonna make a hasty decision based on the fear that he might find someone else or I might end up alone; neither of these things scare me.” She said, “But I will think about my happiness.” Sam nodded in reply.

“Thanks.” He gave her a brief hug and stood, “Right well, I better help me fiancé with Alex.” Izzy looked over to see Alex pulling Tish’s dreadlocks, Tom gently taking her hands out of Tish’s hair and explaining why that wasn’t ok. Almost immediately Alex pulled Tom’s hair instead and the sound of loud laughter wafted over the beach.

Izzy flicked through the photos she’d taken of her family in Byron Bay; they all always referred to the gang as their family, and the extended gang as their extended family. She grinned at the picture of her on Rhys’s shoulders in the ocean, the photo had been snapped by a laughing Chloe moments before Rhys dumped her in the water. There was a picture of Rae in a bikini hugging Bethany, who was wearing only bikini bottoms, both fat beauties laughing. A photo of Danny dive bombing the swimming pool in Woody and Kiki’s resort. A photo of Tom and Rhys in what looked like a very serious conversation in the communal kitchen at the resort, both completely naked, the kids were tucked up to sleep and the nudity was more open when they kids were asleep. A photo of a red-cheeked, drunk Phil holding his wine glass up to the camera, Izzy had taken the photo about 3 seconds before Finn had tackled Phil and started kissing him; Rae had ignored his drunken advances because she was playing pool with James, Chloe and Macca and did not want to lose the bet. She had joined in the kissing later, there was a photo of that somewhere too, the person who had taken it was obviously drunk. Izzy loved handing her camera around and letting everyone take photos. She noticed a photo of Sam and Latisha talking and wondered if this was the conversation about feelings they needed to have and how it had gone. An adorable photo of Nina and her baby on the beach Tom looking over her shoulder at the baby. And then a photo of Chop, cigarette hanging out of his mouth, looking straight at the camera. She paused on that photo thoughtfully.

She was wrapped up in bed, tissues and a bucket beside the bed; she had some sort of stomach flu and had been vomiting all day today. She put the camera down and turned the volume on the tv up. She would send the pictures through to everyone later on. 2010 had been a funny old year for her so far, but she had been enjoying it. Spending August in Australia had been good, but now September was nearly over and she was looking towards the end of the year.

Without really thinking about it she picked up her phone and clicked on Chop’s name, calling him.

“We need to talk.” She said as soon as he picked up the phone.

“Alright.” He answered, “I’ll drive to London tonight.”

“No I’ve got a stomach bug, give it a few days. Maybe the weekend?”

“I can’t this weekend; business stuff. Next weekend?”

“Alright.” Izzy answered.
“Alright, I’ll see you next Friday night then.” She hung up without another word and wondered what on Earth they were going to talk about; she had barely thought about the conversation she had had with Sam, yet alone come to any sort of decision. She grimaced at her phone and sighed at herself before settling in to watch tv.

Izzy sat on her lounge in shock. She had a bunch of pamphlets and a single pill leaflet with a single pill in it. She had to go back to the doctor in two days time for the other pill she had to take.

She had been getting the injection that stopped periods for years at a time, that and condoms. Except with Chop, she didn’t use condoms with Chop. She trusted him.

She had done herself a large glass of water and she placed the pill leaflet next to the glass and stared at it.

She had opted for a medical abortion; she was 6 weeks pregnant and could do that. But instead of taking the pill in the clinic she had asked them if she could bring it home. After a long discussion about the timing of the second pill and her reasons the clinician had let her do it.

“It’s just a bunch o’ cells in me womb.” She said to her empty apartment. “I don’t want kids. This is the absolute right decision for me.” She looked at the pill. “You haven’t even decided what you’re doing with Chop yet.” She reminded herself. She knew it was Chop’s she had to have gotten pregnant in Australia, and Chop was the only person she slept with there, or since she’d gotten back. “You love your career. You are a whole and complete woman without a child or a partner. You love your life... you hate the idea of having a child... Why have you not taken the bloody pill Izzy?” She took a deep breath and popped the pill out of its leaflet and looked at it as it sat in the palm of her hand. “Not taking this pill is an absolute mistake Isabella Reid.” She told herself, “You’re happy in this life; you don’t have to go back to the life everyone thinks you should have.” She knew she was happy, knew she could stay happy like this, but somehow she couldn’t put the pill in her mouth. “Ugh, c’mon Izzy, you know you don’t want kids; you want your career.” A memory of Chloe saying that she didn’t have to give up her career to have kids came to her, “Aye but she doesn’t own her own business like me...” She told the memory, “But you could afford a 24 hour nanny to do all the noisy things and look after it when you’re busy.” She stopped herself. “Don’t even think it Izzy. You can’t do this.” She pulled up her shirt and looked down at her flat stomach, “I don’t want you, you stupid ball of cells!” She whispered frantically at her stomach, “Why did this have to happen?” She put the pill on the coffee table and put her face in her hands. “Fuck.” She looked back up at the pill, “Just do it Iz.”

“I loved your film.”

“Thanks.” Rae grinned up at the young girl as she looked down on Rae with star struck love.

“Who do you want me to make this out to?”

“Tammy.” She answered, “I think you were robbed; not getting the Oscar.” She said hurriedly, as if she had been scared she wouldn’t be able to get the words out if she didn’t speak fast.

“Oh I don’t mind.” Rae shrugged, “Phil cleaned up and Finn got a Golden Globe; got nowhere to
put anymore awards in our little flat!” Rae laughed. It was strange to think of that huge place as little, but over the years they had filled it up, and now that Phil had moved the grand piano, taken from his parents old house in Kensington, out of storage, they had even less room. But he was playing a pianist in his next movie and he felt the need to practice. And Phil and Rae never minded hearing him play any instrument.

“You guys live in a little flat?” She asked, utterly enchanted.

“Aye, since we first moved in together. Which were right after college.”

“You’ve been together for so long.” Tammy marvelled, “The papers said there were problems in the relationship; that you was right jealous of that red haired girl Phil was hugging…?”

“She’s one of me best friends.” Rae said, “She like a sister to Phil.”

“I’m trying to get my book published.” Rae looked back up at Tammy, having finished off a lovely, personal message to Tammy on the inside cover of her book.

“Don’t give up.” Rae told her, “No matter what this fucking world throws at you. Never give up on your passion.” Tammy smiled happily.

“Thanks.” She stuttered, Rae had a feeling that the girl was struggling over whether to ask Rae to read her book or not. Rae hoped she wouldn’t; so many people asked her to read their writing it was unbelievable. At first she’d said yes to everyone, but now she was having to turn people down.

“Have a great day Tammy.” Rae said gently and Tammy nodded.

“You too.” She left and the next person in the line practically ran up to the table. Rae had a quick look at her phone before they got to her, a message from Finn saying they were finished clothes shopping. Rae put her phone down and looked up the young man.

“I love your work.”

“Thank you.” Rae answered with a huge grin, “Who should I make this out to?”

“Philip.” He said. “With one ‘l.’” He said, “Your Phillip has two.”

“He does.” Rae agreed.

“Can you tell him that I love his work too? And Finn’s… I just love all three of you.”

“I will tell him, Philip.” Rae said with a genuine smile. “What do you do?”

“I’m studying history… with Dr Milton actually.”

“Oh you know Archie?” Rae asked with surprise and Philip nodded happily. Because the trio had refused to not live their lives, there were plenty of photos circulating on the internet of them with their friends.

“He’s an inspirational teacher.” Philip answered, “I’m hoping to get to go on his dig in Indonesia next year.”

“I’ll put in a good word for you.” Rae joked.

“Oh no don’t.” Philp shook his head, “You only get positions based on merit and I want to prove
I’m good enough with my own hard work.”

“I think you’re in with a good chance with that attitude!” And then a cheer erupted from the queue; a cheer Rae had been expecting. The boys were bored after finishing their shopping; they had come to sit in on the rest of her book signing for ‘the Perils of Polyamory’. People had already been beyond excited to see Rae Earl in person, now they were getting Phil Seymour and Finn Nelson as well; the energy in the place went up a notch and Philip was crying in excitement as Phil and Finn both gave Rae a quick kiss. The manager of the bookstore nearly fainted before pulling up two extra chairs; apologising that they weren’t more comfortable chairs. Finn shrugged her concerns off with a jovial expression but Phil made an effort to reassure her.

The remaining few hundred people that had been allowed into the store got three signatures that day.

“This is a swish flat.” Chop said as Izzy showed him into the lounge room. She’d never let him come to her place before; when he was in London they always ended up in his hotel room. Chop had taken to staying in five star hotels with luxurious rooms when he was in London because of that. Izzy hadn’t noticed that, even though she always noticed her surroundings.

“Thanks.” She motioned at the lounge and he sat. “Drink?”

“You got any beer?”

“Um… no.” Izzy said with an apologetic look, “I don’t drink it, so… um. I have some spirits, vodka, rum, gin?”

“Rum and coke’ll do.” Chop answered and Izzy nodded before heading to the kitchen.

When she returned Chop was reading through a Harper’s Bazaar magazine, he looked up at her.

“There’s an interview with you in here?” He sounded astounded and Izzy shrugged.

“It’s not my first interview.” She answered, “I might not be as famous as Phil, but in some circles I’m quite well known.”

“I’m real happy for you.” Chop said, “I always knew you’d be successful.”

“Thanks.” Izzy decided not to tell him that a few interviews didn’t mean she was successful. She was successful and she had been long before she started giving interviews. “How’s the mechanic shop going?”

“Same old.” Chop answered, “Danny and I decided to follow Tom and Rhys’s example and hire a manager so we could consider starting up a new store somewhere, he’s thinking Scotland for some reason!” Chop said with a toothy grin.

“Wow… that’s far away.” Izzy tried to sound unaffected.

“Aye but we wouldn’t be there all the time.” Chop shrugged. “And we haven’t made a decision yet.”

“I’m sure you’ll make the right decision for you.” Izzy said with a slightly bitter undertone. Chop
heard the tone and furrowed his brows.

“What’s up ba—” chop stopped himself from calling her baby-girl like he used to. “You said we had to talk?” He added hurriedly to cover his tracks.

“There’s actually two things we need to talk about.” She answered slowly, knots twisting in her stomach.

“Alright, well… shoot.” He said as supportively as he could; he could see how anxious she was.

“I need to tell you that I was thinking about one of these things before I knew about the other… so don’t you think I only thought about one of the things because of the other.” She said and Chop nodded his head slowly.

“I have no idea what you’re taking about Iz.”

“Just that there’s two things, but I was thinking of one of them before the other one, not because of it…”

“Alright.” Chop said not looking any more illuminated than he had the first time she had said it.

“I don’t even know where to start.” She said and Chop noticed how tightly she was holding her hands together.

“Look Iz, whatever it is, it’ll be alright.” Izzy’s eyes wandered off to the side.

“Oh I don’t know about that.” She muttered and sighed. “Alright… out with it.” She told herself. But the words would not come.

“It’ll be fine Iz.” Chop took her hand. She looked down at his hand on hers and then up at his face.

“I’m pregnant.” She said with a slight grimace. She saw Chop’s face betray a multitude of emotions all at once, almost imperceptibly as he both tried to remain supportive for her and didn’t fully comprehend what she was saying.

“Alright.” He said softly and furrowed his brows, she could tell he didn’t understand why she was telling him and then an idea came to him; “Did you want me to take you to the clinic?” He was aware of Izzy’s determination to never have children.

“Oh Chop.” Izzy squeezed his hand and lowered her eyes, and he partially understood.

“You’re gonna keep it?” He asked and she heard that note of pain he tried so hard to hide; he had wanted so badly to have a family with her. “I thought… it don’t matter what I thought… I’m sorry.” He shook his head, “D’you need any help, or…?” He looked at her face.

“Don’t be sorry, I didn’t want kids – I still don’t wants kids… I just…” She sighed and wiped her face with her free hand, keeping the other one in Chop’s hand. “I had the pill for the abortion, I had it in my hand. But I just couldn’t take it.” She felt panic rise in her throat, “I wish this hadn’t happened! I’ve been so careful!” Chop put his arms around her and pulled her to him so she could rest her head on his chest. As soon as she heard his heartbeat she started to cry. “I feel like me whole life’s ruined.”

“Well it’s not too late is it?” Chop asked, “I can take you to a clinic tomorrow?” He stroked her hair soothingly, “Maybe if you’re not alone when you’ve gotta do it it’ll be easier?”
“I doubt that.” She said, “I know I’ve gotta do it, but…” She sat up and opened a small jewellery box on the table. Chop looked in and saw a pill inside. He watched, fascinated, a strange knot in his stomach as she took the pill out and put it on the table. “Two days after I take that I gotta go back to the clinic to get a second pill.” Izzy said.

“And that’ll…” Chop didn’t know how to say what he intended to say and hesitated, “get rid of it?”

“Yes.” She said softly and they both stared at the pill. Chop got up and went to the kitchen, it didn’t take him long to find the glasses; he knew Izzy well enough to guess where she’d keep them. He returned with a glass of water and put it on the table, he sat down on the lounge next to Izzy and turned to her, putting both hands on her upper arms.

“Alright, I’m here for the next couple o’ days while you go through this.” He picked up the glass and handed it to her, “Ready?”

“Don’t you wanna know who the father is?”

“Don’t matter. It’s not his decision.” He looked her in the eye. “When men carry it around it their bodies for nine months they can make a decision about it. It’s your body, your life, your choice Iz.”

“It’s yours.” There was a moment of silence, in which Izzy could see the thud of knowledge go through Chop’s body.

“Oh Iz.” He whispered and looked away, tears pricking at his eyes. He rubbed his face, his hand stopping on the front of his head where the hair was starting to thin slightly. His eyes fell on the pill and he felt the knot in his stomach pull tighter. This was a huge part of the life he had lost when Izzy had left him; he had dreamed since he was 18 of having a family with her. He heard Izzy sniff back her tears and somehow found a peaceful place inside. In that moment he understood Finn when they had been teenagers and he’d first accepted Rae’s love for Phil, before they had been a trio. He understood that peaceful look on Finn’s face as he tried to explain what it was to love selflessly. He looked down at the pill and picked it up. He turned back to Izzy and put the pill in her palm.

“Chop?” She asked bewildered.

“That don’t change nothing Iz.” He whispered. He only whispered because his vocal chords felt like they had been cut with the sharpness of his emotions. But his mind was calm and peaceful, “If you really don’t want a baby Iz then you need to take this pill. It don’t matter who the father is.” He shook his head, “it don’t matter that it’s me, and it don’t matter that I’d do whatever you needed if you kept it; just so you know. But that don’t matter.” He looked in her eyes again. “No one but you matters in this decision Izzy.” He said it firmly, “You have to do what’s right for you.” She looked down.

“This is why I can’t stop loving you.” She whispered. Chop had to take another deep calming breath; she was killing him with this talk.

“Relationships need more than love to work.” He answered and Izzy raised her eyes to him. For months after they had broken up he had insisted that their continued love for each other was all they needed to get through anything. He’d grown more than she realised. “We’re living proof of that.” He told her, “Cos I never stopped loving you either. And I never will. But we’re not together. And that’s been… so good for you. You’ve flourished in Italy and London as a single woman.” Chop gently wiped a tear from her cheek, “No matter how much I still wanna be with
you, I’d never take from you what you’ve gained from not being with me.”

“I don’t think I wanna be not with you anymore.” Izzy said.

“What?” Chop was again confused by her wording.

“I don’t really know. I’ve been thinking about it since Australia… just… I’m happy in this life. But I know I could be happy with you too…” She tried to explain, “And I think… I think…”

“Izzy you don’t have to-”

“I know I don’t have to do anything!” Izzy said, “But I think I might want to be with you again.” Chop’s mouth opened slightly in surprise as her meaning finally caught up with him. “I were gonna think about in between the time I called you and tonight and make up me mind. But I went to the doctor the day after I called you and found out, I didn’t have a stomach bug…”

“You didn’t know you were pregnant when you called me?” She shook her head in reply. “You called because you’re confused about,” he watched her put the pill and glass of water back on the table, “your feelings for me… our relationship?”

“Yes.” She lowered her eyes. “That’s what I originally intended for this conversation to be about.” She said, “And now there’s this thing growing inside o’ me…” She said, “And I keep trying to do the right thing by me by getting rid of it… but I just keep thinking that we created this little sack o’ cells together.” She wiped a tear off her cheek and her hand went to her lower belly protectively. “How fucked up is this? I don’t even know if I wanna get back with you for sure. And even if we did; coming back together and then having a child so quickly is a recipe for disaster.” She looked at the pill again. “I should just take it.” Chop stood up and walked around the room, clearly getting his emotions under control. Izzy waited for him to get his thoughts together. Chop saw the ashtray Izzy kept for her guests; a lot of people in fashion seemed to smoke, and lit up a cigarette. Izzy watching him draw on his cigarette heavily and then suddenly stub it out because he had just remembered that he couldn’t smoke around her. She felt a stab of panic again as if she had just remembered that she was pregnant. He sat down again and took her hand.

“Ok Iz… I want to marry you and have this child. It’s all I’ve ever wanted.” He told her, “But in my fantasy world, you’re happy with that… Do you really think you’ll be happy as a wife and mother?”

“I don’t know.”

“Ayo, come here and say hi your Uncle Jules!” Julian called out across the party and Isaac went running to his uncle, his little arms held out for a hug.

“What’s Ayo mean?” Finn asked Chloe as Rhys and Julian talked, Isaac snuggled up in Rhys’s brother’s arms.

“Ayo and Ife where what their mother called them before she changed their names to be more English cos their stepfather told her to. She chose their English names very carefully, so they keep them, even though their stepfather made her do it.”

“You mean their white stepfather.” Tish added and Chloe nodded.
“That man was pretty shitty all round.” Chloe said, thinking about all the things Rhys had told her about him. But those things were private, so she changed the topic back, “Jules was Ayo and Rhys was Ife. They’re Yoruba names.” Chloe said, “They mean Joy and Love.”

“Oh god I can’t believe it’s October already!” Bethany said as she sat down with them.

“Aye well I can’t believe I’m at another kid’s birthday party.” Rae said, “It seems like we go to more kids parties than adult ones nowadays…”

“Which sucks if you’re not a parent.” Tish agreed with Rae. And they both grinned at Izzy; the only other woman at the party at the moment who was not a mother. When some of the other ladies got there, they’d have a bigger group of ladies who were not going to be mothers.

“I’m pregnant.” Izzy replied with a grimace.

“What?” Rae said and then started laughing.

“Good one!” Chloe shook her head and chuckled.

“I am.” Izzy said softly and everyone stopped laughing.

“What?” Rae repeated and was greeted with silence as all eyes fell on Izzy. Archie reached across the table and took her hand.

“It’s Chop’s and… I couldn’t go through with the abortion so… I don’t know what I’m gonna do.”

“Did you tell him?” Finn asked cautiously.

“It’s not his business Finn!” Chloe snapped and Finn held his hands up in supplication.

“I’m just saying he might look after it when it’s born, if you still don’t wanna be a mum.” Finn explained.

“I have told him.” Izzy said, “He wants to get married…”

“He’s wanted to do that since you was 17 Iz.” Chloe answered.

“I don’t know what I want. I won’t move back to Stamford.” She said. “We hadn’t even decided if we were gonna tell you guys yet.”

“So you’re definitely not getting an abortion then?” Rae asked and Izzy shook her head.

“I’m pro-choice, but when it came to doing it, I just couldn’t… I don’t know why.”

“Cos it’s Chop’s.” Phil said softly and everyone turned to look at him for a moment before looking down at the table and Izzy nodded.

“I think so.” She agreed. “We talked about it for ages, but… there’s still no decision about what we’re… I’m… gonna do.” Izzy added. “We’ve agreed to talk about it more since I’m definitely not getting an abortion.”
They turned to the door as children started showing up for Isaac’s second birthday party.

“Alright, I’m on mum duty, but this conversation needs to continue when I get back!” Chloe said and got up to greet the mothers from her mother’s group and from Isaac’s day care. Chop arrived while Chloe was greeting everyone and quietly chiding Jules from bringing security guards, even though he’d left them out the front of the house.

“Chop!” Finn called him over to their table as Bethany got up to help with the kids now that the party was actually beginning. Chop looked over at the table and looked down, wiping his hands on his jeans almost nervously, before he headed over to the table. Behind him Danny and Grace were arriving and Danny, with Arnold on his shoulders headed over to the table while Grace helped with the kids, her big belly not slowing her down one bit. Chop sat down on the table opposite Izzy and neither of them made eye contact for a moment. Izzy made a point of looking at Danny as he said hi to everyone, but Chop’s eyes went to Izzy and didn’t leave her until she looked over at him. He stayed looking at her for a moment and then turned to grin at Danny.

“Guess what?” Danny said as he let Arnold down and sat down, “We’ve decided where we’re opening up the next mechanic!” He said happily.

“Did Scotland win in the end?” Finn asked, being well aware of the debate thanks to Chop.

“No.” Danny replied happily, “Chop convinced me that London is the place to do it, even though the market’s really tight here.” Izzy looked back at Chop but his eyes were on the table. Everyone at the table except Danny knew exactly what this meant and why Chop had argued for London.

“So you’re moving to London?” Phil asked pointedly.

“No not me.” Danny said, “I’ll be transiting a few times a week.” He said proudly. “Cos Chop’s moving to London to oversee the opening and everything, and he’ll just come back to Stamford a few times a week to keep an eye on us all back there.”

“Like how Rhys and I do.” Tom answered and Danny nodded his head. Everyone tried to not look at Izzy but failed.

“We weren’t gonna say nothing until we’d finalised buying the property and all that, but I got too excited.” Danny said. “Sorry Chop.”

“It’s fine Danny!” Chop said, “It’s your good news too.” Chop told him. Chop resolutely did not look at Izzy as everyone congratulated him. He didn’t notice that they all were trying to not look at Izzy too. “So what are we doing for New Year’s?” He changed the topic.

“You will never ever change me from our traditional New Year’s, no matter how old I get.” Tom answered and Chop grinned toothily.

“’Course not!”

Finn’s head dropped to the side and Rae started to laugh. Phil’s eyebrows furrowed and he let his fingertips drop to her silky smooth skin.

“Why?” Finn asked.
“Felt like going hairless.” Rae answered.

“But I like your bush.” He replied.

“Aye well it’s not your choice!” Rae shot back and he gave her an ‘I know’ look.

“Lie down?” Phil said and Rae laid back on the bed, letting her legs fall open so that they could both see. “Well.” Phil said softly, reverently, and Finn’s eyes opened wider slightly before he settled onto the bed staring at her vagina.

“You can see everything a lot better…” Finn said softly and Phil nodded.

“Indeed.” He said and settled down next to Finn. Finn watched as Phil’s fingers slid down her cunt. But he couldn’t wait any longer; he licked along her hairless labia and made a noise of contentment.

“Alright.” He answered, “I can handle this.”

“Oh I’m glad!” Rae retorted sarcastically.

“But for the record, I like it both ways.” Finn replied. There was a moment of silence before they all burst out laughing.

“I think we all already knew that.” Phil answered.

“For our final piece of news for 2010, I would like to tell you all that Rhys and I are expecting our second child!” Chloe said when everyone was finally there and had their drinks. There was a general cheer and everyone raised their glasses in congratulations.

“Another one!” Rae joked to Izzy and Izzy smiled ruefully. In her form fitting black dress, the beginnings of a baby bump were visible and everyone was commenting on it now that Izzy had come to terms with the whole situation.

“You can join me on the no soft cheese wagon!” Izzy said to Chloe and all the mother’s laughed.

“Oh such a fun wagon to be on.” Chloe answered sarcastically.

They enjoyed a happy early dinner at their favoured pub before heading out to dance the night and 2010 away. Just before midnight Izzy, feeling unwell, went to stand outside to get some air. Seeing her, Chop followed. With the business expanding and moving to London, Chop hadn’t had chance to properly talk to Izzy since she had found out he was moving to London. When Izzy saw him walking towards her she shook her head.

“If you’ve come out for a smoke, you can’t have it near me.” She told him.

“I quit.” He answered. Izzy shook her head.

“You moved to London for the baby too?” She said slightly angrily.

“Yes and no.” Chop answered, “Ever since Danny said we could open up a new branch I been thinking of opening that branch up wherever you were. But I didn’t wanna chase you. I didn’t wanna pressure you or make you feel like you couldn’t get away from me. It were bad enough that
you had to see me cos of our friends… I wanted to let you have your space, so… so I held off opening a new branch and I thought about opening one in Scotland and…” He took a deep breath and tried to not look longingly at her, “I wanted to be near you, see you every day, even if just as friends. But I knew I couldn’t. It weren’t right for you. So I stayed away.” He fidgeted with something in his pocket and Izzy looked at his hand as it moved beneath the material. “You’ve decided to not have an abortion, you don’t know if you’re keeping it yet… I… I just wanna offer myself up to help you in any way you need. And I need to be here for that, so… here I am.”

“What’s in your pocket Chop?” Izzy asked, afraid it was that engagement ring.

“Ah it’s nicotine gum.” He said guiltily, “I don’t wanna be chewing while we having this conversation, but I’m really wanting to…” Izzy stared at him for a moment. He wasn’t going to ask her to marry him, he was honestly just offering to help.

She didn’t really remember how she ended up kissing him as the New Year’s countdown begun, she did remember how surprised he had been and how his arms had wrapped around her tightly as he had kissed her back.

“Have you got an apartment yet?” She asked as the fireworks started to go off.

“No, I’m in a hotel…”

“I think you better move into my spare room.” She answered. He looked into her eyes and saw that they still had a lot to work out, but that however their relationship turned out, they were in this parenting thing together.

“Alright.” He agreed.
it's sex... again... wow there's a lot of sex in this... :D

‘Crawl home’ by Desert Sessions

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vK_mnLSgm6M

I can’t do without...

“Fantasy jar weekend!” Finn said happily and took the fantasy jar off the side. Once a month they partook in a fantasy from the jar; this time it was a short notice fantasy; they’d done a long notice fantasy last time and had ended up on a yacht thanks to Finn’s desire to fuck in international waters. He pulled a folded up piece of paper from the bottom of the full jar and started to unfold it.

“One of Rae’s.” Phil said with a note of humour as the A3 piece of paper was unfurled, covered with writing, including a checklist.

“Shurrup!” She laughed and watched Finn read it, trying to gauge which of her fantasies it was.

“Wow.” He said softly.

“That good?” Phil said and sat down beside Finn to read it. “Well.” He said softly as his eyes scanned the checklist of things she wanted them to do.

“You sure about this girl?” Finn asked and looked up at Rae. She shrugged.

“I dunno which fantasy o’ mine you got there, but if I put it in the jar, I want it. I’m sure.” She said confidently. Phil furrowed his brows and looked down the checklist there were several things on the list that they usually reserved for the club. Phil was unwilling to take on a character during sex in their home. He’d play dominant and be rough a little, but this required things like name-calling, and that required him to take on the role of a more dominant man than he was in his everyday life.

“Well if you truly want this we’ll have to either go to the club or a hotel.”

“Not going to the club tonight, it’s all scat and piss on Friday nights now.” Finn answered.

“Hotel it is.” Phil said and picked up his phone. It was short notice but within a few minutes they were headed out the door to a hotel with a ‘presidential’ suite, a bag full of supplies, in Finn’s hand.
Phil had learned that he had quite a knack for tying Rae and Finn up. They were all good at tying each other up, but Phil was very creative at it and he truly enjoyed it. He ran the rope through his long fingers and let his eyes crawl over Rae’s body as she looked around the room. He let his dominant side sweep over him and he saw Finn doing the same, both men watching Rae and considering the things she’d written down and put in the fantasy jar; it was going to be a rough weekend. Phil took his eyes off Rae for a moment and looked in the bag of supplies and then scanned the room. His eyes met Finn’s and they both gave a slight nod.

It was the first time they had done something like this. Usually if there was going to be very rough dominant fucking, there was just one of them in charge. But Rae had asked for both of them to be in charge when it was rough. She had asked for both of them to dominate her. But that wasn’t all she’d asked for.

“This is going to be a very hard weekend.” Phil said softly to Rae and she turned to look at him, “For you.” As soon as Rae’s attention was on Phil, Finn had swept in from behind and grabbed her hair, yanking it hard until she was looking up at the ceiling. She gasped from the suddenness of it, the firmness with which he was pulling and whimpered slightly with desire; she realised which fantasy they had pulled out of the jar now and knew Phil hadn’t been lying.

Phil watched as Finn spun Rae around and tore her shirt off her in one clean movement. As always Finn’s physical strength was highly erotic and Rae groaned slightly, while Phil felt his character fully snap into place as he watched Finn brutally rip every item of clothing from Rae’s body. When he had finished both men stepped back and looked at her; the predatory expressions on their faces was enough to make Rae wanna start masturbating as she stood under their combined gaze.

They spent a long time looking at her before Finn returned to the bag. He took Rae’s written fantasy out of the bag and taped it to the wall while Phil approached Rae, the rope held taught between his hands.

Working slowly, almost delicately, he criss-crossed the ropes tightly across her body, knotting them to create intricate patterns. He looped the rope around her neck and ran the length down her spine, meaning that if she slouched at all, the rope would begin to choke her. Finn appreciated that; it meant that she had to keep her back straight, her breasts thrust out, rope both above and below her tits, accentuating them. Phil considered tying her breasts further, but he knew that both of them enjoyed them bouncing too much, so he left them free while Finn admired how creative Phil had become with rope tying and watched him work in just the same way Phil had watching him tear Rae’s clothes from her. Finn looked over at Rae’s checklist; the last thing on it was for them to be creative with the way they dominated her. Nowhere on the list did it have for her to be tied in the way Phil was tying her, she had only mentioned her hands being behind her back for most of the time; and Phil had tied them behind her back tightly. They both noticed the satisfied grin she gave when she tried to move and couldn’t.

“Kneel.” Phil said in that soft, but commanding voice. Rae knelt and Finn watched as Phil tied Rae’s wrists to her ankles with a second rope.

“A few weeks back I did a mail order of supplies.” Finn said; they had to order sex toys, lubricant and wipes online because they were so regularly followed and photographed nowadays. “And I got us a couple of these little beauties.” He pulled out a metal device attached to a leather strap. “Been waiting for the right time to use it.” Rae’s eyes fell to Finn’s hand as he carried it towards her. “It’s called a Jennings gag.” He said, “It works on a ratchet device to keep your mouth as wide open as possible.” He held it up to her mouth and she opened it. The rubber coated metal
was cool and she clenched her teeth on it, her lips closing over the section in her mouth. She felt like a horse with a bit in her mouth. Phil pulled her hair up and Finn tightened the strap viciously tight, pulling it deeper into her mouth, her teeth parting a little more to let it in. They let her hair drop back over the strap and Finn grinned sadistically as he pressed the ratchet lever and her teeth were forced apart. “Dentists use these.” Finn said, “Without the leather strap of course.” He continued to push the gag wider and wider until Rae made a slightly panicked noise; that meant he was pushing her a little too hard. He stopped there, her mouth gaped wide by the Jennings gag and both men stared at her. “Now I do believe that ‘use mouth like a cunt’ is on that checklist. Am I right Phil?” Finn asked in a teasing voice, his eyes not leaving Rae.

“I don’t really care if it is, that’s what’s gonna happen.” Phil answered making Rae whimper lustfully. “But before we start…” Phil produced two small balls; they were made of metal and had a loud clanging bell in their hollow centres; they made a loud sound when dropped on any surface from any height. He placed one in each of Rae’s hands. “Drop one for slow down, drop both for stop. Shake them if you can’t drop them.” He reminded them all and Rae nodded. “One final thing Rae… you asked for this fantasy to be played out over the whole day. But the hotel had a minimum two night stay, so…” He grinned and shrugged, “You’ll be having two days of it.” Rae groaned loudly.

“You took that ‘be creative’ thing and ran with it, didn’t you?” Finn laughed and Phil raised his eyebrows in answer.

“Ready?” He asked Rae. She nodded again and Phil looked over at Finn.

“Now Phil, correct me if I’m wrong, but cunts don’t have to breathe do they?” He asked.

“No they don’t.” Phil answered. Rae took that hint and took a deep breath as Finn undid his belt right in front of her face, unbuttoning and unzipping his jeans, her eyes following his hands. He pushed his cock down her throat with his jeans still around his hips. Phil enjoyed the power in the both of them being dressed and her being naked, so he followed Finn’s example and did not undress fully.

Rae’s ability to take a deep breath was effected by the tight ropes around her ribs and the rope on her neck, and of course by the very short length of time Finn and Phil gave her before they were back down her throat. She could feel her cut getting wet as they fucked her throat brutally hard, giving her barely any time to breathe at all. She drooled all over herself, completely unable to close her mouth. Finn shoved his cock all the way down her throat, his balls on her chin and thrust hard into her throat, staying quite deep, making her gag, but he ignored her gagging and kept going until she felt like she might pass out from lack of oxygen. When he saw her eyes rolling back in her head Finn pulled her off his cock and turned her face towards Phil’s cock. She snatched a breath before Phil took a handful of her hair and proceeded to do exactly what Finn had just done.

Rae was an absolute mess by the time Finn pulled he head back by her hair and started to wank over her wide open mouth. Phil joined him, both of them coming almost simultaneously, aiming the load into her mouth. Finn took the Jennings gag off her.

“Suck it dry bitch.” He told her.

“Fucking whore.” Phil said as she sucked them both dry, the cum still in her mouth. Phil went to the bag and took out some gaffa tape. He cut a length off and stabbed a small hole in the middle of it. Over the years of exploring the joys of taping someone’s mouth shut with cum in it, they had discovered that air built up in your mouth the longer you were taped, and it couldn’t get gotten rid of through the nose because of the cum. So now they put a small hole over the lips so the air could be expelled through the mouth but the cum could stay in there. Rae groaned when she saw the
tape; she hadn’t put that on the list, but she’d known they would do it.

“Sh.” Phil said and put the tap over her mouth.

“We’re done using your mouth, we don’t need to hear from you.” Finn added as he dragged her to her feet by the hair and dragged her over to look at the checklist. Phil grabbed a heavy black texta and ticked off the name calling and throatfucking while Finn read the list. “Slap tits.” Finn said quizzically, “That’s new.” He grabbed and squeezed her tits with one hand while the other pulled her hair hard. “Like this?” He let go of her tit and then slapped it hard. She groaned through the tape over her mouth. Phil leaned against the wall, his arms crossed and watched. The way he watched as Finn slapped her tits, the sharp second of pain tingling through her body, the heat of the slap left on her skin was divine.

“I don’t think you know what you’ve gotten yourself into girl.” Phil said softly, his tone of authority laced with a threat. He grabbed her hair brutally hard, Finn letting go for him. Phil pushed her face into the wall and let his hand fall over her arse. He fingered her cunt from behind, Rae groaning loudly, her face pressed into the wall, into her own checklist of things she wanted them to do to her. The pleasure was incredible and Rae was rushing towards orgasm when he withdrew his fingers and yanked her head back. She gave an angry, frustrated groan but he just pulled her towards the bed, Rae having to bend over as he dragged her by the hair. He pushed her onto the bed and she fell on her side, Finn was on her before she had time to get her bearings and he pushed her onto her back, spreading her legs he licked her cunt aggressively, Rae moaning loudly. But like Phil he stopped just as she was getting close to coming.

“Tie her legs together.” Finn said “Her cunt’s fucking useless to us.” Finn grinned when he saw the look in Rae’s eyes. “You know what they say bitch, whores cum second.”

“If they cum at all.” Phil said as he cut another piece of gaffa tape and taped up her waxed pussy. She groaned in frustration. There was no way her clitoris or vagina were going to get any stimulation now. She groaned louder; her anger at them clear. But her hands grasped the safety balls tightly; this is exactly what she had meant when she’d told them to be creative with their domination of her. Finn pushed her legs together while Phil took another length of rope from the bag. Finn held her still as Phil began at her ankles and using the same intricate knot work he’d used on her torso, he tied her legs firmly together, all the way up to her thighs, lacing the rope around her waist tightly so it wouldn’t fall down her legs.

“Nice.” Finn said as he rolled Rae onto her stomach and pulled her arse cheeks apart.

“That’s your only useful hole, cunt.” Phil said and Rae groaned deeply in reply. Finn lubed up her butt while Phil started to pull her cheeks apart hard. He inserted the plug roughly, carefully eliciting a small amount of pain as he shoved it in her. Finn smacked her arse hard, leaving a huge red hand print and left her lying there. They both went into the huge lounge room part of the room and sat on the lounge, cracking open a can of coke each.

“I wish we’d done this when we were fucking teenagers.” Finn laughed.

“Yeah it’s gonna take a bit longer between outings.” Phil acknowledged.

“And her checklist wants lots of cum all over her.” He grimaced and Phil laughed.

“We’ll do what we can do.”

She could hear them laughing and talking, but she couldn’t hear what they were saying and it was driving her nuts. She groaned in frustration and tried moving but the ropes stopped her moving too
much, and every small movement just squeezed her thighs into her taped cunt and moved the butt plug inside of her, making her unbearably horny. She could taste their cum, could feel the burn of her spanked tits, feel how wet her cunt was. She groaned in frustration again.

“Hear her groaning?” Finn laughed.

“We better get back in there.” Phil laughed and took a deep swig of coke; the sugar was going to be needed. Finn dropped to his knees in front of Phil and started sucking his cock back into life. Phil ran a hand through his hair. It didn’t take much to get Phil hard again and Finn stood up, Phil scooting forward in the chair to suck Finn’s already hardening cock; giving oral sex always got Finn hard.

They headed into the bedroom, Rae’s eyes already on them, pleading with them for orgasms. Phil and Finn looked over the check list and pointed at a few of them, silently agreeing what was happening next. They turned to her, Phil picking up Finn’s t-shirt while Finn pulled Rae into a kneeling position with only her knees and head touching the bed. Finn pulled the butt plug out and slid his cock into her, spanking her arse hard. He fucked her as hard and fast and deep as he could while Phil lifted up her head by her hair, Rae grunting and groaning. Phil wrapped Finn’s shirt around her face and Finn grabbed it, using it to pull her up as he fucked her in the arse. Rae was practically screaming with frustration, but her mouth was tightly taped, their cum still in her mouth. She gripped the balls in her hand and felt her desperate need to cum increase. Finn fucked her with no thought of teasing her or what she might want or feel; he fucked her to make himself cum. This was the first thing on the checklist; use her as an object to make themselves cum. When he was close he pushed her onto her side and took the t-shirt from her face, he came on her face, copious amount of it spurting into her eyes, where it stang and made her eyes water.

“Swallow.” Phil ordered and she instantly swallowed the loads they’d taped into her mouth. Phil pulled the tape off her mouth and pushed the cum on her cheeks into her open mouth. Now that the tape was off her mouth Finn had an idea.

“You two are kinda similar in some ways.” He said to Rae and Phil, “both uptight about licking arseholes.” He grinned as Rae’s eyes opened wider; she knew what was coming. “I mean you’ll do it, and you like, but you don’t love it like I do. Don’t get your tongue in there deep enough.” He rolled Rae all the way onto her back and pulled her body until her head was hanging off the edge of the bed. “Time to lick some arsehole.” He told her and positioned himself over her face.

“Get right in there.” Phil said and pulled Finn’s cheeks apart, the two lads laughing together as Rae made an annoyed sound but started to lick.

“C’mon whore do it like you love it.” Finn teased. Phil left Finn to it and turned to the other side of the bed. He legs were still tied together, but he easily pushed them up, exposing her arse. He pushed her legs into her stomach until her arse was raised high enough for him to slip into her. he rested both of her ankles on his shoulder and leaned into her, fucking her arse hard and fast, her screams of frustration returning, but were drowned out by Finn’s arse, her tongue lapping at it like it was an ice cream, her cunt aching for attention.

They continued this treatment for several hours until Rae dropped a ball.

“Swallow.” Finn said and pulled the tape off her mouth; they’d taped her up again.

“I need to pee.” She told them and the two lads looked at each other and grinned.

“Might be time for a break.” Phil said magnanimously. “Can you hold it while I untie you?” She nodded and he began to untie her. He carefully removed the tape from her cunt and rubbed her
hands to make sure she was ok. But he had, as always, tied the ropes just tight enough and not so tight that she lost circulation.

When she stood up, the patterns of the rope all over her boys Finn gave Phil an appreciative nod; he’d done some fine work. She stretched her tired limbs and headed to the bathroom, both men following her. When she turned to sit on the toilet she looked at them, Finn leaning on the doo, Phil standing in the doorway, both watching her. Phil cocked an eyebrow as she looked between them.

“Oh come on.” She said a shaking her head.

“You’ve peed in peed in front of us before.” Finn reminded her.

“Yeah but not with you deliberately watching!”

“First time for everything.” Phil said, neither of them budging. She sighed and sat down. The sound of her pee hitting the water punctuated the silence as she flamed red with embarrassment, both of her men not taking their eyes off her. When she went to wipe Finn raised a hand and she stopped.

“No wiping, drip dry; don’t wanna give yourself any accidental pleasure.” She glared at Finn, and turned her eyes to Phil, expecting him to be more reasonable, but he just grinned at her with a cocky arrogance that turned her on as well as infuriated her.

“We can always run some cold water over our fuck toy.” Phil said, “Clean her up for the next round.”

“Good idea.” Finn said and pulled Rae of the toilet by her arm. He pushed her into the shower and turned the cold water on making her gasp loudly.

“You fucker!” She yelled at him, making Finn laugh.

“You know the safe word.” He pushed her head under the stream of water, cleaning the dry cum off her face, swearing at how cold the water was. Phil got in with them ran water over Rae’s cunt as she gasped with cold. But a she got uses to the temperature the feel of them running their hands over her body started to excite her.

“Please fuck me.” She said.

“We’ve fucked you all day today.” Phil replied as if he couldn’t understand why she was asking.

“Please…” She said loudly in deep frustration.

“Where would you like fucking?” Finn teased.

“In my cunt!” Ra yelled at him and slapped his face hard. “You fucking arsehole!”

“Holy shit!” Finn laughed and she turned and slapped Phil too.

“Make me cum now!”

“Nope.” Finn said and twisted her arms behind her back, pushing her up against the wall. Phil moved the shower head so that the cold water poured down her face as Finn started to slam his cock into her arsehole again.

“FUCK YOU!” She yelled angrily. They both laughed; she often got angry when she wasn’t
allowed to cum. It was when you knew you were doing your job properly.

“Can you shut this cunt up?” Finn asked and Phil pulled Rae’s face down to his cock, ramming it down her throat, moving the cold water to be on her back as they fucked her from either end.

They fucked her until she was so angry at them that they knew it was time for something new. They’d all bee tossing this idea around for a while, and Phil had gone ahead and had three of them specially made for them. But they only had one of them here today. Phil had shown Finn when they’d packed the bag and they had laughed, knowing how angry she was going to be. They pulled her from the shower before they’d cum; they were too excited to try the new thing out, this was a new way to edge each other, to edge her today. They laid her on the bed, still completely wet, almost gentle with her. Rae knew something was about to happen with how nice they were suddenly being, and when Finn knelt over her chest and squeezed her breasts together and starting fucking her tits, Rae knew it was a distraction tactic. She watched the head of his cock poking out from between her boobs as she felt Phil lifting her arse. He wasn’t as strong as Finn, but he did alright and lifting her up and she felt something had and cold against her skin. Finn started to fuck her face as she felt Phil fidgeting around with this hard cold thing; it felt almost like a kind of underwear.

“Done.” Phil said happily and Finn got up and pushed Rae into a sitting position. She looked down at her groin and saw what looked like a pair of shiny metal underwear.

“A chastity belt?” She asked angrily.

“This one blocks all ability for you to touch your clit, or to be fucked vaginally, but does allow for you to pee and use water to clean up.” There was a colander like effect between the legs for that. “But it does leave the arsehole-”

“The useful hole.” Finn piped in.

“Completely available for use.” Phil finished.

“You fucking arseholes.” She shook her head.

“You’ll be wearing this tonight while you sleep.” Phil said smugly, “On the bottom of the bed. Curled up like a good bitch.” Rae’s eyes flashed with rage.

“I think I might order some dinner.” Finn said casually as he grabbed Rae just before she jumped off the bed to slap Phil. He slipped some handcuffs on her, cuffing her hands in front of her and pushed her onto her knees. Phil gave her the two safety balls and put a ball gag on her while Finn ordered room service.

“Come watch tv with us.” Phil said softly, the tone he used making Rae groan silently with desire. “Crawl.” Rae crawled to the lounge room on her knees and cuffed hands. When she got there Finn popped the butt plug back in and sat down with his feet up. Rae knelt in front of him, knowing what her place was in this role.

“If we’re gonna have her mouth uncovered, should put it to good use.” He said and he flicked the football on. Rae licked her lips and looked at his cocks and he grinned and shook his head, wiggling his toes. “Suck ’em.” As Rae started to suck on Finn’s toes she was glad that she could press her cunt against the chastity belt and feel some pleasure. But it wasn’t enough to let her cum, only enough to make her ache even more for release.

There was a knock on the door and Phil got up; they had left the room service on the rolling table
at the door as requested. He rolled the table into the room and set up the table so that Finn and he could watch the game. Rae’s stomach grumbled and she looked up at the table, waiting for them to let her sit on a chair and eat.

But Phil stood in front of her with a dirty grin. She looked up at him and he produced a highly polished metal dog bowl from behind his back. Her eyes went round with anger as he placed the bowl in front of her without a word. He turned back to the table and produced another bowl which he put in front of hr. He poured expensive bottled water into the bowl for her ad stroked her hair gently. He sat down next to Finn in front of the incredibly expensive meal he’d ordered, Rae’s eyes not leaving him until she heard Finn chuckling at her. When Finn saw her glaring at them he cocked his eyebrows.

“Ooo lobster.” Finn said and started to eat. Phil took some of his lobster and gently dropped it into the bowl in front of Rae. She looked up at him, but he was watching the tv. She felt her cunt almost dripping with desire as Phil turned his face slightly to look down at her from the corner of his eye. The look on his face was one of supreme confidence; he knew she’d eat from the bowl. He knew she wouldn’t even try to use her hands because they all knew what she was supposed to do. That confidence made her so horny she could almost cry with frustration. Instead she turned to her bowl and lowered her mouth to the food, eating directly from the bowl.

“Good girl.” Phil said softly. Finn looked over, the lust in his eyes was obvious; Rae’s submission was a complete turn on to all three of them. Finn got up and went to the checklist ticking off several things including humiliation and submission. There was a note at the bottom of the checklist telling them to make sure she knew how much they enjoyed dominating her together and Finn circled that, drawing Phil’s attention to it. So far they’d cum a lot and laughed at her desire to cum, things that they had all done in the dominant role. Phil nodded and put a spoonful of vegetables in the bowl and Rae bent and picked each pea out of the bowl with her mouth individually, giving them a show of how obedient she was. Next came the potato with a cream sauce. Rae made sure they saw her licking up the cream, neither man could take their eyes off her. It was getting to the point that they desperately wanted to hear her cum; but not until tomorrow.

Rae had barely finished eating the last thing Phil gave her when they were upon her. Phil pulled out her butt plug and started to savagely pound her arse, Rae desperately trying to hold onto the ground.

“Drink.” Finn said and pushed her mouth towards the bowl of water while Phil fucked her arse. Finn pushed her face into the water and then pulled it out, shoving his cock down her throat. Finn watched Phil’s eyes turn to the checklist, obviously thinking about what Finn had circled. He spanked Rae hard and got up, going to the bedroom to call room service. Finn let him go, working on breath control with Rae.

“How long can you hold it?” He whispered as he made her eyes roll back in her head, his cock down her throat, counting the seconds until he’d let her breathe again.

“When Finn’s done with you, clear the table.” Phil told Rae when he returned. Finn let Rae up and she took the plates to the door and looked back at them. “Leave them outside.” Phil said and turned back to the television with a smirk on his face. Rae, completely naked, carefully opened the door and peered down the corridor. She pushed the plates out, trying to keep herself covered by the door. When she was done she returned to her bowls and knelt before them without a word.

“What’d you get?” Finn asked as they both settled down in front of the tv, watching sport.”

“Dessert.” Phil said, “Chocolate caramel slice with 24 karat gold icing.” Rae and Finn looked at
him with complete surprise; it wasn’t like him to be so ostentatious. “Each slice is worth a thousand quid.” He said with a grin. Finn cocked an eyebrow at him.

“Alright.” He said and stared at the tv. Both Rae and Finn were trying to figure out what Phil had planned next. When it came to being dominant, Finn was the roughest, but Phil had the imagination, the finesse. And when Rae was the dominant; well she truly revelled in making them suffer.

When the dessert came, Phil met them at the door, not wanting rumours of their wild sex games to get to the press. They could do this kind of thing publicly at the club, but not in a hotel. Phil put the desserts down on the table and then started to fuck Rae in the arse again, Finn watching this time. As he thrust into Rae, he reached over her head and carefully put one of the expensive desserts into her dog bowl. Rae looked at the gold covered dessert as her cunt ached for attention, her arse getting reamed again, and suddenly this whole thing felt a little dirtier and a lot naughtier. She groaned loudly and Phil withdrew from her arse and picked up her dog bowl. He came all over the dessert, Finn and Rae watching with deep desire. There was a moment of silence before he put the bowl back down in front of Rae.

“Eat.” He said and stood over her watching.

“Wait a minute.” Finn said and got up. He came round and knelt behind her, slipping his cock up her arse. “Now eat.” He said with a huge grin. Phil was impressed with Finn’s idea and Finn looked up at him as he pounded Rae’s arse, “Thank you for this.” His voice was filled with lust and mirth. Rae lowered her face to the bowl, her mouth actually watering. She could feel how wet her pussy was. Finn leaned out to watch Rae eating the cum covered, gold encrusted, £1000 dessert as he fucked her arsehole as hard as he could. Rae was groaning loudly; she almost felt like she might cum from the anal pounding she was getting and the mental state she was in. The dessert was rich and delicious and in no way hid the flavour of Phil’s semen; and she ate every bite with relish. Finn managed to hold on until she was done and then motioned for Phil to give him the bowl. He came into the empty bowl, groaning loudly. He stood up and put the bowl back in front of her.

“Drink.” He said and he and Phil shared a grin.

“Nice work.” Phil said.

“Yeah cheers. I quite like the coming on food thing.”

“We should work together more often.” Phil said.

“Aye!” Finn agreed, “We do a good job.” They looked down at Rae as she started to lick Finn’s cum from the bowl. “Make sure you get every fucking drop whore.” Rae groaned in reply. They watched her lick, cum dribbling from her tongue, she slurped and swallowed and groaned. And when she was done they put her butt plug back in and led her to the bedroom.

“You’ve been a good whore, I think you can sleep on the bottom of the bed instead of the floor.” Finn said and pushed her onto the bottom of the bed as Phil climbed under the covers and turned the tv on.

“Fuck you!” Rae answered, surprised they were actually going to keep it going overnight.

“One more peep out of you and I’ll tape your mouth shut.” Phil said and Finn patted her on the head. She gave them a frustrated groan had her hand cuffed hands went down to her cunt, but the metal shield of the chastity belt stopped her from masturbating. She made a loud disgruntled groan
and Finn and Phil laughed again.

“I think we’re gonna have to schedule this as a regular thing.” Finn said and Phil nodded.

“I do enjoy my Rae pet.” Rae glared at them but Phil just threw a pillow to her, “Do try to look happy that we fed you so much cum.”

“And we fucked your arse for hours today.” Finn said.

“I’m exhausted.” Phil added.

“We’ve been real kind to you girl.” Finn said, “We’ve gaped your arsehole so good you’d fit in with the porn stars. Reckon we could fit two dick in her arse at the same time tomorrow?” Finn turned to Phil and Phil nodded.

“I reckon we could.” They both looked down at Rae, lying on the bottom of the bed with her eyes opened wide in trepidation, and, surprising all of them, excitement.

“We can certainly try.” Finn agreed, all of them getting nerves and excitement. “Leave the butt plug in all night…”

“You have to let me cum.” Rae pleaded; this was too much aching desire for her.

“After we double penetrate you, bitch.” Finn said.

“Get some rest there, you’ll need your strength tomorrow.” Phil said and when Rae went to open her mouth again he held up a hand, “One more word, gaffa tape all night…” She closed her mouth and put her head on the pillow they’d given her. She cupped her metal clad cunt and wiggled slightly desperate to cum, and nervous about the stretching she was gonna get tomorrow; but as soon as she thought about it, her cunt just ached more.

She woke up to water being thrown on her face. She gasped loudly and looked up at Finn, he was holding an empty glass and smiling down at her. It was still dark.

“Get up fuck holes, we got horny.” He said and Rae got up off the bed.

“You have 10 minutes to do what you need to do in the bathroom.” Phil said and pushed her towards the bathroom.

Finn and Phil settled back onto the bed and quietly discussed what was going to happen next, safety issues and how much longer they were going to edge her. They both stroked their cocks and watched the door to the bathroom. They knew they could leave her alone with the chastity belt strapped onto her; it had padlocks that only they had the keys to. She could do all of her bathroom business and clean herself up in the shower, but in no way could she make herself cum.

When she came out of the bathroom, her hair still wet, Phil clicked his fingers and pointed to the floor. Rae instantly dropped to her knees, expecting both of her men to have a go at fucking her throat. But Phil pointed to the bed where Finn was waiting.

They had talked while she was in the bathroom, and they knew what they were going to do to her today.

Rae crawled to Finn, the chastity belt pressing against her swollen pussy; she was still so desperate to cum, especially after a fitful night of sleep, filled with very sexual dreams.
Finn pointed to his cock when she got there and she immediately started to lick it while Finn looked at Phil, a sadistic grin on both of their faces. Phil popped the butt plug back in Rae quite easily; yesterday’s activities and having it in all night had left her arse very ready for more today. He ran his fingers over the metal of the chastity belt warmed by her body. His fingers pressed against her thighs as he cupped the chastity belt, as if he were cupping her cunt. Rae groaned; in desperate need now. Finn and Phil looked at each other with even more sadistic grins; that groan was good. Finn pulled her up by her arms, spun her around and pushed her onto the bed. Rae knew to lie there and let them do whatever they wanted to her. She loved this, loved how much they wanted her, how much pleasure they were getting from her body. She had found peace in the ache of her cunt and her desperate need to cum; she knew they’d eventually let her cum.

And the lads knew she’d found her peace. So it was time to get her outraged that she hadn’t cum yet and then begging to cum again. It was far more fun that way.

Finn walked around the bed, his eyes appraising her as she lay there, ready for them to do whatever they wanted to her. Phil watched with a knowing smile as Finn pulled Rae by the arms up the bed. He waited for Finn to get himself in position with that smile never leaving his face. Finn laid down beside her and gave her the same knowing grin that Phil was giving.

“What are you two planning?” Rae said slowly.

“No speaking.” Phil replied quietly, in that cultivated voice of his. Rae made a loud noise of surprise when Finn lifted up her hips and started to work his way under her. As soon as Finn was in position Phil picked up the rope.

“Hands above your head.” Rae immediately raised her hands and Phil tied her hands to the bed headboard. He knelt between Rae’s legs, Finn’s legs between his own and ran his hands up her thighs. “Put your legs on my shoulders.” Rae complied as Finn reached down and took the butt plug out, thrusting his cock into her arsehole forcefully. Rae groaned loudly; she still had another day before they’d let her cum, and she was mentally prepared for another day of edging. Phil leaned in on her legs as soon as she put them on her shoulders, and started to tie rope around her ankles in carefully crafted knots. Phil tied her left ankle to the left bed post on the headboard and her right ankle to the right one, leaving Rae tied with her legs spread into a V shape, her ankles over her head. Phil grabbed his mobile phone and recorded Finn fucking Rae from underneath. She was tied, utterly at their mercy.

Rae watched Phil as he put the phone down and crawled up the bed, his eyes never leaving hers. She felt her pussy, swollen with desire, aching to be fucked hard. And then he slowly licked the chastity belt, right where her clit was, screaming for attention under the solid metal. She made an angry groaning sound as Phil made a great show of licking her pussy through the chastity belt. She couldn’t feel a thing, but she so wanted to feel his tongue on her cunt and it was so close to her. Her breathing grew ragged and she pulled on the ropes, her eyes not leaving Phil’s tongue as he licked along the chastity belt.

“Please.” She begged,

“No speaking or I’ll tape your mouth.” Phil said softly, eliciting a sly chuckle from Finn and a sulky angry noise from Rae. Phil straightened up and with a thrill of fear and excitement, Rae felt his penis pressing against her already filled arsehole.

“Oh god.” She gasped as Phil carefully pushed himself into her. She felt an incredible sense of stretching, of being full, of teetering on the edge of danger; danger of real pain.

“Quiet you.” Finn said to Rae as she whimpered in surprise and excitement.
“It’s amazing what the body can do.” Phil told her as he and Finn both started to thrust into her arsehole. Rae just tried to not tighten up, tried to be as loose as possible, tried to handle this new development. She loved it, but it was also terrifying; she was scared they’d tear her open. But at the same time, she knew they wouldn’t. she knew they’d be careful. She let her head drop back and focussed on the sensation of being so stretched and full while her pussy was empty and aching, her clitoris hard and desperate for stimulation.

And then she felt an incredibly forceful release.

“Fucking hell!” Phil exclaimed loudly as Rae panted loudly.

“Holy shit.” Finn could feel moisture all over his thighs. “What happened?”

“Our Rae-Rae squirted from anal only.” Phil answered.

“Oh!” Finn said as if Rae had been caught being naughty, “You’re not allowed to cum till we say!”

“I didn’t cum!” Rae almost cried. She had this awful sensation of partial release with absolutely none of the usual pleasure. It was terrible.

Both of her men started to laugh.

“Oh shit!” Finn laughed happily, still fucking her, his thrust growing harder. “Ruined orgasm!”

“Please let me cum!” She begged loudly.

“What did I say about talking?” Phil answered.

“I know, but please! Please!” Rae pleaded desperately.

“Hmmmm.” Phil answered as if considering her request. He kept up a good rhythm as he he gave her an expression of thoughtfulness. “Well… maybe we can take that chastity belt off and see what happens?” He said with a sadistic grin. Finn started to chuckle; he knew what was coming, they’d planned this.

“What have you fuckers got planned?” Rae snapped at them.

“Oi listen to the way she talks to us!” Finn answered as Phil leaned over to the bedside table and got the key to the chastity belt. Phil only chuckled slyly in response as he undid the chastity belt, both of them sliding out of her to remove it completely. Finn slid back into her arseholes before Phil had even had chance to put the belt down.

“Hm. Look at that wet, swollen pussy.” Phil ran his fingers down Rae’s aching slit and she groaned loudly, a shiver of delight travelling up her spine. Without a word his rubbed the head of his cock along her labia and Rae felt her pleasure riding dramatically.

“Fuck.” She whimpered. She knew she was going to cum almost instantly, the minute they let her. “Please.” She whispered desperately. But Phil simply slid his cock back into Rae’s arsehole, stretching her back out.

Rae found it hard not to flex her Kegel muscles; doing that always made her cunt ache with pleasure. But she knew it also made her sphincter tighter, and right now, with two penises up her arse, she really didn’t want that. She could practically feel the air on her clit, she was so desperate and sensitive.
And then, without any hint of warning, Finn reached down over her stomach and hit her cunt. Hard. Rae gasped loudly. They’d hit her pussy before. She’d hit it before. It felt nice. But she was so sensitive now she could barely take it.

“D’you think you could cum from this?” Finn asked as he smacked her cunt again. “Cos it’s the only chance you got o’ coming any time soon.”

“Bastards.” Rae spat at them. Phil smacked her cunt and she cried out.

“We was thinking that maybe we’d just keep you in that chastity belt forever.” Finn said.

“What?” Rae gasped. She couldn’t see Finn because he was beneath her, but she looked up to see a sadistic gleam in Phil’s eyes.

“We’re going to keep you int eh chastity belt forever.” Phil reiterated.

“You’re never gonna cum again.” Finn added. “Unless you learn to cum from getting fucked in the arse of hit on the clit.” He smacked her cunt again, her clitoris singing out in response.

Part of her worried that she had played with fire and the boys had liked this far too much and this was her life now; being used as a human flashlight for their sexual pleasure while she got no pleasure herself, while she never got to cum ever again. And part of her was deeply aroused by that and she had no idea why that would be so. Part of her knew it was part of the game and that her men would never do that to her, that they enjoyed hearing her cum… but she pushed that part of herself down and allowed herself to feel the sliver of fear and outrage that they would do this to her, and the incredible arousal that came with it.

“No you can’t!” Rae answered.

“Oh but we can.” Phil answered. “We can, and will, do whatever we want to you.” He pulled his cock out and came on her face. Finn withdrawing as Phil finished up to also drop his load on her face.

“Shower?” Finn asked Phil when he’d finished coming.

“Yeah.” Phil answered. The two men walking towards the shower, leaving Rae tied up, cum dripping down her face, as if they’d forgotten she existed now that they had cum.

“LET ME CUM!” she yelled after them. But they ignored her.

Rae pulled on her restraints half-heartedly; she knew it was no use. All three of them were far too good at tying each other up nowadays, so there was no way she’d be able to wriggle free. She was supremely uncomfortable, and cum was dribbling down her eyelashes.

She took a deep breath and settled into the discomfort, finding her mental peace. All was still and silent in her brain, but her pussy was on fire with desire.

It was bliss.

Torturous bliss.

She could hear them showering, laughing, talking. She couldn’t hear the words, but she could hear the tone. They were clearly enjoying themselves, but also, she could hear they were exhausted. This kind of play could be tiring. She had a feeling they might finish up early instead of doing the whole length of time they’d threatened her with. Rae knew she just had to outlast them.
She looked over at the bedside table; it was 5am.

When she woke up it was quarter to six and both of her men were sitting at the bottom of the bed looking at her with huge grins.

“What now?” She groaned. Her arms and legs were aching, but there was still no lessening in her desire to orgasm.

“There’s still so much more we could do to ya.” Finn said as he ran his hand down her thigh. Rae groaned; it felt so good, even though the muscles in her legs quivered with the exertion of being tied up above her head for so long.

“But we had a talk…” Phil said softly and Rae whimpered in desperation.

“Yes?” She whispered, knowing what was coming. She was about to.

Neither Finn or Phil replied, but their eyes never left her face as both of them ran their hands along her thighs. Rae had to bite her bottom lip to stop herself from begging.

But they didn’t make her wait any longer. Phil slid two fingers inside of her wet pussy, making her gasp in pleasure. And Finn gave her a big toothy grin before disappearing between her thighs; his mouth kissing along her labia before his tongue finally made it to her clitoris.

Rae tried to hold out, tried to let the orgasm build a little. But it was no use. She was coming within minutes.

She cried out loudly, her body bucking weakly with both pleasure and exhaustion.

Her lads groaned happily when she squirted, her cries filled with so much release and pleasure it had both of them erect again.

Finn appeared, his face dripping with her juices. He stared at her with a deep longing desire. It was always so good to hear her cum again after denying her orgasm.

Phil put a very nice show on for Rae, licking her juices from Finn’s face. The men kissed before Phil nodded for Finn to go ahead. Finn slid his cock into Rae’s vagina and she gave a loud throaty grunt; that had clearly been what she wanted. Phil leaned over and kissed Rae’s lips while Finn fucked her, Phil’s fingers gently tracing patterns over her skin, making her shiver in delight.

It didn’t take long for Rae to cum again, once again squirting, leaving Finn’s pelvis wet and making both men grain in appreciation. Phil reached down and started to gently stroke her clitoris.

To Rae’s surprise she was already rising back up for another orgasm. It seemed that edging for so long with such rough and repeated anal sex was very good for her indeed. In fact, her desire and pleasure had barely dropped below near orgasm or orgasm since they had finally let her cum.

As soon as she had cum again Phil started to gently untie her, Finn still fucking her exquisitely.

Feeling the blood rushing back into her feet and hands was brutal but Finn and Phil had swapped places now, and Finn was licking her clitoris while Phil was pumping his cock into her. She had a sense of simultaneous pain and pleasure; one of her favourite sensations. Coming again was far too easy, and Rae was feeling ragged and exhausted from first the denial and now the abundance of orgasms. But she didn’t want it to stop.

“C’mon girl.” Finn waited until the shaking from her last orgasm stopped before lying down on
the bed and motioning for her to climb on top of him. Rae did so, happy to get back to their usual type of double penetration. But she caught the look that Finn and Phil gave each other and knew that they weren’t done with her yet.

Finn slipped into her pussy and held her still, thrusting up from beneath her. And before she had a real chance to try and figure out what they were planning she felt Phil’s cock pressing against her pussy.

She supposed it should have been obvious; they’d both had their cocks in her arsehole at the same time, of course they were gonna try her pussy.

It was a considerably easier feat to achieve, but she still felt stretched and full. But this time the sense of fullness was wonderful and so pleasurable she could feel her whole body shaking in pleasure as she squirted and came multiple times. Finn reached between them and rubbed her clitoris as both men fucked her pussy hard and fast. They were going to fuck her until she collapsed; they’d decided that in the shower.

After Rae had cum again, Phil slipped out of her vagina and into her anus again. This was her favourite type of sex, and there was no way they were going to go the weekend without it.

But Rae was exhausted, her whole body was shaking and quivering, even as she came again, she collapsed onto Finn, both men laughing triumphantly; they’d fucked her into collapse. Even though they were both exhausted too, they both managed to get one more orgasm out of before coming themselves, Finn first, Phil second, both deep inside of her, pushing into her harder as they came.

They all collapsed onto the bed together, Rae in the middle, panting, sweating and content. But it was only a few minutes before Phil was sitting up and Finn groaned and sat up too.

“Do you need anything?” Finn asked Rae. It was time for aftercare, no matter how exhausted he was.

“Water.” Rae answered, her eyes closed. Phil started to gently massage the indents still left on her ankles from the ropes. When Finn returned with the water, he massaged one of her wrists as she drank.

“So I’m thinking lots of massage, nice hot bubble bath, room service and tv?” Phil said and Rae grinned dopily and nodded in reply.

“Yeah.” She answered happily.

“We’re at your command until the hotel kicks us out tomorrow at 10am.” Finn told her. “I do hope you make us give you many more orgasms in that time…?” He said suggestively and Rae grinned, biting her tongue expectantly and nodding.

“After the massage and bath, I think you two can go down again.” Rae told them. “Then room service and tv!”

“As you wish.” Phil answered.

“Whatsoever you want.” Finn said at the same time.
For You

‘For You’ by Angus and Julia Stone
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eefVgc_qhxg

You have my heart

“It’s always fun seeing him in the theatre.” Rae started at Phil lovingly and Elsa sipped her drink with a small grin. Elsa was glad those three had managed to stay together for so long; she knew that unconventional relationships were hard to maintain, especially when they were so in the public eye as this one was.

“I’m glad he still comes back to his roots. Big shot actor like him.” She teased.

“I don’t think we’d ever keep him outta the theatre. It’s his true love.” Rae answered.

As usual Finn was doing the lighting and sound management for this show and he was up in the catwalks figuring out what gels they needed for his vision. Phil was laughing with the leading lady of the play. They had been doing vocal warmups just a few moments ago, waiting for the rest of the cast and crew to arrive.

“We always sell out so quickly when he’s the star.” Elsa mused, mentally going over her theatre company’s profit margins.

“It’s cos he’s famous.”

“It’s cos he’s brilliant.” Elsa countered. “And famous.” She agreed with a chuckle.

“And he learned it all from you.” Rae said. “You were such a good teacher. It’s sucks that you lost your job at the school cos o’ us.”

“It wasn’t just because of you three.” Elsa sighed. “I was always getting called out for being inappropriate.” She shrugged, “You three were just the last straw.”

“Well if you were inappropriate, then I guess sometimes the best kind o’ adult is an inappropriate one… that sounds kinda wrong…” Rae pulled a face and broke out into laughter.

“Well no, you’re kinda onto something there.” Elsa countered, “Obviously we don’t mean inappropriate like wanting to have sex with kids, cos those fuckers are gross and disgusting and should be flung into the sun.” Elsa told her, “But I do believe that both adults and teenagers benefit from adults being willing to show weaknesses and showing who they really are and being honest with kids. I think it’s good for teenagers to see how messy being an adult is. And great for adults to remember what it actually is like being young.” She shrugged slightly. “Quite often nowadays the only example kids have of adulthood is their parents and aunts and uncles. And I know from experience that… they’re not always the best example.” There was something in her tone that made Rae wonder what had happened to Elsa as a child. Rae watched her push her hair behind her ears and caught sight of a scar on her palm. Rae had seen that scar numerous times and never thought much about it. Now she wondered. “Having adult friends can be wonderful for kids; it gives them an adult voice other than their parents’ and someone to trust and talk to when they can’t talk to their parents. I’ve had so many kids come out to me just cos they can’t tell their parents and
they had to talk to someone, anyone…” Elsa looked a little sad at that thought. “I’m glad I could be that adult figure for them. To give them good advice and help and acceptance where I could. And young people have so much to offer older people in terms of friendship, like their exuberance and creativity and worldview; friendship with young people helps keep us oldies young in the mind.” Elsa cocked an eyebrow at Rae, giving her a fond grin, “It’s mutually beneficial. I tried to be that friend for all of those kids, not just you. But teachers aren’t meant to be friends with the kids we teach. They’re worried about favouritism and discipline.” Elsa frowned, obviously disagreeing with that. “Anyway, I’m very glad that I get to see you now as an adult.”

“Me too.” Rae answered.

“And I’m not sorry I’m not a teacher anymore. I much prefer theatre like this.”

“I’m sorry for all the kids missing out on your guidance.” Rae got a rueful chuckle and a shake of the head from Elsa.

“I dunno if I did that good Rae. But I tried.” Elsa answered and Rae shook her head to indicate that she disagreed; she believed Elsa had done amazingly.

“You know I’ve see that scar on ya hand a few times now. How’d you get it?” Rae noticed an almost imperceptible shift in Elsa’s mood. “Sorry, I’m so nosy, I just-”

“No it’s fine.” Elsa’s voice was tight, but she covered it so well that someone who didn’t know her wouldn’t notice. “I got it in Australia.” Rae watched her run her finger over the scar. “I don’t talk about my time in Australia all that much.” Elsa’s eyes lingered on the scar.

“Well if you ever wanna talk about it…” Rae knew Elsa wouldn’t talk to her about this, it was obvious she hadn’t talked about it in a long time, if ever. There was no way she’d be opening up now. But she had to offer because Elsa had done so much for her and she wanted to be there for her.

“Thanks but I’ve come to terms with… all of that stuff from back then.” Her eyes lingered on the scar for a moment longer before she looked away with a sad smile. “I just don’t talk about it, that’s all.”

“Do you ever go home, to Australia I mean, for a visit?”

“Oh I didn’t for a long time. But I do now. I have… I guess you would say… family, I have family there.” She said with a fond grin that was almost childlike in its pure joy.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you grin like that before.” Rae said trying to hide her astonishment. It was a happy, uncomplicated grin. But almost instantly, the happiness was tempered with obvious complications that had arisen at some time during her life. It seemed like nothing in Elsa’s like wasn’t complicated or marred in some way. Rae realised that this was something she hadn’t seen in Elsa when she was younger. When she had been a teenager, everything Elsa did had seemed so effortless. Now Rae understood that everything required effort; it just so happened that Elsa was very good at dealing with that kind of thing; she was some kind of juggernaut. Completely unstoppable. Rae fully expected her to live forever.

“No one makes me smile like my family does.” Elsa answered, the smile becoming more simple again.

“Brothers? Sisters?” Rae tried to know more about Elsa.

“Not blood family.” Elsa answered. “They’re my mob.”
“Like the mafia.” Rae joked and Elsa laughed loudly.

“Yeah sure.” She shook her head happily. “Mafia.”

“You seen Raf lately?” Rae tried and Elsa sighed.

“You were always inquisitive.” Elsa answered, her expression still amused. “I have seen him.” She nodded.

“And how is he?” Rae asked, excited that she was getting so much out of Elsa.

“He is complicated.” Elsa gave Rae a shrewd expression. “Very very complicated.” Elsa was keeping an eye on how many of her actors had arrived, and it looked like she had enough of the cast present to begin. “Ok everyone, you got 15 minutes to get in costume. Move it!” She called out. Rae understood that she wasn’t going to get anything more personal out of Elsa. If nothing else, Elsa kept her history, emotions and issues close to her chest. Rae wondered why. Had she learned to be so closed? Had she learned not to trust people? Or was it just a natural disposition? Or was it just that she only spoke to certain people and Rae wasn’t one of them? Which was fine if that was the case; Elsa could talk to who she wanted to. Rae wondered if Rhys knew a lot about Elsa. They’d known each other for years and years; since he was 14 and she was 20 from what Rae understood. And Elsa was in her 40s now.

Rae settled in to watch the rehearsal, a notepad in her hand, doodling down ideas for her new play she was writing. When the rehearsal was over, they were heading out with the gang.

“THE DOG DAYS ARE OVER! THE DOG DAYS ARE OVER!” Rae watched all the boys singing loudly, Chop managing to down a shot in between singing. “THE HORSES ARE COMING, SO YOU BETTER RUN!” Rae looked over at Chloe, laughing at their boys, obviously about to join in with the singing. “RUN FAST FOR YOUR MOTHER, RUN FAST FOR YOUR FATHER!” She looked over at Izzy, heavily pregnant, with a glass of lemon water, like Chloe. “RUN FOR YOUR CHILDREN, FOR YOUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS!” Rae watched Izzy rub her back.

“You ok?” She leaned over and put her lips to Izzy ear; it was hard to hear over the racket their boys were making.

“LEAVE ALL YOUR LOVE AND YOUR LONGING BEHIND!”

“Just carrying a flipping baby in my uterus.” Izzy scrunched up her nose.

“You CAN’T CARRY IT WITH YOU IF YOU WANT TO SURVIVE!”

“I got heartburn and I need to pee all the time-”

“THE DOG DAYS ARE OVER!”

“And I can’t sleep, and me ankles are swollen-”

“THE DOG DAYS ARE DONE!”

“And me back’s been in so much pain all day today Rae…”
“CAN YOU HEAR THE HORSES COS HERE THEY COME!”

“I’m so done with this shit.” Izzy hated being pregnant. Rae watched Izzy close her eyes, obviously in a lot of pain, the blood draining from her drawn face. All around them people were merry and having fun, and Izzy was trying not to ruin it for them, trying to not be grumpy. But the pain was getting too intense.

Chloe looked over at them and stood up to lean over the table.

“Izzy?” She asked. The boys noticed her movement and all stopped in their loud singing to see Izzy open her eyes and look straight at Chloe.

“Oh fuck.” Izzy whispered.

“Was is it?” Rae asked, suddenly worried.

“I think me water’s broken or something.” Izzy whispered. Chloe ducked her head under the table and then reappeared with a reassuring grin. Apparently Izzy had been in labour for the whole day; her back pain had been her contractions.

“Alright girl, it’s time.” Chloe, being the only person at the table to have been through child birth instantly took the reigns, everyone else falling in line. “Get the ca-

“On it.” Rhys got up to go and get their car. He didn’t drink when Chloe couldn’t drink; he believed in being as supportive as possible to Chloe while she was going through the process of growing another human being within her. Chop, utterly shit-faced drunk, stared at Izzy, his mouth agape.

“Oh fuck.” He was obviously trying to sober up by blinking and staring.

“Archie, Tom, sort out Chop.” Chloe ordered. Archie and Tom, both not exactly sober themselves, got up and dragged Chop to the bar to get some coffee.

“I gotta stay with Iz.” He told them.

“We’ll back with her in a second.” Archie reassured him, his voice slurred but determined. Chloe got up and sat next to Izzy.

“It’s fine Iz, it only hurts for a bit, then it’ll be all over and you’ll have a baby.” Chloe soothed.

“I don’t know if I want a baby!” Izzy cried. Rae took her hand and Izzy squeezed it tightly. Rae was glad that she hadn’t gone out as hard as the boys had; she wasn’t nearly as drunk as Chop.

“Guys, run to the car and get that long jacket from costume.” Rae said and Phil and Finn happily obliged. There was a huge black jacket in the boot of their car that was part of Phil’s costume for the play. Phil hadn’t been drinking tonight so he could drive them home; they often took that duty in turns. Rae knew that Izzy would be embarrassed to walk out of the pub with wet pants, so the jacket would cover it.

In no time at all Phil was back with the jacket, Rhys had returned and Archie and Tom were leading back Chop, a huge cup of coffee in his hand.

“Right, so Rae and me will go with Izzy in the back seat of Rhys’s car. Chop you’ll be up front in that car with us. Phil you bring everyone else, right?”
“Got it.” Phil answered.

Chloe put the jacket on Izzy and when it was obvious that she was going to struggle to walk because the pain was too great, Rhys swept her up into his arms and took her to the car.

The car ride was terrible. Izzy was in a lot of pain, and she screamed often. Chop was going out of his mind in the front of the car. But Chloe stayed calm and reassuring, and Rhys helped keep Chop under control.

But it was worse at the hospital. After only a few moments, it became apparent that Izzy was too small to give birth to her big baby and she was stuck and in distress. And because he was drunk, Chop was excluded from the hospital. Tom, Finn and Archie were also too obviously drunk to be allowed to hang around inside and waited outside with him.

Izzy was prepped for surgery with Chloe and Rae given permission to go in with her. Rhys was to run messages from them to the men waiting outside. But given how much distress both the mother and child were in Rae wondered if it wasn’t just kinder to leave Chop in the dark while there was nothing he could do.

Rae and Chloe sat with Izzy, high on gas, crying from pain, as the doctors prepped everything.

“What if I lose her?” Izzy asked softly, tears streaming down her face. “What if she-?”

“You won’t lose her.” Chloe answered firmly. “This is just a routine Caesarean, you’ll be up holding your baby in no time.”

“What if she knows I didn’t want her at first.” Izzy whimpered miserably.

“She won’t.” Chloe answered. “She wasn’t a person before she were born.” Chloe told her, “She don’t know nothing about any of that.”

“And it don’t matter.” Rae said, “What matters is how much you love her now.” Izzy nodded sadly her hands weakly squeezing Rae and Chloe’s.

“Oh god.” Izzy cried pitifully, “What if she dies. What if-?”

“She won’t. It’s gonna be fine.” Chloe continued to answer all of Izzy’s fears.

The surgery was straightforward and quick, and after only a moment of terror, while they waited for her to take a breath, Izzy’s daughter was born into this world, a whopping 12 pounds 3 ounces, bellowing screamer of a baby. But Izzy took one look at her and oved her. She was still conflicted about being a mother and whether she wanted to be a mother. But she knew that she was one, regardless of that, and this was her baby girl. And she loved her.

Once the surgery was complete and Izzy was settled in her room, Chop was allowed in to meet his daughter.

“Fuck she’s big.”

“Don’t! you’ll make her self conscious!” Izzy answered protectively.

“I just meant they were meant to be littler.” Chop explained. “What are you gonna name her?”

“I was thinking Judith. After your mum.” Izzy answered. Chop felt a lump in his throat and tried to be manly and just nod in reply. But Izzy knew how much it had meant to him.
“Hello Judith.” He whispered to his sleeping daughter. “Welcome to the world girl.”

In the weeks after Judith’s birth, Rae noticed that cluckiness in both of her men again. Every time a baby was born in their friendship group both of them became clucky and they’d both ask her if she had changed her mind about having kids. Just once. They didn’t want to push.

She supposed that one day she might have to give in and let them have children. She just didn’t want them. But she wondered if she’d be like Izzy once she saw her baby. Maybe she’d want it once it was born? But then, she would still have to go through pregnancy and birth and those were two things she could absolutely guarantee anyone who asked that she wanted nothing to do with them. She had seen her two best friends go through pregnancy and birth now. And both times it had horrified, disgusted, repulsed and terrified her.

“Ugh.” She sneered in a disgusted voice. The thought of pregnancy and labour made her feel ill. But babies annoyed her less now that she had to spend so much time with them. So maybe one day. Maybe adoption. That seemed like a far more plausible outcome.

She heard Finn coughing from the other room and sighed. He was coming down with something it seemed.

May finished up and June saw wonderful hot days and visits to the beach. Phil’s play was opening at the end of June, so everyone was working hard on that. And Rae was writing her next play. It was loosely about Elsa, or how she imagined Elsa’s life must have gone. She kept poking and prodding, trying to get more information from Elsa. She learned that mob was actually a term used for Aboriginal kin groups in Australia… not the mafia at all. And even though Elsa seemed to have darker features than the average white person, Rae hadn’t thought that she looked Aboriginal. When she had said that Elsa had given a sad smile and shrugged, telling her she was part Tongan.

Then she had yelled at Finn to go to the damn doctor instead of coughing through all of their rehearsals.

In mid June, Finn had to admit that his flu was running him down a bit and he took a few days off rehearsing and running with Phil to rest.
Three days later he woke them both up with his coughing. He told them he couldn’t lie flat, it felt like he was suffocating. Rae and Phil grabbed the cushions from the lounge and wedged them against the wall to prop him up.

“You should go to the doctor.” Phil mumbled as he pulled the blankets up over Finn.

“For the flu?” Finn grumbled, “Not a chance.”

“I’ll make us all tea.” Rae said softly, worrying about Finn.

Two days later Rae was sitting at the table, reading her emails, Phil was making breakfast, and Finn was in the bathroom coughing.

“What if it’s cancer?” Rae said softly. Phil looked at her, his cooking completely forgotten. “He smoked for so long.” Rae continued in the silence. “He still smokes sometimes…. What if… what if it’s not the flu?” Phil practically crash landed into the seat across from her. The horror-struck look on his face told Rae that he had been worrying about that too, but hadn’t said it out loud.

“I thought I was just being paranoid.” Phil whispered, “So I didn’t say anything.” He looked down at his hands, “Do you think? What if me being silent kills him?” Phil catastrophized. “What if I’d only said something sooner and that could have saved him?”

“Phil.” Rae said firmly, “A few weeks won’t make a difference in anything but the most aggressive caners.” She told him, “You know that.” He nodded. “But we need to get him to go to the-”

“It’s not cancer.” Finn said as he came out of the bathroom and went into their bedroom. They watched him go and then turned to look at each other. They knew her hadn’t heard them; he’d just seen the looks on their faces when he’d come out of the bathroom.

“So how are we getting him to a doctor?” Phil asked in a low voice. Rae looked at the door to his bedroom.

“We’re gonna have to ambush him.” She said regretfully, “Otherwise he won’t go.”

She had lied to him. She knew she should feel bad or regret it. But she didn’t.

He was driving her to the doctor. She had said she was getting sharp stabbing pains inside, that she thought her IUD had come out of place. He had rushed to take her to their doctor.

Phil was meeting them there. They had booked the appointment yesterday and planned it out. Phil was supposed to be in a meeting with some people about his next movie. But that wasn’t until next week. Phil had lied too. He did it rather more easier than Rae did. It was his job to lie; to become someone else for the audience. And he’d had to do it with his family all of his life too. He didn’t like doing it to Finn, but he agreed with Rae. They’d only get him there like this. Because he was afraid it was something more serious too. So Phil had made the pretence of it being another ordinary day had headed out in the morning with kisses all round. Rae had faked writing while
Finn worked on his website.

And then the acting, the lie, the fake tears of pain.

She knew she should feel bad.

She still didn’t.

When they got there, Phil was nowhere to be seen. That was planned too. He was going to show up once they got into the doctor.

They were not only ambushing Finn, the doctor would have no idea what was coming too.

Rae sat down in the waiting room with her hands around her stomach. She had had to rush to the counter to say they were there for Finn before Finn got there to hear it. Then sat down to wait, Finn none the wiser, still thinking they were here for Rae.

When the doctor called Finn’s name, he looked confused. And then Phil appeared.

“Come on.” Phil said with a stern face. Finn turned to look at Rae. She gave him a stern unrepentant face and nodded towards the door.

“Fucking you two.” Finn shook his head and knew he was defeated. He had to either go in or cause a scene here in the waiting room by refusing to go in. “You ambushed me.”

“You weren’t gonna go to the doctor.” Rae said.

“Cos it’s nothing.” Finn hissed and stomped off to the doctor’s room.

He sat down with a humph and glared at Rae and Phil when they came to sit beside him.

“How can I help you today?” Their doctor asked, delicately ignoring the tension in the room.

“I got the flu.” Finn said grumpily.

“He’s been coughing for a couple o’ weeks.” Rae corrected.

“And he’s a smoker.” Phil added.

“Ex-smoker!” Finn corrected tersely.

“Alright, so what were you doing last time we were at the pub?” Rae shot back and Finn narrowed his eyes.

“I had two smokes outside. That’s it.” He retorted, “Two smokes in over three weeks.”

“It’s still smoking!” Phil answered.

“Don’t fucking gang up on me!” Finn said angrily.

“Alright!” Doctor Jackson said loudly. “Let’s have a listen.” She said to Finn.

“Aye and you can tell ’em we wasted your fuckin’ time.”

“We’ll see.” She replied softly. “Let’s just have a listen first, yeah?” She pointed at the bed and Finn got up. “Shirt off please.” Dr Jackson said as she typed a few notes in her file. She gave Rae and Phil an unreadable look before she got up and went to Finn. She warmed the end of her
stethoscope before she placed it against his chest.

“Hm.” She said thoughtfully. “Deep breath.” Finn took a deep breath and she listened closely, “Out slowly.” She listened to his chest and back carefully, making several noises that worried Phil and Rae but made Finn even more sure it was just a flu. “Alright, I’m going to order a chest x-ray.” She said and sat back down. Finn stared at her for a moment as she turned back to the computer.

“What?” He said softly.

“With your smoking history, it could well be lung cancer.” She replied.

“But I’m too young for-” He said softly.

“You’re never too young for cancer Mr Nelson.” She replied gently. “I suggest you get this done as soon as possible. The sooner we catch lung cancer the better your prognosis.”

“So it really could be something?” Rae said in a small, terrified voice.

“It could be pneumonia. It could be lung cancer. Get the x-ray done then we’ll know better what’s happening in there.”

They sat in silence around their kitchen table.

Phil had made them tea, but no one was drinking it.

“I guess I owe you two an apology.” Finn said softly after a long silence.

“It could be nothing.” Rae said softly.

“Aye.” Phil agreed. “Just the flu. Or pneumonia or something.”

“Fucking you two.” Finn shook his head. Rae reached across the table and took his hand. They sat in silence for a moment.

“I wish I hadn’t googled it.” Rae said softly.

“Aye.” Finn nodded. It turned out that less than 20% of people diagnosed with lung cancer were alive 5 years later.

“It’s not lung cancer.” Phil said resolutely.

“This morning you was convinced it was.” Finn answered with a rueful smile.

“That were just worry that were.” Rae told him. “It’s no’ lung cancer.” She reiterated.

It had taken them a long time to finally fall asleep. Now Finn sat staring at the ceiling, his propped up cushions uncomfortable, his lungs heavy, his mind simultaneously blank and racing. It had
come to be like white noise in his head; there was too much going on in there to grab hold of any of it.

He’d had the x-ray today.

The technician had spoken to an intern, telling them bits and pieces about how to do their job. What to mark up on the films for the doctors.

He’d heard her say that there was a definite shadow on his left lung. The intern had asked if the shadow was that huge white spot and Finn had seen the technician nod. He knew he wasn’t supposed to have heard that conversation. But he had.

Finn continued to stare at the ceiling.

He hadn’t told Phil and Rae. he didn’t want them to worry any more than they already were.

When he’d met them out in the waiting room after the x-ray he’d shrugged and said he was famished.

He’d had to force down the meal.

But both of them took it as a good sign that he was still hungry and they told him so.

A shadow.

In my lung.

Like the shadow of Mordor….

The voice in his head was overdramatic, making light of the situation.

Mooooo-oooooor

He drew the word out in his mind to make it sound more doom filled and melodramatic.

And then the thoughts all became white noise again.

He felt panic rising in his chest and took some deep breaths to try and combat it.

Rae grumbled in her sleep and turned to face him, her hand finding his arm and wrapping around it, holding him tight. On the other side of him Phil was sleeping fitfully, his fingers against Finn’s thigh, clearly wanting reassurance that he was there.

He knew how badly they’d both suffer if he died. It made his heart hurt thinking about it.

“Guys…” Finn said softly as the three of them pushed their dinners around their plates. Finn was making himself eat more than he truly wanted to eat; it made them worry less. They both looked up at them. “I love you both so much.” Finn told them softly. “And if this is….” He looked down at his plate. “I want you both to get married and live together happily alright?” He told them, “Don’t think you’ll be betraying me or what we had or nothing like that if you stay together, alright?”
“Finn…” Rae’s voice cracked.

“Like I reckon you two will and should find comfort in each other if I died. I just want you both to know that’s what I want too. I want you both to be happy. No matter what happens to me.”

“Finn.” Phil’s voice was heavy with emotion.

“It’s not lung cancer and it’s not gonna come to that.” Rae said firmly. But she could see that Phil’s old fears of losing them were starting to get a hold of him. He had been dealing with these fears admirably over the past few days, knowing he had to be strong for Finn and Rae. But panic was washing through him now that Finn had said it out loud. Rae felt the same wash of panic that she knew Phil was feeling. She couldn’t stand to lose Finn.

“No.” Phil said simply, his voice laced with painful emotion and barely contained terror and panic. “You’re not dying. You’re not allowed.”

“Alright, well I’ll keep that in mind.” Finn said with a small smile.

Finn watched the doctor stare at the x-rays for a good long while. She had already read the report as well.

He’d made Phil go to rehearsal. He’d made Rae go to her interview today.

He’d told them that he wanted to do this alone.

They’d respected his wishes. But he could see their worry.

But he had a shadow. And he would need time to take in any news the doctor gave him before having to put the brave face on for them.

“Hm.” Dr Jackson mused. “I’m gonna go ahead and order a CT scan.” She told him. “Could be pneumonia. Could be cancer.” She sat down and typed at her computer. “A lot of doctors would put you on heavy antibiotics for a while to see if it cleared. But given your smoking history and the size of it, I think it’s best to really get an idea of what we’re looking at.”

“Would it be best to just go for a biopsy?” Finn asked, feeling surprisingly calm.

“The CT scan should be pretty conclusive.” Dr Jackson answered, “Let’s not biopsy you if we can avoid it.”

As soon as Rae was through the door she was asking him what the results were.

“Um… inconclusive.” Finn answered.

“What?” Rae was astounded. “No… no… no they have to-”

“I have to get a CT scan, I’m booked in tomorrow.” Finn tried to calm her.
“How can they not know?” She sat down heavily and the minute Finn sat beside her she flung her arms round his neck. “No.” She whispered.

“It’s alright Rae.” He soothed.

“Don’t comfort me!” She snapped. “it’s you that should be getting comforted.” She sniffed loudly, tears streaming down her face.

“I’m alright.” He answered. “I dunno, I think I’ve just accepted that I have to just do whatever Dr Jackson says, y’know?”

“I can’t lose you Finn.” Rae whispered. But Finn shook his head.

“Izzy lived through it. I will too.” He said. “Cancer’s not gonna take me out girl.” He stroked her cheek. “Don’t even know if it is cancer.” He kissed her tenderly. His hands gently stroking her cheeks, wet with tears.

They made love on the lounge. Sweet, tender, and desperate love. Rae cried for most of it and clung to him like it was his last day on Earth.

Finn was starving afterwards.

When Phil got home, Finn was eating a huge sandwich and Rae was sitting at the kitchen table watching him. She told him the news in a monotone. Phil sat down heavily and joined Rae in staring at Finn as he ate.

“I’m eating.” Finn said when he looked up to see their worried faces, “That’s a good sign right?”

“What if it is actually cancer?” Phil said softly as they waited in the waiting room. Finn was in getting his CT scan.

“Then we go through it with him.” Rae answered. “We fight to make sure he’s one of the few that survive it.”

“Yeah.” Phil answered thoughtfully. “He’s strong. Nothing’ll take him down.”

“Aye, that’s right.” Rae agreed. “He’ll outlive both of us.”

“Absolutely!” Phil laughed softly. “I always imagined I’d die first.”

“I always hoped I would.” Rae said, “So I don’t have to go through the pain of losing you two.” She scoffed at herself slightly, “So selfish.”

“Makes sense.” Phil answered. “I don’t think I’ll cope if I lose either of you two.”

“We’re all just gonna have to die at the same time.” Rae answered and Phil gave her a small smile.

“Sounds perfectly reasonable.” He replied. “Perhaps in some sort of boating accident?”

“When we’re very very old.” Rae agreed. “As long as it’s quick and painless.” She added, “None of us see it coming, and none of us see each other die.”
“Sounds perfect.”

The few days it took for the results of the CT scan to come back were agonising.

Phil’s opening night was fast approaching, so everyone was trying to throw themselves into that project. Rae had agreed to be stage manager for the run of shows to take herself out of being alone in the house. She couldn’t write anyway. Her mind was on Finn.

He coughed all through rehearsals, but Elsa, aware of the situation, made no mention of it.

In the break between acts Rae tried to get more personal information out of Elsa. She would have to tell Elsa eventually about the play. But it was only very loosely based on her, so Rae didn’t think she’d mind. Rae was particularly interested in why Elsa had changed her surname a few years back. She hadn’t gotten married as far as Rae knew, and now she was no longer Elsa King, even though her company was called King Theatre Productions.

But Elsa was not forthcoming saying only that she had been keeping an old promise. And Rae didn’t really have the heart to pursue it. Her spirits were dampened, her mood was low and she was struggling to keep it up. Hearing Finn coughing as he clambered around in the catwalks was killing her. And she could tell by Phil’s less than brilliant performance during rehearsal, that it was killing Phil too.

But as Finn had reminded them: ‘the show must go on.’ So Phil insisted on more rehearsals to make up for his lacklustre performance, and Finn worked the lights and sound tirelessly.

The meeting with Phil’s agent resulted in a movie contract in Australia. They’d be heading there in September. But Phil had made Sarah put in a clause getting him out of the contract if Finn had cancer. Then they’d be going wherever the best doctors in the world were.

“Hmmm.” Dr Jackson looked at the CT scans and read through the report. Phil, Rae and Finn sat looking at her, each with hearts beating fast, fears racing through their minds. Both Phil and Rae were holding Finn’s hands, he sat in the middle, staring at the CT scan as Dr Jackson studied it. She looked up at Finn. “Looks like pneumonia.” She said finally. The overwhelming sense of relief made tears start into Phil’s eyes. He heard Rae’s gasp of happiness and felt Finn’s fingers tighten around his. “We’ll get you on some antibiotics, take another few scans in a months time to make sure you’re on the mend. And if the shadow hasn’t reduced we’ll get a biopsy then.”

By the time Phil’s play wrapped up in late August, Finn’s cough was entirely gone, and his results came back clear.
It had just been pneumonia.

But it had provided a very nasty jolt to Finn. He decided he would never smoke another cigarette again.

Rae and Phil could not have been happier about that.
Months passed easily and pleasantly in Australia. Winter saw the gang come to visit as usual, but this time they all camped out in the huge apartment overlooking the beach that Phil, Finn and Rae were living in when Phil wasn’t on set filming. Chloe, Rhys, Isaac, Yolanda (their new daughter), Archie, Tom and Alex were all staying for a month after everyone else headed back home from their week long holiday.

The house was filled with love and joy and noise. So much noise.

So Rae was glad when Phil agreed to take everyone for a tour of his set. Finn had stayed back at the apartment with her, also wanting a bit of peace and quiet. Rae took the chance to get some washing put out on the clothes horse on the balcony, then she intended to have a nice long bath.

“No matter how beautiful that view is, I still miss our little place looking over the graveyard.” Finn said softly. “This place don’t feel like ours.”

“Only a few more months and we’ll be back home.” Rae answered. “At least you got some great music interviews down here.”

“Fuck yes.” Finn agreed. “Still, if we could take our apartment and give it this view, I prob’ly wouldn’t complain.”

“It is beautiful.” Rae agreed. But her stomach had randomly started churning. She’d been feeling random bouts of nausea lately and she supposed it was the lack of sleep and excess of heavy food she’d been eating with their guests.

“Heya.” Phil said as he came through the door.

“I knew you’d palm ’em off to your assistant.” Finn answered him with a kiss.
“I love the gang, I just needed some quiet us time.” Phil replied and gave Rae a kiss, “I think I need quiet and less chaos more than you two.”

“And yet we didn’t go with ya.” Finn answered.

“And you both want kids.” Rae said pointedly, her nausea starting to ease.

“You know I’m starting to come around to your way o’ thinking girl.” Finn said. “Like kids would be nice. But so’s the freedom and peace of not havin’ ‘em.”

“Hm. You have a point.” Phil agreed, “A few weeks with two toddlers and a baby has more than proven that.”

“There are very cute when you can give them back.” Rae replied sagely.

“So I think it’s agreed.” Finn answered, “We are destined to be aunts and uncles, not fathers and mum.”

“Yes I think so.” Phil agreed, “it’s sad, but it also suits who we are at this point in our lives.”

“Keeping it open for the future?” Finn gave him a cheeky grin.

“Always like to keep my options open when I can.” Phil answered.

“Keeping your options open with us?’ Rae teased.

“Impossible!” Phil answered with a grin, “There are no other options for me.” His phone rang and he sighed. “Just a second.” He told them and wondered inside talking to Sarah about managing a visit to America soon. His popularity in the USA was waning, and Sarah thought it might be due to Rae’s very strong, hard-line, political statements lately. So she was in damage control of course. And Phil simply didn’t care as long as he could keep working.

“I’ll make us tea.” Finn gave Rae a kiss and headed inside. They’d have the tea on the balcony, have a quickie before the gang got back and then head to the beach when everyone was back from their set visit. Phil would have to work again tomorrow, but they intended to enjoy his day off fully, especially since they still had two more weeks of visitation.

Rae started to sing a song and Finn listened with a big grin as he made the tea. Phil watched her, utterly enchanted, not hearing a word that Sarah was saying. In Phil and Finn’s opinion, Rae didn’t sing often enough. She sounded so beautiful and neither of them could look away.

But she faltered. Her face going from calmly content, to very suddenly shocked. Phil’s eyebrows furrowed and Finn cocked his head to the side, trying to figure out what had happened. And then Rae flung herself against the railing of the balcony, leaned over it and vomited spectacularly.

Both men were out on the balcony in a flash, Phil holding her hair back, Finn wrapping an arm around her waist.

“Oh fuck.” Rae said as she saw the vomit splattered all over someone’s car several stories below them.

“Don’t worry about that.” Phil said.

“Aye, let’s get you inside.” Finn agreed.

“I don’t know where that came from. I just been feeling a bit shite the last couple o’ days.”
“A stomach bug?” Finn suggested.

“I was thinking too much noise and not enough sleep.” Rae answered with a wry grin.

“Aye them kids are cute but they never fucking sleep!” Finn agreed.

“Oh they sleep in the middle of the day.” Phil corrected ruefully. “But at night…” They all laughed.

“So you alright girl?’ Finn asked.

“Aye it’s nothing.” Rae sat down on the lounge and the boys shot off to get her water, a bucket, a wet flannel for her forehead, tea…

“If you’re still feeling bad tomorrow, we should take you to the doctor.” Finn said and Rae groaned. “Don’t make me ambush ya. It’s not fun and I know he’ll,” He cocked a thumb at Phil, “gang up on ya with me about this.” Phil nodded his agreement.

“Alright!” Rae grumbled.

“Eric Bana is much cuter in person than on screen.” Chloe was telling them as she put sunscreen on her children. Rae and Finn had already met him; he was working with Phil on this movie. “And David Wenham is honestly, the most genuinely nice bloke.”

“He seemed to be really listening to me while I blathered on about how good he looked in ‘300’…” Archie said, still feeling the blush of what a fool he’d made of himself.

“Yes he’s a real pleasure to work with.” Phil agreed.

“What are you doing for the big 4-0 this year Rhys?” Archie asked and Rhys gave him a thoughtful look.

“Same as I do every birthday.” He answered.

“My birthday hasn’t existed since I turned 35.” Tom said with a groan. He was a year older than Rhys and was suffering in his 40s, even though he was as beautiful as ever and Archie kept telling him he was going to end up being a silver fox.

“So does my birthday stop now?” Archie asked; he was 35 this year.

“No, this’ll give you chance to be older than me.” Tom answered, “Since I’m still 35.”

“You’ll never be a silver fox that way.” Archie teased.

“What’s a silver fox?” Alex asked, still completely focussed on making the best sand castle.

“Just an older man who’s very attractive.” Archie answered simply.

“Boys are gross.” She answered.

“Very true.” Chloe agreed, making everyone laugh. “She’s very advanced. Only 6 and she already knows the truth of the world.”
“Hun, both of your daddies are boys.” Archie told her.

“You don’t count.” She answered simply.

“Good to know.” Archie answered with an amused grin at Tom.

“Isaac you have to leave your pants on mate.” Rhys said, “Just cos it’s a public beach, alright?” Isaac stroppily allowed Rhys to put his pants back on him.

“I love it when a hint of your East London past comes into your accent.” Chloe told him.

“What’s up darlin’?” Rhys replied with a grin; an almost perfect impersonation of Dizzee Rascal.

“Oh that’s uncanny that is.” Archie said in awe. “Can you do the whole song?” Rhys gave him an enigmatic smile, but his focus was on Isaac, who was obviously unhappy about having to wear clothes.

“Oh yeah!” Chloe answered, “He raps and sings all the time for the kids.”

“Do it?” Archie asked again.

“Yeah alright.” Rhys answered, “But I’m not much of a rapper!” He laughed, “More of a punk rocker.” He looked at Isaac and knew he couldn’t do the whole song in front of the kids.

“Alright.” Rhys turned back to the gang. “I’m not gonna do all of it.” He told them and cleared his throat and began in a truly remarkable vocal likeness to Dizzee Rascal, “What’s up darlin’? I been keepin’ my eye on your movement, I can’t see no room for improvement. But why you all over their on your Jack Jones? You need to let me get behind your backbone, cos I’m the man for the job let me work it. I won’t waste no time, I’ll make it worth it.” Everyone in the gang looked amazed and laughed and listened closely. “One hundred percent, I’ll make it perfect. You got a body to die for let me work it.” He looked over at Chloe and then he started to laugh. “Alright that’s it.”

“You didn’t get to the chorus!” Finn protested.

“And I wanna hear you do the ‘creep, creep, creep to your side’ bit.” Rae added.

“I’ll do the whole song later.” Rhys answered and everyone knew that meant when the kids were asleep. They had to admit that ‘Dance Wiv Me’ might not be the most appropriate song for kids if they were as inquisitive as these kids were.

“All these years I’ve known you and this is the first I’m seeing of this!” Finn said in pretend outrage.

Alex smashed her sand castle and turned to glare at her fathers.

“I wanna swim now!” She declared.

“I wanna swim now!” She declared.

“Well what do you do when you want something?” Tom asked patiently.

“Ask.” Alex answered. There was a pause while she figured that out. “Can I swim now?”

“Of course.” Tom answered and got up.

“Isaac, do you want to go with Uncle Tom?” Chloe asked him and he shook his head and hid behind Rhys shyly.
“That’s ok, you don’t have to.” Chloe answered.

“I’ll take you if you wanna swim.” Rhys told him and he nodded and put his small arms around his father’s neck. Rhys stood up, lifting Isaac with him and reached for Yolanda. Chloe handed him their youngest and he wondered down the beach with Tom and Alex. Rae admire how Chloe and Rhys never made Isaac hug or go with anyone he didn’t want to. She knew that as he grew up this little 4 year old boy would have a good grounding in consent both given by others and given by himself, that had started from before he was even born. In the womb Chloe was reading feminist prose to her kids, and from their earliest ages, if they didn’t want to hug or touch people, Rhys and Chloe respected their wishes, never forcing them to hug anyone. In stark contrast to what Chloe’s parents expected, which was grandkids that performed hugs on command for them. But neither Chloe or Rhys would have it; they respected their child’s bodily autonomy. Tom and Archie had been the same with Alex, but Alex had never really gone through a shy phase. She had always seemed mostly fine with hugging everyone. If anything it had always been having to teach Alex not to touch other people without their permission. A lesson she was learning well enough.

The last two weeks passed in a flurry of activity and sleeplessness.

The peace and quiet was welcome after they were gone. But Rae missed having them around. Phil had been working so hard she supposed he barely noticed and Finn was back to working too. She, on the other hand, had writer’s block.

She decided to do some travel around parts of Australia, just day trips, to try and understand Elsa better. She had told Elsa she was writing a play loosely based on her and that had seemed to amuse Elsa. At least, she had given Rae an enigmatic smile. She hadn’t said she had any issues with it. But she also hadn’t offered up any information either. Rae had then explained why she wanted to write the play and Elsa had said she was honoured that Rae wanted to write about her and that she was sure that she’d do a good job. And that had been the end of the conversation.

Rae felt exhausted, more than her activity levels would account for, and slightly moody. She couldn’t capture Elsa at all. She read about Australia in the 80s. She tried to learn more about Aboriginal mobs, but the information was all contradictory and seemed to be mostly from white sources, and Rae wanted to hear it from Aboriginal people. But then they seemed to not be talking to white people about how things worked in their culture, at least not in any detail, and fair enough. She tried to find out about Tongans in Australia, that was a bit of a dead end in research.

After a long wander through the rundown streets of parts of western Sydney Rae was particularly tired and down in the dumps. She went into a McDonalds to use the bathroom and grab a coke. She felt nauseous and cranky. She hadn’t vomited since her over-balcony fun about a month ago, but her stomach hadn’t been right since then either. She didn’t suppose a coke from Maccas, as the Australians called it, would help.

She decided instead to go to the walk-in clinic she’d seen on her rambling journey today, and see if they couldn’t tell her what was wrong with her stomach. She was sick of feeling like this.
Phil was studying the schedule for tomorrow’s filming; he liked to be well appraised of how everything was going to go. It helped him stay in character and be organised if he knew what was going on.

It was Finn’s turn to cook dinner and he was munching on celery as he stirred a pot of cacciatore sauce. He was serving it with chicken, salad and sourdough bread rolls for he and Rae. Phil had stopped eating wheat a while ago.

Rae came in and sat on the lounge quietly.

“How was your ramblings today?” Finn asked cheerily.

“Yeah alright.” She answered without looking up from her feet.

“I got an interview with Bernard Fanning.” Finn said, “It’s pretty exciting.”

“Aye Powderfinger’s a great band.” Rae agreed.

“Oh god.” Phil said, “I’m the old one in the relationship.” He said with dawning realisation.

“Cos you didn’t know who they were?” Finn asked with a cheeky grin.

“And I wondered what kind of a name was ‘Powderfinger.’” Phil shook his head at himself, while Finn laughed.

“They’re named after a Neil Young song, and they broke up this year. So you’re a bit late coming to the party.” Finn was thoroughly amused. He looked over to Rae, expecting to see her as amused as he was. Phil looked over too, a huge grin on his face. But she was still looking at her feet, a confused and scared expression on her face.

“Rae?” Finn asked.

“I’m pregnant.” She answered.

Deathly silence greeted her words as both Phil and Finn tried to catch up to what she’d said and gather their thoughts and feelings.

“What?” Finn managed to ask.

“About 6 to 8 weeks.” She said in a monotone. “They did the ultrasound in the clinic. Quite quick and efficient… same day service.” She fidgeted with the hem of her skirt. “Apparently my IUD had gotten dislodged. So it didn’t work.”

“What?” Finn was still trying to catch up. Phil was staring, silent, knowing he should say something.

“I’m booked in for an abortion on Friday.” She got up and went to the bathroom and closed the door.

Finn and Phil stared at the bathroom door in silence for a good long time.

“This is entirely Rae’s choice.” Phil said softly, still staring at the bathroom door.

“Aye.” Finn agreed, also staring at the door.

“There is no one alive that can tell a woman what to do with her body.”
“Aye.”

“And what either of us may or may not want is utterly irrelevant because her body autonomy is of the utmost importance.”

“Aye.”

“And we were starting to move towards accepting not having kids, especially after a month of having them here…” Phil continued reasoning.

“Aye.” Finn agreed in the same astonished, hopeful but accepting, soft voice.

“And I would never dream of ever disagreeing with Rae’s choices about her own body.” Phil said firmly.

“Aye.”

“But…”

“Me too.” Finn said softly and turned to him. “Me too.”

“We can never tell her that we wish she was making a different decision.” Phil said looking from Finn back to the bathroom door.

“I completely agree.” Finn said. “It’s her choice.”

“So we just support her choice.”

“And take her to the clinic on Friday.”

“Aye.” Phil said sadly.

“Aye.” Finn said in the same tone of voice.

Rae sat on the edge of the bathtub and looked down at her stomach. Her men had been delicately dancing around the topic for the past 2 days. But they had both made sure they were available today for the whole day. They had made it clear through their actions that they supported whatever choice she made.

But now that the day was here, the day she could get this little parasite out of her… she felt herself hesitating.

Rae put her hand on her stomach. Inside of her, her egg had joined, either with Phil or Finn’s sperm, and a bunch of cells were splitting and growing life right now.

Life she had created with the men she loved.

“Oh fuck.” She groaned and got up. She slammed the bathroom door open. “Ok fine we’re keeping it. But I don’t want any shit from you two about this. And you’ll be my personal slaves while I’m pregnant and… and I don’t want you two to get funny about who the father is.”

“Both of us.” Phil answered.
“Well yeah.” Finn agreed and then gave Phil and Rae a cheeky grin, “But it is fun to guess who’s sperm was faster.” Rae groaned and rolled her eyes while Phil narrowed his.

“Well we all know it’s mine.” He went along with it and Finn laughed delighted that they’d have something else to be in competition over for the next few months.

“We are NOT getting a paternity test!” She snapped at them.

“Alright.” Finn agreed, “But when it’s stunning good looks become apparent, we’ll know who the daddy is.” He teased.

“Yes if it has the intelligence of a gnat, we’ll know.” Phil agreed.

“Oh my fucking god.” Rae rolled her eyes again and sat down while the boys continued sniping at each other. She pulled out her phone and called the clinic, “Hi yes, I’d like to cancel my appointment.”

That snapped the boys out of their bickering.

“It’s really happening.” Finn whispered in an awed voice.

As soon as Rae put the phone down the men swung into action.

“Would you like a cup of tea?”

“Foot massage?”

“What d’you wanna watch on telly?”

“Ice cream sandwhich?”

“Anything you want.”

“Anything you need.”

Rae sighed grumpily and Finn and Phil turned to look at her.

“This house won’t do.” Phil responded to the agent immediately. The agent nodded and started to sort through his stack of papers, trying to find the next property to show them.

Rae’s back was killing her and she was only 5 months pregnant. She had hated every minute of pregnancy so far. Not least of which was being called an obese, elderly 35 year old, high risk mother. It meant she had to get tested far more often than she’d like, but she wasn’t going to argue with the doctors about anything that might affect her baby’s health and safety..

She also hated knowing they had to give up their little flat sometime in the next few years. Eventually their little bundle of cells would need a room of their own, which meant that their apartment overlooking the graveyard was not going to cut it. Even though they had time, they had started house hunting now because they all knew that the house they bought would have to be perfect to make up for the loss of their first home. They had lived there since they had been 18 and 19 years old; only a three years shy of 20 years.
They had managed to find the only person in London who didn’t seem to know who any of them were. The first three homes he had shown them had been two small, dark flats, and one reasonable sized house that was run down and hours away from the centre of London.

Phil supposed that the first two flats had come about because they hadn’t been clear about what they wanted and had just asked to be shown what they had. Then Rae had snapped and said she wanted at least three bedrooms and a garden. And now they had this house.

Phil looked at Rae in her maxi dress, rubbing her back. He turned and looked at Finn in a Blue Oyster Cult band T-shirt and jeans with holes in them. He himself was wearing jeans and a shirt; he was dressed for comfort, not to impress some real estate agent. Phil realised that the real estate agent thought that they couldn’t afford a good house, so he was showing them the absolute cheapest properties he had.

He turned back to look at Rae, sipping on water and looking like she could use a seat. He knew that there was no guarantee that ‘rich’ houses would make her happier, but he had a feeling they’d be closer to what she wanted than this place.

“If ever there was a time…” He mumbled to himself. He didn’t like flashing either his wealth or his fame about. But if ever there was a time for it, it was now. “You have a smart phone?” He asked the agent.

“Yes.” He answered, “I don’t really use it. I’m not interested in social media or anything.”

“Obviously.” Phil answered. “What do you like?”

“Programming. I like to program computers. It’s all I do with my spare time. I’m trying to make a better computer”

“Great.” Phil answered. “Well use that marvel of technology in your hand to google best male actor Oscar winners for the past few years. Look up pictures.”

“Why?” The agent asked but started to type at his phone. “I don’t really watch a whole lot o’ movies.”

“Well just have a look.” Phil answered, turning back to see Finn rubbing Rae’s back, the two of them having a soft chat. Phil turned back to see the agent looking through the pictures.

“Oh.” He said softly. “Oh…” He looked up at Phil in surprise, recognising his photograph.

“Now could you show us some better houses than this?” Phil asked politely.

“Yes of course!” The agent said, “I’m sorry.” He stumbled over his words, “I really should have asked for your budget instead of-” He cut himself short.

“Instead of jumping to conclusions.” Phil answered curtly.

“Yeah.” The agent’s mouth was obviously dry; he was terrified he’d just fouled up the biggest deal of his career.

“We said we wanted a home in London. At least three bedrooms, get to it.” Phil answered with a grim smile.
A few minutes later they were on the road to another viewing. It took a long drive to get there, but when Rae saw them drive past Big Ben, and then the British Museum and only go a few blocks before stopping in front of a beautiful free standing home in half an acre of gardens, she knew that Phil must have said something.

“This has 4 stories, 7 bedrooms, servants quarters, 6 bathrooms, an indoor and an outdoor swimming pool, a cinema, private parking and—”

“Let’s have a look.” Rae said softly.

“Lyndhurst Road.” Finn looked at the details of the property that the agent had given them. He looked up and noticed the huge slide and kids play area to the side of the entrance stairs. He grinned. He already loved this place. But then he looked back down at the asking price: £40,000,000. He pulled a face. “40 million quid.” He marvelled. “Better be solid fucking gold.” He mumbled.

They spent nearly an hour looking through the huge house and wandering the beautiful grounds, commenting on various features and qualities the property possessed.

“We’ll never need this much space.” Rae shook her head.

“Think about it.” Phil said, “We can each have our own room for our own space. The master bedroom is big enough for our specialised bed. The bundle of cells has their own room. And we’ve still got 2 spare bedrooms for visitors.”

“Better than have them all camping on the floor.” Finn agreed. “But we’re not getting this place, it’s too fucking expensive.” He pointed out the cost to Rae and Phil.

“For who?” Phil asked. Finn looked back at the price and mentally compared it to their combined worth.

“Good point.” Finn agreed; they could easily afford this house.

“We can’t spend this much money on a house?” Rae asked, almost scandalised.

“Why not?” Phil asked, “Our family deserves the best house we can afford. I want us to have a house we all love.”

“I love this place.” Rae said, “But we should look at other houses.”

“Does it have everything you want?” Phil asked them both.

“Aye.” Finn looked at the kids playground again. He thought about converting his own room into a recording studio for his work. He thought about getting a dog for their child. The grounds were big enough. “I love this place.”

“Do you like it?” Rae asked Phil.

“If we can make some changes to make it more environmentally friendly, I think it would suit my needs.” He replied. “We’ll get a builder to look over it and make sure we can make the changes, that it’s sound and not overpriced. And we’ll have our lawyers look at everything.” Phil shrugged. “If it’s perfect for all three of us, why bother looking anymore?” He looked over the outside swimming pool. “We could be moved in before the baby comes.”
“Sprucey can finally have a home to spread its roots.” Rae said as she turned to look at the huge
garden.

“Aye.” Finn said with a grin; he could feel that they had found their home. “But I’m not so keen
on servant’s quarters.” He pulled a face.

“Well I was thinking we could sound proof that and turn it into an adult’s only playground.” Phil
said, “Since the children have their own playground…”

“Oh I like the sound o’ that.” Finn said.

“I don’t know why you’re saying ‘children’ like there’s gonna be more than one.” Rae said in a
warning tone.

“We do have nieces and nephews.” Phil said smoothly.

“Just so long as you two aren’t getting ideas of knocking me up a second time!”

“We still haven’t dealt with the first time yet.” Finn pointed out, “Give us some time to start
conspiring for the second girl!” He gave her a cheeky grin and she narrowed her eyes at him.

“Second chid will have to be yours Quinn.” Phil said, “Since you’ll always be second.”

“Fuck you Dillip, we both know that kid’s mine.”

“I thought you were both the father.” Rae said tersely.

“We are.” Finn answered. “But we all know who’s genetic material is in the fastest sperm.” He
nodded sagely.

“Oh for fuck’s sake.” Rae had heard this dozens of times over the past months. “It could have
been the slowest sperm to make it if my egg wasn’t out yet. Maybe the fast sperm all got their first
and died waiting, while the slower ones managed to live longer an get the job done.”

“Well in that case it’s my sperm that’s the hardiest.” Finn said, “Outlived his.”

Rae rolled her eyes as her men squabbled again and went to find the agent, who had decided to
give them some space to discuss things.

It took less than a month for the news to hit the press that Rae was pregnant so they’d bought a
new house in London.

They ignored the tabloids and their rubbish. The only thing that Rae could be happy about was
that the tabloids constantly conjecturing over who the father was had soured the fun for Phil and
Finn and they had stopped doing it now. And that was bliss. She didn’t tell them, but she really
worried that they might genuinely fight or worry about something like that. She supposed that
their joking fights about it should relieve her concerns; they obviously didn’t care. But it didn’t
help at all. She didn’t want anything to break apart their happy home, and she was afraid that a
child was such a big change that it might. Children destroyed lots of relationships. It wasn’t the
child’s fault, it was the parents for not adequately coping with the change.

Rae fretted.
But she didn’t tell them. They knew she was fretting. They showed it by always reminding her that they were all in this together. And she didn’t want to give air to this fire. She wanted to stifle it out, drown it with their love for each other.

She knelt down and started going through her bookshelf of old things. Phil was on set again, Finn was off interviewing someone. And she was still stuck in writing her play about Elsa. So she decided to start packing. They had paid for the house in full as soon as the builder’s and lawyer’s reports had come back favourably. Now there was some renovations for Phil’s environmental concerns; but that would be finishing up in a few weeks. Then they’d be moving in. She knew that they were intending to buy a lot of new furniture because most of what they had now they’d had for nearly 20 years. So there wasn’t going to be much to move in the end.

“At least Phil’s instruments will have a proper home now.” Rae said to the empty apartment. It had always felt weird having a violin and cello worth so much in this flat. Not to mention the original Shakespeare folio. And all of his acting awards.

She pulled out her old diaries. It had been a long time since she’d read over any of them, and she felt no desire to do so now. Although she wondered if maybe some of what was in them would be useful or helpful to other fat, mad teenagers… She looked at the cover of one of them and put it in the box thoughtfully. When she picked up the next one the hospital bracelet from Tix fell out. Rae felt a sharp pang in her chest as she picked it up. It had been too long since she had thought about Tix. And far, far too long since she had visited Tix’s grave. It was surprising how sharp the pain still was, even after all this time. It was just as surprising how easy it was to not think of such painful things after a while. After a while, life actually did just go on and take over. The pain was still there when she thought about it, but she went long stretches of not thinking about how she had failed Tix.

She knew that Tix would have forgiven her straight away.

But it took Rae a lot longer to forgive herself. She wasn’t sure that she really had. But she had forgiven herself enough to let herself continue living and not stay stuck on this sorrow.

Still, it was time to spend a week or two in Stamford. She had some people to visit. She hadn’t seen Aisha or her mum in ages, and emails and phone calls could only do so much. And she hadn’t seen Danny and Grace in a while either.

And she needed to see Tix. She had to fill her in on everything that had happened.

The move had gone ahead in the week after she had gotten back from Stamford. She had gone alone, Phil was too busy on set to take the time off right now, and she had wanted to go immediately. Besides, she really wanted to go alone anyway, so she had told Finn to stay and look after Phil. Neither of them had been happy sending their 8 month pregnant partner off on her own for 10 days, but they both knew they couldn’t change her mind once it was made up.

It had been emotional saying goodbye to their old home. All of them had shed a few tears on their last night in the apartment. Rae hadn’t even yelled at the drunk teenagers in the graveyard that woke her up at 3am.
In the morning they said goodbye to the place and started moving all the boxes out. Phil and Finn had moved all the boxes, both of them blazingly adamant that she was not lifting one box even one millimetre. Rae had never seen either of them less willing to indulge her whims than they were now. She wasn’t allowed to do a thing, no matter how much she sulked and pouted and threatened temper tantrums. They stood firm against her and made her rest.

She supposed it was for the best. Her back was hurting, her breasts were hurting, her ankles were huge, her head was aching, her bladder was the size of a pea and she was 100% over carrying around this little baby. She was telling it to get out of her every day now.

Phil and Finn had decided not to bother getting all their friends in on the move since they were replacing every piece of furniture in the place. All the new furniture was being delivered over the week. The bed had already been delivered yesterday and the lounge suite and dining table set had arrived this morning. And all the old furniture was being moved out of their old apartment by some garbage or charity collection people Phil had hired to take care of it. Rae didn’t know the details, she knew Phil would take care of it.

While the men worked she wandered through their new home and rubbed her back. She liked that Phil had had an elevator put in; she took it up to their bedroom rather than trouble her back and ankles with stairs. She walked through their room and looked at the new bathtub, big enough for the three of them. Phil had had that put in with the other renovations. She liked it. There was a television on the wall they could watch from the tub. It was connected to the central computer that all the televisions were attached to. Phil had had that done too. The central computer had all of their music and tv shows and movies on it. There were speakers throughout the house so that music could be played anywhere they wanted and it could be done through voice commands. And she could watch any movie they had on their computer in this bathtub.

She knew that the boys were almost finished moving in the boxes.

She pulled out her phone and ordered a pizza while she stared the bath. They didn’t have bubbles yet, but that didn’t matter. A nice hot bath, pizza and some telly, for their first night in their new house seemed perfect.

She took the lift back downstairs to see Phil looking over the kitchen boxes, already beginning to unpack. They’d finished moving in all the boxes and the rental truck they’d hired wasn’t due back until tomorrow.

“Alright you raging fuckbags,” She said and they both looked up at her, “Time to try out our bath tub.”

She didn’t need to say anything else. One of them would have to duck back downstairs when the pizza came, but no one minded that. They all got into the hot bath, Rae in the middle and started the long debate over what to watch. Rae didn’t mind; she wanted them to choose. Always a mistake, they’d debate it forever. But she didn’t mind right now. She just laid back in the bath and enjoyed the way it made her aches disappear.

“You guys better hurry up cos I’m hungry, wanting entertainment, and horny.” Rae said as she sipped on her glass of water.

“Alright you choose the movie.” Phil said to Finn to expedite things.

“Hong Kong flick of some sort!” Finn declared. He called up the computer menu and chose from their collection.
They ate pizza, they watched Jackie Chan, they made love, very slowly and carefully.

It was a good first night.
‘Sail To The Moon’ by Radiohead

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkpaJ6FAfZI

Maybe you’ll be president, but know right from wrong. Or in the flood you’ll build an ark and sail us to the moon.

It’s come to attention that the gaps I leave to indicate jumps in time are not clear when I put things up on my blog, so I’m putting a little asterisk in now to signify it. Cheers.

“I dunno how Chloe makes it look so easy.” Izzy said shaking her head. “Being a mother’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done.”

“Chlo never says it’s easy.” Rae looked down at her own huge belly.

“She don’t have to.” Izzy said. “Just look at her, all perfect lawyer and shiny hair and clear skin and nice clothes without vomit on them. She just glows with happy contentment.” She scrunched her nose up in disgust. Rae looked at Izzy, birds nest hair, bags under her eyes, pimples along her forehead, ragged nails, stained clothes. She looked exhausted.

“Well Chlo’s the only one of us three girls that chose this.” Rae reminded her. “Us two was accidents. We weren’t gonna have kids. We were gonna be career girls.” Rae remembered wistfully.

“Oh I remember those days.” Izzy said in fond reminisce. “They’re long gone.” She added dejectedly. “Babies take over ya life.” She sighed and looked Rae up and down. “I bet you can’t wait to get it out.”

“Oh god Izzy, if I have to have one more day with this thing inside of me, I’ll cut it out myself!” Rae said dramatically.

“It gets real uncomfortable at the end.”

“Yeah but yours was practically as big as you.” Rae reminded her and Izzy started to chuckle.

“She was big!” Izzy agreed, “No idea where she got that from. Though mum says dad were a big baby too.”

“But I’m getting scared of the birth a bit now.” Rae admitted. “I know it hurts, I’ve been through enough of ‘em with me friends now.”

“Most painful thing I ever been through.” Izzy answered honestly. “They say that women forget it cos they get a rush of endorphins after the baby leaves the birth canal. But mine never got through it, so I don’t reckon I got that rush. I remember how much it hurt. And I didn’t even have to push
her out.” Izzy nodded sagely, “Chloe just don’t remember how much it hurt cos she got the endorphins.”

“Maybe.” Rae mused.

“Still can’t believe she did it all without drugs. I would have taken ten times more gas.”

“Chloe; wonder-mum.” Rae agreed. “She does make it look easy.” Rae agreed, “But both her and Rhys have said it’s hard.” She added. “But they both make it look easy.”

“Nothing looks like it’s hard to Rhys.” Izzy said.

“Except not punching the shit outta that guy that called Isaac a little—“ But Rae didn’t want to say that word, “you know…”

“I nearly punched the shit outta him.” Izzy nodded.

“The only reason that guy walked away from us in one piece is cos no one wanted the kids to see a murder.”

“Well Chloe verbally murdered him.” Izzy chuckled.

“She is good at that.” Rae agreed. “Especially when she gets all lawyer on people.”

“That is the problem with being in fashion.” Izzy said, “you can’t exactly go all fashion designer on someone.”

“You can tell them how shit they look.” Rae answered.

“But I went into fashion to try and counter that shit. I wanted everyone to feel good about themselves and know they look good.” Izzy answered. “But that dipshit was ugly. So maybe I could have gone all fashion designer on him!” She declared merrily, looking almost like her old self for a moment.

*

“Pizza for dinner?” Finn asked when Phil came in late from work.

“Please no.” Phil answered, “The last time we had pizza I felt like shit for days. Wheat really doesn’t agree with me.” He started to take his shirt off, preferring to hang around the house naked, like Finn and Rae often did. “What does Rae want?”

“Pizza.” Finn said in a low voice.

“Ugh.” Phil looked down and sighed heavily, “Can we go to one of those arty pizza places that actually do decent salads as well?” He asked hopefully.

“Rae did suggest that for you.” Finn noted.

“She’s a good woman.” Phil said with a grin. He noticed the fleck of paint in Finn’s hair and pulled him into his arms, “And you are a good man.” He kissed Finn deeply, “How’s the nursery coming along?”

“Amazingly.” Finn answered. “Kelsey did an awesome abstract painting, all bright colours and stuff on one wall.” He said, “And she got old shitty CDs and broke them up and glued them to the wall, with the shiny side out, so it’s like this shiny rainbow border on the wall. It’s fucking
"amazing."

"Sounds like Kelsey." Phil answered.

"And I done the other walls with colours from the painting, there’s a nice green in the painting that I used. And the skirting boards and doors and window frames and stuff are all in purple, and the roof is blue."

"Our colours." Phil said happily.

"Oh aye!" Phil nodded. "We created this baby together, we all get our colours in there." He pulled out his phone to call the pizza place, "It’s very bright and colourful, but it works. Mostly cos the room’s so big. If it were a small room I think it might be too much."

"What colour furniture?" Phil asked. Letting Finn have complete control over this project had been a great idea; Finn was obviously really enjoying himself. And while Rae had ideas for the nursery, she wasn’t really into doing the painting because all three of them worried about fumes.

"Just wood." Finn shrugged, "Or white."

"Sounds good."

"Come have a look?" Finn said as he dialled the pizza place. Phil followed him through the house, up the stairs to the nursery. It was bright and cheery and the colours complemented the painting Kelsey had done.

"It’s perfect." Phil said when Finn got off the phone.

"Aye Rae likes it too." Finn beamed.

"Where’s our girl?" Phil asked.

"Having a swim."

"I think we should join her." Phil said slipping his pants off.

*

Rae had surprised everyone by really getting into the idea of growing their own fruit and vegetables, and maybe having a few chickens or a goat or something. They still had Phil’s herb garden, and they all agreed that fresh herbs in food were amazing, so they all wanted to give Rae’s idea a go.

She was outside, wandering through their garden on a warm May afternoon, her belly bulging, pen and paper in hand, making note of what she wanted to grow and where things might grow best. This was a big undertaking. The other big thing they had to do was plan where Sprucey was going. There had to be enough room for it to grow and for a second Spruce to be planted nearby when they all died. They planned on planting Sprucey on their anniversary in 11 days time. Sprucey was huge now, and badly pot-bound, so Rae was glad they’d be getting to plant it finally. She supposed it really had been time to move homes. Especially since Phil finally got to get the piano he had taken from his parents home out of storage. He played beautifully, even though he said he was rusty.

It was strange how quickly this house had begun to feel like their home. She suspected it had a lot more to do with her men than the house itself, although she knew that the wrong house would have
never felt like home.

Her back was playing up again today, and the Braxton-Hicks contractions were starting to get alarmingly painful. But she wasn’t due for another week or maybe two, so she wasn’t too worried about them. She just hoped that real contractions wouldn’t hurt this much. But she suspected they would probably be worse since they were the real thing.

She put a hand on her belly and breathed through the pain, sitting down on the marble bench in the end to help deal with the heat that had flushed over her face. She felt a little woozy, but the pain was keeping her focussed.

“Oh.” She said as the pain deepened and she had to focus on her breathing again. “Oh shit.” It occurred to her that these might be actual contractions. “Oh you’re early baby.” She said in a laboured voice. “Sorta.” Anytime between now and the next two weeks was fine according to her doctors. She had several of them. All of them expensive. But as expected, Phil was adamant that she receive the absolute best medical care regardless of cost. And as expected, Finn backed him. But Rae often lost track of all the doctors and all the advice, some of it contradictory. She mostly listened to Chloe, Izzy and her mum. They seemed to know what to do and what everything meant.

She looked up at the house and suddenly realised the flaw in their haste to move here so quickly; there was no way she’d be able to yell loud enough for them to come and help her. She had to walk back to the house in labour. She supposed women had to do stuff like that all the time.

“Toughen up girl.” She whispered to herself as she made herself stand up.

She started at a strong pace towards the house. She wished she hadn’t been at the farthest point in the garden when the pain had started to pick up. She kept talking to herself, muttering under her breath, telling herself she could do it, that she was doing great, that it didn’t hurt that much.

When she finally got to the huge back doors, she leaned against the wall and took a deep breath.

“Easy.” She told herself, “Dropping this kid’s gonna be a piece o’ cake.” She panted through another contraction. “Now I want cake.” She told the back door as she straightened up and headed into the house. “GUYS!” She called out as she opened the door.

No response.

The sound of violin wafted through the lazy afternoon air. She took a deep breath and tried to call out again.

“GU-.” But the end of the call became a scream of pain, the urge to push too great, the scream cut off by her stomach muscles bearing down sharply. Rae leaned on the wall beside the backdoor, trying to part her thighs as she stood, feeling like the baby might pop out at any time. She panted and tried to breathe, sweat dripping down her face. She knew she had to get their attention, get in the car and head to the Portland Hospital; it was where the royals gave birth apparently. Rae had said that any hospital under the National Health Scheme would do. But Phil had again said if there was any time to spend there money it was now, and of course, Finn had backed him. A private suite with the best doctors in the country awaited her just 15-20 minutes away by car.

It suddenly occurred to her that a lot of people were about to be looking at her clacker stretch to unholy proportions. Sure the doctors she knew and they’d already seen her vagina at least, but nurses, possibly interns? She’d never met any of them… She started to laugh in terror at the prospect and was rocked by another contraction. She screamed again.
This time she heard the violin stop. There was a moment of silence before Finn appeared.

“Rae?”

“It’s coming!” She panted.

“Right.” Finn replied. “Fuck.” He turned around on the spot, trying to gather his thoughts; they had a whole plan for what they were going to do, but it had all left his head.

“Did I hear a scream?” Phil asked as he walked in. Instantly he knew what was happening. “It’s time?”

“YES!” Rae yelled back.

“I’ll get the bags, you get the car.” Finn suddenly remembered the plan.

“Yes.” Phil agreed, obviously terrified. They both started to leave. “Wait!” Phil turned back around. “Rae.”

“Fuck.” Finn pulled a face; they’d both forgotten Rae. They went to her and helped her to a chair. “Need anything?”

“DRUGS!” Rae screamed.

“Ok, to hospital as quick as possible.” Phil said and they both scampered out of the room to get to their tasks, Phil pulling out his phone to call Chloe as he went. Moments later they were both rushing back in to her, Finn with two duffel bags and a backpack hanging from his shoulders and Phil with the keys to the car in his hand, the car waiting as close to the front door as he could get it.

“Come on.” Finn said and started to help Rae to her feet. Phil took a duffel bag from his shoulder and took her other hand. They walked her to the door as she panted, grunted and swore loudly. As they started to go through Finn froze.

“Hang on!” He cried and raced back through the house, leaving Phil holding Rae’s hand as they stood in the doorway. Rae, her teeth gritted determinedly, kept heading out to the car with Phil’s help. Finn was back in no time and put Rae’s arm back around his shoulders.

“What?” Phil asked what had been so important that he run off. Finn held up a burned CD.

“Soundtrack for our journey to the hospital.” He grinned. Rae barely heard him, she was gritting her teeth through another contraction.

“Of course.” Phil shook his head. When they got to the car they helped Rae into the back seat and stashed the bags in the boot. “You drive.” Phil said to Finn, his hands were shaking too much to be of any use in that regard.

“No worries, you get in the back with Rae.” Finn climbed in the front seat and Rae managed to scoot to the middle of the back seat. Finn started the car and put his CD on before beginning to drive down their driveway.

Rae’s brows furrowed, her mouth opened in a kind of disbelieving awe as the music began.

“What the fuck?” She asked as she heard the unmistakeable opening riff to ‘The Final Countdown’ by Europe.
“Soundtrack for the journey to the hospital.” Finn repeated. “it’s the final countdown till we meet our baby!” He said excitedly.

“Are you fucking jokING?” The end of her word turned into a strangled scream as another contraction hit her.

“Just breathe.” Phil said calmly.

“I AM FUCKING BREATHING!” Rae yelled at him, “IT’S WHY I’M NOT FUCKING DEAD!” She squeezed his hand so hard he had to stop himself from wincing, “EVEN THOUGH I WISH I FUCKING WAS!”

“Then you’re doing a splendid job.” Phil replied calmly.

“I’LL GIVE YOU A FUCKING SPLENDID JOB!” Rae screeched as Finn pulled out into home-time traffic.

“How far apart are the contractions?” Finn asked Phil.

“I’ll try keeping count.” He answered.

“I CAN’T BELIEVE I AM LISTENING TO THIS GODDAMN FUCKING SONG!” Rae cried as she was again struck by the undeniable urge to push. She pushed as hard as she could.

“What d’you mean? This is a classic, this is.” Finn answered. He had taken on a cheery but focussed and reliable demeanour because Phil was far more serious in his mood and he felt she needed someone to be in a good mood. He thought it would reassure her if at least one of them was acting like they were sure everything was ok. On the inside he was shitting himself.

“I’LL CLASSIC YOU UP THE SIDE O’ YOUR HEAD!” Rae told him and he nodded.

“Alright…” He had no idea how to answer that.

“And you’ll do that splendidly when you do.” Phil reassured Rae. Rae snapped her face round to Phil’s and in an almost calm, but deeply disturbing whisper she ordered him;

“Stop saying splendid.” Through gritted teeth.

“Yes.” Phil answered, slightly afraid of Rae right now. She squeezed his hand harder still as she pushed again, screaming out louder than the music. Finn looked in the rear view mirror and tried to not show how freaked out he was. They crawled along in the traffic and Rae screamed and grunted at them while Phil wiped sweat off her brow, offered her water, got his hand squeezed. Finn kept trying to find the fastest way to get there, but in reality he had to snail along with the rest of the cars.

The song changed to ‘Push It’ by Salt N Pepa.

“Oh for fuck’s sake Finn!” Rae groaned.

“Come on, this is perfect!” Finn answered, his eyes staying on the road, desperate to find a quicker way.

“I’ll fucking push you!” She panted.

“Hey I nearly put ‘Baby’ by that prat Beiber on it.” Finn replied in his own defence.
“I am so glad you didn’t.” Phil answered.

“I fucking hate that song.” Finn agreed. “But it’s called Baby! I nearly couldn’t resist.”

“Oh my god.” Rae groaned. “You two fuckers.” She said, “You two FUCKING BASTARDS!”

The pain was back, “IT’S YOUR FAULTS THAT I’M LIKE THIS!”

“Yes it is.” Phil agreed.

“All our fault.” Finn agreed soothingly. She panted and groaned and oscillated between almost calm and screaming obscenities in pain for a few minutes, Phil and Finn soothing her the best they could.

“GET THIS FUCKING THING OUT OF ME!” Rae cried in agony, pushing as hard as she could.

“Contractions are pretty close.” Phil said softly to Finn. He didn’t want to say exactly how close; it would only alarm him and Rae.

“How close?” Finn asked, catching the tightness of Phil’s tone.

“I FUCKING HATE YOU BOTH!” Rae wailed like a banshee. Rae started to pull her dress up and scrabble with her underwear.

“Rae?” Phil asked.

“GET IT OUT!” She cried. Phil helped her get her underwear off and Finn looked over his shoulder in concern. “LOOK AT THE FUCKNG ROAD!” She screamed at him. “I’M IN LABOUR AND I’M TELLING YOU THAT SHIT!”

“Aye.” Finn turned back around, “Sorry.” Rae put a foot on the back of the Finn’s headrest, and the other on the back of the passenger seat headrest.

“Look.” She told Phil and Phil nodded, white with fright and ducked under her leg, sitting on the floor behind the passenger seat.

“Um…” He said softly. “Finn pull over.”

“We’re almost there.”

“She’s not gonna make it.” Phil answered and Finn looked again. He could see a dark mass peeking out from Rae’s swollen vagina. It was just the top of the head, still not completely out, but obviously about to come.

“Oh my god.” He whispered in horror and awe. He couldn’t imagine how Rae was actually managing to do this. “Um… there isn’t really anywhere to pull over.”

“Pull up on the sidewalk!” Phil ordered. “We’ll pay the fucking fine if we get one!”

“Alright.” Finn changed lanes and pulled up over the curb onto the sidewalk. As he did, the baby’s head seemed to just slide out of Rae. Phil felt panic and awe and fear as he gently supported the head. He was terrified of doing something wrong.

The song changed to ‘Newborn’ by Muse and Finn slipped his seatbelt off to turn and look.

“Help.” Phil barely breathed the word and Finn’s hands were with him, holding their child.
“We might have to help the shoulder out.” Finn, like Phil, had read every book there was about this moment over the months. The two men looked at each other, absolutely terrified and lost. Neither of them knew what to do other than let Rae do what she was doing and try to help as best they could.

“FUCKING FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK HELL!” Rae screamed and pushed and the rest of the baby emerged. Phil and Finn held it carefully, both of them laughing with joy as Rae felt a huge surge of relief.

“Hold her.” Finn said and Phil grabbed the baby close to his chest.

“It’s a boy.” Phil saw his little penis as he started to cry loudly, his little fists closed, his eyes screwed shut. “Oh my god.” Phil felt tears in his eyes as he looked down at their son. Finn took his shirt off and helped Phil wrap the baby up. “You still gotta birth the placenta Rae.” Phil said as he handed their son to her. She looked down at him and held him to her, utterly, completely in love with the tiny squawking bundle.

“Oh.” She whispered. “Oh, my boy.” She touched his face gently and he started to settle slowly, “Look at you.”

“Should we cut the umbilical?” Finn asked.

“I dunno.” Phil shook his head, “Let’s just get her to the hospital.”

“Aye.” Finn answered, staring at Rae as she told their son that he could be anything in this world, that the whole world was his.

“Get back on the road Finn.” Phil said and Finn had to fight to tear his eyes off Rae holding their son. When he finally got his bloody hands back on the steering wheel, he realised that tears were streaming down his face.

‘Mama Mia’ by Abba was less than half way through when they pulled up at the hospital.

Phil was covered in blood and amniotic fluid.

Finn was topless and had wiped blood onto his face when he had wiped his tears away and had no idea.

And Rae was halfway through birthing the placenta, holding their son as she grunted, almost silently through the pushing.

She got out of the car, not caring that everything was a mess and the placenta was coming. She handed their son to Finn and collapsed into the proffered wheelchair. Finn looked down at their baby boy.

“His name’s Robin.” He said softly, Rae and Phil looked up at him and Rae nodded.

“Yeah.” She agreed. That was exactly what he was supposed to be named.

* 

The nurse was doing her check ups and Rae was eating, her two men sitting beside her bed in chairs, all three of them had been staring at a sleeping Robin.

“What a beautiful baby.” She cooed at Robin and then turned to Phil, “He’s definitely yours.” She
said happily. “With some babies you can just see their parents in them straight away.” Phil and Finn shared a look and Rae took a deep breath, looking down at her bowl of food; she’d been anxious about this. The nurse held out the baby to them and Finn took him. They waited for the nurse to go, both men staring at the closed-eyed baby.

“How can she say he’s yours?” Finn asked, “Can’t even tell with his face all scrunched up like that.” And then Robin opened his eyes and Finn’s mouth opened in surprise, “oh.” He whispered slowly, “He has the most beautiful blue eyes.” Finn stroked the boy’s face. “Just like his father.” He looked at Phil, who was staring down at the child, obviously deeply moved by the immensity of having created life. “But I’m ya dad, you hear me Robin?” Finn said and the little boy stared at him silently. “We both are.” Phil put an arm around Finn’s shoulders and Rae watched as they both stared at the baby. “I’m Finn-dad and he’s just dad.” Rae felt an even deeper sense of relief than when she’d finally gotten Robin out of her. It actually didn’t matter who the biological father was, they were going to be alright. “And this is ya mum.” Finn handed Robin to Rae and they sat on the bed on either side of her.

“Wow.” Phil said softly, completely unable to think of a thing to say.

“I never thought I’d see the day that you couldn’t speak.” Finn said and they laughed, Robin, silently staring up at Rae.

“He’s perfect.” Rae breathed, and Phil and Finn agreed completely.

*I*

“I can’t believe I missed all the action.” Chloe said holding Robin in her arms. “4th of May, what’s that? Taurus?” She expertly flipped out her phone and googled it while holding Robin in her other arm. Rhys had Yolanda in his arms and Isaac was colouring on the floor. “Strong-willed, lots of determination and perseverance… The romans thought that Taureans were ruled by Venus and were particularly beautiful.” She mused as she shoved her phone back in her pocket and looked down at Robin, “Do you believe in all that stuff?” She asked him. He just stared up at her.

“Hello!” Archie came through the door, Tom behind him with Alex on his hip. “Finally joined the ranks.” He grinned. “Izzy and Chop are on their way too.”

“You look amazing for a woman that’s just been through labour.” Tom kissed Rae on the cheek.

“It was a few hours ago now.” Rae said looking over at the clock; it was 11pm. She was surprised the hospital weren’t cracking the shits about this.

“When was he born?” Tom asked and sat on the end of her bed, releasing Alex to sit and play with Isaac.

“About 6.” Rae said, “Not sure of exact time, cos it were in the car.”

“The Bentley?” Tom asked Phil and Phil nodded, “ruined the leather then.” He shook his head as if it pained him to think of it.

“It doesn’t matter.” Phil said, not taking his eyes off Robin.

“Spoken like a true aristocrat.” Finn said.

“Says you!” Phil retorted, “The Bentley was your idea. I wanted a Prius.” Finn laughed; he couldn’t deny it.
“Hun you must be exhausted.” Chloe redirected the conversation back to where it should be. “It’s only been a few hours; I didn’t wanna do anything but sleep and rest after my first labour.”

“It was easier than I thought it’d be.” Rae answered, “I mean it was painful, I haven’t forgotten the pain like they say you do. And it was hard… but it was quick.” She shrugged, “I’m alright.”

“The doctor says you were probably in labour all day.” Finn said.

“I doubt it.” Rae shrugged. “I mean me back was bad again, but it was bad for most of it.”

“Look at him!” Archie said, taking Robin from Chloe. “He’s a cutie.”

“Like his father.” Finn answered giving Phil a wink.

“D’you know who the dad is?” Tom asked looking down at Robin with a growing sense of cluckiness.

“It’s Phil.” Archie said, “Not that it matters, but it’s clear as day. Blue eyes, hair colour, shape o’ the chin.” He looked up at them, “Plus Finn winking at Phil like that.”

“Alright detective Holmes, settle down.” Tom answered taking Robin.

“I’m not done holding him!” Archie said as he let Tom have his way.

“We should have another.” Tom said as he grinned at Robin and started to talk softly to the baby, who, as always, stared up at whoever was holding him.

“I know.” Archie answered. “We’ll adopt?”

“Yeah.” Tom agreed. “He’s got such a curious little face.” He said to them. “I bet he’ll end up being some sort of genius.”

“Oh great.” Finn sighed, “Another one of them.” He knocked Phil in the ribs gently, obviously teasing.

“Of course he’s a genius, he’s my son!” Rae shot at them and Phil nodded appreciatively.

“Very true.” Finn agreed.

“Sorry we’re late!” Izzy, looking frazzled appeared in the doorway. Chop, looking in his element with a baby carrier strapped to his chest. Judith, a thoroughly ordinary sized 2 year old was sleeping in the carrier peacefully. Izzy was just glad that Judith’s large birth weight seemed to have finally evened out to a more ‘normal’ sized child.

“No you’re right on time.” Rae answered, watching her baby being handed to Izzy by a very reluctant Tom. All of their kids had had to put up with being passed around.

“Oh he’s beautiful.” Izzy cooed at him, “Was it horrible?” She asked Rae.

“I think it was more traumatic for Phil and Finn than me.” Rae told her. “I gave birth in the car.”

“Did you fuck the Bentley’s leather?” Chop asked, even more horrified than Tom.

“LANGUAGE!” Came the rebuff from every adult in the room.

“Sorry.”
“And yes.” Finn answered, “But we don’t care.”

“But that car’s a beauty.” Chop sighed. “Still this little bastard’s a cutie in’he?”

“What’s his name?” Izzy asked.

“Robin.” Rae answered.

“Robin Nelson.” Phil added. Finn gave a huge grin and sighed contently.

“Better ring the folks hey?” Finn said, “Dad’s gonna cry for sure.”

“Mum’s so ready to be a grandmum.” Rae added.

*

As predicted, Gary did cry. He’d arrived the next morning and had instantly fallen in love with his grandson. He was holding Robin when Linda, Karim and Aiesha got there. Kenzie was off getting drinks for everyone. Everyone could tell that Robin was Phil’s son, but no one said a thing. It didn’t matter. Finn very obviously didn’t feel like Robin was any less his son because of the lack of genetic material, and the three of them were all very obviously committed and as close as ever. This child was going to be raised by three parents that loved him and each other very much.

Janice visited later in the afternoon, bringing a big basket of necessities like nappies, and getting the key to their place from Phil so she could stock the freezer with home-cooked meals.

The day was spent getting visits from friends and family, but Rae really felt the need to sleep. The men handled most of it.

The nurses taught her how to breastfeed, although she was tetchy at them while they did it because Chloe, Izzy and her mother had all given her sound advice on it and she had wanted to keep trying to manage it on her own; she liked learning with Robin. But the night nanny was wonderful and changed Robin at night so she could sleep. But she was only staying the 2 nights in the hospital, then the night times would be her responsibility, and her men too of course. She knew they would be right there with her.

*

The first night at home had been agonising. The three of them would often find themselves staring at a still and silent Robin, looking for signs of breathing but trying not to disturb him in case he was just sleeping and not dead.

Finn was particularly scared of him not breathing and spent almost the whole night watching him sleep. Both Phil and Rae slept in the room while Finn stared at Robin, terrified that he might stop breathing, worrying that he was too silent as he slept.

Rae supposed it would take time for them to be less scared of that. And she knew after a few more days, Robin would be keeping them awake at night time.

A few days later, on their anniversary, they planted Sprucey in the back garden

And a few days after that Finn started to settle down, more out of exhaustion and desperate need to sleep than his fear of Robin dying from cot death easing.

The following week they each got Robin’s name and birth date tattooed onto them. Rae got it on
her ankle just under the bone. Finn got it on his upper arm and Phil got it just under his collar bone.

Robin was still sleeping most of the time, but he had started to wake up in the middle of the night now. And Rae knew, this is when the real hard stuff started; the baby honeymoon was over.
“Oh my god when will he ever stop?” Rae moaned.

“I don’t know, I don’t know.” Finn groaned.

“Shhhh.” Phil was rocking Robin as he cried inconsolably. He had bags under his eyes and his usually sophisticated and cultured demeanour had taken on an air of quiet insanity, like the off-kilter music of a carnival that accompanied some sort of maniacal serial killer. None of them had slept more than a few hours in a row in the past month and they were all starting to lose their minds.

* 

They lay in bed staring at the ceiling. Robin had started crying. Finn looked over at the clock; 2:14am. It had been just over 2 hours since he’d last woken them up.

“My turn.” He tried to convince himself to get up but he just felt like crying. He was so exhausted. “I think I’m going mental.” He whispered.

“Already beat you there.” Phil answered.

“Beat ya both.” Rae sighed. “I’ll get him, I need to pee anyway. You get him next time.”

“Thanks.”

* 

Rae was laying flat out, dead to the world asleep, on the lounge, Robin sleeping on her chest, Phil was unconscious on the floor, a cushion under his head. Finn came in from cooking dinner and grinned.

Peace. Finally.

Finn silently turned the radio off. Let them rest properly, he reasoned.

And then Robin woke up.

And started to cry.

Again.

* 

“I don’t even know why he’s crying!” Phil said frantically. “He just won’t stop!”

“His nappy’s clean, he’s been fed, the temperature’s good… I don’t get it!” Finn bemoaned. Rae
picked Robin up and he grumbled and fussed.

“Today is gonna be the day that they're gonna throw it back to you.” Rae began to sing as she gently rocked him. “By now you should've somehow realised what you gotta do.” He started to settle.

“Kid’s got good taste.” Finn said proudly. “Got that from me.”

“I don't believe that anybody feels the way I do, about you now.” Rae continued hopefully. She finished the whole of ‘Wonderwall’ by Oasis and Robin was peacefully sleeping. They all smiled at his beautiful little face as he slept in her arms.

It only took them a moment to realise that the minute Rae tried to put him down he’d wake up and start crying.

But before that even became an issue he woke up and started crying.

“Oh my god.” Rae whimpered in exhaustion.

* 

“There’s nothing wrong with him.” Their paediatrician, Doctor Norris, said.

“Why won’t he stop crying?” Finn asked desperately.

“Some babies just cry a lot. He might need more reassurance. Perhaps he needs to sleep in your room with you?”

“He does.” Rae said softly, barely able to keep her eyes open. Phil was pacing, holding Robin in his arms, rocking him gently; he was, of course, crying.

“Well maybe he needs a room of his own?”

“He has one.” Phil answered, “He cries either way.”

* 

“I dunno pet, some babies just cry.” Linda said as she rocked Robin gently. He was crying.

“Did I cry this much?”

“Not this much.” Linda answered, “But you did cry a lot more than Aiesha.” She said staring lovingly at Robin even as his little face was balled up in anguish, “And once you started babbling you never shut up. I could’ve strangled ya.” She said and then gave Rae a guilty look. “I mean-”

“No mum, I understand.” Rae answered, “I love him, but if that little shit doesn’t stop crying, I’m gonna throw him off the balcony.” Linda chuckled and opened an arm for Rae, Robin nestled comfortably in her other arm. Rae sat down and found comfort in her mother’s embrace. But Robin still cried on.

“How about you have a nap and I’ll watch him.”

“Oh god, thank you mum.” Rae said in a rushed voice and got up before her mum could change her mind.

*
“You can’t play violin he’ll never sleep that way.” Rae said as she went into Phil’s room. She had heard him start playing Vivaldi’s ‘Four Seasons – Summer’ while she had been trying to soothe a crying Robin. In their 17 years together, Rae and Finn had learned as much about Phil’s taste in music as he had in theirs, so Rae knew this piece of music well. Phil stopped playing and looked at her blankly.

“It soothes me and I need soothing.” He answered in a curt tone. The past few months of sleep deprivation had frayed nerves and shortened tempers. Mostly they had gotten by with just a few short, sharp words, but they all knew a huge argument was brewing; they were all exhausted and at the end of their ropes and worried about Robin. He never stopped crying for more than a few hours at a time. They’d been through dozens of doctors, paediatricians, experts of all kinds. Tests had been done. There was nothing wrong with him.

He just wouldn’t stop crying.

Phil started to play very enthusiastically, his eyes closed, his fingers moving rapidly, playing the dramatic piece of music faster than it was written. She sighed and walked from Phil’s room back to Robin’s room.

Surprisingly he settled down and finally went to sleep. Rae sighed and sat on the lounge in his room. She fell asleep almost instantly.

Robin woke her up just 40 minutes later when he started crying again. She stared at him, bleary eyed and willed herself to get up. But Phil was there. His mouth drawn in a tight line, his eyes tired and his face worn and ragged with stubble.

“I got him.” He said softly. “Sorry about before. I was rude.” His voice was soft and weary. “You deserve better than that from me.”

“It’s alright babe.” Rae yawned in reply. “We’re all fucked at the minute. I love him but I wish to god he’d just shut up.”

* 

“Come on mate.” Finn pleaded with him, “We’re not that shite at being parents are we?” He just wanted to cry. He had nothing left in him. It had been 2 months and still, their tiny little son kept crying almost all the time. If he wasn’t on the breast, or sleeping, for no more than about 2 hours, he was crying. “Please… please just stop…”

* 

“Oh babe I’ve got no idea.” Chloe rocked Robin and shushed in his ear softly for a few minutes. “The shushing’s s’posed to sound like blood in your veins in the uterus. S’posed to soothe them. Worked for Yolanda.” She said, “She was a crier. Nothing worked but the shushing.” Chloe sighed. It hadn’t worked for Robin. “There’ll be something that soothes him.” She tried to comfort Rae, “Just remember it’s a big, bright, loud, scary world out here for him… he just needs the right comfort. You’ll find it Rae; you’re good at figuring things out.”

* 

“We’ll test to see if there’s a higher level of digestive juices. That can cause discomfort and thus excessive crying.” She was calming and reassuring. The three frazzled exhausted parents stared at her, metaphorically clinging to her like she was a lifeboat in a raging sea. Finn was holding a crying Robin and the new doctor, Dr Flannegan, just kept talking. “We’ll also test his ears, it’s
easy for pain in the ears to go undiagnosed.”

They did dozens of tests.

Nothing was wrong.

*

Phil had taken a year off work for Robin’s birth, and he was glad he had. But Finn was still working part time at his station and at writing original songs for movies. He had been commissioned to write a song for a kids movie and he was staring blankly at his computer screen; a few lines of lyrics and chord progressions staring back at him.

He could hear Rae trying to soothe Robin in Robin’s room and sighed.

He shook his head and got up to open the window, hoping some fresh air would clear his head.

“Hey.” Phil said as he came in with some tea for Finn.

“Thanks.” Finn said.

“How’s it going?”

“I’m too tired and worried about him to really write anything.”

“There’s gotta be something wrong.” Phil reasoned and sat on the desk, sipping his tea.

“I can’t imagine he’s crying that much for nothing.” Finn agreed, “Maybe he’s just crying cos he’s tired now. Or it’s all he knows how to do.” Phil sighed in response. He didn’t know why their son was crying, and they had run so many tests now that it was fairly conclusive that there was nothing medically wrong.

“Show me what you got.” Phil said to Finn and nodded towards Finn’s guitar.

“Alright.” Finn picked up his guitar. “I’m so tired I think I’ve forgotten how to play.” He joked and Phil gave him a tired smile. He started to play and Phil closed his eyes, listening to the music.

“Hm, that’s lovely. Good progression.” He sighed. He always loved Finn’s original work.

“Not sure what to do next.” Finn said, “Thinking something like this.” He played on, making it up as he went.

“You can break that up with some hammering.” Phil noted and Finn stopped and considered that.

“Huh…” He replayed the section and added some hammering, a kind of trilling, in to the melody. “Oh that’s good.”

They kept working like that, Finn making things up on the spot, and Phil making a few suggestions here and there. Phil rarely made suggestions when Finn worked, but he knew Finn was tired and needed a little prodding to get him moving.

Rae walked in and they both suddenly noticed the silence.

“What is it?” Finn felt a sudden panic. Robin wasn’t crying.

“He’s sleeping in his cot.” Rae said and Finn breathed a sigh of relief.
“I thought he must be dead, cos he were quiet!” He replied.

“I know what you mean.” Rae said, I had to look real close at him to make sure he was breathing when he was finally sleeping.” She yawned and suddenly Robin started crying again.

“Oh god.” Phil moaned.

“Wait…” Rae suddenly thought she was onto something.

“What?” Finn asked.

“Play your guitar again…” Rae said slowly and Finn gave her a funny look. “Just do it dickhead!” she snapped.

“Alright, fuck girl.” Finn answered in a snarky tone. He started playing his song again and the result was quite fast; Robin settled, without any of them going into his room to try to soothe him.

“Oh my god…” Finn barely breathed the words. They’d all been too tired to play or sing all that much music over the past 3 months, or to recognise the pattern when they did…

“Stop.” Phil said and Finn stopped playing. A few moments later Robin started crying.

“Oh my god!” Finn repeated and started playing again. Once again Robin settled down very quickly. “We’ve figured it out!” He actually started to cry in relief, his fingers moving over the frets. Phil and Rae threw their arms around each other, Rae also actually crying in exhausted joy.

“Rae you did it!” Phil said excitedly.

“We can take it in turns playing.” Finn said, “24 hours divided by three is… 8… we can do two 4 hour shifts each, every day… I can’t even imagine what 4 hours of sleep feels like!” Finn was deliriously ecstatic.

“Oh my god the sleep deprivation has mushed your brain.” Rae said and leaned over his computer. She opened the central computers music folders and clicked for the folder to play the songs randomly forever. There were hundreds of thousands of songs in the folder, so there was plenty of music to play. Finn stared at the computer in awe.

“Didn’t think o’ that.” He said simply, “Obviously.” Music wafted out of the speakers and Rae set the volume to a low, but easily audible level. The three of them went through to Robin’s room and watched him sleeping peacefully. They all stared at him lovingly.

“He’s so beautiful.” Rae said softly.

“Look at his little feet.” Finn agreed.

“He’s just so perfect.” Phil agreed.

“But he almost looks dead.” Rae continued.

“He’s just so… so perfect.” Finn kept looking at Robin.

“He is the most beautiful baby to have ever existed.” Phil almost cooed.

“I just love him so much.” Rae wanted to touch his sweet little face, but she didn’t dare wake him.

“He’s definitely our boy.” Phil said, “Loves music. Like all three of us do.”
“Must’ve been all that playing music to him in the womb.” Finn answered. “We always had music on when he was growing inside o’ ya.” He turned to Rae.

“I don’t care what it is.” She said and sat down on the lounge, “He’s sleeping.” Phil and Finn sat down beside her, all three of them staring at their boy.

Nearly 8 hours later Rae woke up in horror. She jumped up, terrified that something was wrong with Robin because she had been allowed to sleep for so long. She rushed to his cot and looked down at her baby. She could just see his chest slowly rising and falling. She felt relief wash through her. He was fine. She turned to see both of her men still asleep, although she could tell that Phil was about to wake up. She was still exhausted, but the 8 hours had done her good. She turned back to Robin, wondering if she should wake him for a feed or nappy change. Phil opened his eyes and looked at his watch.

“Good god!” He jumped up, clearly in the same terror she’d been in.

“He’s fine.” She told him and he put a hand over his heart.

“Scared me.” He told her and she nodded. They both looked at Finn, sleeping upright on the lounge. He always had been the heaviest sleeper of the three of them. But he never slept through Robin crying. They turned back to Robin.

“I might wake him for a feed.” Rae said.

“Wanna risk it?” Phil said and Rae shrugged.

“He’s gotta eat.” Rae gently lifted him up and he opened his eyes sleepily. He looked up at her, and he even seemed to smile.

“Oh my god.” Phil whispered. “He’s so perfect.”

“Finn can’t miss this.” Rae said and Phil, agreeing with her, set to the difficult task of waking Finn up while Rae prepared to feed Robin.

As always, Robin took the breast easily, but unusually, he didn’t start crying almost as soon as he was done. For the first time in just over 3 month, they all got to really enjoy having a baby in the house instead of endure the endless crying. He stared up at them and they all made silly faces at him when he started to pull faces, obviously trying to understand what the muscles in his face did. As soon as the three of them started, Robin started to smile, laugh and make noises.

It was magic.

* 

Over the next few weeks they finally got into a rhythm and normalised their sleeping patterns. Music played softly in the house 24 hours a day, and everyone was much happier and well-slept.

Months passed in a newfound sense of domestic bliss.
“We’re going to give you something easy today.” Phil said, “More or less.” Robin sat on the floor staring up at his father with large curious eyes as Phil started to play ‘Four Seasons’ by Vivaldi. He would play the entire 40 plus minutes of the piece. And Robin would watch him for the entire time. It wasn’t the first time Phil had played long pieces to him, on piano, cello, violin, even double bass… it didn’t matter, Robin watched with interest. Finn would play guitar, Rae would sing and Robin was always fascinated. Someone played music to him almost every day. And of course there was almost always music playing in the background; it still soothed him.

He was 11 months old now, already starting to try to walk at every opportunity. He crawled like a race horse and the house was often filled with laughter as someone sprinted off after him to make sure he wasn’t getting himself into any trouble. He said several words already, and they were sure that Phil’s insistence on language lessons already was paying off, because they thought they could hear mum and dad in several languages.

Rae and Finn had already had to pull Phil back on becoming too ‘Phil-like’ as Finn called it. Phil was sure that his son was a genius, and he was sure that he should be receiving lessons for just about everything already. And while it was true that he was developing faster than expected, Rae and Finn had been determined to let him just be a child. Phil had accepted their wisdom with only one fight; the language lessons. Which Rae had sided with him on; she’d heard that learning languages was easier at a young age, so the lessons had begun. French, German, Spanish, Mandarin, Afrikaans, Arabic, Hindi, Russian, Japanese, Portuguese, Kiswahili, Indonesian, Latin, and sign language. 2 half an hour lessons every single day. One in the morning, one in the afternoon. But Robin seemed to love these different people coming to speak with him.

* 

“I was wondering if you wanted to begin your return to work next month with some theatre.” Elsa said as Phil handed her a cup of tea. Finn was sitting on the floor playing with Robin and Rae was sitting next to Elsa.

“I’m not willing to take on too much.” Phil said, “Nothing that will take me out of the house more than three days a week.” He concluded.

“Understood.” Elsa answered.

“For the whole of next year.” Phil expanded, “Being a father is too important and I can afford to not be working. I’ll only be returning to work because I miss it.”

“I can work around that.” Elsa said. “Maybe we’ll do a play with one show a week for the majority of the year?” Elsa said, “Three month part-time rehearsal, then 9 months of one show a week. With a costume run or two each week to keep us fresh.”

“But how would your company sustain that financially?” Phil knew Elsa needed to be selling out shows 200 days of the year to come in even.
“I can run other shows concurrently. It’ll be tricky, difficult to organise and time consuming. Which are things I love.”

“What play?” Phil was more than a little interested. This would suit him perfectly.

“D’you know, King Theatre Productions has not yet run Hamlet?”

“Oh I love Hamlet.” Phil breathed.

“I know.” Elsa answered with a grin. “I assume you’d take the titular role.”

“I’ve never performed Hamlet to the huge audiences your company pulls in.” Phil said excitedly. “And I might be rusty.”

“Nonsense.” Elsa answered, “And you get three months to get it together anyway.”

“Sounds perfect.” Phil answered.

“Excellent. I’ll start making plans. When would you like to start?”

“Call it July 1st?”

“You’re on.” Elsa answered, “Oh I love this song.” She heard the music playing and Rae sighed. “What?”

“I’m just dreading having to wean him of it.” Rae said and Elsa gave her a quizzical look. “He cries a lot without music playing all the time.”

“Well he did.” Finn said, “We haven’t exactly stopped the music since we found out it stopped him crying.”

“Now he only cries if he’s wet or hungry and it’s easy to soothe him.” Rae said.

“Or if he hurts himself.” Phil said.

“Oh I think we all cried more than he did.” Finn remembered the first time Robin had tried to stand, fallen and pulled the drawer he had been holding onto out on top of him. The three of them shared a soft chuckle of remembrance.

“Yes I understood that the music was on to soothe him.” Elsa said, “I gave you that expression because of the weaning comment.”

“You what?” Rae asked.

“I never understood the western commitment to weaning children off things.” She said, “Why take away something that a child finds comforting?” She asked them and Rae felt as if some sort of lightbulb had gone off in her head; why did they have to wean him off listening to music? “It’s not destructive, it’s not hurting anyone, let him have his comfort. I think we could all use comfort, why did we all as a society start thinking that comfort was a bad thing? What’s so bad about having comfort?”

“Nothing.” Rae answered softly, in awe of finally having the answer to this problem.

“He’ll come off it when it’s his time to come off it.” Elsa answered having learned this kind of attitude from the mob she spent her teenage years with in Australia. “Let him make that choice. He knows what’s right for him in that regard. Trust him.” The words were like a warm blanket of
comfort to Rae. Elsa was right; Rae was going to let Robin decide when to turn the music off.

*  

“You know, he would have been just as much mine if he hadn’t been… you know… mine.” Phil said as he changed Robin’s nappy, “but I still can’t help but feel the enormous honour of having been able to make a life with the woman I love.” He said, “I would never want to deny that feeling to Finn.” He looked over at Rae, “Even though I know he hasn’t even thought of it, cos Robin’s just as much his as he is yours and mine.”

“I know.” Rae said, “I been thinking the same thing though.” She said softly, “Might have to have a second.”

“Might have to.” Phil said with a small smile. “And I think Robin would do well with a younger sibling.” He finished up and quickly washed his hands before picking Robin up and holding him close while the energetic baby let him.

“Aye well it’s gonna be a few years till I’m letting one o’ them things grow in me again.”

“Yes, fair enough!”

“Pity we can’t mingle yours and Finn’s genes.” Rae said with a cheeky grin.

“It is rather.” Phil agreed. “We’d have three beautiful babies.”

“We’ll have to settle for two.” Rae answered.

*  

“Your demon child just anointed me.” Finn said to Phil as he passed him on the way to the bathroom, vomit dripping down his shirt. Robin had never been much of a vomiter, not even when he had been a newborn.

“Oh dear.” Phil watched him clean up and listened to Rae soothing a crying Robin in the lounge room.

“I’m fine, go help your spawn.” Finn told him when Phil followed him in the bathroom.

“Right.” Phil went through to Rae gently singing to a grumbling Robin. He was rubbing his eyes and on the verge of screaming in tantrum.

It took her several minutes, but Rae managed to get him to settle back to sleep.

At 11pm, after they’d watched a movie, Finn checked in on Robin and came into their shared room in a panic, an unconscious Robin in his arms.

“He’s burning up!” Finn said in a terrified voice.

When they got to the hospital he was immediately admitted with influenza. He hadn’t been coughing at all, so this came as a surprise to them.

Robin passed his first birthday in hospital when his diagnosis was changed to pneumonia; apparently it was a complication of his influenza.

Days were spent by his bedside not even able to touch him because he was inside an oxygen tent, tubes down his throat and up his nose, wires everywhere.
Rae tried not to cry, but she did.

Phil tried not to pace, but he did.

Finn tried not to just sit staring, feeling utterly hopeless, but he did.

As verbally forceful as Phil was with the medical staff, they never seemed to have enough information. People came and went with comforting words and hugs and days bled into each other as they watched their son struggling to breathe, completely unconscious. He hadn’t woken up since the first day he’d been in there.

Phil was getting them coffee, to help with the lack of sleeping and Finn had taken his place pacing the room.

“I keep thinking…” Rae said in a miserable, helpless voice, “Of all the times I said I’d throw him over the balcony if he didn’t stop crying.” Her voice shuddered with tears, “I’d give anything to hear him cry now.”

“You know this isn’t your fault, right?” Finn asked and Rae didn’t reply. Finn sat beside her and laced his arm around her waist. “No one could’ve stopped this. It’s pneumonia. We know it just happens.”

“Where’d he get it from?” Rae said, “I wasn’t careful enough when I took him out.”

“You got paparazzi on your arse every time you take him out Rae; you’ve done amazing. There’s not even a picture of him in the press anywhere.” Finn sighed, “Maybe it were when I took him out. Or Phil… or when we was all out together?” Finn made her look at him, “Maybe it’s still in me and I gave it to him.”

“No.” Rae shook her head. “It’s not your fault, or Phil’s.”

“Not yours either.” Finn reiterated. Rae nodded her head and looked back at Robin.

“I couldn’t stand it if…” She couldn’t even think about it. The possibility of Robin dying was too much for her and she started to weep. Finn held her tightly. When Phil came in he put the cups down and sat with them, the three of them clinging together for comfort.

Each day felt like a century, but just 7 days passed in hospital before Robin opened his bright blue eyes. His gaze sought out his parents, and as soon as he saw them he tried to make a noise, stifled by the pipes. And then he tried to cry. Twenty seconds after he’d woken up, his fathers were frantically hitting the call button if they were Phil, and running down the corridor calling for a doctor if they were Finn. Rae stood, her hands against the oxygen tent, looking in at her baby, telling him he’d be ok, that everything was alright.

And two days later he was back home. There were antibiotics and Finn had decided to buy humidifiers and air cleaners and oxygenators and all sorts of contraptions. Robin was grizzly and still a little poorly, but he was clearly on the mend; he was already back to pulling himself up on every item of furniture in the house.

*  

Rae was reading a book about Australian Aboriginal cultures, still trying to unravel Elsa, and Phil was reviewing the ‘Hamlet’ script Elsa had given him; there were minimal edits, which he appreciated. Finn was in his room editing music for a television series; he was getting more work like that and he enjoyed it.
Robin sat on the floor playing with the blocks Finn had gotten him. He loved those blocks.

When Rae looked up Robin had stood up, in the middle of the room, with nothing helping him.

“Look…” She barely breathed.

“Pardon-?” Phil looked up with an inquisitive expression that instantly turned to awe. Rae pulled out her phone, her eyes not leaving Robin and texted Finn; she didn’t want to call him into the room in case it startled Robin.

He stood there, tottering, as if on the brink of tumbling back to the ground. He took a small shuffling step just as Finn came into the room. Finn stopped, his mouth open wide in excitement. They all silently watched Robin figure walking out. He took another small step and then started to cough. He went crashing to his bum. Rae stood up, ready for him to cry, ready to pat his back and help him with the last remnants of his illness. But he instantly rocked himself back onto his knees, his hands planted on the floor and pushed himself wobblingly to his feet.

“My word.” Phil was amazed with his determination. “He’s brilliant.”

“Aye, I told ya; he’s my son.” Rae shot back at Phil. Robin took another step, this time slightly more sure of himself.

“He’s gonna be running around the house by the end o’ the week.” Finn marvelled.

* 

Rae was shopping, a quick trip out to get the things they needed. She was looking at her shopping list, checking her phone and generally in a hurry when something stopped her short. She stopped, staring in the used book store. She had found the perfect present for Tom and Archie. She had no reason to buy this other than it was perfect. She started to snigger slightly and tried to keep it together as she picked up the book.

“Oh my…” She tried to get herself under control before she went inside to buy it.

When she showed Finn and Phil, Finn spent a solid minute laughing while Phil tried and failed to not laugh.

“Oh it’ll be perfect for ‘em.” Finn agreed.

* 

“Hello Yoda!” Danny cooed at Robin and he giggled loudly. Because Robin was born on May the fourth, Danny was always calling Robin ‘Star Wars’ related names. It was a little late, but they were finally having Robin’s first birthday party. They had intended to have the entire gang there, but instead opted only for the close gang and family. Robin was only a few weeks out of being in hospital, so everyone understood the smaller guest list. Danny got a big hug from Robin before he ran off squealing ‘Finn-dad.’

Kelsey had set up painting easels for the kids and gotten wash-out paint so their clothes wouldn’t be ruined. She loved teaching them all about art. Isaac was studiously listening to her as she spoke about canvases and paints. Chloe thought Isaac might end up being an artist one day; he loved to paint and draw.

The house was a happy, busy mess of chaos, with children running around everywhere. Rae caught Alex drawing on the walls and agreed not to tell her dads if she agreed not to draw on other
people’s property without permission ever again, and to instead draw in the art books Kelsey gave them. Rae then told Kelsey that Alex might need a bigger medium than just an art book and Kelsey asked Alex to decorate one of the walls in her lounge room. Alex was super excited about it.

Karim was delightedly noting every time he heard something come out of Robin’s mouth that might have remotely been French or Arabic while Linda was setting up the presents on the table.

“Arch.” Rae said, her eyes on her mother, happily flirting with Karim and adoring Robin.

“Yes?” Arch came over as Rae caught Tom’s eye and motioned for him to come over. When she had both of them with her, Rae revealed a small, hand-wrapped gift.

“This is for you, to read to Alex.” Rae said, desperately trying to keep her face straight.

“Well shouldn’t she be opening it?” Archie asked and Rae shook her head.

“No…” Rae answered obliquely, “It’s as much for you.”

“Alright…” Archie answered with obvious misgivings. He had caught the cheeky glint in Rae’s eye. He opened the present and stared at it in disbelief.

“What is it?” Tom asked. But as soon as he saw it he burst into laughter.

“What’s going on you three?” Chloe came over with Yolanda in her arms. She read the name of the children’s book out loud. “Who will toss my salad?” She stared at the book for a few moments before cracking into laughter.

“We are not reading this book to Alex!” Archie asserted through his laughter.

“Oh why not?” Rae asked innocently, “It’s just a book about a girl wanting someone to toss her salad…” Tom nearly choked on laughter, and Chloe was nearly crying from it. “She just wants you all to eat healthy!”

“D’you give it to ‘em?” Finn came over with Phil in tow. But he saw Archie’s face and started laughing immediately. Chloe motioned for Rhys to come over and showed him the cover of the book. He grinned broadly and shook his head.

“Someone didn’t think that through.” Archie said taking the book from Chloe and looking at the cover.

“Or someone was taking the piss.” Tom said.

“It’s an older book, it might not have been a saying back then.” Chloe answered.

Quite suddenly Kelsey appeared looking both furious and confused.

“I can’t believe you invited her!” She spat at Phil.

“Kelsey I understand-” Phil started.

“I don’t think you do understand how I feel!”

“This is our house, and we will invite-”

“Then don’t invite me if she’s coming!”
“It was me!” Ra said stepping between the warring siblings. “I wheedled and nagged until he agreed to invite her.” Rae told Kelsey. “She’s done some evil things, I know. But I wanted to give her the chance to-”

“To fuck up your kid too?” Kelsey asked spitefully.

“Kelsey please.” Finn said softly. She glared at Finn for a moment.

“Fine.” She said huffily. “But don’t expect me to speak to that bitch.” She stormed off, back to the painting area where Isaac was still very seriously studying his canvas a he painted. She said something happy and encouraging to him, her bad mood in no way apparent.

Phil looked over at Meredith. Rae had lied. Rae had been the one to have the most misgivings about inviting her. But Phil had wanted to give her a chance to know her grandson. And he had wanted Robin to know his grandmother. Phil had no intention of ever leaving Robin alone with that woman, he was going to watch her like a hawk. But she was still Robin’s grandmother, and he didn’t want Robin to miss out on knowing his grandparents.

“We should’ve told Kels.” Rae said softly.

“We weren’t sure Meredith was gonna come.” Finn answered. They both noticed Phil’s spine straighten, as if he was drawing himself to his full height in preparation for what was to come, perhaps giving himself strength. His jaw jutted as he raised his chin, his eyes never leaving his mother.

Meredith stood in the doorway to the back yard; Grace had let her in and brought her out to the garden. But her eyes where on Robin. Her hand went to her mouth and after a few moments spent gathering herself she went to her grandson, knowing who he was despite how many children there were in the room, and having never even seen a picture of him before. She crouched down before him and started to talk softly, kindly. Robin stared at her with obvious interest.

Finn noticed his father looking on with an eagle eye, watching to see what Meredith would do, knowing how horrid she had been to Phil.

Linda, having been filled in, in even greater detail than Gary, watched her with a deeply uninviting expression. Karim was also watching closely; he believed Linda had reason to dislike this woman, so he was backing his wife up. Their son, Shane, was almost 11 now and he was following Aiesha around, annoying her.

Phil cleared his voice and headed towards his son and mother. When Meredith saw him, it was very obvious to everyone watching, even though they couldn’t hear what she was saying, that she was thanking Phil. Finn and Rae clasped hands, letting Phil deal with her on his own terms, but ready to jump to his defence if it looked like he needed them. Robin reached up for Phil and Phil picked him up, still listening to his mother talking.

“Alright everyone.” Linda said after having waited what she thought was long enough for Meredith to plead her case for more frequent visitations. “Pressie time!” She said and went over to Phil. She took Robin from Phil’s arms, Phil letting her do so. She had an almost smug air around her; rubbing it in to Meredith that she didn’t have the right to see her grandchild. In Linda’s opinion, Phil was being too kind giving that woman a second chance. She sat Robin down in his high chair and everyone crowded around the table. Rae hadn’t seen the point of doing something like this; it’s not like Robin would remember it. She thought that the party was more a celebration that they’d survived the first year.
But now that she saw him there, giggling and throwing his arms around while her family took photos of him and showed him the presents they’d gotten him, she was glad they’d done it. She felt herself tearing up and wiped her eyes quickly.

“Sentimentality.” She mumbled to herself. But she knew she wasn’t fooling anyone.

* 

“Oh god, I’d forgotten how loud they can be!” Linda said putting a hand to her ear when Robin squealed. He was running around the house with Finn and Phil while Rae tried to have tea with her mother.

“Welcome to my nightmare.” Rae sighed.

“Are you gonna have another pet? Apparently 2 years is good spacing.”

“Yeah but he’s not two yet mum.” Rae answered.

“So you are gonna have another one!” Linda said excitedly and Rae rolled her eyes.

“Maybe, if Finn wants one that’s, you know…”

“His?”

“Robin is his mum.” Rae answered firmly. “I meant genetically his.”

“So did I.” Linda answered, “There’s no denying Robin’s his too.”

“And adopted children are no less loved or part of a family than biological ones.” Rae added, knowing that Archie and Tom were starting the process of adoption now.

“I know pet.” Linda said, “Just think of all the gays with their kids. They all love their kids.” She said, “Just look at Archie and Tom.” She went on, “Tom’s not in anyway related to Alex, but you couldn’t doubt it for a second; he loves that girl with all his heart. He’s a brilliant father and she’s his girl.” She nodded and Finn and Robin, playing a strange kind of tag, Phil laughing at their antics now. “It’s the same with him. You three make brilliant parents together. I’m not sure if you’d have been as good if it hadn’t been all three of you.”

“Remember when you didn’t approve mum?” Rae teased.

“You’ll never let me forget!” Linda tutted, “I was wrong baby girl. So wrong. It was just so different to what I was used to. But I can see now that it’s right for you. And it’s right for that little boy. No matter what the media says.” Rae groaned; she’d been staying away from all sorts of news outlets because she knew that speculation over who the father was would eventually turn to speculation about whether this was a healthy household for a child to grow up in.

“Is it bad?” She asked.

“They might ease up if he’d been seen in public.” Linda answered, “But I’m so glad you’ve kept him out of the spotlight so far. Can’t do it forever though pet.” Rae let out a deep breath.

“Aye, we know.”

“Well, do it on your terms. Not theirs.” She advised, “and-” Her mobile phone beeped. Rae knew that was the tone for Aiesha; her mum had different tones for everyone in her phone. “Hang on.” Linda said and read the message. She sighed deeply, looking tired.
“What is it?” Rae asked.

“Aiesha’s pulling away from us a lot lately.”

“She’s nearly 19 mum. I think it’s kinda natural at that age innit?” Rae asked feeling a sudden ache and fear that someday her little boy would pull away from her.

“I suppose.” Linda said philosophically. “It just feels different. Like she’s keeping something from us. I tried to hint that I’d be ok if she were a lesbian. Which is what I think it is.” She said.

“She’s probably conflicted cos you’re all Muslim.” Rae said, “The general feeling is that religion doesn’t really like our kind.”

“You know we’re not strict.” Linda said, “And Karim says there’s room for interpretation on that topic.” She added.

“You’re angling for me to talk to her aren’t you?” Rae sighed.

“If you could?”

“Mum!” Rae said, “I’m not gonna try and wheedle information outta her for you. If she wants to talk to me I’ll listen, and I’ll keep her privacy.”

“As long as she’s got someone I trust to talk to.”

* 

Rae’s salad tossing children’s book had begun somewhat of a competition amongst the gang to find the most inappropriate children’s book.

Chloe found a ‘Thomas the Tank Engine’ with a picture of Thomas looking like he was getting fucked from behind, even though you could only see his face, and the conductor’s arm looked like a penis about to go in his mouth. On the same page, Thomas was gasping about getting a special load…

Chop then found a book with kids having a snow fight and one kid asking another if they liked it in their face, while throwing white snow in their face and the other child replied that they like it any place… It was more than a little reminiscent of a cumshot to the face and they all agreed that it had to be deliberate.

By this time Danny had become aware of their endeavour and had searched for weeks for a suitable addition. He found a pop-up book. On one of the pages was a pink elephant, who’s trunk popped up from the page like a huge grotesque pink penis.

Next Grace, Danny’s partner, found a book that had the wonderful story of Baby looking up to see Dick going up, up, up… It was supposed to be about a boy climbing a tree… But the book just proved that dick jokes were always funny, no matter your age. Especially since not many kids were called ‘Dick’ nowadays.

Tom’s find nearly killed them all with laughter. There was a picture of a little boy pulling his pants back on while a sheep stared at him, and under it the text read ‘a morning of awkwardness is far better than a night of loneliness.’ They had laughed so hard that Alex and Isaac had started to worry about them all.

Rhys found a book called ‘Mommy Drinks Because you’re Bad.’ That set them all of in laughter,
and then into morbid curiosity about how the book was written, why, and who even buys this book, and then into outrage at the thought of some poor kid actually being given this book.

Finn’s book was called ‘Why is Mommy Moaning’ and it’s fair to say the gang had a good time coming up with explanations as to why she might be moaning.

Phil found a book which depicted some basic anatomy issues when it had a picture of a ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ elephant, the boy peeing from more or less the right spot, the girl appearing to pee out of her arse. After the laughter, Phil commented that feminist research had indicated that most people had a poor understand of ‘female’ anatomy, and he didn’t think that shit like this helped. A long feminist discussion had followed, and the inappropriate children’s books were suddenly becoming more serious as they all realised that some people were actually giving these books to their kids.

Izzy lightened the mood a bit by finding a book called ‘Games you can Play with your Pussy’ with a very satisfied looking carton cat on the front.

There were dozens of books found, so much laughter and so much discussion for some of them, they spent months on this hilarious little endeavour. But when Archie found a book called ‘Goodbye Testicles’ about a dog getting de-sexed that led to a long an awkward conversation when Alex found it, everyone agreed that maybe it was time to stop…

*

Rae knew she shouldn’t look.

She knew it.

But she still found herself glancing at the newsagent as she went past.

That was her first mistake.

Her second mistake had been letting her curiosity get the better of her and actually taking a closer look.

There were several articles about her family. All conjecture about why they hadn’t shown Robin in public yet, or even released their child’s name to the press.

Some suggested that they weren’t coping, with the reporter saying they had spoken to sources close to the family.

Another article said that the child had been born with deformities and was very ugly, this one quoted unnamed medical sources.

Another article, quoting an unnamed family friend, said that the relationship was falling apart, that it had always been a troubled and difficult relationship, and now with the addition of a child separation was only a matter of time.

Another article wrung their moral hands over whether it was child abuse for Robin to be raised by three parents, and suggested that child protection advocates were calling for the removal of the child and that the appropriate government officials were looking into it.

There were several articles moralising about whether it was ok for the three of them to have a child. Lots of reporters opining that it was ok for them to have their freaky relationship when it was just the three of them; all consenting adults presumably, but bringing a kid into it was reprehensible.
Rae was beyond furious. Her mother had warned her that the media was going crazy, but it had been 18 months since Robin had been born, how could they still be going on about it?

She also remembered that her mother had suggested that she show Robin off to the media on her own terms.

“Finn!” She called through the house when she got home. Finn’s station was listened to by millions of people worldwide, the website had millions of hits a day. It had branched out into books, tv, movies and games reviews and discussion as well. Their movies expert Tracey had nearly wet herself when she had gotten an interview with Colin Firth recently, and she’d been asking Finn to get her an interview with Phil for months…

“Aye, what’s up girl?” He came out of the music room with Robin on his hip. They had converted one of the four sitting rooms into a huge music room, the piano, violin, cello, double bass, guitars and various other kids musical instruments were all in there. Finn’s guitar was often in his own room too, which was also a music room of sorts, but it was a different kind of music room. It was where he did his work, not where he played for fun. Robin had a maraca in his hand and was shaking it mercilessly, utterly delighted by the sound it was making.

“Does Robbie still want an interview with me?” Robbie was Finn’s book expert on his station.

“Aye.” He said and let Robin down so he could run around with his maraca.

“Part of me doesn’t wanna give them the satisfaction… and most of me is worried about the effect this’ll have on Robin…” Rae said looking at him banging the maraca against the wall. He was gentle. He’d been taught ‘gentle’ but he was obviously very interested in the sound a maraca made when hit against various things, because next he moved on to banging it against the door.

“I was wondering when you’d see the media shite.” Finn said and rubbed his stubble.

“I think we have to introduce Robin the world. On our own terms.” Rae said, “So an interview with Robbie and Tracey, exclusive to your station.”

“Hm.”” Finn thought about it.

“I can talk about what I’m working on. Phil can talk about what he’s working on, and we can also just happen to have Robin around.”

“Cos we’ll have the interview here.” Finn understood. “Have you got any projects to talk about?” He knew Rae’s writing had dribbled down to a halt.

“I’ll think o’ something.” Rae said, but as soon as the words were out of her mouth she had the memory of something she had only half thought of in the past. “Yeah I got something.” She said slowly, thinking about how she could do this project.

* Rae and Finn were trying not to snigger as Tracey stared, starry eyed, and obviously in lust at Phil. Phil was sitting with Robin on his lap, playing piano. Robbie had told Finn to hire some photographers, a camera person and sound people for the interview, so a small army of technicians were laying out cable and setting up angles and light in the main sitting room. Phil was soothing Robin with music; the little boy seemed a little intimidated by everyone barking orders. He wasn’t used to such stern tones of voices. Tracey slowly raised her camera and took a few candid photos. Rae had no doubt they would be stunning and she’d have to get copies of them. Robbie was standing beside her looking around their home in awe. Neither of them had ever dreamed they’d
end up here. Besides a few emails and skype sessions with Finn, all completely professional, there’d never been any hint of a chance of getting close to this trio. And now here they were getting the world exclusive story of Robin… they knew they were here to talk about Phil and Rae’s projects, but they also knew that the real story was that little boy, sitting kicking his bare feet, looking intently at what his father’s hands were doing.

“What do you reckon that is he’s playing?” Robbie asked in awe.

“No idea.” Tracey whispered in enraptured lust. “But it’s beautiful.”

“Liszt.” Finn said as he walked past them into the music room, “Feux Follets.” He added and sat down, looking over the list of questions they’d all agreed upon. Phil had gotten very good at playing devilishly tricky piano pieces with Robin on his lap. The boy loved it, and if he deemed the piece too boring he’d get stroppy.

“Robin’s going through a Liszt phase.” Rae said and sat beside Finn to also go over the questions, she was worried that some of them might be too personal for Phil’s liking. Finn had noticed the overly personal questions too. Tracey grinned dopily as she turned to look at Rae and Finn; she was loving every minute of this.

“How does a 2 year old go through that kind of a phase?” Robbie asked sceptically and Finn and Rae shared a side-glance. They’d been asking each other that question for months now. But Robin was very clearly musically gifted, even before his body was capable of playing instruments. And that seemed to frustrate him sometimes. He very obviously understood and wanted to play music, but he very obviously couldn’t play any instrument yet.

“He’s not 2 yet.” Finn answered in response.

“He’s very musically inclined.” Rae answered. “It was bound to happen, having us three for parents.”

“Can I just say it’s a real honour to be here.” Tracey held out a hand for Rae to shake and Rae took it. She could see a deep excitement in Tracey’s eyes and supposed she was very star-struck being this close to Phil. Tracey made an excited sound and stared at Rae for a moment, a huge grin on her face. And then she seemed to remember herself and cleared her throat, looked down and shrugged nonchalantly, “We should put that stuff about music in the interview.” She turned back to Phil and Robin and Finn made a note of it; Tracey was right. Phil had no idea he was being watched; his back was to them, and it was unlikely he could hear them over the music he was playing. They could just see the side of him and Robin, they couldn’t know yet that Robin was biologically his; they hadn’t seen enough of him. Rae took a deep breath; the whole world would know after tomorrow, when the interview was scheduled to go up online.

“Does he like any good music?” Robbie asked and Rae and Finn again shared an amused glance.

“I wouldn’t let Phil hear you say that.” Rae said, “And Robin likes all sorts of music.”

“He’s not too keen on meaningless pop or that country rock shite.” Finn mused, “But he seems ok with pretty much everything else.” Rae nodded her head in agreement.

“He likes 80s pop and some 90s pop.” Rae added, “Loves Beyonce too.”

“Oh aye.” Finn nodded.

“But a lot of pop, like the mass manufactured pop, he just doesn’t seem to like.”
Phil finished up the piano piece and Robin put his little hands on the piano and pressed the keys carefully.

“Well done.” Phil encouraged.

“More?” Robin asked and Phil smiled indulgently.

“Of course!” He answered putting his hands back on the piano, “More Liszt?”

“Yes please!”

“Alright.” He started to play ‘La Campanella’ and Robin again was transfixed by his hands moving on the keys.

“He’s beautiful.” Tracey breathed still staring at Phil and Robin.

“Which one?” Robbie teased and she turned and gave him a filthy look.

“We’re ready to go!” The camera woman said and Phil stood up, picking up Robin and putting him on his hip as he did.

“We gotta go do this thing ok?” He asked and Robin nodded, “You don’t have to do anything, but mum, Finn-dad and me would really like it if you could be there with us, is that ok?”

“Yeah.” Robin said distractedly, “Can I sit on?”

“Who do you wanna sit on?”

“Finn-dad.” Phil went into the lounge room with Robin as everyone started to settle into place. Rae sat down and Finn sat beside her, Phil handing Robin to him as soon as Finn was settled. Phil sat on the other side of Rae and Finn started to jolt his knees for Robin, just as Robin had known he would.

“Horsey!” Robin cried out merrily and started giggling. Everyone laughed with him; he was a cute kid.

A few minutes later the camera woman, Fiona, told them that they were rolling.

“First, let me just say what an absolute delight and honour it is to be here with you, doing this interview in your beautiful home.” Tracey tried not to gush and Robbie gave her an amused look.

“Thank you.” Rae replied.

“I must say Mr Seymour, you play piano beautifully.” She said, her eyes on Phil. It was strange hearing him called Mr Seymour. Legally his name was now Phil Nelson, but they had kept his name as Phil Seymour for his career, just as Rae was still Rae Earl on her books, but Rae Nelson legally.

“Thank you, and please call me Phil.” He answered warmly. Rae tried not to roll her eyes; she was used to women falling in lust with her men instantly.

“How long have you been playing?” Tracey asked and Finn had to stop himself from sighing; they were already off-script with the questions. The ‘script’ was a bunch of questions to guide them all, not an actual script that had to be stuck to word for word. The interview was meant to be organic and free-flowing, but everyone knew what kind of questions were going to be asked. And questions about Phil’s childhood or Robin were not questions that were supposed to be asked.
“Since I was very young.” Phil rarely talked about his childhood in specifics with reporters.

“Will you guide Robin into playing too?” Tracey asked, her eyes going to the little boy who was now staring at her curiously. As soon as she really looked at the boy, she could see that he was Phil’s. She felt a jolt of electricity; this was some story they were breaking, even if they weren’t going to actually talk about his paternity, it’d be all everyone was talking about tomorrow.

“Absolutely not.” Phil answered.

“Ab-” Robin tried to say the word.

“Ab-so-lute-lee.” Finn said slowly to him.

“Ab… zo…”

“Lute-lee.” Finn repeated.

“Lu-lee.”

“Wonderful!” Finn congratulated him and he laughed.

“Abzolulee!” Robin repeated his new word.

“May I ask-?” Tracey had waited patiently for Robin, but now her curiosity was burning at her.

“I will not be guiding Robin into any hobby or career. He will decide what he wants.” Phil answered.

“He’ll guide us on what he’s interested in.” Rae added. “We’re not all about strict rules and discipline and lessons. We want him to be a little boy and to learn and discover and figure out what he wants to do with his life.” She explained further, “We’ll stop him from harming himself and guide him where necessary, but we won’t be trying to influence him into making the choices we might want him to make. It’s his life and he needs to decide what he’s into.”

“Anyway.” Finn said, fully aware that things had gone off-script. “We’re not here to talk about Robin, as cute as he is…”

“No of course!” Tracey said, “Movies and books!” She looked at Robbie, who had so far been rather silent, an anomaly for him.

“I’m eager to hear what you’ve got coming up Rae.” Robbie asked, sticking on topic.

“Well, when I was younger, I used to keep a lot o’ diaries.” Rae said, “Chronicling what it were like being a fat teenage girl who was pretty much mental.” Finn and Phil both gave a fond grin and slight chuckle. “I was thinking that something like that might be really useful for teenagers nowadays, to know that they’re not alone, and it will get better.” Robin crawled across Finn’s lap to Rae’s lap and plonked himself down. Rae put her arms around his tiny waist and held him as she spoke, “So I’m editing up my old diaries to be published.”

“Sounds intriguing.” Robbie asked; no one had known what her project was going to be, so his interest was genuine. He shot off several questions about the project; there had been room in the ‘script’ for him to improvise his questions around her project and Rae found him to be an excellent and well-informed interviewer. She made a mental note to have interviews with him in the future; he knew and loved literature of all kinds. “Have you got any plays in the pipe-works? I’m quite a fan of your script work.” He asked when they had finished talking about her diaries.
“Thanks!” Rae, as always, wasn’t sure how to handle fans, so she just answered his questions without further comment on his admiration. “Yes actually, I’m about halfway through writing a play about Elsa Grant, the owner, producer and Head director of King Theatre Productions.”

“That’s… that’s the company Phil always works with when he does theatre?” Tracey asked, obviously to clarify for viewers.

“Yes that’s right.” Rae answered.

“What made you decide to do a biographical piece?” Robbie asked.

“When I was younger, having someone like Elsa around was so wonderful. She were my heroine. She was, is, so strong, wise and inspiring, and I just think every young girl should have a powerful woman in their life to look up to.”

“I couldn’t agree more.” Tracey said, her eyes glued to Rae, obviously very interested in her upcoming projects, ‘Can I just say, you’ve been that woman for me.”

“Well…” Rae stopped, having no idea how to reply to that; it was completely unexpected, “Thank you.” She stammered through the words, “I never thought, I’d be-”

“Of course you are.” Phil said.

“You inspire me all the time girl.” Finn agreed, “Why you wouldn’t you inspire women too?” Rae felt herself blushing and Robin’s fingers gently touched her cheek, obviously he was fascinated by her change in colour. Rae took a deep breath and gathered her thoughts quickly.

“Well I suspect everyone is an inspiration to someone.” Rae said, “But it’s quite an honour to be thought of an inspiration nonetheless. Thank you.”

Phil read the text from Finn; the interview was breaking his website, he complained. It had been well-received according to Sarah, and all the tabloids were playing catch-ups with the story now. Some of them accusing Finn of editing it to make them all look good, despite Tracey and Robbie publically stating they did all the editing with no input from Finn, even though he owned the station. Finn and Rae were both working in their rooms. Whilst there was a huge computer hub in the sitting room that they could both work on, Phil was sitting in it with his mother. And both of them had thus made a hasty retreat. Phil wanted to try and mend broken bridges. Both Rae and Finn had misgivings about it, especially given Kelsey’s vehement opposition to it, but they would support him in any choice he made. Robin was playing with blocks, he seemed to be trying to build a bridge over one of their potted plants. Meredith was quite taken by him and she stared at him lovingly while Phil shot back a reply to Finn, texting without looking at the phone, a trick both Rae and he had mastered.

“He’s brilliant. Such a bright, intelligent boy.” Meredith cooed. “He’s very obviously your son-”

“If you’re implying that Finn is in any way unintelligent or lesser than me, I can assure you that you are 100% wrong.” Phil answered firmly.

“I meant with his looks.” Meredith returned. “But… but I do assume you are the most intelligent in this family. It’s unlikely that I’m wrong, given your IQ-”

“IQ measurements are meaningless.” Phil had said this many times before.
“Of course.” Meredith answered, clearly unwilling to argue the point, even though she obviously disagreed. “Anyway, he’s such a perfect little boy.” She turned back to Robin, who was now carefully touching the leaves of the potted plant, just like Rae had taught him. She had taught him to be careful with plants, that they were living things, and to not just pull their leaves off. She’d done this after having caught him pulling up her broccoli plants. He’d only had the calm, patient lesson from her once, and had never ripped up another plant since. His interest in them persisted, he just gently touched them now.

“Yes.” Phil agreed, “He is perfect.”

“I can’t believe he’s only 20 months old.” She said, “He’s so advanced…”

Phil was struck by a sudden similarity between himself, his mother and his late father. This obsession with being advanced, being spectacular, the best, extraordinary. Robin was all these things, but Phil didn’t know if he would accept an ordinary child. And the realisation of that struck him hard. He needed to change. Rae and Finn had already pulled him up on being too much like his father; wanting to push education too soon, trying to encourage genius too much. Phil knew he needed to do more to remedy this disease that ran through the Seymour family. He would not inflict it on his son. He’d already committed himself to not pushing Robin into any particular profession, but he knew he had to do more.

“That little boy is going to run the country one day. Or cure cancer, or own a fortune 500 company, or be the lead violinist in-”

“Yes he’s extraordinary.” Phil cut her off, “But he’d be just as extraordinary if he wanted to be a plumber, you understand?”

“Why would he want to do that?” Meredith asked, clearly confused. She couldn’t understand why anyone would want to be a plumber. She just assumed that menial jobs like that were out of financial necessity, rather than actual desire or pleasure in the work. And Robin would never know ‘financial necessity’ – she’d see to it if her son would not or could not.

“Whatever he wants to do with his life mother, he’ll be just as extraordinary, and he’ll have my full support.”

“But you must push geniuses sometimes.” Meredith said, “It’s well documented that the smarter you are, the more likely you are to have depression.” She added, “People like you need to be guided with a firm hand Phil. That’s what your boy will need too.”

“I think the three of us are doing a perfectly fine job with him Meredith.” Phil said coldly. Meredith bit her tongue and looked back at her grandson. Unsurprisingly, Robin began to cry; he seemed to be able to sense tension in his parents and he didn’t like it. Phil got up to comfort him and Meredith sighed.

“You always used to like music.” She said softly, “It could always calm you down.”

* 

“Why on Earth would you want to stop his language lessons?” Rae was confused, but Phil seemed so upset and adamant.

“I don’t want to be my father Rae.” He whispered miserably. Finn pursed his lips and looked down at his feet while Rae put a hand on Phil’s shoulder and looked him in the eyes.

“The fact that you’re saying that means you’ll never be like him. He never saw what he did as a
bad thing.” Rae told him, but Phil just looked away.

“I keep asking myself would I have been disappointed had he been an ordinary child.” Phil said bitterly.

“Of course you wouldn’t’ve.” Rae answered firmly.

“But we’ll never know because he’s so extraordinary.” Phil said.

“I don’t think your own child can ever be anything other than extraordinary.” Finn said, “Regardless of IQ or how advanced he is or if he’s hitting those milestones before everyone else.”

Finn said, “I revel in how brilliant he is too, ya know?”

“Really?” Phil asked, surprised.

“We all do.” Rae said, “But I don’t let it define my relationship with him, nor do I let it define him in my mind.” Phil sat down on the lounge, his mind racing.

“Don’t can his language lessons.” Finn sat next to him and put an arm around Phil’s shoulders, “He loves ‘em.”

“Aye he does.” Rae reinforced what Finn had said. “Giving him an early education in things he clearly loves, like music, and language… it’s not the same as pushing him.” Rae said, “Giving him the resources to explore everything he wants to and be the best he can be, isn’t the same as trying to make him into a genius or trying to make him be something in particular.”

“Yeah if we don’t educate that little genius, he’ll get bored and become a criminal mastermind.” Finn concluded. Phil scoffed and then broke out into a grin.

“You sure he loves those lessons?” Phil asked.

“He’s constantly babbling in over a dozen languages. He loves that he’s already smarter than his parents.” Finn said.

“Not smarter.” Phil said, “There’s no such thing. He’s just been given opportunities that we were not given.” They all knew that Phil was keen to learn other languages; he had declared that when his schedule eased up he’d start on any language Robin picked. But his father had not seen languages as important, so it had not formed part of his core education. Nor had his mother seen them as important, unlike music and the arts, so she had not fought to have them included.

“Maybe you should speak to Kester again?” Rae asked him and Phil nodded; he didn’t want any of his ugly family history affecting his family in anyway.

* 

“Ok, I agreed to this only on the condition that I get some of your excellent banana and coconut cake, so cough it up.” Elsa said with a wry smile. Rae had noticed that Elsa’s demeanour had softened as she got older; heading towards 50. She seemed happier. Rae liked that.

“Alright, I made you a whole cake to take home.” Rae said and handed her the cake in a Tupperware container. “And I have a second cake here, with chai, just the way you like it, for us to enjoy now.”

“Oh god.” Elsa groaned, “That means you’re really gonna pry.”
“You gotta help me write this thing.” Rae tried to not plead. Elsa sighed. “I just need some information…”

“You really wanna write this play huh?”

“It’s so important to me.” Rae said. “And while it’s not gonna be exactly your life, I do wanna base it off you, and to do that, I just need to know more.”

“Like what?” Elsa took the proffered plate of cake and eyed it, “This cake better be worth it.” She said in an amused tone.

“It will be.” Rae answered, “Tell me about when you was young.” Rae tried to not be too exact with her questions; she knew that would shut people down.

“You know that when I was 20, I was married, and that he wasn’t very nice… Dr King… my ex-surname.” Elsa said, “Well before him I was in love.”

“Raf.” Rae knew who he was; he looked uncannily like Finn, just as his twin brother Dominic did.

“No.” Elsa said softly, “Not Raf.”

“But I thought Raf was your one true love.” Rae furrowed her brows.

“I don’t talk about Australia.” Elsa said softly and Rae suddenly understood. Whatever had happened with this other man was far worse than what had happened with Raf.

“Alright.” Rae said softly, “So maybe your time in Australia happens outside of the play.” Elsa gave a small smile in response, “And we focus on your time here.”

“What d’you wanna know?”

“I dunno… everything.” Rae said excitedly. It seemed like Elsa was going to talk.

“There’s a lot.” She warned.

“I can take it!” Rae said, grabbing her pen and paper. “Start with when you got here…”

“Yeah I don’t really talk about Dr King either.” Elsa said softly. “So I suppose we’ll start from when I first lived alone. I was 20… and I had no one in the world, other than my financial manager and the lady who did my first tattoo. Remember I told you I got my grass tattoo after I left my husband.” Rae nodded and looked at the notes she’d already taken. She was trying to write everything down, not sure what would be important.

“Financial manager?” Rae asked.

“I had some money to invest.” Elsa gave a soft chuckle. Rae knew there was more to that story than Elsa was going to give her from the way Elsa simply continued without any explanation. Elsa often did that when she wasn’t willing to talk about something in detail. “I was living on the streets, utterly friendless. My money was all invested in shares and I wasn’t willing to draw on it just yet, so I was starving too.”

“Sounds scary and lonely.”

“Well I quickly made friends.” Elsa answered, “My financial manager is Lysa, you saw her one time in Stamford.”
“I think I remember, you had that really cute guy carrying all your stuff?”

“Yes that’s right.” Elsa laughed shaking her head. “He’s one of Andy’s boys.”

“Andy?” Rae said and then remembered Rhys and Andromeda at the sex club. “Andromeda.”

“That’s right.” Elsa nodded. “And the lady that did my first tattoo was Joni, who you know as Pandora.”

“So that’s how you met all those people at the sex club?” Rae asked and Elsa nodded.

“She saw I was homeless and helpless and offered me some much needed help.”

“What kind of help?” Rae asked.

“A job.” Elsa said with a small grin.

“A job with Pandora… at the tattooist?”

(Of course not.” Elsa answered, “I have no skill at tattooing and they already had someone on reception.”

“At the sex club then?” Rae was thoroughly enthralled already.

“No, the club didn’t exist then.” Elsa answered, “And do you always call it ‘the sex club’?”

“Aye, what d’you call it?”

“Just the club.” Elsa shrugged.

“So where was the job?” Rae asked and settled in for an afternoon of questions, information, and frantic writing of notes for her next play.

* 

“Sorry we’re late.” Tom kissed Rae’s cheek.

“Yes Tom was being completely unreasonable.” Archie snarked and also gave Rae a kiss on the cheek.

“Alright…” Rae said slowly as Alex handed her a present for Robin; it was his second birthday party.

“I am not being unreasonable!” Tom answered, obviously trying not to snap in front of Alex.

“There are so many kids in Africa that need a good home.” Archie answered.

“Oh my god Arch, I don’t wanna be like Madonna with a black kid as an accessory.” Tom said, “It’s so racist.”

“We could be like Angelina, you like Angelina!” Archie answered, “We could take the child back to his homeland all the time and have him stay in contact with any family he has, and Rhys could help us navigate through-”

“There are kids in England that need a home too.” Tom answered.

“What is your problem with adopting outside of the country?” Archie asked in an exasperated
ton, he turned to Rea, “I suggested Latin America first, but he was opposed to that too.”

“I just think you should let kids stay in their own culture, close to their family.” Tom said, “A lot of kids up for adoption still have family, they just can’t or won’t take them.”

“You’re right, I’m not disagreeing with you. But a kid in an adoption centre is still in need of a good home, no matter what country he’s in, and we can offer that.”

“Right, so why not one from here?” Tom asked, “Why have you gotta go overseas?” Rae looked down at Alex, she was looking up at her fathers with an expression that told Rae that this argument had been ongoing for a very long time.

“It’s not that I gotta go overseas, I just-”

“You presume they’ve got it worse over there.” Tom snarked.

“Well don’t they?”

“Ask Rhys if he thinks Nigeria has it worse than here, see how he feels about it.” Tom snapped.

“Why have you always gotta bring Rhys into this discussion?” Archie snapped back. “He’s not the only person who’s got an opinion, you know?”

“You raised him first!” Tom shot back.

“Alright you two!” Rae said, “Time out.”

“You’re acting like kids!” Alex said with her hands on her hips. “And like uncle Rhys is your only black friend.” She said and left to go and play with Isaac. Tom and Archie watched her go, both with a shocked expression.

“Oh my god.” Archie said, “I have been such an incredible arse.”

“Me too.” Tom said. “And so racist. Fuck.” He sat down on the lounge and took Rae’s hand, as she stood there looking at where Alex had disappeared to and wondering if she could follow. Archie paced the room while Tom figured out his own head. “It’s just being white and adopting a kid of colour… it’s tricky territory, and Rhys is my best friend, and I completely trust his opinion and wisdom, so I always think to go to him.”

“Same.” Archie said, “Except the best friend bit.”

“But are we using him as the ‘black fried we have’ all the time?” He asked and looked up at Rae as if she had the answer.

“Guys, I think adoption is emotional and tricky…” Rae tried to think of what to say, “and you both have valid points, about letting kids stay in their culture, and also homeless kids need homes no matter where they’re from…” Rae nodded. “And also that Rhys is very wise and I think he’s used to being our go-to guy on just about everything, to be honest.” She said, “I think if you’re white you’re bound to be racist a lot o’ the time, just like men are misogynists a lot o’ the time.” She said, “It’s the way this society raises us all. But I think as two white blokes go, you two are doing a good job at not being knob-heads, and you try real hard not to be bigots, so I think…” Rae was thinking on the fly and speaking whatever came into her head, she just hoped it was the right thing to say, “I think you don’t treat Rhys like he’s the token black guy…. But I do think this is a racial issue, so you’re wanting to ask his opinion straight away, so it seems a little wiffy?” She shrugged slightly, not sure if she was right about any of this. Really, issues surrounding race needed to be
dealt with by people of colour; it wasn’t really white people’s area of expertise. As soon as Rae had thought she relayed it to them. “You know this is a racial issue.” She repeated, “Particularly, black, African kids. Rhys is black and of African descent, so out of all of us here, he’s the one most qualified to talk about this, so I actually think you’re right to wanna ask him about it.”

They both nodded thoughtfully, but Rae sensed something in Tom and she sat down next to him.

“What is it?” She asked him and Tom shook his head.

“Yeah what is it?” Archie asked, “You been dragging your heels about adoption from the get go.”

“I do wanna adopt.” He said. “it’s just… with Alex, you can see she’s related to you.” Tom said, “And I…” He shook his head, “it’s selfish but… I want…”

“You own genetic material.” Rae answered. She had been afraid of Finn wanting this very thing. But so far he hadn’t mentioned wanting his ‘own’ child. Tom nodded.

“But my sister isn’t exactly going to be forthcoming with a donation, you know?” Tom said, so… I guess…”

“You want a donor egg.” Rae said and Tom nodded again.

Why haven’t you told me this?” Archie asked. But it was normal for Tom to take time coming around to understanding himself on many topics.

“The donor I had in mind really hated her pregnancy and really probably doesn’t wanna go through it again.” Tom said, “So…”

“You mean Iz?” Rae asked and Tom gave her a look and then looked down.

“Yeah sure.” He answered.

“He means you.” Archie corrected and Rae’s eyes opened wide in surprise.

“Hey!” Finn came around the corner, “You’re missing out on all the fun.” He said, “Kelsey’s got a pottery corner, and let’s just say that Isaac has discovered anatomy and…” He started to laugh.

“Yeah we’re coming.” Rae answered and turned back to Tom and Archie.

“Don’t worry about it alright?” Tom said.

Yeah alright.” Rae said softly.

* *

“I’m gonna have another baby.” Rae said after they had put Robin to bed; all of the kids were sleeping on various beds and lounges and floors with cushions, and carriers throughout the house and all of their friends were outside in their entertaining area with wine, food, music and laughter; most of them would end up staying the night. Only Danny and Grace always went home every night, probably because neither of them drank. Phil and Finn looked at her, Finn with excitement, Phil with a confused air; they had agreed to wait for Finn to say he wanted another kid.

“We’re having another baby!” Finn said excitedly.

“Not we.” Rae said softly. “I been thinking about it all day. And I know I should ask you guys
first cos I’m such a bitch when I’m pregnant… but…” She sighed, “It’s Tom and Arch… I can’t say no to them”

“Oh.” Phil said softly as Finn stared at her for a moment.

“You’re gonna have Tom and Arch’s kid?” He asked and Rae nodded.

“Tom’s to be exact.” She said.

“They asked you?” Finn said slowly.

“No.” Rae said, “but Tom kinda let it slip that he wishes that he could have his own.” She said, “And the donor he wanted was me.”

“Alright.” Finn was clearly conflicted. Phil realised that this was probably the first time that the whole ‘biological child’ issue had really risen in Finn’s head. It was all fine for Rae to be sharing her genes with Phil to make a child; he still saw that child as his… but for Rae to be sharing her genes with Tom, and not him… it tugged at Finn, and Phil could see it. He could also see Finn not wanting to let his best mate Archie down, so he was gallantly fighting not to say anything about his misgivings. Rae was too busy focussing on how big of a decision this was for her to really see what Finn was going through, and fair enough; it was a big deal for her. But Phil had an excellent view of what both of them were going through right now. Rae was getting on in years, this conceivably could be the last child she’d carry, he knew that Finn was considering this but that Rae wasn’t. Phil knew he had to diffuse this situation before it ever started because there was far too much potential for things to become irrevocably painful.

“Do you really think you could give up a child you’d carried inside of you?” He asked. He almost regretted saying it after seeing the look on her face, pain and fear and a deep desire to help her friends and not let them down. But she obviously hadn’t wanted to consider that question.

“I don’t know.” She said honestly. Phil saw Finn’s mind ticking over everything, he could see the painful question on Finn’s lips, but Finn was holding it back. Phil tried again to stop it before it came.

“You wanted to abort Robin, you vehemently didn’t want kids, but when you thought about him growing inside of you, you couldn’t let him go.”

“I know.” Rae said defensively. “What are you doing?” She asked him bewildered, “You’ve never tried to convince me of what to do with my own body before.” She said, hurt by Phil trying to convince her not to do it.

“You’re willing to have a baby with Tom but not me?” Finn asked softly. Phil closed his eyes and plonked down on the lounge, rubbing his hands on his face. He had been trying to avoid that question.

“What?” Rae said, offended that Finn could think that way about her, but even more worried that the biological child question had finally come home to ruin their family.

“That’s not a fair question.” Phil said softly, “Rae didn’t deliberately get pregnant, we weren’t trying for a child…”

“I know.” Finn said, “But we could be now.” He said, “One that’s mi-” He stopped himself from saying it and looked down at his hands in horror at what he’d nearly said: *one that’s mine…*

“Robin is yours.” Phil said firmly.
“I know.” Finn’s mouth felt like it was stuffed with cotton wool. He was shocked at himself; these thoughts had never occurred to him until this moment, and he wasn’t enjoying them at all.

“If you had told me that you felt that way about Robin,” Rae said scathingly, “I would have tried for a child with you.” Rae looked over at Phil, “Phil and I had already agreed that if you ever said you wanted one of your own.” Her eyes snapped back to him, filled with hurt and anger, “we’d do everything we could to make that happen, but you never said-”

“It never mattered.” Finn said, “Until now.”

“Well I’m sorry, for Robin, that you don’t see him as yours enough to allow your best friend to have this opportunity.” Rae said coldly and left the room.

Rae slept in Robin’s room that night, curled up on his lounge. Chloe and Rhys slept in the bed in her room. Chop and Izzy took the fold out lounge in Phil’s room; they weren’t a couple again, but they lived and parented together and they often slept in the same bed, although not a lot of sleeping went on when they did… Tom and Archie took the futon in Finn’s room. Phil and Finn slept in their bed, missing Rae but both knowing there was no point in trying to convince her to join them.

In the morning Finn sat on the edge of the bed and watched Phil dressing.

“I really fucked up.”

“Not really.” Phil said softly. “I mean you hurt her. And me… And Robin if he’d have heard you.”

“Fuck.” Finn said under his breath.

“But I don’t think it’s wrong for you to have felt that way, or to have said something.” He sat down next to Finn, “If Robin had been yours, I still would have been his dad too. I’d have been Phil-dad and we’d have been as happy as we have been.” He took Finn’s hand. “But eventually, I think it would have come up.”

“You probably would’ve handled it better.” Finn said mournfully, beating himself up.

“Unlikely. It might have never come up with you if not for this thing with Tom and Archie.” Phil said, “It most certainly would have come up with me eventually. I have too much pride.” He said, “You know, even if we hadn’t known who the biological father was… it still would have come up.” Finn scrunched up his eyebrows in thought as Phil spoke, “There’s something, I don’t know… primal, about having a child.”

“Brings out the Neanderthal?” Finn said with a small, sad smile.

“Aye a little.” Phil answered matching his smile. “You know, it’s been one of the greatest moments, blessings, miracles, of my life to be able to have a child with the woman I love.” Phil said, “I would never want you to not experience that. The knowledge you and she mingled together and created life…” Finn stared into the distance with an undeniable expression of desire. “Fatherhood is far more than passing your genes on. We both know that because you’re already a father.” Phil told him.

“I am.” Finn agreed.

“But… it can be something very… particular and special… singular… to be the biological parent of a child.”
“I wouldn’t know.” Finn said sadly. “I probably never will.”

“If you want to try for a biological child with Rae—”

“I don’t really think it’s right for me to ask now.” Finn said, “And I feel like I betrayed Robin.” Phil could see how much that pained Finn. “Like, you don’t know how much I love that boy.” Finn shook his head, “I can’t believe that I ever allowed even the slightest hint that I don’t think of him as mine to… exist…”

“I understand.” Phil buttoned his shirt up and took Finn’s hand. “We gotta go feed our guests.” He said, “Be good hosts.” Finn nodded and followed him downstairs.

When they got downstairs, Tom and Archie were in the kitchen cooking up a storm.

“I love your kitchen Mr Big-Time-Actor.” Tom cooed, “So much healthy food!” He looked Phil up and down, “Gotta maintain that physique.” He grinned and turned back to the food he was making. Phil laughed along and started to help. He looked over at Finn, cutting up tomatoes and when Finn looked at him, Phil nodded at Archie. Finn looked over at Archie, focussed on chopping mushrooms. He understood what Phil was saying; he should talk to Archie.

“Hey.’ Finn said softly and motioned for Archie to leave the room with him. Archie gave him a quizzical look and followed him out into the computer/sitting room. Everyone else but them and some of the children were still sleeping, so they had the room to themselves.

“So apparently…” Finn had no idea how to broach the topic so he just went straight in, “Your man and my woman are gonna breed.”

“What?” Archie was astounded.

“Tom and Rae?”

“No, Tom said not to worry about it.”

“Well Rae worried about it, and now she’s gonna be a mum again… with Tom.”

“Wait.” Archie paced slightly. “I don’t know how I feel about this.” He said suddenly. “I don’t know how I feel about Rae being the mother to my child.” Finn hadn’t been expecting this from Archie.

“So you’re not—”

“Tom, never told me he wanted this, it was sprung on me last night too.” Archie said, “In his defence I’m sure he didn’t really know what he wanted until he finally gave voice to it. Tom’s a very ‘in the moment’ sort of a guy. I mean he knew what he wanted, just not in the solid way that saying it out loud would make it…..”

“Does that mean he doesn’t really want Rae to—”

“Oh no he wants it.” Archie said, “He’s wanted it for years he just didn’t know he wanted it till he gave it voice. And as soon as he gave it voice he knew it was exactly what he wanted; it made his wants solid” Archie said, “it’s just how he is.” Archie said when he saw Finn’s expression.

“How do you…?”

“Life is never dull.” Archie answered.
“… make plans or…?”

“I love the way he is. I’m hyper-organised and he lives in the now…”

“How does he run a business?”

“He’s brilliant Finn. And he has Rhys…”

“Oh right.”

“The thing is, he wouldn’t have thought it through before saying something. Not really. It was just a feeling in his gut until he said something.” Archie sat down, “So he didn’t think about the consequences or… or Rae’s age… or the fact that… well he can’t really ask to do it when you haven’t.” Finn lowered his eyes and Archie suddenly realised just how big of a deal it was that Rae had agreed to do it. “Oh god.” He said softly.

“It doesn’t matter.” Finn said. “It’s not like that; I got Robin and-”

“Oh god!” Archie repeated. “You want your own and she’s gonna have one with Tom.”

“Robin is mine.” Finn declared.

“I know. Like Alex is mine and Tom’s.” Archie said, “Like an adopted kid would be ours too. I know. I know you don’t love them any less. But you’re still thinking about it aren’t you?”

“I s’pose.” He admitted.

“Listen Finn…” Archie said, “I dunno how I feel about this…”

“Me either.” Finn admitted, “Like I know I should be all there for you. but-”

“No Finn…” Archie said, “I get it. It’s alright.”

Tom watched, his eyes narrowed, when Rae came in and motioned for Phil to come with her, leaving him alone preparing all the food.

They went to Robin’s room; he was up and running around the house with Isaac and Alex, so they could talk.

“Why did you try to convince me not to do it?” Rae asked Phil instantly, “Was it cos you were trying to stop Finn from saying that… thing he said?” Phil looked down and slowly nodded. “You had no right to do that!” She told him, “If Finn needs to say things like that, then he’s gotta say ‘em.”

“He regrets it.” Phil said, “He wishes he hadn’t said it.”

“Then that’s his problem and he has to fix that with me.” She said, “You can’t save us from arguing or-”

“I can’t be afraid that our happy home will fall apart?” He asked, “haven’t you been afraid about that over this exact topic?” There was a silence between them. “And what would you do to keep us all together?” He asked her, “I know I pushed it Rae, I know it’s wrong to try and convince you
not to do it. But... but I love you, and I love Finn, and I love Robin, and this home will always come first to me. Always. And there’s nothing I won’t do to protect it.”

“Including shut me down.” Rae said softly.

“I’m sorry about that, in future I will find a better way to protect our home.” He sounded truly regretful and penitent. “I won’t do that again. I was very much mistaken in doing that.”

“You think?” Rae snarked.

“I know.” He answered, “It was the complete wrong thing to do for many reasons, not least of which was disrespecting your own bodily and life autonomy. And that’s not something I’m ok with.”

“Then why did you do it?”

“I got scared.” Phil said sadly, “We’ve been happy for so long, we’ve gotten through everything, every trauma... I guess I thought that... I don’t get to be that happy. I got Robin... maybe... maybe that’d be the thing that’d make Finn not be ok with this arrangement anymore.”

“Arrangement?” Rae asked.

“I know, I know.” Phil shook his head. “Foolish. We’ve been together for nearly 20 years... arrangement is an offensive term to apply to what we have. But still... this old, old fear came up and just... fucked with me.” Rae stroked his face gently.

“That happens sometimes.” She said, “I know we can get through this too.” She told him, “Maybe we should all see Kester?”

“I wonder if he minds that we still see him even though he’s retired now?” Phil chuckled shakily, his emotions still unsettled.

“He’s fine.” Rae said, “Keeps his mind sharp.” She told him, “I’m more worried about you.”

“I’m worried about you. You been afraid about this too.”

“I was worried, but Finn’s been so good...” Rae shook her head slowly, “He was the only one that honestly wasn’t worried about genetics.” She whispered.

“Until he was faced with the prospect of not getting to share his genetics with you at all.” Phil said and Rae furrowed her brow.

“How is that-?”

“Menopause and-” He said softly, not looking at Rae.

“I’m not that fucking old.” Rae said bitingly.

“By the time you had this one you’d be 38, 39... then you’d wanna give your body a break before you had another, so it’d be 41, 42 before you considered another...”

“My mum was 49 when-”

“But how many women are having children at 49? Would you wanna have one then?”

“The average age of menopause is 51.” Rae said, ignoring his second question because she knew
the answer was no.

“I guess Finn didn’t think about averages, just the more realistic facts.” Phil said, “You hated carrying Robin.” Rae nodded; she did hate pregnancy, “How many times are you wanna go through it?”

“Alright.” Rae said softly, “I see where he’s coming from. But honestly, this is ridiculous!” Rae said, “We’ve gotten through so much, like this could ever rip us apart. Nothing could. Nothing will.” She shook her head, as much at herself and her own fears as at her men. “I better go have a talk to that lad.” She sighed.

“I’m sorry Rae, I-”

“You’re forgiven.” She told him, “Don’t do it again. Let us have it out. It hurts, but we’ll get through it.” She explained, “Finn doesn’t regret saying what he said cos it’s not true, he hates saying it cos it hurt us. And it’s not good to keep stuff inside o’ him, it’s not good for any of us. He needed to express those feelings. As much as it sucked to hear them, or else they’d’ve been like poison in him.”

“You’re right.” Phil agreed.

“Right well, we still got some talking to do about this mister. We gotta kill this fear again. That’s the problem with mental health issues; they’re never really gone, you just get them under control until they figure out a way to get outta their harness.” She kissed Phil, “So we gotta make a better harness.”

“Yes.” Phil agreed.

“C’mon let’s go find him.” She guided him back into the kitchen, Tom watched them go into the other room, but this time Archie came out and joined him in the kitchen.

“What’s going on?” Tom asked and Archie shook his head.

“You set the cat amongst the pigeons.”

“What?” Tom asked, looking at the door Phil and Rae had gone through, he knew that Finn was in there.

“Rae’s gonna have your kid.” Archie said and Tom’s jaw dropped.

“But I told her not to worry.” He said and Archie shrugged, “And… she hasn’t had one with Finn yet. I thought she’d have one with him first.”

“Well apparently she didn’t think o’ that.” Archie said.

“Oh fuck.” Tom said, both of them staring at the door.

“What’s fuck?” Isaac asked, Alex beside him holding Robin’s hand. Tom and Archie turned back to Isaac.

“That’s like a special adult word.” Alex said sagely.
In the other room the trio were talking in hushed tones, aware that the kids were around, and Robin always sought them out when he was awake.

“I guess I just thought you’d want one with me before someone else.” Finn was explaining.

“It just never occurred to me cos I had Robin with you.” She said, “I know… I know genetically…”

“Please don’t.” Finn shook his head, “I’m a right fucking dickhead for-”

“No, don’t Finn.” Rae said, “Don’t be so hard on yourself.” She pleaded, “I get it. It just never occurred to me that I should have one with you first because we, all three of us had Robin. I had been so worried that the biological thing would matter to you, and you never showed signs of caring, so I just forgot that that was a thing and… Robin is just ours.”

“Yes.” Finn agreed.

“But…” Rae said slowly, “I think it’s time to start trying for our second.” She said. “But!” She stopped her two men before they got too excited, “After that no more, ok?”

“Alright.” Finn agreed and Phil nodded.

“Except, if they still want it, I will have one for Tom and Archie, after this one with you two.” She said, “But that’s years off.” She said. “First we gotta figure out how to make sure this second one has your genes Finn.” Rae said, “I know the biological thing don’t matter, but I’d like to have one with you too.” She looked back at Phil, “I want one with both of you.”

“Should we check, for sure that Robin is Phil’s before-” Finn thought about it for a minute and then laughed, “What am I saying, it’s impossible for Robin to not be his!”

“We’ll get the paternity test anyway.” Rae said, “Just to be sure.” She took Finn’s hand, and then Phil’s, “Let’s get it all out in the open so we can tackle it head on and it can’t grow in the dark and eat at us like a poisonous fungus.”

“Spectacular imagery.” Phil said with admiration and Rae winked at him.

“The best way to deal with your fears, is to face them head on.” Rae declared, “So let’s get all the cards on the table and plan out our second baby.”
Hope There’s Someone

‘Hope There’s Someone’ by Antony and the Johnsons

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b5HHRT8xvw

Hope there’s someone who’ll set my heart free

“You must be missing our girl’s vagina.” Finn said with a goofy grin. Phil tried not to grin back at his infectious mood. It had only been a week of trying, but Finn was positive of their instant success; he was already planning the painting of one of their spare rooms. They had decided to go simple; anal only for Phil, vaginal only for Finn, and Phil had to watch it with his coming. They weren’t expecting it to be too hard. It hadn’t been too hard the first time they’d gotten Rae pregnant.

“Yes it’s a terrible burden.” Phil responded with a dry tone, but he couldn’t keep the grin from his lips. They were all excited to have a second child. Even Rae was looking forward to it and talking in hopeful terms about the pregnancy and the first few months being better the second time around because they’d have a better idea of what they were doing. “But I bear this burden for you my love.” He added drolly.

“Oh I know.” Finn chirped.

Rae got in the shower with them and immediately set about to washing her hair, wetting it down and eying the shampoo bottle. Since Robin had started sleeping better their personal life was starting to reassert itself, showers together, sex… They had a baby monitor in case he made the slightest sound.

“Any problems?” Phil asked. They took it in turns putting him to sleep now. They used to do it all together, but they had started to get into a routine, they were all working again now and everyday life was taking over. So there wasn’t as much time for all three of them to be there all the time for him. They made time everyday for all four of them to spend lots of time together, especially having at least one meal together a day. But a lot of the parental duties were now done rotationally. Robin was coping well with the change, he barely seemed to notice except for when he wanted a particular parent that wasn’t available. He had wanted Rae today but she had organised to have 4 hours solid of writing time. There had been an almighty tantrum, but the men had handled it. Phil’s absence was the worst. He was frequently out of the house for work, whereas Finn and Rae both worked from home. Phil made sure that his hours were shorter now and he was particular about spending time with Robin when he was at home, but Robin still noticed when he wasn’t in the house. With Finn and Rae, he knew they were in the house, so he was less stroppy about it than he was with Phil.

“No he went down without a fuss.” Rae reported. She’d set up the baby monitor on the sink, but they weren’t expecting any problems. Now that they had music, Robin was a wonderful sleeper.

“Speaking o’ going down…” Finn said with a dirty smile. He put a hand on Rae’s hip and she started to laugh.

“You’re not nearly as smooth as you think you are.” Rae said and laughed louder when he lustily pulled her closer, gripping her arse tightly.
“I’m not trying to be smooth girl. I’m just trying to get some fucking action while I can!” He kissed her mouth passionately, pulling her closer, his fingers gripping her arse firmer still. Phil watched, desire in his eyes, as Finn attacked Rae’s neck with wet, rough kisses, Rae laughing the whole time. “Gotta knock you up.” His voice grew lustier still, and Rae’s body was clearly starting to respond to his attentions. Phil watched Finn kiss all the way down Rae’s body, until he was kneeling in front of her, kissing her thighs. He reached out and touched her cheek. He was missing vaginal intercourse, even though it had only been a week. But he knew that soon enough things would be back to normal, and this was worth the effort. Phil kissed Rae tenderly, deeply, as Finn started to lick Rae’s vulva, his hand going to Phil’s cock.

It was times like these that Rae was infinitely glad they’d figured out that music soothed Robin. He always slept right through his parent’s night time shenanigans.

* 

“Aunty Ash!” Robin couldn’t quite say ‘Aiesha’ so her name had been shortened to Ash. Which Aiesha seemed to prefer anyway. Aiesha gave Robin a hug but the little boy was too energetic to stay in a hug for too long. He was struggling to be released almost immediately; there was a big house to run around, and Finn-dad had left the door to his studio-room open, where he was working, so there was a parent to terrorise and stop from doing work. He was off in a flash and Rae watched him go.

“Off to annoy his father.” She knew her son well.

“Especially cos he’s trying to work right?” Aiesha laughed and Rae nodded.

“But of course! When else would be the best time to go and demand hugs and play time?”

“He’s like a cat.” Aiesha noted and Rae found that absurdly hilarious and accurate.

“I assume you want some tea?” Rae said and Aiesha sat down on a stool at the kitchen bench.

“It’s like you know me or something.” She answered. Rae started to make the tea, noticing how Aiesha fidgeted and stared at the kitchen counter top anxiously. Pushing her short black hair behind her ears and fidgeting with her lose fitting clothes.

“Out with it girl.” Rae said as she poured boiling water into the teapot. Aiesha watched her, picking at the skin around her nails.

“Remember when I was like 10 and you and mum and Finn thought I had a crush on Phil?”

“I do.” Rae said, not sure where this was going. “You were very insistent on getting your hair cut like Phil’s and wearing clothes like Phil’s and… it was kinda super cute.” Rae laughed.

“It wasn’t that I had a crush on him, it was that I wanted to be him.” Aiesha said, accepting the mug of tea and looking down at it, stirring it an unnecessary amount.

“Well that’s understandable. He’s very…” Rae sighed lustfully and Aiesha shook her head.

“I wanted to be as smart and controlled as him, with a beautiful wife… not a husband though.” They laughed together and Aiesha was obviously starting to settle down. Rae thought that maybe their mum had been right and Aiesha was a lesbian; she wanted a wife, not a husband… “I always loved that Phil never treated me like I had a crush on him.” Aiesha said softly. “He was always so kind to me. I so wanted to be just like him. In every way.” She said the words pointedly and Rae tried to understand what her sister meant. She had obviously decided to tell Rae whatever it was
that was troubling her, whatever it was that had her pulling away from their parents. Rae was beginning to suspect it might not be as simple as being a lesbian. Rae pulled a stool around to be sitting on the other side of the kitchen bench and reached across the counter-top to hold her sister’s hand. “I still do.”  Aiesha whispered.

“Still… wanna be Phil?” Rae asked softly.

“I love Phil’s style, and the way he wears his masculinity… I love… I-I want…” She stopped and stook a deep breath. “I want you to call me Ash… not Aiesha… like you used to when I were younger. Like Robin does now.”

“Alright.” Rae said, and then it dawned on her. She understood what Ash’s problem was, she understood why Ash had been pulling away from them. She looked down at Ash’s tattered nails, the way Ash’s hair was cut short, the lose pants and t-shirt… Ash wasn’t a lesbian, Ash was straight…

“Don’t be a dickhead to girls.” Rae said gently.

“What?”

“Well a lot o’ the advice I were giving you before was little sister advice. Turns out I should’ve been giving you little brother advice.”

Ash stared at his older sister for a moment, emotions threatening to overwhelm him. And then he flung his arms around Rae’s neck, holding her close and crying. He hadn’t expected for it to be so easy to come out to anyone. He knew Rae would be supportive, but he had expected more shock, more surprise, more questions.

“Thank you.” Ash whispered. Rae didn’t say anything, she just held him tighter until the tears stopped.

“Now what do you need?” Rae asked as soon as Ash finally let go of her.

“I… I wanna get top surgery.” He said softly. “I was gonna bind. But I were afraid o’ mum and dad’d say.” He lowered his eyes. “I dunno if I can afford surgery.”

“Well if you can’t you can always get a non-repayable loan from your big sister.” Rae told him. Ash looked up and gave her a watery grin. “And you have a big sister who would be honoured to go with you to all of your medical appointments so we can sort this out in the best way possible for you.”

“Thank you so much Rae.”

“Anything you need Ash.”

“I dunno how to tell mum and dad.” He said with a sniff.

“Well I softened mum up for ya.” Rae chuckled and Ash gave her another watery smile. “After the shock of two son-in-laws, I think she can take anything, ya know? And she loves you very much Ash. That’s not gonna stop just cos we all got your gender wrong all these years.”

“Are you gonna tell her?”

“Not if you don’t want me to.” Rae answered honestly. “But if you want me to talk to her first I will. But honestly, I think it’ll be ok. Just talk to her when you’re ready.”
“What about dad?”

“Oh Karim’s… he’s got so much softness and love in his heart.” Rae said thoughtfully. “He might not get it at first, but he’ll support you no matter what. You’ll never hear a cross word from that man.” Rae thought about a time, a long time ago, when she had freed all of his canaries, and they had all been killed by sparrows and neighbourhood cats. Blood and feathers and death everywhere. And still not a cross word from him. He hadn’t understood why she had done it at first, but he had wanted to help her anyway. “I guarantee you he’ll support you Ash.” Rae said. “And he’ll make himself come to understand what’s going on with you. It’s what he does.”

“You should call him dad you know.” Ash said softly. Rae nodded slowly. He certainly was the only real dad she’d ever known, and he had been a solid, steadfast and loving father.

“You’re right.” Rae answered. “And if you take a partner, a beautiful woman, home for mum to fawn over, she’ll forget about the trans stuff.” Rae shrugged and Ash laughed.

“I’m not really… I dunno… I haven’t really ever been interested in…” He shrugged. “I used to think about having a wife in a really abstract way. But when it comes to it… I’m just not interested in all of that.”

“Well maybe you’re asexual as well.” Rae said and Ash nodded slowly. “That’s ok. Get a dog for her to fawn over.” Ash laughed again. Robin came running down the stairs, Finn following him, trying to get him to stop running down stairs. They had thought about gating the stairs, but it just wasn’t feasible, so they had made a committed effort to follow him around instead. He usually used the lift anyway; he liked pressing the buttons.

“Aunty Ash!” He squealed again, diving in for a hug, Ash barely having chance to catch him. As soon as Ash had him and Robin was happily hugging him, Rae got Robin’s attention.

“It’s uncle Ash ok?” She told her son. Robin looked at Ash and then back at Rae as if considering this. “Cos Ash is a boy.”

“Ok.” He said and kissed Ash’s cheek. Finn gave Rae a curious look and Rae nodded, confirming what she had said. Finn nodded in reply.

“So it’s Ash then?” He asked and Ash nodded, “And Mister and ‘he’ and so on?”

“Yeah. Please.” Ash answered.

“No worries.” Finn replied. “Sorry we were mistaken all these years.” Ash was again starting to choke up so Rae turned Finn towards the fridge.

“Biscuits please Mr Nelson.” She told him and smacked his arse. He gave her a smutty grin over his shoulder and went to the fridge. Robin hopped off Ash’s lap to go ferreting around in the fridge too.

“Jesus!” Ash fretted as the boy jumped off.

“Yeah he’s gonna break his neck one day.” Rae understood his concern. “He likes to jump up and down off things and run up and down stairs… I just hope when he eventually falls over he doesn’t break anything.” She turned and saw Finn trying to stop him from climbing into the fridge.

“I wanna have kids one day.” Ash said softly, ‘D’you think they let people like me have kids?’

“Why wouldn’t they?” Rae asked. “You’ll be an amazing father.” Rae asserted without a hint of
doubt. “And if there’s laws against it, we’ll just get Chloe on it. She’s working on the gay panic
defence you know? Trying to get it banned. She’s changing the world.” Rae said proudly.

“What could I teach a child though? A messed up transgender asexual with no experience of the
real world…”

“You don’t think you already live in the real world? That what you’re going through isn’t real
enough?” Rae asked pointedly, “And you’ll be teaching my children that being a human being
isn’t simple clear-cut black and white. That what other people call you, whether it’s good or bad,
isn’t always true. Not to judge people by the way they look. You’ll teach them that your body is
your own, to be touched or not touched by your will, not someone else’s, and not by society’s
expectations. You will teach my children, and your own, to walk their own path. How is that
anything other than a good thing?”

Finn delicately kept Robin interested in the fridge for a bit longer, understanding that this was a
semi-private conversation. Ash teared up again.

“I been real lucky to have you as an older sister.”

“And I am very lucky to have had you as my baby brother.” Rae answered.

* *

Rae looked at the blood on her toilet paper. She hadn’t missed having periods when she’d been on
the hormonal IUD, she hated that she was getting them again.

But even worse than having to endure another period was knowing she wasn’t pregnant again this
month.

Trying for a child was much harder than doing it by accident.

She sighed and knew she’d have to see Finn’s face fall again when she told him that it hadn’t
happened yet. Then her men would be reassuring her and themselves that it was fine, that it took
time, that it was still early days.

It was only the third month. Nothing to worry about.
Pretty When You Cry

Chapter Summary

current warning - rape, violence, abduction

this is a difficult chapter - if you may be triggered by these things, don't read it - I have put a synopsis of this chapter in the beginning of the next one - you won't miss any plot points

‘Pretty When You Cry’ by VAST
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOZ6ptqcbUc

I didn't want to hurt you... But you're pretty when you cry
I didn't want to fuck you... But you're pretty when you're mine
I didn’t really love you… But I’m pretty when I lie
You hurt me baby – I hurt you baby
If you knew how much I love you, you would run away...

Rae sighed and read over the article Sarah had presented them with.

Gus, the hot water repairman that had tried to rape Rae had gone to the press, sold his story for big bucks about how he’d fucked Rae, she’d gotten cold feet and become afraid that her two hot men would leave her so she’d cried rape, but the cops had seen it for what it was.

She felt a burning rage in the pit of her stomach and when she looked over at Finn, the way his jaw was clenched, his nostrils flared, she knew that Gus would be getting his arse royally kicked if Finn ever saw him. She looked over at Phil and wasn’t surprised to see the same anger on his face, but, as always, his mind was ticking things over, seeking a way to destroy Gus that didn’t involve beating him to a pulp.

“So it’s damage control time.” Sarah said, “Again.”

“I just don’t wanna talk about it.” Rae answered, “It was traumatic.”

“Well you’re gonna have to.” Sarah said, “If you had gone to the press in the first place this wouldn’t be happening.” Sarah noted, “So if you don’t-”

“No.” Phil said calmly, “If she doesn’t want to talk about it, she’s not talking about it.”

“You should know better by now.” Finn said.

“You three do not make it easy to do my job.” She answered shaking her head.
“And yet you keep us as clients.” Phil answered, starting to usher her to the door.

“You pay too well not to.” She said irritably. “Fine, I’ll see what magic I can weave.” She knew Phil’s cues well enough to get the hint, “I’ll show myself out.” She left without another word.

“Hey guys, where’s the-” Chloe came in as Sarah left.

“Just give us a minute Chlo.” Phil said softly. Chloe looked at Rae’s face and knew something bad had happened.

“Right.” Chloe answered, “I’ll make sure the kids stay outside with all of us.” They were having a barbecue with the whole gang. Sarah showing up on the doorstep was relatively rare, she normally rang, so they had all met with her when she had requested it. Chloe left and Finn closed the door behind her. They sat in the lounge room, Rae staring at the coffee table silently.

“Often when reminders of our past trauma and abuse are thrust in front of us, it can feel like it’s happening to us again.” Phil aid softly and sat on the coffee table in front of her, “So I just wanna let you know that you’re safe, and you’re here with us.”

“Aye we won’t let that fucker near ya ever again.” Finn declared.

“I know.” Rae said, “And I can take care of myself. All those self defence classes with Rhys and Tom and you.” She looked at Finn. “it’s just… what a fucking arsehole.” She shook her head. “It wasn’t enough to try and rape, now he has to destroy my world.”

“He wants power.” Phil said, “control over you.”

“Well he can’t have it.” Rae answered, “Can we sue him for defamation?”

“Let’ ask Chlo and find out.” Phil answered.

* 

Chloe’s public statement to the press, the world and Rae’s would-be rapist was scathing and so strongly worded that the tabloid printed a redaction of the story that afternoon. But Chloe wasn’t done. She was going after Gus with every bit of legal wrangling she could; she wanted to see him burn. Him and every man like him.

And then he simply vanished.

The police had suspected Phil, Finn and Rae. There’d been a lot of questioning and intense scrutiny for a few days, but nothing could be proven. There was no body, no evidence of a crime. He’d just vanished.

And when a few days later his bank accounts were emptied, and a one-way ticket to Brazil was purchased on his credit card, everyone decided he’d taken off; fled the country to avoid Chloe and Rae’s wrath. Everyone also decided it was a wise choice. The press declared this to be the actions of a liar. Some of the dirtier tabloids bemoaned how a poor innocent man was being beaten into submission by bitter rape-calling feminists. But the majority of the country seemed to be able to recognise a liar when they saw one. This was important to Rae, for Robin when he grew up. She didn’t want these things hanging over him.

It took Chloe less than a fortnight to effectively clear Rae’s name and run a wannabe rapist out of the country. She declared it to be her best work yet.
Rae looked down at her shopping list. They were having the gang, the school friends, the uni friends, and the work friends all over for a huge dinner on the weekend. It had been too long since they’d seen some of these people, and Woody was visiting from Australia. It was going to be a huge day and Rae had decided on getting caterers to do the lunch, but she still had some things she wanted to get for herself; she wanted to make more of her famous banana and coconut cake everyone loved, especially since Elsa was coming along and Rae wanted to get more information out of her for her play; the writing was coming along nicely now.

Shopping was another task that they took in turns, although Phil was lagging on his duties this month because of filming. He’d catch up. He always did. Finn had picked up most of Phil’s undone duties. He always did. Phil would repay him in blowjobs. Rae would watch; she delighted in seeing her men together.

She dumped the groceries in the trunk of the car, reading a funny text from Finn about Robin and Phil having a bath and Robin grabbing Phil’s penis. It was the first time he’d done that! He often bathed with one of them and Rae supposed that eventually he’d start asking questions about all the various bits; he was obviously curious. He was curious about just about everything. She unlocked the car, laughing at a horrified text from Phil explaining the same incident. He ended the text with a 5 step plan on how to deal with Robin’s growing curiosity about the human body and a reminder to himself that Robin wasn’t even three yet and that he had no idea what he’d just grabbed, he was just grabbing things.

She sat down in the front seat, throwing her handbag on the passenger seat, shooting a text back to both of them, telling Finn to take it more seriously and Phil to take it less seriously.

She was texting Chloe about it when she felt a strange stabbing feeling at her ribs. Like a spring had sprung out of the chair and was jabbing her. She looked up, about to look at the sore spot when movement caught her eye and she froze.

He was sitting, leering at her in the back seat. She knew that it wasn’t a spring stuck in her side, it was the point of a knife.

She felt a deep fear grip her innards like ice. She kept her eyes on him in the rear-view mirror as he drank her in, the leering grin growing. Her phone was in her lap and without taking her eyes off him she sent ‘help’ to Chloe; the last number she’d texted. She just hoped Chloe wouldn’t think it was a joke after the last text about Robin and Phil she’d sent. But she didn’t dare send more in case he realised what she was doing. She then dialled Chloe’s number, her eyes still on him, sitting behind her, jabbing her ribs with a knife.

“Did you think I’d forgotten you?” He asked in a soft hiss of a voice. “I could never forget you.”

“Please…” She pleaded. But she had only spoken to hide the sound of her carefully, as quietly as she could, dropping the ringing phone down into the door pocket that ran along the side of the seat. She just hoped Chloe would understand what was going on. She hoped that all the tv shows had been right about being able to trace locations from the phone being left on like this.

“Sh…” He reached forward and stroked the side of her face, his eyes on her reflection in the mirror. The feel of his fingers on her skin made Rae feel physically ill. She could barely comprehend that he was here, sitting in her car. She had to figure out how to-

“I’ve missed you.” He whispered, “D’you miss me?” Rae didn’t speak and he kissed her neck. She closed her eyes in disgust, not wanting to see that in the reflection; it was bad enough that she...
could feel it. She had to figure out how to get away from him. “You’re gonna come quietly Rae.” He told her, “Or else I’m gonna kill you, then go to your place tonight and kill Finn, and kill Phil, and then gut your little boy, Robin.” He put his lips close to Rae’s ear, “I’ll make sure he suffers the most.” He laughed softly. “And if you’re thinking I can’t do it. That your security system will keep them safe…” He put a piece of paper in her hand. Rae tried not to shudder at his touch. She looked down at the paper. It had the security codes to their alarm system on it.

“How-?”

“Cos I’m smart Rae.” He told her, “People always think I’m dumb. But I’m smart.” He stroked her face again and Rae bit her tongue hard to stop herself from whimpering. “Start the car Rae.” Rae couldn’t see a way out. He could get to her boys. She put the key in the ignition and started the car. “Thanks babe.” He said and jabbed her arm with a syringe.

“Ow!” Rea turned to look at him in surprise but her head swam, his leering grin becoming more grotesque as she fought whatever drug he’d given her.

It only took a minute for everything to go black.

* * *

Rae woke up with a start. She tried to move but couldn’t. She looked up at her hands, each tied with rough rope to a post on the bed she was lying on. Looking down revealed her ankles to also be tied, one to each post on the bed, her legs parted and unable to move. She looked around the room. An uncovered lightbulb in the middle of the room was on. There were no windows. She looked up at the concrete ceiling, and saw an odd spray-shaped stain. She craned her neck and could see that the long side of the bed was against the one wall, but the head of the bed was not against a wall and the foot of the bed was. She couldn’t see all of the room and she had the feeling that he was waiting in one of the darkened corners, just out of sight. Watching her. Waiting for her to be awake and afraid; ripe for him.

She looked at the wall on the side of the bed, closest to her face. And saw herself. At about the age of 17.

“Oh my god…” She whispered.

Photographs.

There was her and Phil talking. Her and Finn laughing. Her, Finn and Phil making love…

So many photographs.

She recognised photographs in her room, Finn’s room and Phil’s room.

There was her changing Ash’s nappy.

There she was at university.

And again, the three of them making love, this time in the apartment overlooking the graveyard.

Her eyes travelled around the walls.

A photograph of her getting dressed.

And then the newspaper and magazine articles began. Cut outs of stories from the press about
Rae’s public life, interspersed amongst the photographs of her intimate life.

And the photographs became of their new home.

Rae’s mouth opened in horror when she saw a photograph of her breastfeeding Robin.

A photograph of her lifting Robin up laughing.

A photograph of her changing his nappy.

A photograph of Robin sitting on her lap as she read to him.

Her eyes followed the photos until they got to the foot of the bed and curled round to the wall at her feet.

On the wall at the bottom of the bed was Gus’s article about her crying rape after their supposedly consensual sex and several photographs.

These photographs were of someone else.

“Oh god…” Rae whimpered. She recognised that face.

Rae felt her skin crawl, her mind not wanting to take in what this meant as she looked at the first photo of him. He was smiling, as if he was drunk and was talking to a new friend.

The next photograph showed him unconscious in the back seat of a car.

Then another photograph of this man… Rae could tell he had once been tied to this very bed. She could see the photographs of herself on the wall beside the terrified looking man.

She tried not to cry as she looked at the next photograph… his stomach had been sliced open… it was too horrific to properly comprehend.

The next photograph showed him screaming, his intestines spilling across the bed.

Rae gasped as her eyes continued to follow the photographs, telling the story of the torture and murder of Gus Roach.

There was a photograph of his body being dumped in a river, probably the Thames.

There were only two photographs left.

One of her unconscious in the back seat of her car.

And the last one was of her tied to the bed.

“I dealt with your little problem.” His voice seemed to come out of nowhere. “Because I love you so much. I always have Rae. Even when you spurned me, I still loved you.” His voice sounded bitter, “Those boys who claim to love you didn’t protect you the way I protect you!” He yelled at her.

“Saul… please…” There was a flash of a camera and Rae jumped in fright.

“Sh….” His voice was suddenly calm. It terrified her, how his mood could so easily change. “I’m glad you’re awake my love. Now we can begin our new lives together.” There was another camera flash and he came into view and sat on the bed. “Tomorrow the press will be talking about
your disappearance.” He told her, “But they’ll never find you. You’ll stay with me forever now Rae. we’re finally together.” His hand gently stroked her face and he took a photograph of his hand on her face. “We’ve waited so long.” He said, “I’d almost given up hope that you’d call to me…” He looked up at the photos of Gus, “And then you did… you let me know you needed me.” Rae understood that Gus going public had triggered Saul back into action.

“Oh god…” She whispered as her eyes fell on those photographs again.

“I made him suffer.” Saul said, “It was hard.” He laughed a little, “I didn’t know if I could do it, ya know? Didn’t know if I had the stomach for it… but you needed me… so I made myself able to do it.” He nodded slowly, his eyes dead.

“Oh god.” Rae whimpered again, he was worse than he had been before.

“He screamed and screamed!” Saul laughed, “and pleaded… begged me to spare him. But I told him why I was killing him… he admitted what he’d done in the end.” Saul nodded with a satisfied air, “He tried to tell those lies about you… but the more I cut him up, the more he was willing to tell the truth.” Rae’s eyes returned to the pictures, she wished she could un-see them, but all she could keep thinking was Saul could get into their home, and he had done this to another human being...

“Please don’t hurt-”

“As long as you’re here with me, they’re all safe. Ok?”

“Yes.” Rae nodded her head rapidly, “I’m here with you… you won’t hurt them.”

“You’re gonna do whatever I say Rae… or they’re gonna suffer terribly.” His fingers caressed a picture of her and Robin giggling together. “You know I can do it. I can do anything for us, so we can be happy together.”

“Alright.” Rae agreed rapidly, her eyes on the photograph of Robin.

Rae remembered that after Gus had tried to rape her, she had wondered when her rape would come; reasoning that it had been dancing around the peripheral of her life since Saul had first tried to rape her in that bathroom when she had been 16.

And now she knew when it was going to come.

Today.

In this bare concrete basement.

On a filthy bed that her attempted rapist had been brutally tortured and murdered on.

By the man who had started this dance.

Surrounded by photographs of her life that showed her that he’d always been a part of her life… That it had always just been a matter of time.

And she had to accept it. She couldn’t get him mad enough to kill her. She had to stay here with him and take everything he did to her. Because he could get to her family.

So she had to stay with him…
Or kill him.

Her eyes turned back to Saul, his eyes were on her body.

“You lost a bit o’ weight.” He said, his hand going to her stomach. “Probably being a mum, running around after the little one. He is a cutie.” He looked up at her face, and his face suddenly contorted with rage, “HE SHOULD BE MINE!” He punched Rae hard in the stomach and she gasped, the air knocked out of her. “You belong to me Rae! you’re mine!”

“I’m sorry.” She tried to gasp through the pain in her stomach. And suddenly he was there, on top of her. She whimpered in fright and disgust. His face was right in hers, his breath caressing her skin.

“I know.” He said, “I know baby. Sh…” He rubbed his cheek against hers. “We can start our family now.” He told her, his lips on her ear. His hand eagerly went down her body, grabbing at her breasts forcefully. Rae looked up at the rope binding her left wrist and pulled on it slightly, to feel if there was any way out of it. He nuzzled into her neck, kissing her soft skin and groaning in appreciation while Rae tugged a little harder on the binding, revulsion and fear broiling in the pit of her stomach.

And then he was up, kneeling between her legs, violently tearing her blouse.

Rae tried not to scream, but the look in his eyes and the feel of his nails tearing her skin as he brutally reefed at her clothes undid her resolve.

“Please don’t!” She pulled with all of her strength on the ropes. She could feel them biting into her skin, but they weren’t budging. He used his knife to cut her jeans, to cut one of her legs free so he could get in closer. She tried to kick out at him, but he had her held hard.

She screamed and pleaded.

And he laughed.

And his camera flashed.

*

Finn looked out the front window. The media was gathering in even greater numbers. No one likes to miss out on a titillating, tragic mystery.

He turned back to Phil who had Robin on his lap, talking to police officers.

She’d been missing for 2 days.

Chloe had told the police about her last text and the odd, silent phone call.

They had tried tracking the location of her phone and it had led them to her car, dumped on the side of the road in East London with no traces of her other than her handbag, her phone and the groceries in the trunk. A canvas of the neighbourhood had yielded nothing; none of the neighbours had seen anything.

They had been frantic. They kept it together when Robin was there, but Chloe had had him a lot over the past 48 hours. Right now she was up in his room cleaning up. Rhys was with Gary, Kenzie, and the kids in the back yard.
Tom and Archie had been around a lot too.

Izzy and Chop were in Italy for Izzy’s latest fashion show; no one had called them yet. But the news would reach them eventually with that media circus outside. No one had told Danny and Grace or any of their other friends yet either.

Finn’s eyes went to Linda sitting, silently, like stone, on the other lounge opposite Phil. Karim sat beside her and Ash paced around the room, chewing his nails and holding himself tightly, obviously terrified for his big sister. Linda looked pale and distraught. She had cried and screamed at the police earlier today.

The prime suspect was Gus.

The police were talking big about having their best people on the job.

Finn supposed they had to have the best people on the job when so many eyes were on them.

A strange kind of numb had come over him. He supposed he could only be frantically terrified and anxious for so long before his nervous system just shut down.

In the calm of his mind he watched the police talking to Phil about Gus, anything he could remember.

“It’s not Gus.” Finn said softly. Everyone turned their eyes to him. “She told us, just after what happened with Gus that-”

“That she thought Saul was still watching her.” Phil caught Finn’s train of thought.

“I know it’s Saul.” He said. “Gus was a crime of opportunity. Saul was a planner.” He nodded, “This is Saul.” One of the police officers looked over his notes.

“The assault from the late ‘90s?” He asked as he tried to find the entry in his notes.

“That’s it.” Finn answered, “Fucker nearly killed both of us.”

“Oh my god.” Linda started to cry again.

*

She stared at the photographs he’d added to the wall.

Polaroids of her screaming and crying.

Polaroids of her lying there blankly, her eyes looking dead.

The pictures she could barely stand to look at were the ones that reminded her too much of the ones Finn had taken of her. the ones Phil had later been a part of. The ones that showed parts of him inside parts of her.

But he made her look at them.

She looked at the rope burns around her wrists, caked with blood and starting to bruise.

The concrete beneath her was cold.

She looked over at the bucket near the head of the bed.
She could see stains on the bed from here and shuddered.

Where they her stains, or Gus’s?

Her fingers touched the chain, warmed by her skin, around her neck.

He had dragged her there by her hair and wound the chain around her neck, using a huge padlock to keep it in place.

It felt heavy, like it was weighing her down at the neck. And the chain felt hard against her chest, sitting snugly between her breasts.

She followed the chain to the anchor point in the concrete floor; a bolt. Nothing else for this thick, heavy chain.

Rae pulled on the chain.

Nothing happened; the anchor point was far stronger than that.

It would need much more of a pull.

She stood up and put her feet on either side of the anchor point and pulled back with all her weight, desperate to get free of her bonds.

It didn’t seem to budge.

At least she wasn’t tied to the bed anymore; she could move a little here, and she had her hands free. It was strange how much she had noticed her itches when she had been tied up and unable to scratch them. Now at least she could scratch. She wasn’t itchy now. Of course.

She knelt and looked at the bolt, seeing if there was anyway to loosen the concrete. She pulled on the chain again, looking closely to see if there was any movement at all.

She heard the door unlock and quickly stopped pulling on the chain, arranging herself into a position of passivity, lying on the floor.

“How’s my wife today?” He asked cheerily, bringing down a tray of food.

“Fine.” Rae answered softly. She knew better than to not reply. She had the bruises to attest to that. She had bruises to prove she had to be careful with how she replied as well.

“Is it getting too chilly down here for you?” He asked, eyeing her naked body.

“It is a little cold.” Rae answered warily.

“I’ll bring you a blanket later on.” He said and gently stroked her face. “Eventually I’ll let you up into the house and you can cook and clean for me. Suck my dick while I watch football, be my footstool… wifely things, you know?” He said and stroked her face again.

“Thank you.” Rae replied through bruised, numb lips.

“Now eat up.” He said, “Don’t want you losing any more weight.” He checked the integrity of the chain and gave her a pat on the head, “I’ll be home from work in 8 hours. Get some rest, you’re gonna need all your energy for what I’m gonna do to you tonight. Spoiler alert; there will be blood!” He kissed her lips roughly and headed up the stairs, whistling a jaunty tune.
Rae watched him leave and then looked down at the food. She had to eat it; he’d beat her if she didn’t. He’d made that clear too. She looked down at her bruised and torn skin; her whole body was covered in bite marks, scratches, bruises and welts. She picked up the plastic fork and knife. She wondered if she could sharpen one of these on the concrete floor. Sharpen it enough to jam it in his neck the next time he came to put his disgusting cock in her.

* 

Finn slammed the door open to the lounge room, everyone looked in shock.

“Chloe.” He snapped at her, “Take me to Ian’s house.”

“Finn-”

“NOW!” HE roared at her.

“I am not going back to Ian’s place.” Chloe stood her ground against Finn’s rage. “I was raped there, do you understand? I am NEVER stepping foot in that place again.”

“This Rae.” Finn said, “Saul’s got her and you know it. You know it’ not Gus. And that fucker Ian knows Saul. He knows where he’s got my girl.” Finn yelled, “So you will take me there, now.” His tone was menacing.

“Finn Nelson, so help me god if you use that tone on me again-” Chloe threatened.

“NOW CHLOE!” Finn yelled. “NOW!”

“I AM NOT GOING BACK THERE!”

“Yes you are.” He advanced on Chloe but Rhys stood and was in between Finn and Chloe instantly. Normally he’d let Chloe take care of herself; she was more than capable, but emotions were running high, and no one wanted to see life long friendships ended right now. “Get out of my way.” Finn warned Rhys. Everyone stared, not knowing what to do.

“Finn…” Phil tried to calm him. Outside they could hear Linda with the kids.

“If Chloe says she’s not going back there Finn, she’s not.” Rhys said calmly, “There is another-” But Finn punched Rhys with all of his might. Rhys staggered back and Chloe gasped.

“FINN!” Phil snapped in an authoritarian tone. “OUT!” He pointed to the kitchen and pushed Finn towards the door. “Now. Or do you wanna hit me too?” Phil asked in a softer tone. Finn stared at him for a moment as Rhys rubbed his jaw.

“Am I the only one here that wants to find her?” He asked Phil in an accusatory tone.

“Finn…” Phil’s voice softened more.

“Fuck all of yas.” Finn threw his hands up and left the room, clearly in tears. Phil ran a hand over his face and turned to Chloe.

“I’m so sorry Chloe, and you too Rhys… I…” He shook his head.

“He’s just real emotional at the moment!” Archie stuck up for his best friend, “I challenge anyone of you lot to have your shit together properly right now, cos I know I fucking don’t.”

“It’s fine.” Rhys answered. He turned to Chloe, “Can you write down that address?”
“I was thinking that.” Tom mumbled to himself, aware that no one was thinking straight right now.

“Yeah.” Chloe said, “I’m sorry Phil, I just can’t go back…. You understand?”

“Of course.” Phil answered.

“I just feel like… it’s Rae… she went into that place to save me… I should-”

“You don’t need to but.” Tom soothed, “Just write it down.”

“Yeah.” Chloe repeated. She grabbed a notepad and pen from her handbag and write the address down, handing it to Rhys when she was done.

“We need gloves.” He said to Phil.

“We have disposable gloves in the kitchen.” Phil answered. “We chop a lot of chilli.” He explained.

“We leave no fingerprints.” Rhys said and Phil nodded. Rhys turned to Chloe.

“I’m sorry missy, but I’m about to do something that might get me put in jail.” He put a hand on her waist, the other on her face.

“No.” She answered sternly.

“You know I have to.”

“No.” She repeated, “You’re not gonna get caught.” She ordered, “you have two children that need their father Rhys O’Daire.” She reminded him, “You are going to go and do whatever you need to do bring you and my best friend back home safely.” Rhys nodded slowly.

“I’ll do my best.”

“You will do this. You hear me Rhys?” Chloe grabbed his face, tears on her cheeks. “You will go to Ian and you’ll find where Saul’s keeping her, and you’ll get her, and you’ll all come home. That’s how this is happening.”

“Yes.” Rhys answered. “I love you Miss Chloe.” He kissed her deeply, “I’ll be fine.”

“Don’t get caught big guy.” She ordered again.

“Come on you two.” Rhys pointed to Tom and Phil.

“Oh…” Archie felt like he’d been hit in the chest. Tom turned to Archie.

“Same talk but less emotional.” Tom said and kissed Archie. “I love you, I’ll be back before you know it.”

“Don’t get put in jail.” Archie said, trying to sound as commanding as Chloe.

“Done deal.” Tom grinned, “You’re not quite as tough as Chlo though.”

“See if you say that when I put you in the chair after all this is done.” Archie laughed miserably.

“Promises, promises.” Tom replied with a cheeky grin. “Right let’s go before this gets mushy.”
He said to Phil and Rhys. He gave Archie another kiss and the three of them headed towards the kitchen.

They ran into Finn about to come back into the room.

“Could write down the address.” He mumbled in an ashamed voice.

“Got it.” Rhys said, “Let’s go.” Finn nodded, his eyes lowered and followed Rhys. Phil grabbed four pairs of gloves and headed out to the garage, Tom, Rhys and Finn in tow.

Rhys adjusted the car seat and waited for Tom to climb in beside him, both of them making sure not to look at Finn and Phil as they spoke.

“I’m sorry.” Finn had his eyes lowered.

“It’s fine.” Phil answered, “I understand. And I do want her back too.”

“I know… I just…” Finn shook his head, “It’s my fault she’s-”

“No it’s not.” Phil said firmly. “Now get in the car, we have to go and… I guess question this Ian fell.”

“Yeah question.” Tom said as Phil and Finn got in the back seat of the car. “That’s what’s gonna happen…”

They drove out of the garage and down the driveway in silence.

“Sorry about the punch.” Finn said to Rhys as the media scrum out the front of their house closed in around the car to see who was in it.

“It’s alright.” Rhys answered as he navigated his way through the media onto the road, “It was one of your best hits.” He noted. “You WILL apologise to Chloe though.” He said immutably.

“Yes.” Finn agreed, “I will.”

“Then we have no problem here.” Rhys answered, “You’re one of my oldest friends, it’ll take a lot more than a punch to get between us.”

“Thanks.” Finn said gratefully.

“Now listen here fuckers.” Rhys said as they drove towards Stamford. “When we get there, we go in quietly. We don’t make a noise. We keep gloves on at all times. We park 2 blocks away and jog there in the dark.” Tom and Finn nodded while Phil looked around at the three of them, “We keep it quick, silent and brutal. Got it?”

“Got it.” Tom answered.

“What are we planning to do exactly?” Phil asked.

“Whatever it takes.” Finn answered.

*Rae felt her nostrils flaring, tears on her cheeks, but she refused to make a sound.*

“Go on now.” Saul grinned at her. She looked at the bucket and then back at Saul. “Don’t make
me tell you again Rae. I love you woman, but you are so very pretty when you’re in pain… so don’t give me any more excuses than that to hurt you.”

Rae looked at the bucket again and closed her eyes, trying to stop the tears. She squatted over it, Saul’s eyes delighting in watching her urinate and defecate.

“That’s when you know it’s true love.” He whispered, “When everything she does is just magic… Even taking a shit.” Rae put a hand over her face and tried not to start weeping. He’d made her weep too often tonight already. She’d learned now not to ask him to give her privacy to go to the toilet. She’d have to learn to just hold it until he left her alone.

When she was done she used the terrible scratchy toilet paper he had provided and went to the tap over a drain that he had provided for her down here. Cold water, a small piece of soap. She had to empty and clean her bucket in that drain. It always smelled. She hated it when she was desperate for water and would put her lips to the tap, only to smell that foul drain…

She washed her hands and went back to sitting on the bed beside him without a word.

“Right where was I?” He asked, “That’s right, and then Simmo says, well if you’re gonna use that kind of concrete, the whole fucking building’s gonna collapse, and me boss is like, staring at him and-”

Rae tried to listen to him; sometimes he asked her what she thought or what he’d just said. But her mind kept simply turning off, trying to take her somewhere else. Somewhere warm and safe.

She thought about her three boys. The happy life they had been having.

She missed them. Ached for them.

It was always warm and safe with them.

Saul kept telling her about his day. This was the best part of her time with him. She dreaded when he’d finish talking. That always meant he wanted to fuck. And fucking always meant hurting her.

“Please tell me more.” She said softly when he went silent.

“I like how interested you are in my day.” Saul said happily. “Good girl.” He stroked her head gently, like she was a pet dog. “I might get you something nice.”

“Thank you.” She was glad that the numbness was coming back. It came and went, but it was far better than the panic, the fear, the shame. She welcomed the numb.

“Alright then, let me tell you about lunch time; there was this hot little bird at the sandwich counter. Now get jealous, you’re the only bird for me!” He gave her a grin, “And she always laughs when I do my ‘make me a sandwich woman’ joke. I think she’s keen on me. Fancy a threesome?”

“Whatever you want.” Rae had a feeling she’d had to get used to saying that.

“I think you’re settling into this well Rae.” Saul told her. “I’m proud of you.”

* 

It was 2am but the lights were on, there was some laughter inside, and the undeniable sound of a computer game. Tom crept up to the front window and looked in.
“Six guys all our age,” He reported when he got back to them, “Playing PlayStation, possibly drunk or high.” He shrugged, “Easy pickings.”

“Anyone know which one’s Ian?” Phil asked. Rhys nodded.

“When he was harassing Chloe I got a look at him one time.” He said, “I remember exactly what he looks like.”

“This is gonna feel good.” Tom said, “Getting the fucker that raped Chloe in order to get the fucker that’s got Rae.” He nodded, “Good night.” He snapped on the gloves and looked to Rhys to lead the way.

“So how are we getting in?” Finn asked.

“Let’s just knock.” Phil said. “They answer the door-”

“Rhys doesn’t let them close it.” Tom had complete faith in Rhys’s physical strength.

“And we’re in.” Finn agreed.

“And then what?” Phil asked.

“We make Ian tell us where Saul is.” Finn said.

“How?” Phil asked.

“I think the real question is what are you willing to do to get Rae back?” Rhys asked. Phil stared at him for a moment and then back at Finn. He nodded.

“Whatever it takes,” He agreed. “I’ll knock.”

“Why you?” Tom asked.

“Out of the four of us, he looks the least threatening.” Rhys answered.

“Cos I’m famous.” Phil corrected, “They’ll just open the door for me out of surprise.”

“Shit, good point.” Finn said.

“Let’s go.” Phil said and walked resolutely towards the front door.

“Fuck, he’s famous!” Finn suddenly realised, “They’re gonna know who he is and report him to the cops.”

“Too late…” Tom said as they saw Phil knock on the door. Rhys pulled them down to duck behind the bush.

The door opened and Phil put on a huge Hollywood smile, laced with apology.

“Hi I’m so sorry for bothering you this late at night. But my car’s broken down, my phone’s dead… your light was on…”

“Holy shit! Are you Phil Seymour?”

“Yeah that’s me.” Phil answered.

“Yeah sure thing mate, come in and use the phone!” He turned away from the door to make room
for Phil to come in.

“That’s Ian.” Rhys said as he stood and headed towards the door. Tom and Finn followed.

Rhys slammed the door open, catching Ian unaware. He slammed a flat-handed hit into Ian’s chin, not wanting to stun him too much, and Ian fell back into the lounge room, his friends all jumping to their feet.

“Sit down!” Tom commanded them as Rhys picked Ian up by the throat and slammed him against the wall, his feet dangling an inch above the ground, “Unless you wanna see if my friend can literally pop your friend’s head clean off his shoulders.” The men all looked at Ian, scrabbling with Rhys’s hand around his throat. “I reckon he can do it.” Tom said, “Who’s a betting man here?”

“You two have done something like this before.” Phil said under his breath and Tom made a non-committal noise in response, his eyes not leaving the men as one by one they sat back down, their eyes on Tom or Rhys.

Finn went to Ian as Rhys let his feet touch the ground.

“You’re gonna tell us where Saul is.” Finn said to him.

“Fuck you.” Ian answered and Rhys slammed him against the wall again. Tom looked over at Rhys and one of the guys he was watching pulled out a pocket knife and lunged at Tom.

“Watch out!” Phil’s warning gave Tom just enough time to dodge. Tom kneed him hard in the gut, punched his face, grabbed the hand holding the knife and squeezed the wrist, twisting it. He head-butted the man, twice.

“I fucking hate head-butting!” Tom yelled at him. The pocket knife fell to the floor and Phil grabbed it. “I get bruise on my forehead.” Tom said kneeling the guy in the sternum, “Can you guys not see how beautiful I am...? A bruise on this face?” He elbowed the guy in the back of the head and he fell to the floor. “Now just for that shit you’re all getting tied up.” He turned to Phil, “Find something to bind them.” Phil stuffed the knife in his pocket and headed in the hallway.

Back with Rhys and Finn, Rhys was choking Ian into submission. Finn had seen a half finished cigarette in an ashtray on the table. He picked it up and turned back to Rhys and Ian.

“Let’s try that again.” He said softly. “You are going to tell us where Saul is.”

“I don’t know where that bastard is!” Ian gasped. Rhys bought his other hand up and started to choke Ian again. As soon as Rhys let go and Ian gasped for breath Finn pushed him up against the wall, Rhys giving him room to do so.

“You’re gonna tell us where Saul is, or I’m gonna burn your fucking eyeballs out.” Finn said, holding the cigarette close to Ian’s terrified face.

“Got some gaﬀa tape.” Phil said and tossed a roll to Tom. He started to tie one of the guy’s hands behind his back, Tom doing the same.

“I haven’t seen that fucking cunt in years!” Ian said and Finn pressed the cigarette into his cheek. Ian screamed and Rhys put his hand over his mouth.

“TRY AGAIN!” Finn yelled at him. “Next time I take an eye!”
“I haven’t…” Ian pleaded. Rhys put his hands back around Ian’s throat.

“How tempting it is to just choke the life out of you.” Rhys said softly. “What you put her through…” His eyes were filled with fire and rage and more hatred than Finn had ever seen in him.

“Not yet Rhys.’ Finn said softly. “He’s gotta tell us.”

“I know.” Rhys answered, “I got the rage under control. Don’t worry.” He stroked Ian’s hair roughly, “But it’d be so easy to kill him.”

“You better tell me.” Finn said, “Or else I’m gonna let him do what he wants.”

“Just let me kill him.” Rhys didn’t take his eyes of Ian.

“Why d’you wanna kill me?” Ian asked Rhys, his voice stammering in fear.

“You raped his girl.” Finn said, “And now Saul’s raping my girl.” He leaned in closer to Ian, “It’s true what they say about shit sticking together.”

“I never raped no one.” Ian pleaded.

Phil looked around the room, trying to figure out what to do next. Ben was the only other name he knew in connection to Saul.

“Which of you is Ben?” Phil asked the group of men, now all tied and sitting on the lounge. He was greeted with silence. “Look, once those guys are done with Ian they’re heading over here.” He advised him, “So one of you is gonna cop it. Don’t let it be you.”

“He’s Ben.” One of the guys nodded towards the guy on the left.

“Hey fuck you, you piece of shit!” He spat back at his ‘friend.’ “I’m not Ben, he is, he’s trying to-”

“I don’t care.” Phil answered, “You’re Ben now.” Phil pulled him to his feet. “And if you can’t tell me what I want to know, that just means I’ll move on to your friend next.” Tom grabbed Ben by the hair and reefed him away from the lounge, Phil kicking his feet out from under him so he was dragged along by just his hair. He cried out but Tom just kneed him in the mouth.

“This twat just bled on my pants.” Tom complained as he pushed Ben down to the ground and put his foot on his face. Phil pulled the knife out of his pocket and brought it up to Ben’s Groin making him cry out with pain when it pierced one of his testicles. Tom dropped and pushed one of his knees into Ben’s throat so he couldn’t scream out.

“Tell me where Saul is or I’ll cut your fucking dick off.” Phil said in a calm cultured voice.

“I swear.” Ian was stammering, “I never raped-” Rhys tightened his hands around Ian’s throat.

“I’m not interested in hearing your lies.” Rhys said, “Just tell us where Saul is.”

“I haven’t seen him in years!” Ian choked. “I swear…”

“Same as you swear you’re not a rapist.” Rhys replied. “Take an eye.” He told Finn. Ian started to struggle, panicking as the cigarette got closer to his eye.

Back with Phil, Ben had finally stopped crying out in pain.
“I’ll only ask one more time.” Phil said patiently, “where is-?”

“His nan’s got a place in Northampton!” Ben cried out.

“Northampton!” Ian was screeching, “Northampton! That’s the only place I know!”

“Exact address.” Phil said calmly to Ben and Ben stammered through giving it. “Good boy.” Phil told him and stood up, his eyes turning to Rhys and Finn. “We got what we came for.”

With great effort Rhys let Ian crumple to the floor, his hand going over his cheek. Finn kicked him hard and turned to leave with the rest of his people, leaving two injured men rolling around on the floor and four taped up men on the lounge looking on in horror.

They got to the hallway when Ian called after them

“I fucking remember you, you fucking cunt nigger.” He said, Rhys turned back to him. “I fucked Chloe till couldn’t walk right, she loved it.” He said, slowly getting to his feet.

“Rhys.” Finn said softly, aware that there was nothing he could do to stop whatever was about to happen.

“That fucking slut’d fuck anything with a cock!” Ian laughed, “Did she make you think you was special or something?” Ian asked, “He cunt lips were already flapping lose by the time I got to her; she’s a fucking free whore that one.”

“Go.” Rhys said softly to Finn, his eyes never leaving Ian, who was cackling maniacally.

“I can’t do that man.” Finn said.

“Go without me.”

“You’re putting me in a real fucking shitty position Rhys!” Finn yelled at him, “I gotta get Rae, but I know if I leave you with this fucker you’re gonna kill him. I know it; cos I would too.”

“You got a family Rhys.” Phil said gently, “Two kids, and I know Chloe wants to try for a third. She’s healed; go home to her.”

“Jail time isn’t gonna do her any good.” Tom added.

“Maybe I’ll just go pay Chloe little visit since you fucking invaded my home.” Ian threatened, “Where is it that that top-notch world-renowned lawyer lives? London is it?”

Rhys slammed Ian against the wall again. Ben rolled away from them, afraid he’d be targeted again.

“RHYS!” Finn went after him, trying to pull the hug man off Ian. Rhys pushed Finn back and punched Ian in the face, before again slamming him into the wall, his hands around his throat.

“If you go near her I will kill you.” Rhys said, “You and all of your friends are gonna leave England by this time tomorrow.” He said, “And never come back. And if you don’t, I’ll make sure they never find your body.” He punched Ian again, harder, bouncing the back of his head off the wall with the impact of the punch. Ian slumped to the floor when Rhys let him go. Rhys turned back to the rest of the men in the room, all staring wide eyed and terrified at him. “Leave this country. Now.” He told them as he grabbed their wallets out of their pockets and shoved them in his own pocket, “or I’ll make you regret it. Rhys grabbed Finn by his collar and pulled him out
of the room. “Lets go.” He said in a taught voice,. Everyone in the room knew it was taking everything he had not to kill Ian.

As soon as he left the house he pulled out his phone. Tom, Phil and Finn following him back to the car.

“Jules.” Rhys said, “I need help cleaning up a big fucking mess I made.” Rhys listened for a moment, “I need to make sure six men don’t take to the police and leave the country.” Rhys was silent for a minute and then he pulled out the first wallet and opened it, looking for ID, “Ian Simmons, Ben Winchester, Craig Rycliffe,” He tossed the wallets to Finn, Tom and Phil as he was done, “Simon Douglas, Raymond Richards and Bradley Fitzwilliam.” Rhys then said the address and waited for a moment, “Can you get someone here now?” Phil and Finn shared a glance but when they looked over at Tom he was actually chewing gum and casually blowing bubbles as he looked through a wallet.

“Definitely done something like this before.” Phil said to himself, Finn heard and nodded his agreement.

“Thanks brother. I owe you one. Love you too.” He hung up the hone and unlocked the car. They all piled in and as Rhys started the car they saw another car drive past them and stop at Ian’s house. It wasn’t the police. “I really didn’t wanna owe him a favour again.” Rhys sighed. Tom nodded.

“Yeah I understand that.” He agreed.

“So to Northampton.” Rhys said to Phil and Finn.

“Yeah Finn said in determination. “Ready to torture an old woman if it comes to it.”

“You don’t think he’s gonna be there?” Tom asked.

“You think he’s got Rae held prisoner in a place where his nan lives?” Phil asked.

“Right.” Tom acknowledged their point.

*  

Rae sat on the floor near the bed and rubbed the plastic knife against the concrete. He had brought her down this meal with the plastic cutlery and told her he was again going to be at work fro 8 hours today. Surely if she worked at it she could get this into some sort of useable weapon by the time he came down to her tonight. She picked at her food and worked the knife along the concrete under her bed. The concrete was smooth and it wasn’t great at grinding the brittle plastic.

“Shit.” Rae mumbled. This was going to be harder than she had first thought.

*  

They got home in the late morning, Chloe met them at the front door. She could already see the dejected looks on Phil and Finn’s faces. Kelsey and Archie came out to meet them too.

“Dead end.” Tom explained. “They gave us his nan’s address. She died 4 years ago. New family own the place now.”

Chloe folded her arms over her chest determinedly.
“Well East London’s the only lead we got now.” She said, “I say we go and ask them neighbours ourselves if they saw anything.”

“Agreed.” Kelsey said as Archie hugged Tom. Chloe put a hand on Rhys’s face.

“I told ya you’d come back.” She told him.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t bring Rae back with me.” He put his forehead on hers.

“We’ll find her.” Chloe said.

They all saw the flecks of blood on Phil, Finn, Rhys and Tom. But no one said anything.

No one said anything about the man that showed up at the house 10 minutes later demanding to see Rhys and then leaving a few minutes later with a garbage bag of the clothes they had worn and the wallets Rhys had taken, either. Chloe recognised him as one of Jules’s men. She knew that Ian wouldn’t ever be a threat to her again. And she wouldn’t ask Rhys what exactly had happened if he didn’t want to talk about it.

Some things actually are better left unsaid.

*  

Rae heard the door click and felt her stomach clench up instantly.

He hadn’t been gone as long as what seemed usual. It had only been a few days, so she wasn’t sure he could really say what was usual.

She slid the plastic knife under between the mattress and the bed-base and quietly got up and sat on the bed. She had been working on it since he had left, trying to make it into a shiv; a sharp utensil she could stab him with.

She had thought that rubbing it on the concrete floor would have easily shaped it, but it really wasn’t going to plan; the knife wasn’t sharpening up into a point at all. Still, it was the only plan she had right now, so she was clinging to it.

He thumped down the stairs. He usually came down differently, like he was in a good mood.

Saul stood in front of her, his hands on his hips. Rae sat quite still, peering up at him, her hands on her knees, the chain around her neck leading off to the anchor point nearby. A ripple of goose bumps rose on her skin as he glared at her, making her stomach clench in fear again.

“Where is it?” He asked softly, a hint of menace underlying his tone.

“W-where is what?” Rae stuttered. She already knew that he’d noticed the missing knife. She could tell. She didn’t know why she was trying to pretend she didn’t know… It was just that this was her only hope. And he was going to find it, and punish her for it.

“The plastic knife.”

“I don’t kno-” He slapped her face hard. For some reason, Rae thought of the times that she’d encouraged Finn or Phil to slap her face, or the times she’d slapped theirs. Always such careful, well aimed, not too hard, very sexy slaps. The slaps they’d played with during sex made her wonder if slaps were ever as bad as movies made them out to be.

They were. And worse when the person doing them was aiming to hurt.
He slapped her again, and when she was off balance from the slap, he yanked her foot up. Rae fell back on the bed as he pulled her foot to him.

“EVERY FUCKING LIE YOU TELL!” He grabbed her toe and reefed it back hard. Rae screamed as the toe broke. He dropped her foot and grabbed her by the hair, pulling her off the bed to the floor. “Now try again Rae.” He said threateningly. “Where’s the plastic knife?”

“Under…” Rae gasped and cried, “The…” She hiccupped her tears back, “Mattress.” He kicked her in the stomach, winding her and making her curl up into a ball. “I’m sorry…” She whimpered miserably. But he had taken his belt off and the leather came cracking down on her bare flesh.

Rae cried out in pain. At first. After a while her throat was too ragged to do more than whimper and whisper pleads to him.

“I DO EVERYTHING FOR YOU!” He screamed at her, “AND YOU LIE TO ME!”

When Saul was done he hung his belt over his shoulder, blood dripped off the buckle, and he took his cock out and pissed on her.

“Don’t ever lie to me again.” He said as he finished up. Rae nodded, still whimpering, balled up and shivering with pain. He went to the mattress and took out the knife. “Trying to make shank?” He said and shook his head. Rae just sobbed in response. He spat on her in contempt, and to Rae’s relief, stormed up the stairs.

It took some time for Rae to be able to move herself into a sitting position; the pungent smell, and sting of his piss in her wounds was what made her move. She crawled, half scooting because of her broken toe, swelling alarmingly, to the drain.

The water was cold and she shivered and sobbed as she tried to clean herself with the soap under the drizzling tap.

She started to spiral into despair.

“I’m gonna die down here.” She wept.

* 

When the police showed up the next morning, everyone was worried that it was in relation to what had happened at Ian’s house; except Rhys, who knew his brother well enough to know that that problem was taken care of. Jules could be very persuasive about leaving the country; Rhys had no doubt those Ian, Ben and his friends were on planes to somewhere else right now. And they wouldn’t be coming back.

When Phil saw the police he was oddly calm; he had no regrets about what he had done. He’d do it again, and worse if it would get Rae home alive. He’d lose his career, his reputation, his wealth, he’d do his time in jail for assault, or accessory to murder if that’s what Jules had done. Anything, just as long as Rae was returned to them. And when he looked at Finn, he saw the exact same resolve on his face.

He sat down opposite the police officers.

“Has there been any news?” Phil asked as Finn played with the packet of nicotine gum Chop had given him; this constant anxiety and terror was testing his resolve to not smoke.

“We’ve found the body of Angus Roach.” The police officer said. Finn felt a deep fear stab at his
intestines and he stopped fidgeting with the gum. “We’re looking into Saul Hudson as the primary suspect in both that murder and your... partner’s disappearance.” Phil gritted his teeth at the way they always paused before saying ‘partner.’

“He did it for her.” Finn said in a quiet voice. He was trying to keep the panic under control. He and Phil had both been doing that; they had to be strong for Robin. “He thinks their soulmates, destined to be together.” Finn knew all about this. He and Rae had talked about it in detail, before Phil had become a part of their relationship.

“It means he’s probably keeping her alive somewhere.” The female police officer tried to reassure them.

“I know he is.” Finn answered. “And I know what he’s doing to her. And I know I’m gonna kill him.”

“He does not mean that.” Chloe said, attempting to protect him from any future suspicion should Saul end up dead. “He’s in a highly emotional state.” Finn gave Chloe a look that indicated that he did indeed mean it but Chloe’s withering look silenced him from saying a word.

“No need to worry Miss, we’ve heard much worse in these kinds of situations.” The male officer answered politely but Chloe was all about business now.

“Now then, we went to the neighbourhood where the car was found and asked the neighbourhood occupants if they had seen anything.” Chloe said in a professional tone, “We managed to get a description of the assailant.” Chloe handed them a sketch, done by Kelsey, “This man was seen dragging a woman that matches Rae’s description from her car 3 nights ago. He said they headed left down the road. She seemed to be drunk or high, which suggests he drugged Rae.” Chloe pointed at Kelsey’s drawings, “That looks like Saul Hudson to us, just a little older than when we last saw him.” Chloe folded her arms and squared up to the officers, “Now perhaps if you had been doing your jobs properly you would have gotten this information sooner.”

“It’s easier for a man with fame and money to charm answers out of people than-”

“Easier for a man the neighbours remember as a boy, as one of their own.” Finn corrected.

“My sister and I grew up in that neighbourhood.” Phil explained. “This particular witness remembers us as children.”

“They trust someone who’s one of them rather than cops who too often don’t give a shit about the poor people of London.” Kelsey said from the doorway. She’d followed Chloe in to see if her picture would be any use. “And then they won’t tell you nothing when you need help.” She sighed and crossed her arms; now wasn’t the time to be making a point. “At least you got a picture now.” She nodded at her drawing.

“Run it on the news.” Chloe asserted commandingly.

As soon as the police left the house Chloe collapsed onto the lounge. She covered her face with her hands and wept as silently as she could.

Finn sat down beside her and Phil sat next to Finn. They sat in silence for a while, each of them lost in their own thoughts and fears for Rae.
“Tell you what Finn, if you don’t kill him I will.” Chloe whispered into the silent room.

“He drugged her.” Phil said softly. “But she knew he was there, so she got a chance to send a text to you.” He looked at Chloe, “And call, and hide her phone.”

“So not a fast acting drug.” Finn answered.

“Or it was and he just took some time to gloat before he gave it to her.” Chloe answered.

“What was Saul’s job?” Phil asked Chloe.

“I think he was a labourer… like a brick layer or something?” She shrugged.

“So how does he get access to those kind of drugs?” Phil asked, straightening up.

“Illegally.” Chloe said and Phil nodded.

“And where do almost all the illegal drugs in London go through?” Phil asked pointedly.

“Jules.” Chloe said and shot up. “RHYS!” She called through the house. They ran into the kitchen where everyone was waiting. “RHYS!” Chloe said again, scaring Robin who was sitting on the floor playing with a toy car. He started to bawl. “Call Jules.” Chloe said to Rhys as Izzy held up her hand to Phil and Finn and scooped Robin up.

“C’mon bub, let’s go outside to your uncle Chop.” She told him as cheerily as she could. She was exhausted from the sudden flight here, as was Chop, but nonetheless, he was outside babysitting the kids; they were all taking it in turns to look after them.

“Why?” Rhys asked Chloe as he pulled out his phone.

“I want mummy!” Robin cried loudly as Izzy took him outside.

“Oh I know hun.’ Izzy soothed, “We’re getting her back.”

“Because Rae was drugged.” Chloe replied meaningfully, not caring that Rae and Finn’s parents were there and Jules’s secret might be revealed; Jules, Rhys’s twin brother, was the biggest drug dealer in England. Rhys nodded and put his phone to his ear as he headed into the lounge room to get some privacy.

“Kels, you took a photo of your drawing of Saul yeah?” Chloe asked. Chop came inside to grab a drink of water now that Izzy was out with the kids.

“Yep.”

“Text it to Rhys.” Chloe said, “He can send it to Jules.”

Kelsey immediately sent the picture to Rhys, telling him to send it to Jules. Fifteen minutes later Rhys came back in.

“He’s gonna ask his associates.” Rhys said, “He said he got some Propofol in last month, which isn’t unheard of, but it’s a little rare to get orders for it.”

“Isn’t that the shit that killed Michael Jackson?” Chop asked.

“Chop!” Chloe said shaking her head.
“What?” He asked, “I just wanna know what we’re up against…. This bastard’s got our Raemundao… I just…” He lowered his eyes, clearly feeling as helpless as the rest of them, “I’m gonna go back out with the kids, yeah?”

“Thanks for your help Chop.” Phil said and Chop waved him off dejectedly.

“But Jules,” Rhys continued, “Did not sell it on himself, one of his associates did.” His eyes turned Linda and Gary.

“If it gets my baby girl back I don’t care how illegal it is.” Linda told him. Rhys nodded.

“He’s gonna come over with any information he gets.” Rhys said, “I deemed it too important for phone or courier.”

“Should we go to the fuzz with this?” Archie asked almost silently. He already knew the answer, but he had to ask.

“Good lord no.” Gary answered, “This is the closest thing we’ve had to a lead, and it’s illegal.”

“And we don’t need them fouling it up.” Chloe added. Archie nodded.

“I just wish there were something I could do.” Archie said.

“Help hold the fucker down when we find him.” Tom answered. A silent agreement passed amongst them all that that sounded like a good idea.

* 

Rae held the blanket around herself, shivering with the cold, blood dripping from her swollen lip. Her eyes scanned the room, looking for anything she could use to get her out of here. She needed leverage to pry this bolt out of the concrete floor. She looked over at the bed and wondered if she could use that in some way. She had to get out before she lost her mind, her hope, her sense of herself…

She got up, hobbling, he’d broken another tow in a fit of rage about an hour ago. She tried to think of a way to snake the chain around the bed and use it as leverage, but she soon found that the bed wasn’t bolted down, and was far too lightweight to really help; It just moved too easily. The tap was also too thin to be helpful as leverage.

She supposed if she kept pulling on the anchor point she might wear down the concrete or bolt thread a little; make it lose.

The concrete around the anchor point was rougher than the smooth concrete under the bed. Rae wished he’d thought to try sharpening the plastic knife here. If she had, it might have been ready to take that prick’s eye out when he’d come looking for the knife.

She thought about fighting him; she had done training. But he was always on his guard, often armed, and she knew he was hard to beat. He’d nearly killed Finn. He made her mind freeze in terror and she seemed to be unable to remember all the things she’d learned. Or if she remembered them she knew, just knew, they somehow wouldn’t work on him.

She felt like he destroyed her.

She had to get out of here before that feeling became a reality and he really did destroy her.
She went to the anchor point and planted her feet on either side of it, pulling up on the chain with all of her might.

Nothing.

She moved to the side, delegating it ‘north’ in her mind and pulled on the chain from that angle.

Nothing.

Next she went to what she delegated as ‘east’ and tried pulling that way. She thought that maybe if she pulled on the chain from different angles it might weaken the anchor point.

Next she went ‘south’ and ‘west’ before trying to pull it straight up again.

Nothing.

“Again.” She gritted her teeth. She had to stay strong or she’d never survive this.

She just wanted to go home, to see her boys again. But she couldn’t think about them. she had to focus on this chain, and this anchor point; they were her life now, until she figured out how to get free of the chain.

Then getting out of the locked door at the top of the stairs would be her neck focal point.

“One thing at a time.” She told herself as she pulled the chain, from further away this time, to the north.

*

“I can’t even begin to…” Finn’s voice cracked. “I know what he’s doing to her… I know the kind of torture she’s going through right now.” He wept angrily. Phil held him tightly. “How could I let this happen?”

“It’s not your fault.”

“I used to be so careful!” Finn said bitterly, “I used to watch her, make sure she was safe. I got lazy. I fucked up and now he’s taken her.”

“It’s not your fault Finn.” Phil soothed, his years of acting keeping his voice steady even as tears streamed down his face. He stroked Finn’s hair as Finn cried, beating himself up.

“I knew what he was! And I got lazy! I left her vulnerable!” Finn cried angrily.

“We’ll get her back, we’ll give her whatever she needs to heal. And we’ll kill him.” Phil said calmly; he knew there was no point telling Finn it wasn’t his fault right now. He wasn’t listening. That wound would have to be healed when they finally got Rae back.

“I mean it.” Finn said fiercely, he sat up and looked Phil in the eye. “I mean it Phil. I’m gonna kill him.”

“And I’m gonna help you.” Phil answered.

*

He was at work again, and Rae was painfully walking around the basement; her insides were aching, her body was sore and abused. She was sure she had some broken ribs from where he’d
kicked her last night ‘just for fun.’ He’d told her that that was a wife’s duty; to entertain and serve her man. Then he told her it entertained him to hurt her, that it got his dick hard to hurt her.

He’d started playing weird music, with voices in it. Sometimes she caught snippets of what was being said, and she realised he was trying to use subliminal messages on her. The light was always on, he never let her sleep too long, he was starving her. Rae understood he was training her, brainwashing her to be what he wanted.

She turned back to the anchor point. It felt like that bolt in the concrete floor was mocking her.

She pushed that thought, along with thoughts of Saul and his plans for her, from her mind; thinking about it wasn’t going to get her out of here.

She couldn’t just escape though. No. She had to make sure he’d never touch her family.

She stared at the anchor point, pulling the chain as hard as she could again.

It felt like she’d been down here a month, but she had kept track of the meals he’d bought her. It had only been four days.

She couldn’t imagine how worried her men must be. And poor Robin; he wouldn’t understand.

There was a constant thrum of fear in her heart, but she kept it at bay by focusing her mind on escape. And murder.

She sometimes had hours and hours of just imagining different, brutal and bloody ways to kill him.

She saw herself feeding him through a wood-chipper – alive.

Sometimes her imaginings involved chainsaws… sometimes they involved hand saws.

She saw herself driving a truck over him.

Driving nails into his eyes.

Peeling the skin from his flesh while he screamed in agony.

She imagined punching him so hard in the gut that her hand went through him. And when she pulled her hand out she would bring all of his intestines with it.

Sometimes she imagined ants eating him to death. Very slowly.

Tying him to train tracks.

Throwing him of a cliff.

She thought about getting her hands on some sort of slow acting poison that liquefied his insides and made his flesh go necrotic.

But she had to stop herself from dwelling on Saul’s murder. Even though it was cathartic and so satisfying to think of all of this. It also filled her with a sense of hopelessness; none of these scenarios were ever going to happen.

Her arms were sore from pulling on the chain, he hands were painful from gripping it, and her broken bones were making it nearly impossible to pull with all her force.
Shen needed to take a break, gather her strength and determination, and start again.

She decided that a good way to take a break from pulling he chain was to search the place for anything that might help her get out of here.

She eyed the bed closely, searching all of it to see if there was anything useful on or in it. She stared at the ropes around the bed posts for a moment. He still used them most times he raped her. She was screaming and fighting every time; it was her instinct to fight. So he had no choice but to bind her unless he felt like fighting her, which sometimes he did.

He told her that eventually she’d be trained to be a good wife. It’d just take time. But he was a patient man. Because he loved her.

Rae’s skin crawled and she made herself stop thinking about it.

It was hard. Her mind kept returning to it, like a cow regurgitating and chewing cud. She ruminated on all the details. She wished it would just be wiped from her memory – all of it. But instead it kept replaying in her mind and even as she was trying to figure out her escape, she’d find herself sitting there, staring at nothing, her mind reliving the horrors she’d endured down here. She knew it was a trauma response. But she didn’t have time for that now.

She focussed her mind on escape again and ran her fingers along the walls, trying not to disturb all of his photos of her while she felt for weaknesses or inconsistencies.

She was going to burn this building to the ground when she got out of here. With all of these photos in it.

Her fingers felt no anomalies in the walls and she sighed in frustration and started to poke at the bed, feeling for a loose spring or something.

Eventually she got up and started to pull on the chain again, putting all of her weight into it. Surely the bolt couldn’t hold out forever.

*

Jules gave a grim expression to the press. He was not impressed with getting his photograph in the media. He didn’t say a word, he simply kept his head down as his driver drove past them, his security guards trying to shield him from their prying eyes as he sat in the back seat.

When he got inside he gave Rhys a hug and sat down in the lounge room, the entire gang surrounding him; Isaac, Shane and Alex were ‘supervising’ the other kids in the music room. The door was ajar so they could hear the racket they were making.

He took a deep breath.

“The problem you wanted taken care of was done cleanly.” Jules said to Rhys and Rhys nodded in reply, “but it was costly.”

“I’ll pay you for that, it’s no matter.” Phil said and Jules cocked an eyebrow at him.

“No it’s not for men like you and me. We can buy just about anything, or anyone.” He said knowingly, “But this request came from him, not you.”

“It’s fine.” Rhys told Phil. “It’s an O’Daire family thing.” The brothers liked having one over each other. Jules finally had one on Rhys.
“I assume that that problem is associated with the Propofol buyer?” Jules asked Rhys.

“Yes.”

“And he has a woman held against her will?”

“Yes, we believe so.”

“You said you counted this woman as one of you family?” Jules asked Rhys and Rhys nodded.

“Good, cos I had to burn a bridge for this.” He handed a piece of paper to Rhys.

“Burn a bridge?” Linda said, her eyes wide with fright.

“Let’s just say there was blood.” Jules answered, “You don’t want the details.” They all turned their eyes to the piece of paper in Rhys’s hand. “Turns out one of my… ex-associates, watches football with the guy who bought Propofol from him. Also helped him soundproof his basement a few weeks back, apparently for band practice. Good mates they are… or were. The lad you’re looking for has one less friend in this world.”

“Thank you.” Rhys said solemnly, knowing that Jules did not like to get his hands dirty like this.

“Consider it a favour you don’t need to repay.” He answered, “Any family of my dear brother’s is my family too.” He looked around the room at all the frightened faces. “And no one fucks with my family.”

“Thank you.” Chloe gave him a huge hug, “Come say hello to your niece and nephew.” She took him by the hand and led him into the music room.

“Ayo! Ife!” He cried out his names for his niece and nephew. They ran to their uncle Jules and gave him a hug. Linda stared at him, such a loving man… and he had no doubt tortured or killed someone for the piece of paper in Rhys’s hand. She turned back to Rhys who was looking down at the paper.

“It’s an address in East London.” He said, “Not far from where the car was dumped.”

Everyone sprang up.

“We can’t all go.” Chloe said from the door to the music room.

“Try stopping me.” Linda said fiercely.

“I wouldn’t mess with a mother.” Jules said softly, looking lovingly at Yolanda in his arms.

*  

She was exhausted, but the first hint of hope since she’d been down here had struck her this morning, so she had to keep going.

Rae planted her feet and used the blanket on the chain to stop it from hurting her hands as she pulled.

She had felt the anchor point finally budging this morning.

She fell slightly, too exhausted to pull it properly.

“Shit.” She panted. She had to rest. Her body was giving out on her. Despite Saul’s assertion that
he didn’t want Rae losing any weight, he’d only been feeding her one meal a day, and after 5 days she was starving, thirsty, and badly battered.

As soon as she had to rest she’d started to weep. Her strength, emotionally, mentally, physically, was starting to leave her. She had to get out now; she was afraid she didn’t have much else left in her.

She wept, a feeling of hopelessness starting to spread dangerously through her limbs.

But her brain knew; it knew she couldn’t let that feeling of hopelessness spread any further. As soon as it got too far she might as well be signing her own death warrant. And the death warrants of her family.

She made herself stand up, shaking, sobbing, exhausted, in pain, and sick with hunger. She made herself wind the blanket tightly around the chain again. And now… now she was pulling it with all her might.

It was surprisingly, almost silent, when it finally gave way, sending Rae sprawling along the concrete, taking the skin off her backside and elbows.

But she was instantly up, she picked up the bolt that had come free of the concrete. She started to cry in relief, almost maniacally laughing.

She’d done it.

But she had to get herself together.

She took a few deep breaths and looked around the room. She knew the door at the top of the stairs was locked; she’d heard him unlocking it every time he came down the stairs. She wondered if she should wait for him down here and attack him, or try to break out of the door.

She reasoned that she was in a weakened state, but that she’d have the element of surprise. But then she knew that when it came to Saul, she was no good at fighting him and winning.

Her mind took her away from that painful thought, protecting her from the horrific memories of the past 5 days, and instead reasoned that there was no harm in checking the door. If she could get out of it, it would be far easier to kill him while he slept.

There was no way that both of them were leaving this house alive.

He had abducted her and held her for five days, naked and chained in his basement, repeatedly raping and beating her, feeding her once a day, trying to brainwash her into being a ‘good wife’ to him through sleep deprivation, subliminal messaging and torture.

He had made her go to the toilet in a bucket. He’d abused, degraded and humiliated her.

He had threatened the two loves of her life.

He had threatened her son.

He had said he was going to gut Robin and make sure he suffered the most.

There was no way she was leaving this man alive.

She searched the room and found nothing of use. She had no weapons other than the chain, still attached to her neck, the blanket she had wrapped around herself, and her bare hands.
Rae didn’t know if he was upstairs right now or not. He might be at work, he might not be. He hadn’t mentioned work this morning.

She crept up the stairs to the door and looked at the handle, running her hands down the door, hoping it would reveal some sort of secret to her.

“Fuck.” She whispered to herself. She was afraid that she had come this far only to be locked in, only to have him come and tie her back up. How could she hope to defeat him? She felt that sense of hopelessness start to flood her again.

So she turned the door handle, trying to fight it off. She heard a beep and realised that the door handle was alarmed.

“Fuck.” She felt her heart hammering in her chest. The door was locked, and alarmed. Whether he was home or not, he’d know the alarm to the door had been triggered.

She heard his footsteps, hurrying towards the door. She stepped back, wondering if she could get back to her spot, put the bolt back in the hole in the floor and pretend…

But the door was open, and he was there.

“You disappoint me Rae.” He said in a soft threatening tone. Rae shrunk away from him, weeping and pleading.

“Please… I just wanted to come up and be closer to you.” She lied. “Please…” She cried desperately. His hand shot out and backhanded her face. Rae fell back against the wall, nearly losing her footing on the stairs.

“You want me to kill your son? Is that it Rae?” He asked, and then he looked like a lightbulb had gone off in his head, “You wanna be free of him!” He said as if he understood now.

“No… no…” But he grabbed her head and pulled her face close to his, the keys in his hand diggin into her cheek.

“Cos he’s not mine, right…? You wanna be free of him. I understand baby. I understand…”

And Rae turned herself, to be higher on the stairs than him. He barely noticed, he was too busy cooing about killing her son.

She pushed him. Even though he still had a hold of her. If she had to fall down those stairs with him and possibly die, too then so be it. She was going to make sure he never touched her son.

He fell back, but grappled with her, the wall, the bannister to the stair case.

As soon as he let go of her and grabbed hold of the banister to steady himself Rae brought the chain up and smashed it down across his forearms with all the force she could muster. It was a thick heavy chain and Saul screamed out in pain and outrage.

“You bitch!” He yelled at her as he snapped his hands off the bannister in pain.

Rae pushed him again. Much harder.

This time he didn’t have chance to grab hold of anything.

He fell down the stairs, tumbling as he went.
Rae heard a crack or two on the way down, but she wasn’t sure if you really could kill someone on a flight of stairs or if it was just something that happened in the movies.

She looked at him, lying still at the bottom of the stairs.

She supposed she should go and check if he was dead…

And she probably needed his keys to get out of the house. She could see them on the floor near him.

But she didn’t know if she could bring herself to go anywhere near him again.

But she thought about Robin.

She could hear her jagged breathing and made herself take a few deep breaths to try and calm herself.

She was weeping, shaking, almost laughing in relief and terror as she crept down the stairs to his still, silent form.

The simultaneous weeping and crying made her feel like she was losing her mind. The fear mingled with hope and relief was almost too much to take. She kept waiting for him to jump up and attack her like they always did in the horror movies.

She got to him and carefully took the keys off the floor near his hand.

She glared down at him, not wanting to touch him to check for a pulse. The thought of touching him made her skin crawl with repulsion. Instead she held a hand, hovering over his mouth, feeling for breath.

She couldn’t feel any.

She started to cry in relief and sat down on the bottom stair, her strength draining as she realised it was over. He could never hurt her boys.

After a few moments she knew she had to get herself together. But somehow her nerves were worse now. Like everything of the past few days had finally caught up to her. She didn’t have to be strong now, she could fall apart with the weight of what had happened to her.

But no. She couldn’t. Not yet.

She made herself get up.

She couldn’t take her eyes off him, she was terrified if she turned to walk up the stairs he’d come back to life and attack her, dragging her back down into that basement.

So she crept up the stairs backwards, her eyes on him the whole time.

But he didn’t move.

When she got to the top she closed the door and locked it. Her hands were shaking so bad she could barely get the key in the lock.

She turned to look at a thoroughly ordinary house. She stood, staring, her eyes just simply taking in a sight that wasn’t the basement. It took her a moment to get herself moving again, hobbling across the room, the blanket held with both of her hands at her throat.
She found the phone and picked it up. She kept looking anxiously around the house, sure he would figure out a way of his basement and appear. She dialled 999 and as soon as she heard the operator’s voice her weeping returned.

“Hello.” She wept, “It’s Rae Nelson.. Rae Earl, I think you’re probably looking for me.” She leaned back against the wall, her whole body weak and shaking, the blanket pulled tightly around her naked form, the chain around her neck hanging down between her breasts and dragging on the floor. She wept, not hearing what the operator was saying. Eventually she heard the words and tried to piece together what the operator’s question meant; Rae’s mind seemed to be going to mush. She was losing it, she couldn’t seem to hold herself together anymore. “I was abducted.” Her voice broke and waivered as she tried to make herself speak through the sobs wracking her body.

“Where are you ma’am? Are you safe?”

“I don’t know.” Rae wept.

“We have your address, we’re sending officers now.” The operator said, “Just stay on the line.” Her voice was soothing, “Where are you in the house?” Rae looked around.

“Kitchen.” She wept.

“Are you safe?”

“I don’t know?”

“Does your abductor have a weapon?”

“I don’t know.” Rae cried. There was a loud cracking sound at the front door and Rae screamed.

“Ma’am? Rae?” The operator sounded alarmed, even as she kept her soothing, calm tone as best she could.

“THERE’S SOMEONE BREAKING THROUGH THE DOOR!” Rae cried in terror down the line.

“The police are only a few minutes from your destination, can you find a place to hide?”

Another loud crack and the door slammed open before Rae had time to answer. She saw Rhys; he’d obviously shoulder-barged the door, his huge 120 kilos of muscle able to get through the cheap wood.

Finn and Phil were in the room, practically pushing past Rhys, looking around; for her.

Rae dropped the phone and cried out.

And they were there, their arms around her. Linda practically pushed them out of the way pulling her girl into her arms.

Rae could barely speak, she was weeping.

“What did he do to you?” Linda was horrified at the state of her daughter.

“I pushed him down the stairs. He’s dead.” Rae wept, confessing to her mother.

“I’ll go make sure he’s dead.” Finn said.
“Don’t go alone.” Rae panicked. “NO…”

“It’s fine, I’ll go with him.” Phil soothed.

“NO he’ll kill you. He said he’d kill you both. He said he’d gut Robin.” She was babbling through her tears.

“We’ll go with them.” Tom said and pulled Rhys by the arm. He understood that Finn and Phil needed to see if Saul was dead and Rae needed them to be safe. “He can’t kill the four of us.”

“And we’ll make sure that fucker’s dead.” Phil said. Rae nodded slowly, the calm reassuring tones of everyone she loved was finally starting to seep in through her trauma. Her mother’s warm reassuring arms, Chloe’s hand stroking her hair, Finn… Phil.

“WHERE’S ROBIN?” She suddenly panicked.

“Ash and Jules are looking after the kids.” Izzy said from the doorway.

“Jules…” Rae whispered. He had armed bodyguards with him. Robin would be safe. She felt even more relief as soon as she understood that Robin would be safe. She started to weep again.

“You all came…” She said as she looked around at them. Linda pulled the blanket closer around Rae, realising that her daughter was naked under the blanket.

“And just to be clear,” Chloe said loudly, “What we all heard Rae say was ‘there was a struggle at the top of the stairs and he fell down them.’” She looked around at them all, “And what we heard Finn and Phil say was ‘We’ll make sure he’s ok.’”

“That’s what I heard.” Gary said immutably and everyone agreed.

“Where is he?” Finn asked gently and Rae nodded towards the basement door. Phil noticed that she was tightly gripping the keys and he gently took them from her hand.

“Alright, everyone that isn’t Linda and Chloe, outside.” Izzy said, organising everyone so that Rae could have more privacy. “Boys, go make sure he won’t be bothering Rae again.” She added, nodding for Chop to go too.

But they had barely taken a step towards the basement door when the police showed up.

*

Rae sat on the hospital bed.

She was numb.

She looked down at the hospital gown covering her body, her bruised and scraped knees sticking out from under the hem.

She had barely recognised herself in the mirror. Her left eye was swollen shut, her lips split, her jaw was swollen and purple. Her nose had been broken again. Her right eye had a kind of deep blue bruise under it.

The doctors had taken note of every single bruise, every mark and broken bone.

They’d used bolt cutters to get the chain off her neck.
They’d laid her down and opened her up again, taking swabs for a rape kit.

It was humiliating.

There had been a rape victim advocate, or support group person there… Rae hadn’t really listened to where she was from or who she was. She’d just told her she didn’t want to talk about it. After the medical examinations, Rae had asked the advocate to leave. She needed to be alone she said. But that wasn’t true. She just didn’t want to be around strangers.

Now she was waiting to be told that she had to stay overnight. They’d said she had to, she had wanted to leave right away. They were talking to her Rae and Phil as her legal guardians.

Part of her thought that Finn and Phil would just let her go home because she so desperately wanted to.

Part of her thought they’d make her stay because doctors thought she should.

She looked down at the cast they’d put on her wrist. They’d also taped two fingers on her other hand. Four of her toes were broken, six ribs, her clavicle… She was bandaged, stitched, patched up and medicated… she wanted to go home.

She needed to shower.

Two police officers came in. Both female. Rae looked at them as they introduced themselves.

“Is he dead?” She asked as she looked back at the wall opposite her.

“Yes.”

“Good.” Rae answered emotionlessly, “He threatened to kill my son, and my partners.” Rae said in a monotone, still staring at the wall. “So I’m glad he’s dead.”

“Your partners said you told them that there was a struggle on the stairs and he fell?”

“Yes.” Rae answered. For a moment she considered telling them the truth. That she had pushed him, hoping he’d die in the fall. But Chloe had said to say this. And Chloe was going to be her lawyer if the police took this any further.

“Ma’am, we just have to ask. He kidnapped you, held you against your will, and beat and raped you?”

“Yes.” Rae answered.

“This wasn’t some love affair gone wrong, or-?” Rae turned to look at them.

“When Gus Roach broke my nose the police said that to me too.” Rae said. “Now I have several broken bones, was missing for five days… I have bite marks around my nipples where his teeth nearly ripped them off…” She said, “You think I went into this willingly? That I enjoyed this?”

“No.” The shorter officer said, “But we just have to cover all our bases.”

“Are you going to investigate me for murder then?” Rae asked, “Since there’s a dead man?”

“Probably not.” The taller officer said. “It looks like an accident to us. But we’ll have to talk to our superiors and the relevant legal people before we can call it that officially.”
“I don’t wanna answer any more questions right now.” Rae said, her mood starting to grow agitated again. “I just wanna go home. I need to shower.” She started to cry.

“I’ll talk to the doctors.” The taller officer said. She left, but the shorter one hung back.

“You know Ma’am, if the evidence seemed to suggest that you forcefully pushed him,” Her tone seemed to indicate that the evidence did indeed indicate that, “I don’t think there’s a court in this country that’d convict you.” She put her hat back on her head, her eyes taking in the bruising on Rae’s face, “Or a police officer wanting to follow it up. Evening.” She gave Rae a nod and left.

Rae’s whole body was shaking again.

She tried to take some deep breaths and stare at the wall opposite her.

But panic was rising up her chest. She knew this feeling from decades ago; from when she used to have panic attacks.

“No.” She whispered to herself, “You can do this girl.” She took deep breaths. “You have to see Robin, and be calm.” The thought of Robin helped calm her. “I need a shower!” She declared to the empty room. She jumped of the bed, wincing at all the breaks and scrapes and cuts and bruises she could feel now.

She wished she could just go numb again.

She focussed her mind on getting out of here. Of getting home to Robin. She had to see him. She had to have a shower.

“They said you should stay off your feet.” Phil said as he came in with a wheelchair. Finn was behind him holding a bag of medications and talking to the nurse about Rae’s wound care and symptoms to look for. These details had all been written down for them, but the nurse was going over it again.

“We’re going home?” She asked in a hopeful voice.

“That’s what you want right?” Phil asked. Rae nodded, “Then that’s what’s gonna happen, no matter what the doctors say.” He helped Rae into the wheelchair. “We’ll pay for them to come and see you at home if you need further medical care.”

* 

“The police have found irrefutable photographic evidence that Saul Hudson was responsible for the murder of Gus Roach.” The reporter looked down at his notes, “As well as the abduction and rape of Rae Earl.”

“How did they find out about the rape?” Rhys asked, utterly appalled that this was going all over the country. He was sitting in the waiting room with Chloe. Izzy had ordered everyone else back to Rae, Finn and Phil’s house.

“It’s illegal for them to name rape victims; they’re guaranteed anonymity in the UK under the Sexual Offences Act Amendment of 1992.” Chloe said, “I’ll have their fucking heads.”

“Good.” Rhys answered.

“It’s being suggested that Saul Hudson’s death was the result of an accidental fall down the stairs to the basement he held Ms Earl in for 5 days.” The reporter continued.
“She’s been free less than 4 hours.” Chloe shook her head. “The cops’ve gotta have a leak.” She pulled out her phone and shot some texts off to her assistant at work. “I’m having the cops over this as well.”

“Justice for all the times the police did nothing to help our family.” Rhys answered, referring to the whole gang. Along with the complete inaction of the police to help Phil, Finn and Rae when they had been attacked, they also hadn’t helped Rhys or Tom and Archie in similar incidents over the years.

“I’m gonna make people pay Rhys.” Chloe said. “Heads are gonna roll.”

The media scrum at the front of their house had nearly set Rae off into a panic attack. But Rhys had rolled the car through them at a steady pace without stopping, and Chloe had said some very loud, very angry words out the window at them.

And Phil and Finn were right beside her, each holding one of her hands.

There had been a few journalists waiting outside of the hospital, so Rae had known that the press knew she had been abducted.

“How much do they know?” She asked they rolled up the driveway to their front door. The press knew they weren’t legally allowed passed the border of their property, so they were all waiting out on the verge; the public property out the front of their home. Chloe looked over her shoulder at Rae and then back at Rhys. Phil and Finn didn’t know that the media knew about her rapes yet.

“Hun…” Chloe said softly as Rhys stopped the car.

“Oh god.” Rae started to cry. She could tell from that tone of voice that everyone knew she’d been raped. “Oh god.” Rae felt so ashamed, so humiliated.

“How?” Finn asked, bewildered.

“It’s illegal-” Chloe tried to say.

“I want them to burn.” Phil said as he wrapped his arm around Rae, “You have as much of our resources as you need to make it happen.” Chloe nodded.

“Those fucking fuckers.” Finn said, his arm around her waist. They could feel her whole body shaking. But Rae looked up at her home. She had to see Robin. Only when she saw him would this be over.

She took some deep breaths, her eyes on her knees. She had had to wear the hospital gown home. Izzy came out to the car with a dress for Rae; practically a sack, just something that would be more comfortable.

“Izzy came out to the car with a dress for Rae; practically a sack, just something that would be more comfortable.

“Thought you might need this.” She said to Rae as she passed it through the window. Izzy looked up at all the media, taking photos of the car, waiting for Rae to emerge so they could take a photo of her too.

“Thanks.” Rae’s voice barely made a sound. She slipped the dress on over the hospital gown and Finn got out to let her out. Rae pulled the dress down as she stood up. There was a flurry of activity from the press as they all vied to get a photo of her from all the way down her driveway.
They called out to her, trying to get her to look at them, trying to get her to answer their questions. Phil got out of the car and ignored them; he was good at ignoring the press. But Rhys and Chloe headed down to the throng to disperse them as Rae was helped inside by Phil and Finn, both insisting that she go back into the wheelchair. And to be honest, she didn’t feel strong enough to walk the steps to the front door anyway. She was just glad that the front stairs weren’t the only way in to their front door; there was a ramp hidden behind the front garden. She wasn’t sure why the original owners had hidden the ramp, probably to make the front of the house look more traditional. But right now she was glad; she was out of view of the press.

“MUMMY!” Was the first word she heard when she went inside. Robin came bounding to the door and launched himself at Rae.

“Woah boy!” Finn said catching him. “Mummy’s just a little sore at the moment, so you gotta be gentle, ok?” Robin nodded solemnly; he knew ‘gentle.’ Finn sat him down in Rae’s lap, her arms were outstretched for him. She wrapped him up tightly, ignoring the pain in her ribs and clavicle.

“My boy.” She wept and kissed his face. He hugged her tightly and when she finally stopped kissing his face his touched her cheek gently, trying to figure out what the bruise was; he’d never seen a bruise on her face before.

Rae started to weep in earnest.

She thought she had wept and cried and sobbed as hard as she could over these past five days. But that had been nothing to now.

“Mummy?” Robin sounded scared.

“I’m sorry baby.” Rae’s voice was strangled with her emotion, “I’m just so glad to see you.” She held him tight, and somehow the little boy just knew to sit there and take the confusing, slightly scary hug.

Linda came in with some tea. The only way she had been convinced not to stay at the hospital was by being told that Rae would need food and drinks when she got home. There had never been any intention of leaving her in hospital overnight. Linda had come home and started cooking all the comfort food she knew; everyone else joining in and helping. They had enough food practically feed all of London waiting in the dining room for her.

“Oh my baby girl.” Linda knelt, putting the tea on the floor. “Let’s get you cleaned up, then you can go to bed and have some food in bed.” Linda said, “I got some tea for you. So you can feel the warm.” Linda had instinctively understood how cold Rae must have been the past 5 days, locked in a basement with nothing but a blanket to keep warm. Rae was shaking and weeping, Phil and Finn both staying close, Robin on her lap. Linda gently helped her sip the tea.

“The whole gang’s here to see you.” Linda said, “But they can all wait. They all came along to bust you out of that place, so they all know you’re alive. It’s only Ash and Shane that-”

“It’s fine mum.” Rae’s voice cracked, “I’ll go say a quick hello.”

“Oh thank fuck.” Ash said as soon as Rae was in the room. No one corrected his language. All of the kids had heard a few words the adults wished they hadn’t heard over the past five days. There had already been several discussions about difficult topics, and there would have to be more. Especially since the news report about Rae’s rape had been seen by all of them. Rape was a word none of them had wanted to introduce to their kids yet.
Phil took Robin off Rae’s lap so that Ash could give her a hug and then Shane gave her one too.

Rae looked down as both of her brothers looked at her in shock and horror.

“Quit with the staring.” Izzy said softly under her breath. They both looked away, Ash taking a deep breath and turning back to Rae.

“I put your favourite dressing gown in the bathroom upstairs and mum’s made all this delicious food.” He said as helpfully as he could, trying not to stare at all the bruising.

“Thanks.” Rae said, obviously getting very exhausted. “Thank you all.” She looked at all of them. “But I really need to have a shower now. I’d like you all to stay around as long as you can… but tonight, I’m… gonna shower and sleep.”

“Of course.” Archie answered for everyone.

“I’ll see ya tomorrow.” Rae told them all. Finn wheeled her to the lift while Phil let Robin say his goodnights to everyone.

Upstairs Rae closed the door to the ensuite and turned the water on.

Outside of the ensuite, her boys looked at the closed door and settled themselves in mentally for the long road to recovery. Rae never closed the door when she showered. Now she did.

Finn kept Robin busy and Phil sat on their bed and pulled out his laptop.

“What’re you doing?” He asked.

“We are getting fencing put around the entire property, electric gates on the driveway and armed body guards 24 hours a day.” Phil answered. Finn stopped and thought about that for a moment. He looked down at Robin.

“Aye.” He agreed. “But how legal are armed body guards? We’re not America.”

“Well we’re about to find out.” Phil answered as she started to do his research on who to hire for this job. At the moment, they had Jules’s men in the house and covering the perimeter. But they could hardly keep a drug lord’s personal security team at their house forever. “None of us are leaving this house without a security guard ever again.” Phil said as he typed away, a set, determined look on his face.

“Aye.” Finn answered. Part of him felt good and safe knowing they were going to do this. But part of him was sad for the loss of freedom and innocence. He looked at Robin again, feeling both glad and sad that he would grow up around security guards.

“I never wanted to be one of those rich guys with drivers and guards and servants.” He said typing angrily. “But no one’s touching my family again.”

“We should get like… an armoured limo or something.” Finn said gently. This was Phil’s way of coping. And Finn was going to help him.

“Yes.” Phil said snapping at the keys.
“Each have our own personal security guard, as well as having guards for the house.”

“Yes.”

“And new alarm system, better than the one we got now. This one’s kinda ancient. We can get better technology than that.”

“Absolutely.”

“Abzolulee!” Robin chimed in. Phil looked up at Robin.

“He gets two guards.” Phil said.

“Absolutely.” Finn answered.

“Abzolulee!”

Rae sat on the bench that ran along the wall of the shower. Crying uncontrollably. She scrubbed at her skin as she poured the hottest water their shower would deliver, down onto her skin.

She was scared that she would never feel clean.

She was shaking, sobbing, snot pouring out of her nose, tears streaming down her face, her whole body aching and sore. But she couldn’t stop. She had to be clean. She had to get him off her. Out of her.

“Robin needs you.” She told herself. “Pull yourself together.” She stood up and washed her hair thoroughly, once again ignoring all the aches and pains. Except she wasn’t really ignoring them. She was accepting them. Accepting the pain.

She hadn’t covered the plaster on her wrist, so it was a sodden mess and she pulled it off. They’d be upset, but she could get another cast tomorrow.

When she got out and dried herself, her entire body was in pain. Deep inside of her felt painful. She looked at the bag of medications Finn had been given for her. There was emergency contraception and a post-exposure prophylaxis in case Saul had AIDS; hopefully this would stop it from infecting her, but it was unlikely since it was supposed to be given within 72 hours of the possible infection. She’d taken her first dose of the emergency contraception and she read the packaging for when she had to take the second dose. She realised that it was also possible that the emergency contraception wouldn’t do the job since it too had 72 hours on it. And Saul had held her for over 120 hours, the first rape coming within the first few hours.

She tried not to think about it.

She put the packaging down and sat on the toilet for a minute, trying to gather herself before she went back out to her men.

When she went out to them, there was food and tv and tea and all sorts of things for her.

She settled down to try and eat, but she wasn’t that hungry. She supposed her appetite would return eventually.
She laid in bed holding Robin to her, spooning him as Phil spooned her. He was close; his whole body touching her, his arm around her waist. Finn was on the other side of Robin, his forehead touching hers, his feet touching hers, his arm over Robin, his hand on her hip.

It had taken her men a long time to settle into sleep. But even though she was exhausted, Rae couldn’t sleep.

Every time she closed her eyes she saw him.

“He’s dead.” She whispered to the darkness in the room.

It was soothing to know he was dead.

The following day Chloe cleared everyone out of the house, taking everyone to Jules’s house for the day, including Robin. Rae had been reluctant to let him go, but Jules had personally assured her of his safety, as had Rhys, Chloe and Tom. Everyone had taken time off work, everyone was in hyper alert.

But Chloe had wanted to just give Rae some peace. Just Finn, Phil and the security guards Phil had hired overnight, would be staying behind.

So she showered again. She asked Finn and Phil to join her. She wanted to feel normal, and it was normal for them to shower together.

That had been a mistake.

Rae felt slightly crowded in, and both of her men were visibly shaken by the sight of her naked.

Phil had felt ill when he had seen the welt marks across her back; Saul had whipped her with his belt, the buckle leaving deep wounds that had had to be stitched and needed daily tending while they healed.

Finn was mentally beating himself up for letting this happen to her again.

And they both noticed how harshly she was rubbing her skin clean. Rae was stopping herself from going as hard as she wanted.

“And there’s a couple of wounds I want ‘em to look at... see if they can minimise the scarring.” She tried to feel that fire in her belly that she’d felt after Gus had attacked her. But it wasn’t there.

“Whatever you need.” Phil said in a soft voice.

“Guys I just want life to go back to normal.”

“Sure.” Finn said, but as hard as he tried to sound positive, the tone in his voice clearly indicated that he wasn’t sure if life could ever go back to normal.
“He’s dead.” Rae said, “I never have to worry about him again.” She started to wash her hair again, “It’s all over.”
‘Recover’ by Chvrches

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyqemlIbjfg

And if I recover, will you be my comfort? Or it can be over? Or we can just leave it here…?
And you take what you need, and you know you don’t need me…

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Synopsis of last chapter for those who took the warning and didn’t read it.

Gus Roach (the guy who tried to rape Rae quite a few years back) made false allegations against Rae in the press, claiming they had had a consensual sexual relationships and she had called rape when she got worried her partners would leave him.

Chloe had started legal proceedings against Gus because of his lies, when he simply disappeared. Suspicion fell on Rae, Finn and Phil. But when Gus’s bank accounts were cleared out and a one way ticket purchased to Brazil, everyone assumed he knew he had been caught in his lie and was running.

Saul, triggered into action by Gus’s lies to the press, abducted Rae in her car.

Saul tortured and killed Gus, in his mind he did it for Rae. He threatened the lives of Finn, Phil and Robin, threatening to make Robin suffer the most.

The police at first suspected Gus for Rae’s abduction until they found his body in the Thames River. Finn knew it was Saul straight away. Rae’s car is found abandoned in East London, but no one saw anything.

Rhys, Tom, Phil and Finn go to question Ian about Saul’s whereabouts; the police are making no headway in the case, and the gang is unwilling to sit back and do nothing. Things get rather heated with Ian, and Rhys has to call his brother, Jules, the biggest drug dealer in England, to clean up the problem so that Ian won’t go the police. Jules pays for Ian and his friends to leave the country permanently. The lead Ian gave them; Saul’s grandmother’s house in Northampton, ends up going nowhere.

Chloe has everyone got o East London to question the people nearby. One of the witnesses remembers Phil and Kelsey as children because they grew up around there, so gives them a proper description of the abductor and a direction he was heading in with a woman matching Rae’s description who looked drugged.

Phil realises that for someone like Saul to get drugs to drug Rae, they probably went through Jules. Rhys asks Jules to check it out and Jules, after some heavy persuasion of one of his associates, delivers the address of the person who bought Propofol, a sedative he rarely (illegally) sells in London.

Rae has been held in Saul’s soundproof basement for 5 days and repeatedly beaten and raped. She manages to break free of her restraints and tries to get out of the locked door at the top of the
stairs. Saul catches her, there is a short struggle. Rae deliberately pushes him down the stairs, wanting to kill him so he can never hurt her boys.

She doesn’t know if he is dead for sure, but strongly suspects he is. She locks him in the basement and calls the police. While she is on the phone to the operator, Rhys breaks down the front door, Finn and Phil and her mother, and others are there. Rae confesses to killing Saul, Finn says he wants to make sure he is dead. Chloe tells everyone to lie about what Rae said, to say that there was a struggle and he fell.

Rae is taken to hospital for examination, a rape kit is done, she is stitched up, bandaged and her broken bones tended to. The police indicate that it seemed like Saul’s death was an accident.

The press run stories about Rae’s rape and Chloe, angry because it’s illegal in England to name rape victims is determined to take them all down.

Rae finally gets to go home, sees Robin, breaks down, but manages to keep it together to say hi to the entire gang and her family, who are all waiting to see her. Then she heads upstairs to brutally scrub herself in near-boiling water in the shower.

Phil decides that the security of the house needs to be improved and that they are all having personal security guards now.

Rae tells them she just wants life to go back to normal, that he’s dead now so it’s over.

But every time she closes her eyes she sees him.

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“Don’t stand in between the door and her.” Rhys answered Finn’s question.

“That’s it?” He asked. Phil made a thoughtful noise.

“I suppose every rape victim goes through a very different recovery.” Phil answered Finn’s furrowed brows. Phil hated saying those words about Rae; ‘rape victim.’ He felt such a whir of emotions he hardly knew what to do with himself, let alone with his son and his partners. Rhys was nodding in reply to Phil’s words.

“Let her guide you through what she needs.” Rhys said, “Don’t try to be the hero that psychically knows her every need. Because you’ll never know what she needs. She hardly knows what she needs from one minute to the next.”

“She was locked in a basement for 5 days.” Chloe sounded horrified. “We’ll never know just what she went through. But I know she probably thought she was gonna die. All the things we know he did cos o’ the bruises and the doctors… it’s nothing to what he did to her mentally.” Chloe wiped away her tears. She was keeping a strong face on in front of Rae, but it was almost impossible for her not to cry when Rae was sleeping or outside in the garden. “Her recovery is gonna take a long time. And you never really recover… you just… you just learn to live with what’s happened.”

“How do you learn to live with… that?” Finn asked in a small voice.

“You just do.” Chloe answered. “Even what Rae went through… she’ll learn to live with it. But it’s gonna take time, and I know Rae; it’s not gonna be a smooth ride.”
“I suggest you try to be as stable as you can be.” Rhys said, “And don’t stand between doors and her.”

“I don’t get it.” Finn said.

“Men often stand in between women and doors.” Chloe said, “It’s often a subconscious way of stopping them leaving. Of trying to make sure they go through with sex.” Finn stared at the wall for a moment before he nodded.

“Aye, I get it now.” He said.

“I think Rhys means it metaphorically as well as literally.” Phil gave Rhys a penetrating look.

“Yeah.” Rhys said, “You don’t know what she’s been through, and there’s a lot of things victims to go through on their journeys to becoming survivors. Let her go through it.”

“Just be there for her no matter what.” Chloe said, “Not just through the easy stuff.”

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“Why have neither of you tried to start sex?”

“Rae you were… you were ra-” Finn started to say.

“It doesn’t matter, he’s dead. It’s over.” She cut him off, her voice stern and slightly too forceful.

“Aye, o’ course.” Finn lowered his eyes. He obviously didn’t believe that.

“I don’t think that’s how it works Rae.” Phil said gently, “Him being dead doesn’t undo what he did to you.”

“And what would you know?” Rae turned on him. “When was the last time you were abducted and… and…?” She stopped, breathing hard, her eyes wild with rage. But she squared her shoulders and took a deep breath. “It’s over.” She told him forcefully, “He’s dead. It’s over.”

“Yeah.” Finn said, putting his hand on her back, gently stroking her skin, trying to comfort her.

“I wanna fuck.” Rae said almost flippantly, as if it was no big thing to be having sex for the first time since her abduction. As if there weren’t still healing bruises and cuts all over her body. As if this was just like any other time they’d fucked.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea Rae.” Phil said softly as she nuzzled in closer to them.

“Please.” She whimpered, “I need him off me.” Finn remembered Rae making a plea like this with him the last time Saul had attacked her, only that time he hadn’t succeeded in his ultimate plan. “I don’t wanna feel him on my skin anymore. Please…”

“Alright.” Finn answered, a deep need in him to give her anything she asked for.

“What?” Phil asked, staring at Finn in surprise. But Rae was grinning triumphanty.

“This is what Rae needs.” Finn answered. Phil understood and nodded his head slowly, still not sure that this was the right thing to do. Finn gently kissed her lips. She couldn’t kiss back from the split in her lips, but she closed her eyes, tears leaking out of them. Phil very gently stroked her face and edged closer.
They were both touching her, washing him away, getting the feel of him off her.

Only every time she closed her eyes she saw his face.

Every time she felt something touch her skin, it was his hand.

She tried to focus on Phil and Finn, gently caressing her, making love to her as she had asked them to. Finn took his shirt off and started to gently unbutton hers. Phil’s brows furrowed with concern, but he let his hand gently caress her neck, her face, and as her top opened, down to her breasts. His face.

Leering.

His hands squeezing her flesh, his nails tearing at her.

She jolted away from their hands. Phil froze and Finn made a soft comforting noise, slowly dropping his hands.

“It’s fine.” Rae tried to make a laughing sound.

“It’s ok.” Finn soothed. Phil realised that he was between Rae and the door and moved as subtly as he could, the bedsheets bunching beneath his knees.

“I know I’m ok.” Rae said testily and pulled Finn and Phil closer. When they both hesitated she kissed Finn and then Phil, “C’mon.” She drew them back into the moment, her hands dropping to waists of both of their pants.

“You sure?” Phil asked tentatively.

“Yes!” Rae’s tone was impatient. She pulled Phil into a kiss, Finn gently stroking her back.

As soon as his eyes closed she felt Saul forcing his mouth onto hers, making her kiss him.

She pulled out of the kiss abruptly.

“Rae…?” Finn’s tone was sympathetic and calming.

“I’m fine!” She pulled him into a kiss, but again pulled out of it quickly.

“It’s ok.” Finn soothed again.

“Stop using that fucking tone o’ voice!” Rae snapped. “I know I’m ok!”

“I’m saying it’s ok Rae, not you’re ok…” Finn furrowed his brows.

“Ugh, whatever.” Rae answered brusquely, “I’m ok, alright?”

“Alright.” Finn didn’t sound convinced.

“You know it’s alright if you’re not ok?” Phil said softly.

“Well I was alright until you two decided to treat me like I was tainted meat or something!” Rae’s tone was accusatory, her voice raised in anger.

“Rae’s that’s not-” Phil started to answer but Rae got off the bed.

“That’s what it is innit?” She turned on them. “You don’t wanna touch me cos he did?”
“Rae…” Finn sounded in physical pain; he couldn’t bear seeing her falling apart like this.

“I didn’t do nothin’ wrong!” Rae ranted, “it’s not like I asked him to… it’s not my fault!” She yelled at them. “So you two don’t get to sit there all high and fuckin’ mighty being disgusted by the satin he left in me! Knowing he…”

“Rae he didn’t leave a stain in you.” Phil said firmly.

“I never said that he did!” She’s eyes flared with rage, “That’s what you two think. You think I’m different now, that I’m dirty. D’you think I wanted it? is that what you’re really thinking?” Angry tears stung her eyes, “D’you want me to just hide away in shame? D’you think I didn’t fight him enough or…” She was breathless with her emotion and she took a deep shuddering breath before she continued, “You don’t wanna touch me, cos both of you think I been infected by him.” She cried, “Y’know so…” Fear seemed to be catching up with her. “I guess we’ll know in 3 months.” She said, her anger seeming to have died. In three months she’d be tested for HIV / AIDS.

“Rae, I don’t care about the results to that test.” Finn said, “you’ll always be my girl.” He got off the bed and reached for her.

“Don’t touch me!” She glared at him. “it’s not just AIDS. You think I’m dirty now. Cos I had his cock in me.”

“I don’t think that.” Finn soothed, “Neither of us doo.”

“Don’t use that fucking tone!” Rae yelled, “I’m not a fucking child that needs calming down!” Robin started to cry in the other room. They paused for a moment. “You two can deal with him. I don’t wanna see him.” Rae headed for the door.

“Rae?” Phil said, confused. In the few days since she’d been home she’d been determined to keep Robin close, to the point that the little boy was deeply frustrated by it.

“I did my motherly duty, making sure he didn’t get gutted by letting that disgusting man…” She paused, not able to say what Saul did to her, “I’ve got no more energy right now.”

“That’s-” Finn began.

“I never fucking wanted kids in the first place!” Rae screamed at him. She left the room, slamming the door behind her.

Finn and Phil stared at the door for a moment. Both in shock. Rae had been angry plenty of times over the years but she had never yelled or screamed at them like that.

“I’ll get him.” Phil said; Robin was still crying.

“Aye.” Finn answered, his mouth dry, his emotions a mess. “I’ll see if Rae… I dunno… I’ll just make sure she’s ok.”

“Probably best to leave her alone.” Phil said. “I think she’s gonna need a lot of being eft alone.”

“Well what else am I s’posed to do?” Finn asked, feeling helpless.

“Help me with Robin.”

*
Phil was sitting at the piano, his head in his hands, simply trying to understand anything of what he was feeling.

“Selfish.” He told himself. To be sitting here thinking about how he felt while Rae was still covered in bruises from what that… man… had done to her. She’d had the cast put back on for the third time yesterday; she kept taking it off in frustration. And today a doctor was coming to the house to assess the damage to her nose and the possibility of avoiding scars. A nurse was coming to dress the wounds…

Phil thought he had known painful things in his life. But nothing had hurt like seeing Rae like this.

“Selfish.” He repeated. But he couldn’t stop the tears. It was the fear of when she was missing, the relief of seeing her alive and the knowledge that their lives would never be the same again all catching up with him.

“Selfish.” He took a deep breath and wiped his eyes, drawing himself to his full height as he sat there, sucking his emotion deep down inside of him. He started to play ‘Wonderwall’ on the piano. Rae was in the kitchen and she had mentioned that she wanted to hear him play.

Phil looked up at the guard standing watch in the room. He had averted his eyes, but was clearly still on high alert.

He played without being able to feel the music like he normally could. He ached for Rae. For what she had been through. For how she was trying to repress it and pretend they could return to normal. For what he knew was coming, as desperately as he wished it wasn’t going to happen, he knew… He knew she was going to end up leaving. He hoped it wouldn’t be forever. But it was going to happen. He could feel her desperately trying not to pull away, and that was only causing more trauma. She needed time to heal, and while she was there with them she was worrying more about them than putting the energy into her own needs. He only hoped he’d have the strength to let her go when she finally did realise she had to go.

He choked back his emotion and focussed on playing music for Rae. He had notice she kept setting them tasks. Tasks to do that where within her sight, but not too physically close. Finn did whatever she needed without question, but Phil had always had a mind that saw all possibilities and understood motives better than most. He did as she needed because he loved her, but he understood what was happening. He was hoping that he could make the place feel enough like home over the next few days or weeks for her to want to come back when she was ready.

Finn was in the garden, gathering herbs for Rae’s intense cooking spree. She was baking and frying and sautéing and cooking things she’d never cooked before. Keeping herself busy.

She wished everyone would stop visiting and treating her like she was made of glass that would break at any moment. She was fine, there was nothing wrong, it was all over, she was totally fine…

She just wanted life to go back to normal. She wanted to be done with this whole thing.

*  

“We’ll only take a few minutes of your time.” He smiled at them reassuringly. This was a new officer, none of them had seen him before. The other officer was a woman, the taller one that had spoken to Rae in the hospital.
There’d been so many police interviews since then. They all seemed to blend into each other. And the photographs of what had happened to her had been put on the table during one of those interviews. Finn had nearly knocked the block off the officer that had put them down in front of Rae. Phil had insisted on disciplinary action against the officer in question. The police had all been far more careful with their enquiries since then.

“Of course.” Phil answered politely. Rae was looking down at the floor. Finn was sucking his teeth, eying the police officers moodily. He often thought about the fact that the police had had no idea where Rae was. They had completely failed to find her until she had called the emergency number. It pissed him off.

“We just wanted to let you know Ms Nelson that Saul’s death has officially been found to have been an accident.” The female officer said to Rae, obviously very glad to give that news to her.

“So that’s the matter closed.” Phil said, standing, ready to show the officers from their home.

“No.” The male officer said, not budging from their lounge. “We just have some questions about how you and all of your friends ended up at Saul Hudson’s house.”

“Why does that matter?” Finn asked.

“It’s very interesting to us how you managed to find an abductee that we couldn’t.” He leaned back in the lounge comfortably, “Maybe you two always knew where she was.” He posited. “This sure has been a hell of a publicity goldmine for you three.”

“Are you saying that I-” Rae began.

“Not you.” The officer said, his female partner looking down at the floor. “It’s very obvious from the photographs we found at Saul Hudson’s home that you had nothing to do with this. You were very much a victim.” His eyes turned back to Finn and Phil, “But how did they find you when the police couldn’t?”

“She called.” Finn answered defiantly.

“But she didn’t know where she was.” The officer answered. “That’s what she told the 999 operator.”

“She was scared and confused.” Finn answered. “She called us first then-”

“The phone records don’t indicate that.”

“We followed a second lead from the gentleman that remembered me from my youth.” Phil said, “We didn’t want to say anything to the police because he asked us not to; he doesn’t like talking to the police.”

“Well you won’t mind if we ask him about that?” The officer asked with a sceptical tone.

“Be my guest.” Phil answered.

“You won’t mind if my partner here stays with you while I follow it up?” The officer asked, “Make sure you don’t tip him off?”

“Of course.” Phil answered, “I’ll be sorry to have let the old man down.”

A few hours later the police were gone, the male officer looking disappointed that they couldn’t
collar Phil and Finn for something.

“How did you know the old man would corroborate your story?” Finn asked.

“Cos he hates the police.” Phil answered, “They go around there asking him if I’d talked to him a second time, he knows I’m in trouble, he helps by gladly lying to the police, saying that I did and what we talked about is none of their business. It’s what old men like him do.”

“Are we gonna help him back?”

“If he’ll let us.” Phil said. “But he probably won’t. He’ll say it was his duty to help me out.” Phil smiled, “Cos I used to hunt for snails in his yard so his cabbages could grow unhindered.”

*

Finn dropped the mug of tea he had been taking out to Rae.

She had been out in her garden all morning, and he thought she could do with a nice cuppa.

But she was sitting in the middle of a mess, weeping, sobbing. She had pulled out every plant she had planted in her vegie garden.

And now she wept.

“Rae?”

“Get away from me!” Rae screeched at him.

“Are you ok?”

“I said get away!” Her voice was filled with so much pain it practically winded Finn.

“I… I don’t wanna leave you alone like this.” He tried.

“I said get away.” Rae looked up at him through bruised, red eyes, wet cheeks, her mouth set in an angry line, “Or don’t you accept a ‘no’ either?” He tone was accusatory.

“Rae…?” Finn was breathless with emotion.

“Fine.” She stood up, “If you won’t fuck off, I will.” She moved towards the house, Finn standing between her and her destination. “Move.” She said to him. Finn hesitated and then stepped aside.

He didn’t watch her go to the house, he looked at her destroyed garden, feeling like the rug had been pulled out from under him. He thought back to when they had been teenagers and he had insisted that Rae never be alone because of Saul. He had insisted even though she hadn’t wanted that. He thought about that while the question of whether he was a man that had a problem with taking the word ‘no’ hung in the air and he set about to fixing the damage Rae had done to her garden.

*

Some nights she wouldn’t leave Robin’s room. She would stare at him as he slept, crying silently.

She’d cling to them, weeping softly and whispering that he had threatened to hurt her baby.

Most of the time she was deeply interested in everything Robin was doing, and far more protective
She would sometimes hold him close, singing lullabies, rocking him, and sometimes she would whisper to him that he was safe because she would kill anyone that tried to hurt him. Because she’d already done it once she knew she could do it again.

But sometimes this exhaustion would come over her and she couldn’t stand to look at him, and she would be bitter that this little boy had been used to terrorise her into accepting what was being done to her in Saul’s basement.

Robin seemed to be coping with the confusion his mother was causing him; he had a lot of questions that Phil insisted where answered as honestly as possible, without too much detail.

Chloe and Rhys took him a lot too. It was helpful.

* 

“I feel like dancing.” Rae said pulling Finn to his feet. “Let’s go out dancing.”

“I have filming tomorrow.” Phil answered. Rae normally didn’t try to get them out dancing when she knew Phil was on set early the next day. Finn and Phil shared a glance when she moaned and then shrugged.

“Fine if you wanna be a stick in the mud, I’ll just take Finn out dancing.” She said to Phil.

“I think I should stay in and look after Robin.” Finn answered, trying to encourage her to stay in too. The bruising on her face was fading to yellow and he was worrying nonstop about her.

“Fine.” She pouted and then a devilish grin took over her face, “Then I’ll just go out with my very sexy bodyguard, and dance the night away with him.” She said.

“If that’s what you want.” Phil answered and Finn gave him a surprised look.

“Fine.” Rae answered, turning and leaving like a defiant teenager, her bodyguard in tow.

“Why aren’t we trying to stop her?” Finn asked as soon as she was out of earshot.

“We’re not her parents Finn, she can make her own decisions.” Phil answered.

“But after what she’s been through…” Finn fretted.

“I’m worried too.” Phil agreed, “I have no doubt that this is all part of her trauma. She doesn’t know how to process it, how to cope with…” He shook his head. “It’s gonna take time.”

“How can you be so calm?”

“I’m not calm.” Phil said, “I just recognise when there’s nothing I can do. She doesn’t want to talk about it, not even to Kester, or Chloe or a new therapist… she wants life to go back to normal. How can we give her anything but what she wants?”

“I know.” Finn understood.

“And it’s normal for me to not go out when I have filming the next day.”

“She wants it to go back to normal, but he’s not acting normal.” Finn tried to figure his girl out.
“Neither of us can even begin to comprehend what she went through, what she’s going through now.” Phil said, “There’s so many different ways that trauma can manifest itself, so we have no idea what to expect from her over the next few years; we just have to do our best to support her.”

“Years.” Finn said despondently.

“That’s if she ever returns to… I hesitate to use the word ‘normal’,” Phil sighed heavily; he was beyond anxious and having to fight the urge to begin self-harming again, he felt like he was drowning in the depth of Rae’s trauma. But he would be strong for her. He was determined. This was about her, not him, not Finn, and not even Robin. “We have to accept that our lives have been changed forever.” Phil said, “They’ll never be what they were. Rae can never go to a time when she hasn’t been raped now. It will forever be a part of her. And we have no way of telling how she’ll learn to cope with that. Or if she ever will. Like Chloe said, she’ll have to learn to live with it… But we don’t know what that exactly means.”

*  

“There is a chance that-”

“I don’t care.” Rae’s eyes were glued to the floor, her heart burning with rage and terror and even the sorrow burned her. “Get rid of it.” The doctor waited in silence for a moment.

“Do you want some time to think?”

“It don’t matter if it’s his or no.” Rae answered, “Even if it’s Finn’s… I don’t want it inside me.” She looked up at the doctor, “I don’t want anything growing outta… that…. outta me.”

“I’ll schedule the abortion for early next week.” He answered.

“I want this to be completely private.” Rae said fiercely. “No one can know.”

*  

Rae’s eyes felt watery but she kept sniffing.

“Fuck…” She felt like the whole world made sense because her brain was simply functioning better and faster. She’d been snorting cocaine all night, dancing with some girl who was giving it to her.

Last week it’d been some guy she paid to get her ecstasy. She’d danced with him for hours.

It felt good to be out dancing.

*  

“If there’s anything I can do.” Chloe’s eyes were filled with so much emotion.

“It must be hard for you.” Rae responded.

“What?” She was bewildered.

“All this stuff must be dredging up all the stuff that happened to you.”

“Don’t worry about any o’ that Rae.” Chloe answered, “It’s you and me girl. Always together, always best friends. Forever. Right?”
“Yeah.” Rae answered.

“So talk to me Rae.”

“I got nothing to say Chlo.”

*

Rae looked down at her stomach. Her hand rested on her belly, but she snatched it off. There was no time for memories or pointless sentimentality. She’d killed whatever it was that had been growing inside of her. She had just known it had been his. The age of the foetus meant it could have been Finn’s. But Rae knew. It was Saul’s; created out of hatred and fear and rape.

She looked at her reflection; she’d lost a lot of weight over the past few weeks. It was practically dropping off her. Magazines were snapping up paparazzi pictures of her and praising her for her weight loss, for finally doing something about her size, saying she was finally getting to be beautiful enough for her two men…

Rae read them all, the words tumbling over and over in her mind.

She had endured the most heinous brutality and was suffering…. No she didn’t think about what she was feeling now. She was fine. But it was true that she wasn’t eating much, and she went running almost every day, and she might be using just the smallest amount of illicit substances...

She thought about how Rhys had told her that only an organism that was dying or sick lost weight. That losing weight required that you didn’t feed yourself enough food.

Was she sick?

Was she dying?

If she let it all catch up with her it felt like she was.

*

She was incredibly drunk when a reporter with a camera found her, puking in the gutter, her security guard holding her purse.

She swore at him and tried to stumble away, her guard helping her to the car he was driving for her.

It was all over the news the next day.

Sarah went into damage control.

Rae sat despondently listening to her.

“I don’t give a fuck.” Rae told her.

“Phil, your partner, remember him? He’s currently filming a ‘family friendly’ movie, and your behaviour is-”

“I said I didn’t care.” Rae said getting up and walking out.

“She’s being selfish.” Sarah shook her head.

“She’s a rape victim.” Phil said sharply. “Studies indicate that a lot of rape victims self-medicate
with substance abuse.” Sarah rolled her eyes.

“I get that Phil.” She said, “But if she wants to self-medicate, implode, destroy herself, her life, whatever. Let her at least have the common courtesy to do it in private and not drag the men she supposedly loves down with her.”

“Alright you need to go now.” Finn said curtly.

“Hey, I’m not saying she doesn’t have a good reason, or that you shouldn’t get her help and do whatever you can for her.” Sarah said, “I’m just saying she should have the decency to not fuck up your lives by being so goddamn public with her meltdown.”

“I’m pretty sure mental health issues don’t work that way.” Phil snapped, “And you’d do well not to comment on what Rae is doing in regards to her trauma, abduction and rape. Understood?”

“Sure.” Sarah answered. “I’ll see what I can do with what she’s giving me.” She left.

Finn and Phil sat around moodily worrying about Rae and trying to figure out what to do.

* *

“Chloe keeps wanting to talk about it.” Rae said, ‘Like we’re gonna bond over rape or something.” Janice wrapped her hands around the hot mug of tea.

“She probably just wants to help you through this t-”

“Trauma, yeah.” Rae said, “I’m fine though. I just wish everyone’d stop treating me like I’m not.”

* *

Rae looked at the blade.
She’d bought it specially.

When she had seen the knife, a kind of throbbing had started in her head, drowning out everything else in a kind of white noise. An electrical static.

She had felt a jolt of excitement when she had touched it, and had instantly put her money down on the counter.

She caressed her thigh with the blade, imagining how it would look when the knife sliced her skin. The blood, the pain, the feeling of freedom…

She pressed the tip into her skin, a bead of blood forming around it.

And she felt nothing.

But she wanted to feel nothing didn’t she?

Or had she hoped that this would make her feel something? Some sort of self preservation?

She had no idea what she was actually feeling.

And she had no idea what she was hoping would happen to her when she sliced into herself.

It was terrifying.
And so intoxicating.

She pressed a little harder, preparing herself to slice into her flesh.

“Rae?” It was Finn. His voice sounded so hurt.

“You’re s’posed to be at-” Her voice sounded like it was far away, echoing down a long tin tunnel to her ears.

“What the hell are you doing girl?” He snatched the knife out of her hand and gently touched the area around her small wound.

“You can’t do this Rae. You and Phil don’t self-harm no more. Remember?”

“Yeah well. Phil was abducted and beaten and ra-” She stopped herself from saying the last word.

“You know what? Fuck you! you don’t get to judge me.” Rae stood up and pushed him away from her.

“Rae?” She turned away from him. “Please. Please talk to Kester, or Chlo, or Rhys, or anyone…. Just talk to us!”

But she kept walking. Not one word left her lips.

*

Rae watched Robin playing quietly with his dolls.

She felt nothing. Like she was made of nothingness.

She was reminded of ‘The Neverending Story’ and The Nothing that had been destroying Fantasia.

She didn’t feel like The nothing was engulfing her.

She felt like she was The Nothing, engulfing everything around her.

She couldn’t remember hearing Robin laugh once this week.

*

It was the first time they’d all left her alone in the house since the ‘almost-cutting’ incident.

She only had an hour, but she didn’t need more; she had been packed and ready for the opportunity to leave for weeks. She put the letter to her boys on the bed in her bedroom and grabbed her bags.

She didn’t know where she was going. She just knew she had to be elsewhere.

She took the lift down to the bottom floor and headed towards the door. Her emotions quite suddenly caught up with her. Everything that had happened to her, the knowledge that her presence was destroying her happy family, the pain of leaving them… She felt tears thick in her throat, but she knew she had to go.

“Rae.” This time it was Phil that was stopping her from doing what she needed to do.

“You’re supposed to be on set.”

“I just had a feeling…” He almost whispered. “What are you doing?” He asked, his eyes
dropping to the bag in her hand. “You can’t.” He whispered, his voice pleading. “Rae I know things have been hard since…” But Phil couldn’t say it, couldn’t remind her of what had happened. “But we’re getting through it.”

“No we’re not. I’m not!” Rae answered, she was weeping, her voice was thick with tears and sobs, “Phil I’m broken inside… there’s something not working right inside o’ me. And I seen what it’s doing to you and Finn, and I can’t do it anymore.”

“Leaving us isn’t gonna be easier on us Rae.”

“But it’ll be easier on me!” She cried, sobbing loudly. Phil felt like he’d been punched in the stomach and slowly nodded.

“You’re right… it’s selfish to…” He paused and got his voice under control, his emotions, his insides breaking apart right now, weren’t going to help her. He’d done this once before; hidden the gaping wound in his chest from her, for her. He could do it again. He took a deep breath. “I can’t make you stay. But I can tell you that we will be waiting for you, right where you left us, when you’ve done what you need to do.”

“Don’t wait.”

“Rae I love you. Finn loves you. D’you really think not waiting is an option for us?”

“You’ve got each other.” She cried miserably. “Don’t wait… I can’t have that on me too.” She turned, her whole body shaking with tears and went through the front door. Phil clenched his hands tight, stopping himself from running after her.
Better Days

‘Better Days’ by Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuBZTtI8aEc

We might still know sorrow but we got better days

“I wasn’t gonna stand between her and a door.” Phil answered firmly.

“Oh for fuck’s sake Phil! If ever there was a time to do it, that was it.” Finn snapped. “You shouldn’t o’ let her go!” But Phil shook his head in reply. “She could be anywhere.” Finn said, “We gotta call Linda. Hopefully she just went to Stamford.” He pulled his phone out. “If something happens to her… And she been acting all mental…” Finn fretted.

“Don’t use the word mental like that.” Phil said in a soft voice.

“You seriously gonna get all politically correct on me while my girl’s missing?”

“Our girl.” Phil answered.

“Aye well, you’re not acting like she your girl. You’re acting like you don’t care.” Finn started to walk out of the room.

“Make her yours, not by imprisoning her heart and mind but by freeing her from everything that could.” Phil called after him. Finn turned around, looking very unimpressed. “I don’t know who said that… but it’s how I’ve tried to love Rae from the beginning. And it’s a journey that you’ve been on too… You don’t love someone by holding them to you, by imprisoning them in a place they don’t want to be. You love them by removing the things that would imprison them. In this instance… that’s us, this home…”

“You’re wrong.”

“It’s not my opinion.” Phil answered. “It’s hers.” All of the heat and rage flew out of Finn’s body and he slumped into the chair nearest him. “She needs some time alone. We gotta do our best to keep it together here, and give Robin a normal life.”

“Yeah but it’s never gonna be normal without her.”

“I know.”

*

Rae put the plate down on the table.

“Big breakfast.’ She said, “Pot ‘ tea, and-”

“Hey… you got a familiar face…” He said looking up at her.

“I get that a lot.” Rae answered, “People think I look like that slag Rae Earl.”
“I don’t think she’s a slag.” The man answered with slightly narrowed eyes, clearly not liking what she’d said.

“Aye well I’m just tired of everyone thinking I like to sleep with every man in the room cos I look like her.” Rae answered and put the bill on his table face down, “Enjoy your meal sir.”

“You know you don’t really look like her. You’re too skinny.” He called after her.

“Thanks.” She replied without looking back.

When her shift ended she walked home to her tiny flat above a halal butcher shop. The owner had quite a sweet spot for her and kept asking her to marry him. Rae would smile sadly and refuse. But he would always give her everything she bought for half price.

She was going by the name Olivia. It was one of her middle names and it allowed her some very welcome anonymity.

She thought about her boys often.

She worried about Finn. She knew it was bad that she had left him just like Kenzie had. She knew this would bring up all sorts of abandonment issues.

She worried about Phil and how she had hurt him deeply before. She knew he’d be struggling to be strong, fighting against self harm.

And she worried about Robin. Her little boy, wondering where his mummy was. But then she’d remember that he had gone weeks without laughing once; her presence had been a poison for him.

When she wasn’t working to scrape together barely enough to pay her bills, she was walking and jogging.

Weymouth was a pretty city by the beach, and she would get up at dawn to sprint along the golden sands.

She was the thinnest she had ever been, easily fitting into a size 10, but still her appetite did not return, even as she continued to shrink.

Her co-workers told her she’d be pretty if she smiled.

Her neighbours said she was quiet.

The halal butcher said she was beautiful, but so sad and untouchable.

If any of them had asked Rae to describe herself, she wouldn’t have known what to say.

Sometimes she sat with a notebook open, a pen held in her hand as she stared at the blank page, willing herself to write something, anything at all.

But there seemed to be nothing left inside of her.

*

“I WANT MUMMY!” Robin screamed on the top of his lungs, stamping his feet angrily.

“She’ll be back soon.” Finn said and then sighed; they’d been trying to not make statements like that because they might not be true.
“I WANT HER NOW!”

“Well she’s been real sad and she just needed some time alone.” Finn tried to explain.

“NOW!” Somehow Robin’s voice grew even louder.

“You alright?” Phil asked as he popped his head in the door.

“Aye I got this.” Finn answered wearily.

“You sure?”

“NOW!”

“Aye you gotta get going to work!” Finn said, “You got a contract to keep.”

“I’m gonna go on indefinite leave when I finish this film.” Phil told him. “My family is more important.” He knelt down in front of Robin. “We miss mummy too.” He told the angry boy.

“When is she coming back?” Robin asked miserably. Finn and Phil shared a look.

“Real soon.” Phil answered, “As soon as she can.” And just like that Robin was satisfied. He ran off to play.

“What if she doesn’t come back?” Finn asked in a small voice.

“She will.” Phil said immutably.

“What if she’s waiting for us to go get her?” Finn was terrified; he’d been through this before.

“Rae is not your mother.” Phil put his hands on Finn’s cheeks reassuringly. “She will come back, ok?”

“Alright.” Finn answered and accepted Phil’s kiss.

“I’ll be back from work as soon as I can be.”

*  

Rae was walking home after a ten hour shift when she noticed some people ahead crossing the road when they saw a huge figure walking towards them. A recognisably huge figure.

“Rhys…” She whispered to herself. She had known it was only a matter of time before they found her. It looked like he hadn’t seen her yet. She could turn and melt into the shadows and not be seen.

But it had been months. Maybe he could tell her how her boys where?

But she supposed they weren’t really her boys anymore.

Rae hesitated, halfway between wanting to hide and wanting to be found.

“I saw you before I crossed the road Rae.” Rhys said. He had seen her struggle.

“If I’d turned and run, would you have let me go?”

“Of course.” He answered, “I’m just here to make sure you’re still alive. To see if you need
anything.”

“How did you find me?”

“Really?” He asked with a small smile.

“Jules.” Rae answered shaking her head slowly, “Of course.”

“He has a lot of connections.” Rhys nodded, “And one of your neighbours is a dealer.”

“Is it Annie or George?” Rae asked motioning for Rhys to follow her.

“Annie.” Rhys replied.

“Huh.” Rae said, “I wouldn’t of thought either of ‘em were dealers. They both seem so... quiet.”

“A lot of drug dealers are quiet.” Rhys shrugged.

“Do they know you’re here?”

“No.” Rhys answered, “Not even Chloe knows.” She turned and looked at him. “You’re family Rae. I just wanted to make sure you’re safe.”

“He’s dead. Who’s gonna hurt me now?”

“You.”

“I don’t self harm.” Rae said and unlocked the door to the stairs that led up the flats above these shops.

“Sometimes our own thoughts are the things that harm us the most.” He said softly. Rae didn’t acknowledge his words. Instead she climbed up the stairs, Rhys following her silently.

“So this is my place now. Bit of a step up from the last place.” She joked with no humour. The flat was tiny and bare; there was hardly any furniture at all. Just a mattress on the floor, a small television on a set of drawers and mobile hanger for her clothes. The kitchen, bedroom and lounge room all blended into each other with no walls between them and the tiny bathroom was off to the side. The bathroom was tiled area with a toilet and shower head over a drain in the floor. There was no separation between the toilet and the shower, and the toilet often got wet when Rae washed her hair. “I didn’t really have enough money for furniture.” She said as she looked around. “So if you wanna sit… it’s the mattress or the floor.”

“You could have used your account.”

“No.” Rae shook her head. “That’s their money… that’s her money.”

“Her money.” Rhys said softly, “You mean the woman you were before you were repeatedly raped by Saul Hudson.”

“I see what you’re doing.” Rae said, “You think I’m running away from it so you’re naming what happened to me.” She looked him dead in the eye, “Out of all the people I know, you’re the one I thought would understand the most. The one that would accept that even if it is running away, it’s my right to choose what I want.”

“It is your right.” Rhys agreed, “I apologise.”
“So you want a drink?” Rae asked, her voice and expressions, muted, as they had been this entire conversation.

“You need to learn more self defence.” Rhys answered, “Like how to defend yourself from an attack in a car.” Rae stared at him with an unimpressed expression.

“He’s dead.” Rae answered. “No one else is looking to abduct me Rhys.” She opened the fridge and got a bottle of chilled water out for herself. She filled the bottles up from the tap and put them in the fridge to chill. “Unless that’s your plan.”

“I have no plan Miss Rae.” He said softly. “Other than to see that you are ok.”

“Well, you’ve seen me.” She said and sat down on the mattress. “Are you gonna tell them?”

“Do you want me to?”

“No.” Rae’s voice sounded like she was saying yes. Rhys furrowed his brows in thought before he went to her and crouched before her.

“Rae.” He said softly, looking her in the eyes, “The things that hurt us deep inside… sometimes they stay with us, they never go.” He told her.

“That’s not very comforting.”

“It’s not meant to be. It’s simply the truth. So we just have to keep telling ourselves that they don’t own us.” There was a fierceness to his voice that told Rae he was speaking from experience. “No matter what. Every single time those feelings of his hands on you come up Rae, you have to tell yourself he’s not here, he doesn’t own you. And those memories, those thoughts, those feelings… they don’t own us. We do. We own ourselves.” Rae lowered her eyes. “I’ll come visit you again in a fortnight.” He said, “I do hope that you’re still here and that you haven’t moved on.”

“Finn’ll never forgive you for not telling him that you found me.”

“That’s between me and Finn.” Rhys answered, “In this instance my loyalty is to the victim struggling to become a survivor on her own terms.” Rae looked up at him, suddenly very grateful for his presence. “You are my sister Rae, and I couldn’t leave you thinking that you’re alone.” He stood up, “You’re not alone. But I’ll give you all the space you need.”

“Chloe’ll never forgive you.” Rae whispered.

“That’s between Chloe and me.” He answered gently. “Just know you’re not alone Miss Rae.” He gave her a nod and left quietly, without another word. Rae watched him leave, wondering if she should pack up and relocate now that she had been found.

* 

“I just feel like we should be looking for her.” Finn said as he got into bed.

“Me too.” Phil answered, “But we gotta respect what she wants; which is time alone.”

“I don’t like the idea of her being alone.” Finn said miserably. “I hate the idea that she’s out there all alone, feeling like she’s got no one.”

“Yeah it kills me too.” Phil rubbed his face, looking tired and worn. “But I honestly believe that
victims should be supported in whatever way they want… us chasing after her is more about us getting what we want and less about her getting what she needs. It’s about soothing our emotions, not hers.”

“Aye but I don’t think she knows what she needs in that regard.” Finn answered.

“You’re probably right.” Phil agreed, “But I don’t wanna be the one to tell her what she wants or needs, do you?”

“No.” Finn agreed. “I just wish that she knew she weren’t alone, y’know?”

“I was actually thinking that we should ask someone like Rhys or Chlo to try and find her.” Phil said, “Some one that’s still her family, but not someone that she feels pressure from.”

“We don’t pressure do we?”

“Not intentionally.” Phil said, “But there’s a pressure inside of her to try to get back to what we had before. Even if we’re not the ones putting the pressure on her, it’s there. And I imagine it’s overwhelming.”

“Aye especially with Sarah losing her mind about the current situation.” Finn nodded slowly.

“The world will just have to accept that we need privacy in this time of healing.” Phil said simply. “As Sarah worded it.” He added.

“Aye right, I can see that happening.” Finn snarked. Phil nodded in agreement.

“I wish…” Phil stopped himself.

“What?”

“There’s no point wishing for things is there?” Phil said sadly.

“I wish she were back. That we knew if she were ok. That none o’ this had happened. That I’d killed him when I had the chance.”

“I wish all of that too.” Phil whispered. He cleared his throat and straightened his shirt. “But that’s…. it’s pointless. We need to focus on what is real and what is happening. And on Robin and each other. We need to focus on the things we can control and change and look after… not on fantasies.”

“Aye.”

“Focussing on fantasies and wishes is just… painful.”

“Live in the here and now.” Finn agreed.

“I miss her.” Phil said miserably. Finn put an arm around his shoulders.

“Aye me too.” He soothed, “But I’m glad we still got each other. And Robin. I’d hate to be going through this alone.”

“Like Rae is.”

*
Kester swore under his breath at his arthritic hands as he tried to cut the roses in his garden. Gardening. That’s what his doctor had suggested. Gardening to take the place of smoking.

Kester had been sceptical at first, but the psychologist in him was aware that he had suggested similar practices for his own patients when he had been practicing. Replace a bad behaviour with a good one… a negative thought with a positive one. So he had looked at the jungle of weeds that surrounded his little two floor apartment and envisioned what he wanted it to look like. Then he had begun work. And he had a beautiful garden now. But his arthritis was starting to make it increasingly difficult to take care of his garden.

“We have a visitor.” Angela, his partner, stood at the back door, her apron covered with flour; she was baking again. This was his life now, gardening and baking. He supposed that’s how it was for most retirees in their 70s.

As soon as he saw her he opened his arms for a hug. Rae buried herself in Kester’s warm arms.

“I’m sorry for bothering you, I know you retired. It’s just-”

“I’ve been expecting you.” Kester allayed her fears.

“I’m that obviously needy am I?” Rae tried to sound like she was joking, but she obviously feared that she was too demanding of Kester.

“Something horrific was done to you. All control was taken from you, and you were brutalised and the whole world knows it.” Kester said, “It’s ok for you to seek out the familiar, to find something that’s comforting and safe.” He told her, “Stop being so hard on yourself.”

“If I was seeking comfort from the familiar I’d be with me boys.” Rae countered as she sat down on the bench and watched Kester slowly getting up to join her.

“You think so?” Kester asked, aching for a cigarette; counselling always seemed to bring the addiction out in him.

“I dunno.” Rae said softly. “I dunno why I’m even here.”

“You don’t?”

“Always the psychologist.” Rae joked.

“Always.” Kester agreed and handed her one of the yellow roses he had already cut this morning. He had so many, Angela wouldn’t miss one form the vases she kept full of them inside.

“Historically, the yellow rose means friendship and wishes for joy and good health.”

“This is a beautiful flower.” Rae said softly, looking at it; it was completely perfect.

“People often think of them as quintessentially British. But these ones come from the Middle East. The vast majority of roses come from Asia and Africa. Only a very small amount of them originated in Europe or the Americas.”

“Maybe that’s the quintessentially British thing about it.” Rae quipped, “That it was taken from somewhere else. Like tea as another example.” Kester chuckled and Rae felt the first smile she’d felt for a long time creep across her lips.

“Perhaps.” Kester agreed. “You’re always welcome here Rae.” He told her, “Don’t worry about
my retirement.” He nodded to the yellow rose and Rae understood; they were past psychologist patient things now. They were friends.

“Thanks.” She looked down at the flower, all her words dried up and dying in her mouth. Kester sat silently, sorting his basket of roses into bunches. He didn’t need to do that; Angela liked to do it. But he was gardening instead of smoking. “I’m cold Kester.” She whispered. Kester looked at her, the sun shining on her hair, her painfully thin frame, her haggard face. He knew she didn’t mean temperature, so he waited silently for her to continue. “I’m so cold. And I’m sucking he warmth out of me men, of me son.” Her voice was a painful whisper; a confession of her greatest sin.

“Is that why you left?” Kester asked gently.

“Yes.” She answered. “They contacted you huh?”

“I might have gotten a panicked call from Finn.” Kester acknowledged. “He was angry at Phil for letting you go. But Phil was right to let you go, wasn’t he?” Rae nodded. “You didn’t need someone else taking control from you.”

“You think it’s about control?” Rae asked, “You think I left them to…” Her voice trailed off as she started to think about those words.

“Well it would be understandable if you did.” Kester said. “No matter how supportive they are, everyone’s still just waiting for you to recover.” He twirled a white rose in his fingers. “That’s a lot of pressure.”

“They don’t mean to put any pressure on me.”

“The pressure to return to life the way it was before a big traumatic event…” Kester looked at her knowingly.

“You think it all came from me.” Rae said softly, “Don’t you?”

“Because they deserve happiness. And warmth. Like you had before. And you felt you couldn’t deliver.”

“I couldn’t. I can’t.” Rae said sadly. “I kept trying to go back to the way it were… but… I’m not that person anymore.” She sounded so disappointed with herself.

“Of course you’re not.” Kester answered. “But of course you still are, also.” Rae gave him a quizzical look. “There’s nothing more Rae-like than you trying to protect your boys the best you could.” He said with a warm smile. “When something hugely traumatic happens, we often feel like we lose ourselves. We’re not the person we once were. But we are still that person.” He told her, “Don’t think for one second that someone as small as Saul can make you a whole different person Rae.” Kester said firmly, “He never had that much control over you. No one ever will. But he has changed you. And it’s such a big, noticeable change that it feels like your whole being has been ripped apart and destroyed.” Rae nodded slowly, “Well it can mean that, if you want it to. You can pull everything apart and build yourself again from new. Or you can heal yourself and stay you. Changed, but you.” Kester handed her another rose. “This is Rosa rubiginosa. Eglantine, or sweet brier. It means ‘a wound to heal.’” Rae looked at the sweet pink rose. “Don’t let anyone tell you the right way to recover Rae.” Kester told her, “You don’t have to forgive, but you can if you want. You don’t have to be the person you were before, but you can be if you want. You don’t have to be alone, but you can be if you want.” Rae looked up at him. “You have complete control over this process. And that’s the most important and healing thing of all. Don’t
let anyone take that control from you, for any reason.” Rae nodded slowly.

“I wanna be how I were before. But I don’t think I can.” Rae held the pink and yellow roses together and stared at them. “Every time I think about going back home… I just think about how much of a burden I am to them. How hard it is for them to have me around when I’m like this…” She shook her head sadly, “And I can’t do that to them…”

“Rae, I know from personal experience, that it is a great privilege to help the people we’re in love with.” He looked back at the house. Angela’s daughter had died last year. It had been a difficult time. He looked back at Rae and saw how confused she was by what he had said. “You never considered it that way did you?” Rae looked up from the roses in her hand to his face. “When we are in love with someone we want to help them through the bad moments, it’s as much of an honour to us as walking with them through their life when they’re happy.” He told her, “It’s a comfort to us to hold them while they finally sleep peacefully after a long battle with the world. Loving someone means that your soul aches to be there for them.”

“So I’m denying them the chance to comfort me…” Rae asked incredulously, starting to feel guilty.

“No.” Kester answered. “Those men understand that you choose what’s best for you. They know that we all get over bad things differently. And if your way is to be alone, then that’s what you need and that’s what they’ll give you. Without question.” Rae felt tears stinging at her eyes again. She hadn’t cried as much as she thought she would have after all she’d been through. “And they’ll be there for you while you do that and they’ll be there for you if and when you decide you no longer want to be alone.”

“D’you think so?”

“I know so.” Kester answered and Rae felt a heavy weight lift off her chest because she knew he was right. She had just needed to hear it out loud. “Just don’t force yourself to be alone because you think you’re a burden to those men.” He told her gently, “None of you deserve that. All three of you deserve the chance to help you heal together.” There was a long moment of silence while Kester pretended to be busy with his roses and Rae looked down at the floor. “So which is it?” He prodded gently, knowing his role in this whole thing. “Do you need time alone to heal, or are you hurting yourself by trying to not be a burden to them, which just hurts them too?”

“I don’t know.”

*

“I’ve been so worried about you baby girl.” Linda said, her hand clinging to the phone.

“I’m sorry mum.” Rae croaked.

“No need to be sorry Rae. I’m just so glad to hear from you.”

“How’s everyone?” Rae asked.

“You mean how are your boys.” Linda answered astutely. “Finn is going crazy, and everyone can see it.” She went on without waiting for Rae’s response, “Phil is going crazy, but holding it all inside so no one can see. And Robin is staying with people other than his parents far too much. They all miss you.” She pursed her lips, wondering if she had said too much, been too harsh.

“You think I’m being selfish.” Rae tried to keep the misery out of her voice. She couldn’t stand her mother’s judgement. Because she feared it was true.
“No Rae. I don’t.” Linda answered brusquely, “I think that none of us can ever know what you’re going through, what you’ve been through, and you need to do whatever you need to do to get yourself good enough to come home.”

“What if I never come home?” Rae hadn’t even known she was going to ask that question.

“Rae?” Linda was absolutely stunned. She sat down heavily on the chair and put her head in her hands; it had never occurred to her that Rae might never return.

“I’m sorry mum. I gotta go. I got work.” She hung up without another word and Linda still clung to the phone, her world feeling like it was crumbling around her.

“Hey mum.” Ash came in, “Was it Rae on the phone?” He asked hopefully.

“Yeah.” Linda said softly.

“When’s she coming back?”

“She doesn’t know.” Linda answered, unwilling to tell her son, or anyone, that Rae might not be coming back. “I gotta call Finn and Phil.” She told him, “Be a good son and do me a cup o’ tea, yeah?”

“Alright mum.” Linda watched Ash leave and took a deep breath before calling the landline to the Nelson household. She knew Finn would be the one to pick up; he always rushed to the phone. Phil was on leave from his career, but he was more repressed and controlled than Finn, so he let Finn rush to the phone and get it because he knew it made Finn feel better.

“Hi Finn. Listen, Rae called.” Linda knew she wouldn’t be telling them everything that Rae had said, but she had to tell them something. She listened to Finn babbling until Phil took the phone off him and put her on loud speaker before asking her to continue. She took another deep breath.

“She’s fine. Got a job… she’s working towards coming back.” She lied.

*R*

Rae took a bite of the green apple and shoved her other hand in the pocket of her jeans. She was opening the café this morning and she still felt sleepy. The apple was her breakfast and she walked slower than usual to accommodate eating it. She still had plenty of time before the café opening time, but she wanted to grab a magazine and read through it before opening up.

“Morning Olivia!” The guy who owned the news agency said as he opened up his shop.

“Hi Bob.” Rae said and headed towards the magazines.

On her way out Rae saw the morning and new editions of all the newspapers and tabloids and magazines lined up ready to be put out. She saw a photograph on the front page of one of the tabloids and felt her throat constricting, terror coursing through her veins, her skin crawling. She sobbed loudly, desperately trying not to fall to her knees. Bob looked up at her and then back at the tabloid she was staring at. It was a photo of that Rae Earl woman tied up in Saul Hudson’s basement. Apparently the cops had a leak, and some multi-million dollar sales had been made and now the tabloids had all the photos that Saul had taken of Rae’s assault. He thought it was messed up that they’d print them, but he understood that for the tabloids it was good business. He would be giving everyone that bought a copy of the tabloid today a dirty look though.

“Olivia?” He asked. The poor girl was shaking. “It’s alright doll.” He went to her and tried to put a hand on her shoulder to comfort her.
“No… no…” She kept saying the word over and over, her eyes glued to the picture, not seeing him at all.

She ran out of the newsagency, Bob staring after her with confusion. She’d always been such a nice quiet girl.

Rae went to work.

She had no choice, and no money.

But her heart was pounding, and her nerves were shot. She kept jumping every time someone tried to get her attention. Her boss sent her home after the breakfast rush.

Rae waked home, her head down, her arms wrapped around her stomach, her shoulders hunched in on herself. She wanted to be invisible.

The whole of England and the rest of the world already knew she’d been raped. Now they’d all seen it too. She could never go back to being Rae.

He was waiting for her on the doorstep. It hadn’t been a fortnight yet. But things had changed. He’d seen the photos, she could tell by the way he was looking at her. Rae looked at him, her whole body aching with fear. He was so safe looking. She ran and threw her arms around Rhys’s neck, sobbing loudly. He held her tightly.

“C’mon.” He said softly to her, looking over her shoulder at Chloe, waiting in the car. Chloe gave him a nod.

They went upstairs and Rae sat down on the mattress, trying not to cry anymore. Rhys made her a mug of tea in silence. He didn’t need to ask where anything was; the kitchen was so small it took no time to find everything. He noted how little food there was in the flat. He didn’t know if that was from lack of money or lack of appetite. He left a few hundred quid on the kitchen side, just in case.

“Thanks.” Rae said when she took the tea from his hands. Her hands were trembling as she put the mug to her lips. “I suppose Chloe’s working on suing them?”

“Oh yes.” Rhys answered, “She’ll see that heads roll in multiple locations. She’s going after the fuzz as well.”

“Don’t get Chloe angry.” Rae tried to joke.

“She is very protective of you.” Rhys agreed.

“And you.” Rae noted.

“I have been very blessed.” He smiled, but his happiness was tempered with sorrow. “This should not have happened.”

“Everyone loves to see the famous bitch get it.” Rae answered, “Some fat slag dared to be happy and self-loving and have a guy… two guys – how dare I!”

“The world does like to keep certain people down.” Rhys agreed.

“The further you get from being a rich white guy, the more likely you are to be kept down.” Rae said. She looked at him, “I probably shouldn’t be complaining.”
“Because I am black.” He answered knowingly.

“Yep. You cop it worse don’t you?”

“Black men and white women can act as oppressor or oppressed.” He said, “And it’s not a competition to the bottom Miss Rae.” He said, “We both get shit from this world.” Rae nodded slowly.

“I can’t believe they… actually printed…” She couldn’t finish the sentence. Rhys sat down beside her and she melted into his proffered hug. “How can I feel so safe with you?” She asked almost silently. “I could barely handle being touched by my own men. But here I am…” She shook her head and Rhys simply stroked her hair sympathetically. “I guess it’s cos I kept trying to have sexual feelings for them again.” She kept speaking. “What if I never feel that way again?”

“Then you don’t.” Rhys answered calmly.

“I don’t wanna go through life broken.” Rae answered.

“Your brother, Ash, is asexual. Do you think he is broken?”

“No. But that’s different. That’s just the way he is. Me… I’ve never not wanted sex… it feels wrong to be like this.”

“It doesn’t matter why a person is asexual, or any other type of sexuality Rae. It’s no less valid or worthy or real or deserving of respect.” Rhys, as always was deeply comforting. His deep voice, slightly laced with that old east London accent he had learned to hide so well that it had become natural for him to speak without it.

“I love you Rhys.”

“I love you too Rae.” He answered, his arms staying around her tightly. But Rae knew he would let go of her the minute she showed the slightest sign of needing him to.

“I wonder if it would have been easier to go back to sex if I was with you. Like it were for Chlo.”

“It wasn’t easy for Chloe.” Rhys answered, “But even Chloe suggested that I might be easier for you because as a victim myself, I might be slightly more understanding than other men.”

“You?” Rae looked up at him with surprise and he nodded.

“I’ll tell you about it one day. But not today, cos today is about you.” He told her firmly. Rae looked away and settled back into his arms.

“So my best friend, your woman, is saying we should fuck cos it’ll make going back to sex easier for me?” Rae started to chuckle and Rhys made an amused noise too. “So you guys are still in an open relationship?”

“Yes.” He answered.

“I couldn’t do it to Chloe.” Rae said softly. “Even if she says it’s a good idea!” Rae laughed some more. “Besides, I’d really like for it to be my men.” Rhys nodded slowly. “And I really think it’s unfair for Chloe to just be giving you to me like that!” Rae suddenly realised. “Oh god I’m terrible! She’s like a pimp!” Rhys laughed louder and Rae found herself belly laughing for the first time since Saul had appeared in her car. It took a long time for them to stop laughing. Rae starting to cry in amongst all the laughter.
“I do not mind, I find you very attractive Rae.” Rhys said after the laughter eased up.

“Yeah, you’re pretty fucking attractive too.” Rae agreed, “But you’re really more like a brother to me.” She added, “A big, non-blood-related so I can still notice how goddamn hot you are without it being gross, brother.”

“Yes.” Rhys said and kissed her forehead gently. “A brother. A sister.” He stroked her hair, “I told Chloe much the same. But she still wanted to be a pimp and see if I could help you sexually.” They laughed again.

“And you have.” Rae answered.

“Let me remind you Rae; there’s no rush to get back into sex. It’s ok if you never have sex again.”

“Oh god, no it’s not!” Rae groaned and sat up. “I wanna have sex again. One day. Not yet but.” She got up and paced the room slightly, stretching her legs.

“Well you are under no obligation to have sex or any physical contact until you are ready.” Rhys told her. “I know that you know that. But sometimes it’s good to hear it again.”

“What if I never go back?” Rae asked and Rhys nodded.

“If that’s what you need Rae, then that’s what you do.”

“But I have a son.” She whispered. “Is this what it was like for Kenzie?”

“Good question.” Rhys answered. “Not one I can answer.” He watched Rae biting her nails for a moment. “You know, the world has such a heavy expectation of mothers. It’s like a woman has to stop being a human being just because she has had a child. You’re no longer a human being, you’re a mother.” Rhys said, “But that’s rubbish innit? You’re a human being, a woman with needs, who has undergone an unthinkable trauma. The idea that you have to sacrifice yourself until there is nothing left of you for the sake of your children is misogynistic in the extreme. No such demand is made of fathers.” Rhys noted, “In fact, fathers taking care of their own needs is seen as part of a child’s education about how the world works.” He left a moment of silence for Rae to think in. “Robin will be fine; you haven’t abandoned him to be alone, he has two wonderful and loving fathers. And he’ll learn that it’s ok to take some time to yourself to heal when you need to. He’ll learn to not be selfish with other people; to accept that other people’s lives do not revolve around him. And that is something a lot of white boys could stand to learn, to be honest.” He added the last sentence in an undertone and Rae couldn’t help but chuckle.

“Yeah fair enough.” She agreed. “It’s just… he’s my son. And I feel like I should be there for him.”

“‘Should’ is a terrible word.” Rhys answered, “Always making us feel guilty, and not good enough, and like our whole lives are wrong.” He got up and looked out the window at his car, Chloe was still in there, hoping she could talk to Rae. “Sometimes it’s better to be away from our children than with them. For our health and for theirs. Don’t let the word ‘should’ fuck you up Miss Rae.”

“Easier said than done.”

“Yes.” Rhys agreed. “Now then, it’s time for you to learn self defence in a car.”

“He’s dead. I don’t need-“
“Well I guess I can tell Chloe you don’t wanna learn self defence, but-”

“Chloe’s here?”

“Waiting in the car.” Rhys answered, “She didn’t want to make you talk to her if you didn’t want to.”

“Only you were willing to do that huh?” Rae answered with a wry grin.

“If you had turned away from me I would not have followed you; I would not have forced you to speak with me.” Rhys answered. “But I could not let you think you were alone. We’re family.” He reiterated.

“I’d really like to see Chloe.” Rae answered.

“Have you had lunch yet?”

“No. I’m not really hungry.” Rae answered, despite the fact that she’d only eaten half a green apple all day.

“Well hopefully the self defence work will work up and appetite, cos I’m starving! And I’d like to take my sister and my woman out for lunch.”

“Alright. Well… out to your car I suppose.” Rae said heading to the door as Rhys got up, texting this information to Chloe, so she knew what to expect. She stopped at the door, “Chloe knows not to tell them where I am right?”

“Yes.” Rhys answered, “And if they are angry at us for that, that is our problem, not yours. Understood?”

“But-”

“It is our choice to be here and we do this with the understanding that you’re completely in control of how much time we spend here and who we tell about it.”

“Except you told Chloe without asking me.” Rae said.

“And I will continue to bring people who will help you heal.” He said, “Unless you tell me not to…?” But they both know Rae wasn’t going to do that.

“Just don’t tell her I sleep on a mattress on the floor ok?” Rae said and Rhys nodded.

“Not a word Miss Rae.”

*

Rae pulled out her laptop. She hadn’t looked at it since her attack so many months ago. But it was 2am and she’d been struck by the very urgent need to write.

She opened up the last thing she’d been working on; her play about Elsa. She started to type away, noting down some ideas that quite suddenly came to her.

She decided she needed to talk to Dominick and Rafael and Rhys about her more. For that, she needed Elsa’s permission.
She shot an email off to Elsa and closed her laptop; she had work tomorrow so she couldn’t luxuriate in a sleepless night of writing.

She took a mild sleeping pill and settled back in to sleep.

*

“Hi I’m Oli-” Rae stopped and shook her head, “Sorry, I’m Rae Earl, we’ve briefly met.” She held out her hand to Rafael.

“Yes.” He shook her hand.

“And you already know Dominick.” Rhys said. The three men sat around the table, Dominick staring at Rae with barely concealed surprise; she was quite thin now. Rafael looked down at the menu.

“Wow, Elsa has… very good taste.” Rae mumbled under her breath, between Rhys and the twins, Elsa had bedded 3 of the most attractive men she’d ever seen. The twins looked a lot like Finn, with darker hair and blue eyes. And Rhys, well he was Rhys; as beautiful as ever.

“It’s good to see you’re writing again.” Rhys said nodding at her laptop.

“Aye.” Rae answered as she opened it up and ordered some apple pie. She hadn’t eaten apple pie in months. But she just felt like some now. With ice cream. And cream.

“So what is it you want from us?” Rafael asked.

“Well I’m writing a play that’s loosely based on Elsa’s life.” Rae said and Dominick started to laugh. “What?”

“Oh I just can’t believe she’s alright with this!” Dominick said, “She’s… private.”

“She called me.” Rafael said, “Said I could say whatever I deemed appropriate.”

“Yeah me too.” Dominick answered.

“She’s more trusting than she used to be.” Rafael said, his eyes lowered.

“Would you say trust issues is the reason you and Elsa broke up?” Rae asked.

“Wow.” Rafael laughed uncomfortably, “Straight to the deep shit.”

“Alright.” Rae laughed, “Maybe we’ll start easier. Just tell me your thoughts and feelings on Elsa.”

“Easier?” Dominick shook his head. “That’s not easier.”

“I think we’re in for a very long lunch.” Rhys agreed.

“Just before we start that question… do any of you know what happened in Australia, before she was 20?” Rae asked, “I don’t expect you to tell me, I know it’s too private. But I just wanna know she talked to someone about it. It seems painful, you know?” There was a moment of silence, Rafael stared off, clearly feeling some deep pain, Dominick cleared his throat.

“She has spoken to me about it.” Rhys said softly. Rafael looked up at him. Rae saw the envy on Rafael’s face, but it was quickly gone and he looked down again.
“She still spending a lot of time in Australia?” Dominick asked and Rhys nodded. “Good, I think it was really good for her to go back.” He said, “She’s got family there, you know?”

“What family?” Rae, her mind focussed and deliciously excited for all the information she was going to get out of the twins. She knew Rhys would keep mostly quiet. She had 2 hours before Elsa herself would show up, and then she’d go over her notes with Elsa, making sure she was ok with all the information she might put into the play.

Rae felt excited to be working again. Not working in the café, that was making enough money to pay the bills. She hated that job. No, this was her real work, her passion, her drive. She was so glad to have it back.

*  

“Hello Mr O’Daire.” Rae said as she came up to her front step, Rhys again waiting on it.

“I have a visitor for you.” He said.

“What you’re not visitor enough for me now?” She asked with a teasing voice.

“I will take you to dinner afterwards. But you have a question to ask this woman, so I brought her here for you. She knows not to say anything. And she is uniquely able to understand you.” He nodded towards a car parked behind his. It was Kenzie, looking down at her phone.

“Oh my god.” Rae whispered, “You brought Finn’s mum here?”

“You wanted to know if this was like what it had been like for her.” Rhys reminded her.

“Aye but… I didn’t wanna ask her.” Rae felt her stomach turn into knots.

“Because subconsciously you had been judging her for abandoning Finn. And now you worry that she and others can judge you for doing the same to Robin.” Rhys said, “But it is not exactly the same, as you are well aware.” He waved to Kenzie when she looked up.

“What if she thinks I’m a terrible mother?” Rae whimpered.

“If she does, tell her to go fuck herself and kick her out of your home.” Rhys said firmly and Rae chuckled slightly. “But we both know she won’t.” He said soothingly. Rae nodded. Kenzie had jumped out of the car and was rushing towards her with her arms held out.

“Oh god Rae, it’s so good to see you!” She held Rae tightly. “Oh my poor girl.” She said softly in Rae’s ear as she held her close. “You’ve suffered so much, I’m so glad I can help.” She had bags full of something dangling from her arms and she motioned for the door. Rae looked back at Rhys.

“I’ll see you at 7 for dinner.” He told her.

As soon as Kenzie was through the door she was loading food into Rae’s fridge. Rhys’s money was still on the side; she had tried to give it back to him, but he was having none of that. Now her fridge was being filled with food… She saw Kenzie’s famous chicken stew in Tupperware containers going into the freezer and her stomach growled. She loved that stew. As soon as her fridge and cupboards were stuffed with food Kenzie turned to her and gave her a warm smile.

“You have questions?” She asked; Rhys had appraised her of the situation, she understood her role here.
“I’m sorry I don’t have any chairs.” Rae said and sat down on the mattress.

“Not a problem.” Kenzie sat beside her. “Are you wondering what it was like for me to leave Finn behind?” She asked. Rae nodded, her eyes downcast. “It was terrible. One of the most painful experiences I ever went through. But there was also an immense sense of relief.” Rae’s eyes shot up to Kenzie, and Kenzie knew that Rae felt that way too; that was why she also felt so guilty. “I was falling apart, I thought I was going to kill him... I was in no condition to be around him.” Kenzie said, “And it was a relief to be away from that house. From the pressure to recover from the loss of my baby girl, and to be mentally well... to be what I had been before.” Kenzie nodded, “it took me a long time to not feel guilty about that relief.” She said astutely. “But you just have to know you’re doing the right thing Rae. For you, and for Robin.”

“But what if I never go back, like y-” Rae stopped herself.

“Like me?” Kenzie said gently. Rae lowered her eyes. “I was waiting for Gary to come for me, to show that he had forgiven me for leaving; that he still wanted me.” Kenzie shook her head, “Foolish.” She said and then sighed and touched Rae’s cheek fondly. “That’s not a problem for you. You know those men love you. You know they’re waiting for you and that they’ll always wait for you.”

“Yeah.” Rae looked so guilty so Kenzie hugged her and shook her head.

“Don’t worry about them; they’re doing fine.” Kenzie lied. “They know you need this.” That was the truth. “The reason you’re not going back is because... well I think it’s because you’re afraid that you’re broken somehow. And that maybe you’ll break them.”

“Yeah.” Rae’s voice cracked and Kenzie made a sympathetic noise that was so like the noises Finn made Rae burst into tears. Kenzie held her tightly.

“You’re no more broken than I was Rae,” Kenzie said firmly, “I know it feels like you are. But you’re not.” She looked into Rae’s eyes, “Something terrible happened to you and it affected you. Like poison coming into the garden of Eden. But it hasn’t broken you or killed the garden. You’re still alive under all of that poison. You just gotta give your body and mind time to process all the toxins and grow back all your flowers.” She said, “You’re the garden under the winter frost. Just wait Rae; that snow will melt, you’ll be back.” She took a hanky out of her sleeve and wiped Rae’s face. “And just like any garden after winter or poison or whatever, you’ll be different than you were before. And that’s ok. Because we all always change. Only dead things never change, dear.”

“I’m not dead.” Rae sniffled and held onto Kenzie. “You know, a while back I decided that I was strong, and I was never gonna let anyone take that strength from me again.” She said.

“And you haven’t this time either.” Rae sat up to look at Kenzie, surprised by what she had said. She had expected her to say something along the lines of ‘you’ll get it back’ or similar. “You can’t possibly imagine that a weak person can survive through all of this?” She asked pointedly. “You’re not weak because some man abused you. That abuse is on him; he did it. What he did says nothing about you and everything about him. He’s the weak one, for having to control and abuse and cage and force another person in order to try and feel love, rather than treat you like a human being with your own wishes and desires. It’s terrifying to let another human being be who they truly are instead of caging them, binding them to us. It’s terrifying to give a person the option to reject us... that’s why so many men harass, force, catcall, persuade, beat and rape us. They’re weak. They’re afraid. So they don’t give us the chance to say no, or they punish us if we do.” Kenzie said with absolute conviction, “Saul was the weak one. You’re the strong one because you survived it.”
Rae washed the dishes and wondered what her boys were doing right now.

She jogged along the beach in the morning and wondered what they were having for breakfast.

She ate some lunch, a rarity for her, and wondered if they were still sleeping it the same bed, or if this trauma had sent them to their separate bedrooms.

Rae was washing her hair, remembering times when they had showered together.

She went to the park to see all the flowers and plants. She imagined herself to be just like a garden. Someone had ploughed over part of the garden, but she was starting to feel like the damaged plants were sprouting new shoots.

She swam in the ocean even though it was far too cold. She imagined having her men to warm her up afterwards. She masturbated for the first time since her rapes, thinking about how they’d warm her up… She hadn’t been able to cum.

She took a deep breath and walked through the wooded area. She found plant life to be so soothing since she had started to see herself as a garden, growing again after a fire, a flood, an earthquake, a tsunami, a tractor… any sort of disaster she felt like attributing to Saul’s actions.

Visualising her soul as a garden helped her feel like she could heal. Trees could grow again after being chopped down. So could she.

She laid in bed staring at the ceiling.

She missed them so much.

And quite suddenly she realised that all she’d been thinking about lately was her inner garden and her boys.

She suddenly knew she was aching to go home.

“Home.” She whispered to the dark, empty flat.

Rae looked up at the house.

The cab driver was waiting behind her in his taxi; he’d driven her the 3 hours 20 minutes without a
word about money, because he recognised her as Rae Earl. The fare had ended up being over 600 quid and she did not have that kind of money right now because she had left her bank card to their joint account behind when she had left them all those months ago. But she knew her men would pay it. Gladly.

She’d put a few kilos back on. She’d moved out of her size 8 clothes, back into her size 10 clothes. But she still had a long way to go before her size 16-20 (depending on the brand) clothes fit her again.

But she was finally hungry again, so she didn’t think that would be a problem.

Her heart was pounding in her chest.

It had been a little over a year since Saul had abducted her, and she’d spent a lot of that in Weymouth not seeing her boys.

She suddenly grew afraid that Robin wouldn’t recognise her.

She took a deep breath. She was ready.

“The frost is gone. My flowers…. Still need some time.” She said to herself. “But I don’t have to do that alone.” She looked down at her bag and then back up at the house. “I’m not filled with poison anymore.” She took the stairs up to the door and pressed the door bell. She had a key, but she felt like it would be rude to simply let herself in after all this time.

Phil opened the door, his eyes in a roll; Finn was calling something to him from the back of the house. Rae knew that Phil thought it was terribly rude for Finn to be yelling things out when the front door was being opened to guests. Rae burst into a huge grin, giggles bubbling under the surface of her fear that they wouldn’t want her to come back.

Phil froze, staring at her, his chest rising as he took deep breaths; breathing her in.

“Phil?” Finn was calling out again. “PHIL! DILLIP YA WANKER!” He yelled, obviously getting closer, “Answer me! You want cheese or no?” He was walking into the foyer, not caring that there were guests, wearing only jeans, his hair longer and shaggier than when she had last seen him.

He froze too, staring at her the same way Phil was.

“Hi.” Rae said softly. “Can I come in?” She stammered over her words, “Can I come home?” The giggles she’d almost had a few moments before had fallen away and tears were on her cheeks.

Phil pulled her into his arms as Finn crossed the space between them and threw his arms around her too. The three of them clung together, weeping.

It was some time before the cab driver, who had looked away, finally got out of the cab to try and get his fare.

“Yes of course.” Phil answered the taxi driver, not wanting to let go of Rae. Rae gently separated herself from them, feeling slightly overwhelmed. She looked around at the parts of the house she could see from the front door while Phil went to the computer hub and grabbed their joint cheque book.

“How much was it?” Finn asked as he put his hand in his pocket, fishing for his wallet.
“£647.50.” He answered, slightly embarrassed by the fare.

“Wow.” Finn said, knowing he didn’t have that much in his wallet. He went out to the computer hub, there was a ‘money’ drawer there were they kept all pertinent information for their finances and a nice wad of cash on hand. Rae watched her men trying to keep it together and smiled fondly, sadly. She’d missed them so much. Phil returned and started to write a cheque.

“I trust this will cover it.” Phil said, having not heard the amount. The taxi driver looked down at the cheque and his mouth dropped open.

“Um… yes…” He stammered.

“Excellent.” Phil replied, “Thank you for bringing her home. Good day.” He started to close the door.

“Is this for real?” The taxi driver asked, “This cheque ain’t gonna bounce is it?” He held it up and Rae saw it was for a million pounds. She felt the giggles rising again. Finn walked back to the front door with the wallet they kept their money in in his hands.

“Here.” Finn said, handing him the whole wad of cash they kept in the house; easily several thousand dollars. “That should easily cover it. Thank you for bringing her home.” Rae started to giggle at the look on the taxi driver’s face.

“Thank you.” She said to him through her giggles. The driver looked at the wad of cash, seeing that it more than covered the fare he let them close the door and headed straight to the bank, wanting to cash that cheque before they cancelled it.

But Phil had no intention of cancelling it. He had no more thought about it than Finn did about the money he’d just handed over. Rae was home. She was standing before them giggling.

“You two paid him twice.” She chuckled and picked up her bag. “Is it ok if I come home then?”

“Of course; this is your home too.”

“Aye girl, course it is.”

They answered at the same time.

“Where’s Robin?” Rae asked looking around the room as she walked in towards the kitchen, both men following her.

“Staying with your mum for three nights.” Finn answered. “Sometimes we just need… a break… cos… you know, we’re worried and what not.”

“I get it.” Rae answered.

“We can bring him back early.” Phil offered.

“Maybe we can wait until tomorrow for him to come home early?” She sat down, trying to loosen up her tense body. “This is just… a little overwhelming.”

“Sorry.” They both apologised.

“We can be elsewhere if you need.” Finn offered.

“Perhaps it’s best if we just continue with making lunch?” Phil said to Finn, taking the pressure
off Rae to decide.

“Aye that sounds good.” Finn answered and the men went to the kitchen, Rae sitting at the table looking out at the garden. Her vegetable garden was doing well; they’d maintained it for her. But she knew she had to tear it all out and start it again. The annuals anyway. The perennial plants could stay.

She felt ok. She felt like she was supposed to be here now.

“What have you guys been up to the last few months?” She asked and they both looked over at her.

“Counselling.” Finn answered.

“Looking after Robin.” Phil added.

“That’s about it really.” Finn looked down.

“Waiting for me?” Rae added and they both nodded, reluctantly, not wanting to make her feel bad. “You didn’t fight too much about me going did you?” They shared a guilty look and Rae shook her head. “It wasn’t either of your faults that I went. And neither o’ you could’ve or should’ve made me stay. Alright?”

“Aye.”

“Yeah.”

They were both still looking down.

“We have a lot of healing to do. But I think I’m finally ready to start down that path now.” She told them, “And I wanna travel that road with the loves of my life.” They both looked up at her, “If you wanna come with me?” But she knew the answer before they both told her they did. They both looked like they wanted to come over to her, so she deflected them. “What’s for lunch?”

“Salad.” Finn answered and went back to chopping vegetables, “Everything’s grown in our own yard.” He added. Phil gave her a knowing look before he turned his attention to the food. She wasn’t ready for too much physical contact yet. But she felt like she really wanted to be ready for it. She felt like she really wanted a lot of things.

It had been Kenzie’s visit that had really got her thinking that she wanted to come back. Everything Kenzie had said had just made perfect sense. Things that Rhys and Chloe and Kester had said seemed to slot into her jigsaw puzzle after what Kenzie had said.

She knew now that she had always meant to come back; she belonged here. She had just needed some time and space. She didn’t need that anymore. That didn’t mean she was healed or ok. It just meant that she could finally come home.

*

“How many times did you visit her?” Finn asked incredulously.

“Several.” Rhys answered, making it obvious he wasn’t going to go into details. As far as he was concerned, that was up to Rae; she could tell them as much or as little as she wanted.

“You knew where she was and you didn’t tell us?” Finn said and looked from Rhys to Phil,
waiting to see Phil’s outrage. But Phil was looking awkwardly at his shoes. “You knew.” Finn said in a soft voice of shock.

“After we talked and said that maybe Rhys or Chloe could talk to her instead of us… I made some inquiries with Jules and he told me Rhys had already done that same line of questioning.” Phil didn’t look up, “He implied that Rhys had found her without saying that he had. But I got the idea, and I left it at that.”

“You left it at that?” Finn said angrily. “You could have told-”

“Would you have left it at that?” Phil asked looking up at Finn. “Or would you have insisted on knowing where she was? On seeing her?” Finn was silent in response. “She needed time away from us. She felt pressured to be as she was before.” Phil answered, “We needed to let her come back in her own time.” Finn shook his head.

“Don’t keep stuff like that from me again.” Finn was trying to get all of his emotions together.

“I wasn’t really keeping anything from you. I suspected Rhys had found her, I didn’t know for sure, and I didn’t push for further clarification…”

“Because you didn’t wanna lie to me, so you stayed ignorant deliberately.” Finn said, “Not much better Phil.”

“Yes, it’s… not a very clear distinction is it?” He agreed. “I am sorry Finn… I was thinking of Rae first in this instance. I believe when it comes to this stuff, we should be putting her needs and wants first.”

“Aye and that’s the only reason I’m not right pissed off at ya.” Finn said. Phil nodded.

“I’m sorry.” He said again and Finn could hear how genuinely sorry he was, “I didn’t mean to hurt you… I just… sometimes figuring out what to do with you and Rae can be tricky, especially when what you both want is opposite.”

“You had to do it. I get it.” Finn said tersely. “It’s fine.” His voice softened, “It’s fine.” He repeated, far more believably this time. His eyes turned back to Rhys.

“I was thinking back to when Rae were missing.” He said to Rhys, “You told Jules that you considered Rae family, knowing what he’d do.” Finn said and Rhys nodded.

“I did. And I would do it again.” Rhys answered in a serious tone. “And I don’t regret it. I don’t lose any sleep over what Jules did for me. For Rae.”

“Thank you.” Finn said. “I’ve counted you as my family for a long time.” He said, “If you ever need anything.”

“That was a non-repayable favour.” Rhys said, “You don’t owe me. I love Rae, I’m glad to see her safe.”

“I know I don’t owe you.” Finn said, “I know Rae’s like a sister to you. But I just… I need to tell you. I’m here for you in anyway you need.”

“I know. I knew that before this.” They shared a knowing look and a smile that said they knew they were brothers.

“Also I think you’re gonna have to talk to Tom and Archie about adopting an African child.” Finn
said, a grin breaking out on his face.

“Oh for fuck’s sake.” Rhys moaned, setting Finn off laughing.

* 

Rae put the manuscript in front of Elsa.

“It doesn’t have a name yet.” She said. “I was gonna call it ‘Pure Heroine’ but then Lorde’s album came out and ruined that for me.” She chuckled. “So I’m still trying to think of a name. Anyway, I was thinking that you should be the first person to read it.”

“Thank you.” Elsa answered, “I’m keen to read it.”

“Maybe you can name it.” She answered. “And um…” Rae pulled a face. “It kinda became about me towards the end, rather than you.” Rae said apologetically.

“The best literature has pieces of the author in it.” Elsa answered. “Can I read it in your garden?” Elsa looked out of the window to the vegetable garden, still in the middle of being re-planted.

“You’re gonna read it now?”

“Of course.” Elsa answered. “I can even comment on it as I go if you want.” She gave Rae a grin.

“Thank you for never asking about what happened to me.” Rae said suddenly. “You’re the only one that…” Rae lowered her eyes, “Never treated me any different at all.” There was a small silence in which Rae heard Elsa take a deep breath.

“I was raped. When I was much younger.” Rae looked up at Elsa. “I was lucky enough to have friends and family that understood that I was not my rape.” Rae felt a sting in her eyes. “And that saved me. It saved me from becoming my trauma. You are not your rape Rae. And I will never treat you like you are. If you need me to behave differently, I will do so at your behest. But until you say otherwise, I will treat you exactly like the wonderful, intelligent, beautiful and powerful woman you always were and still are.” Rae felt a huge mix of emotions.

“Thank you.” Was all she could reply with Elsa’s words had stirred so many emotions deep within her. They reminded her of what Kester, Rhys and Kenzie had said to her. She had changed, but she was still the same woman. Saul could never have enough control over her to make her be someone else. Not unless she chose to be someone else. And she chose not to be. For a while she had been Olivia, she’d been someone else. She’d needed to be. But she chose to take back her life. She chose to not let that man have control over her, even from the grave. She chose to not let him ruined her life. It’d take a lot of hard work, therapy, talking and time. But she was never going to let Saul Hudson make her be any one other than who she was; Rae Earl. She was not what he had done to her. She was so much more than that.

* 

Rae’s pleasure was languishing just before the peak. It was frustrating, but she kept her eyes on her men, both shirtless, digging up the annual garden beds for her. She was inside; they couldn’t see her masturbating as she watched them.

The relief she felt when she finally came far outstripped the pleasure.

She’d been so scared that she wouldn’t be able to cum anymore. She’d found it difficult after all of
her assaults. But not like this. It had been over a year and she hadn’t even had the desire to cum until recently, and she had only just, finally been able to make herself cum.

She’d been afraid that all of her self talk that she wasn’t a different woman, that she was still Rae Earl, was a lie she was telling herself. That maybe Saul had utterly destroyed her.

Logically she knew that a single orgasm didn’t prove anything. But in the sweet afterglow of it, it sure felt like it did.

*

Mid December saw celebrations sweep the whole nation; marriage equality for gay and lesbian relationships had finally been legalised and hundreds of ceremonies took place on the 16th.

Tom and Archie were excited, and the wedding planning began almost immediately.

*

New year’s had been a muted affair, but the whole gang had still gotten together, even letting the older kids stay up to watch the fireworks on television.

It had been nice and peaceful.

Rae was feeling more and more like she belonged here again.

Things progressed slowly; they were each going to a different therapist and also doing relationship counselling together. Robin was seeing a counsellor too. He had been happy to see his mummy again. But Chloe was still taking him for one or two nights a week. Just while Rae was still settling in.

Tom and Archie had decided not to adopt a child from Africa just yet after Rhys had pointed out that he absolutely could not be their cultural help. Not even if the child was from Nigeria; he had been born in England, and while he had strong ties to Nigeria and had learned much about his culture, he had not grown up in it, so he couldn’t mentor an adopted child. And especially not if it wasn’t from Nigeria, which was likely to be the case.

Tom was heartbroken; he wanted a second child.

Chloe started to talk about maybe doing some surrogacy for them, and that had appeased Tom; he knew he had options, and that helped.

*

She’d been home three months before they finally made love.

There hadn’t been any attempts to do so beforehand. She’d only started sharing the bed with them again after a month of living there again, sleeping in her own room.

Rae had masturbated, very privately, the frequency slowly increasing until one day she knew she was ready for sex.

She had waited three days until Chloe took Robin for the night.

When she had started to kiss them; the first real kisses since the last ill-fated attempt at sex, both men had been torn between their desperate want and need for her and their fear that it was too
much too soon again.

It did not take long for them to realise that it was different this time.

It was a different kind of lovemaking for them because Rae had wanted it all vaginal, all face-to-face. It meant that she was kissing the two of them, while one made love to her physically, and the other gently stroked her body, lying beside her.

She came.

And so did both of her men.

It had been wonderful.

A week later she wanted to do it again… and then another week later. And then four days later… And before she knew it her sex drive was back. Not long after that, they started to return to making love with double penetration and oral sex included. It had all flowed on smoothly and naturally with relatively few hiccups.

*

And six weeks later Rae, vomiting and sore all over, found out from her doctor that she was pregnant again.

They all knew that they had no idea who the father was. They all decided it was Finn anyway.
Gay Pirates

‘Gay Pirates’ by Cosmo Jarvis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dysG12QCdTA

But it’s you my love; you’re my land a’hoy, yeah you’re my boy!

I’d be under the sea, but you hold me above, cause you’re the man I love!

But I’m yours you know? And I’ll love you still in hell.

“No one can ever say we don’t love that kid.” Finn grumbled through his hangover while Denise, Phil’s personal make up artist from his films (he took her from film to film) put realistic looking stitches on his cheek. Phil was looking at his teeth; she’d blacked out one of his front teeth and given him a black eye. Finn drank the hangover cure Tom had given them all and was starting to feel a little better, while Phil, who barely seemed to ever have hangovers, looked down at his clothes. Even Phil had been a little worse for wear this morning. But a fruit salad for breakfast, lots of water, a swim and a jog later and he was surviving the headache admirably. And Tom’s drink was helping too.

Last night had been a huge stag party with everyone invited. Tom and Archie had a lot of friends; there had been hundreds of people there, most of them people they didn’t know. But by the end of the night everyone had met them; Finn with his incredible online radio station and also the best man to Archie, and Phil the big film star. Rae had struggled to go; she had a little anxiety about going places with large crowds nowadays because she was afraid that they had all seen those photos and would say something, or look at her in a way that she just couldn’t stand. But it was Archie and Tom, so she had made herself go. And she had tried to stay as anonymous as possible. But she was Rae Earl; anonymous didn’t exist for her anymore.

She was the only one in the gang not grumbling with a hangover this morning; the joy of being pregnant.

Rhys had also been passed around amongst Tom and Archie’s friends; as Tom’s best man, he had the duty, just like Finn, to know every single guest personally, according to the guests!

Rae watched Denise doing the make up and looked down at the envelope in her hand. She had decided to get a prenatal paternity test. It was expensive, but non-invasive in that the company had simply taken her blood and could sort out the DNA of the foetus blood in her bloodstream. It was new technology, but 99.9% accurate and it didn’t require a needle going into the amniotic fluid to determine the father. So it was a winner in Rae’s eyes; no risk to the baby. Finn and Phil had agreed to the test, but Finn, beautiful Finn, didn’t want to know the results. He had said it didn’t matter. The little child growing inside of her would be as much his as Robin was.

Robin came running in and Denise picked him up and made a pirate noise at him, making him laugh.

“Now you gotta sit still pet while I do your make up yah?” She told him and he nodded solemnly. “But I gotta finish your dad’s first.” She turned back to Finn and Robin sat on the table where she’d put him, his legs kicking out rhythmically as he hummed a tune to himself. It didn’t sound like any song Rae had heard before and she was beginning to think that her just turned 4 year old
was already composing music.

She looked back down at the envelope and opened it. It might not matter to Finn, but it mattered to her. She hadn’t told them about the abortion yet, but the slim chance that it had been Finn’s had been playing on her mind a lot. She desperately wanted this one to be Finn’s. She looked at the letter in the envelope. Hesitating to take it out. On this piece of paper was the name of the biological father of this little baby inside of her, barely making a bump in her belly yet. She put a hand on her stomach, feeling much more like herself. The pregnancy was going smoothly, unlike Robin’s and she was ready to add to their family. She wasn’t having as many flashbacks or triggered moments. She was ready to continue on her life’s journey. She understood that she was forever changed… But she was definitely still herself. He could never own her.

She pulled out the letter and opened it. She knew that both of her men were pretending not to look at her as Denise went about her business.

“Finn…” She said softly. He looked up at her in the mirror’s reflection. She stared at his face and a smile broke out on her face. He turned to look at her.

“Oi!” Denise said; she was still doing the tricky stich work. Phil watched as Rae’s smile grew and Finn’s expression became one of wonder.

“Mine?” He sounded bewildered. Rae held up the letter and he got up and took it. Phil jumped up, overjoyed and threw his arms around both of them. They laughed and congratulated each other.

“Alright!” Denise yelled over all their noise. “There’s a wedding to go to today, and I have to get you lot ready.” They looked over their shoulders to Denise, standing by the make up chair she’d set up, Robin still swinging his legs on the table beside her, staring at them.

“Sorry.” Finn said, beaming from ear to ear. He turned back to Rae and Phil, “it didn’t matter you know, but…” He looked back down at he letter in his hand. “But… it’s exciting anyway.”

“What’s the thing?” Robin asked as Finn sat back down.

“Well you know how mummy’s growing you a sibling?” Finn answered and Robin nodded. “Well they’re gonna call your dad Phil-dad and me just dad.” He answered. Robin scrunched his nose up.

“But she’ll still be my sister?” He asked.

“Aye.” Finn answered, “Or brother.”

“Sister.” Robin insisted.

“So why a pirate themed wedding?” Denise said, looking at her watch and Finn settled back in the seat so she could keep working. “So why a pirate themed wedding?” She asked as she started to work on Finn again.

“Because Alex loves pirates.” Rae replied looking at Phil as he kissed her belly. “And there’s nothing her dads wouldn’t do for her if they possibly can.”
Archie came in with Alex in tow. She looked incredibly excited. Denise looked up at them; she was doing all the gang’s make up, including the kids. But Tom and Archie were carefully separated so they wouldn’t see each other today before the wedding.

“Cool!” She said when Phil showed her his ‘missing’ tooth.

“You looked… excited and pissed off…?” Rae said and gave Archie a hug.

“I’m 37 years old, I’ve been with the man I love for 20 years… engaged for 19 of them.” Archie gave a small shake of the head, “We finally get the same rights everyone else has had all that time. It’s beautiful, but I’m pissed off about it. Pissed off it took so long.” He looked at Finn’s reflection in the mirror and saw his eyes lowered and suddenly realised what an arse he’d just been. “I’m sorry.” He said softly and Finn shook his head. Archie looked around at Phil and Rae, wanting them to know he was sorry that they couldn’t get legally married.

“Don’t worry about it.” Finn looked up at him with a sad smile, “it’s just a bit o’ paper.”

“Yeah but money’s just a bit o’ paper too.” Archie answered, “And it still rules the whole fucking world; even the communist countries.”

“Language!” Phil reminded him. They had given up on the lower level swear words like ‘pissed’ off; their friendship circle was a bunch of swearers. But they were all still trying to keep the worse swear words out of their kid’s ears.

“I don’t think they’ll ever give us marriage equality. We’ll live all our lives together and never have that.” Rae said sadly.

“What are you talking about, our girls Chloe’s on the case!” Archie grinned.

“Chloe’s got more important things to deal with than that. She’s been fighting the gay panic defence.” Rae answered.

“Good. Need to get rid o’ that thing.” Archie shook his head. “But she can work on more than one thing at a time! She’s brilliant! And this is important too. You guys deserve the right to-”

“Archie, is this a wedding or not?” Finn said sternly, “Let’s not talk about this now; your hair’s too neat to be a self-respecting pirate!” Rae started to mess up Archie’s hair.

“So why didn’t you fellas get married on the 16th of December last year like a lot of the other gays?” Denise asked.

“Well while a lot of the gays like to travel in flocks.” Archie sniped and Rae gave him a ‘be nice’ expression, “it was too common for the love of my life; he wanted it on a different date to when all the common gays got hitched. Plus we had to plan it. And also, Tom wanted to get married in the Caribbean because of the pirate theme, so the shoulder season seemed like the best thing in terms of expense.”

“Yeah one more month and you’re in hurricane season.” Denise noted.

“He’s says it’s cos of the pirate theme, but we all know he was just looking for an excuse to get here!” Rae said, knowing that after their honeymoon, the gang were all invited to town hall to get their real marriage certificate in England.

“What’s a hurricane?” Robin asked.
Alex danced down the aisle like a drunken little pirate. The white sands and the azure ocean were breathtaking. But Rae did wonder if Caribbean people were sick of the pirate associations… there were literally hundreds of people dressed as pirates, a band of pirates playing a pirate ditty, and Woody, the celebrant, was also dressed as a pirate.

But it was all for that little girl; who was loving every minute of it. She stood at the stairs that led to the altar, utterly alone, looking down the aisle, waiting for her daddies to walk down the aisle and get married.

Rae grinned, knowing what was coming, what her dads had planned for her.

Suddenly there was gunshot off to the left and Alex’s head whipped around to see what was happening.

Phil came running down the aisle.

“AVAST!” He cried, “We’re under attack!” He yelled, all the guests stared at him, utterly aghast. “Blackbeard the mangy bilge rat and his pile of scurvy pirates have come to kill ye and loot ya corpses! ARRR!” The guests were confused and chuckled, but Alex looked very excited. Rae sighed and took a deep breath. She stood up and pointed to the ocean and started to scream. They had hired a massive pirate ship to sail and anchor off shore during the wedding; pirates were swarming along the beach, looking like they had come from the ship. Rae’s job had been to take everyone’s attention while behind them the hotel staff were setting up the pool to have a plank and other pirate themed things around it. When the guests had walked past it to get to the beach, it had just been an ordinary pool. Now there was treasure on the island in the middle of the huge pool, a plank, mini pirate ships floating in it and pirate skeletons about.

“GET THE CHILDREN OUT!” Izzy screeched. Needless to say, all the children, except for Alex, had been well prepared for what was coming, and they were being looked after by nannies at the side of the ceremony. A special game of ‘escape the pirate attack and find the treasure’ had been planned for them; they’d be back in time for the ceremony, bringing the treasure (the wedding rings and gold chocolate coins) with them. The nannies, all trained actors with first aid and child care training grabbed the children and ran; all in character; Grace was leading the way. Alex, Isaac, Tix and Jacob were the only children left behind because they were the oldest kids. Jacob and Tix, Danny and Grace’s two eldest kids were well versed in how the story was going to go and were to help Alex and Isaac if they needed it.

And Rae kept screaming as Blackbeard and his pirates got closer and closer to the wedding guests.

Chloe, on the other side of the aisle started to scream at Rae to shut up. And then an arrow struck her in the chest and she fell down, squirting fake blood on all the guests around her. Alex squealed with delight.

“NO!” Archie came running down the aisle, “I’ll avenge ye, ye fine buxom beauty!” He cried to Chloe.

The attacking pirates were led by Danny, with Finn and Tom as his generals.

“KILL ‘EM ALL!” Danny roared, “And bring me Alex!” He pointed his sword at Alex and the girl squealed. “She is the key to power over death itself!” Macca separated from the group of attacking pirates and headed towards Alex.
“C’mon!” Jacob said to Alex, “We gotta go!”

“FIGHT!” Phil was calling out and Rhys and Archie came to his side, the guest scrambling to know what to do. The pirates coming with Finn were all actors, and there were actors amongst the guests, who all jumped up with their swords out.

“I’ll not let ye put your scurvy fingers on the girl!” Bethany cried, jumping out from the audience to be between Macca and Alex.

“I’ll kill ye, even though ye be a right buxom beauty!” Macca replied.

“Oh that’s quite a cutlass ye got, ya scurvy dog. Don’t be thinking ye can use me as a scabbard!” There was a sexual pun in that and Macca tried not to laugh as they began their choreographed fight, giving Alex and her friends a chance to escape to further up the stairs, closer to the altar on the stage.

“Why do they want you?” Jacob asked Alex, sticking to the script.

“I dunno!” She cried happily. She knew it was all a game.

“He said something about you being the key to life over death?” Tix asked.

Back down with the guests fighting had broken out amongst the attacking pirates and the guest pirates. The actors fought each other as a kind of background to the main drama. They were prepared for the possibility that guests might try to get involved and had contingency plans for that; the good pirates would tell the guest to take shelter or the bad pirate would take them hostage and the good pirate would free them.

Woody hid behind Alex and the other kids, it was part of his role to pretend to be scared at the moment.

The battle was furious, with Finn and Phil fighting each other the most convincingly, both of them having extensive sword training now; their fight was definitely put on display, with the actors and other fighters moving away so the guests could see it. The guests were quickly on board now, understanding that this was a performance of sorts. Many of them were glad they were wearing ratty old clothes; fake blood was flying everywhere. Many of them started to cheer and take sides.

The battle raged on until slowly the invading pirates won over and Danny sent Finn to go up the stairs to get Alex. Rhys stood between Finn and the stairs and they fought, again, quite convincingly, only barely pulling the punches. But Tom came to help him, resulting in a very impressive fight between the three of them, Alex cheering for her dad the whole time, the guests as impressed with this as they had been with the sword play. Between them Tom and Finn managed to defeat Rhys. It was all scripted, but none of the guests could tell that it was scripted down to every word and every punch and every sword stroke. It had been a massive undertaking. All for Alex, even though it was supposed to be Tom and Archie’s day. They loved their daughter.

Rhys was put in irons along with all the other ‘good’ pirates, Danny cackling manically.

“Get the girl ye lily-livered scabby sea bass!” Danny yelled at Finn. He turned to Tom, “Take the prisoners to the plank ye lice infested bilge swiller!” Tom pushed Rhys and Archie towards the plank, all the ‘good’ pirates going with them.

Finn stepped towards the stage that the altar was on, where Alex and the others waited. As soon as he put his foot on the bottom stair there was a loud cracking noise and Finn went flying back.
“Only those on the side of good can step on the stage of the altar!” Woody cried out loudly, seeming to be more brave now. Finn scowled at them.

“I’ll cut out ye tongue and feed it to the sharks ye rotten timbered ballast pig!” Finn yelled at Woody. “Give me the girl and I won’t-”

“NEVER!” Jacob cried out. “Ye one-eyed bow-legged landlubber!”

“I’m no landlubber, ye flea ridden harbour hog!” Finn returned in outrage.

“Get the girl!” Danny screamed at Tom, but when he tried to go up the stairs, the sound effect played again, and Tom went flying too. Alex screamed out and ran down the stairs; this had been expected and Woody ran after her and grabbed her just before her feet touched the sand, Finn went to grab her but just missed.

“You can’t have her!” Woody cried out gallantly.

“Yer doom be at hand.” Tom replied to Woody as he got up, “you hook-handed son of a double Dutchman.”

“GET THE LASS!” Danny screeched again.

“You can’t!” Woody yelled back with glee, “While she’s on the stage for the altar, no evil person can touch her.” He’d lost his pirate accent, but it didn’t matter.

“My daddy’s not evil!” Alex said in outrage, but Jacob and Tix grabbed her hands and pulled her back up the stairs. Several guests laughed at Alex being adorable.

“Give her to me.” Danny said threateningly. He was wonderfully melodramatic.

“I will never hand over the pirate priestess princess Alex!” Woody answered.

“Fine.” Danny answered, “If ye won’t hand over the lil poppet, we’ll send these scallywags,” He motioned to all the good pirates, “to the plank…”

“NO!” Tix yelled out, playing up the drama.

But Danny laughed and arrr-ed and pointed at the twins, Kristi and Kurt. Some actors pushed them towards the plank, both of them crying and pleading for their lives loudly and melodramatically, Kurt standing with his knees knocking at the end of the plank. The guests laughed as they plunged into the pool from the plank, not far above it. When they hit the water, they lay face down, completely still. If anyone looked close enough they’d see miniature snorkels sticking out of the water. Blood started stain the water, seeping from the twins; it looked incredibly impressive.

“COME DOWN ‘ERE GIRL!” Danny yelled out at Alex.

“You can’t take my friend!” Isaac stepped in front of Alex. That hadn’t been scripted; Woody had been supposed to say something, but they all rolled with it.

“If ye won’t come down ye cutlass flapping grommet, many more will meet their fate on the plank!” He pointed at three people sitting in the audience and the actors grabbed them, pulling them physically from their chairs. It was Nikki, Aiyana and Bryn. A fight ensued, the guests gasping, having not expected the actors to take people from the audience. Of course it was suspected that they were planted there, but it still added to the excitement. Bryn made a run for it while Nikki and Aiyana fought gallantly, Aiyana being stabbed in the stomach before being tossed
in the pool, Nikki shot in the head on the end of the plank. They’d used a squib on the back of Nikki’s hat to make blood explode from the back of her head and she had fallen into the water back first, trusting that the pool would catch her. Fake blood seeped out of the two latest victims as Bryn ran down the beach, pirates chasing after him.

And that’s when the cannon fire began. Bryn was flung to the side by an explosion, blood spraying everywhere. Alex gasped and cheered as a new pirate force appeared, headed by a woman. But Izzy screamed and pointed to the other side; another pirate force, also headed by another woman was closing in on the other side.

Cannon fire rung out as they ran up the beach towards the guests, their swords held high and guns aimed at the guests. Some of the pirate actors were ‘blown up’ by cannon fire.

Up on the altar, Alex had her mouth covered with her hands, her eyes wide with excited joy. As the two new pirate forces approached, one captained by Nina, the other captained by Renee, the original invading pirate force readying their weapons, Danny held up his hands and cried out in the loudest voice he could muster.

“PARLAY!”

All of the pirates froze in place, staring at their captains.

Danny turned to Nina.

“What be your purpose in being here Daisy Gut-Slicing Docherty?” He asked Nina.

“I could be askin’ ye the same thing Blackbeard!” Nina shot back. “But I see that ye beard be gone!” She mocked and all her pirates laughed. Her generals, Sam and Stacia, yelled out several insults at Danny and his crew.

Danny held a hand up at her and turned to Renee.

“And what be your purpose in being here Mae Bonny-Baby Keys?” He asked Renee.

“She’s known as the demon of Stingray Reef!” One of the actors cried out.

“Ye speak first.” Renee returned, her generals, Latisha and James, stood to attention beside her, stern and disciplined looking.

“I be here for the girl!” Danny pointed at Alex. “She has the secret to life over death!” Nina looked at her generals and Renee conferred with hers quietly. “Ye be here for the same reason.” Danny said knowingly. “If ye stand with me, I’ll let ye live, as long as you sail under me flag!”

Negotiations began, Nina not saying much, her generals doing more of the talking. Latisha seemed to be the chief negotiator for Renee’s side too.

As they spoke, Isaac pointed out Chop and Sammy sneaking towards the stairs to the altar. Alex grabbed Isaac’s hand and held it tight. Chop and Sammy stepped over Macca’s body, killed by Bethany, and both managed to get up the stairs.

“They’re good.” Isaac breathed to Alex; they could touch the altar stage, so they weren’t evil pirates.

Chop was shaking from head to toe; he had a big stunt to perform, and he’d been practicing
diligently for months, but he was still brickling it.

“Alex!” Sammy said as they neared her. “We bring news pirate priestess princess!” She said. Alex went to them.

“What is it?” She played along excitedly.

“We have discovered that you have a secret power, passed down for generations in your family.” Chop said his only line. He’d been working on it and saying it over and over and over again trying to sound natural and un-scripted. He’d learned that it took a lot of work to make something look natural, like it took no work at all; that was acting for you. He didn’t like it much.

“A secret power?” Alex asked; as perfectly predicted by her fathers.

“Yes pirate priestess princess Alex.” Sammy said, “you have the gift of life over death.”

“What’s that?” She asked.

“It’s quite simple.” Sammy told her, “If you cry out the word ‘alive’ over the microphone, everyone will come back to life.” Sammy said.

“Wow.” Alex said. Chop nodded, his whole body tense, ready for the squib on the back of his head to go off. Any minute now…

And Bang, the loud sound affect of the gunshot, the squib went off, spraying blood on everyone on the altar and Chop fell from the top of the stairs down to the ground. He had practiced that stunt so much, and he still managed to accidentally smack his nuts on the way down. He lay curled up at the bottom of the stairs cupping his balls, desperately trying to lie still and not cry as the pirates all turned to the altar to see what was happening.

“I’ll protect you to my very last breath pirate priestess princess Alex!” Sammy said, but she too was shot, in the stomach, blood pouring down her white dress. She collapsed and rolled down the stairs, smacking into a silently groaning Chop.

“The wee lil poppet is unprotected!” Finn said and everyone turned back to Danny.

“So are ye with me or against me?” Danny asked Nina and Renee.

“I stand with ye.” Renee answered, but her tone said ‘for now.’

“And I stand against ye!” Nina answered, her pirates instantly charging towards the pool, aiming to free the good pirates.

Another gorgeous battle ensued.

“Say ‘alive’ Alex!” Tix cried grabbing the microphone from behind the altar and handing it to her, “The good guys are outnumbered!” Tix and Jacob knew they had to get Alex to say ‘alive’ in this part of the story.

Alex stared at the battle, afraid to try out her new power.

“Bring back my mum.” Isaac said softly.

“ALIVE!” Alex cried. Chloe was the first one on her feet and Isaac cheered loudly. All the dead people got up and quickly started to fight again. Except for Chop who got up much slower and followed Sammy back up the stairs to protect Alex. They were to slip off the back of the stage
when the moment came. But for now they stood next to Alex protectively.

Even the bad guys came back to life and Bethany and Macca were again fighting it out along with everyone else.

Many bad pirates tried to get up the stairs, but all of them were thrown off the stairs, and Chop and Sammy had bows and arrows, ready to take out anyone if the natural protection of the altar stage didn’t work.

Katie and Jason ended up in an amazing hand to hand battle right in front of the stairs, many of the guests amazed by the battle.

Tom and Archie had a well choreographed sword fight that led through the whole battle scene, up on chairs, around the pool, on top of the bar, eventually leading to the bottom of the stairs that lead up to the altar and their daughter.

And into this scene the other children came, led by Grace and the nannies.

“We’ve discovered the secret to stopping this war!” Grace called out; she, like most of the people with lines, was wearing a small, flesh coloured microphone on her neck, so everyone could hear her. “We have to get to the altar to tell the celebrant!” Grace said and the kids with her made a war cry of determination and followed her into the fray. The nannies carrying the children who were too young followed at a slower pace still thoroughly enjoying this audience-participation play. The actors knew to get out of the way of the kids, and Grace had hammered it into them to follow her; the path was being cleared for the kids as they went through the crowd. The actors were good at their jobs.

In front of the stairs, all the guests were focussed on the brilliant sword fight between Tom and Archie; they had worked so hard on this, Phil and Finn teaching them and choreographing the whole thing.

Tom tried to disarm Archie but failed, so Archie pulled Tom by the wrist trying to make Tom drop his sword. The result was that their faces were close together. Alex watched as they froze in their battle, bloody and bruised; they had not pulled their punches. And suddenly they were kissing passionately, their swords dropping to the floor. A cheer went up from the guests.

And then Finn and Rhys were there with a band of pirate actors each.

“What are ye doing?” Finn pulled on Tom and Rhys pulled on Archie, their pirates getting involved and pulling them apart.

But Tom and Archie both broke free of the pirates holding them back; a graceful, violent choreographed dance, and again met in the middle, kissing each other. Rae, lying on her side, dead, watched, thinking it was very 'Romeo and Juliet' like, as they were again dragged apart. This happened again, the fighting becoming more violent, the kissing more desperate.

And then Grace and the children appeared.

“We know how to end this battle!” Grace declared again.

“How?” Woody cried out from the altar.

“Marriage!” All the kids and nannies called out.

“If someone from each side of the battle married, the war will be over!” Grace said breathlessly.
“Wait so what…?” Finn asked as if confused.

“If ye marry, we can bring this war to an end!” Rhys said.

“I’ll not marry!” Finn cried out.

“But maybe…” Rhys turned to look at Tom and Archie, “Maybe there’s others that can tie the dreaded knot.”

Archie and Tom looked from Finn to Rhys and back again, and then stared at each other.

“Let’s do it ye fine piece o’ booty.” Tom said.

“I’ve sailed the seven seas and never seen a sleeker schooner.” Archie answered. Tom grabbed his hand and they gave each other a devilish grin as they headed towards the altar.

“NEVER!” Danny cried and started to fight everyone, slicing one actor’s throat, spurting fake blood everywhere. His pirates started to join in the fight.

“We’ll hold them off!” Finn said and Rhys nodded. The two best men turned to the actor pirates and fought them off while Tom and Archie walked up the stairs to the altar, on the stage. All the gang members that had been part of the game got up, even if they were meant to be dead and sat amongst the guests while the actor pirates were slaughtered by Finn and Rhys. This had been done deliberately so that everyone could see the important moment. The actors didn’t need to see it.

Woody said the introductions to the ceremony hurriedly, as if trying to get the ceremony done before the pirates killed them all. Finn and Rhys finished killing them all and turned to look at the altar as Tom and Archie stared at each other, holding hands. Grace slipped them both a ring so they could hand them over at the right moment.

“Do you?” Woody asked Tom and pointed the microphone at him as Rhys handed him the ring.

“Fuck yes.” Tom answered and Alex’s jaw dropped, everyone was laughing, even the pirate actors that were supposed to be dead. Tom slid the ring onto Archie’s finger.

“Do you?” Woody shoved the microphone at Archie as Finn handed Archie the ring.

“I really, really do.” Archie answered, tears in his eyes.

A cheer went up, led by Alex as Archie put the ring on Tom’s finger.

“ALIVE!” She cried again and all the dead actors got up and started to cheer with the rest of the guests.

“You guys better kiss then!” Woody declared and they planted their lips on each other passionately.

“This water is too salty, for me to even drink.” It was Elsa, singing the final song as Archie and Tom kissed. No one had even known she was here. “I’d rather walk the dreaded plank than stay another week. But it’s you my love. You’re my land ahoy.”

Rae listened to Elsa’s beautiful voice singing what sounded like a pirate ditty, but was actually a song by Cosmo Jarvis about the story of two gay pirates falling in love and the other pirates hating them for it.

“This was amazing.” Phil laughed as they watched Archie and Tom still kissing.
“They’re gonna end up fucking up there!” Rae laughed with him. Finn looked back at them from the bottom stairs to the altar and gave them a thumbs up, a huge grin on his face.

“But it’s you my love, you’re my land ahoy, yeah you’re my boy!” Elsa was still singing.

“Yo ho Sebastian, let’s go far away!” All of the actors joined in loudly, surprising all the guests, a cheer and a laugh went up and the kids started to dance and play; many of the actors lifting them up and dancing with them. The actors clapped and stamped in time and the guests quickly joined in. “Somewhere where the captain won’t be mad. Yo ho Sebastian, I wanna love you good! We deserve much better than we’ve had.” A chorus of rowdy voices cried out in unison.

Tom and Archie stopped kissing finally and looked out over their guests, huge grins on their faces.

“They say they’re gonna kill me if I look at you once more,” Elsa continued to sing solo, “Pissed in my hammock yesterday so I’ll sleep on the floor. I’d be under the sea, but you hold me above.” Tom and Archie looked at each other again, still as in love as they ever were. “And they put glass in my sandals so my feet would bleed all day, and they forced me to wear them or they said they’d make you pay. I’d be under the sea, but you hold me above – cos you’re the man I love!”

Again the chorus of actors, louder still as several guests joined in; the song was well known and the chorus was easy. Rae and Phil joined in: “Yo ho Sebastian!” Everyone was covered in fake blood and huge smiles.

Tom and Archie started to walk down the stairs, holding hands, Alex walking in front of them, beaming with joy.

“The captain found out about us and ordered them to throw us both overboard tonight, together we will go.” Elsa sang. Rae’s smile dropped as she thought about all the violence committed against queer people. Even the word queer that many of them had claimed for themselves was a violence; a slur. Marriage equality might have seemed like a small victory, but it was still a very important victory. “But I’m yours you know, and I’ll love you still in hell. And I hope they didn’t tie up your hands as tight as mine. I’ll see you on the bed of this blue ocean babe, sometime. But I’m yours you know.” Elsa’s voice cracked with emotion, it was perfect, it pulled the right strings and the cheering and happiness was tempered with the same knowledge and thoughts that Rae had had, “And I’ll love you still in hell; and down we fell… And I’m singing–” The actors joined in louder and more rowdy than ever.

“YO HO SEBASTIAN!” The chorus was sung twice before it was just Elsa’s voice, ringing out the absolute truth:

“We deserve much better than we’ve had…”
Do You Realise?’

‘Do You Realise?’ by The Flaming Lips

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lPXWl2ESxVY

Do you realise that everyone you know someday will die?
And instead of saying all of your goodbyes,
let them know you realise that life goes fast, it’s hard to make the good things last.
You realise the sun doesn’t go down – it’s just an illusion caused by the Earth spinning round.

Phil started awake.
She was whimpering, screaming, but with her mouth closed.

He sat up in the bed and looked down at her, gently stroking her hair and making gentle shushing sounds.

She screamed loudly and shot up in bed, Finn starting awake and sitting up almost simultaneously.

Rae was still screaming so Phil switched to speaking to her. Sometimes gently soothing her in her sleep worked. Sometimes it didn’t.

“It’s alright, you’re home.” He told her.

Finn quickly came to his senses, his eyes still filled with sleep, and he gently put a hand on her back and soothed her.

“We’re here girl. Always will be.” He said comfortably.

Rae stopped screaming, still panting, her eyes, filled with terror looked around the room, slowly focussing on where she was.

“Oh…” She whispered, “I’m sorry… I just…” She rubbed her face, still shaken, her heart thudding. “I thought I was…” Her voice broke with tears and she started to sob.

“You’ll never be back down there.” Phil soothed.

“Cos he’s dead.” Finn added with a tone of finality that boy men knew would truly soothe her.

Neither man could imagine how she could have healed at all if that monstrous man was still alive. His death always comforted her; he could never, ever do this to her again.

“He’s dead.” She repeated. Finn grabbed the bottle of water on the bedside table and handed it to her. She took a long drink and a deep breath. “Better check on Robin.” She told them.

Since she had gotten home, she had slept in the middle; it made her feel safer. But with her now giant, pregnant belly, it did mean that whenever she wanted to get out of the bed, she couldn’t just scoot to the bottom of the bed. She looked at first Finn and then Phil.
“We’ll all go.” Phil answered as Finn got out of bed to let Rae out.

With Rae’s pregnancy, she was n and out of bed multiple times during the night; needing to pee. No one was sleeping a full night through anymore.

They headed in to Robin’s room. He was sitting up in bed, staring at the open door.

He always woke up when Rae woke up screaming. At first he had screamed too. It was very frightening. But now he knew to wait, he knew his parents would come to look after him when it got frightening.

“You right jelly bean?” Rae asked as she sat down on his bed. Robin nodded solemnly in reply.

“What’s wrong mummy?” He asked taking her hand.

They had made several attempts to explain it to him, but had always left him clearly dissatisfied with the explanation.

“Well..” Rae knew that she really did have to explain it to him satisfactorily. And she knew children were very capable of understanding things; she’d seen it so many times in Robin and her nieces and nephews, particularly Chloe and Rhys’s kids, who already seemed to understand racism and sexism better than most politicians.

But how could she tell him this? How could she make sense of it for herself let along for him? “Remember how you had that monster living under your bed last year?” She asked.

“Monsters aren’t real mummy.” Robin said firmly, but his eyes flicked to his ‘Frozen’ nightlight, Anna and Elsa smiling warmly at him, the cool blue light gently bathing the room.

“Ok.” Rae answered, “And do you remember how we told you that you didn’t have to hug anyone you didn’t wanna hug, even if they seemed sad about it? ”

“Yeah.” He nodded solemnly.

“And remember we told you that no one can touch you without your permission? Ever?”

“Yeah.”

“And remember how mummy went away for a few days before I came back and then went away for a bit longer.” Rae asked. Robin scrunched up his face, trying to remember it seemed.

“Yeah.” He answered finally.

“Well…” Rae took a deep breath and turned to look at Finn and Phil, both in the doorway. They came into the room, Finn pulling up one of Robin’s small chairs from his tea-set; he had a miniature table and chairs and teapot and cups and everything. Finn sat with his knees up high from the smallness of the seat and Phil, trying to conceal his grin at Finn sat down on the bed next to Rae; the seriousness of the moment quickly sobering Phil’s small moment of mirth. They both let Rae know they were there for her with their presence. Rae looked back at her son. “Well there was this monster… a monster who was a man… like so many monsters are… who took your mummy and made her stay in a dark place and… made her hug him even though she didn’t want to. And who touched me without permission.” She felt Phil’s hand go to her lower back, Finn’s hand touching her knee. “And that made me really sad and unwell in my mind…” Rae tried to explain what she was going through in a simple sentence. “So I had to go away for a little bit so I could be less unwell in my mind and less sad… and now… sometimes I have bad dreams.”

“About the man monster?” Robin asked.

“Yes.” Rae said, “Sometimes I think I’m back in the dark place, and it frightens me.”

Robin was silent for a moment, considering all of this information. He nodded slowly and reached over to his prized ‘Frozen’ night light. He unplugged it and handed it to his mother.

“This’ll help keep the monsters away.” Robin told her. All three parents had to fight to hold back their emotion. Rae cleared her throat as she took the night light.

“But what about you.”

“I’m a big boy, I can handle it.” Robin said with a sage nod of his head. His eyes turned to Finn, “Can we go to the shops tomorrow Finn-da?” He asked as if trying to be casual. They all knew he would want another night light as soon as possible. Finn tried not to crack into a grin at him.

“Sure.” Finn answered casually. “What d’you need?” Robin shrugged, his eyes turning back to the night light. But very quickly, his eyes went back to his mother.

“I can show you how to turn it on in your room if you like mum?” He got out of bed and went to the doo, “I don’t want monsters to hurt you again.” He said as he went out the door and headed to their room.

*

Chloe poured tea while Rae sat and watched the children playing with Rhys; they were playing dress ups.

“You kids should get dressed in our room so you can do a big reveal.” Chloe told them and Rhys guided them from the lounge room to his and Chloe’s bedroom to prepare for a ‘fashion’ show.

“Rhys told me that you said he’d be good to get me back into sex.” Rae’s eyes stayed on Chloe.

“I did.” Chloe answered, not looking up from the tea as she squeezed some lemon in hers. “But that’s obviously not an issue anymore.” Chloe said and looked up at Rae, nodding at her belly.

“You knew we’d never fuck.” Rae said with a knowing grin.

“I knew it’d give you a laugh.” Chloe grinned back. “And if it happened, well then good. Rhys has a way of…” Chloe shook her head, “Sometimes I swear he’s psychic, but I know it’s just that he actually pays attention and has empathy. Unlike just about every other bloke on the planet.” She laughed. “Anyway, it was up to you two. I just wanted you to know I didn’t mind. If he felt safe for you Rae, I wouldn’t have minded.”

“Well we did have some hot hugging action.” Rae answered and Chloe laughed in reply, “And dome sexy forehead kissing.”

“You two are such sluts.” Chloe answered.

“Thank you for getting Rhys to come. I know he probably had the idea, but I know it was you; he wouldn’t have come if you had told him not to.” Rae leaned across the table and Chloe held her tightly.

“You’re never alone Rae; we’re family, us lot.” Chloe kissed her temple and stroked her cheek gently. “And when you’re not bringing life into this world you and me is gonna start training
again. We gotta make sure our self-defence is always top notch Rae. we can’t get complacent.”
Chloe looked over at Rae’s security guard, standing silently in the corner. “Even if you you’ve got
him now.” Chloe nodded at the security guard, “He can’t be with you always.”

“Comforting.” Rae answered.

“We don’t have the luxury of comfort babe.” Chloe answered, “We’ve already had enough bad
stuff; so ‘I’m gonna fight it in every possible way.”

“And kicking it in the nuts seems appropriate.” Rae answered.

“Repeatedly.” Chloe answered with a wicked grin.

“You know…” Rae paused; she hadn’t really talked about this in detail to anyone. “When h had
me… all that training just went out the window.”

“You were scared Rae.” Chloe said softly.

“I’ll be scared the next time a guy wants to…” Rae looked off.

“That’s why we gotta work harder and drill it into our bodies, so we got muscle memory.”

“Muscle memory?”

“It’s when your muscles remember the action so well they just perform it automatically.” Chloe
answered.

“I like the sound of that.” Rae answered slowly, “I think I wasn’t taking the self defence stuff
serious enough before. I wasn’t practising anywhere near enough.”

“A month after you drop that kid, we’re gonna train every day, alright?” Chloe asserted.

“Aye… as long as the birth isn’t fucked up.”

“Why d’you think there’s gonna be complications?”

“I dunno.” Rae sighed, “Just at the moment it’s much easier to believe in bad stuff happening than
good stuff.” Rae answered.

“Cos a lot o’ bad stuff’s happened.” Chloe understood. “So it’s high time that everything went
good, yeah?”

*

“MUM!”

Rae’s head snapped off the cushion.

“MUM!”

She tried to roll herself off the lounge where she’d fallen asleep.

“God… fucking… damnit…” She muttered to herself as she managed to roll off the lounge onto
the floor on all fours, her huge belly carefully protected the whole time.

“MUM!”
“I’m coming Robin!” Rae got up as quickly as she could. She was panicked and pissed off at herself. Her men were out; Finn still working part time on his station, Phil grocery shopping and still on leave from his career. She was supposed to be looking after Robin. She swore she barely put her head on the cushion and suddenly she’s waking up to her baby screaming for her.

“MUM!”

Rae ran into the kitchen, panicked, ready to yell at the security guards if anything had happened to Robin, to alleviate her guilt more than anything.

But he was holding the phone, taking a deep breath ready to call out again. When he saw her, he held out the phone to her.

“It’s for you.”

“Oh right.” Rae was relieved. And surprised she hadn’t heard the phone ring. “Thanks.” She took it from him and sat at the kitchen counter, “D’you know who-?”

“It’s Gran.” Robin answered. That meant Linda. Meredith was grandmother and Kenzie was grandma.

“Alright, well go play in your room for a bit?” Rae said and Robin nodded. Rae watched Robin’s two security guards follow him and sighed. She hated the lack of privacy but she was so glad they had the guards. “Hey mum.” Rae said as she put the phone to her ear.

“Rae…” Linda’s voice was sad and Rae felt and instant panic in her stomach.

“What is it mum?”

“Kester’s dead.”

“Ok I may have gotten too much, but rice never goes off and it was cheaper in bulk.” Phil said as he dragged the multitude of bags into the kitchen, a 10 kilo bag of rice over one of his shoulders. He paused when he saw Rae. Sitting at the kitchen counter, tears staining her cheeks. “What is it?”

“He had a stroke.” Rae whispered miserably.

“Who?” Phil tried not to panic.

“Kester.”

“Oh.” Phil had a moment of relief that it wasn’t Finn, and then instant pain. “Oh no.” He dropped all the bags and took her into his arms. They ignored the rice bag splitting as it fell to the ground and clung to each other. Phil knew from Rae’s tears that Kester was gone. “We have to call Finn.” Rae nodded and handed Phil the home phone, not letting go of each other for a moment. “Hey Finn.” Phil said softly, “You probably need to come home.” There was a moment of silence for Rae as Finn responded. “Kester had passed away.” There was another moment while Finn talked and then there was their goodbyes. “He’s on his way.”
When Finn got home, they were sitting on the lounge, Robin was playing with his mini musical instruments on the lounge room floor while Rae was organising their trip back to Stamford.

He nestled in between them, getting and giving hugs without a word.

The usual argument that Rae and Phil had about whether they were going to stay with her mother or in a hotel didn’t happen. Phil understood that this time they had to stay with Rae’s family. Even though Linda would constantly try to feed Phil wheat, they’d have no privacy, the bed was too small, and Linda gave Robin too many lollies which made him headachey and grumpy.

“We going tonight or tomorrow?” Finn asked.

“Tomorrow morning.” Rae answered as she finished replying to Chloe’s email; Rae had called her at work and now they were emailing their plans. “I talked to him yester.” Rae said softly. “I can’t believe it.”

The service had flown by, even though Rae had sung, Angela standing beside her gripping her hand as the Ave Maria had rung out in the church in Rae’s beautiful voice.

Standing at the graveside, Rae had wept and gently laid a single yellow rose on the coffin before it was lowered. Angela, Kester’s partner had surrounded the gravesite with roses; his roses from their garden.

Yellow roses had always been Kester’s favourite, so she had appreciated Rae’s gesture. Rae had wept for her lost friend who had once given her a yellow rose to signify friendship. A friend that had helped her through her darkest moments.

Rae looked up to see Chloe wiping her eyes. Kester had helped Chloe through a lot too.

Rae knew that the five of them would sit and talk late into the night tonight, reminiscing about Kester, while grandparents took care of their children. They’d probably go to the old pub. It’d be strange to be there without Izzy and Chop.

Rae looked over at Danny, openly weeping, Grace comforting him softly. She knew Danny and Grace would go home to be with their kids after an hour at the pub. They were homebodies; there was no place else that they were happier. Danny had really landed on his feet when he’d found sweet, kind, patient, pregnant again, Grace. And their half a dozen kids were blessed with attentive and loving parents. And a lot of pets; Grace never could seem to put down the strays that were brought to her clinic. A chaotic and happy home that would be muted for the next few days while Danny overcame this loss enough to go back to his usual cheery self.

Rae envied Danny his ability to weep so openly. It felt clean and good. Watching him made Rae realise that expressing emotions like that; uncomplicated, unhindered, unconcerned for what others might think, unworried about losing control; it was simple, it would be easier to move on. The way most people felt things was in bits and pieces, holding onto themselves desperately tight in case the pain became too much for them to bear. People held it all in, even when they cried because they were so scared they couldn’t; deal with the pain. Danny let it all out; he wasn’t afraid that he couldn’t handle it. He knew he could.
Rae knew she could handle it too. She’d just do it in the privacy of her own home. She looked over at the edge of the cemetery where paparazzi were snapping shots of her trio. She had to do a lot in the privacy of her own home. Rae looked over at their security guards standing at a respectful distance. Their two best guards were with Robin. He always had two, but Rae thought that when this baby was born, Robin might have just one, because his little brother would need a guard too. Rae put a hand on her stomach and looked back at the coffin in the ground, the single yellow rose on it. She knew she was distracting herself from feeling anything because she couldn’t let herself cry as much as she’d like here; there were too many photo opportunities in that, and Rae refused to let Kester’s funeral be turned into headlines for the scum that read those articles. It was good for people to read interviews and follow Instagram and twitter accounts and the like… but unwanted photos of people’s private lives, like this, no matter who they were - it was disgusting that people consumed those stories.

Rae looked up at Chloe and saw her glowering at the paparazzi; she was still on the warpath over the photos of Rae’s abuse. Those tabloids had enjoyed their highest sales in years when they’d released those photos. Rae had hoped there would be some common decency, some sort of backlash in the sales. But that had not happened and Rae felt like the world had betrayed her; like people couldn’t be trusted.

Rae tried to keep her mind busy, thinking about anything other than the way his eyes had crinkled when he smiled. The smell of cigarettes, and then roses that had surrounded him. The way he teased, the way he seemed to read her mind. The way he had always been there for her, encouraged her. the way he had loved her. She tried not to think of the keen intelligence sparkling in his eyes, the intonation in his voice whenever he was able to reveal something about herself to her. The way he’d fold his hands over his lap, the crazy things he sometimes did, the cardigan he’d been wearing the last time she’d seen him.

She cried, knowing that it would be all over the tabloids, but unable to stop herself anyway.

* 

“Hey Rob.” Phil grinned as he came in through the front door.

“Daddy!” He called and ran straight at Phil, nearly head butting him in the balls. Phil had learned the hard way to turn his hips when Robin came running. So had Finn.

“How was the interview?” Finn asked as Phil gave him and Re a kiss and sat down with them.

“Oh same as they always are.” Phil answered picking Robin up and putting him on his hip. “what have you been up to today?” He asked his son.

“I painted.” Robin nodded, “And I made music.”

“Can I see your painting?” Phil asked and Rae cleared her throat. Finn tried not to grin and Phil sighed. “Where’s your painting?” Phil asked and Robin squirmed to be let down. As soon as was on the ground he was running off towards the music room. Phil looked at his partners.

“Where’s the painting?”

“He’s your kid.” Finn answered.

“He’s always my kid when he’s being a shit and yours when he being cute.” Phil replied.

“Aye. That’s the price o’ being the bio-dad.” Finn answered with a smug grin.
“Well guess who’s kid this is gonna be at three in the fucking morning when it’s bawling.” Rae shot at Finn and Finn’s face fell while Phil chuckled.

“Better go see what he’s done then.” Phil sighed and went into the music room, Rae and Finn following, having already seen it. Phil’s mouth opened in surprise; Robin had painted a large, abstract mural on the wall. Phil turned back to Rae and Finn and the security guards. “Where were you guys when this happened?” He asked and looked back at the painting. “Oh well, I guess it’s staying now.” Phil said when he saw Robin’s beaming face, filled with pride at is artistry.

“It took him less than five minutes.” Finn said. “We was just singing along to one song on the radio, and in that time he done it.”

“And that’s not the worst of it.” Rae nodded towards Phil’s cello.

“Oh god.” Phil barely breathed the words. His multi-million dollar Stradivarius cello now had five stick figures on it, three big ones, clearly representing the parents, one of them with another small stick figure across the midsection – that was pregnant Rae, and a small little figure representing Robin. They were all smiling and holding hands. “This cello is over 300 years old…” Phil looked thunderstruck.

“Don’t you like it daddy?” Robin asked, his smile falling. Phil turned and looked at him.

“I…” He cleared his throat, took a deep breath and then cleared his throat again. “I don’t know what to say.” He finally managed to form a sentence. “It’s beautiful.” He finally managed to say, “But we need to have a talk about using paper for your art.” Phil crouched in front of his son and tried to think of the right words.

“Mummy and Finn-daddy already said.” Robin sulked.

“It’s bath time kiddo.” Finn said and motioned for Robin to come to him. “You sit.” He pointed at Rae, who usually liked to be a part of the bath time frivolity. But Rae was getting more and more pregnant, and sitting sounded good. Finn gave Phil a cheeky grin and lead Robin from the room, while Phil looked back at his cello, tears in his eyes.

“Is it ruined?” Rae asked, understanding how important Phil’s instruments were to him.

“I’m sure it’ll still play.” Phil said stiffly, his fingers gently touching near the paint. “Oh god.”

“Gives it some character.” Rae tried to cheer him.

“It’s over 300 years old, it had plenty of character.” Phil sighed and shook his head. “But I guess it has more now.”

“We can get it restored.” Rae tried.

“No.” Phil said, “This is part of its story now.” He smiled slightly, still obviously aghast. “These instruments were like my children. I have real children now.” He said and looked at her, “I’m fine.” He reassured her. “It was a shock…” He acknowledged, “But it’ll still play, and I had no intention of selling it, so…” He sighed, obviously still trying to come to terms with this. “But we might just keep it locked in the glass cabinet in future.”

“Yes.” Rae agreed. “This is a piece of history, that could be in a museum!”

“Some Stradivarius instruments are in the Smithsonian.” Phil agreed. “And now Robin’s art is part of this Stradivarius.” Phil took another deep breath. It would take a while for him to be ok.
But Rae knew he’d still be able to play the instrument, so he’d survive it.

“So restoration?”

“No.” Phil shook his head. “At least not till he’s old enough to understand why. Until then, we keep his art.”

“Maybe it’ll be worth more with Phil Seymour’s kid’s painting on it?” Rae tried and Phil shook his head. Rae knew it wasn’t about the monetary value. This living piece of history had survived hundreds of years in tact; wars and civil upheaval hadn’t touched it… But one 4 year old certainly had.

“It’s my fault for not properly securing it.” Phil said and took it from the stand and locked it into the glass cabinet; it was still visible there, but it couldn’t be touched. “That’s better.” He turned to Rae. “Sit you.” He said as he turned to Rae.

“Yeah yeah.” Rae sighed.

* 

“Five police officers were fired and a further three are doing jail time. Apologies have been issued by all the tabloids involved, a several million dollar payout has been ordered… this was a comprehensive victory for yourself and Ms Earl.” Jill, the reporter was looking at her notes.

“Yes, justice was served.” Chloe answered, ‘But I’d like to remind everyone that so often in rape cases justice is not served. In fact most of the time it is not.” Chloe turned to look at Rae, sitting beside her, “It is illegal in this country to reveal the identities of rape victims. These people got off lightly in the first instance of this law being broken. When they released those disgusting photographs into the public sphere, it was even more inexcusable. There was no way I was letting them get away with that.”

“Sounds like you’re putting the police force and the tabloids on notice.”

“Again.” Chloe reminded her, “This happens all the time, people act without respect and outside of the law and think that they have a valid reason to justify it. They do not.”

“What do you make of the claims that people who have the privileges of wealth and fame, who live in the public eye, belong to the public?”

“Nonsense.” Chloe answered. “Every human being, regardless of their profession, deserves their privacy and to be treated with humanity and respect. My client is a writer. Should she belong to other people because she writes successful novels and plays and happens to be in a long-term commitment with an actor and a businessman?” Chloe was on fire, “What if tomorrow we suddenly declared that because receptionists are the public faces of companies in that they are the first to greet customers, and as such public figures, and therefore it was alright for us to take private photographs of them grieving at funerals, shopping for groceries, or in fact to criminally leak their crime scene photographs to the media? What if the impoverished people of this country decided that receptionists were living the high life so they deserved it? My client chose to be a writer, not a public figure. She is very good at her job, so yes, she has wealth. As such, she has decided that the multi million pound payout she’ll be receiving from the tabloids will be used to open a rape crisis clinic here in London.”

“Truly?” Jill looked surprised.

“My client knows only too well the destruction that rape can wreak upon the mind, body and soul
of victims. The centre will provide 24 hour assistance, transportation from anywhere in the country to the centre, beds for those needing time away, medical, psychological and legal help, as well as self defence training.”

“Sounds incredible.” Jill told Chloe and then turned her eyes to Rae, “But I’d like to ask Mrs Earl-”

“Ms.” Chloe corrected in a stern voice. “The relationship status of men can remain anonymous with the prefix mister, but missus and miss were designed to allow men to know whether a woman was owned or not, so he knew whether to waste his time pursuing her or not. Ms is as anonymous as mister. Women should not be judged or defined by their relationship status.”

“I apologise.” Jill answered insincerely. “I wished to ask Ms Earl,” She emphasised the word ‘Ms’ almost sarcastically and Chloe narrowed her eyes, “it must have been harrowing experience to have not only experienced the brutal abduction and multiple rapes you went through, but to the have it so publicly relived.”

“Where’s the question?” Rae asked softly. Jill looked at her quizzically. “That was a statement.”

“I’m just asking if it’s been difficult for you?” Jill clarified.

“Of course it has.” Rae responded. “I’m unsure as to why that question even needs to be asked. Are there vast swathes of people imagining that being raped is easy?” Chloe put a hand over her mouth to cover how much almost vindictive joy Rae’s response gave her.

“I think people are just trying to understand.” Jill responded, slightly defensively.

“It worries me that people need to see the suffering and tears and rape and brutalisation of particularly women in order to understand, or feel empathy or sympathy or compassion.” Rae answered, “It’s trauma porn. It’s a ick sort of need to know all the dirty, disgusting details; that’s why those tabloids that carried the pictures of my violation sold so well.” Rae told her, “There’s also a need to be in the know, to be the one the victim confided in; as if reliving this horror, over and over again would somehow make it any easier or better for the victim.” Rae leaned forwards in her chair and looked Jill in the eye, her voice firm and unwavering, “rape is horrific and utterly soul destroying. Why d’you or anyone else need to know the details of such depraved brutality. It’s another symptom of society’s continued focus on anything other than the victim.”

“Unless it’s to blame the victim; we’re fine to focus on her then.” Chloe added and Rae nodded. “But I would like to add that while adult rape is undeniably a gendered crime, with most victims being female and most perpetrators being male, there are some male victims and we will be providing care and assistance for them at our centre too.”

“With child rape, the ratio of male to female victims is still worse for little girls than little boys, but it’s far closer.” Rae added.

“But overwhelmingly the majority of perpetrators, no matter who the victim is, are male. So I am going on record to name the problem; toxic masculinity, a culture that encourages an attitude of female submission, and male dominance and ownership over woman. A culture that almost glorifies rape in the way it talks about sex as a type of conquering competition and dismisses victims. A paedophilic culture that idolises and sexualises little girls and ignores the wisdom of older women. A culture that objectifies and sexualises women, but shames a woman who takes control of her own sexuality, who has her own agency; women are to be only sexual when a man sexualises and controls them, not when women please. A culture where white male violence is so pervasive as to be completely invisible and un-talked about; we’re like fish swimming in the ocean,
so surrounded by water that we don’t know what it is, it’s simply everything and everywhere like the stench of testosterone driven violence in our world.”

“My lawyer, and my good friend Chloe and I will be combining our considerable talents to tackle this issue.” Rae took Chloe’s hand and they shred a stoic, determined grin.

“And as a rape survivor myself, believe me, I am putting rapists, police officers, the legal system, and the tabloids, on notice.” Chloe looked right down the barrel of the camera, “We’re coming for all of you, and we’re protecting victims with everything we have.”

Rae rubbed her temples and tried to read over the scripts Phil had been given; people were still knocking on his door, and while he was saying he was fine to stay at home still, Rae could tell he was itching to get back to work. She knew he would stay at home with her for as long as she needed both of her men here to feel safe. But she had the security guards and she had her project with Chloe, which still needed a name, and she had her writing, and she was feeling safer. She wanted him to go back to work a few months after the baby was born. Finn had kept working part time; owning his own business meant that e had to keep checking in with how it was running. But he had scaled back any none-essential tasks and let his employees take care f his beloved station as much as he could. Other than the occasional interview with a star that just wouldn’t talk to anyone but him, of course. Rae knew that Finn needed to start spending more time on his business too. It was time for them to get back to normal; she was ready for that.

Another angry scream reverberated through the house and Rae sighed and kept rubbing her temples.

Robin was having another temper tantrum.

Robin had been the perfect child until he’d found out there was a brother on the way. When he had thought that the baby was going to be a sister, he had been less naughty. But once the scans had shown it was a little boy, all hell had broken lose and now he was acting up a lot for him. But he was most naughty with Rae and Finn; probably because he blamed them for bringing another little boy into the home. Robin had shown anxiety over another child coming into the home; he liked being the centre of attention it seemed, but he had coped with it when the other child was a girl; now he was not coping so well. Rae had been getting tips from Chloe who had had the same problem when her second was due. 90% of the time he was the cutest little angel on the planet. But that 10% in which he was the devil was particularly bad when Rae was so pregnant she felt like the baby was about to drop at any moment.

Finn was sitting beside her, rubbing her back distractedly while he went over the finances and figures of the station.

“He threw those out.” Finn said softly.

“I know.” Rae said looking at the scripts again.

“He’s not ready to go back to work yet.”

“Yes he is.” Rae countered, “He just thinks I’m not ready fro him to go back.” Finn looked up at her, “I’m ready for both of you to go back. Just gotta wait till the lil baked bean is born.” Re put a hand on her stomach, “At least a few months after that… then it’ll be fine.”

Finn opened his mouth to reply but Phil came in with Robin, red faced but not crying now. He’d
started cracking the shits when Rae had told him he couldn’t have any ice cream, and Phil had taken over when the tantrum had gotten quite bad.

‘Thank you.’ Rae mouthed the words to Phil. Since this behaviour in Robin had begun, the only person he’d do anything for was Phil. But he always wanted to be wherever Rae was. He was following her around constantly and being upset with almost everything she did. Even if she wasn’t pregnant it would be wearing on her.

Phil lifted Robin up to be sitting on the table. He loved sitting on the table while his parents were on the computers; Robin loved the computer hub.

“Alright let’s co-ordinate our days.” Finn said, “I got a staff meeting at 10am, then I’m free.”

“Got a scan at 1pm.” Rae told them; the baby was due any day and they were constantly checking to see if he’d need to be induced

“I have that interview today.” Phil’s fans were eager to hear news, and Sarah was organising interviews to keep him in the public eye as much as he’d let her, “At 3.”

“I’ve got work.” Robin declared loudly, his temper tantrum forgotten, his tear stained face grinning happily.

“Oh aye?” Finn asked, “Where’re you working?”

“He… trucks.” He answered.

“Sounds great.” Phil answered and Finn agreed. But Robin’s eyes turned to his mother.

“Mummy?” He sounded slightly scared and Phil and Finn shot their eyes to Rae.

“Contraction.” She told them, “Probably just a Braxton-Hicks.” She said through gritted teeth. Both men were on their feet instantly and Robin whimpered at the speed of their actions; he knew something was happening.

“Mummy?”

“I’m fine baby.” Rae answered as sweat beaded on her forehead. She picked Robin up and made a pain noise in the back of her throat, holding it in.

“I’ll get the car.” Finn said, “You get the bags.” He shot at Phil. Both men were gone, Robin swept up onto Finn’s hip as they hurried away. Rae watched them go, feeling the clenched muscles in her abdomen slowly release.

When they came rushing back in, Rae was reading the scripts again.

“What?” She asked them as they looked at her incredulously, “I told you it were nothing.”

* * *

“The men’s quarters need to be on the other side of the building with all of the specialist offices in between them and the women.” Rae said to the architect. They had bought two massive warehouses in Westminster industrial estate and were having them combined and refurbished. The warehouses were across the River Thames from the airport, so not right in the heart of London, but out here they could provide beds for 1000 people. Sadly, that was not nearly enough.

“Why would you segregate the men and women?” Christian asked. He was an excellent architect,
but he really didn’t understand what they were doing here. Chloe rolled her eyes in frustration. “I mean men are victims of rape too.”

“Yes but they are also the rapists most of the time.” Chloe answered, “So I don’t imagine many women are going to be too happy having men around while they’re sleeping.”

“Then the men won’t be happy being in with a bunch of men either.” Christian answered.

“It’ll be different because they’ll know that all of these men are victims too and are like them.” Chloe answered.

“But won’t the women know the same thing?”

“It’s a vastly different experience being a male and a female rape victim.” Chloe said in a brusque tone. “The only issue we have out here is intersex and non-gender conforming people.” Chloe mused.

“we can have a few beds t the inner city office for people who aren’t comfortable being in with men or women.” Rae answered and Chloe nodded.

“Good idea.” Chloe had loved Rae’s idea to have some inner city offices for their doctors and nurses and lawyers and counsellors for people who didn’t need a bed and just wanted some quick advice or help. Those offices would be staffed by a nurse 24 hours a day too, and the other staff members would alternate between the warehouse and the offices.

“I really don’t get why you can’t put tem all in together.” Christian mumbled under his breath.

“After I was raped I could barely stand to be in the same room as the men I loved.” Rae said curtly, “Let alone with men I didn’t know.”

“Stop questioning us.” Chloe snapped, “We’re actually the experts on this topic and you need to accept and respect our expertise and knowledge, as well as our lived experiences instead of attempting to invalidate them and place your own expectations and experiences over the top of ours.”

“Actually I’m the expert.” Christian answered, “Seeing as how you hired me as the architect and I’m trying to make a useable space for you.”

“Within our parameters.” Rae backed up Chloe, “And if you can’t do that, then you’re not much of an expert in your own field are you?” Rae felt a sharp pain deep in her abdomen and wrapped her arm around her stomach. Chloe looked over at her and Rae shook her head to say she was ok. “I feel as though we should have just done the centre for women.” Rae snapped, “And intersex and other genders, but not men. You guys just don’t get it.”

“So we don’t deserve help, cos we don’t bow down to your opinions of it?” Christian sneered.

“Men could create their own centres for male victims.” Chloe answered, “Men control most of the political power and wealth in the world. Why don’t you lot help yourselves?”

“OK I can’t work with you two men hating feminazis.” Christian stood up.

“Yes because women demanding fair treatment is exactly the same as the genocide of the Jewish and Romani people.” Chloe shot back, shooting to her feet. “Get out, we’ll find someone better.” Chloe was furious at him. “A woman!” She yelled at his back as he left. Rae took a deep breath and not just because she was angry; the pain in her abdomen was quite bad. Chloe noticed her
pain. “You alright babe?”

“Braxton-Hicks, whoever they were, can eat my arse.” Rae replied with a pained grunt. Chloe laughed.

“Mine too.”

“Well, better start googling female architects.” Rae said as the pain finally started to ebb. “And I wish this little bastard’d just come out now.” She looked down at her huge belly, “Any time you’re ready kiddo.”

* 

“I’m gonna kill him.” A very pregnant Rae waddled into the room and Finn shared a glance with Phil. “I’m gonna kill him and he’s gonna die.” They heard a wailing scream come from Rae’s room and Phil and Finn looked at each other again, silently debating on who should take this one.

“Well he’s your son.” Finn finally threw at Phil when it became apparent he was losing the silent debate.

“God fucking damnit, you always throw that one at me.” Phil grumbled and Finn kissed him in return. “But he’s always yours when he’s being an angel.” Phil was unmoved by Finn’s kisses.

“You’ll do the same to me Billy.” Finn grinned, “When my little bundle of joy and pain is born.”

“I’m actually gonna kill you two fuckers as well in a minute.” Rae said with an icy glare. She was a week overdue and her mood had been critically grumpy for the past month. “I never fucking wanted kids.” She grumbled when they both kissed her cheeks.

“You love that little shit.” Finn reminded her and she nodded. He had been one of the joys of her life, but right now she felt so unwell and tired that she was struggling to keep up with any one of her boys, yet alone the three of them. Robin was four now, and he was at that stage of life where he simply had to scream and run everywhere, and apparently the only word he knew was ‘no.’

“Alright.” Phil finished his tea and got up, wandering through their huge house to find that Robin had climbed through Rae’s wardrobe and pulled all her clothes down.

“Rob!” Phil called out and saw the pile of clothes twitch. “What’s the matter Robin?” He sat down on the bed next to Robin and he poked his head out from under the clothes.

“Where’s mummy.”

“In the kitchen.” Phil told him, “Wanna come and-”

“NO!” Robin screamed at the top of his lungs, “NO!” Phil looked him in the eyes.

“What would you rather do?”

“I want mummy!”

“Well mummy’s really tired and she needs to sit down, and she needs you to help her out and be a big boy. Do you think you can do that?”

“Yeah.” He grinned.

“I knew you could.” Phil said, “So you can help her out and be a big boy by coming into the
kitchen and having some breakfast, alright?"

“NO!”

“Alright, well you don’t have to.” Phil answered and leaned back on the bed, “But maybe you should tell me what’s bothering you?”

“I don’t want a brother.”

“Alright.” Phil said, “I accept that you don’t want one. But unfortunately you’re gonna have one.”

“I wanna sister!” Robin screamed in a high pitched screech. Phil put a finger to his ear and felt his eyes water.

“Why d’you want a sister?” He asked and poked at his ear to see if he could still hear properly after that.

“So she can play dolls with me!” Robin threw Rae’s clothes around and jumped off the bed, stomping his feet dramatically.

“You like dolls, what makes you think your brother won’t?” Phil reasoned. Robin was a very advanced child, unsurprisingly, and reasoning usually worked on him, even in temper tantrums.

“I wanna dress her in nice dresses!”

“And you think boys don’t wear nice dresses?” Phil asked with a gentle voice, “Did you forget about Uncle Rhys?” Robin paused for a moment and then his face lit up.

“Oh yeah!” And then he jumped up and down excitedly, “Make Uncle Rhys play dress up with me!”

“I will ask him if he wants to.” Phil said pointedly, “Because we never make people do things, do we?”

“Nuh.”

“Right. Let’s clean up your mum’s clothes yeah?”

“Will Finn-dad play too?”

“We’ll see.”

“Will you?”

“Yes.” Phil answered.

“You can wear mummy’s red dress!” Rae had several red dresses and Phil had to stop himself from saying he already had worn some of them.

“Which one?” He asked as he handed a coat hanger to Robin and he started to hang a dress on it.

“The pretty one.”

“Oh of course!” Phil said, “I’d love to wear that, I will look amazing in that.”
“PHIL!” There was an urgency in Finn’s voice that made Phil pick up Robin and rush to the kitchen, there was blood stained liquid all over the floor, Rae’s fingers were curled around the edge of the table, her face pale and screwed up in pain. Robin started to cry in fear.

“Get the car.” Phil said, handing Robin to Finn. “I’ll get the bags.”

“Aye.” Finn rushed out to the car.

“You alright?” Phil stroked Rae’s cheek.

“Something’s not-” Her voice was cut off in a painful silent scream.

“Something’s not right.” Phil understood. “I’ll call an ambulance.” He slipped his phone out and put his hand on Rae’s forehead while he dialled the emergency number. His heart was pounding in his chest, but he was determined to keep it together better this time than he had last time. Especially since something wasn’t right this time; Rae needed him.

When Finn came back in, Rae was leaning over the table and Phil was on the phone, sitting beside her stroking her back, listening to the operator talking him through what to do.

“I called an ambulance.” Phil said. “I’ll get Robin out of the car, you take the phone.” He gave the phone to Finn and headed out to get Robin from the car. He knew he’d have to have a talk with Robin about being a big brave boy as he got him out of his car seat.

Finn sat down next to Rae and rubbed her back.

“What was that?” He asked the operator.

“How far apart are the contractions?”

“Contractions?” He asked Rae and she shook her head.

“Just constant pain.” She answered.

“It’s just constant.” Finn answered, working hard to keep his voice calm; he could see the blood dripping from the seat.

Phil came in as they heard sirens in the distance. Robin had a determined face on and was clinging to Phil’s neck, Phil carrying him on his hip and grabbing the bags Finn had gathered with his other hand. Rae’s body was heaving with the deep breaths she was taking, but she was silent and pale. Phil helped her drink some water, still holding Robin, the bags on the table now, ready to go.

“They won’t let us all in the ambulance.” Phil said, “So you go with Rae, and I’ll meet you at the hospital with Robin.”

“I wanna go with mummy.” Robin said in a soft voice.

“Hey my little jelly bean.” Rae whispered to him, “You can’t come with me this time, but I’ll see you at the hospital and it’ll be fine, I promise.” She looked up at Phil and back down at Robin, “Dad’ll be with ya till uncle Rhys comes.”

“Uncle Rhys?” Robin’s eyes lit up and he looked up at Phil.

“Yeah!” Phil said, getting the boy excited so he wouldn’t be so frightened. “And your cousins.” Robin looked back at Rae.
“But mummy’s bleeding.”

“I bled when I gave birth to you too.” Rae told him, “That’s what mother’s do, we give out blood to our children, so they always know that they’re part of us, never alone, always loved.”

“Does it hurt?” His little eyebrows furrowed, an unusual expression for him, very reminiscent of Phil.

“Yes.” Rae panted. The pain was both constant but it was starting to get peaks, like contractions with an underlying problem. “But sometimes the best things give you a bit o’ pain.” She told him, “And it’s so worth it.”

“We should call Linda and Chloe.” Phil said softly to Finn while mother and son spoke. Finn nodded and picked up his phone, handing Phil’s phone back to him, the operator still on the phone, making sure everything was o until the ambulance arrived.

There was a knock on the door.

“They’re here now.” Phil told the operator as he went to the door.

Simultaneously, Finn was listening to his phone ringing, waiting for Linda to pick up.

“It’s happening now.” Finn calmly said into the mobile phone. A long stream of panicked words could be heard on the other end of the phone; Linda wasn’t prepared to be a grandmother again just yet. There was a moment of silence and then Ash was on the phone. Robin climbed onto his lap and took his mother’s hand while Rae focussed on her breathing.

“Yeah she’s right proper flustered fuck-nuts. Well done.” He said and Finn could hear the grin in his tone of voice.

“Get your arse to London.” Was all he said and hung up. It was Ash’s job to call the other sets of parents, and Finn knew he could trust him to do it. He dialled Archie’s number and got the answering machine. It was Archie’s job to tell the rest of the gang.

“Hi Archie, it’s-”

“Uncle Archie, uncle Archie, uncle Archie!” Robin chanted as the paramedics bustled into the room.

“It’s happening now.” Finn left a message and called Chloe.

The paramedics started checking blood pressure and other vital signs, asking questions and setting up the stretcher for her.

“What’s up babe?” Chloe asked nonchalantly as her greeting, “Is it time?”

“Looks like it’s moving fast, you better hurry.” Finn answered, watching the paramedics. He recognised their actions as the actions of medical professionals who were seeing a medical emergency in front of them.

“Right.” Chloe was part of the birthing team and she hung up and hurried to prepare herself.

When they got Rae into the stretched, the pool of blood left in the chair and on the floor was terrifying.

“Fuck.” Finn breathed in fear.
“Go with her.” Phil said firmly and gathered the bags. “I’ll be there as quickly as I can.” He turned to Robin as Rae was wheeled out of their house, her eyes closed, her teeth clenched. She was focussed on her breathing. Finn grabbed her hand and went with her.

When Phil got the hospital a nurse showed him and Robin to Rae’s room.

“Oh I’m glad you’re all here now.” Their doctor was looking over the results of the paramedics tests while a sonographer used a potable ultrasound machine to check on the baby. She looked up at Phil and gave Robin a cheeky grin. Robin giggled, Dr Jackson always made him giggle. She was both their GP and, as a qualified OBGYN as well, their obstetrician too. She liked to take care of all the needs of her patients.

The first thing she’d done is given Rae pain killers. Rae was feeling much better now.

“Hey.” Phil went to Rae’s side while Robin looked around the room. He’d never been in a hospital room like this.

“So it’s placental abruption?” Dr Jackson asked the sonographer and he nodded.

“Pretty serious too.” The sonographer noted and pointed at the screen. Dr Jackson nodded as Chloe came in.

“Hey babe.” Chloe said.

“Please take Robin out.” Phil said softly and Chloe nodded, taking Robin out to Rhys in the waiting room. “You said serious?” Phil asked.

“The baby is presenting breech, and you have placental abruption.” Dr Jackson said to Rae.

“What’s that?” Finn asked.

“The placenta has started to come away from the lining of the uterus.”

“Oh shit.” Finn said and Phil looked at Rae, her face worried but determined.

“So what now?” Rae asked.

“I’m recommending an emergency Caesarean, as your baby is showing signs of distress. We need to get him out of there.”

“Her.” The sonographer corrected.

“Her?” Finn asked, “But the other sonographer-”

“Got it wrong. Which happens sometimes.” The sonographer replied with a shrug. “And her heart rate is increasing.”

“Ok so, can we go ahead with the-”

“Yes of course.” Rae answered the doctor, “Do whatever you need to do to keep her safe.”

“Everything will be fine.” Dr Jackson reassured them as the nurses bustled about prepping the
room and Rae, “You’re both handling the stress well; she’s a strong little girl.” Chloe came back in but Dr Jackson sent her out, telling her that she couldn’t be there for the operation; only essential people could be in there for this. Chloe looked worried but put on a brave face as she left the room. “I’m sorry Rae, I know you would like to have Chloe present for the birthing, and even though I am sure she would be very comforting, I can’t allow it.”

“So I’ll be awake?” Rae asked and Dr Jackson nodded.

“But we’ll put a curtain up so you can’t see the incision.” Dr Jackson left to prepare ad Phil and Finn leaned in to Rae.

“A little girl.” Finn said softly.

“Oh robin will be so pleased.” Phil noted. They were deliberately keeping her mind off the impending surgery and focussed on the little girl she was about to hold.

“But I didn’t get to play me birthing mix tape.” Finn said crestfallen.

“Oh god.” Rae sighed.

“It started with ‘O Fortuna’ by Orf.” Finn said and nodded for Phil, “Thought you’d like some classical music.”

“Are you serious Finn?” Rae shook he head.

“O Fortuna?” Phil looked aghast and Rae chuckled, “D’you think some sort of dreadful fate is descending upon us?”

“Well having two kids is gonna be harder than one.” Finn shrugged. “Then I had ‘Baby Love’ by Diana Ross.”

“No Christmas tunes?” One of the nurses asked, “Since it’s so close to Christmas?”

“Nope.” Finn shrugged, “Not my style. Won’t be my daughter’s style either.”

“It might be.” Rae teased.

“Don’t say things like that.” Finn looked aghast.

When Dr Jackson returned he recommended that the dads stayed on that side of the curtain with Rae.

“It can get a little gory down here.” She told them, “But if it’s safe, I can let you both have a look, and one of you can even pull her out?”

“That’d be Finn’s job.” Phil said.

“So she’s yours?” Dr Jackson asked.

“And his.” Finn answered, “But he got to be the first one to hold the last one.” Finn explained.

The nurses bought surgical masks and gloves for the men, and they were made to wash their hands and put on gowns.

Everything went by in a whirl of fast-paced activity, so before Finn knew it Phil was holding Rae’s hand, while she was grimacing at the way everything felt, and Finn was helping Dr Jackson bring
their second child into the world. Finn felt a deep sense of connectedness to his squirming child as he held her, the umbilical cord still attached to the placenta, bleeding and inside of Rae. But the doctor was saying that both mother and child were out of danger and doing great. He stared down at her and sighed with love and awe, tears in his eyes.

And then she was whisked away for tests to ensure she was healthy.

“Is she ok?” Rae asked anxiously.

“She’s perfect.” Finn said, but he saw Rae trying to see around the sheet to where the nurses had their daughter, even as Dr Jackson was sewing her up. “We’ll check but.” Finn motioned for Phil to follow him over to the table where they were testing her.

The two men tared at her in awe. She was silent and blinking, not crying as they had expected.

“She looks like she’s just checking out this place.” Finn said, completely in love.

“Hasn’t decided if she likes it yet.” Phil agreed.

“Here you go.” The nurse said and handed the baby to Phil, she was obviously star struck by him.

“She’s in perfect health. Of course.” She gushed.

“Thank you.” Phil said and they both looked down at her.

“I get what you mean.” Finn said staring at their daughter, “About what a singular and special experience it is to… to have mingled my DNA with Rae’s and…” He stroked the little girl’s face.

“But… but now I know for sure that there really isn’t a difference between adopted and biological.” He looked up at Phil, “She’s as much mine as Robin is.”

“I completely understand.” Phil said not taking his eyes of the squirming little girl in his arms, “She’s mine.” He said with a huge grin. “As much as Robin is.” He looked up at Finn and they shared a deep kiss, Phil’s safe hands securely holding their child. Finn took her from Phil and brought her over to Rae. Rae took her and looked down at her adoringly.

“My girl.” She whispered lovingly. “Oh I’m gonna protect you from this world baby girl.” She stroked her face and smiled contently as Dr Jackson finished up.

“I told ya my sperm was stronger than yours Jill.” Finn said as he looked as his daughter proudly. Rae rolled her eyes and ignored them while Dr Jackson studiously pretended she didn’t hear them; she was sued to having to do that.

“Well if you call coming first being stronger, then sure thing Quinn.” Phil replied. Finn looked up at him with narrowed eyes. “We all agreed that Rae got pregnant when we had sex for the first time after… the break.” Phil answered. ‘The break’ was their euphemism for the time after Rae’s abduction. “You came first.” Phil explained, his eyes never leaving the baby. Finn made a noise of disbelief; Phil was right, but this was a low-blow argument, and the tosser knew it, Finn could tell by the smarmy grin on the git’s face.

“I was in the throes of passion mate.” Finn retorted, “Maybe you should look passion up in the dictionary and-”

“As I recall,” Rae interrupted them, “I came first.” The two men looked at her with grins.

“Too right.” Finn answered. In truth Rae always came first, and Phil and Finn were well matched in terms of their ability to hold out for long enough. Sometimes one of them came first, sometimes
the other. Phil was just teasing.

“Yes, good point.” Phil agreed.

“Can Robin come in yet?” Rae asked and Dr Jackson said she’d tell Chloe to bring him in.

Chloe bought Robin in as Rae put their newborn on the breast.

“You ok babe?” Chloe asked as Robin sat on the chair and leaned his head on his hands and stared at Rae nursing the baby.

“Emergency C-section.” Rae explained, “The placenta came away from the uterus. And She was in there the wrong way up.”

“This is how babies eat.” Rae said softly to Robin, “You ate like this too when you were this little.”

“I told you she was a girl.” Robin stated.

“Yes you did.” Rae agreed.

“You shoulda listened to me.” He nodded sagely, not noticing the grins he was getting from the adults in the room.

“Too right.” Finn agreed.

“What’s my sister’s name?” He asked reaching to touch her foot gently. They were all immensely proud of his gentle touch and soft voice, of he way he looked at her with love.

Rae and Phil looked at each other. Finn had chosen Robin’s name and the understanding was that Phil would choose this child’s name; Rae didn’t want to name them, she always agonised for weeks over what to name characters in her books, naming her own child would really be too much.

“Dana.” Phil answered, “It’s from Danu, a Celtic goddess.”

“Unexpected.” Finn said, “I like it.”

“So was Robin.” Phil said with a grin.

“yeah but it suits him.” Finn answered, “And she’s definitely Dana.”

“Another unisex name.” Rae said. “At least they won’t have to change their names if they’re trans.” She noted, “If they don’t wanna.”

“What’s trans?” Robin asked.

“Uncle Ash is trans, remember?” Rae asked and Robin thought for a moment and then nodded.

“Yeah.”

A nurse came in on her rounds and checked their notes.

“Oh you were told it was a boy and then a girl came out!” She said jovially. “You’ll have to repaint the nursery from blue to pink!” Phil and Rae shared a look and Finn squeezed Rae’s hand, knowing she was unimpressed. The nurse looked at Robin and gave him a sympathetic look and patted him on the head gently, “You must be disappointed not to have a little brother.” She said
gently. Robin looked at her quizzically. “Little boys never like having sisters.” She grinned at him.

“Why?” Robin asked curiously while Finn squeezed Rae’s hand and gave Phil a ‘be nice’ look.

“Well you got no one to roughhouse with, or play sports with. Like who’s gonna play rugby with you?” Her tone was still sympathetic and kindly, but even Finn was about to tell her that maybe she should stop.

“I don’t like rugby.” Robin retorted loudly. But the nurse was undeterred.

“Oh well, she won’t be able to play any of the games you like.” She told him.

“Why won’t she?” Robin cocked his head to the side as if he had never heard of this preposterous idea before.

“Cos girls like to play dress ups and with dollies.” The nurse told him. Rae opened her mouth to reply that she didn’t want this kind of gendered brainwashing for her kids when Robin replied.

“So do I.”

“But different types of dress ups and dolls.” The nurse patiently explained.

“Why?” Robin asked, obviously halfway between not believing her and worried it was true.

“Oh girls are just made of different stuff.” The nurse waved her hands as if this explained everything.

“No they’re not.” Robin said firmly and then looked at Phil with real worry, “Are they?”

“No they’re not.” Phil reassured him, and then looked at the nurse, “It’s bad enough that every time he watches tv or goes out into the world we have to battle ridiculous notions of gender stereotypes, I refuse to paying you for the privilege of stuffing my daughter in a box before she’s even had chance to get to know herself even a tiny bit whilst simultaneously outright lying to my son. To robin all human are made of flesh and bones and blood and hair; all the same things, because that is the truth.” Robin nodded emphatically while his father spoke. Phil looked at Robin as he continued, “But lots of people have different life experiences and are raised differently or look differently and have different things they like or different abilities and it’s important that we what?”

“Respect everyone.” Robin answered.

“That’s right.” Phil answered, they’d get to not giving respect to bigots and bullies later on, for now, this was the main message, “No matter the gender of your little sibling, they might not wanna play with you, or they might want to. And you…?”

“Respect their right to choose.” Robin answered.

“You’re brilliant.” Phil told him.

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to overstep my bounds.” The nurse said with a tight and professional smile.

“It’s fine.” Rae answered, “We’re just trying to let our kids be who they wanna be regardless of their genitals.” She explained to the nurse.
“Finn-dad?” Robin turned to Finn.

“What’s up little munchkin?” Finn asked.

“What if I wanna be a girl?” He asked. The nurse cocked her eyebrows disapprovingly before she left. She figured she could sell her story to the tabloids though; these kids were gonna be messed up in her opinion.

“Then you can be a girl, that fine.” Finn answered, “And if you don’t wanna be either, or if you wanna be both, you can do that too. You feel like you’re a boy right now?” Finn asked and Robin put on his best thinking face.

“Yeah.”

“Alright then, you’re a boy.” Finn declared. Robin jumped on the bed exuberantly and both men instantly reached out to keep him still.

“Don’t jump on your mum!” They both said and Robin looked horror-struck and like he might cry.

“It’s alright baby.” Rae soothed him and opened up her other arm for him to hug up to her, so she had one of her children in each arm. “I just had to have surgery.”

“Why?”

“Cos they had to get your little sister out o’ me.” Rae answered.

“Why?”

“Cos she couldn’t stay in there.”

“Why?”

“Cos she were too big!” Rae answered, Finn and Phil settled in for a long game of ‘why?’ – Robin could outlast all of them when he started to ask them why, but they all tried to go for as long as they could until they had no more answers. Then they’d turn to google. But by then, Robin would grow bored.

“Why?”

“Cos she a growing lass.” Rae said.

“Why?”

“For the same reason you’re a growing boy.” Rae said, and Finn and Phil simply waited until it was their turn. They loved encouraging this enthusiasm in him.

“Why?”

*20th of December.” Archie said looking at Dan, “You poor girl. No one will remember your birthday, it’ll be swallowed by Christmas.” He looked around at all of the gang and family sitting at the table in Rae, Finn and Phil’s house for Christmas lunch. Rae wasn’t able to do much and was so glad that Linda was staying with them; she and Karim had done most of the cooking, even though they didn’t really do Christmas anymore. Rae hadn’t really done Christmas until she’d had Robin. She wanted him to see Christmas trees and Christmas lights, but they tried to avoid the
mass consumerism involved and focussed on the family aspect.

“Don’t listen to him you precious baby.” Tom said and took Dana, “We’ll make sure that doesn’t happen.” He stared at Dana lovingly, “I can see Rae in her. Look at those perfect genes. We’d make beautiful babies girl.” Tom said to her. Archie sighed and gave Rae an apologetic look; Tom was back to wanting a baby with Rae now that she’d had one with Finn. But Rae shook her head; it was ok, she understood Tom’s desire to have a second child.

Rae looked around at Finn and Phil bustling in and out of the kitchen, two of their security guards in aprons helping out. They were payed well and had been offered the day off, but had declined; the pay was very good on Christmas day. This was the most people they’d ever had to a Christmas luncheon, but it was doubling as a kind of name-giving ceremony for Dana. Rae sighed, already Dana’s birthday and Christmas were getting mingled together. Rae looked up at her men working hard and tried not to feel guilty; she couldn’t really do much because she was still healing after the Caesarean. Even if she could do much, there was no way her men would allow it. It’d be another few weeks before they eased up on the ‘rest’ mantra; Dr Jackson had been very clear that she need a lot of rest to heal well. And Rae was trying to follow doctor’s orders.

* 

Rae woke up with a start.

There was no nightmare.

No crying.

No night time noises.

Everything was silent.

“Fuck.” Rae scrambled out of bed, scooting to the bottom of the bed, because she still slept in the middle. She ran down the hallway to Dana’s room.

She was utterly still and silent.

Rae crept in, trying not to let her fear get the better of her.

She knew.

She knew Dana was not a crier.

But still, the long silent nights terrified her.

She put a hand near Dana’s mouth and felt the soft breath against her skin.

“Oh thank god.” Rae whispered. “You are gonna be the death o’ me girl.” At first Rae had been so thankful that Dana slept through the night at just 4 weeks. But now she kept getting terrified that Dana was dead and that’s why she was so silent.

She was the complete opposite of Robin, who had cried until Rae thought she’d pull her hair out.

Dana never cried. She grumbled if her nappy was full, and whined if she was hungry, and whimpered if she was scared or upset in some way. But she never cried.

Rae sat down in the rocking chair and watched her sleep for a few minutes. She didn’t know which was worse: crying or silence.
Strong

Chapter Summary

content warning - miscarriage

‘Strong’ by London grammar

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6drfp_3823I

Yeah, I might seem so strong. Yeah, I might speak so long.

I've never been so wrong.

This city was never quiet. Not really. But somehow she found it peaceful when it was 4 in the morning.

Sometimes she just couldn’t sleep.

So she’d slip out of the house and walk. Sometimes security would follow her, sometimes she’d slip past them without being noticed. She didn’t mind either way.

She knew she shouldn’t feel safe in the middle of the night in London. But she felt safer now than in the middle of the day, with all those eyes on her.

It was hard; she craved time with her family. But she felt like something inside of her had died. Some light had been snuffed out forever. So alone time was some kind of blessed relief from having to pretend that it hadn’t been.

Rhys had told her that sometimes when something terrible happens it never left us, we just learn to live with it.

She understood that now.

For how terrible she had known the world to be, she had managed to hold onto that light inside of her. Perhaps it had been hope, or a naïve belief that it wasn’t as bad as it seemed, or the notion that there was intrinsic goodness at the core of everyone…

That was gone.

She was more cynical now. More on edge. She questioned people’s motives more. She trusted less.

And she hated crowds.

She’d never been overly fond of them. But now that the whole world knew what had happened to her; had seen the pictures…

She found it hard to look in some people’s eyes. It had taken her some time to really feel
comfortable looking in Phil and Finn’s eyes. But stranger’s eyes – she could barely stand to look at their faces. All these people walking past her in the night couldn’t tell it was her. But in the day time… She could see that moment in their eyes, that moment of knowing what had happened, of considering it, of seeing the pictures, of wondering how it affected her… the pity. And sometimes she saw hostility, like they were wondering what she did to bring it on, like she deserved it.

Sometimes she felt like she had deserved it. But she always managed to stop that thought from getting too much of a hold on her.

Rae stood, looking at the city lights, her hands in her pockets, fog streaming from her mouth every time she exhaled.

She knew she had to head home soon; Dana would want feeding at about 5.

But she lingered, hiding for a moment longer in the anonymity of the night.

* 

“She’s just so beautiful.” Kenzie cooed with deliriously happy tears in her eyes, holding onto her grand-daughter for dear life.

Finn sucked his teeth silently, trying not to be moody. He was trying to not be pissed off at how involved in Dana’s life his mother wanted to be. Part of him was annoyed because she had abandoned him as a child, and part of him wanted her to be in Dana’s life, and another part of him was thankful for the part she had played in bringing Rae home and was thus inclined to give her whatever she wanted. Phil looked on, his arms crossed across his chest, one hand against his mouth, hiding his mixed emotions. Finn had already ranted about this; he had also pointed out Kenzie’s obvious favouritism for Dana over Robin, and that was the real crime in Finn’s eyes. Phil had not noted the same favouritism in his own mother, she was pleased that she was permitted to see her grandchildren at all, the paternity of them mattered little if her son called them his children. Phil had a feeling that she knew she was skating on thin ice no matter what she did; any sign of her becoming abusive or manipulative and she would be cut from their lives. Phil would not have their children be subject to the same abuse he suffered, so he was always watching his mother closely.

“Beauty isn’t everything.” Robin said solemnly. Phil’s hand dropped from his mouth, a huge grin on his face as he turned to look at Robin.

“That’s right.” Phil told Robin, “There is so much more to a person than the way they look.” Robin nodded as if he had taken in every word and then pointed at the door to the kitchen.

“Mummy?” He asked permission to leave them to go find his mother.

“Sure thing kiddo.” Finn said and Robin ran out of the room to go to Rae, making tea for everyone in the kitchen. It used to be Finn’s job to make tea for everyone since he undisputedly made the best tea. But it was understood that sometimes Rae was overwhelmed by visitors and needed a moment to get her breath. So she made the tea nowadays.

“Go’ he’s brilliant.” Gary marvelled, “He learns everything you teach him so well.”

“We haven’t said those words to him yet.” Phil said, trying not to be overly proud. He knew he had to fight the parts of him that were too like his own father. His father’s pride in his own and his children’s intelligence had been a source of abuse in Phil’s household growing up.

“He got that by himself?” Gary said in awe.
“It appears so.” Phil responded.


“Don’t call her a baked bean!” She corrected him, her eyes not leaving her grand daughter.

“Well it’s not a competition da.” Finn said, his eyes wandering over to Phil. They might have made out while bickering over the brilliance of their kids this morning. It had been a joke, each father claiming that their genes were clearly best and had been passed on to their kid; neither of them truly felt that way, and both claimed both kids as theirs... But Rae had been horrified and had asked them what their children might think if they had heard such talk.

“Aye, you’re right o’ course.” Gary was still too swept up in Dana to really hear it. “Go’ but she does look like Gracie did.” He breathed sadly.

“Yeah.” Kenzie sad, halfway between sadness and happiness. “She’s so beautiful.” Phil took Finn’s hand and squeezed it; Grace, Finn’s sister, may have died when he was very young, but it was still a difficult topic for Finn.

“Alrighty, I got green tea for Kenzie, black tea for the Nelson men, earl grey for Philly and chamomile for myself.” She said as she put the cups down. It had become a habit for her to name the things she was putting on the table when she had been a waitress. One she had not shaken yet.

“Thank you dear.” Kenzie said, her eyes still on Dana. Robin, who had followed Rae in, climbed up to sit on her lap. She held him as everyone settled in to drink tea and make small talk.

Rae looked around, feeling a warm glow in her chest. She really did love her family so much. She felt so happy in this moment.

She settled back in the chair and listened contently to the chatter. Robin lolled back on her, humming another tune she’d never heard before.

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“I love my kids, but I am so glad that Rhys is such an active father!” Chloe laughed as they watched their three men and the children playing on the huge play ground Phil and Finn had installed for the kids. There had already been a slide and jungle gym for kids near the front door when they had moved in, so they had just expanded on that and replaced the unsafe parts of the structure.

“Oh I know.” Rae gently rocked Dana, who was slowly falling asleep in her bassinet. “Sometimes you just need a break.” She said softly, “Don’t have the energy.”

“You’re not feeling depressed are you babe?” Chloe asked gently, her eyes searching Rae’s face.

“No.” Rae sighed, “But I’m not... I’m not as happy as I should be either.”

“And how happy should you be?” Chloe asked, her expression clearly reminding Rae that the word ‘should’ was evil.

“I’m just…” Rae struggled to find the words. “I dunno if I’ll ever be able to get it out o’ me head.” Rae almost whispered. “I just feel so... numb sometimes.” Chloe heard the crack in Rae’s voice and knew she was fighting back tears.
“That’s normal Rae.” Chloe soothed.

“That’s normal Rae.” Rae said softly. “I mean… I’m ok, I’m not depressed or suicidal or self-harming… I have a beautiful family I’m so grateful for, and I’m happy here with them… but something’s changed inside of me Chloe. And I just… I don’t think I’ll ever get it back.” Rae wiped her eyes fiercely, “And I want it back. I wanna be how I was before all o’ this happened. Before he…” Rae lowered her face and took a deep breath to try and calm herself.

“Well you won’t ever be.” Chloe said with a firm, compassionate tone, “You’ll never be the same Rae. What he did to you has changed you forever.”

“I know. And I hate him for that. For taking who I was away from me. What would my life have been like if I had never met Saul Hudson?” Rae wept, “And I’m scared… Cos what does it all mean now? And Kester’s gone so…” Rae took another breath and tried to get herself under control, “I know I’m still me but… I don’t know this me like I used to know myself. Who am I now?”

“You’re Rae Earl. Just as you always were.” Chloe said, “You are all the things you were before. But now you’re a survivor too.” Chloe said with deep empathy.

“I keep just wanting to go back to how I was… wanting this to be over. To be cured…. Over it. Now.” Rae said miserably. “But I know…” She shook her head, hopelessly. “I know I’ll never be over it. But I keep asking myself why I’m taking so fucking long to get over it.”

“It’s been 22 years since I was raped Rae.” Chloe said gently, “And I still have moments when… I feel it again and…” She shook her head. “This will always be a part of me. I’ll always be a survivor now. And being a survivor… it’s powerful. You should be proud of yourself.” Rae furrowed her brows, she didn’t understand Chloe’s reasoning. “I’m so proud of myself Rae.” Chloe took her hands, “Those men, they tried to reduce us into nothingness. And no matter how hard they tried, we prevailed. We rose above; we survived. Nothing can ever take that from us. We know without any doubt just how powerful and strong we are. Being a woman in this fucking world requires strength. Every single one of us is powerful beyond measure. But so many of us will never know it. But being a survivor… We know, even if we doubt it. We know that to survive what was done to us… We are real life superheroes.” Chloe said immutably. “And having those men try to reduce us… it shows us just how much this whole world tries to reduce us; into our productivity, our job, our genitals, our clothing, our religion, our skin colour, our sexuality, our status, the names we’re given; mother, sister, daughter… The world likes things, especially women, to be simple… stripping away our identity. And being a survivor can feel like just another one-dimensional label that people slap on rape victims so they don’t have to actually see us… But it can be so much more than that Rae. It can be the thing you use to complicate things, to un-reduce your identity. It can be a source of power and strength for the fight against this rape culture we live in.” Chloe scooted closer, wanting Rae to rise her eyes and look at her. “Own your survivorship Rae, don’t be ashamed of what happened to you. It’s not your fault, and you are still Rae Earl, just as you always were, no matter what he did, and no matter who knows about it.” Chloe watched as Rae sniffed, tears dripping down her face, her eyes lowered. “I know you’ve lost faith in this world Rae, in humanity. But I want you to take that faith that this world doesn’t deserve anymore, and put it into yourself.” Rae’s eyes raised to Chloe’s eyes. “Have faith in yourself Rae. You deserve it.”

* 

Rae sat nursing Dana, grinning at Phil and Robin on the piano; Robin was tinkering away at the keys, clearly creating his own song. Finn was at the computer hub tapping away, doing work on
his station, organising interviews and unearthing new bands.

This was happiness.

She felt peaceful and content and safe.

Dana would be turning 6 months old in 2 weeks, and knowing her men, they’d have a mini-party for the family to celebrate the milestone.

“No daddy, that doesn’t sound as good as this.” Robin tinkered at some notes and Phil listened.

“That’s brilliant, what about this?” He played a few notes and Robin squealed delightedly, nodding happily.

“That’s good daddy!”

Rae looked down at Dana’s face as she gently suckled. Robin had been an eager feeder, but Dana was slow and ponderous. She sometimes seemed to get distracted while on the breast. Rae enjoyed noticing the differences between her two babies.

Her phone chimed; someone had texted. She ignored it and kept looking down at Dana. She always took much longer to feed than Robin had. But she was patient, even though she was feeling a little nauseous, and she would wait for her to be done in her own time.

Her phone chimed again and Rae looked at it, on the coffee table. She decided to leave it; if it was important, they’d call.

“I’ve got Alex Turner coming on the station again.” Finn declared happily. “Just gotta figure out who’s best to interview him…” He started to mumble and go over his roster of employees. Phil and Rae shared a grin before turning back to the children. They both loved how much Finn enjoyed his work.

Rae furrowed her brow s her phone started ringing. She sighed and leaned forward, holding Dana steady as she grabbed the phone.

“What d’you want Archer?” Rae asked.

“Put on the news.” He answered.

“Finn, put on the news.” Rae asked and Finn got up and put it on, standing to the side to watch. Phil turned to see what was on.

“The police seized their children unlawfully. My clients have done nothing wrong. This trumped up nonsense of endangering their children by causing them to watch a sexual act is ridiculous!” Chloe was speaking passionately.

“Archie, Chloe’s been on the telly loads o’ times-”

“Just wait.” Archie ordered.

“Our children walked in on them having sex!” Chloe was continuing, “I dread to think of how many parents would have their children essentially abducted by the police tomorrow if we were going to take all the children who had accidentally seen their parents making love.”

“I didn’t even know they could just take kids like that…?” Finn asked with concern.
“Police can use a 72 hour protection order to remove them if they think they’re in imminent danger.” Phil said, “I looked into the laws when we had Robin.” Phil answered, “Because we’re poly I thought it was more likely that—”

“These children were only taken because my clients are in a polyamorous relationship!” Chloe concluded and ended the interview.

* 

Rae could hear talking as she came up the hallway. She paused at the door of Dana’s room and listened.

“Horsies don’t really go neigh.” Robin said in a matter of fact tone. “They make a kinda snorting sound.” Robin continued, “Someone has to tell you these things Dana.” Rae cracked into a grin and put her hand over her mouth. “I’m your big brother, so I’ll always tell you these things.” Rae peeked around the corner and saw Robin, standing on the toy box, leaning over Dana’s crib, gently stroking her face. He had obviously pushed the toy box over to the crib and Rae shook her head; she’d have to talk to him about safety. But she couldn’t help but watch for a moment longer as he kept talking to his baby sister. “Mummy and daddies try to hide it, but sometimes there’s monsters. One of them hurt mummy. But I protected her. And I’ll protect you.” Rae saw Robin’s night light, this one had been a Jack Frost one. He had already plugged it in and turned it on for her. “And Santa doesn’t exist. Don’t tell the other kids.” Robin nodded, “or mummy and daddies; they still believe in him.” He nodded solemnly as he imparted his wisdom onto the silent baby. Rae could see that her eyes were open, looking up at her big brother. “And orange juice doesn’t taste as nice as oranges.” He said knowingly, as if telling her a great conspiracy. “And there’s other stuff I’ll tell you when you’re bigger. You’re too little now.”

“Alright jelly bean.” Rae said as she came in the room, “No moving toy boxes around like that, alright? It’s not safe.”

“Ok.” He answered and looked back at his sister.

“You love her very much.” Rae said and Robin nodded. “She loves you too.”

“I know.” Robin turned his beautiful blue eyes to her, “She smiles to me.”

“You’re gonna have a lot to teach her.” Rae said.

“Cos I’m bigger.” Robin answered, obviously taking his responsibility very seriously.

“But she’ll still have stuff to teach you.”

“Cos she’s a girl.” Robin said. Rae paused and then nodded, wondering how he had figured that out. “Girls are kinda the same as me, but also different.” He said slowly, obviously still figuring it out in his head, “It won’t be the same for her.” He furrowed his brows, clearly only partly grasping what he was saying, and it seemed to frustrate him.

“Yes.” Rae agreed, “The world will treat you and her differently.” She sat down in the rocking chair and Robin came to sit on her lap, “But even if the world treated boys and girls, and other genders the same, she’d still see things differently because she’s a different person to you. She’s not the same as you. No one is like you. And no one is like her.” Robin looked over at Dana’s crib and nodded.

“She’s special.” He said in an understanding tone.
“So are-” Rae began to say that he was special too, but Robin cut her off.

“And I’m special.”

“That’s right.” Rae agreed.

“And you’re special.” He twisted in her lap to look at her.

“Yes.” Rae agreed, although she hadn’t been feeling it lately.

“You are.” Robin said louder. He held her eyes for a moment before turning back to Dana.

“She’ll want food soon.”

“Aye.” Rae agreed, giving Robin a tight hug. He always took her emotional moments well and hugged her back without a word.

“I meant not milk.” He said and Rae gave a slight laugh; she’d been thinking that Dana would probably start some other foods soon. Rae had kept Robin on the breast until he’d lost interest in it. She’d do the same with Dana, slowly introducing foods until that was her only food. Rae trusted her children to know what they wanted in this regard. Some would say that was foolish. But after a lifetime of being told what she was supposed to eat from the womb until today had ruined her relationship with food, she wasn’t going to do that to her children. She never told them what to eat or how much or when. She ate healthily in front of them, and let them eat when they were hungry. Sometimes Robin would only eat one meal in a day, and sometimes he’d eat half a dozen. His paediatrician had been concerned at first, but Robin was bright, happy and healthy, and had no hang ups about food. The paediatrician had noted that he was starting to see girls as young as 4 and 6 worrying about fat content in food. Their house was filled with healthy food, very little processed food, and a garden of fresh fruit and vegetables. Robin knew he could eat whenever he wanted, and he did. Trusting her children from the first day of their life had allowed Robin to trust his own hunger cues, and this was shown by his heavy eating always coming before a bit of a growth spurt. Rae could not imagine what his eating would be like when he was a teenager; he’d probably clean them out every time he had a growth spurt coming on. Rae had been anxious about not controlling Robin’s eating when he had been born; but she had been determined to do it differently than it had been done in her life.

“Aye I think so.” Rae agreed. Dana had been showing an interest in watching them eat.

“Will she have apple first. Like I did?” He asked.

“You remember that?” Rae asked in disbelief.

“You do mummy.” Robin answered, again turning his eyes to her.

“You remember it cos I do?” Rae asked and he nodded. Rae felt a slight shiver down her spine. Chloe had warned her that kids sometimes did and said creepy things, but Robin did seem to be psychic sometimes. “I’ll prob’ly give her apple first.” Rae told him, nodding and deciding to just enjoy the moment instead of thinking about all the creepy children stories she’d heard.


“That’s right.” Rae nodded, “When she’s ready.”

“She won’t like pumpkin.” Robin said, “Cos she’s not like me.”

“Well we’ll wait and see.” Rae looked up at Dana, her dark brown eyes, looking almost black,
were on her, staring at them. “I’m sure she’ll tell us what she likes.”

“Aye.” Robin said and Rae grinned. That was the first time he’d said that. She couldn’t wait to tell her men.

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Rae sat in the café. It was a Sunday lunch time ritual, began when the children first started being born; whichever ladies could make it out of the house on Sunday for lunch, would meet at this café. Emails and texts would fly around on Saturday night, seeing who could and couldn’t make it. It was a nice way to get all the mothers out of the house, away from work, and spending time with the girls regularly.

But today no one could make it. Except Rae. So she’d decided to come alone. She really liked the fish in parsley sauce they served. And she could stand to spend some time alone.

She was loving having two children, but she still needed time to herself; something that she often struggled to find now. Dana would be turning 6 months old tomorrow, everyone was coming over, and her mum would be staying for a week after that.

So Rae intended to sit and eat slowly, perusing a good book, earphones in, luxuriating in this much needed alone time.

Rae picked up the menu to see what else she wanted to have with her fish. She hummed along quietly, her elbow resting on the table, the sun shining in through the window.

And there was a tap on her shoulder. Rae sighed silently and turned to see a concerned looking middle aged woman, speaking. Rae held up her hand and pulled out her earphones.

“Yes?” She asked the woman.

“Hi Mrs Earl… I’m so sorry to just come up to you like this…” The woman looked anxious and excited. “But I just wanted to say that it’s terrible what happened to you. And then the pictures all over the place, just dreadful.” Her eyes were filled with compassion. “I feel for you dear.” She reached out and put a hand on Rae’s arm. But Rae recoiled.

“What makes you think I wanna hear about it again?” Rae asked, “Them pictures being published was like getting raped again but this time in front of a fucking audience of millions.” Rae shook her head, “What purpose could forcing me think about it again possibly serve, other than to make you feel better? People like you, just asking victims about what happened, or trying to talk to us about it… You just want the chance to be the special one who showed the compassion and made the victim break down and got the tears and juicy details.” The woman looked at Rae, utterly aghast, “just want your piece of trauma porn.”

“How dare-? I never!” The woman was stunned, “This is what I get for trying to be kind to one of you lot! All the things the tabloids say about you are true!” She spat angrily and stormed off.

Rae took a deep breath and looked away, back out the window. She took another deep breath and tried to look back down at the menu. But the day was ruined now. The whole week was.

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Rae had followed the case; Chloe had filed charges for compensation for the poly parents who had had their children removed. She had gotten the kids returned to their family before the end of the 72 hour hold, but they were having ongoing visits from social services, the kids had been identified
as being ‘at risk’ and there was a threat over the family that the kids could be taken again at any moment. Chloe was demanding that the visits stop, that all files being kept about the family by social services in regards to children being ‘at risk’ be destroyed, and that compensation be paid. Needless to say it was a huge case now, and had been in court for many weeks.

Rae had sat in court a few times, but she didn’t go too often because her anxiety regarding crowds had not lessened, and this case was producing protests and a massive media circus outside of the courthouse.

The parents were 3 women and 1 man, there had been another man until last year when he had died from cancer. There were 7 children, with a set of triplets in amongst the rabble. Rae had met them, they were happy, healthy children, traumatised by this ridiculousness. The youngest children hadn’t even known that there was something ‘wrong’ or different about their family until this had happened.

Rae had sat through hours of character assassination on 4 perfectly fine parents. And she felt afraid of what this meant for her family. If things like this were allowed to happen… What could happen to them?

Rae looked over to her security guard, sitting beside her silently. She wondered if he would testify against them if it came to it.

But Chloe was on fire, and Rae had faith in her abilities to stop this injustice.

When a recess was called, Rae decided she couldn’t watch any more of this; it was too scary and depressing at the same time.

Rae got up and headed out to the media scrum and protesters outside. She’d already made several statements about this trial being about putting people’s lives and choices on trial and in support of the family. She was in no mood for talking to anyone from the media today. The fact that the poly relationship in question here was one man and 3 women had gotten half the media comparing it to cults and the other half declaring that they were a secret cult where the women were brainwashed and the children abused. Rae knew that those type of poly relationships existed. But as she had said to the media when she’d been asked if cults were a good reason to ban poly relationships: every group of people has wankers in it, being in a mono relationship doesn’t mean no one is in a cult or being abused. People used to say the same kind of thing about gay marriage, and now that was legal, she’d reasoned.

She was tired of her humanity and human rights being up for debate because of the people she loved.

She was tired of people thinking that respect and dignity only belonged to certain people that fit their thin definition of worthy.

She was tired. She’d been fighting all her life. And now she was a mother of two; she didn’t have as much energy for trying to convince people that she deserved to be treated with basic human decency.

Dana was almost 8 months old, Robin was 5 years old now, her next book was about to be released, Phil was thinking of retuning to work and Finn’s station continued to grow bigger. She had enough on her plate; she didn’t want to argue with journalists today, even though this was a poly family, and she was on their side. Today she was just too tired.

“Can you say a buttload of ‘no comment’ for me Jonah?” She asked her guard. He gave her a fond
smile and nodded.

“Did you know that buttload is an actual measurement, Ma’am?” Jonah asked, Rae shook her head and grinned at his easy mannerisms, tempered by his military training. “For wine and other types of alcohol. I hear it’s the same as 2 hogsheads.”

“Oh right?” Rae asked shaking her head.

“Which is just under 240 litres.” He added as he opened the doors out of the courthouse for her, already starting to move in to get closer to her, to protect her from the crowd.

“Good to know.” Rae said as she took in the mess of people waiting outside.

The protestors were screeching at each other; a small group in support of poly relationships and a massive crowd against them, most of them were overtly religious in their opposition, and some of them claiming that Muslims and their polygamy were not welcome on their huge signs.

Rae sighed; the show of bigotry on display was breathtaking.

The pro-poly people were a mishmash of different people from different walks of life, not all of them poly themselves, some of them religious, some of them not, all of them appalled that there weren’t more of them here.

Rae was thinking of asking Phil or Finn to come to help bolster the crowd size on their side. But then she really didn’t want to play into this whole cluster-fuck. This situation should have never happened.

Rae started to head out towards where she had parked the car, a block and a half away.

Journalists started to yell questions at her.

“No comment.” Jonah replied, using his body to shield her from their jostling as they walked. The pro-poly protestors cheered her, and then the anti-poly protestors started to yell at her. “Shit.” Jonah said with real concern as the protestors started to head over towards them.

“Some of the grandparents of the children have declared the situation to be unhealthy and against the word of god, what is your response?” A journalist tried to shove a microphone in her face but Jonah pushed his hand away.

“Are you expecting the outcome of the trial to be a positive one for your community?”

“No comment.”

“Do you support cults that have polygamous relationships?”

“NO COMMENT!” Jonah answered and put his arm over her shoulders, hustling her away from them as best he could. Rae put her head down and watched the pavement go by as they walked through the scrum of journalists, the yelling of the protestors getting louder.

“Are the children really happy and healthy or are you lying for them because they’re poly?”

“No comment.”

“Why would the police take the children unless there was a genuine emergency?”

“No comment.”
“What about reports of sexual abuse; the children are forced to watch pornography?” This was the story making the rounds, rather than the truth; one of the kids had walked in on their parents having sex and had then drawn that in school the next day, prompting her teacher, who had attended the anti-poly rallies every day, to call the police.

“No comment.”

“Are your own children abused, given that child abuse seems to be the norm in poly households?”

“That’s verging on slander!” Jonah hissed at the journalist, “And no comment.”

“YOU’RE SCUM!” The protesters had caught up. Jonah jostled Rae through the crowd as carefully as he could.

“IT'S YOUR FAULT THAT THOSE KIDS WERE RAPEP BY THEIR PARENTS!” Rae took another deep breath as the protestors screamed at her.

“Do you take responsibility for the increase in acceptance of poly relationships?”

“No comment.”

“Is it your fault that these children are being abused?”

“No comment.”

“GOD WILL PUNISH YOU!”

“FAT BITCH!”

Rae wrapped her arms around herself.

“YOU DESERVED TO BE RAPEP FOR WHAT YOUR KIND DO TO KIDS!”

“Why is child abuse more prevalent in poly households?”

“No comment.”

“YOU’RE FILTHY SCUM!”

The crowd surged, pushing Rae forward, Jonah’s strong arm catching her before she fell, but the crowd had surrounded them now, cameras, journalists as caught up in the violence of the screaming protestors. But the protestors only had eyes for Rae.

“YOU’RE GONNA BURN IN HELL!” One of the men tore at her clothes, trying to get to her through Jonah’s protective warding.

“BACK OFF!” Jonah yelled over the top of them. Another person pulled Rae’s hair, reefing out a handful and making Rae cry out in pain. The crowd surged in closer, a camera hit Rae in the head and sirens were wailing.

“KIDDY RAPER!” The women who screamed that punched out at Rae. There were dozens of hands clawing at her, pulling at her hair and clothes, scratching her skin. Rae tried to push through the crowd with Jonah, tried not to cry.

“YOU’RE TRASH!”
“FUCKING SLAG!”

“PAEDOPHILE!”

Jonah started punching out at the people screaming and clawing at Rae.

The crowd pressed in on her, surging back and forth as police spoke over megaphones, trying to disperse the mob.

The journalists weren’t shooting questions at her anymore, they were too busy trying to survive the violence of the mob themselves now.

Rae’s hair was yanked, harder than before and she fell back, the crowd grabbing hold of her, punching and tearing at her. Jonah grabbed her hand desperately, pulling as hard as he could to get her out of the crowd.

Rae screamed in fright and pain as the crowd attacked her, screaming insults and accusations and damnations at her.

Rae felt the air forced out of her lungs by a heavy blow to her stomach and doubled over, grasping her stomach as she finally fell to the floor, the crowd letting her fall. And now it was their feet instead of their hands on her. Someone stomped her arm, kicked her back, her stomach, her head.

Rae’s head was spinning, consciousness threatening to leave her when she felt her clothes being torn brutally and her mind jolted violently to a basement that she had tried not to think about for so long. But before her shirt tore completely off her there was an arm around her waist, pulling her up to her feet. She looked out amongst the crowd and saw police officers hitting and grabbing people, people were screaming and scattering. But Jonah had her. He was bleeding from the nose, lip and eyebrow; he’d need stitches. But he had her.

He shoved someone out of their way, and pushed through the panicked crowd, shoulder barging people when he had to, Rae half dragged in his arms.

They broke free of the crowd and hurried up the road. Rae looked over her shoulder at the protestors being broken up; most were fleeing from the cops, but some were fighting.

“You’re bleeding.” Jonah said in a horrified voice as they neared her car

“So are you.” Rae answered as Jonah helped her into the back seat of the car.

“We’re going to the hospital.” He nodded towards Rae’s lap and she scrunched her brows at him and looked down.

She felt a stab of fear as she saw the blood on the crotch of her jeans. Her post-natal bleeding had stopped months ago, and she wasn’t expecting a period any time soon.

“Oh fuck.” She whispered.

Jonah got into the front of the car, dialling on his phone as he started the engine.

“You’re going to need to bring Finn and Phil to the hospital, yep, St Thomas.” He clicked the phone off and drove towards St Thomas hospital.

Rae cradled her stomach, feeling winded and like she was still getting kicked; she was in pain, and in the back of her mind she started to understand what was happening to her.
“Impossible.” She whispered to herself. Jonah was calling ahead to the hospital and didn’t hear her.

It didn’t take Jonah long to get her to the hospital, and almost immediately doctors and nurse were there, getting her onto a bed.

By the time Phil and Finn managed to get there, Rae had been discharged and was sitting with Jonah in the car, staring at the floor, not able to say anything.

When they got there, Jonah departed to be chewed out by his boss and Phil and Finn crawled into the back seat of the car.

“Where’s Robin and Dana?” She asked, almost numb.

“Kels came over to look after them.” Phil answered; his sister was always willing to drop everything and play aunt. “She says they can stay at her place tonight if we need…” H stopped.

“What happened?” Finn could see bruising along the side of her face where the camera had hit her.

“I’m sure the media will be playing it all day.” Rae answered bitterly.

“Rae…” Finn asked softly.

“Apparently I was 2 months pregnant.” Rae said without looking at either of them.

“Was…” Phil said softly, understanding what she was saying.

“I didn’t know I was pregnant, so it doesn’t mean anything right?” Rae tried to convince herself, her arms wrapping around her stomach tighter. Phil put his arm around her shoulders, Finn wrapped his around her waist and they moved in closer to hold her as the tears started to come. “It’s not like we needed a third anyway.” She tried to be strong, to be brave. But the images of that angry crowd attacking her kept playing in her mind, and a loss she could barely even begin to understand was eating away at her resolve. She broke down into sobs.

The guards stood outside, all of them having been appraised of the situation, all of them purposefully averting their gazes. Except for Jonah, who looked on with furrowed brows; he had failed her, he had gotten his lecture, and a pay cut for a month. He would probably have his assignment changed too; be sent to another family. His boss, Kiera, was paid to hire and fire the guards that protected the Nelson household, so it was her decision, her company, her contract. He didn’t really want to leave this family; they were good people. He wished he hadn’t sign a non-disclosure contract, he’d go to the press and tell-all, about what a good, loving and healthy family this was. After the things that had been yelled at Rae today, he had half made up his mind to do it anonymously. He wouldn’t say anything that would betray their trust or invade their privacy. But he wanted to protect this little family.

Rae felt an empty ache in her chest, an ache for a loss of something she hadn’t even known she’d had. She wept while Phil kissed her temple and whispered soothing words to her about how she was safe now and Finn stroked her face, kissing her cheek gently.

“Don’t explain the bruises an’ the cast.” Finn prodded gently.

“There was a mob at the court.” Rae answered. “I got a broken wrist. Again.” Rae sniffed, “Two broken ribs, bruised kidneys.” She took a deep breath, “And… I gotta go back in a bit to make sure everything’s… evacuated proper.” Rae put her hands over her face, “I can’t do this.” She whispered, “Everything was just starting to get good again.”
It was Finn’s turn to whisper soothing things to her about how strong she was. Phil looked out the window at Jonah, standing still, erect and stoic, his eyes scanning the surroundings, stitches above his eyebrow. Phil would talk to Keira about making sure he wasn’t reassigned; he had done his best and had managed to get Rae out of there. But they all obviously needed more guards.

“I wanna go home and hug Robin and Dana.” Rae croaked through her tears.

“Yeah, I’ll drive.” Phil said and climbed out of the car. Finn buckled up his and Rae’s seatbelts and took her into his arms while Phil appraised security of what was happening now and what would need to happen in the future.

They drove home in silence, each of them caught up in their own thoughts and feelings.

After clinging to her children for several minutes, Rae had a shower and cried.

“It’s all over the news.” Kelsey said, flicking through the channels, Dana asleep in her arms. Phil sat next to her while Finn made food with Robin in the kitchen.

“Oh god.” Phil said in horror when Kelsey stopped on a channel and he finally saw just how violent the crowd had gotten.

“It could have been so much worse.” Kelsey agreed with his tone of voice. “Someone was trampled to death.”

“Fuck.” He breathed and shook his head. And then images of Rae and Jonah escaping from the crowd, a blood patch growing over the back of her jeans where shown while the reporter speculated that she was miscarrying.

“There’s already people saying she shouldn’t be having kids anyway cos poly relationships are abusive relationships.”

“Oh for gods sake.” Phil was exasperated, “I thought we’d gotten past this.”

“People supported 3 consenting adults doing whatever they wanted, but not the inclusion of kids.” Kelsey answered, “You guys have had a new fight to fight for 5 years now, and you’ve been ignoring it.” She looked down at Dana, “Which is why Sarah’s been going nuts all the time, and wanting to show Robin off as much as possible; to show he’s a happy healthy kid.”

“People really think that having more adults in the house means kids are getting abused?” Phil asked Kelsey and she shrugged.

“People assume that people who aren’t mono and heteronormative are super highly-sexed.” Kelsey answered, “It’s been happening to bisexual people for forever; people, mono-sexual people, think they’re fucking around. And this is no different, monogamous people think the poly people are fucking around and straight people think queer people are deviant.” She explained, “So they think the kids are being raised in a highly sexual environment.”

“God why does everyone have such a problem with sex?” Phil shook his head, “People are so concerned that everyone has sex the same way they do, or else they’re freaks and you have to worry about kids around them.” He got up, too frustrated to sit still.

“Happens with gay men; lots of straights think they’re all paedophiles.” Kelsey sighed, “People are shit.”

*
Rae put the huge bunch of yellow roses on Kester’s grave and sat down, gently pulling at a weed and putting it in her pocket.

“I miss you.” She said softly. “Been a lot o’ shit lately. Some o’ it you already knew about, but… the way people are… I can’t go more than a few weeks without someone asking me about the rapes or Saul or… and then just last week I…” Rae stopped and stared at his gravestone. “I miscarried. I didn’t even know I were pregnant. But I still… I feel cold again. I can feel myself pulling away.” She sat in silence for some time, imaging what Kester might say to her. “I’m not going anywhere but.” She said eventually, “I’m glad I chose to walk through this life with those two men, and nothing’s gonna take that from me, and I know that we help each other through shit. That’s how it works. I just wish it weren’t my first instinct to run away when I feel so…” She shook her head, “I guess I’m afraid that I’m not loveable when I’m a bit of a emotional wreck like how I am now.” She paused, “So I guess these are the times when I really have to learn to love myself.” She understood. “It’s easy to love myself and be kind to me when I’m doing good, publishing books, on top o’ everything… but when I’m falling apart, when I’m crying and miserable… it’s harder to love meself… But this is when I need it most.” She took a deep breath. “it’s not them that loves me less when I’m like this. It’s me.” She could imagine Kester’s smile, the way he smoked, and later in life the way he gardened… “I still got so much to learn. And I s’pose that we only really stop learning when… when we die.”

She stayed for a few minutes longer, gently cleaning the gravestone, before she got up and left, her two security guards, Jonah and Ashanti, keeping a respectful distance the whole time.

“Hey Jonah, you up for the drive home?” She asked him as she walked up to him.

“Yes Ma’am.”

“Well I just gotta visit one more grave, then we’ll go yeah?”

“Alright.” He nodded and watched Rae protectively as she trudged further into the graveyard, searching out Tix’s stone.
Back It Up Boys / Breath Control

Chapter Summary

I finally got back to writing this series as part of the 31 say challenge (August 2017) -
this is day 20, a Never finished fic.
You can find the challenge on my AO3 page - there's a ficlet for every day this month
I'm hoping to put another chapter of this poly fic up next month (fingers crossed!)

‘Back It Up, Boys’ by Peaches
Sweet buns let me be your gun

AND / OR

‘Breath Control’ by Recoil - vid nsfw
Every woman has an itch and every nice girl secretly wants to switch...

I sat astride his chest.
‘It’s just a thrill,’ he said, as he relaxed on the dark, dark bed. ‘It's just breath control.’ He
whispered, ‘hold me here.’
|And I did and his head fell back.
He whispered, ‘Press harder’ and I did and his eyes rolled back.
It’s just breath control.
It's just... control.

The party was done, the kids were with Chloe and Rhys, Rae still wasn’t great with crowds, so
they were skipping the sex-club visit, and now they were alone and had headed downstairs, to the
‘lower ground floor’ as the real estate agent called it, or the basement, as anyone else would call it.
It had taken Rae a while to want to go underground into a basement again after what Saul had done
to her. But after a while, she had wanted to play in their ‘sex room.’ As Phil had suggested all
those years ago, they had converted the servant’s quarters, behind the underground garage, into a
sound proof, water proof, sex room. They also had turned one of the huge storage cupboards down
there into a storage area for all of their sexy clothes and toys. Both rooms were padlocked, the
keys were stored in their bedroom on the highest shelf in the wardrobe.

Finn and Phil grinned at her; it was still a tradition that whoever’s birthday it was, was the dom, or
rather, the domme, today. So they were waiting for her.

“The big 4-0.” Finn chuckled.

“Shurrup, you got there first.” Rae laughed. She loved the way his eyes crinkled when he
laughed, the slightly thinning hair on his head, the slight wrinkles forming along his laugh lines.
Phil took his glasses off, a new addition this year, and Rae loved the way his hair was starting to
grey at the temples, the same crinkles along his laugh lines that they were all getting. She loved
that they enjoyed aging together.

“Aye but I still look good.” He teased.
“Aye we all do.” Rae answered. “You two go upstairs, I got some prep work to do…” She gave them a devilish grin then pointed at the door.

As soon as they were gone, Rae slipped in her strapless ‘strap-on’ dildo. It was new, she hadn’t shown it to them yet. It was kind of L shaped, with part of it sliding into her vagina, leaving the other part sticking out from between her thighs like a huge cock. This one was longer and thicker than her strap-on and she already knew how they’d both react to it. She put on her clit stimulator, a butterfly shaper vibrator that was held in place against her clit by a pair of sexy latex short shorts that buttoned at the front. Rae buttoned them around the dildo and grabbed the remote control for both sex toys. Both of them could vibrate at multiple speeds and pulses. Rae pre-set both of them to the settings she wanted first and slipped both of the small remotes into the tiny pockets on the back of her teeny tiny shiny black latex shorts.

She had lamented at first when her weight had first started coming back after what had happened all those years ago, but now she was glad to see her fuller figure back, she liked how her thighs looked poking out from under these tight shorts.

She sat down, enjoying the feel of the other end of the strapless dildo, as she was now mentally calling it, inside of her.

“Forty.” She sighed, “And still a slut!” She laughed at herself and got up to look through the clothes they kept down here.

She looked through her sexy tops, a black latex singlet cut very low, red corsets, black corsets, corsets of every colour and material… lacy things, see through things, bikini type tops; everything imaginable.

“Hmmm.” She held up the black, thigh high stockings. Phil liked stockings. She rolled them on and then put on some sky high, bright red stilettoes. Finn like red on her. she’d pull her hair ack in a piny tail and put on bright red lipstick of course. and smoky black eyeliner.

She looked at her breasts in the mirror. For forty, the sag on them wasn’t too bad. Rae held them together for a moment and then let them drop again.

There were so many things she could wear, but in the end, she decided to just tape x’s over her nipples.

After she was done, she used the house’s internal intercom system to call them down to her.

“Make sure you’re both naked.” She told them.

She looked through their collection of paddles and canes, made from many different materials. Phil favoured the bamboo cane, Finn favoured the wooden paddle. Rae picked up the leather paddle with ‘slut’ engraved on it backwards. It was slightly more flexible than the wooden paddle, and when it was used correctly, it left a lovely imprint of the word ‘slut’ on the skin.

She held it, a delighted grin on her face, her fingers tracing along the word as she turned to look at them both coming into the room, naked, excited.

“That’s new…” Finn said when he saw the strapless dildo.

“And very big.” Phil said, his eyes opening wide.

“I know.” Rae said with a grin, “I’m sure you’ll both enjoy it.” She turned back to their toys. “I’m gonna let you both pick your favourite butt plugs.” She said, “And put them in.” She sat
down on the bed. “Put on a show for me.”

She tapped the paddle against her hand softly as she watched her 2 men begin to kiss, their hands exploring each other’s bodies – expertly finding all the good places, the ticklish places, the moan-inducing places… they all knew each other’s bodies so well now.

Finn always loved to work with his mouth, and before long his tongue was tracing patterns on Phil’s body, his teeth grazing along his skin. Phil let his head drop back and enjoyed his husband’s very talented mouth find its way down to his cock. He looked over at Rae, her eyes gleaming with desire, her fingers tracing down the paddle.

“Don’t take too long.” She said with a saucy grin, “I’ve got a long night planned out for you.”

Finn chuckled and slowly turned Phil around, kissing along his hips to his buttocks. HE licked up Phil’s crack and then grabbed some lubricant.

“Looking at that beastie,” Finn motioned towards Rae’s strapless strap-on, “I don’t think just spit’s gonna do it.” He chuckled.

He lubed up a butt plug and gently slid it into Phil’s arse to prep him for what was to come.

Phil enjoyed the feel of Finn’s mouth as he slowly made his way back to standing, kissing Phil, every inch of the way.

They kissed again, Phil letting his talented hands work their way down Finn’s body, his lips never leaving his. Phil’s hands expertly stroked Finn’s cock and he was gifted with Finn’s loud groans, their tongues still entwined, as Finn shivered in delight. Phil’s fingers worked their way around to Finn’s arse, gently working over his buttocks, massaging his arsehole, with one hand and grabbing the lube and butt plug with his other.

In no time at all both of Rae’s men were plugged and ready for her.

“In position.” She said, nodding towards the door.

She could have chained them against the wall. They’d all experienced that in the past. But that was not for today.

They both turned and put their hands on the wall, leaning forward and pushing their arses out – they both knew what was coming.

“Let’s mark up those pretty bottoms.” She said and both Finn and Phil smirked. For some reason, Rae saying the word ‘bottom’ sounded more naughty or dirty than ‘arse’ – it really did something to both of her men.

She brought the leather ‘slut’ paddle down on Phil’s arse first. He made a grunt of appreciation and waited for the next blow. But he heard it crash down on Finn’s arse, heard him make a sound of delicious delight.

She paddled them both until their arses were both glowing pink, the word ‘slut’ visible on both of them.

“Lovely.” She said as she ran her fingers down their arses, “Now it’s time to try out my new toy!”

She took the remotes out of her pocket, already at the settings she liked, and turned them on, groaning in bliss.
“It vibrates?” Finn asked.

“Yes it does.” Rae said with a happy grin. “I’m gonna cum so many times tonight! Much more than either of you!”

“You sure about that?” Finn asked with a grin, “You know how that prostate stimulation’s been doing me in since I been getting older.” He teased.

“No coming.” She ordered and he groaned in frustration, “You focus on sucking Phil’s cock, while I fuck ya.” She said with a cocky grin. “On the bed.” She told Phil and he crawled onto the bed, rolling onto his back, putting his hands behind his back, looking up at them with a lusty grin. “No coming.” She told him and then patted Finn on th arse, “You know what to do.”

Finn crawled onto the bed, keeping eye contact with Phil the whole time. He licked Phil’s thighs, teasing him, while Rae pulled out Finn’s butt plug. She bit her bottom lip, looking at the girth of her strapless dildo.

“Good luck.” She said to Finn as she pressed the tip of it against his anus.

Finn maintained his eye contact with Phil as Rae’s strap-on stretched his hole. Finn gasped, Phil grinned, enjoying the exquisite look of pleasure mixed with a little pain on Finn’s face.

Rae enjoyed the way the strapless dildo moved around inside of her as she pushed the other end of it into Finn. She liked it even more when she pulled it out of him slightly – the back and forth motion was incredible.

The vibrations inside of her and on her clitoris, coupled with Finn’s deep grunts and groans and the look in Phil’s eye as he watched Finn’s face while he was getting fucked, had Rae coming quickly. She thrust into Finn harder and deeper as she cried out in bliss. Finn grunted and grit his teeth, groaning with frustrated pleasure – he’d love this a lot more if Phil was sucking his cock right now.

Phil could tell that was exactly what Finn was thinking by the look on his face. So he pushed Finn’s mouth onto his cock hard, to remind him what he wasn’t having – knowing that Finn would do the same to him in a few minutes.

Rae noticed Phil’s teasing and laughed. Phil fucked Finn’s throat hard and rough while Rae pounded him from behind, bringing herself more orgasms, until Finn’s groans became urgent – he was close to coming.

“I like it when you 2 help out.” She said as she withdrew from Finn and he gave a deeply frustrated groan. “Here’s your chance to get your own back Finn - swap.” She ordered.

She watched them swap, Finn teasing Phil.

“You’re in for it now!” He laughed and Phil nodded happily – he had known it.

As soon as Phil was bent over, Finn had grabbed the back of his head and brought his mouth down onto his cock. Rae laughed and let him have his fun while she pulled out Phil’s butt plug and started to slide her dildo into Phil’s arse. She relished the sounds he made, the same grunts and groans as his body tried to accommodate the huge dong.

“That thing’s fucking brutal!” Finn laughed as Phil gripped the blankets. But he didn’t give the signal for Rae to stop so she started to fuck his arse, slow at first, speeding up, while Finn fucked his throat brutally hard, making him gag. Finn was going much harder than Phil had gone, and Rae
made a mental note to give Phil a chance to get his own back later on.

“No coming!” She reminded Finn and he nodded, but his rhythm didn’t slow up. Rae worked herself up to match Finn and they absolutely hammered Phil from both ends, Rae coming loudly multiple times. Finn having to stop occasionally to stop himself from coming.

When Rae stopped and Phil was allowed to roll over onto his side, he gasped, grinning.

“Brought that down upon myself.” He said, panting.

“You’re such a masochist.” Finn said, stroking his hair.

“Sometimes.” He agreed.

Rae looked at her men, lolling on the bed together, all grins, cocks hard and aching, ready for her to do whatever she was going to do to them.

She loved them both so much.

She was really looking forward to making them suffer.

She went back to the cupboard with their sex toys and pulled out the cock-cages.

Phil groaned, he had a love-hate relationship with his cock-cage. She handed Phil’s cock-cage to Finn, and Finn’s to Phil, arching an eyebrow.

“You both know what to do.” Rae said, “And put the butt plugs back in. I want those holes open!”

“I’ll go first.” Phil said, dropping to his knees to put on Finn’s cage.

“You just want to be out of yours for as long as possible.” Finn laughed.

“You know me so well.” Phil agreed.

While the men caged each other’s cocks and plugged each other’s arses, Rae slid off her tiny black shorts and took off her clitoral vibrator and took out her strapless strap-on dildo.

“I’ll be using that again later.” She told them – she wanted to swap from one arsehole to another. Both of them had done that in the past. And even though Rae had used a smaller strap-on on them in the past, she’d never done it. Now was the time to rectify that.

Rae spent several minutes lovingly tying them both to the bed – spread-eagle, on their backs.

Then she handed them both a small ball with a bell inside.

Finn watched with lustful eyes as Rae straddled Phil’s face. At first, she let him eat her out for a few minutes but then she sat down on his face, smothering him. She waited there, enjoying the power she had, watching his fingers twitch slightly. Finn laughed when Phil shook the ball, ringing the bell, signalling he needed a breath.

“I don’t know what you’re laughing at.” Rae said, “You know I’m gonna sit on your face too.”

“And I fucking can’t wait.” He said with a huge grin.

“More!” Phil said lustfully, straining his head upwards to lick her pussy.
She made him strain for some time before she sat back down on his face. This time he managed to get a bigger breath and it was much longer before he had to ring the bell. Rae waited a few seconds longer before she lifted off him.

“When’s my turn?” Finn asked.

“In a minute.” Rae said.

“More!” Phil begged and she instantly sat on his face, he groaned happily as she rubbed her cunt into his face.

“C’mon, let me taste ya.” Finn said.

“Behave, and maybe I will.” Rae answered, amused.

She liked it when they played up a little.

Phil rung the bell and she stayed on him for a full 30 seconds longer before lifting up. He groaned lustfully after taking a deep breath.

“More!” He demanded and Rae tutted at him.

“I think you need to behave before you deserve more.” Rae answered and Phil groaned as if in pain.

Rae straddled Finn, who was laughing lustfully, ready for being smothered – wanting it.

Rae sat just above his face and he licked her cunt expertly. But Rae sat down on his face before he got her close to orgasm.

Finn’s lung capacity wasn’t as good as Phil’s because of the smoking he used to do, but he’d been working on it. He so enjoyed being smothered. Rae watched the pre-cum dripping from his cock and laughed, she turned to Phil, who’s eyes were filled with desire, watching her, his face glistening with her juices.

She looked down at Phil’s cock, leaking pre-cum as well. It was exciting how turned on by her that her men still were, after all these years.

Finn jingled the bell and Rae lifted off him. He took a deep breath and waved with his hand for her to sit on his face again.

“Again!” He said, a huge grin on his face.

Rae sat on Finn’s face again and rubbed her pussy on his face hard – that’s how he liked it. Phil pulled on his restraints, obviously wanting to touch her. Rae enjoyed giving them a little of what hey liked when she was in charge. It made it more torturous when she denied them orgasm.

She decided that net she might straddle their hips – one at a time – and rug herself along their cock cages. That always drove Phil wild with frustration, and made Finn swear with desire.

But first she wanted to cum. She’s let Finn give her this orgasm, and Phil could give her the next one.

When he rung his bell, she lifted herself up slightly and stayed close enough for him to lick her out. He did so, with real delight.
Rae felt that rush of pleasure building in her groin – she was getting close.

She groaned loudly and both Finn and Phil groaned in response. Finn was enraptured with licking her and Phil couldn’t take his eyes off her – she was so sexy – he wished he was tasting her right now. But then, seeing her right now was damn good, and Finn wouldn’t mind being able to see her as her orgasm built.

Rae thought she might untie them soon so they could touch her… but riding them to tease their cocks would have to come first…

The thought of that pushed her pleasure higher and-

The phone rang.

It was Rae’s mobile. They always kept their phones on them, even in here, in case of an emergency.

Rae tried to ignore it though.

And it finally stopped ringing…

Only for Phil’s phone to start ringing.

“Oh for fuck’s sake.” She said and started to get up.

By the time she got to the phone’s Phil’s phone had stopped ringing, and Finn’s was ringing.

“Something’s happened.” Finn said from the bed, where he and Phil were still tied down.

They watched Rae pick up the phone.

“Hey Chloe.” She saw the caller ID.

“Rae babe, I’m sorry to call, but um… Robin fell off the monkey bars.”

“Oh god.” Rae said and both Finn and Phil pulled on their ropes.

“We’re at the hospital-”

“We’re on our way!” Rae said, panic welling up in her chest.

Shew hung up and instantly went over to them, untying first Phil’s hands then Finn’s, explaining to them what Chloe had said.

They threw on clothes, and ran out the door.

It was only when they got to the hospital, and had spoken to Chloe – Robin was okay, it was just a broken arm – that the 2 men realised they’d left the butt plugs and cock cages on. And they were both walking in a very odd way because of that. Rhys had stayed home with their kids and Dana, so it was only Chloe and Robin here.

Rae got the giggles, and blushed as the 2 men tried to deal with the situation, having a discussion with Chloe as she led them to the room.

But the giggles were gone when she saw her boy, pale faced from crying. He reached out for her instantly and she took him into her arms.
The doctor spoke to them about cast care and the injury while Robin pressed his face into Rae’s neck.

Rae soothed him gently as they walked back towards the car.

But when they got to the doors, it was clear that some bastard in the hospital had recognised them and called the media.

There were photographers and reporters at the door and Robin started to cry loudly.

“Back off!” Finn said loudly, “Have some decency and leave us in peace to look after our son!”

“I’ll be making a complaint to the hospital.” Phil said to them as they pushed their way through the crowd. They hadn’t brought their security with them, so Phil and Finn shielded Rae, carrying Robin closely, as the cameras and yelling reporters crowded in around them.

Chloe slipped out without being seen to head home so she could bring Dana to them. She was furious that someone had called the media and was intending to have heads roll over this.

Finally they got to the car and Finn slipped the media the bird before getting in the car to drive them home, Rae on the back seat with Robin, Phil in the passenger seat.

Robin was traumatised more by the media scrum than the broken bone, and it took some time for him to calm down.

But as always, Finn knew the best way to make people feel better. For Rae and Phil, it was tea. For Robin, it was ice cream. And after he discretely removed his sexual paraphernalia and handed them off to Phil to take back downstairs, he set about to making tea and a huge bowl of ice cream for Robin.

When Phil returned he got pinged on his phone by Sarah. He read the articles and sighed.

“The first articles are already out.” He said, “It was noted we were walking odd.” Phil said to Finn, “Other articles are saying we abused him, other that we neglected him and others are calling it an altercation at the hospital.” He sighed.

“I’m sure Sarah will do her job admirably.” Rae said with a shrug.

“Oh she wants Robin to give an interview with us.” Phil answered with a tight smile.

“Oh for fuc-” Finn began.

“Language.” Rae said softly.

“For fun’s sake.” Finn corrected.

“Well I’m not thinking about that tonight.” Rae said, turning her attention to Robin.

“Aye.” Finn agreed.

After ice cream, Robin was feeling a lot better, and he sat with Dana for a while before bed.

“So uh… quiet sex then?” Finn said and Rae laughed softly.

“Happy birthday.” Phil added.
“Thanks.” She took both of their hands. “You both made it a great day.” She sighed, “We’ll pick up the rest of this day a little later on.” She said, “Tonight is for quiet love-making, followed by checking in on the kids all night.”

“Oh yeah.” Phil agreed, “This kind of think instils fear into you.”

“Imagine if it had been worse.” Finn said.

“Stop it you 2!” Rae said, “He’s fine, it’s not worse, and we’ll all be ok.”

“You’re right.” Finn said.

But the 2 men shared a look; it was nice to see Rae being the voice of reason and positivity. She’d been in a more negative place since all that had happened with Saul. But after many years, it seemed like she was really, fully healing. They both felt a sense of peace that maybe, finally that door was closing for good.

But for Rae, she was just focussing on her family and her life and refusing to look back. That time in her life had already owned too much of her soul. She didn’t think of it as healing, just as having made peace with it. And it felt good.

She took her men up to bed and they made love quietly, barely finishing before Robin came in asking if he could sleep in with them tonight.

“Of course you can.” Rae said as she got up. “I just have to go to the bathroom, and then we’ll sleep, alright?” She said and he nodded, his eyes big, but tired.

Phil began to wonder if he should back away from the spotlight more. He didn’t like what had happened today. He went and got Dana, and when Rae returned, the whole family settled in to sleep peacefully.

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