Too Much Is Never Enough

by readercat

Summary

Strange things are going on and the Xavier Mansion and Magneto is going to get to the bottom of it. What he finds is Charles, Charles, and more Charles...
Constructive criticism is always welcome (but be gentle with me).
Chapter 1

Erik Lensherr’s…Magneto’s…mouth dropped open as he observed the bustling activity on grounds of the soon-to-be ‘Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters’ (Seriously, Charles? Could you be any more pompous?). Erik…Magneto…hadn’t believed Emma’s report concerning the recent spike in activity at the estate--after all, what remotely sane person could believe such a fantastic story? On the other hand, Magneto could control metal with his mind, so he had decided to take the risk of coming to see for himself. And now, even seeing it with his own eyes, he could hardly believe.

THE PREVIOUS DAY, BROTHERHOOD HQ

Magneto, in the midst of indulging himself with his daily allotted Charles fantasy, his only indulgence really (this one featured Charles’s full red lips, lovely pale skin and…oh yesss)--and nearly screams in frustration when he is interrupted mid-wank by a knock on his office door. “You know that I’m not to be disturbed during my meditation time! This had better be important or someone will die!” Erik yells, as he yanks open the door to find Emma Frost waiting impatiently, arms crossed, booted foot tapping. At least he thinks she’s impatient, it’s hard to tell sometimes (‘Kristen Stewart has a broader range of facial expressions’, he thinks, suddenly never more glad for his helmet--he’d rather not have to explain to Emma, to anyone, how he even knows that bit of info).

“Eri…er, Magneto…Sorry to disrupt your ‘Alone Time’,” Emma says, glaring, voice in full bitch-mode. He can just feel her mental eye roll, but lets it slide…this time. “We need to talk”.

“Well…? What is so urgent you felt it necessary to disturb me, Ms. Frost? I gather that it must be important--you sound more constipated than usual,” he says snidely, still pissed about his aborted wank session.

“Believe me, I’d rather gouge my own eyes out than walk in on you while you’re rubbing one out to one of your sick fantasies about pouring it to Charles Xavier. However, the information I have is rather important.”

“I was not wanking to fantasies of Charles!” Emma just looks at him. Magneto looks away first (‘but only because she bores me’). “Woman,” he growls, “pray that your usefulness to me continues, because as soon as I don’t need you anymore--you’re dead.”

“Right back at you…” Magneto can almost hear the unspoken <Bitch!>. They glare at one another for several moments like angry cats before finally settling down to talk.

“Well…? Spit it out, woman! I’m not the telepath here--I need words. Now, for the last time: what was so important that you just had to interrupt me?”

“Alright! Don’t get your cape in a twist,” Emma snaps. She takes a deep breath and begins, “As you know, I’ve been keeping track of goings-on at Xavier’s estate.” Erik nods and motions impatiently to continue. “With the CIA out of the picture for now and Cerebro out of commission, things had been pretty quiet. Mostly, they’ve been tied up with renovating the mansion & grounds to house students and to accommodate Xavier’s wheelchair.” Magneto can’t hide his wince, and Emma, in a rare show of tact, ignores it and goes on, “Obviously, Xavier’s determination to continue with his mutant school remains unabated, but we haven’t been overly concerned--if nothing else, it will continue to keep them occupied with something besides causing problems for us. The probability of success was pretty low, anyway. He’s only got a handful of students, after all. But even if he was able to find more students, there’d be no way that Xavier, even with all of his money, could find enough people able, or even willing, to adequately staff a school full of mutant kids.”

“Ms. Frost, you are failing to tell me anything I don’t already know.”
“What I’m getting at, Magneto, is that it looks like we were wrong.”

“What do you mean, ‘…it looks like we were wrong.’? Wrong about what? Remember?” he stabs at his temple in annoyance. “Not. A. Telepath.”

“I’m getting to it!” Emma jumps up and begins pacing. “Like I said, earlier, things had been quiet, slow--but a couple of weeks ago, I started noticing a substantial increase in mental activity at the mansion. Lots of minds buzzing. All adult. At first, I just assumed that it was because of all of the contractors on site for the renovations, so I didn’t think much of it. Then, I started noticing that even though the personalities all seemed to be distinct and unique to each mind, they were all somehow oddly in sync with one another, with a common thread linking them all together. I’d never felt anything like it. So, I took a closer ‘look’ and…I’m not really sure how to say this without sounding crazy…but, um,…I counted over a dozen Charles’s at the estate”.

“Huh!?!?”

“I said, I counted over a dozen Charles’s.”

“Huh!? Wha…?!?”

“Over. A. Dozen. Charles’s. Not including the original. That was the common thread that I found in all of the minds. All of them were linked to Charles somehow. More than linked. More like, deep in their minds, their psyches, they are so deeply intertwined with each other and with Charles that it’s almost like a split personality--only it’s not. I think. What I do know is that, apparently, they’re been running the estate for him, getting the school ready--taking care of everything for him. Taking care of him.”

“What!?!? Who!?! They!?!? How?!?!? H-how can this be possible?! Dammit, woman, answer me!!!”

“I don’t know! Maybe the injuries Xavier suffered caused him to have some kind of mental break and he’s manifested other personalities and he’s started to project them or maybe he’s developed a secondary mutation that allows him to make copies of himself or something--I don’t know! Neither of those scenarios really seem to fit the activity in the minds that I felt. I told you: I’ve never felt anything like it before. My main concern is…what if they’re all telepathic, too?”

“What-?!?”

“What if they are all telepaths? The possibility of over a dozen telepaths with Charles Xavier behind the wheel…? Are you not seeing a problem!?!?”

“I just don’t believe it. It’s impossible! Maybe Charles knows that you’re watching and he’s just playing with you. Did that ever occur to you? He is far more powerful than you, after all. Or maybe you’ve finally lost it, Ms. Frost. Perhaps my demands have finally overtaxed your already sub par abilities.”

“Fuck you, Lensherr! I know what I saw and I know what I felt! Something’s going on at that place, and whatever it is, it means trouble for the Brotherhood.”

“Take time off, Ms. Frost. You obviously need to clear your head.”

“Go to hell!” Emma snarls. “Maybe you need to take that stupid-looking helmet off and clear your head. If you don’t believe me, go and see for yourself! Who knows--maybe one of them will lay you and you can finally get over your ridiculous crush on Charles. Then, you can get back to being a leader and see how much trouble we could be in! I so look forward to saying ‘I told you so’.”

Magneto doesn’t need to be a telepath to hear her unspoken <"Bitch!"> as she stomps out of the room.

**XAVIER ESTATE, NEXT DAY**
After a long, sleepless night, Magneto (not Erik--especially not today) finds himself standing at the gates to the Westchester estate of one Charles Francis Xavier, aka Professor X (former best friend, soul mate, and unrequited love), staring in shocked disbelief as he watches Charles walk (walk?! across the grounds pushing a wheelbarrow. And another Charles sitting with a group children. And another Charles, with a beard(?! talking to Sean and Alex. And yet another(?) Charles--this one standing behind him, pressing a gun to the base of Erik’s…Magneto’s skull.

“I don’t need the gun to kill you,” Charles (Not-Charles?) says in an amiable American-accented voice. “However, you do have to admit that it makes an effective statement.” He leans in close to Magneto, “Try to take it from me, though, and I’ll kill you before you can finish the thought. Just so you know.”

Eri…Magneto is so shocked, it doesn’t even occur to him to use his powers. At any rate, he doesn’t doubt Not-Charles’s words, because he can practically feel the predatory smile in that strangely (dearly) familiar voice--something almost like…anticipation. He wants Magneto to try to take the gun. He wants violence. Magneto shivers (fear? lust? How did he sneak up on me?) and controls his instinct to fight back until he’s seen more. The Not-Charles sighs, a warm puff against the back of Magneto’s neck, bringing another shiver (looking like lust), “I confess that I’m a little disappointed, my friend. I wouldn’t have guessed that you’d back down without a fight, but I suppose it’s for the best. Charles would be seriously pissed if I killed you before he got to see you. I’d have to apologize to him and I’ve really been trying to break the habit of apologizing all the time. I’ve been told I do it too much. Erm...sorry about that.”

Not-Charles lightly traces the barrel of the gun down Magneto’s spine (ok, lust is definitely rearing its ugly head) before tapping it against his helmet, instructing him to slowly turn around--finally allowing Eri…Magneto a look at the gorgeous, shaggy-haired young man standing(!) in front of him. The spitting image of Charles Xavier (albeit, better dressed), if not for the hardness behind those blue, blue eyes and the aura of violence and deadly confidence about him--helped along in no small part by the fact that he’s casually, willingly, pointing a gun at Magneto’s head.

“You’re really not Charles, then? Where is he?! Is he alright?!” Erik starts to panic, “Who are you?! Where is he!? If you’ve hurt him, I’ll ki--”

Not-Charles rolls his eyes, hands coming up, palms out, in the universal gesture for peace, “Whoa, take it easy! Breathe! Calm down before you blow a gasket. No, I’m obviously not Charles, though I suppose I can understand your initial confusion--there is some resemblance.”

Magneto lets out a semi-hysterical bark of laughter at this and Not-Charles shoots him a droll look before continuing, “Charles is in his study. And he’s fine--thrilled, in fact, to have the extra hands helping out around this old mausoleum…I mean mansion. I’ll take you to him if you want.” He smiles and offers his hand to Magneto (What did he do with the gun? I didn’t even see him put it away! My God, he’s gorgeous!). “I already know who you are, but I guess I should introduce myself. Charles,” he says, wiggling his fingers at his temple, “is no doubt appalled by my manners.
I’m Wesley. Wesley Gibson.”

Still half-dazed (whether from the mornings events or from the effects of Wesley’s smile, he’s not yet sure), Magneto takes Wesley’s offered hand—so like Charles’s in looks, so different in feel—surprisingly strong and callused. It triggers in Erik a wave of longing (God, I miss Charles). As their hands part, he feels Wesley’s fingertips lightly but deliberately graze the skin of his inner wrist. Wesley’s smile shifts into something a little bit coy, little bit wicked, and a whole lot sexy when Magneto’s surprised eyes snap up to meet that brilliant blue gaze. And of their own accord, his eyes slide back down to Wesley’s lips, helplessly drawn to the promise of that perfect, red mouth that he never thought he would ever see smile like that for him.

Smirking, Wesley starts talking again (Something else he’s got in common with Charles, Magneto thinks), “I’m in charge of security at the estate—for now anyway. Though in my spare time I’ve been helping Charles get the accounts straightened out. What a fucking nightmare, that’s been! When Charles showed me his accounts, I nearly shit a litter of kittens. Do you have any fucking idea how much money that man has!? Or how much financial planning goes into getting a school set up? It’s enough to make me want to run away and join the circus.” Turning and starting off toward the mansion, he beckons Magneto to follow (“Anywhere…”). “Can you believe that I used to be an accountant, excuse me, ‘Account Manager’…?”, he laughs. “Thank God, I got away from that! I would have ended up killing someone!” Wesley gets a strange look on his face, then doubles over with laughter. “Oh, my God! I-I believe…that might…possibly be the funniest…fucking thing… I’ve ever said.” he gasps, brushing at the tears in his eyes as the laughter finally tapers off. “Private joke,” he explains, at Magneto’s slightly alarmed look.

“Oh, and Magneto, Erik Lensherr,…Max Eisenhardt, whatever it is you’re calling yourself these days”, Wesley says—all traces of laughter suddenly gone, eyes and voice deadly cold (‘How the hell does he know my real name!?’). “Understand that I am responsible for Charles’s safety. I will protect him. At any cost. And just so there are no misunderstandings between us: You fuck with Charles and I’ll kill you. You fuck with his students and I’ll kill you. Hurt any of them and I will end you—and you won’t even see it coming.”

“And what if I fuck with you, Wesley? What will you do then?” Magneto is alarmed to find his mouth saying the words completely without his permission, mouth forming a smile that’s all about teeth and sex and violence (see, I’m a badass, too)—ignoring the part of his brain that’s screaming at him to shut the fuck up before he finds himself dead at the hands of this beautiful, dangerous creature. Oh, well…There are worse ways to die.

“You fuck with me…,” Wesley gives Magneto a speculative look, wicked-coy little smile sliding back into place, eyes heating. “You fuck with me and I’ll kill you. After I fuck you.” He then claps his hands together and grins, “Well! Now that that’s been settled, would you like to head down to the house and see Charles or…?” Wesley quirks his eyebrow in invitation, smile going from wicked to downright pornographic.

Erik finds himself unable to form any cohesive thoughts, mind nearly overwhelmed with images of red lips, wanton blue eyes, strong callused hands gripping him, of taking Wesley hot and hard, using him the way he’d never dared (only dreamed) with Charles. Charles. He latches onto the image of sweet, beautiful Charles. Charles, who brings Erik back from the edge of the abyss, time and time again. Erik removes his helmet (always hated the stupid thing, anyway) and finally manages to choke out an answer, “Charles. I want to see Charles.”

A delightful little pout and exaggerated sigh from Wesley, “You disappoint me again, my friend. I thought you’d be more fun. Oh, well. In that case, we should get going then…it’s not like Charles doesn’t already know you’re here.” Wesley motions toward his temple again, then waves at Erik’s head, “Especially now.”

“Are you a telepath, as well?” Magneto suddenly feels stupid for not asking earlier (‘If Emma
Much to his relief, Wesley replies, “Oh, no, no! Definitely not. I can communicate with Charles like this,” again with the finger wiggle, “but only him—no one else. Disconcerting, to say the least, having someone else in my head like that. But kinda comforting, too—someone knowing who, what, I really am and not having to hide.” Magneto understands, oh yes. Then Wesley grins and says, in a truly horrible English accent, “Well, come along now, guv’na, and I’ll take you to the lord of the manor for tea and crumpets.”

“I know my way around the mansion, you know.”

Magneto gets another quick glimpse of that predatory smile, so out of place on Charles’s face, but somehow strangely right. “That may be, Magneto, my friend,” Wesley drawls, teasing (mocking? probably), “but if you think you’re going to just walk around Charles’s house unimpeded, you’re wrong. I know that you’re a dangerous man, and we just discussed how seriously I take responsibility for Charles’s safety. The fact you’re still even conscious is a major concession to Charles’s wishes.”

Magneto feels like he should be offended by Wesley’s arrogance, but somehow just can’t find it in him to care right now. “Well then, take me to him.” Magneto says, feeling lighter than he has in a long time. Maybe it’s because that ridiculous helmet is finally off of his head. Or maybe it has something to do with the soft, joyful soft touch of another mind, long missed, brushing against his own. *Nah.*

Erik smiles his first real smile in far too long and walks toward Charles.
Charles Xavier--Genius, Telepath, Drama Llama

Chapter Summary

Wesley’s flirty-ness and Erik’s admiration of Wesley’s ass leads to the start of a long overdue conversation with Charles.

Chapter Notes

The conversation between Charles and Erik is telepathic in nature, so all that is in italics.

Once more, they sets off toward the mansion, with Erik trailing behind Wesley—all the better to check out Wesley’s behind. Erik was trying to be subtle, but suspects that Wesley knows he’s being watched (admired), if the seemingly exaggerated sway of his (very nice) butt is anything to go by. He’s surprised and intrigued to feel a wave of something from Charles that from anyone else Erik would think was jealousy. He hears Charles voice in his head, <<“Really, Erik?? Is it really necessary to ogle the poor child?”>>

Hmm, Charles’ snitty voice. Interesting…

It’s been a while--far too long--but Erik still remembers how to talk mind to mind with Charles. He projects his thoughts to him with a note of teasing, <<“Charles, my friend, he's hardly a child. Besides, he started it—you certainly can’t blame me for looking.”>>

<<“Well, you still don’t have to enjoy it quite so much.”>> Uh-oh. Charles’ sulky voice. Somebody’s in trouble. Could he really be jealous? Erik’s heart starts pounding and he decides to test his theory.

<<But Charles, there's so much to enjoy...and he certainly doesn't seem to mind the attention. In fact, he made his interest in me blatantly clea--”>>

Up ahead, Wesley suddenly trips over his own feet and does a face-plant (--“What the fuck!?!--). Embarrassed, he looks around and scrambles to his feet, only to go down again in a tangle of limbs (--“Ow!”--). And again (--“Dammit! What the hell!?--).

<<Charles Francis Xavier!>> Erik thinks in mock horror, trying to stifle his laughter...a combination of amusement and increasing joy. <<“Shame on you, abusing your power like that!”>>

<<“Wasn’t me.”>>

<<“Charles...”>>

<<“Wasn’t me. I can’t help it if he’s clumsy.”>> At this point, Wesley has finally given up and is now just sitting on the ground, glaring by turns at the mansion and at Magneto…and looking very pissed off.
“You’re a rubbish liar, Xavier. Always have been.”

Charles’ snitty voice again. Yep, guilty as sin. “Besides, I’m sure you’ll kiss it all better.” Ooh! Snitty, straight to bitchy--do not pass go, do not collect $200. Erik’s heart, which has been beating like a jack-hammer, feels like it’s sprouted wings and is going to take flight. The most enormous, ridiculous smile in the world spreads across his face.

“Charles, for someone who is both a genius and a telepath, you are remarkably dense sometimes.”

“Oh! Think this is funny, do you? You left me on that beach heartbroken. That’s right! Heartbroken!! You and that stupid hat of yours. You didn’t even care how I felt! You just threw me away and replaced me with that snotty bitch, Emma, and then started shagging my sister! Now, you finally come back, and for what?! So I have to watch you ogling that little tramp, while he minces around in his tight trousers and simpering and pawing all over you, offering you all the things that I can’t give you. AND YOU LIKE IT!! *sob*”

Drama, thy name is Charles Xavier. Well, Erik could show him a thing or two about that!

“YOU?! YOU were heartbroken?! You want to talk about ‘heartbroken’?! Oh, I can tell you ALL about ‘heartbroken’, Charles. I loved you! I still love you. I only left because you said we didn’t want the same things! What I wanted was to be with you for the rest of my life. I thought you knew how I felt and that you were saying you didn’t want that with me! You never showed one iota of interest in me as anything other than a chess partner. I wore that stupid helmet because I didn’t want you to know how much you had hurt me and because I didn’t want know that you were moving on with your life. The last thing I needed was to inadvertently capture a stray thought from you while that skinny bitch Moira was ‘comforting’ you with her cleavage. Oh, yes Charles! How do you think I felt, sitting there and watching for months while Moira simpered and pawed at YOU! And don’t even try to tell me that you didn’t like that! And I never touched your sister!!” Erik finally pauses, emotionally rung out.

Silence.

Then, so quietly he almost thinks he imagines it, “You love me?”

Erik sighs. “No, Charles, I just said it because I enjoy sounding like a fool.”

“How long?”

Erik sighs again. “Since you pulled me from the ocean.”

“Me, too.”

“You really never knew, Charles?” Erik asks in burgeoning hope. “You never knew how much I...?”

“You made me promise to stay out of your head, remember? I promised and I’ve kept my word. Even now, I’m only here because you let me be here. Everyone’s always bitching at me to ‘Stay out of my head, Charles’, ‘Don’t listen to my thoughts, Charles’, ‘Respect my privacy, Charles’ and then they all get upset when I don’t know what they’re thinking. Do you have any idea how frustrating that is?” Charles sighs. “If I’d known how you felt, I’d have made sure that you knew you had something worth staying for—I was just trying not to move too fast. I wanted you to know that you could trust me. Not to mention, I didn’t want you punching me in the face in the case that had gotten it wrong about you. In case you haven’t noticed, I’m not very good at reading
people without my telepathy.”

Erik sighs, "Oh, Charles...Charles, it would seem that we have a lot to talk about, you and I."

"It would seem so, my friend."

"Would you like to continue this discussion over a game of chess?"

A wave of guilt emanates from Charles: "Erik? I have a confession to make--I hate chess. I mean really hate chess. That's one of the reasons I always drank so much during our games--to dull the boredom. I only played because I was desperate for a way to spend time with you."

Erik starts laughing. "Charles, I can't tell you how glad that makes me! I hate it, too. I only ever played because I thought you liked it and I was so desperate that I would have done anything to spend time with you."

"Well, if it makes any difference, I still like booze."

"That's a relief!", Erik laughs. "I would hate to think that I would be denied that chance to get you liquored up and take advantage of you."

"I wouldn't dream of denying you that."

"Now Charles, are you going to let Wesley up? After all, I was only watching him because--in case it escaped your notice--the man just so happens to bear an uncanny resemblance to a certain professor of my acquaintance. And in my defense, I have to point out that your body in a pair of trousers that actually fit is truly a sight to behold. You have...what is that Americans say...'junk in the trunk'? And I must say, the view from the front is equally fine. If good things come in small packages, then you must be rotten to the core because there is nothing small about that package."

Erik grins in a very shark-like fashion as he feels a mix of embarrassed amusement (and not a little preening) from Charles. "Thank God you didn't dress like that when I was living at the mansion. You would never have had a moment's respite. We would have never gotten anything useful done. As it was, I wanted to rip that X-suit off of you with my teeth!"

"Now you tell me all of this," Charles grouses. "I guess I should have listened to Raven's fashion advice after all. If only one of us had just..."

"Well, now we know. And at last the mystery of why you always wore such ill-fitting trousers has finally been solved--you needed the extra room. Though it does worry me a bit about what the ill-fitting cardigans are hiding..." Erik chuckles evilly.

"Oh, forgive me, that was so funny I forgot to laugh. Ha-ha. And just for the record, I do NOT have 'moobs' or a pot-belly."

"Since when?"

"I really don't like you right now."

"Don't you?"

"I can kill you with my brain, you know..."

Erik laughs. "As long as you love me, I can live with that. I will see you shortly, my friend."
Erik turns back to Wesley, who by now is looking like he wants to claw his brain out. “Well, Wesley are you going to sit there all day or what?”

Wesley jumps up and stomps off toward the mansion, yelling. “Fuck you! Both! That was beyond awkward. I had to hear all of that! There is not enough brain bleach in the world to get that conversation out of my head. And for the record, Charles, I am not a simpering, pawing little tramp!”
Chapter Summary

Wesley talks—a lot. Erik gets introduced to Robbie Turner—Wesley's bff at the mansion. Erik gets invited to go shooting later. Wesley gives a quick—for him—rundown of some of our other players. Erik’s mind throws a gutter-ball over an innocent Robbie-Wesley hug. Wesley briefly ponders the question of why Charles seems interested in telepathically kicking only his ass when flirts happen... 

Chapter Notes

Constructive criticisms are always welcome.

As they near the mansion, Erik and Wesley (who has a chance to calm down) come across the first Not-Charles that Erik had seen—the one who had been pushing the wheelbarrow across the lawn, and who was now digging in a flower bed.

“That's Robbie Turner. I guess you could call him our interim groundskeeper, for lack of a better term,” Wesley informs Erik as they grow nearer. “He’s also got a bit of a medical background, so he’s been pulling double-duty assisting Dr. Garrigan—you'll probably meet him later.” Wesley pauses for a moment before continuing softly, “Robbie’s kinda quiet, so don’t be offended if he seems stand-offish—he doesn't mean anything by it. Ya know, I generally don’t waste sympathy on people, but I honestly have to say that I feel for that poor bastard. Life fucked Robbie good and hard, left him with some issues to say the least. He’s a good guy, though, so don’t give him a hard time, ok?”

"Of course."

At their approach, Robbie looks up from his digging and Erik is taken aback for a moment by the flash of sheer rage in Robbie’s beautiful blue eyes, before they clear and become a familiar serene blue, his face a pleasant, polite mask. *Issues indeed.*

“Hey, Robbie, this is Erik Lehn….er, Magneto. He’s a ‘friend’ of the Professor’s,” says Wesley with a smirk, eye brow cocked.

Robbie wipes off his soil-covered hands and holds one out to Erik. “Robbie Turner. Pleasure to make your acquaintance, er...Magneto.” Like Charles, he is English and oh-so-beautiful. Pale and slender, but with finely muscled arms, strong shoulders and back—exactly as Magneto always imagined Charles would look had he actually had to work for a living (“so damned beautiful...”). Unlike Charles’ longish floppy mop, Robbie’s thick brown hair is cut short and tamed into a actual style. Like Wesley's, Robbie’s hand in his is strong and callused, contrasting wonderfully with his quiet, calm voice—so polite and proper, but lacking the privileged poshness he always associates with Charles.

“Robbie. Please, call me Erik.” Gazing into those placid blue eyes and hearing that quiet voice,
Magneto is almost fooled into thinking that he’d only imagined that flash of rage. But, no, he’s far too familiar with rage--knows it far too intimately—to ever be fooled. It would seem that still waters do indeed run deep with the lovely Mr. Turner--and Magneto…Erik finds himself wanting to dive into those waters and see how deep they really are.

“Ehm…if you think you can let go of Robbie’s hand, I’m sure he has work he’d like to get back to,” says Wesley. “Besides, I thought you wanted to see Charles…?”

Magneto gives Wesley his best shark-smile, “Jealous, Wesley? Your ears are turning such a lovely shade of pink…so very ‘Charles’ of you.”

“Maybe I’m just embarrassed for you,” Wesley counters, “Fawning all over the poor guy.”

“Now, now Wesley. No need to be selfish--there’s plenty of me to go around,” Erik teases. Then his eyes narrow. “Or,” he says, still holding Robbie’s hand, shark-smile full force, “maybe you’re worried that I might succeed where you’ve failed?”

“Hardly,” Wesley snorts. “No offense, Rob. (--‘None taken, Wes.’--) It’s just that Robbie’s straight, you know, so you’re wasting your time there. And Charles is waiting for us…”

Robbie, finally realizing that Erik still holding his hand, draws away (the light pink flush on his cheeks, pleasing Erik to no end) and says, “Children, please! You two can dicker over me (‘Dicker!’ Wesley cackles--) some another time. I really do need to finish up here, though. I’ve got to head over to the infirmary to help Nicholas--Dr. Garrigan--with the inventory.”

Wesley is still snickering, “You said ‘dicker’!”

Robbie rolls his eyes at Wesley, and says to Erik, “He’s such a child--please overlook him, he can’t help it.”

“Yeah, I got your child right here,” Wesley snarks.

Robbie raises an eyebrow, “I believe you just proved my point.” He turns back to Erik, “As I said: A child. Again, Erik, it was a pleasure to meet you.”

“I can assure you, Robbie, the pleasure is mine.”

Wesley snorts, “I’m sure it is. But if you recall, Charles just went ape-shit on me because you were looking at my butt. You want him breaking bad on poor Robbie here?”

Robbie puts his hand on Wesley’s shoulder (Erik’s eyes nearly cross at the sight of the two Charles look-alikes touching), “I do appreciate the concern, Wes, but I can take care of myself, right? Besides,” he smirks, “Charles ‘breaking bad’ on you? It sounds like you’re the one that needs looking after.”

“Bite me!” says Wesley, face flushing bright pink, “I’m just trying to do you a solid, you know--‘Bros before Ho’s’, and all.”

Robbie laughs and throws his arm around Wesley’s shoulders (Erik’s mind goes straight into the gutter--“Sorry Charles.”), “Honestly, Wesley, you’re not right. So…you still up for target practice after I finish up with Nicholas?”

“Sure, man. Well…um, anyways, yeah, I’ll meet you at the range later. Just don’t bring that jerk, Garrigan, with you this time, ok?”
“Oh, come on!” Robbie says, ruffling Wesley’s hair. “He’s not *that* bad.”

“He’s a dick!” Wesley whines, jerking his head away. “My shoulder blades itch whenever he’s in the same room. I keep expecting the little dweeb to shoot me in the back. Now, Freddie’s ok, and Miller, even Steve, *maybe* Johnny, and McAvoy. Oh, and Tom…Tom’s ok. But Garrigan’s out. And so are those nut-jobs Macbeth, Leto, and Vosper…oh, and Robertson.”

“Anyone else not make the list, Wes?” Robbie laughs, “because if your exclusions are based on the designations of dicks or ‘nut-jobs’, we’re *all* out.”

Wesley scowls at him, “Aren’t you funny. Ok, then: well, Rory’s obviously out, but I wouldn’t trust that mouthy little shit around so much as a water pistol, regardless. Valentin, Brian, and Tumnus practically piss themselves if you so much mention the word ‘gun’—excuse me, *weapon,*” Wesley rolls his eyes at Robbie, “so they’re out.”

“Well, I definitely agree about Macbeth, Leto, Vosper, and Robertson. But, what about Charles? Oh, and your friend here?” Robbie turns to Erik, “Would you like to join us later, Erik? If you’re not busy with Charles, that is…?”

“I would like that very much, Robbie. If it’s ok with Wesley…?”

“If you’re not ‘busy’ with Charles,” Wesley grins and waggles his eyebrows, “you’re more than welcome to join us. If so, we should keep it a small group tonight. Just the three of us—and Charles, if he’s up for it. Wouldn’t want you to feel overwhelmed.” Wesley gives Magneto a smile of pure sin, “I don’t think you’d be able to comfortably take on more than that. *Ow!* Sorry! Sorry!” Wesley winces and rubs the back of his head. At Erik’s and Robbie’s startled looks, he explains sheeishly, “I think Charles may have caught that last bit.” He mutters under his breath, “*Pacifist, my ass*…*OW!* Dammit, Charles!”

Robbie and Erik burst out laughing.

“Bastards,” Wesley snipes. “All of you! Well, on that note, Erik, I guess we’d better head on to the mansion for real this time. Maybe we can find out why Charles is only interested in beating *my* ass. I’ll catch you later, Robbie.”

“Later, Wes.”
Chapter Summary

In the midst of Wesley explaining to Erik about the 'Ick Factor', they (mostly Wesley) somehow end up talking about feelings...

Chapter Notes

This story has ended up a little more Wesley-heavy than I had intended (I like Wes...) but Erik and Charles will have their face-to-face soon.

“So,” Erik asks, still chuckling as they once more start off toward the mansion, “You and Robbie are close?”

“I guess you could say that--he’s certainly my closest friend here, at any rate. And I do admire the man--not something I say lightly; he and Charles are pretty much it, and I suppose Fred--you’ll meet him in a few. But we’re not an item, if that’s what you’re getting at. In addition to the aforementioned fact that he’s straight, there’s also the ‘ick factor’ to consider.”

“‘Ick factor’?”

“Maybe you didn't notice, but Robbie and me? We kind of look alike.”

“Really? I hadn’t noticed,” Erik responds dryly.

Wesley shoots Erik an annoyed look, “When over-used, sarcasm can be an unattractive trait--just so you know. Anyways,” he continues, “I know I played down the resemblance to Charles earlier, but…it’s freakin’ uncanny. I mean, I consider myself ok-looking,” (Erik snorts at what he considers a massive understatement). “That being said, the thought of screwing someone who looks like me…? Just ‘ick’. That just seems like narcissism to the nth degree--and a little too close to twin-cest for comfort. Don’t get me wrong. I used to have a lot of hang-ups about sex--well about everything, really--but I got over ’em. A couple of years ago…? The thought of being with a guy would have set off an epic anxiety attack. Now? I see someone I want, girl or guy, I go for it. The worst they can do is say ‘No’, right? Besides,” he smirks, “now days, more often than not they come to me. And why pass up the opportunity? I just let myself enjoy the moment for what it is and don’t worry about how society says I should feel. It’s not like I’m gonna stick around for the aftermath anyway and life’s too short for regrets.” Wesley looks thoughtful for a moment, “I’m not saying that fucking Robbie would be a fate worse than death. I suppose if I was really desperate and we were really, really drunk…No! Just…no. Not going there.”

Erik, who has already ‘gone there’, is wondering how much liquor Charles has on hand and if he can trick Wesley and Robbie into getting drunk. “You’re trying to tell me that you’re not attracted to him? It sure seemed that way to me. And Robbie certainly seemed affectionate enough with you,”
he says, giving Wesley a wicked look and loving the way his face flushes bright pink.

“You don’t understand!” Wesley growls, running his hands through his hair. “It’s just that…,”
he sighs. “It’s not that he’s a dude, obviously. But like I said earlier, the man has issues. Major
issues. He needs someone who will stay in for the long-haul and I’m not exactly the type to form
lasting attachments. Even if he wasn’t straight, I…it would never work. I’m not even decent friend
material, for fuck’s sake, much less anything more! I’d end up bailing and I just couldn’t do that to
him.”

“Maybe he’s not as damaged as you think. Maybe you’re what he needs.”

Wesley ignores him, abruptly changing the subject by asking, “So…what about you and Charles?
In spite of the mental conversation I was forced to overhear--I still haven’t gotten over that, by the
way--I find it hard to believe that you two were never together. You don’t seem like the type to not
seize an opportunity. Were you afraid of losing him, so you just let it go?”

Erik sighs. “Charles and I--we were sort of like a more intense version of you and your friend
Robbie. The companionship was there and the mutual respect and the flirting, but we never pursued
it. I suppose it’s pretty obvious that the desire was there, on my part anyway--but I was never sure
how Charles felt. And you’re right, I was afraid of being wrong and losing him completely, so I
never asked. I don’t think I could have taken the rejection. I’d already lost so many people I loved
and I didn’t want to lose him, too.”

“Not to be an ass, but you did lose him when you did nothing but leave him on that beach, hurt
and alone.”

“Until the end of my days, I will regret leaving Charles on that beach. You already know that I
never really wanted to leave, and if I had only known how he felt or if I had known that he had been
hurt that badly, I would never have left his side.”

“You had to be pretty blind not to see how he felt about you. But now you know that the feelings
were mutual and, in spite of everything that’s happened, you both still have them for each other. So
what are you going to do now?”

“I have a great deal for which to atone. I can only hope that Charles can forgive me and give me
the chance to make it right.”

“It seems to me like he already has forgiven you, or at least is willing to try. Things won’t be
perfect, but you’ve got a second chance—that’s more than most people ever get.” Erik is startled to
see a look of profound sadness come over Wesley’s face when he says quietly, “Sometimes you
don’t even get the first chance—it’s gone before you even recognize it for what it was.”

“Wesley…I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, me too. By the time I realized how much she meant to me, it was too late. She’d
sacrificed her life to save mine. I never even got to say goodbye. You still haven't realized how
lucky you are,” Wesley says, turning to look straight at Erik. “I’m telling you now--don’t fuck this
up, Erik. You won’t get another chance.” Something in Wesley’s eyes and in the set of his
shoulders reminds Erik of that promise to protect Charles “at all costs” and he knows that last
sentence has more to do with a bullet to the head from Wesley than any lack of forgiveness Charles’
part.

“I won’t fuck it up.”
Wesley gazes at him for a moment longer then relaxes and nods, more to himself than to Erik, “Good. We should get a move on, then,” and continues on to the mansion.

“Wesley?”

“Yes, Erik?”

“Did it ever occur to you that maybe this is your second chance?”

“What do you mean?”

“You being here. In this…situation. The new relationships you’re forming. You said that you’re “not one to form lasting attachments” and that you don’t stick around, but here you are doing exactly that. You’ve got a home, a job--the security and accounting stuff for Charles, you’re making friends, have people you feel responsible for…”

”Are you talking about Robbie again!? I told you--it’s not like that. It can’t be. All I feel for him is friendship. I can’t deny that he is a handsome devil,” Wesley chuckles. “And, I mean, sure, he’ll flirt--though he’d probably call it ‘bantering’ or something very proper and English, but if I pushed it or tried to put the moves on him, Robbie would kick my ass--and that’s not any easy thing to do.”

“Ha!” Erik says. “So it is like that! You do want him! You’re just afraid, so you won’t ‘make a move’ on him!”

“Not true!” Wesley denies. “Besides, I told you--*ick-factor* aside, he’s got issues. Like I said earlier, Robbie needs someone that he can trust to stick around and I can’t be that someone--it’s just not in my nature. In fact, I’m the last fucking person he needs in his life. I shouldn’t even be friends with him. I’m strictly a ‘no strings attached’ kind of guy. I can’t give any more than that, my life is too complicated. I can’t be responsible for what might happen to anyone I’m involved with--even as friends.”

“Wesley, what could possibly be so bad about you that you feel that way?! You’re being ridiculous!”

“I’m an assassin, Erik! I kill people for a living, for fuck’s sake! Did you already forget how we met!? I snuck up on you with a gun, remember!? I would have killed you if Charles hadn’t forbidden it--and had the power to back it up.”

Erik’s mouth drops open, “I thought you said that you used to be an accountant!”

“I *said* that I *used to be* an account manager! I left to become an assassin!”

Erik blinks. “Oh. That’s quite a career change.”

“Yeah. Well, I know I don’t look like much but,” and here Wesley gives what Erik is coming to think of as Wesley’s ‘I’m-a-sexy-ass-predator’ smile--not that he will be sharing that information. “I certainly got the drop on you, didn’t I, Mr. I-Hunt-Nazis-for-Practice?”

“I was distracted!”

Wesley snorts, “Right. If Charles hadn’t mind-whammied me, your brain would be leaking out through the bullet hole in your penis-hat, right now.”

Erik glares daggers. “Wesley, I could pull all of the iron out of your blood without even breaking a sweat. And my *helmet* does not look like a penis!”
Wesley's eyes narrow at Erik (who is getting the lust-shivers again). “You’d have to catch me first, Magneto. I could take you anytime, anywhere and you’d never know what hit you. Besides, you haven’t even seen all my moves. I’m not just a one-trick pony.”

“Are you a mutant?!”

“A mutant? No. At least, I don’t think so. Look,” he sighs, “we’re about to meet up with some of the others, and this is a long story. Maybe I’ll get a chance to tell it to you some other time.”

“I look forward to it. Though I shudder to think what you would consider a ‘long story’,“ Erik says dryly.

Wesley affects a deeply offended look. “Bite me. And your ‘helmet’ does too, look like a penis. Or maybe,” he says as he stalks off, “that’s only when you’re wearing it.”
Baby You Can Drive My Car

Chapter Summary

Erik meets Steve McBride and Frederick Aiken...or as Wesley likes to refer to them--Pete and Re-Pete.

Chapter Notes

The chapter title is from the Beatles song.

Baby You Can Drive My Car--Fred and Steve

Wesley and Erik finally reach the front doors of the mansion, where they encounter the other two Not-Charles’ that Erik had seen when he had first arrived on the grounds of the estate.

The two men look up at Wesley and Erik’s approach, the bearded Not-Charles smiling broadly when he sees Wesley. He waves, and picking up a cane, levers himself to his feet and walks over to meet them. The other Not-Charles follows, lighting a cigarette on the way. “Wesley! You’re just the person I wanted to see,” the bearded Not-Charles says. Then noticing Erik, says, “Oh, Hello! I didn’t mean to be rude.” He holds out his hand. “Frederick Aiken. And this gentleman with me,” he motions at the other Not-Charles, “is Steve McBride.”

“AKA, Pete and Re-Pete,” Wesley laughs, “since you rarely see one without the other.”

“Erik Lehnsherr. Pleasure to me you both,” Erik says, shaking their hands.

Frederick is American, and though his hair is even longer than Charles’ and he has a full beard (something Erik fascinating), Erik can’t help but be stunned by the resemblance. Where Wesley reminds him so viscerally of Charles’ vitality and wicked sense of humor, something about Frederick brings to mind Charles’ forthright honesty. His blue, blue eyes practically shine with conviction and idealism. He gives the impression of being every inch the gentleman.

Steve, on the other hand (English, like Robbie and Charles), comes across as a bit shady. Despite his undeniable charm, he can’t quite hide the calculating look in his blue, blue eyes--like he's just waiting for someone to show a weakness he can use to his advantage. To Erik, he gives the impression of someone who, while not a bad man, is not a someone you could ever really trust. He seems like the kind of man who would steal your car and then try to sell it back to you at a ‘discount’. It goes without saying that Erik finds him immensely attractive.

“Erik, here, is a ‘friend’ of Charles’,” says Wesley, grinning wickedly--leaving no doubt about what kind of friend he means. Frederick, much to Erik’s delight, blushes fiercely at this.

Steve gives Erik a lazy grin and a once-over before taking a drag on his cigarette and turning to
Frederick, “Honestly, Freddie! You blush like a Victorian-Era spinster. One would think that you were an innocent little virgin.”

“Steve!” Frederick looks completely scandalized.

“What? Oh, I’m sorry. Did I offend your delicate sensibilities?”

“One doesn’t talk about that kind of thing in public! It isn’t polite.”

Clearly enjoying Fred’s discomfort, Steve takes another drag off of his cigarette, leans in close, and asks in a sultry-sounding voice, “I’m sure Erik here doesn’t mind (--Erik doesn’t--), but would it make you more comfortable to discuss it a more private setting, then?”

Erik is fascinated (read, horny). Wesley is openly cackling.

By now Frederick is nearly crimson with embarrassment and tries to change the subject, “Why are we even wasting time talking about this…this nonsense? I thought you were going to teach me to drive today?”

Steve immediately goes shifty-eyed. Wesley goes on high-alert asking, “And just how were you planning to do that, Steve? I wasn’t aware that you had access to the garage.”

Steve glares at Frederick. “Thanks a lot.”

Freddie looks abashed. “I’m sorry, Steve. I panicked. I didn--”

“Well?” Wesley asks, completely serious now. “That wasn’t a rhetorical question, Steve.”

Erik finds himself thinking that Wesley looks incredibly hot when he means business.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake, Wes!” Steve shouts. “Like a little lock is going to keep me from doing what I want! I’m not a fucking prisoner here!”

Wesley is practically vibrating with anger as he steps nose-to-nose Steve (Erik doesn’t think he’s ever been so turned on). “There are rules here!” he yells. “You know that! I won’t see everyone’s safety compromised because you’re incapable of thinking about anyone but yourself!”

At this, Frederick says, “Calm down, Wesley! He was just trying to do me a favor. Besides--”

“Shut up, Fred!” Wesley snaps. “You know how irresponsible he is and you were perfectly willing to go along with him. If you’re that fucking desperate for Steve to show you how to ‘drive a stick’ then take him to bed already and just get it over with! It’s not like we don’t notice you two sitting around, eyeball-fucking each other 24/7!”

Erik is surprised to see a dangerous light in Frederick’s eyes as he shoulders Steve aside to confront Wesley, “That was completely uncalled for! If you’d bothered to check your facts, I could have told you that the reason I wanted to talk to you earlier was to ask about using one of the cars! Just because your life seems to center around your dick doesn’t mean it’s the same for the rest us!”

Wesley looks shocked. “You said ‘dick’!”

Frederick rolls his eyes, “Really?! That’s all you got out of that? That I said ‘dick’? No ‘I’m sorry for misjudging you’ or ‘I shouldn’t have snapped at you, Fred’? Just ‘You said dick’?”

“Well, in his defense…” says Steve. “I’m a little surprised myself.”
Frederick throws up his hands, “Why do I even bother?”

“Ok! Ok! I shouldn’t have snapped at you, Fred and I’m sorry for misjudging you--both. We all cool now?” Wesley digs a set of car keys out of his pocket and goes to hand them to Fred.

“And the ‘driving a stick’ comment?” Fred asks.

“I totally stand by that one,” Wesley laughs.

“Well, fuck you, then.”

“Fred!” Wesley and Steve gasp out simultaneously.

Erik bursts out laughing, “Now who’s acting like a couple of Victorian-Era spinsters?”

Fred look inordinately proud of himself as he takes the car keys from Wesley. As he turns to walk toward the garage, he slaps Steve on the ass, “Well come along, Steve. Don’t you have something you want to teach me?”

Steve turns to look at Wesley and Erik with a raised eyebrow, then with a slightly dazed grin, hurries off after Fred.
Charles in Charge--Part 1

Chapter Summary

(Very short chapter) Erik and Charles finally have their face-to-face. The feels abound!

Chapter Notes

More Erik/Charles (and Wes, of course) next time. Still trying to decide on the issue of 'the sexy-times'--I'm a little squicky about trying to write it. Not much worse than badly written sexy-times.

Watching Fred and Steve walk away, a flummoxed-looking Wesley says, "Well. I wasn’t expecting that! I mean, I was…but I wasn’t, you know, expecting anything to actually…Whoo-boy! …you know, happen. I’ll bet even Charles didn’t see that one coming!” He shakes his head, trying to clear it, and he turns to glare at Erik, who is still laughing at him. “Speaking of Charles…,” Wesley motions Erik through the front doors of the mansion, “this way, please.”

Erik follows Wesley into the mansion, and since he already knows his way around the place, takes advantage of the opportunity to resume admiring Wesley’s ass, which is just as magnificent as he remembered (as if he could have forgotten during the few minutes that he’s been able to tear his eyes away). Despite the object of his focus, Erik does manage to notice a few changes around the mansion—he is, after a master of stealth and cunning. He is chagrined to ‘hear’ the faint echo of Charles’ laughter ghost through his mind at this thought. 'Nosy telepaths,’ he thinks irritably. The irritation quickly fades as the changes he sees sadden him and fill him with guilt--the wheel-chair lift, the widened doorways, the new elevator. He'll make it right, though.

Wesley, in the meantime, is giving a running commentary on the Charles’ other ‘guests’ and their current roles in the household: “Well, in addition to those you’ve already met, there are the ones I’ve already mentioned, but that you haven’t met: Nick Garrigan--our doctor, Joe Macbeth--the cook, Jameses Miller & McAvoy--soldier and actor, respectively. Then there’s Martin Vosper--sleazy little ‘rent-boy’. Um, let’s see…who else? Oh, yeah, Brian Jackson--college student/super-nerd, Johnny Martin/aka Max--janitor and piano teacher, Bruce Robertson--sleaze-bag cop, Tom LeFroy--attorney, Rory O’Shea--troublemaker, Valentin Bulgakov--our literature teacher, and lastly, there’s Leto Atreides and Mr. Tumnus. I’ll just let Charles explain those two,” he shudders. “They make my fucking brain want to cry! So, that’s what, 18 so far, including Charles…? Um, Erik? Are you alright? Erik…?”

“18?!” Erik says weakly.

“Do you need to sit down for a minute--you look a little pale. Seriously, are you ok?”

Erik nods dazedly. Damn! Emma was right. He’ll never live that down. 18! He’s nearly on Charles overload, just meeting the few so far. What’s he going to do with 18?! Erik suddenly grins, wide and devious. What’s he not going to do with 18? He feels a sharp slap to the back of his head and jerks around to glare at Wesley, who is gleefully fist-pumping (—“Yessss!!”—), but is too far
“Hah!” Wesley crows triumphantly. “It’s about time Charles finally decided to telepathically bitch-slap someone today who isn’t me. Sweet!”

Erik is not amused.

<<Well, that’s nothing new,>> says Charles. <<And if I were you, I wouldn’t be wondering about what you’re going to do with 18--you’re going to be so busy with one that you won’t have time to think about the other 17. I’ll be expecting you in the library.>>

“You ‘heard’ the man,” says Wesley, pointing at this temple. “Let’s move!”

At long last, they finally reach the doors to the library and Erik waits impatiently for Charles to give them permission to enter--an act of good faith on Erik’s part, as everyone knows that he could easily unlock and open the door himself (and though he will never admit it out loud, there is still a small part of Erik’s brain that doesn’t think that it wise to provoke Wesley’s ‘protective instincts’).

Charles knows that Wesley and Erik are waiting outside, but in a fit of pique decides to make them wait. ‘I’ve waited this long. It won’t kill him to cool his heels for a change.’ He finds that being the one calling the shots is deeply empowering. The satisfaction he feels from the petty act of ignoring Erik’s impatience is immense, and a slow, cat-like smile curves his lips as he feels Erik’s frustration at being forced to play nice. Charles has been the one to get the raw end of the deal, and there’s no way in hell that he’s going to make this too easy for Erik. The ball is in his court now and it’s play by his rules or go home empty-handed.

Intellectually, Charles knows now that Erik has suffered too, but this is a matter of the heart--and it’s not like the heart is the center of logic. He can be forgiven for being a bit bitchy, considering the circumstances--and it’s not like he indulges that side of himself oft--

He hears a loud snort and some muffled laughter from the other side of the door. “Charles, you’re projecting.”

<<‘You know that I can make the two of you think that you’re Bella and Edward from Twilight…’>>

The laughter stops abruptly.

Charles’ smile rivals Erik’s best shark-smile. Oh, Yes. This shift in power is doing Charles a world of good. And if he’s being completely honest with himself, it’s not a little arousing. ‘Maybe I won’t make him wait that long, after all,’ he thinks to himself. “Well…? What are you waiting for Erik? Come in.”

Erik uses his powers to open the door and finds himself face to face with Charles Xavier. His Charles, who he hasn’t seen since that terrible day on the beach. He can only stare into those amazing blue eyes as if they hold all of the secrets of the universe in their shimmering depths. The thoughts run through Erik’s head in a stream so fast and jumbled he can barely even process them: ‘god i’ve missed him so much i love you how could i have ever thought they look like him i love you he can’t walk i’m sorry i love you i did that i love you he’s so beautiful i love you please forgive me i love you i’m home.’
The wave of emotion that Charles feels from Erik is everything that he could have hoped for, and he has already forgiven him—for the big things anyway. He still means to make Erik work for it, but he can’t help the slightly watery smile that lights up his face—he’s not made of stone, after all. He holds out his hand to Erik and smiles. “Come here, my friend.”

Erik takes Charles’ hand, his own smile rather watery, kneels down next him, lays his head in Charles’s lap, and cries.
Charles in Charge--Part 2

Chapter Summary

More feels, some snark, and finally a proposition from Charles and Erik that Wesley is not sure he believes.

Chapter Notes

Another short chapter.

Charles cries, too, and runs his fingers soothingly through Erik’s hair, murmuring gently to him until Erik regains control of his emotions. Erik is not ashamed to have cried and responds to Wesley’s incredulous, “Jesus Christ! You two cried like 12-year-old girls who found out that they were going to meet Justin Beiber!” with a saccharine, “Oh, I’m sorry, Wesley--I couldn’t understand you over your sniffling.” Erik cries fierce, manly tears, thank you very much. Charles cries gentle, perfect tears. Unlike some people in the room (who aren’t him and Charles)--they do not snivel like a teenage girl who has just seen the cutest puppy do the cutest thing ever.

“I’m not crying,” Wesley with a wet sniffle, surreptitiously wiping at his eyes. “I have something in my eye.”

“Yes, you do,” says Charles. “And from where I sit, it looks like big, girly tears.” He and Erik high-five and grin at each other while Wesley glares.

“So that’s how it’s gonna be, huh? Gang up on me? Two on one? Well, that’s OK.” Wesley turns the full force of his faux-injured blue gaze on them, “I know when I’m not wanted.”

In spite of Charles’ presence at his side (‘Right where he belongs.’), when he hears Wesley utter the phrase “two on one”, coupled with the force of those eyes…Erik’s mind goes there. He can’t help but want Wesley, at least a little (Ok--a lot). Considering Charles’ earlier reaction to Erik’s appreciation of Wesley’s attributes, he’s expecting a bit of a shit-storm to erupt. Instead, he is shocked (but utterly thrilled) to see a slightly stunned look of want on Charles’ face, directed at Wesley.

Erik feels a little sorry for Charles right now. Charles has never been on the receiving end of that particular gaze before, so he has not had time to build any immunity to it. Erik also feels kind of bad because he had always assumed that Charles knew exactly what that gaze did to people and that he used it with impunity. But he supposes that there is a big difference between knowing how it affects people and being affected by it. Sort of like the difference between running someone over with a car and being the one run over. Sensing an important opportunity here, he starts projecting images like mad to Charles and hope he understands what Erik wants. He does.

“Wesley, wait! You don’t have to leave just yet,” Charles says, fake-casual.
Wesley smiles, seemingly clueless to the sexual undercurrents in the room, “It’s ok. I’m not mad or upset, Charles—you know that. I just know you two have a lot to sort out and you can’t do that with me here. Besides, I’m supposed to meet up with Robbie later, so I’ll just mosey on and get out of your way and,” he grins wickedly, “let you get ‘reacquainted’.”

As he turns to walk out of the library, both Erik and Charles frantically yell, “Stop!”

Wesley pauses with his hand on the door and looks back at them, wary, eyebrow raised. “Something wrong?”

“No,” says Charles, tracing his finger back and forth along the arm of his wheelchair. “It’s just that you shouldn’t feel like you have to leave so soon. After all, you’ve been so kind to Erik…”

“For which you already ‘repaid’ me,” Wesley says, deadpan, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Yes. About that--perhaps I did over-react a bit.” Wesley snorts in disbelief. Charles ignores it and continues, “I would hate for you too feel that your assistance to both of us is not thoroughly appreciated.”

<<“You’re losing him, Charles,”>> Erik thinks at him in desperation. <<“‘The Look’, Charles. He’s like you--he’s got no defense against it!”>>

Charles gives Erik ‘The Look’ (though not the one he meant), then turns to Wesley, saying, “Oh, fuck it. I’m horny and tired of beating around the bush. We want to fuck you. Erik and I.”

Wesley gapes at both of them. “Eh…?”

“Rather, I want to fuck Erik, but I can’t. He can fuck me--great for him, but I won’t feel it. However; if you let me into your head while you are having sex, I can feel what you feel. Think about it. You and Erik get to fuck with my blessing--and don’t pretend you don’t want to,” he points to his head. “Telepath, remember? As I said, you two get to have sex with each other, I get to feel what sex is like again, I get to watch two very attractive men have sex, you finally do something with that mouth besides talk--everyone wins. How’s that for a plan?”

Erik smiles. “Perfection,” he says.
Is There a Doctor in the House?--Nicholas--Part 1

Chapter Summary

This chapter takes place during the same time as the (not-yet-finished) Charles in Charge chapters.

We meet Dr. Nicholas Garrigan as he spends time with Robbie in the infirmary. Poor Nicholas is having a bad day and can't figure out why he's feeling so out-of-sorts (Charles apparently doesn't realize that he's projecting somewhat). Robbie learns that alcohol and Scots don't mix.

F-Bomb Warning: Nicholas likes to drop the F-bomb. A lot.

Chapter Notes

I liked writing Nicholas, though he's not not much like the LKOS Nicholas. Mine is surly, snarky, drunk, and cussy (imagine a Scottish Dr. Leonard McCoy that looks like James McAvoy).

The lines "No, we don't have monkeys in Scotland." and "I'm an American soldier coming overseas!" are lines from LKOS.

Meanwhile…

“God! I fucking hate this fucking place! Fucking inventory! Fucking mutants! Fucking work! Fucking blue fur all over my fucking infirmary! Fucking RULES!! And, fucking hell, now I’m out of fucking cigarettes! Fuck!! Fuck!! FUCK!!”

Nick’s tirade is interrupted by a quiet chuckle coming from the doorway of the make-shift infirmary. “I see you’re in a good mood, as always. Rough day?” Robbie walks over, taking in Nicholas’ appearance: white lab coat and rumpled shirt, shaggy too-long brown hair in even more disarray than usual, tie askew, blue eyes slightly wild--Nick looks a bit more like a mad scientist, at the moment, than an accomplished medical doctor.

Nick scowls at Robbie and holds out his hand, making grabby motions, “Give me cig, you pasty English fuck.”

Robbie stares at Nicholas with a raised eyebrow, “Seriously? I just was called pasty by a Scot!? You hail from a nation of the whitest people on the planet and you call me pasty?”

Nick ignores Robbie’s perfectly valid rebuttal, instead demanding, “Smokes, you fuck--give me one.”

“Since you asked so nicely…” Robbie makes a show of checking his clearly empty pockets then
shrugs, smiling insincerely, “Oh, I’m sorry--all out. Actually, I was hoping to get one from you.”

“Well, obviously, I don’t fucking have any!” Nick snarls, throwing up his hands in frustration. “Since you’re all but fucking useless to me now, why don’t you get started on the fucking inventory, so my time is not completely fucking wasted today!”

Shaking his head in amused exasperation at Nicholas’ outburst, Robbie pulls up a seat at the lab table and settles in to work. “Where would you like me to start with the inventory, Doctor?”

“Start with the fucking bandages,” Nick replies, distracted now, as he rummages around in the cabinets and filing drawers in search of some elusive something.

“He looks rather like a weasel going through someone’s rubbish bin,” Robbie thinks, watching him. “Or perhaps a rat,” thinking of Wesley’s preferred descriptor for Nicholas. He smiles.

Nick’s head pops up out of the drawer he was searching (“Just like a weasel!”), “What the fuck are you smiling about?”

Robbie suppresses the urge roll his eyes--barely. Here we go again.

And Nicholas starts to rant: “I’ve got no fucking cigs, blue fucking fur fucking everywhere, inventory that still needs to be fucking counted, and you’re smiling?! Well, If you’re fucking smiling then you’re obviously not counting the fucking inventory. You ken how I fucking know that? Because if you were counting the fucking inventory you wouldn’t be fucking smiling!”

Robbie nearly tells Nicholas why he was smiling, then decides that discretion is the better part of valor and goes with (a still honest), “Maybe I like doing inventory, did you ever think of that?”

Nicholas looks shocked “‘Like doing inventory?’ Who the fuck in their right mind likes doing inventory!? That’s fucking insane!”

Robbie looks him dead in the eyes. “Who ever said that I was sane, Nicholas?”

Nick stops short and blinks at Robbie. “Well. Right, then.” He pauses for a moment, blinks again, then turns around and goes back to his rummaging.

Robbie, for his part, is stunned. “Did I…did I just hear you utter a sentence that didn’t contain the word ‘fuck’ or some derivative thereof?”

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Robbie, for his part, is stunned. “Did I…did I just hear you utter a sentence that didn’t contain the word ‘fuck’ or some derivative thereof?”

Not looking up from his search, Nicholas replies, “Yeah, but I was fucking thinking it.”

“That’s a relief. You had me worried.”

“Piss off, you lazy fucker and get back to work. Oh, and when you’ve finished counting those fucking bandages, start on the fucking burn ointment. We go through that fucking shite like it was going out of style. That fucking Summers kid is a menace. It’s a wonder he hasn’t burned the fucking place down, shooting lasers out his arse or whatever. Too bad he hasn’t managed to get your fucking boyfriend, that snot-nosed wee bastard, Gibson (‘He’s not my boyfriend, Nick’--), in his line of fire. My fucking luck though, he’d only get hurt just enough that I’d be having to care after the wee bossy fuck.”

Robbie can’t understand why those two hate each other so much. He’s never in his life heard two people who can talk so much shit about absolutely nothing. Looks not withstanding, they’re really not all that different from each other, personality-wise. Sure, Nicholas is pretty well morally bankrupt, whereas Wesley has some concept of honor, but still…
“HA!” Nicholas shouts, triumphantly. “I fucking knew it!” He emerges from the depths of a filing drawer, holding up what appears to Robbie to be an almost-full bottle of Scotch. “I knew that Charles couldn’t have fucking drank it all! Grab those fucking beakers over there, laddie, and give ‘em a wash. We’ll drink to getting this fucking inventory done!”

“But we haven’t finished the inventory yet.”

Nicholas shrugs and waves his hand. “So fucking what? What the fuck else am I supposed to do? I’ve got no fucking smokes. I’m bored as fuck. I’ve got no woman—and for some fucking reason, I’m all of a sudden horny as fuck. What’s there to do, I ask you, besides get fucking drunk? Oh, for fuck’s sake! Give me that fucking thing!” He snatches a beaker out of Robbie’s hand, wipes it out (inspecting it closely for fur), pours in a large measure of whisky, and knocks it back. His eyes close and he shudders delicately as it burns its way down. “Oh, fuck yes!” he rasps, pouring another measure. “That’s the fucking ticket right there!”

10 minutes and almost a ½ bottle of Scotch later…

“…So then, so then, I fucking say to her, I say, ‘No, we don’t have monkeys in Scotland!’” Nick laughs uproariously. “Thought I was fucking charming, she did! You what fucking happened next, then?” Nick leans into Robbie, slurring conspiratorially, “Took me back to her hut and fucking shagged me!” He grins in drunken pride, momentarily lost in the memory, before suddenly blushing crimson and looking anywhere but at Robbie.

“What!” Robbie says. “Oh, no! Oh no, you don’t! You’re not going to quit your story now that it’s finally interesting.”

Nicholas snaps his head around, looking affronted. “What the fuck you mean ‘finally’ interesting?”

“Oh, you know what I mean, Nick,” Robbie says, placating him. “It’s just that it’s not fair to not tell the whole story. Especially when you have that look on your face.” Especially since I’m sober and will remember it later. “Awww! I know!” Robbie teases. “Was she your first ‘lady-friend’, Nicky?”

“Fuck off, you wanker! And, no, she fucking well wasn’t!”

“Then tell me! I thought we were friends, Nick. And if you can’t embarrass yourself in front of your friends…”

Nicholas sighs in defeat, then looks at Robbie, “So fucking help me, if you tell anybody body about this, I will fucking end you. I don’t care if your fucking boyfriend (--He’s not my boyfriend.--) does kill me for it.”

“Agreed. Now what was so embarrassing about your native encounter?”

“It was just something that I may have, um, fucking shouted at the moment of, er…detonation.” He turns bright red again at the memory and squirms a bit in his chair. Fuck, I’m horny! What the fuck!?!

“Well? What did you say? You’re killing me here, Nick!”

Nicholas, if possible turns even redder, and quickly mumbles out a sentence.
“What was that?”

“Fuck you! You fucking heard me!”

“Oh, come on! There’s no way I could hear that! Now, tell me--what did you say?”

“Fine, you fucker!” Nicholas snaps, face still beet red. “I fucking said that when I came, I shouted, ‘I’m an American soldier coming overseas!’”

Robbie stares at him in moment of utter silence, mouth open in surprise, then he bursts into helpless laughter: doubled-over, stomach-aching, tears running down his face, falling off of his chair, guffawing laughter. “Christ!” he gasps. “You did not actually say that!”

“I don’t fucking know why I said it,” Nicholas slurs sullenly. “It just seemed the thing to say at the fucking time!”

Of course, this only makes Robbie laugh harder.

“Oh, fuck off, you English bastard! Doesn’t your boyfriend have to pick you for the fucking prom or something?”

The insult does nothing to quell Robbie’s laughter. In fact, he only laughs harder, subsequently completing Nicholas’ buildup from a state of simple drunkenness to embarrassed, and strangely horny drunkenness, to finally, a state of outraged drunkenness (with a large side of horny). Why the fuck am I so god-damned horny today? Why does Robbie look so fucking hot all of a sudden?

At the exact same moment that it dawns on Robbie what a bad idea it is to mix alcohol and a Scotsman, and then to provoke said Scotsman, he hears, “Ok, that’s it, you fucking English wanker! Come the fuck here!”

Expecting a punch, Robbie is completely shocked when Nick grabs him, hauls him in close, and kisses him. On the mouth. Not just a peck on the lips. A KISS. At first, Robbie is too shocked to move, giving Nicholas a chance get a good grip (or would that be grope?) on him. For just the briefest moment Robbie melts into the kiss (God, it’s been so long…). Then Nick tries to slip him the tongue.

“OWWWW!!” Nicholas howls. “You punched me in the face, you fucking flea-bitten whore! You didn’t have to fucking do that!”

“Why the hell did you kiss me?!” Robbie asks, angry and still shocked.

“Why the fuck do you think?! Because I’m fucking drunk and horny! Do you see any fucking women around here?! I sure as fuck don’t!” he glares. “Not that I can see much of anything now, since you punched me in the fucking EYE!”

“I’m sorry I hit you, but you shouldn’t have done that!”

“Oh, grow the fuck up, Robbie! It was just a wee fucking kiss, and not even a good one at that. And fuck you, anyway--you fucking liked it until you remembered you weren’t supposed to like it! At least my fucking boner is gone,” Nick says, snidely. “Besides, it’s not like I’ve done anything to you that your fucking boyfriend hasn’t done!”

“I told you: he’s not my boyfriend!”

“You’re apparently the last fucking hold-out then!”
Robbie steps up into Nicholas’ face, the look in his eyes keeping Nick silent for once. “Never. Try. That. Again.” Then he turns and storms out of the infirmary.

Nicholas stares after him for a moment, an odd look on his face. He walks over to the mirror to examine what is sure to be one hell of a black eye. “Thank fuck, I haven’t drank all the fucking Scotch yet.”
Chapter Summary

Charles, Erik, and Wesley bond. And Wesley actually says something that's worth listening to--for once.

Chapter Notes

Not particularly happy with this chapter. Sexytimes-wise, there is a special place in hell for people like me--a place were the shelves are filled with copies of Twilight and 50 Shades of Gray and there is nothing else to read for all eternity.

Back in the library…

“Come here,” Charles says to Wesley, who while warming up to the idea, is feeling cautious (he still hasn’t forgotten the leg thing from earlier).

Warily, Wesley approaches and gets jerked onto Charles’ lap. Erik can only stare, goggle-eyed, as he is witness to the hottest thing he has ever seen: Charles cupping Wesley’s face, then thoroughly, deeply kissing him to within an inch of his life. When they finally break, Charles says, “So, Wesley…you still think the ‘ick-factor’ is going to be a problem for you?”

Flushed and looking dazed, Wesley’s response is somewhere along the lines of, “Guh…” (mirroring Erik’s thoughts exactly).

Charles smirks at them, looking smug, “I’ll take that as a ‘No’, then.” Absently running his hand through Wesley’s hair, Charles looks over at Erik “Take off your shirt. I want to see you.”

“Yes,” Wesley says, finding his voice at last. “Let’s see what you’ve got, Erik.” Wesley leans over and grabs the hem of Erik’s shirt, helping him get rid of it. “Fuck,” Wesley and Charles both breathe out, staring at Erik’s bare chest, shoulders, and God!…his abs! Erik preens. He has no doubts about his magnificence—he has only to look in the mirror, after all--but their gaping, while expected, is still gratifying.

Wesley looks at Charles with a raised eyebrow. Charles nods his approval and Wesley hops off of his lap, stripping off his sweater. Wesley may be small, but like Erik, his body has been honed into a weapon--his deceptively slender build hiding a lean, well-muscled body. He is completely unsurprised at the spike of lust darkening Erik’s eyes. Who wouldn’t want him?

Together, Erik and Wesley look at Charles expectantly. “Well,” Wesley says after a moment, “Let’s see it. We’ve shown you ours…now you show us yours. I know your upper body has to be in great
shape, so come on.” He begins chanting, “Take it off! Take it off!”

Erik joins him, “Take it off! Take it off!”

Face flushed pink, Charles huffs, “Alright, alright! Just give me a minute.” As Charles shrugs out of his jacket, Erik is pleased to note how wide Charles’ shoulders have gotten. The realization that the size of Charles’ shoulders is no doubt the result of physical therapy, momentarily tinges Erik’s lust with guilt. Charles smiles at him and the guilt is gone. Charles hands the jacket off to Wesley, who goes to toss it aside.

“No! Not the floor!” Charles scolds. “You’re not a bloody animal, Wesley!”

“Oh. Pardon me,” Wesley says. With exaggerated care he hangs the jacket up. “Heaven knows we mustn’t appear uncivilized whilst having gay three-way sex in the library. What would the neighbors think?”

Charles gives Wesley one of his patented ‘Looks’ (he has many)--this one being the ‘Oh-my-friend-how-you-disappoint-me’, nodding to himself in satisfaction when Wesley flushes slightly and squirms in discomfort (“I’ve still got it…,” Charles thinks.).

Getting back to the matter at hand, Charles decides to make a show of it--he’s got his pride, too, you know. Starting off slow and easy, he unbuttons the cuffs of his shirt, his heated blue eyes never breaking contact with Erik and Wesley. They watch as Charles loosens his tie from around his neck, unknottedting it, then slowly drawing it through his collar--keeping hold when Wesley reaches out to take it (We may need this for later, he grins wickedly, tucking the tie into the space beside his leg). Wesley and Erik look at each other in surprise, before quickly turning back to Charles’ impromptu strip-tease.

Hitting them with his patented ‘Groovy Mutation’ look (which, contrary to the opinion, is proven to have a 98.4% success rate, thank you very much), he draws the shirt tails out of his trousers, then starts popping the buttons of his oxford shirt, giving only the barest glimpse of the pale skin beneath. He’s amused to see Erik and Wesley leaning forward in anticipation, trying to catch a better look. Charles teases them by stopping with his shirt still partially buttoned (he revels in the feel of their disappointed frustration--especially Erik’s). Eyes all but glowing now, he smiles lazily, raising his arms over his head, stretching--arching back to expose the cut of his jaw and the long line of his neck. Then he rolls his shoulders, allowing his shirt to gape open just enough to show off his collar-bone (one of his best features, so he’s told).

Erik is all but drooling at this point--oh, if he had a dollar for every fantasy he’d had about that collar-bone…and that throat!…(not to mention that skin and that hair and that mouth!) he’d be rich. It’s all he can do not to pounce on Charles, grab his hair caveman-style, and drag him off to his lair. Only his burning curiosity to see what Charles will reveal next is stopping him. <<Come on, Charles! Stop teasing!>> he begs mentally.

Charles arches an eyebrow at him. Out loud, he says, “Stop teasing? Really? And just who do you think is calling the shots here, Erik? I’m pretty sure that it’s not you--not if you plan on getting laid, that is.”

“I…I’m sorry, Charles. You’re in charge here. I just got overly excited--I just never…you…just look…I’m sorry. It won’t happen again.”

“Oh, yes it will,” Charles smirks. “You will stay overly excited, if I have anything to say about it--and I do. You just won’t act on it without my permission. Understood?”
“Yes.”

“Yes, what Erik?”

“Er…?” Erik looks a little confused.

Charles gives him a mental prompt, and Erik has to blink a couple of time before he can respond. “You’re not serious!?”

Charles looks at him, frowning, eyes narrowed, “Do I look like I’m joking?”

“Well, no…but, Charles!”

“Do you want sex or not, Erik?”

“Of course, I do! But Charles…,” Erik whines.

Charles just stares at him.

Erik sighs, defeated by his own lust. “Yes, Professor Sex, sir. I understand.”

Charles smiles widely. “That’s my good boy.”

Wesley is openly snickering until Charles turns to him, glaring, and snaps, “That goes for you, too! Understood?”

“…?”

Charles glares at him, “Wesley…?”

Wesley looks at the floor, face burning, and mutters, “Yes, Professor Sex, sir.”

“Excellent.” Oh, yes. This is a very good day, indeed. He gives an evil chuckle; “You know, you boys don’t really have to call me that, by the way--I just wanted to see if you were desperate enough to actually do it.”

Charles doesn’t have to be a telepath to sense that he may have overdone it a little, so to bring the focus back to sex, he quickly resumes unbuttoning his shirt, then slowly peels it off, revealing his chest, his shoulders, his arms, his flat stomach…

“Damn…” says Wesley.

“Well, I think that we can safely put to rest your fears of ‘moobs’ or a pot belly, yes Erik?”

“Oh, yes…” Erik sighs reverently. He’d always known that Charles was beautiful, but this… Charles is…incandescent: angelic face, shining hair, luminous eyes, glossy red mouth, miles of smooth alabaster skin with delicious little freckles, and his muscles…Sweet Lord, his muscles! As beautiful as Wesley is, but he’s a only a distant second to Charles. Erik has an almost overwhelming urge to kick Wesley out of the room, so that he can have Charles all to himself. Charles catches his thoughts and gives Erik a soft, just-for-you smile.

<<Later, Erik. There’s plenty of time for just us. I know you want him, so you’d better take advantage while I’m in the mood to share--it’s never going to happen again. After this--you’re mine.>>

<<I already am.>>
They ignore the gagging noises Wesley has started making.

<<True,>> Charles smirks. <<After this: No one touches you but me. Now, look at him--do you really want him to leave before we get a chance to play?>>

Erik looks at Wesley, still shirtless, ass conveniently on display while he bends over the waste bin claiming to be vomiting rainbows.

<<Well, he certainly isn’t you, but…>>

Charles smiles. <<That’s what I thought. He wants you, too. You feel like danger to him. He likes that. It’s the same for you, I know.>>

Erik shark-smiles at Charles, <<Ok. Let’s play then.>>

“Wesley? Come here.”

Wesley stands up and slinks over to Erik, hands sliding down Erik’s chest to the front of his trousers, tracing his fingertips around the waistband. He growls in Erik’s ear, totally getting into his role now. “You want to belong to Charles, do you? You were both too afraid to ask for what you wanted--and just think, all this time, the other wanted it, too. But we’re going to fix that, aren’t we?”

“Oh, yes,” Charles says. “We’re definitely going to fix that.” Erik is already so far gone at the moment that it’s all he can do just to nod.

“If not for Charles’ claim on you,” Wesley continues, “I would have already had you, right there where I found you, Erik. You would have been down on your knees, taking your punishment for trespassing on private property.” His voice leaves no mystery as to what he means by ‘punishment’. “You would have loved it, wouldn’t you? Going down on me--desperate, grateful. Making me come for you. Just like you’d always wanted to do for Charles--like you still want to do for Charles. And now you can. Now both of you can have it.” With one of his wicked-coy smiles, Wesley turns to Charles with his arms around Erik’s waist, head against his chest, hips pressed together: “Don’t we make a pretty picture, Charles?”

The nearly-overwhelming surge of lust that Charles projects to them (and to everyone with a couple-hundred mile radius) nearly ends everything before it gets started. His desire ratcheting up exponentially, and encouraged by Wesley’s imaginative and delightfully filthy mind, Charles projects a couple (dozen or so) images to them about what he wants.

Erik is almost insane with lust, pulling Wesley closer, trying to capture his mouth in a kiss. Wesley continues weaving the fantasy. “I wonder…oh, god…oh, fuck…I wonder….” Wesley pants, “Charles would you like it if Erik sucked my dick while you were in my head…? Would you like that Charles? Would you like to feel Erik’s mouth on me like it was happening to you?”

Erik whimpered (he will hotly deny it later, but…yeah--he totally whimpered). Images start rapidly flickering through his mind, some Erik recognizes from his own fantasies, a kaleidoscope of pornographic images that leaves them all panting.

“Come on, Charles! You know I want him, but we won’t do this without you in my head. And you know it’s really you he wants, anyway. Do it!” Wesley is growling in frustration, when suddenly, finally, he feels Charles’ presence in his mind. Yes!

Wesley shudders all over as Charles fully enters his mind, <<“FUCK!, Charles! That’s worth
the price of admission all by itself! More, please!">> He laughs, half giddy at the sensory-overload coursing through him.

"Like that, do you?>> comes Charles amused voice. "More, you say, Wes?>>

"Hell, yes!>>

"Well…you are willing to let me use you for this--and I kind of owe you for not completely freaking out over the leg thing, earlier.>> From Erik’s amused snort, Wesley gathers that Charles shared that with him, as well.

"Oh, I’d say we’re good now."

Erik nearly sobs in relief as Wesley’s mouth captures his in a kiss—heated and wild, so full of teeth and aggression and desire that he nearly comes right then. Wesley is licking and biting at Erik’s neck, rubbing against his chest, fingers again tracing the waistband of his trousers.

Charles takes over, moving Wesley’s shaking hands to Erik’s belt to start working the leather through the loops, then working the fly, hands trembling with their want. “Oh, fuck! Charles is moving my hands…oh fuck, that’s weird!—but good! It’s good! Don’t stop, Charles!”

Wesley frees Erik from his trousers and sucks in a breath (or is it Charles?) before taking Erik in his strong, calloused hand and begins to firmly stroke him (Charles must have pulled that image out of his mind, Erik thinks). “He wants me to kiss you again,” Wesley says, looking up at Erik, blue eyes gone hot and hazy with desire, thick brown hair messy, pale skin flushed rosy, lazy smile on his red kiss-swollen lips—“fuck he’s beautiful!” Erik thinks. “He likes the way we look together. He likes watching us.”

Coupled with the feel of Wesley’s hands on him, the thought of Charles getting off on watching them is almost enough to make Erik come, but at the last moment Charles makes Wesley release his grip on Erik. “Can’t have you coming yet,” Charles admonishes, grinning wickedly.

Erik lets out a ragged, tortured moan of disappointment before laughing, “You like to watch? Why, Charles, I had no idea you were so! You never fail to surprise me. Well…let’s give you something to watch, then.” One of his hands cups the back of Wesley’s neck and brings him in for that kiss Charles wanted to see, his other arm wrapping around Wesley’s hips to bring their bodies tight together. Wesley is more than eager to meet him halfway—but not just Wesley. Erik can see Charles looking out of Wesley’s eyes, knows that Charles is along for the ride. He glances over at where Charles is setting and sees that Charles’ eyes are at the same time both unfocused, yet intent as he fully joins his mind with Wesley’s.

“Charles…,” he breathes. If he had any doubts, they are dispelled at the smile he gets in return—that smile would never, could never, come from Wesley. Suddenly, this is about so much more than sex. Or so much more that just sex, anyway. He feels the warm presence of Charles’ mind in his own

<<You know I wanted to be here in Wesley’s mind when this happens, Erik. For me, that was the whole point of him being here—the unexpected desire was just an added bonus for us. He’s here, too, by the way. He knows what’s happening. He’s experiencing this as much as I am.>>

“So what do you want Charles? I want this to be good for you.”

<<I’m rather enjoying just standing for the moment, actually. But I was rather taken with Wesley’s little scenario, to be honest…”>> Images flow through Erik’s mind: Erik sliding to his knees, his hands sliding over Wesley/Charles’ body… Wesley/Charles’ hand gripping Erik’s hair, forcing his head back…Wesley/Charles in moaning pleasure while looking into Erik’s handsome
face, with its ever-changing eyes…

“Oh, yes, Erik! Beautiful, so beautiful. I’ve wanted this for so long. I can’t wait to be in your mouth, Erik. Oh, fuck, please… I want you so badly. I need to fuck your mouth,” Charles moans, via Wesley.

Erik, being a bit busy at the moment acting out Charles’ wishes, projects back to Charles that he expects this blow-job to be reciprocated. <<“I know you can do that,”>> he thinks at Charles.

Afterwards, Wesley and Erik collapse in each others arms, Charles still in their minds <<Thank you for that--both of you>> * Erik and Wesley laugh tiredly, as at the same time, they say, “No. Thank YOU.”

Charles gently withdraws from their minds, and they lay on the carpet basking in the afterglow of the most amazing sex that any of them has ever had, to date.

To no one’s great surprise, Wesley is the first to break the silence. “Well,” he laughs, “to answer your earlier question, Charles, the ‘ick-factor’ is officially no longer an issue.”

While Wesley is getting dressed, Erik manages to find the strength to crawl over and rest his head in Charles’ lap so that Charles can stroke his hair and murmur nonsensically to him.

“Now that you’ve gotten the initial sex stuff out of the way,” Wesley says, “I will leave you two alone to work on the emotional stuff.” He pauses for a moment. “If you want my opinion--and even if you don’t--” he holds up a hand to forestall any comments, “I think you two can work it out. I have the emotional sensitivity of a rock, and even I could feel how much you love each other. . Erik’s already heard this from me, but I’ll say it again for you, Charles: You don’t know how lucky you are. Not everyone gets a second chance--don’t give up on this without a fight.”

As he walks out the door, he looks back at them and smirks, “Now, I will leave you alone to cry like little girls, whilst I find Robbie and go shoot stuff.”

Which is how Wesley ends up in the infirmary ‘comforting’ a drunk and emotionally compromised Nicholas Garrigan, and thinking, “How is this even my life?”
Chapter Summary

The next step in Steve and Frederick's relationship leads to an awkward encounter with the always-sensitive Dr. Garrigan.

Chapter Notes

Short chapter.

“…last fucking holdout, then!”

“Never. Try. That. Again.”

Steve and Frederick look at each other in trepidation as they near the infirmary. Oh, the shouting and cursing coming from inside is nothing new—just that it’s usually all coming from Nicholas. What surprises them is hearing Robbie yelling back, then stomping out of the room, looking fit to murder.

“Wonder what’s got Garrigan on the war-path?” Steve whispers to Freddie, as Robbie stalks past. “I mean, more so than usual…”

“Garrigan?!” Freddie hisses. “What about Robbie? I’ve never so much as heard the man raise his voice before. What did Nicholas do to him that angry?”

“That’s what I wanna know. Aw, who can tell? Garrigan’s a nutter.”

“That man is not stable,” Freddie agrees, still whispering. “Maybe we should come back later. Perhaps when he’s in a better mood.”

Steve snorts quietly, “So, never, then…?”

Freddie sighs. “I suppose you have a point. Still, I’m not really comfortable asking him about this. Especially now—when he’s sure to be in a spectacularly bad mood.”

“If you recall, Freddie, this was your big idea. We could have easily taken care of this in town—that was my plan. But, no, someone was too embarrassed.”

Freddie shuffles his feet, “Well…yes…but you were going to steal it, Steve!”

“And…?”
“You can’t just go around stealing things from people!”

Steve slings an arm around Freddie’s neck, “Of course I can, darling--I’ve made a living of it! You know that!”

Freddie glances at him sidelong, “What if you’d tried and gotten caught?”

“I’ve never gotten caught,” Steve brags. “Almost caught? Sure. But that’s what makes it exciting, right?” He winks at Freddie, who blushes. “And,” he laughs, ruffling Fred’s hair, “if you don’t want to deal with mean old Nicky, I’ll just lift what we need from him, too!”

“Steve!”

Steve places his hands on Frederick’s shoulders and looks into his clear blue eyes, “Freddie, if you really don’t want to talk to Garrigan, there are other options. But if you want to go another route, it’s just that it’s going to take time. But that’s fine if you’re willing to, you know…wait--I’ll support you, no matter how long you need to wait.”

Frederick looks into Steve’s clear blue eyes and smiles crookedly, “You, sir, are a manipulative bastard of the highest order.”

“And you, sir, have proven yourself to be, this day, just full of surprises. Your sudden use of profanity for starters,” Steve teases. “Honestly, Frederick! Do you kiss your mother with that mouth?”

“No, not my mother…” Freddie grins,

“So we’re doing this, then…?”

“How about this…? You’ll do the talking. I’ll stand around and look miserable--that’s sure to put Nicholas in a better mood. Right?”


Steve and Frederick enter the infirmary, glancing at each in amusement, taking in Dr. Garrigan’s drunken, irritated muttering: “…then fucking flounces off like a spinster aunt! Suppose he reckons the fucking inventory is just going to count its fucking self now! Don’t even know now if I have enough antihistamines for that fucking nerd, Brian! What the fuck is it with nerds and their fucking allergies, anyway? Probably allergic to that fucking Tumnus. ‘Oh my, aren’t I just the hairiest little faun ever!’ Fucking shedding everywhere, wee fucking hooves clattering about…”

At the sound of snorting laughter, his whips around glaring. His surly, “What the fuck are you laughing abo--?” is interrupted by Steve and Fred’s simultaneous, “WHOA!!”, as they get a look at Nick’s face.

“Jesus, Nick! What happened to your eye!” asks Steve.

“Yes, Nicholas…your eye looks horrible. Are you OK?”

Nicholas bristles, and Steve rolls his eyes at Freddie, Now you’ve done it. Wait for it…wait for it… Eyes (eye, rather) bulging, Nicholas shouts, “‘Am I OK?’ , ‘Am I OK?’ Do I fucking look like I’m OK?! No, I am not fucking OK, Frederick! Since you two idiots seem to be fans the screamsingly
fucking obvious: I have a fucking black eye from where fucking Robbie punched me in the fucking face (--Robbie!? Wh--). It’s none of your fucking business why! And, yes, it hurts like a fucking bitch. I repeat--I am not fucking OK! Would you like me to fucking clarify that statement? No? Well, thank fuck something’s gone right today! Now what the fuck do you two want!?”

Steve rubs his hand over the back of his neck, “Erm, well…umm…”

“Spit it the fuck out! I haven’t got all fucking day!”

Freddie fidgets, his face turning red, while Steve motions an irritated Nicholas over and murmurs quietly into his ear. Nicholas draws back and looks at them, glaring balefully, “You have got to be fucking kidding me!”

“Well…no…”

“You have got to be fucking kidding me. You two? How the fuck long has this been going on? I mean, I always fucking figured the two of you for arse-bandits (--Hey!--), just never thought I’d see the fucking day the Virgin Queen here,” he waves his hand at Freddie, “would give it up!” He digs through his store of medical supplies. “Please fucking tell me that I don’t have to have ‘The Talk’ with you. I don’t think what’s left of my sanity would fucking survive it.”

“NO!” Steve and Frederick shout in horror.

“No. Please don’t. I don’t think anyone’s sanity would survive that. Besides, we’ve got it under control,” Steve says.

“Thank fuck for that! Here,” he thrusts a couple of tubes of lube and a handful of condoms at Frederick. “Here! Take it! Fuck knows I’m sure as hell not gonna be needing it any time soon.”

“Thanks…”

Steve awkwardly pats Nick’s shoulder. “That’s gotta suck. So, um…Yeah! Thanks, mate! Er…know where we can find some booze?”

“If I fucking knew that, I’d be fucking drinking it! And while we’re on the subject of vices….” Nick neatly snags the pack of cigarettes from Steve’s shirt pocket and slips them into his lab coat, “I’m taking these as payment for services fucking rendered. Oh, and here’s some fucking ointment for that beard-burn, Steve.”

“I don’t have beard-burn.”

“Yet…” Nick smirks. “Now--if that’s all: Get the fuck out!”

“Ok, then,” Frederick says as they escape from the infirmary. “That had to be one of the most awkward experiences I have ever had. That man is certifiably insane! At first I was wondering why Robbie hit him, but now I’m only wondering why he hasn’t hit Nicholas before now.”

“Eh, he’s not that bad. I’ve certainly seen worse. You’re just so nice that everyone seems meaner in comparison.”

“Is that supposed to be a compliment, Steve? Or are you saying I’m…what’s the word--a wimp?”

“Of course it’s a compliment, darling! Why would insult someone I want to shag? That would be
“Yes. It would.” Uh-oh. Frederick has that look in his eyes.

“Oh, come on now, Freddie! You know I meant it as a compliment. I would never even think of you as anything less than manly! I didn’t realize that I would be insulting you by saying how a nice person you are. I like that you’re a nice man. I wouldn’t be here with you if I didn’t like it. You’re all the things that I wish I was. Don’t be mad at me--not now. Please, Freddie…”

Frederick looks at Steve and laughs. “You know I was just messing with you, right? But it’s nice to know you care.”

“Oh, my dear…you are so going to bottom for that!”

“Bottom?”

From behind, Steve wraps his arms around Frederick and kisses the back of his neck. “Trust me,” he says, all charming smiles and shifty-eyes. “You’ll love bottoming!”
Have You Seen This Man?

Chapter Summary

While searching for a missing Robbie Turner, Wesley hears an interesting story from Fred and Steve.

Chapter Notes

Short chapter

“Where the fuck is he?” Wesley mutters to himself. Robbie hadn’t shown up at the range and wasn’t at any of his usual haunts. It’s not like him to not be where he says he’s going to be. If you look up ‘reliable’ in the dictionary, Robbie’s picture would be there by the definition.

He was really hoping to avoid this, but he’s going to have to brave a trip down to the infirmary to retrieve Robbie from the evil clutches of Nick Garrigan. “I wouldn’t put myself through this torture for just anybody, I hope his inconsiderate ass appreciates this.”

Why anyone would willingly stay in that place listening to Dr. Sunshine’s incessant bitching is beyond Wesley’s ability to reason. The only thing that makes any sense is that Robbie is trying to atone for something and that he sees the time spent with Nicholas as his penance. What could possibly be that bad, though?

“Hey Wesley!”

He looks up from his pondering to see Steve and Freddie—with their arms around each other, smiling from ear to ear. He does a double-take.

“You okay, Wesley?” Freddie asks, now looking concerned at the look on Wesley’s face.

“Yeah, I’m fine. So…you two, huh? You weren’t just messing with me earlier, you really…?”

“Learned to ‘drive a stick’?”, Freddie smiles. “So it would seem.”

“And it’s all thanks to you and your friend Erik!” Steve adds.

“Me!?"

“Oh, yes, Wesley!” Frederick says. “First, your friend made Steve get flirty, and then you jumped to conclusions about Steve and started yelling at us. If you hadn’t I wouldn’t have gotten so angry.
And then I would never have worked up the nerve to show Steve how I felt.”

“And I would never have dared to come onto Frederick first--I was worried about freaking him out. But now it’s all worked out perfectly!”

“Yes, we’ve got condoms and lube and everything!” Freddie adds, holding out the supplies they got from Nicholas. He smiles at Steve. “And Steve says that I get to bottom!”

Wesley shoots a narrow-eyed look at Steve (who, in turn, is giving Wesley a desperate, shifty-eyed, ‘don’t ruin this for me’ look), “Did he now? Well…you guys sure don’t waste any time.” He gets a look of profound relief from Steve. “So,” he continues, “Where’d you get all that stuff, anyway? In town?”

“No, we got it from Nicholas.”

“I’ll bet that was fun.”

“You don’t even know,” says Steve, rolling his eyes.

Wesley nods in understanding. “Well guys, I’m happy for you, really happy. I wish you all the best, but now I’ve gotta head down to the infirmary myself. Robbie was supposed to meet me at the range, but never showed up--I can’t find him anywhere. I figure Garrigan must still be holding him hostage.”

“Oh!” Steve perks up, “I can’t believe I almost forgot! Robbie’s not in the infirmary.“

“Where is he, then!?"”

“I don’t know. He was leaving just as we were getting near the door. But, hey! You wanna hear some hot gossip?”

“You mean besides the two of you finally hooking up?” Wesley asks.

“Oh, yes! I can’t believe I almost forgot!” Frederick says. “Robbie punched Nicholas in the face!”

Wesley the look on Wesley’s face is torn between ecstasy and utter shock. “Robbie did WHAT!?!”

“He punched Garrigan in the face! Gave him a black eye! Horrible looking…,” Steve grins.

“Please tell me this is not a joke!”

Freddie picks up story, “Yes, we heard them shouting as we were coming up on the infirmary, then Robbie came storming out and stomped by us. Didn’t even speak. I’ve never seen him like that before…”

“When we walked inside,” Steve continues, “Garrigan was grumbling and cursing as usual, so we didn’t think too much about it until he turned around and we got a look at his eye. We tried to ask what happened, but he just said that Robbie punched him in the face and that it was, and I quote (and here he adopts a horrendous Scottish accent): “…nane ay yer fookin’ business why!”

Wesley thinks he might be dreaming. No day should be this good. Apparently, he’s an inadvertent world-class match-maker, he’s had incredible three-way afternoon sex with Charles and Erik, then he finds out that Robbie Turner--his Robbie…er…his friend Robbie, he means--punched that little rat Nicholas fucking Garrigan in the face! The only way it could be better was if Wesley,
himself, had been the one to punch Garrigan.

A strange little smile graces Wesley’s lips as he imagines how the scene must have played out—he can almost hear the crack of Robbie’s knuckles connecting with Nick’s face. If Fred and Steve are a little disturbed by that smile, then they are a lot disturbed when the smile suddenly disappears and Wesley’s eyes burn cold with rage, as he tries to imagine what horrible thing Nicholas must have done to make Robbie react so violently. “I’m headed to the infirmary. If you see Robbie tell him to wait for me in my room.”

Steve speaks up, “Wesley, I don’t think you should go down there until you’ve talked to Robbie. I’m sure there’s a perfectly reasonable explanation for what happened.”

“Steve’s right,” Frederick says. “Besides, Robbie’s a grown man—he won’t appreciate you trying to fight his battles for him. Whatever happened, he already took care of it. Don’t make worse, Wes.”

“I can’t ask Robbie because I can’t find him. For whatever reason, he actually likes Garrigan. Don’t look at me—I don’t understand it, either. So I know he wouldn’t have punched him unless Garrigan did something really awful. I don’t know what Garrigan did to him. But I’m going to find out.”

With that, he strides out of the room, leaving Steve and Fred looking worriedly after him.
Chapter Summary

Poor Nicholas' is having a bad day. He's tried drinking, smoking, yelling at Hank--nothing's helped. He's depressed and frustrated. And he's pretty sure that Wesley is going to kill him. Could his day get any worse? Of course, it can...

Chapter Notes

“Why does this fucking shite always happen to me?” Nicholas bitches as he watches Steve and Fred leave the infirmary, arms around each other and just as happy as little larks. “I can’t even get one wee fucking kiss, and those two come prancing in, throwing it about that they’re shagging! ‘Ooh, look at us Nicky--we’re so in loooove! We need lube! Because we’re having SEX!’ Fucking bastards!”

He lights up one of his pilfered cigarettes (at least he’s gotten something out of this day), taking a long drag as he wanders back over toward the Scotch. If he’s not mistaken, there’s still over ½ the bottle left. I am going to get so fucking drunk that I will forget this day ever fucking happened. To achieve this goal, he’ll no doubt have to raid Charles’ liquor cabinet. Then again, he’s not sure if there is enough alcohol in the world to erase the horror of this day.

Catching a glimpse of himself in the mirror, he winces--that black eye is turning out to be just a bad as he’d expected. But it’s not his first, it won’t be his last--hey, it’s not like he doesn’t ken that he’s arse. That isn’t what’s got him all out of sorts. He flops down at his desk, swigging the Scotch straight from the bottle, cursing when he realizes that he’s let his cigarette burn out. He lights another, absently wondering if he can bully Sean or Brian into giving him some pot. Fuck knows he could use a wee toke.

Frustrated and increasingly depressed, he continues knocking back the Scotch. Robbie rejected him. Not just rejected the kiss (though the bastard was into it at first--he was!), but rejected him--Nicholas. Robbie is probably the only friend…is the only friend that he has here. Anywhere, really. What if he loses that? The look on Robbie’s face when he stormed out of the room said ‘I’m finished with you’. And now, Nick’s afraid that he’s really fucked up bad and that he’s not going to get a chance to explain and to fix things, not that it matters. Gibson’s going to fucking kill him now, anyway. Nicholas feels like crying--and, oh wouldn’t that just make his fucking humiliation complete? At least he’s not horny anymore…much.

Sinking further into his depression (Alcohol is a depressant, Dr. Garrigan--he drinks a toast to his brilliance in remembering this fact),he slumps back in his chair, slouching down, waiting for the booze and nicotine to work their magic. Ignoring the list of uncounted inventory, feet on his desk, his head tilted back, cigarette between his lips, Scotch readily within reach, he finally starts to drift off.
into an alcohol-induced haze. But just as his eyes start to close, he notices a bit of blue fluff float across the floor. Immediately he snaps upright, eyes…er, eye narrowed, senses on full-alert—he’s all but quivering with suppressed excitement, like a bird-dog on point. “McCoy!” he hisses.

Sure enough, the bit blue fluff is followed by another…then another…and another. Soon, Nicholas can hear the tell-tale click of claws and the heavy padding of McCoy’s feet…paws…whatever the fuck they are, coming toward the infirmary.

Lurching drunkenly to his feet, Nicholas smiles in long-waited anticipation, slurring to himself, “McCoy, you furry fucking bastard! You picked the wrong fucking day to shed in my fucking infirmary!”

Moments Later…

“…fucking lab is no doubt spotless. Mine!? Blue fucking FUR all over the fucking place! And why the fuck is that!? You keep coming here to fucking shed, that’s why! Don’t you even fucking try to act like you don’t! Between you and that fucking Tumnus, I can’t keep the fucking place clean! Now get the fuck out of my infirmary and fucking STAY OUT!!”

Distracted by his mission (the sound of shouting coming from the infirmary barely even registering anymore), Wesley is nearly knocked on his ass by Hank McCoy, who has come scurrying out of the room, looking more frightened and intimidated than any enormous blue man-beast should have the right to look.

“Wesley?! Oh, oh, I’m sorry! I…I didn’t see you--I’m afraid I wasn’t paying attention, I…I’m so sorr--,” Hank stammers, looking nervously back toward the infirmary.

“Hank! Calm down! You’ve got nothing to apologize for--I’m fine. Now, tell me what’s wrong?”

Voice barely above a whisper, Hank tells Wesley, “Don’t go in there! Nicholas has completely lost it. I don’t know what’s happened, but he’s drunk--I mean really drunk, not just his usual--and he has a black eye. He started shouting at me as soon as I walked in! At first, he was just yelling about the fur--like I can help that--and then he started rambling about a bunch of stuff that didn’t make any sense.”

“Like what?”

“Well, he’s hard enough to understand as it is, but he was slurring so badly that he was even worse than normal. I think he was saying a bunch of stuff about Steve and Frederick being larks and making puppies. Then he said that he wasn’t going to be making any puppies and what a shame that was since you were going to kill him because of Robbie, who was a hypocrite anyway. Then he started in on the fur again. He must have some latent mutant abilities because I don’t think he stopped yelling long enough to breathe!”

“Did he say anything else about Robbie?”

“No. Why?”

“Robbie’s the one who gave Nicholas the black eye. And now I can’t find Robbie.”

“Robbie’s the one who hit him?! Why would he do that? I thought he and Nicholas were
friends…or at least, Robbie tolerated him better than anyone else.”

“Yeah. That’s what I thought, too. I don’t know what that little rat bastard did to Robbie, but I’m about to find out!” Eyes determined, he shoulders Hank aside and goes marching into the infirmary…

Just as Nicholas is wondering if this day could possibly get any worse (yelling at McCoy was strangely unsatisfying), who comes striding through the door, looking like Death on a mission, but his mortal enemy…Wesley Gibson. Well, this is it, he thinks, I’m going to die.

Nicholas calmly accepts his fate, but just the same, he plans to go down fighting. Gibson might beat him to death, but he won’t forget him--he’ll find that Nicholas Garrigan kens a thing or two about fighting dirty.

However, even the best-laid plans of mice (or, in this case, rats) and men can often go awry--especially when said plans are attempted during an alcoholic depression fueled by nearly an entire bottle of Scotch. So when Wesley reaches out to grab Nicholas and shake some answers out of him, to both Nicholas’ and Wesley’s mutual horror, Nicholas flings himself at Wesley and begins sobbing (completing his transition to utter humiliation--if Wesley kills him now it would only be a mercy).

Wesley is frozen in horror as Nicholas latches onto him, sobbing, the words coming out of his mouth, more a rambling stream-of-consciousness than anything resembling actual communication: PleasedontkillmeImsorryIdontwanttodieItwasjustonekissI didntmeananythingbyitIwasjustloneyWhatswrongv PleasedontkillmeWhydoesntanyonelikemeOhGodPleasekillmeNodontkillmeTellhimImsorry…”

Wesley oh-so-awkwardly pats Nicholas on the back as he tries to absorb Nick’s drunken rambling and make some sense out of it. He still needs to find out what happened to Robbie. He manages to catch ‘kiss’ and ‘tell him I’m sorry’. Wesley’s eyes nearly pop out. Oh, shit. He didn’t.

“Kiss?” Wesley manages to pry Nicholas off and push him back enough to look into his eyes, barely hiding his wince of sympathy when he gets a good look at the black eye (‘Man! Robbie really let him have it!’). Nicholas gazes back at him, the eye that’s not swollen shut looking huge, vulnerable, and very blue. The miserable, guilty, pathetic look on Nicholas’ face tells Wesley everything he needs to know. This time he can’t hide his wince of sympathy. Oh shit. He did.

Sighing, he reluctantly puts his arms back around Nicholas, easing them both to sit on the floor, letting Nick lean on him and sob drunkenly. Wesley pats on his back in what he hopes is a soothing manner, reassuring Nick that he is not going to kill him (‘…yet’ he adds silently). Looking first at Nicholas, then heavenward, he thinks, ‘How is this even my life?’
Chapter Summary

Wesley and Nicholas have their confrontation and they fight, but it goes nothing like Wesley planned.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is very short and not where I intended the story to go, but oh, well... We'll see what happens from here.

"…I've Got a Bad Case of Loving You"--Nicholas and Wesley Part I

Still in the Infirmary...

Nicholas is still leaning against Wesley and sniffing into his neck (Is he sniffing me?!), but his sobs have finally died down to just the occasional sniffle, and his grip has relaxed enough that Wesley can finally breathe normally. Thank God! He was beginning to imagine that Nicholas' hair was really soft and smelled really good--and this day has been fucked up enough already, thank you. And now that the 'Ick-factor' has been shot to shit (thanks for that, Charles), the last thing he needs is to pop a tent over Nicholas Garrigan (even though a sick, sick part of him does secretly think Nick would be amazing in bed--Oh, come on! You just know that someone that selfish and amoral would have to be).

Time to get it back under control, Gibson. "Well, Garrigan? Now that you've finished PMSing, are you going to tell me what happened?"

He hears a muffled reply that he's pretty sure is, "Fuck you! And I wasn't fucking planning on it..."

Wesley grabs the back of Nicholas' neck, gives him a little shake, and growls, "Let me rephrase that: Tell me what happened--I'm not asking, Garrigan."

Jerking away from Wesley, Nicholas jumps up, face red with humiliation, "It's none of your fucking business, you wee fuck!"

Wesley stands nose-to-nose with him, "Tell me or I'm gonna kick your fucking ass, Garrigan!"

"Not if I kick yours first, you fucking wanker!"
“What did you do to Robbie!?”

“You already fucking know! I’m not fucking going over it again!”

“Tell me!”

“Get out of my fucking infirmary, before I fucking throw you out!”

“Please! Not five minutes ago, you were clinging to me, crying like a toddler with a skinned knee! I’d be more worried about you getting snot on me than you hitting me!”

“Fuck you! Bring it on, you fucker!”

“Need to blow your nose first, little boy?”

Unfortunately, in anticipation of living his dream of finally beating the ever living shit out of Nick Garrigan, Wesley has forgotten two of the classic rules of combat: first, never underestimate your opponent and second, never forget that everyone has a breaking point. As a result, he’s not quite prepared for solid rugby tackle Nicholas hits him with. Fortunately, Wesley hasn’t done all of his training for nothing. He grins fiercely, as Nicholas takes him down. It is so on.

Much to Wesley’s shock, he’s finding that actually needs his enhanced speed and strength. Nicholas is surprisingly fast and squirming--giving it everything he has, cursing and spitting like a cat all the while. And even though Nick can’t fight worth a shit, Wes is still having a hard time getting him pinned down. He’s grudgingly impressed by the effort Nick’s putting into it--if he’d had been sober, he might actually have gotten in more than a just a lucky tackle.

Finally, Wesley manages to flip Nicholas onto his front and him grab him in a bear-hug from behind, pinning his arms.

“Ow! You fucking bastard! Let me the fuck up!” Nicholas pants.

“Stop fighting me, Nicholas! You’re going to hurt yourself!”

Still enraged, Nicholas doesn’t (or can’t) listen--exhausted as he’s becoming, he’s still bucking and squirming, trying to break out of Wesley’s hold on him. Desperate now, realizing that his arms are hopelessly trapped, he slams his head back against Wesley’s face. He feels a mixture of horror and deep satisfaction at both the sound of the cartilage in Wesley’s nose crunching and the resulting shout of pain. The satisfaction, however, is short-lived as Wesley’s immediate response is to bounce Nick’s head off of the floor. That finally takes the fight out of Nicholas and he gives up, going limp--not unconscious, just limp, finally giving up. Exhausted and panting, both men lay there on the floor, not moving.

Wesley wraps his arms tighter around Nicholas, pulling him closer, when he realizes that Nicholas isn’t just panting or breathing hard. He is sobbing harshly--quite unlike his earlier drunken sobbing. Wesley can feel him shaking in terror of something. Then he remembers what Charles told him about Nicholas’ time in Uganda--about the torture that Nicholas went through. Fuck! He’s having a flashback! Wesley holds him close, stroking his hair, and murmuring into Nick’s ear that he’s safe, that everything is okay. “I’ve got you. I’ve got you. It’s alright, Nicholas. You’re safe.”

Wesley arranges them with his back to the wall, so that Nicholas, who has finally drifted off into
an exhausted slumber, can rest against him, his back to Wesley’s chest. Nick’s head has tipped back against Wesley’s shoulder, and his soft snores are gusting against Wesley’s neck—having the unfortunate effect of driving Wes to distraction, causing him (in spite of the pain of his possibly broken nose) to shiver every time Nicholas breathes out.

“God, why are you doing this to me?!?” Wesley groans miserably, resting his face on Nicholas’ head, rubbing his cheek against Nicholas’ silky hair. “I do not need this, right now. Please, God—not him. Not Garrigan! Anyone but him. It’s not fair!”

But then love never was.

Adding insult to injury, Nicholas stirs, burrowing in closer to Wesley, and mumbles sleepily, “You know, your pleas to the Almighty might carry more weight if your cock wasn’t fucking poking me in the arse—figuratively speaking.”

“I hate you,” Wesley whines, thumping head against the wall.

Nicholas smiles against his skin. “That’s not what you were telling God, you fucker.”

“I really hate you,” Wesley sighs, winding his arms back around Nicholas. Catching himself breathing in the scent of Nick’s hair, he thinks, ‘God, I am so fucked.’

How, in the space of an hour, did that annoying, sarcastic, SOB, Nicholas Garrigan suddenly become the absolute most adorable, rumpled, grumbly, adorable fucking thing Wesley has ever seen? He’s terrified that if he looks in the mirror right now, there will be big hearts where his pupils are supposed to be—like some freaking cartoon character or something. It’s not fair. This is not supposed to be happening like this. He had truly, honestly thought that if he ended up with anyone, it would be Robbie. In fact, he had almost convinced himself of it—apparently, though, it seems there was more than just excuse of ‘issues’ holding him back from pursuing a relationship with Robbie. He doesn’t look forward to that talk. How is he going to let Robbie down like that?

“Er…how’s your nose?” Nicholas asks, interrupting Wesley’s thoughts. “I’m sorry about that, by the way. I, uh, panicked, I guess and…well…I should probably take a look at it.”

“It’s OK, I mean, it’s not too bad. I’ve had worse, anyway. I do think I may be hallucinating, though. I’m pretty sure you just spoke several sentences in a row without using the word ‘fuck’.”

Nicholas tilts his head back, looking at Wesley, annoyed. “Why does that always surprise everyone so fucking much? I can speak proper fucking English, you know.”

“And after that fine example of speech, who could doubt it?” Wesley smirks.

Nicholas’ response of: “Fuck off! Now do you want me to take a look at your fucking nose or not, wanker?” sounds, to Wesley, strangely like an endearment.

Wesley finds himself perched on an exam table getting his nose checked out, listening as Nicholas (after finding out that Robbie is missing) finally fills him in on the events leading up to The Punch:
“…So I was drunk and I’m not sure what fucking happened but I kept getting more and more horny--I don’t know…I just grabbed Robbie and just fucking laid one on him. I’ve never even been attracted to the wee fuck before. And you know what the fucking bitch of it is…?”

“I can hardly wait,” Wesley scowls.

“You're the one that wanted to fucking know," Nick reminds him. "Anyway...The bitch of it was that the pasty English fuck was into it--at first, anyway. If the fucker hadn’t kissed me back I never would have tried to…er, deepen the kiss. That’s when he fucking hit me.”

Wesley stares at Nicholas, ignoring the sharp clench in his stomach when he hears Nick say that Robbie was ‘into it’ and had kissed Nicholas back. I am not jealous of Robbie. I'm not. “So you tried to slip him some tongue and that’s when he gave you the shiner. It doesn’t make sense. I mean, it does--that he got mad. But why would he just take off like that?”

"Maybe he was ashamed of fucking losing control like that--he did say he was sorry for hitting me.” He is avoiding eye contact with Wesley.

“And the rest…?"

Nicholas sighs, “I told him that it wasn’t even a good kiss and that it wasn’t like I’d done anything that his fucking boyfriend hadn’t done to him. That’s when he really lost it--I was actually afraid of him for a moment--and stormed out.”

“Boyfriend?”

Nicholas looks at Wesley, eyebrow raised, “I was talking about YOU, you moron!”

"Oh. Well I take it that issue has been resolved to your satisfaction."  

“Actually, I have yet to be satisfied. Now hold still, you big fucking girl! If you keep fucking squirming around I’m not going to be able to line it up properly!” Wesley flinches, wincing as Nicholas pushes the cartilage back into place, taping it. “The last fucking thing you need is for your nose to be any more crooked than it is already!”

Ignoring Wesley’s glare, Nicholas admires his handiwork--tilting Wesley’s face from side to side, making sure everything looks alright. Wesley can actually feel his heart stutter a bit as Nicholas leans in, peering into his eyes, cupping his face, thumbs sliding along Wes’s cheekbones. Wesley’s face starts to heat up and his breathing getting a little ragged, his lips parting slightly in anticipation. Though he will never admit it out loud, he is crushingly disappointed when Nick pulls back, asking almost clinically, “Well? How does that feel?”

“Er…I...fine, I guess…,” he shrugs, in his disappointment, missing the gleam in Nicholas’ eyes...er, eye.

“Excellent! Then I should be able to do this with no problem,” Nicholas smirks as he steps forward, leaning down to kiss Wesley. Just before their lips meet, Nicholas asks, “Now, are you gonna fucking punch me if I use tongue?”

“I’m gonna fucking punch you if you don’t!” Wesley growls, pulling Nicholas the rest of the way to him.
Becoming Robbie--Robbie Part II…

Chapter Summary

We check in very briefly with Erik and Charles (who, unbeknownst to all, might be projecting feels). Then we finally hear from Robbie. The poor boy has had plenty to think about--the kiss from Nicholas, The Punch, his relationship with Wesley, the talks he needs to with both men (which will mean revealing some truths about himself). And those problems aren't even at the top of his list.

Chapter Notes

A little more serious and feely than I'd intended...

In the Library…

“So, Erik…,” Charles says, tracing his finger up and down Erik's spine, “What now?”

“You mean, ‘What now?’ the future or ‘What now?’ as in, what should we try next?”

“I mean, what should we try next,” Charles laughs. “I’m not saying that the future, our future, is not important, darling, but I’m afraid that I’m having a rather difficult time thinking about anything unrelated to sex, at the moment.”

Erik looks back at him, smiling--teeth on full display, “For once, my friend, we are in perfect accord.”

“Will wonders never cease!? Now,” Charles grins, “if I’m not mistaken, don’t I owe someone a blow-job…?”

Meanwhile, Somewhere on Grounds of the Westchester Estate…

Robbie’s feeling pretty bad about not showing up at the range. He knows that Wesley is probably worried. Wes is nearly obsessive about everyone’s safety, and it’s not like Robbie to break his word but even as guilty as he feels, he just can’t face Wesley or Nick right now.

Robbie touches his lips--they still feel tingly from when Nicholas kissed him, earlier. It had felt so
good, feeling someone’s lips against his own. A part of him wanted so badly to give in, just let Nick have his way (Robbie snorts at himself, ‘Have his way...listen to me--I sound like a heroine in a Regency romance novel...’). He remembers that for just a moment he did give in, until Nick tried to French him, that is. He just had that moment of utter certainty that ‘This is not what I want. Not how it’s supposed to be.’

And how did he react? He panicked and punched his friend in the face. At the time, he was so angry (scared) that he didn’t care that he had hurt Nicholas--and not only physically. He would very much like to forget the look on Nicholas’ face as Robbie storm out of the infirmary, but his throbbing knuckles won’t let him. Now that he’s had a chance to calm down, he can recall with perfect clarity, the look of pain, bitterness, humiliation, rejection on Nicholas’ face and in his eyes.

He knows that he needs to apologize. Nick acted out of drunkenness, not malice…and Robbie overreacted--badly. He doesn’t want to lose Nick’s friendship. He can’t explain for the life of him why, but he really does like the man. And he knows, in turn, that Nick values his friendship--regardless of how he may act.

Yes, he’s going to have to have a long heart-to-heart talk with Nicholas. Explain as best he can, why he reacted the way he did and try to smooth things over. Perhaps things between them might have turned out different if Robbie was into casual relationships--but he’s not. He’s going to have to be completely open, and he’s a little scared to reveal certain things about himself. Nicholas is not exactly the most sympathetic ear, but one of the benefits of Nick’s lack of moral compass is that he has little room to throw stones and therefore, can be surprisingly non-judgmental. Considering all that’s happened today, though, maybe this will help put them back on equal footing.

What really scares him is the forthcoming conversation with Wesley. Robbie knows that Wes has certain ‘expectations’ concerning the two of them, even though Wesley has never actually said anything--whether out of respect or fear of losing his friend, Robbie doesn’t know. It will all but kill him if he ruins his and Wesley’s friendship, but the time has finally come to set some things straight. And that’s going to require laying everything on the line. If nothing else, Nicholas’ kiss has made him realize that he can’t go on pretending anymore.

This means, for a start, correcting Wesley’s misconception that Robbie isn’t attracted to men. While he doesn’t think of himself as a homosexual, he does find some men to be very attractive--one man in particular…it’s just not Wesley. Second, how is he going to break the news that it’s just not going to happen? Not with him. How do you tell someone you love that you love them but you don’t love them? No, he’s not looking forward to that conversation at all. How can he disappoint Wesley like that?

Still racking his brain, trying to find a solution to his problems, Robbie wanders back to the mansion, ignoring the queasy feeling in his stomach at what he knows he has to do. Time to face the music, Robert Turner. Time to tackle his real problem: How to tell the person you love that you love them and that even thought you are a coward and a jerk and an asshole and don’t deserve them, you want, need, desperately for that person to still love you back…?

He’s about to find out.

Having reached his destination, Robbie knocks, fighting back his panic as he waits, seemingly forever. Finally the door opens. “Tom? Can we talk?”

He nearly flinches at the expression (or lack of expression, rather) in Tom’s cool blue eyes (normally, warm and sparkling) as they assess him and, seemingly, find him lacking.

“Apparently, we can,” Tom answers, coolly.
“Tom, please! You know what I mean!”

Tom raises an eyebrow, his face still expressionless, “Do I? It’s difficult to know what you mean, Robbie. It tends to cause confusion when one constantly says one thing and does another.”

“Tom!”

“For example,” Tom continues, “When you tell me one moment that you have never felt closer to another person and then the next moment you stop speaking to me. With no explanation, whatsoever.”

“Tom, I--”

“Or,” Tom goes on relentlessly, hurt finally seeping into his voice, “Going out of your way one moment, to spend time with me, to find little ways to touch me--oh, you think I didn’t notice that?--and the next moment you avoid me like the plague.”

Robbie reaches out and grabs Tom’s shoulders, shaking him, “Tom! Please listen to me! I love you! I’m sorry for the way I treated you. I’ll do anything, if you’ll forgive me. I have never felt closer to another person--I’ll never feel closer to another person. I know I don’t deserve you, but I want you so much. I’ll spend the rest of my life making it up to you, I promise. I’ll make it my life’s mission to think of a million stupid excuses to touch you and--and--”

Robbie feels Tom grasping his shoulders, “Breathe, Robert. Breathe. You’re going to hyperventilate.”

Robbie sucks in a lungful of air. He can only blame the dizziness for the next words that tumble out of his mouth: “Nicholas kissed me. And I liked it.”

“Oh.” If Robbie has thought Tom’s voice cool, before--now it is all but dripping with icicles. “That thing I said about you saying one thing and doing another…” Tom’s eyes are blazing and he looks ready to kill. “You just said the most beautiful thing anyone has ever said to me--that I’ve ever heard or read, even; then you immediately turn around and tell me that you kissed someone else and liked it! What is wrong with you?! And NICHOLAS?! You fucking snogged NICHOLAS!!?”

“Wait, Tom! Let me explain! Please!”

“I think I’ve let you say more than enough, Robbie.” He turns around to go back into his room. Just before the door closes he hears Robbie frantically yelling:

“No! Wait! After he kissed me, I punched him in the face!”

Tom spins around. “You what!” he asks in disbelief.

“After he kissed me, I punched him in the face. Actually, he was still kissing me when I hit him.”

“You punched Garrigan. In the face.” Tom can’t hide his delight. He’s not any more fond of Nicholas than everyone else it seems.

“Yes! I punched him in the face.”


“Well, he surprised me, actually. He was drunk--drunker than usual--and he just grabbed me and kissed me. I never even saw it coming. I was so shocked that I couldn’t do anything. Then, well…
it’s been so long since I’ve been kissed that just for a second…,” he trails off, seeing Tom’s eyes narrow. “Er, anyway, just for a second, it felt really nice…then he tried to use his tongue…and… well, that’s when I hit him.”

“You hit him because you don’t like tongue?” Tom asks, dryly.

Robbie glares at Tom. “I like it just fine, thank you. But not from him. I didn’t--don’t--want him. I wanted it to be you…and I just panicked.”

“You wanted me?”

“That’s what I said.”

“Kiss me.”

“What?”

“Kiss me, Robbie. You said that you would do anything if I would forgive you. Well, kiss me. Show me, for once, that you really want me. I think I’ve put myself out there enough and gotten pushed away. Now it’s your turn to make a move.”

Robbie smiles at him, leaning in, “That’s not going to be a problem, anymore.”

Tom puts his hand on Robbie’s chest, stopping him, “I don’t think you quite understand, my dear. I’m not guaranteeing that anything will come of this. All I’m asking for is one kiss. I may still walk away when it’s over, Robbie. But if you don’t want me enough to take that risk, then there’s no hope for us. Are my terms acceptable to you?”

“Yes! Anything you want.”

“I’m waiting…”

So, Robbie kisses him. ‘Yes!’ he thinks, ‘this is what a kiss is supposed to be.’
Saving Doctor Garrigan

Chapter Summary

Tom plays kind of a mean trick on Robbie, but it turns out ok. Steve, Frederick, and Hank finally locate Robbie and warn him about Nicholas’ impending death at the hands of Wesley Gibson and they mount a mini-rescue mission (some participants more willing than others). Robbie hopes he’s not too late to save Nick--he gets a shock. Tom gets a good laugh.

Robbie puts his heart and soul into the kiss that he gives Tom. He finally pulls away, slowly drawing back to gaze into Tom’s beautiful face, keeping his hands still buried in Tom’s soft brown curls (he can’t bear to not touch him now). “Well…how is that for a start?”

Tom gazes back at Robbie for a moment, then pulling away from him, turns without a word and walks back into his room, shutting the door behind him.

Robbie stares at the closed door in stunned disbelief. He can feel the blood drain from his face, and as he sinks to his knees the only thought running through his head is: Oh, God! I waited too late. I waited too late. He can feel his heart breaking. He’d nearly been crushed when he lost Cecelia, but as much as he had loved her, that pain was nothing compared to what he was feeling now.

Still kneeling, he places his shaking hand on the door. Tom. Despairing, he leans forward, resting his head against the door for a moment–and falls into Tom’s room as the door suddenly opens. He looks up to see Tom standing over him, holding his coat.

“What’s wrong!? You just walked away without a word and slammed the door in my face. What do you think is wrong, Tom!?”

“Oh, Robbie!” His Irish brogue is getting stronger as he becomes distressed. “I was just going to get my coat is all. I’m sorry--I didn’t think….” Tom stops looking a little ashamed. “No, that’s not entirely true. I wanted you, just for a moment, to know how it felt to be rejected--how I’ve been feeling, lately. For you to be in my shoes for a change. That was cruel of me, I know. But, truly Robbie, I never meant for you to really think that I don’t want you.”

Robbie is having trouble believing what he’s hearing--he’s been on such an emotional roller-coaster today. Especially now. In the space of just a few minutes, he’s gone from being happier than he can ever remember being in his life, to the depths of despair, and now maybe right back up to the happiness. “You said that you might still walk away…and you did. What was I supposed to think, Tom?”

Tom smiles fondly at him, “Have a little faith, Robbie. It’s seemed to have paid off for me.” Standing up, he holds out his hand. “Now, I believe you wanted to talk. I was going to just talk to you here, but after that rather amazing kiss, I felt that perhaps it would be better if we talked somewhere a little more public--if we plan on getting any actual talking done, that is.”
Robbie smiles at Tom, dizzy with relief and joy, and takes his hand. “Ever the barrister, Mr. LeFroy,” he teases, getting to his feet. Then he turns to Tom, cupping his face and looking deeply into his eyes. “I meant what I said, Tom. I’m sorry for the way I treated you. I was afraid of how I felt and I was selfish—only thinking about myself, never stopping to think that you were hurting. I will make it up to you. You have my word.”

“I have on got it on good authority that the word of Robert Turner is quite the thing, but if it’s alright with you, I’d rather have your heart.”

“You’ve always had it, love,” Robbie tells him, kissing him gently. “But since I know you barristers love to negotiate, how about I give you my soul, as well?”

“You know me too well,” Tom laughs. “Throw in your body and you have a deal.”

“Deal.”

“Don’t you need to think about it first?” Tom asks, grinning.

“Tom…I haven’t been able to think about anything else. Deal.”

“Deal.”

They seal it with a kiss. Then another. And another…

And, just about the time the kisses have turned heated enough for the two of them to decide that “talking”, at this point, would be akin to closing the barn door after the horses have gotten out, they hear someone yelling, frantically:

“Robbie! Robbie! Thank, God! We’ve been looking for you everywhere! It’s—oh…”

Understandably irritated, Robbie looks up to see Frederick and Steve, flushed and out of breath—and looking so worried that even their shock at seeing him and Tom together is not enough to hide their agitation.

“Robbie, er…Tom,” Frederick says. “I’m sorry to, er…interrupt you, but you have to come with us, Robbie. Quick!”

“What’s wrong?” Robbie asks, part of him already knowing. No-- not now, he prays silently, knowing that it won’t do any good.

“It’s Wesley,” says Steve. “He’s going to kill Garrigan.”

“And we’re concerned, why?” Tom asks, dryly.

They all stare at him. He has the grace to look a little uncomfortable—even though he does despise the cock-blocking little bastard. Though, right now, he’s not sure if that means Garrigan or Gibson.

“We’re serious Robbie. Wesley was already worried about you not showing up at the range, then
he found out that you and Garrigan got into a fight and no one had seen you since. He was furious!

“To make matters worse,” Freddie adds. “Garrigan is really drunk—I mean really drunk. Even more so than usual—and even more combative than usual. As drunk as he is, Nicholas stands even less of a chance than he normally would. Wesley is going to murder him—if he hasn’t already. We have to stop him. I’m worried that we’re already too late.”

“Robbie! You have to get to the infirmary! Now!”

They all look up to see Hank barreling around the corner, fur puffed out—his anxiety causing his him to shed copiously. Nicholas would be having a stroke if he could see this, Robbie thinks.

“Please, I’ve been looking for you everywhere! Wesley is going to kill Dr. Garrigan! You have to stop him!”

“Do we really have to do this?” Tom asks, again. “It’s not like any of us, except for maybe Robbie—yes, it’s a mystery to me, too—really like Garrigan. We could just claim plausible deniability. Say we thought Gibson was joking or something…”

They forget that Frederick used to be an attorney—and apparently a good one, as he immediately homes in on the one thing that might sway Tom to their cause: “Tom what if by some freak occurrence, Nicholas were to win their little fight? As the only practicing attorney around, you would have to defend Garrigan.”

Under other circumstances, the look of horror on Tom’s face as he processes this information would be comical. “Christ!”

“Hank!” Tom yells. “Get Charles!” Then he starts running in the direction of the infirmary, yelling at the other three men, “What are you waiting for? We have to stop them!”

Robbie is nearly sick with anxiety. How is he going to live with his best friend killing one of his other friends over a non-existent relationship. Like…like, Robbie is Wesley’s territory—like Nicholas was poaching or something. This actually makes him kind of mad and Robbie decides that Wesley needs a good ass-kicking—providing that Robbie’s not too late to prevent Wesley from killing Nicholas.

Robbie’s anxiety increases the closer they get. They are nearing the infirmary and the sounds coming from inside, fill him with dread. “He’s going to beat Nicholas to death. I know it,” he tells Tom, as they race toward the infirmary.

For the sake of their fledgling relationship, he pretends that he doesn’t hear Tom’s muttered reply of, “One can only hope.”

Robbie and Tom reach the infirmary first—Freddie’s bad leg had slowed him and Steve down a little. They burst into the room and Robbie nearly has heart failure—for the second time that day, thinking, I’m too late.
Wesley has Nicholas down on the floor in some kind of choke-hold, and they’re…and, wait a minute…Robbie’s confused mind is trying to process what he’s seeing…they’re…why are they naked!? He gapes in utter shock as they both look up equally shocked—and more than a little embarrassed.

The strange wheezing noise Robbie has been hearing in the background, suddenly processes as laughter and he looks behind him to see Tom, collapsed against the wall, all but rolling about on the floor with laughter. “Oh, Robbie!” he gasps, tears of laughter running down his face. “You were so right, love! Wesley certainly was giving Garrigan a good pounding!” Further dissolving into fits of laughter (ignoring Nicholas’ snarled, “Fuck you, you fucking Scottish wannabe!”), he gasps out, “And if what I saw was any indication, that black eye is going to be the least of his worries, come the morning!”

About that time Steve and Frederick come running into the room. They stop short, looking at the scene before them in shock. “And you were surprised about Fred and me…?” Steve questions, eyebrow raised.

Wesley, attempting to cover himself and Nicholas with the discarded lab coat, scowls at them, “It’s not like we planned this or anything. It just happened.”

Wesley looks embarrassed, but Robbie can see how he’s keeping his hand on Nicholas and putting himself between Nick and everyone else, trying to shield him. Something in Robbie’s chest loosens and he can breathe again. Everything’s going to work out fine. He and Wesley still need to talk, but now Robbie knows that it’s going to be OK. He helps a still-laughing Tom (his boyfriend!) off of the floor, hugging him close.

“Now,” Wesley says to everyone, “do you think you perverts can turn around so that we can get dressed…or do you plan on buying tickets to the show?” He grins wickedly and runs a hand through Nick’s hair, gripping a handful, then pulling his head back kissing him deeply. He looks at the others, “…because we can keep going if you want to watch…”

A loud chorus of “No!” comes forth and they all hastily turn around.

“Jealous fuckers,” Nicholas grins. Wesley couldn’t agree more.
Nobody Likes A Jealous Hater

Chapter Summary

Very, very short chapter. Wesley and Robbie resolve their differences. The chapter can be best summed up with Nicholas' description of "...painfully fucking awkward".

Wesley and Nicholas finally get managed to get dressed--but only after extensively torturing everyone present by dressing each other slowly (though it would probably be more accurate to call what they were doing, 'reverse stripping'), while, to everyone’s horror, discussing in great detail the consummation of their relationship and pausing every little bit to snog (ignoring the groans of mental pain and cries for brain bleach).

Nicholas puts the complainers (everyone) in their places by pointing out, “Well, you must want to see our naked fucking arses, because anyone else would have gotten the hint by now and politely waited in the fucking corridor like a normal person.” Wesley is grinning from ear to ear, practically growing with pride. “Besides,” Nicholas continues, “Nobody likes a jealous hater.” And he leans in to give Wesley another slow, passionate kiss (with lots of obvious tongue--not that he was trying to send a message to anyone, or anything).

“Ok! OK!! I’m sorry for hitting you, Nick. Please, stop!! I’m begging you!” Message delivered.

Wesley was afraid of this. Robbie couldn’t handle the strain of losing Wesley’s love and knowing that Wesley’s heart belongs to another. He does love Robbie, just not the way he needs. But he supposes that it’s better this way, though--having it all out in the open, like ripping off a band-aid. This way Robbie can heal faster from his crushing disappointment (Wesley has apparently has failed to notice the heated looks between Robbie and Tom).

Wesley approaches Robbie (and Tom) awkwardly, Nicholas trailing behind, “Robbie, can we talk? I’ve got some things I need to say and…”

“Sure, Wes. I’ve got some things I need to talk to you about, too.”

Tom looks at Nicholas and grins. “Do you want to get a drink, while they let each other down gently?”

Nicholas just looks at him. “Are you fucking kidding me? I wouldn’t fucking miss this for the world!”

“I was hoping you’d say that,” Tom laughs.

Steve and Frederick are looking back and forth between the two couples in fascination. They look at each other and grin, settling back to watch. This is going to be good.

“Robbie, I know you’re probably hurt, but it’s better you find out this way th--” he is confused when Robbie starts snickering. “What?”

“Wesley, I don’t mean to interrupt your carefully planned speech, but I have things to do, and you
will talk us all to death if we don’t just get to the point: I love you but I don’t love you. You’re not breaking my heart.”

Wesley looks deflated, “I’m not?”

“No. That’s what I wanted to talk to you about. I’ve been trying to find a way to tell you that I’m in love with Tom.”

“Tom!” Wesley looks at Tom in shock--Tom finger waves at him, then blows a kiss to Robbie.

“Yes, Tom.”

“Well...I like Tom.” Wesley tries again, “You’re not even a little broken-hearted? You know, that I threw you over for Nicholas?”

“Wesley, if anything, I should be broken-hearted over Nicholas--at least I’ve kissed him.”

“Well, if you’re sure.” And responding to the glare he’s getting from Nicholas, quickly adds, “Not that it would make any difference--I’m taken now. Who’d have thought it, huh?”

“It makes a sick sort of sense, if you think about. Apparently all of the ‘hate’ was just sexual tension?”

“I suppose.”

“Wesley, if you really hated him that much, you’d have killed him already.”

“I know. So, we still friends?”

“BFF’s.” They laugh and hug each other.

Nicholas speaks for them all when he says, “Well, that was painfully fucking awkward.”
Chapter Summary

It seems that crazy Joe Macbeth has a wee crush on 'someone special'--who is none too pleased to find himself the object of Joe's affections. Wesley and Nicholas are there, but they don’t help.

Chapter Notes

Short chapter

Nicholas and Wesley wander toward the library to talk to Charles and fill him in on the recent goings-on. Passing by the kitchen, they hear a baritone voice break into a very enthusiastic, off-key rendition of ‘Baby Did A Bad, Bad Thing’.

“Oh, shit! It’s that fucking Macbeth!” Wesley hisses.

“Well, we are by the fucking kitchen, Wesley. Who did you expect to find here, but the fucking cook?”

“Nick, he’s in one of his crazy moods--crazier than usual. I just know it! Let’s get out of here before he sees us!”

“Wait just one fucking minute,” Nicholas shakes off Wesley’s hand and heads toward the kitchen. “--I smell biscuits!”

Wesley tries to stop him, but Nicholas has already been lured into the kitchen by the aroma of the freshly baked cookies. Shortbread, if Wesley is not mistaken. And he has to admit that they do smell awfully good--rich and buttery and sweet.

Joe is still singing as he removes the pan of shortbread from the oven. He apparently hears them and whirls around--the maniacal grin on his face causing Wesley and Nicholas to instinctively back away--and says brightly, “So to what do I owe the pleasure of your company, gentlemen?”

Nicholas says something to the other Scot that Wesley can’t quite make out, though he’s pretty sure that he hears ‘fucking biscuits’ in there somewhere. Joe says something back to him, equally unintelligible, as he plates the cookies (though again, Wesley is pretty sure he hears the word ‘fuck’ in there somewhere). Nicholas smirks, reaches for the plate of cookies, and promptly gets his hand slapped with a spatula.

“Motherfucker!” Nicholas yelps, rubbing his hand and glaring at Joe.

“I said those aren’t for you, Garrigan,” Joe says almost primly before his crazy-smile snaps back into place. “Those are for someone special.” The way he says it sounds at the same time both sinister and strangely flirty, making Wesley cringe in sympathy for that poor, fucked ‘someone special’.
“Who are they for, then, you crazy fucker?” Nicholas snaps.

The look he gives Nicholas is a little chilling, “I told you—someone special. That would not be you.”

“What the…? You’re wanting to fucking court someone!? If it’ll get me one of those, I’ll court your fucking arse, Macbeth!”

“Hey!” Wesley pouts.

“Sorry, darling, but do you know how fucking long it’s been since I’ve had home-made shortbread? Hell, yes, I’d fucking give him a piece of this,” Nick waves a hand, indicating himself, “to get a piece of that,” he points at the shortbread, “—it smells fucking delicious!”

Looking slightly mollified, Joe says, “It’s a new recipe: Rosemary-Chocolate Chip. I suppose you can try a piece—but please don’t touch me.”

As he holds the plate out to Nicholas, they hear someone enter the room. “Oh, hello. Do I smell fresh biscuits?”

Joe immediately slaps Nick’s hand away from the plate and whips back around, crazy grin back in place, and offers the plate to the newcomer with a flourish, “James! Yes, I made them just for you! Rosemary-Chocolate Chip. Try one!” He grins wider.

Taken aback (and not a little disturbed), James laughs a little nervously. “Er…thank you? You didn’t have to do that, Joe.”

“Oh, I but I did have to! I thought to myself, poor James, so far from Scotland, what can I do to make my fellow Scot feel more at home? A fellow chef (James’ protest that, “I wasn’t a chef—I iced cakes.” and Nicholas’ offended, “What!? I’m from fucking Mars!?”, blithely ignored) should be able to lean on his mates in hard times.”

James’ blue eyes are the size of saucers, and are nervously tracking Joe’s movements. He leans back as Joe leans in towards him, smiling flirtatiously (or so Joe thinks—everyone else he looks like a serial killer ready to snap). Never taking his eyes from James, he slaps Nicholas’ hand with the spatula, snatching up the piece of shortbread Nick was trying to steal, and holds it up to James’ lips, telling him, “Here, try a wee bite. It’s still warm.” Something in Joe’s eyes (‘Probably the crazy’, Wesley thinks) compels James to take a small bite of the biscuit.

Terrified as he is, he still can’t stop the sound of pleasure he makes at the flavor. “Oh! That’s good! That’s really good!” he practically moans, then blushes as he realizes the other men (especially Joe) are staring at him in a rather predatory way.

Wesley can easily see why Joe’s got his shorts in a twist over McAvoy. The man is good-looking in a slick sort of way that even Charles with all of his money and style can’t match. Wesley know that he’s an actor, maybe that’s it—he’s got presence. And if that wasn’t enough, the guy is genuinely nice and awkwardly funny. And that accent! Wesley has already proven that he is not immune to the inherent charming-ness of the Scotsman (in secret, he even thinks that Joe is a little hot). Sure James is no Nicholas (and who’d have thought he’d ever think that), but still…Speaking of Nicholas, why is he looking at James like that? As if he can sense Wesley’s gaze, Nicholas gives him a shrug and a sheepish, “Well, look at him!” look.

None too subtly, Joe asks them, “Weren’t you two gentlemen on your way somewhere else?” before ignoring them to ask James, “Would you mind helping me finish the baking—it would mean
so much to have some experienced help.”

Being the nice person that he is, James feels trapped, but would feel too guilty saying no, so against his better judgment, he tells Joe, “Of course. I would be glad to help you.”

“Wonderful! You’re such a darling! Let me find you an apron!” he says, and whirls around the room looking through the cabinets.

Wesley and Nicholas use the opportunity to take their leave (make their escape, Nick helping himself to some of the shortbread). James is frantically trying to get their attention, mouthing, “Don’t leave me!”
Chapter Summary

Joe attempts to charm/seduce James via a clever mix of baking and song. James wants to cry.

Chapter Notes

Another very short chapter...

Watching Wesley and Nicholas walk away was one of the worst feelings in James’ life. Trapped by his own kindness, he now has to deal with the unwanted attentions of a fucking lunatic/serial-killer-in-the-making all by himself. Now he’s going to die and no one will ever find his body. Why can’t I just be an arse like Nicholas or Bruce? Licking the lingering crumbs of shortbread from his lips, as he waits for Joe to find ‘the perfect apron’ for him (“Ooh, and I know just the one, too!”), James does have to admit that the man can cook.

Just as he begins to relax a bit, Joe pops out from nowhere like an insane jack-in-the-box from a cheesy horror movie--complete with sinister grin and crazy-eyes--causing James jump and yelp like a tiny dog.

“James!” Joe all but shouts, excitedly brandishing a wad of cloth at him. “I found it! It’s perfect for you! Here try it on!”

Not giving James a chance to respond, Joe spins him around and throws the apron over him. “Here it comes,” James thinks, as Joe grabs the strings. “He’s going to kill me now, I know it. He’s going to strangle me with the apron strings.” He has the urge to giggle as he of thinks of Clue: “It was the cook who murdered the actor, in the kitchen, using the apron strings.”

To his surprise, Joe just ties on the apron, then spins him back around to admire his handiwork. He claps his hands and smiles brightly, “You look so lovely, James! I was right! It's perfect for you!”

James looks down to see that his apron bears the slogan Kiss the Cook. Oh God, kill me now.

Joe claps his hands again, business-like this time, “Now let’s get started with that baking! We’ve got a lot to do.” He looks at James and smiles in what he thinks is a coy way, “We’re going to have such a lovely time!”

James wishes Joe had just gone ahead and strangled him.

“You can start on the rest of the shortbread, James. The recipe is there next to the mixing bowl.” James sighs and wanders over to the counter to begin. He starts mixing the dry ingredients, then adds the butter and starts kneading it into a dough.

“No! No! You’re doing it all wrong!” James freezes as he feels Joe press against his back, sliding
his arms around James. His places his hands over James’, squeezing, helping him to knead the dough. “You do it like this,” he says--kneading it exactly the way James was before Joe started ‘helping’. Joe sniffs his neck, “Mmmm, you smell like gingerbread.”

James wants to cry.

“You know what this reminds me of?” Joe asks, still ‘helping’ James knead the dough.

James is afraid of the answer, but feels compelled to ask, “What does it remind you of, Joe?”

Joe presses a little closer, kneading the dough in a very disturbing way, and murmurs in James’ ear, “It reminds me of that scene in Ghost. You ken the one I mean--only with shortbread dough instead of clay.” He begins swaying them gently side to side and starts humming “The Unchained Melody”, badly off-key.

James hopes that Joe doesn’t mistake his small whimper of fear for encouragement. No such luck.

“So you feel it, too, then?” Oh yes, James can feel it--pressed right up against his arse. Proof positive that Joe is definitely a Scot. “You feel the connection between us?”

“Er…I…--”

“Shhhh!” Joe turns him around and presses a finger to James’ lips. “It’s alright, darling. You don’t have to say anything, right now. I know you’re shy, love.” He pulls James into his arms, “Just let me hold you for a moment.”

Through his terror, James is noting dimly that, if nothing else, Joe does smell very nice--sort of floury and sugary, with a hint of cinnamon and vanilla. And he’s quite strong. Even if James wasn’t too frightened to try escaping, he’s not sure that he could break free. Best to just ride it out and hope that Joe turns his back or something so that James can run like hell. It may be a while, though. Joe’s ‘interest’ in him doesn’t seem to have yet abated. Only now it’s pressed up against his front. Which is, admittedly, not entirely unpleasant.

Joe sighs happily and starts stroking James’ hair, “Darling, you’re so very lovely. I could just eat you up.” It says much about Joe’s mental state, that James has to put serious thought into whether he means that figuratively or literally (the phrase, “It puts the lotion on the skin.” is running in a loop in his head). As far as he can figure, it’s even odds on which way I could go. At this point, death would only be a mercy, James thinks wryly to himself as he relaxes into Joe’s embrace.
A Brief Cherik Interlude…

Chapter Summary

What it says...

A Brief Cherik Interlude…

Back in the in the library…

“I wonder what Hank wanted,” Charles muses idly, as he and Erik take breather from their marathon make-up sex session. “I really hated to abuse my powers like that, but he picked such a poor time to interrupt. I hope it wasn’t anything important—he seemed a bit agitated.” He looks worried for a moment, then waves it off. “Oh, well…it was just a little deflection--at least now he’s getting caught up on all of the lab work he’s been complaining about being behind on.”

Erik pulls their clasped hands up and kisses the back of Charles' hand, “Charles, I’m sure everything’s fine. If it was something important someone would have contacted you by now.”

“You’re right, of course (words that are music to Erik’s ears). Besides, we have more important things to worry about.” He gives Erik a sultry look and teasingly walks his fingers up Erik’s thigh.

“Charles, darling, don’t you think we should we move this to the bedroom? I’m starting to get rug-burn.”

“But Erik, if we move to the bedroom, I’ll have to stop doing this…” he leans over and starts licking and lightly nipping at Erik hip bone, then moves slowly up his body with several more light kisses.

“Well, when you put it that way…,” Erik sighs as Charles’ tongue dips into his bellybutton… then he shrieks when Charles blows a big raspberry on Erik’s belly. They both burst into giggles and raucous laughter. Erik pulls Charles into his arms, looks into his happy, shining blue eyes and tells him, “I love you so much, you silly man.”

They kiss, and neither of them thinks about leaving the library again for a very long time.
Chapter Summary

Cop Bruce Robertson faces off against rent-boy Martin Vosper.

Chapter Notes

Things got a little porny, so please forgive me...

If there was one thing that Bruce Robertson hated, it would be…well, he actually hated just about everything, to be honest. But if there was one thing he hated in particular it would be dirty little blue-eyed rent-boys in tight white jeans that perfectly showcase their tight little a--

“What the fuck you lookin’ at, creeper?” the dirty little blue-eyed rent-boy in question asks sullenly, shooting Bruce a nasty look.

“I’m just making sure you’re not getting into any trouble, you little bastard.”

A knowing comes across Martin’s face and he sneers. “Yeah, don’t think I haven’t heard that one before.”

“You calling me a liar?” Bruce asks, eyebrow raised, voiced getting dangerous sounding. This might be fun…

Martin gives Bruce a once-over, making a show of hollowing out his cheeks as he takes a slow drag off of his cigarette, and pursing his plump, red lips as he exhales a stream of smoke. “What are you gonna do if I am, copper?’

Bruce plucks the cigarette out of Martin’s hand (--“Hey!”--) and takes a drag, then places the butt between Martin’s lips. “Guess I’d have to teach you a lesson about mouthing off to Bruce Robertson,” he says.

Martin loves a challenge, especially when it comes to cops. They’re worse than most other men, thinking they are so much better than everyone else--he loves making them fall off of their pedestals. This one is good-looking, though (he’s always had a weakness for blue eyes and ginger beards), so he might be a little fun to rile up.

Martin cocks his hip, his tight jeans showing off his ‘wares’ to their best advantage (he doesn’t miss the way that Mr. Cop’s eyes zero in), then he smirks and says, “Doesn’t seem like I need any lessons in mouthing off to you, mate. I think I’m doing just fine on my own.” He takes another slow drag off his cigarette.

‘Kid’s got more smirks in him than 50 Shades of Grey’, Bruce thinks (not that he’d ever admit to reading the rancid thing).

“But,” Martin continues, his smirk changing to something altogether more inviting, his voice all
but purring now, “mouthing off on you…that’s another thing entirely. Maybe you could teach me a lesson about that…”

Martin slinks over to him (that’s the only word that comes to Bruce’s mind, *slink*), still purring, “…or maybe I could teach you a thing or two…” and sinks to his knees in front of Bruce. The part of Bruce’s mind that hasn’t fogged over with lust is impressed at how graceful the other man is, especially considering how indecently tight those jeans are.

Bruce is not a good man on his best day. And he is certainly not one to turn down any opportunity for sex, especially when freely given (or close enough for government work). And especially from someone as pretty as this hot-to-trot little rent-boy.

Martin looks up at him, his beautiful blue eyes gleaming, his mouth curling up into a wicked smile, as he unbucks Bruce’s belt. He leans in and rubs his face, cat-like, against the front of Bruce’s trousers, smiling wider at the groan he hears in response. Though that is nothing compared to the sound he hears when he mouths almost lazily at Bruce’s erection. “Like that, copper?” he asks, pulling back.

“Fuck, yes!” Bruce pants.

“Open your trousers,” Martin orders. Bruce hastily unbuttons and unzips his trousers, pulling open the fly as ordered, but makes no further move.

Martin looks at him with approval, “Good boy, you know how to follow instructions,” he purrs, tracing a finger over Bruce’s underwear-clad erection, making the cop shiver. He leans back in, following the same path with his tongue, loving the strangled shout of pleasure when he closes his mouth over the head of Bruce’s cock, dampening the fabric, and gently sucks. He pulls back again, keeping eye contact as he hooks his thumbs in the waistband of Bruce’s boxers, pulling them down so that he can give the man a proper blow-job—which he does (looking up into Bruce’s hot blue eyes the entire time).

Bruce comes in pretty short order (Martin *is* a professional, after all), and collapses to knees, panting. He pulls Martin into his arms and kisses him deeply. “Thank you, love, that was wonderful.” He smiles wickedly, “Next time you can be the cop. Or was it the priest? Or the Headmaster…? I’ve lost track. But first, would you like for me to take care that?” he waves his hand toward the front of Martin’s jeans. “That looks horribly painful.”

“Oh, please, yes!”

Bruce helps a very relieved Martin out of his skin-tight jeans, “You know, Martin, I love these jeans on you, but maybe we should retire them for something a little less form-fitting and a little more comfortable.”

Martin laughs and kisses Bruce. “Bastard! You’re just saying that because it’s your turn to wear them next!”

Bruce laughs and kisses him back, “True, but you have to admit they are a wee bit tight. The cassock and the headmaster’s uniform are far more comfortable.” He looks thoughtful for a moment, "I wonder if Charles is missing that horrible vest and tie yet?"

“I doubt it—he’s got so many ugly vests that he won’t be missing one. And anyway the jeans are so uncomfortable ’cuz you’re fatter than me!”

“For somebody who wants a blowjob, you’re not being very nice,” Bruce admonishes.
“But, Bruce…I thought that’s what you liked about me,” Martin smirks.

And he’s right, Bruce knows, as he proceeds to lovingly ‘return the favor’.

Yeah, if there’s one thing Bruce Robertson hates, it’s dirty little blue-eyed rent-boys. But if there’s one thing that Bruce Robertson loves, it’s dirty little blue-eyed former rent-boys.
Stuck in the Kitchen With You--Joe Macbeth and James McAvoy Part III

Chapter Summary

Nicholas expresses concern about leaving James alone with Joe. Wesley is pleased, but suspicious. James is starting to worry about Stockholm Syndrome. And Joe...well, Joe is still...Joe and completely oblivious.

Chapter Notes

Very short chapter. But don't worry there is more to their story--I just needed the transition.

“You know, I’m feeling a little guilty for leaving James alone with Macbeth. Maybe we should stop back by the kitchen and check on him. You know, just to make sure that Joe hasn’t ‘done something’ to him…”

Wesley looks at Nicholas in shock. “I’m not sure which surprises me more: the fact that you actually expressed concern for another human being or the fact that you did it without uttering the word ‘fuck’.” Before Nicholas can protest, Wesley gets a suspicious look on his face and says, “Wait a minute! You don’t feel guilty! You just want to go back because you’ve already eaten that shortbread you took!”

Nicholas, looking not the slightest bit guilty at being caught out, merely quirks an eyebrow at Wesley and says, “So what the fuck’s wrong with killing two birds with one stone? We make sure McAvoy’s still alive and I get to restock. And I’m not completely heartless, Wesley--I know you’re worried about him, and it seems that makes it my fucking problem, too, now.”

“Oh.” It’s not exactly a declaration of love, but all the same, Wesley feels all warm and fuzzy inside at Nicholas caring about something, even a little, simply because it matters to Wesley.

“Besides,” Nicholas continues, “It’s not like I want to be sitting around listening to everyone pondering the question of, ‘Where is James?’ or ‘What’s that smell?’ or, God forbid, ‘Why does this stew taste funny?’.”

In spite of himself Wesley snorts, even knowing just how possible that last scenario really is. “Maybe it would be better to let Charles know what’s going on and see if he can save James from Joe’s clutches?”

“But--”

“Nicholas, do you really want to eat that stuff knowing that he made it especially for James? Hard telling what he put in it.”

Suddenly looking a little green as Wesley’s words sink in, Nicholas agrees that perhaps going to Charles first is a “…good fucking idea!”
In the kitchen…

“I wish we could stay this way forever, darling,” Joe says, “but we do have all of this baking to finish…”

With a dramatic little sigh, Joe reluctantly pulls away from James and kisses him sweetly on the cheek. Thoroughly traumatized, James trembles with the relief of finally being free, only to be immediately snatched back into Joe’s arms. “James! You’re shaking! I’m sorry, darling. I didn’t mean for you to think that I was abandoning you! Don’t worry, I’m here--I’ve got you,” Joe coos, cuddling James closer, soothingly (he thinks--and James would have to reluctantly agree) running his hands up and down James’ back.

“Whoa! Hands!” James suddenly yelps out, as Joe lets his hands ‘accidentally-on-purpose’ wander over James’ butt.

James can feel Joe smile against his skin, where he has been happily nuzzling and sniffing James’ neck (his goatee lightly tickling James’ skin and he does not like it--nope, not at all--it does not make him shiver, even a little bit) before Joe says, “Sorry, love--I guess the cook in me couldn’t resist checking your buns.”

Normally, that is exactly the kind of ridiculously stupid thing that would utterly charm James and make him laugh like a braying donkey. Now, he’s worried that if he starts laughing, hystericis will quickly take over and he won’t be able to stop. He’s already horrified that Joe’s psychotic flirting makes him want to laugh and that he hasn’t seriously thought about escaping since Joe re-grabbed him. It seems more and more likely that Stockholm Syndrome may be only a chuckle away. The thought of Stockholm Syndrome, naturally makes him think of Sweden, then chefs, then the Swedish Chef, and, hey! Joe’s a chef, the Scottish Chef and--I have to get the fuck out of here, James thinks desperately.

Still nuzzling, Joe is also experimentally easing a hand over James’ bottom again, now softly singing what sounds suspiciously to James like ‘Baby’s Got Back’.

“Er…I have to go to the bathroom!” he shouts at Joe, finally pulling free. “Bad! Yeah! I have to go really bad! To the bathroom! Now!”

Joe is looking at James like he’s the crazy one. “Well, alright. You should probably go, then. The baking can wait a few minutes.”

James marvels a bit at how completely sane Joe looks in that moment--then, of course he ruins it by giving James his crazy-smile, adding a sultry, “But I’ll miss you terribly, darling, so hurry back.”

Not bloody likely, James thinks as he runs like hell.

“Wow. He must have really had to go…” Joe says to the empty kitchen. Then he crazy-smiles again, “…but he’ll be back.” And he wanders back over to the counter, happily singing, “Ooh, I’m reeeeaa-dy, for this crazy little thing called Love…”
Tastes Like Feels

Chapter Summary

It’s getting into the early evening when Erik and Charles finally decide to surface from the library. But then they get delayed by feels.

“You know, we should probably start getting dressed,” Charles sighs.

“We’ve been at it this long, why stop now?”

“Well, it’s getting close to supper time and I have a rule about everyone eating together. And this will give you a chance to get meet the new students and re-acquainted the old--and meet the other…Not-Charles’s, I believe you like to call them…? Besides,” Charles laughs, “you’re going to need to refuel and keep your energy up. I’m not done with you yet, love--we’re just taking a little break.”

Erik is a little apprehensive about meeting his old colleagues, but perks up a little at the thought of being surrounded by all of the other Not-Charles’. If they’re even half as impressive at the ones he’s met so far, he’s in for a very interesting evening. He can’t help the devious shark-smile appears on his face. He feels a sharp rap to the back of his head and whips around to look at Charles who is innocently (too innocently, in Erik’s opinion) propping himself up against the desk, reaching for his once-crisp, but now hopelessly wrinkled shirt. Long lashes sweep over impossibly blue eyes, (hiding the evil within, Erik thinks loudly) as Charles faux-casually asks, “Something wrong, darling?”

Erik levels a look at him that has been known to make grown men tremble in fear. Charles just laughs at him, tells him that he looks like a disgruntled cat, then asks Erik to help him find his tie (knowing full-well what happened to it). The memory renders Erik incapable of stringing together a coherent sentence, much less remembering that he was irritated. Charles takes it as a win, smiling beatifically.

Once he comes back to reality, Erik can’t help but watch as Charles dresses, curious to see how he manages to do everyday things like that. He feels a fierce sense of pride at how capable Charles seems, at how well he has been able to adapt, but at the same time he feels guilt because Charles still struggles so much and he knows that it’s his fault. Erik has to admit to himself, too, that watching Charles dress is almost as erotic as watching him undress. All of that pale skin and surprisingly fit body slowly disappearing under clothes, those delicious little freckles and lean muscles hiding away, all just waiting to be revealed to Erik’s gaze again. He realizes that he must have been projecting a little because some of the things that Charles is doing are starting to border on pornographic. No one zips their trousers up that slowly, or makes those kinds of noises when they do. His suspicions are confirmed when he sees the barest hint of a teasing smile curving Charles’ lips. “Sorry. I couldn’t help myself. You were thinking quite loudly, Erik.”

“Please don’t stop on my account, Charles. I was enjoying the show.”

“Yes, and I was enjoying performing for you.” Charles smiles wickedly. “We’ll have to make sure that we remember this for later use.” He smiles even bigger when he feels the waves of lust coming from Erik.
Erik looks at the smiling Charles, who is all disheveled and rumpled—clothes wrinkled, buttons missing, a couple of questionable-looking stains on his shirt and trousers, missing tie, hair in complete chaos—and thinks that he has never seen anything more beautiful or perfect in his life. Charles must have picked up that thought because his smile is now so big that it’s threatening to out-shark Erik’s, then it changes into that smile that Erik has quickly learned is just for him. “Any time you want to see something beautiful and perfect, Erik, all you have to do is look in the mirror.”

He can actually feel himself blushing at Charles’ words. Erik knows without a doubt that he is both magnificent and beautiful—and projecting again, if Charles’ amused snort (badly disguised as a coughing fit) is anything to go by. But hearing the words from Charles is different because as far as Erik is concerned, Charles’ opinion is the only one that matters, because Charles is his equal in every way. If he’s completely honest with himself, he thinks that Charles is superior to him in every way (‘Not in every way’, comes Charles’ amused thought, accompanied by an image that makes Erik want to blush again—this time with manly pride).

“Now,” Charles says. “We do need to finished getting dressed for supper.”

“Charles? You’re not really planning on wearing those clothes, are you?” Beautiful as Erik thinks he is, Charles still looks like a drunken frat boy that the cat dragged in. Erik knows he doesn’t look any better, but it’s much more noticeable on Charles, who always takes such pains with his appearance. “Perhaps you should change clothes, first.”

It’s now Charles’ turn to blush as he considers the missing buttons, the stains, etc. “Er…perhaps you’re right, Erik (Erik never gets tired of hearing those words). A change of clothing and a shower? Some of your old clothes are still here if you’d like to change, too. They might be a little musty, but I’d say they probably still fit.”

“You still have all of my things?” Erik is astonished that Charles hadn’t burned everything when Erik left him on the beach.

Charles is blushing again, not looking at him, “I left everything just the way it was. I was always hoping that you would come back one day—even if it wasn’t for this…” he motions between the two of them. “I would have been glad to have just had you as a friend. I would have always hoped for more, of course.” He finally looks at Erik, the hope in his eyes almost painful to look at, “Are you going to take Wesley’s advice? Try to work it out?”

“I’ve told you before, that for a genius you are remarkably stupid sometimes and you are the worst telepath, ever. I think that the fact that I’m here and haven’t killed anyone—namely, you—and the fact that we have been having make-up sex for several hours, and talking about feelings of all things, should tell you something about my intentions. Oh, yes—and there is the fact that I’ve told you that I love you and have for some time. What would make you think that I don’t want to stay with you?”

“I’ve just had my hopes crushed so many times. And I’ve wanted this for so long— it’s just hard to believe that it’s all real.”

“Well, I’m here and I don’t plan on going anywhere. All you have to do is look,” he taps his temple, “anytime you have doubts. You have my permission—an open invitation, in fact.”

Charles is looking at Erik with his heart in his eyes, and is starting to look a little sniffley. “It’s still hard to believe that you really want to be with me. After all, you’re just so ‘magnificent’,” he snorts out, laughing even harder when Erik glares at him.

“I’m never going to live that down, am I?”
“Oh, darling, you don’t have to be a telepath to know that answer to that now, do you?” Charles laughs as he wheels his way out of the library, confident that Erik is following close behind.
Chapter Summary

Our first meeting with Leto and Mr. Tumnus, the most nervous little faun, ever.

Chapter Notes

Short, but they have more coming.

Elsewhere in the mansion…

“Leto?”
Silence.
“Leto?”
Silence.

Mr. Tumnus is starting to get nervous. Well, actually he’s almost always nervous. It’s just that he is much, much more nervous than usual at the moment. He’s not sure what to do. It’s not like Leto to not answer when he comes calling. And it’s getting close to dinner time. Everyone knows that Mr. Charles likes everyone to eat dinner together. Even Leto goes.

Tumnus likes Mr. Leto very much. When he’s around, Tumnus doesn’t feel so alone—they are both so very different from the others. But Leto does make him very nervous, the way he looks at him with his blue-in-blue eyes. Like he knows a secret about Tumnus (about everyone) that amuses him, but isn’t really funny.

Leto often looks like he’s far away, like he’s seeing something that no one else can see, not even Mr. Charles. Tumnus feels like that sometimes, like he’s always looking away to Narnia. He misses Narnia so very much. There, he was just a faun, like every other faun (perhaps a bit nicer—he is a very nice faun, after all—Queen Lucy said so herself). He was just living his life being the best faun that he could be for himself and his friends.

Here, in this place, he’s different from everyone else and that feels very lonely. He’d thought that he could be friends with Mr. Hank, but Hank’s ashamed of who he is, so Tumnus doesn’t like to be around him. How in the world could anyone be ashamed of having such beautiful fur? He had asked Mr. Leto about it and had gotten one of Leto’s funny-but-not, far-away smiles. He told Tumnus that Hank hadn’t become, yet. Tumnus told Leto that he didn’t understand, and Leto had looked into him
with his blue-in-blue eyes and told him, “Yes. You do, almost more than anyone here.” It had made Tumnus very happy (even though he still didn’t understand).

Mr. Tumnus loves listening to Leto’s voice, it is beautiful--rich, melodic, and soothing (it reminds him a bit of Aslan’s, though not as deep). Sometimes, he asks Leto to read to him when he has trouble sleeping. Sometimes, he even pretends to not be able to sleep so that Leto will read to him anyway. He doesn’t consider it a lie. He is sure that Leto knows the truth, since the smile he always gives Tumnus is different from his other smiles--he still knows a secret about Tumnus, but this secret doesn’t make him sad.

And sometimes, when Tumnus is all warm and cozy, wrapped in his blanket and curled up on the floor next to Leto’s feet or pressed against his legs (when it’s cold), and Leto’s voice is leading him toward sleep, he very much wants to stay. But he never stays. He always remembers to politely yawn and thank Leto for helping him get sleepy, and then goes back to his own room and, smiling and peaceful (and a little wistful), drifts off to sleep thinking about the sound of Leto’s voice.

Now, though, he is anything but peaceful. He is fretting--wringing his hands a bit and stamping his hooves. Next thing, his fur will start bristling--and, oh, he just hates it when that happens! He can’t help but worry though. What if something happened to Leto?

Just as his tail starts flashing, indicating an on-coming panic attack, he hears the sound of Leto’s footsteps coming down the corridor. Tumnus can hardly contain his relief and barely restrains himself from running to Leto to make sure that he is alright. “Mr. Leto! I was so worried! I came to walk to dinner with you and you weren’t here, you’re always here, but you weren’t here this time and I didn’t know if something had happened to you…” he trails off miserably, ears drooping, blue eyes enormous and tear-filled.

Leto puts his hands on Tumnus’ face (the scales tickle) and makes him look up. “I’m sorry for not being here. I was outside. I needed…outside. But I know that you always wait for me, so I should have been here. I didn’t mean to make you worry.”

Tumnus understands needing to be outside. Indoors is no place to run and be free. And he knows that Leto needs outside more than most.

“It’s alright. I was just worried. I get too nervous and worried about things and I don’t think.”

“No, you don’t,” Leto smiles, a rare real smile. “You’re too busy caring. Don’t ever apologize for that.”

Leto watches, still smiling, as Tumnus blushes a bit at his words, but his ears perk up a little and his eyes lose the anxious, worried look that was making look him so unlike himself.

“Would you like for me to read to you tonight?”

“Oh, yes please!” Tumnus is so happy, he barely stops his tail from wagging.

“Maybe an extra chapter or two to make up for my thoughtless behavior today…?”

“Oh, you weren’t thoughtless! I was!” Tumnus blushes again, “But yes, an extra chapter or two would be so lovely.”

And as they walk to dinner together, if Tumnus’ tail is wagging just a bit, well…that’s no one’s business but his.
Wesley and Nicholas reach the library and find it empty. Taking in the state of said library, Nicholas whistles low. “What the fuck happened in here?” he asks, gingerly picking up a hopelessly wrinkled, elaborately-knotted piece of cloth that he thinks used to be a tie. His quirked eyebrow nearly disappears into his hairline when Wesley looks at the ruins of the tie and turns a very interesting shade of red, clearly embarrassed about something. Never one to let such an opportunity pass him by, Nick shoves the tie in Wesley’s increasingly red face. “Do you know something about this fucking thing, Wes?” he teases.

“I know that you probably don’t want to be touching it with your bare hands,” Wesley mutters.

Grinning widely, Nicholas continues to taunt him with the tie. “Somebody’s awfully fucking embarrassed about something. Did you see something you weren’t supposed to, Wesley? Did you see Charles and his friend being naughty?”

Wesley can’t control his blushing and he wants to crawl into a hole. The library sex with Charles and Erik was fantastic, and he wouldn’t take it back but he could have lived with Nicholas never finding out. He’s not ashamed, he just knows that Nick will never let him hear the end of it, using the information to torture him for the rest of his life. Because Nicholas, while most certainly a jackass and a possibly a borderline sociopath, is not an idiot and it’s only a matter of time before he puts two and two together and--

Nick’s eyes almost pop out and he looks from the tie to Wesley in disbelief. “Oh, fuck me! You didn’t! You shagged Charles!?! And his friend?! Fuck, Wesley!”

“They asked me to!” Wesley whines. Probably not the best argument, but he’s feeling a little defensive at the moment.

Nicholas merely raises an eyebrow. “They asked you to…?”

“They asked me to stay. And, well…”

“Well, what?”

“You haven’t seen his friend. And then Charles hit me with ‘The Look’--I was powerless against it. He wanted to have make-up sex with his friend and needed me to help ‘facilitate’ matters, is all,”
Wesley says, squirming with embarrassment. “Your face is going to freeze like that,” he adds, indicating Nicholas’ still-raised eyebrow.

Nicholas stalks toward him, tie still in hand. “So, Wesley…what naughty things did you do with Charles and his friend?” He backs Wesley up against the desk, pinning him with his hips. “It’s ok,” he says, grinning evilly, as he leans in to kiss Wesley, deftly slipping the knotted tie around his wrists. “You can trust me--I’m a doctor.”

Sometime later…

“I hope none of this paperwork was important,” Nicholas comments lazily, draped across Wesley’s still heaving chest, amidst the shambles of the once-pristine desktop. “’Cuz if it was, we’re in big trouble.”

“We can always blames it on Charles and Erik,” Wesley says, raising up to kiss Nick’s shoulder. “And even if we do get it trouble, it was totally worth it,” he grins.

“Yes. Yes, it was fucking was,” Nicholas grins back. “You make such a lovely bottom, you wee fuck,” he laughs, kissing Wesley on the nose.

“Fuck you,” Wesley snaps. “I topped you well enough, didn’t I?” Unfortunately, his retort completely is spoiled by his next sentence: “Now can you please untie me? We’re going to be late for dinner.”
Chapter Summary

Erik meets more of the Not-Charles’. We get introduced to Rory O'Shea and Brian Jackson and revisit with Leto and Mr. Tumnus. And Erik's love of tails inadvertantly gets him in deep kimchee with Charles.

03/24: Edit to the end of the Chapter

Chapter Notes

Edited the chapter on 02/01, but it still didn't feel complete so I added a little more on 03/24. Any constructive criticism would be greatly appreciated.

The Dining Room…

Erik is stunned into complete silence when he enters the dining room.

The sheer number of Not-Charles’ milling about in such a confined space is a little overwhelming. He recognizes Frederick and Steve, who wave at him (though he doesn’t remember them being quite that friendly with each other). Then he spies the lovely Mr. Turner, deep in conversation with a Not-Charles that Erik hasn’t yet met (Irish, if Erik is not mistaken).

He’s about to walk over and introduce himself to this lovely new Not-Charles, briefly indulging in a fantasy of sliding his hands into the man’s soft-looking brown curls and…

“Dammit! Ow!” Erik shouts as a bleach-blonde, spike-haired, Not-Charles in a motorized wheelchair runs over his foot (not bothering to apologize). Still cursing, and rubbing his foot, Erik observes the boy (‘Rory O’Shea’, Charles provides, telepathically), and finds himself thinking that Charles is very lucky, indeed. This Not-Charles, seems to be almost completely immobile. Charles chimes in again, «He has a form of Muscular Dystrophy. It’s advanced to the point that he can only move one finger now.>> And apparently, that would be the middle one, judging from the boy’s reaction to Erik’s attentions.

“What the fuck you lookin’ at?” he growls in a strong Irish brogue, meeting Erik’s gaze head-on, completely unflinching, challenging even. Very few men can do that, and Erik can’t help but be grudgingly impressed by the arrogant little shit. Not to mention that he’s strangely adorable (after all, he does look like Charles, despite the hairstyle and facial piercings). Some of that grudging
admiration must have showed in Erik’s eyes, because Rory loses the hostile look, adopting a wide grin, blue eyes full of mischief. “Er, sorry about the foot, mate. I get over-excited sometimes and can’t control myself. I’m Rory. I’d offer my hand, but well…”

“Erik. And I get the feeling you control yourself just fine--when you want,” he says wryly.

Rory looks pleased at this, and cackles loudly, running his wheelchair around Erik several times (ignoring the curses as he runs over more feet), before stopping suddenly and bellowing, “BRIAN!! Get your boring English arse over here! Come meet Erik!”

Erik nearly pisses himself when this new Not-Charles, Brian, comes stumbling up to Rory, looking very much like an awkward, nervous puppy.

“What are you shouting about, Rory?” Brian asks in exasperation, pushing up his thick glasses. Then spotting Erik, his mouth drops open and he just stares, a blush creeping over his face. “Er, hello?” he says shyly, offering his hand.

Like Rory, Brian appears younger than the others--maybe late teens or so. His hair flops over his forehead in what has to be the worst mullet Erik has ever had the misfortune to witness. He’d truly never imagined a world where Charles could have bad hair (the other Not-Charles’ have excellent hair). And he owes Charles an apology for making of his wardrobe so many times--as it would seem that Charles is not the worst dressed person on the planet, after all. Still…all is not lost--despite being a hopeless nerd, Brian does have that same lovely pale skin that blushes so beautifully, and the sinfully red lips, and bright blue eyes as all of the others.

Erik shakes the boy’s sweaty hand, “Hello. I’m Erik, a friend of Charles.” Then glancing over, adds, “And Rory, here.”

“Brian. Brian Jackson. P-please to meet you,” Brian stammers, holding onto Erik’s hand, gazing at him like he’s half in love already.

“Brian’s my boyfriend,” Rory announces suddenly, ramming Brian with his wheelchair--effectively knocking his hand away from Erik. Brian stumbles from the impact, and looks at Rory, a bit shocked.

“But I thought you said--”

“You thought I said what?” Rory asks belligerently.

Brian looks confused, “Well, what changed your mi--”

“Oh, just shut up and hop on! We’ll talk about it later.”

Brian still looks a little confused, but smiles brilliantly (which does wonders for the boy’s looks, in Erik’s opinion) and climbs onto Rory’s lap and kisses him on the cheek. Rory revs up the wheelchair and takes off Brian, running over Erik’s foot again. In spite of the pain, Erik has to laugh as Rory calls out, “Sorry about the foot, mate!”

“Seems everyone’s certainly been busy while we’ve been otherwise occupied,” Charles says as he wheels up next to Erik. He looks a little embarrassed. “I’m afraid I might have been, er, projecting a little over the last few hours. Er, resulting in some unusual behavior.”
“What are you talking about…” Erik trails off as he sees a new Not-Charles enter the room. This one has to be hands-down the most unusual individual/being/whatever that Erik has ever encountered.

“Erik,” Charles says as the boy/man approaches, “Allow me to introduce you to Duke Leto Atreides II. And Leto, this is my friend, Erik Lehnsherr.”

The most readily noticeable feature about Leto are his eyes. They are entirely blue with no whites, seeming to almost glow. But even without those beautiful, unusual eyes, there is something about him, some aura, something so ‘otherworldly’ that no one could never mistake him for being human—at least as Erik understands humans.

At first glance, he looks even younger than Rory or Brian, but the look in his blue-in-blue eyes tells a different story. He gives Erik the impression that his youthful appearance is merely a shell—that in reality, he is some strange sentient being outside of time, waiting for…something.

<<Like for you to take his hand, Erik>> Charles projects to him.

Even though he looks like Charles, Erik finds that he doesn’t want to touch the boy, Leto. The knowing look in his alien eyes and the strange little smile playing about on his red lips (‘I know a secret about you’), makes Erik’s skin crawl. But neither can he stand the feeling of disappointment rolling off of Leto’s hand, letting go as soon as he possibly can, barely resisting the urge to wipe his hand on his trousers. Wesley was right, he thinks.

Conversely, he nearly melts into a puddle of goo when he spies the timid little creature cautiously peaking around Leto, blinking its large blue eyes at Erik. As it is, his mental, “Awwww!” makes Charles snort with laughter. It takes every ounce of Erik’s formidable iron will-power to not snatch the adorable creature into his arms so that he stroke its soft brown fur and coo endearments to it. (<<Him>> Charles corrects). Erik suspects that his eyes have that soft gooey look that he gets whenever Charles does something adorable or cute. Even that creepy Leto looks genuinely amused.

“Erik, this is Mr. Tumnus. Tumnus, this is my friend Erik.”

Mr. Tumnus cautiously shuffles forward and offers the hand that is not twisted up in his scarf to Erik. “Hello, Mr. Erik. How do you do?” In an aside to Charles, he asks, “This is the right greeting?”

“Yes, Tumnus. Your manners are impeccable.”

Tumnus’ ears perk up and he smiles happily at Erik, then looking nervous again when Erik doesn’t move, only stares.

“You have a tail,” Erik breathes, looking enraptured. “Oh, Charles! He has a tail!”

“I-Is that wrong?” Tumnus asks, looking nervous again, his eyes huge and looking they are starting to tear up.

“Oh, no! No, Mr. Tumnus, it’s a beautiful tail! I love tails!” Erik says desperately. “I wish I had one!” Oops. Didn’t mean to say that.

“Really?”

Erik wants to pet Tumnus so badly, but the icy look in Leto’s eyes (which make Erik’s skin want to crawl off and hide) tells him that touching Tumnus would be a very, very bad idea on Erik’s part. “I think your tail is magnificent!”
Magnificent? Really, Erik. That’s certainly high praise, coming from you,” Oh, shit. Charles is using his snitty voice again. It’s going to be a long night.

Snittiness evident in every fiber of his being, Charles turns executes a neat turn and rapidly wheels away. Erik quickly makes their excuses to Mr. Tumnus and Leto (standing much too close to Tumnus for Erik’s comfort) to go after Charles. Or limp after Charles, rather, since in the midst of his dramatic exit, Charles had made sure to run over Erik’s foot (the same one Rory had ran over, naturally).

Leto smirks at Erik over Tumnus’ shoulder as he leans in to whisper in Tumnus’ furry ear, causing the lovely little faun to blush and his adorable little tail to wag like mad. Erik attempts to return Leto’s smirk with interest, but for once his heart really isn’t in it. He just sighs in resignation, and takes a last longing look at Mr. Tumnus’ beautiful (<small><em>Don’t you mean magnificent?</em></small>) tail.

'Drama thy name is indeed Charles Xavier', Erik finds himself thinking again as he limps meekly after Charles, fully prepared to engage in a massive amount of ass-kissing.

“Charles, please…!” Erik begs, addressing Charles’ back. “You know I didn’t mean anything by it! It’s just that…Charles, he has a tail! A tail! You know how I feel about tails!”

His snitty-voice edging into bitchy, Charles replies, “I think you’d be a little more concerned with showing your appreciation for my tail, Erik…if you expect to ever get any more of it, that is.”

“Charles! Don’t talk like that!” Erik says desperately. “You know very well that I’ve just spent several hours showing you how very appreciative I am of every part of you--tail included.”

Kneeling beside beside Charles and taking his hand, Erik asks in a sultry voice, “I’m so sorry that I upset you, Charles. Is there anything…anything at all…that I can do to make it up to you?”

Charles rolls his eyes, laughing helplessly as Erik bombards him with increasingly ridiculous pornographic images. “I never could stay mad you, Erik.”

“Good! Now can we can go back to the dining room and meet the rest the 'Not-Charles’?” Erik asks, trying not to appear too eager, but failing miserably, if Charles’ smirk and raised eyebrow are an indication. “I know there are more of you.”

Charles snorts then lets out a long-suffering sigh, “Of course, darling. I wouldn’t want to get in the way of your ogling.”

Erik doesn't even try to hide his evil grin.
You May Be Right, I May Be Crazy (A Brief Look Inside the Mind of Joe Macbeth)

Chapter Summary

Everyone figures that Joe's a little bit wacky. And of course, they'd be right. So let's take a wee looky-loo at what goes on inside Joe's head...

Chapter Notes

Added a bit onto the end of the chapter 03/24

06/16/13--Deleted the bit I added on 03/24 (I just didn't like it).

James has been gone an awfully long time and now Joe’s earlier good mood has been replaced with a growing sense of anxiety.

What if something had happened to James in his hurry to find a bathroom? James could easily have gotten lost trying to navigate around this huge mansion. He could have fallen and scraped his perfect knees…or twisted one of his perfect ankles. For all Joe knows, James could have been kidnapped and sold into sex-slavery! Abducted by aliens! Shanghaied by pirates! Ok, that one sounded a little crazy, even to Joe--they’re not that close to the water.

But still…anything could have happened to him.
“I’ll save him,” Joe whispers, crazy-smile creeping slowly into place as he imagines a grateful James flinging himself into in Joe’s arms…

After a long and bloody battle, Joe has finally defeated the last of the Sex-slaver Aliens and disabled the force field holding James prisoner.
“Joe! Thank God!” James cries, his voice full of emotion as he runs into Joe’s arms. “You’ve saved me!”
“Of course, my darling! What else could I do but save my beloved?!” Joe says, holding James tightly, breathing in his gingerbread scent. “I could never have let the aliens take you from me!”

At the mention of the aliens, James burrows deeper into Joe’s embrace, shuddering delicately, a soft sob catching in his throat. Joe gently cups James’ face in his hands and gazes deep into his eyes.
“What is it love? Why are you trembling? You’re safe now. You know you have nothing to fear.”

His beautiful eyes wet with unshed tears, his cheeks flushed red with shame, James tries to turn away. “Th-they were g-going to p-probe me,” he says brokenly. “Oh, Joe! H-hold me!” he sobs, collapsing against Joe.

Not wanting to frighten James any further, Joe knows he must hide his rage that anyone would dare to touch his James. Joe can only pull James closer, gently stroking his hair, singing softly to him while he cries. “It’s alright, my love. I’m here--I’m here for you! I’ll take care of you always.”

Looking incredibly young and vulnerable, James looks up at Joe, his heart in his eyes, and in a soft voice, says, “Oh, Joe! Do you mean it? Truly? Then take me! Make me yours!”

“Oh darling, no one will ever probe you but me. I swear it,” Joe promises fervently as their lips...
The sound of the kitchen timer startles Joe out of his fantasy. He whips around to glare at the offending timer, his chilling gaze promising retribution for the crime of daring to come between him and his James. Indeed, many years later, the timer—brutally dismantled—would be discovered in an old chest in a long-forgotten part of the mansion. *Oh, yes...* that timer would pay.

Joe’s smile turns wistful (and all the creepier for it) as he thinks of his Treasure Chest, filled with broken remains of his victims. He fondly recalls the silver tea service he’d let tarnish for defying him. *Oh, how it had suffered for its impertinence!* There was also the so-called ‘non-stick’ sauce pan which had deliberately ruined his hollandaise—well...he’d shown it, he could still hear the screaming as he’d scrubbed it with steel wool. Then there was the set of inferior knives that had dared to defile his kitchen—their blades now viciously dulled, some pots that he’d let rust for various infractions, lazy crockery that had needed to be taught a lesson, several forks—their tines cruelly bent just because he could…and now, the timer.

‘Oh, you *will* pay dearly’, Joe giggles to the timer, before sobering up. ‘But—first things, first.’

Putting aside the gruesome death of the timer for the moment, Joe turns to the oven and takes out the last of the shortbread and sets it aside to cool. He does a last minute check to make sure that everything is ready to go for when the dinner hour rolls around, so that he can turn his attention to more important matters: reuniting with his James. Now that he’s has finally gotten a chance to hold James in his arms, there’s no way that Joe going to let him go now.

“Poor darling must be so lonely and frightened without me,” Joe says to himself. “But I’ll find him and bring him back to safety.”

His good mood restored, Joe’s crazy-grin takes on a decidedly predatory look. “*One way or another, I’m gonna find you...I’m gonna getcha, getcha, getcha...*” he sings, as he sets off to stalk, er...*find*, James.
Adventures in Sudafed--Valentin Bulgakov Part I

Chapter Summary

We are introduced to Valentin Bulgakov, who desperately trying to get his sneezing under control so that he can have a proper dinner conversation with the handsome Private James Miller. Since Dr. Garrigan is out of the office, Valentin is left to his own devices to find a solution to his problem. What he finds instead is Sudafed...

Chapter Notes

Very loosely based on an experience in college (back when Sudafed was unregulated and you could get it full-strength, anywhere). I had a serious sinus issue, but had to work--so I decided to take two Sudafed tablets (ya know, cuz they're so small and just one couldn't possibly do any good, right?). Between when I got to work and when I woke up (on the floor of the janitor's closet, where I'd been dumped to sleep it off), I'd apparently been pretty obnoxious and had told my best friend/co-worker (who didn't speak to me for two days) EXACTLY what I thought of her boyfriend...in front of her boyfriend. He thought I was hilarious--her, not so much, lol.

Valentin Bulgakov has long suffered from an unfortunate condition that causes him to sneeze uncontrollably whenever he gets stressed out or very nervous. But even though he is now desperately in need of the medicine to help control his condition, he can’t help but drag his feet as he makes his way toward the infirmary.

Dr. Garrigan, who runs the infirmary, is the antithesis of all of Tolstoy’s teachings. The volatile doctor’s constant bad temper and foul-mouthed drunken rantings never fail to send Valentin into the very sneezing fits that he’s trying to stop.

He’s also firmly convinced that the man is a sadist--especially after Valentin’s last visit. Garrigan had not only completely out-of-hand dismissed his condition as being purely psychosomatic--quite rudely stating that there was “nothin’ wrong wi’ ye, ye wee fookin’ commie bastard, that a guid shag wouldnae fix!”--but when an offended Valentin finally managed to stutter out a protest (he was not a Communist, thank you very much!), Garrigan had called him “a frigid, tight-arsed, wee pouf!” and shouted at him to “Get the fook oot ay mah infirmary!”

Valentin had erupted into such a violent sneezing fit that Garrigan had been forced to give him something called an ‘Epi-Shot’--which, based on what happened next, apparently involved jumping on Valentin and violently stabbing him with a giant needle (an experience made all the more traumatic by the fact that Garrigan was grinning like a maniac the whole time).

Understandably, Valentin is reluctant to face down Garrigan again (he still has phantom pains in that arm), but if he doesn’t get his medicine, he’ll never be able to make it through dinner without sneezing all over poor Private Miller (again), much less ever be able to hold another intelligent conversation with the man. In fact, just thinking about the (handsome)*ACHOO!!* young soldier makes Valentin’s nose start to twitch. *Achoo!! Achoo!!* So, as much as he hates the infirmary, or

*Achoo!! Achoo!!*
more accurately, what waits for him inside, Valentin picks up his pace.

Finally the dreaded infirmary is in site, so he takes a deep breath, sneezes again, and mentally prepares himself for both the verbal and psychological abuse sure to come. “Dr. Gar--Dr. Garrigan?” he calls nervously as he cautiously enters the room, sneezing softly. He is met with silence.

“Dr. Garrigan?” he calls again. No answer. Still expecting the surly Scottish doctor to pop up out of nowhere and begin ranting at him (the very thought making him sneeze violently several times in succession), he gives it one more try. “Dr. Garrigan, it…it’s Valentin. I--I’m here to pick up my medicine…” “Still no answer. Valentin slowly starts to relax a bit at the knowledge that Garrigan must be out (or possibly passed out--It wouldn’t the first time, he thinks).

Still cautious (just in case), he takes a look around and spies on the desk a half-empty pack of cigarettes and an opened, mostly empty bottle of what appears to be Scotch. Discarded on the floor is a crumpled up lab coat, with several tufts of blue fur clinging to it. Ah-ha. Garrigan’s one-man war against fur is nearly legendary. It’s not difficult for Valentin to imagine what likely happened. No doubt Garrigan is off indulging his favorite past-time of heaping endless streams of drunken abuse on that poor, gentle soul, Dr. McCoy.

It could be hours before Garrigan shows back up.

“Oh, no!” Valentin moans wretchedly, at the realization. “What am I going to do now!?”

Dinner-time is swiftly approaching, and if he has any hope at all of having an intelligent philosophical debate with Private Miller *Achoo*!, Valentin has just got to get his sneezing under control.

*Why is this so hard?! The man (James… I wonder if he would permit me to call him James…?) *ACHOO!! ACHOO!!* (Oh, my! *That one has his eyes watering!*) has been ever kind to him--always so polite and friendly. All Valentin wants is to just be able to relax and have a conversation or discussion with the man without sneezing all over him, then having to run away in embarrassment! It’s just that the quiet Private Miller, with those oh-so-serious blue eyes, makes Valentin incredibly nervous. And I don’t even know why! *ACHOO!!* *

Nearly despairing, Valentin finally (reminding himself of the benefits of communal living) decides to take matters into his own hands and find the medicine himself. His English is not the best, but he does well enough to get by, so he begins going through the cabinets looking for any medicines that address sneezing. The secretary in Valentin finds himself (unsurprisingly) appalled at Garrigan’s filing system and he feels for Garrigan’s assistant, that poor, put-upon Mr. Turner (*How does he find anything in here?!*)--but, at long last, he has several bottles and packages lined up on the desk ready to inspect.

“Hmmm…Sneezing, sneezes, sinuses, allergies! So many! Which one should I choose!?”

Feeling overwhelmed by the choices, Valentin is about to break into an epic sneezing fit when he finally sees it: *Sudafed: ‘Take one pill every six hours as needed to control sneezing’*. He breaks into a relived smile. “Oh, perfect! Just what I need! This should get me through dinner without sneezing all over Private Mill--*Achoo!*--eh, everyone, I mean.”

He wants to make sure the medicine has time to start working before dinner-time arrives, so he opens the pack, thinking that he should take the pills as soon as possible. He gets ready to take one, then checks the time again. *Uh-oh. He must have spent more time in the infirmary than he’d thought. Perhaps I should take two, just to be safe. Especially since they’re so small…*

Pleased with this reasoning, he pops two of the little Sudafed tablets and pockets the remaining pills--just in case (after all, he wouldn't want to make a fool of himself in front of Private Miller). Then he happily heads back to his room to await dinner, confident that the medicine will soon work its magic.

The next morning…
Valentin wakes up groaning in pain, face-down in his pillow. He can't understand why he feels so awful. It feels like something stabbed him in the eyes, died in his mouth, then came back to life, and is currently trying to make its escape by beating its way out through his skull. He's not sure which he needs to do worse, pee or throw up--it's even odds right now. He finally decides to brave crawling out of bed, only to realize a number of things simultaneously: he is very sore, he is very naked, he is not in his bed, he's not even in his room, and if the warm naked body pressed against his is any indication--he is not alone...

To be continued...
Another Cherik Interlude

Chapter Summary

Dinner is delayed when an unexpected visitor pops up.

Chapter Notes

Very Short

Erik and Charles make their way back to the dining room to finish meeting the Not-Charles that have gathered. Erik is almost giddy with anticipation.

“Patience, love. It wouldn’t do to look too eager,” Charles says dryly. Erik looks slightly embarrassed, but can’t really bring himself to really feel guilty.

“Charles, how can I not be excited?! I’m about to enter a room full of men who look like you!”

“Well…”

“How would you feel it was a room was filled with men who looked like me…?” Erik asks, projecting a number of images to Charles: Erik as a loin-clothed Spartan, a prostitute, a hit-man, a soldier...

Charles’ eyes nearly cross as they glaze over with lust and he makes a strangled little squeaking noise (which he will later deny). “Oh my,” he says, chuckling weakly. “That’s quite a thought.” He pauses a moment, a puzzled look on his face, then says, “That’s odd. I feel strangely light-headed.”

Erik looks at Charles, concerned. Then at the same time, their eyes widen in shock and they look down at Charles' lap, then back at each other, then back at Charles’ lap.

“Well,” Charles says in wonder. “It’s been a while since that’s happened.”

Erik is practically drooling, already reaching for Charles' belt. “It would be a terrible shame to let
that go to waste. How do you feel about being fashionably late to dinner?"

    Charles grin rivals Erik’s shankiest shark-grin. “Why, Erik, darling! I do believe you read my mind!”

10 minutes later....

    Erik pauses in the middle of things, "Er...Charles, we're in the middle of the hallway. What if someone comes looking for us or walks by...?"

    "Don't worry your pretty little head, darling," Charles pants, "I've already taken care of it."

    Over the years, Charles would occasionally get a wistful look on his face and let out a disturbingly evil chuckle. No one would ever know that he was thinking about the time that he’d used his powers to make everyone in the mansion (and, unknowingly, half of Westchester) spend half an hour thinking that they were chickens.
Chapter Summary

Happiness abounds at the Xavier Mansion. Everyone, it seems, is pairing off--everyone except Johnny, that is. Though he tries not to let it show, he's upset and depressed about being the odd-man-out. Bruce and Martin kindly decide to offer a solution to his problem.

Chapter Notes

Their story was a little more involved than I intended...

_It’s not fair._ Johnny glowers at all of the happy faces around him. He’ll admit that he’s never been a standup kind of guy, but surely he’s not so unlovable that he deserves to be alone. After all, there a lot worse guys here than him. Even Garrigan has hooked up with someone and he is a complete ass!

_Maybe I should have washed my hair._ It has been looking a bit lank, but that’s only because it’s gotten a little too long. _Should I have shaved?_ He rubs a hand over his face. Personally, he likes his bit of stubble--thinks it makes him look older. He checks his breath, then surreptitiously, he sniffs his armpits. Nope, he doesn’t smell. _What the fuck could it be?!_

Sure, he smells like cigarettes and has dark circles under his otherwise (so he’s been told) very nice blue eyes because he drinks too much and doesn’t get enough sleep; and, yeah, his personal hygiene has had its ups and downs over the years (it’s currently on an upswing), but he knows that he’s not ugly.

Still scowling, he pulls the brim of his hat over his eyes and slouches down, sinking even further into the couch, knowing that he looks ridiculously emo at the moment, but too depressed to really care. _Maybe the couch will swallow me and end my misery_, he thinks, not even bothering to shield his thoughts. Charles was too caught up in his (super sexy) friend, Erik, to notice anyway.

Charles and Erik, Wesley and Nicholas (he’s still shaking his head over that one), Robbie and Tom, Steve and Freddie, Rory and Brian…he could go on, but it’s just too depressing.

Nope, if he was a betting man (he snorts derisively at himself, being the world’s unluckiest gambler), he’d put all of his money on him never getting laid again. _At least I would actually win a bet for once_, he thinks (every cloud has its silver lining, right?).

Initially, he’d thought that he might cozy up to Steve, both them being of a like mind--always open to a con or a little thievery for a quick bit of cash, as long as no one got hurt. But, no, Steve’s only ever had eyes for Frederick. Strange a pairing as it is, those two have been eye-ball fucking each other for ages. Though if the way they are looking at each other now is any indication, they’ve
finally taken their relationship to ‘The Next Level’ in a big way. ‘Party on, dudes!’ he thinks uncharitably.

What is wrong with me? Johnny wonders in frustration. Even that crazy-ass bastard, Joe, has found somebody…well, found somebody to fixate on, at least (he takes a moment to cringe in sympathy for McAvoy). Even Tumnus and Leto…I hope to God their love is platonic, he thinks before his mind can skitter away from the thought. He shudders and tries desperately to think of something else, anything else.

Remembering how lonely he is does the trick.

Being something of a loner, Johnny normally wouldn’t give a shit about being by himself. He’s always been just fine with his own company—and when he does want the company of others, he’s never had trouble finding it for the night. But something about all of the happy faces and the air of contentment about the mansion is making it hard to ignore the small, but significant, difference between being alone and being lonely—and Johnny is quickly finding that he does not like being lonely, at all.

He tries to talk himself out of his depression, but finally gives up, thinking that the only way he could possibly get any more emo is to wear eyeliner and start cutting himself. This almost makes him smile, until he realizes how close to the truth it feels.

Johnny is wanting a smoke desperately, but Charles won’t let him smoke in the main house and, to be honest, he’s too depressed to get off the couch anyway. So, he just stays where he is, slouching and staring (glaring) at nothing, feeling sorry for himself—not realizing just how sad he looks. And that he has not gone unnoticed—that he is, in fact, the focus of an intense discussion on the other side of the room.

“Look at the poor bloke, Bruce! Looks like someone killed his puppy,” Martin says quietly, rubbing Bruce’s back.

Leaning into his touch, Bruce answers, “Yeah, I have to admit that I’m feeling for the poor wee bastard. No one should look that lonely.”

“What are we gonna do about it, then?”

Bruce looks over his shoulder at Martin, eyebrow raised, “Whatever do you mean?”

“I mean,” Martin says, “that don’t we have an obligation to make young Johnny-Max feel a bit more at home? You ken, befriend him—take him under our collective wing and such.”

“You want to adopt him?!” Bruce says incredulously. Then he snorts. “Why, darling! Aren’t you getting the cart ahead of the horse? We haven’t even picked out our curtains and china patterns yet! Besides, I think a bassinette would be a tight fit for him.”

“Don’t get smart, Bruce!” Martin snaps, slapping the back of Bruce’s head.

Wincing, Bruce rubs his head. “I’m just trying to make a point that the boy doesn’t want or need that. ‘Oh, hello Johnny, we’ve decided that we’re going to be your gay parents! Now be a love and go clean your room.’ Yes, I’m sure that would go over like the proverbial lead balloon.”

“I do see your point,” Martin says, then looking a bit shifty adds, “but that’s not exactly what I had in mind…”
Bruce recognizes that look and his eyebrows climb into his hairline, “What exactly did you have in mind, oh love of mine?”

“Well, I was thinking something more along the lines of a…er, partnership, of a sorts. Not that I love you any less, mind you,” Martin quickly adds. “But adding a third to the mix wouldn’t be the worst thing in the world now, would it? I mean, look at him, Bruce!”

Oh, yes, Bruce is looking, alright. And quickly warming to the idea. He can readily admit that Johnny is quite lovely--very appealing in a sullen, disheveled, emo sort of way. He could be a very nice addition, indeed. But he also has a slightly needy look about him and Bruce speculates he has the potential to be a bit high-maintenance.

“I’m definitely intrigued by the thought--very intrigued, in fact. But do you really think, providing that he’s even open to the idea, we could give him what he needs? I suspect that he needs quite a lot. We could we taking on more than we bargained for, Martin. I can’t believe I’m saying this--you’ve ruined me, love--but I won’t risk what I have with you for a fuck, no matter how appealing he may be.”

Martin gives an uncharacteristically shy smile and rests his forehead against Bruce’s. “I wouldn’t risk it either. But we both know what it’s like to be lonely and I think he needs us. Together, I know we’d be enough for him--without taking away from each other.”

“You think he’d be satisfied, knowing he’d be coming into a relationship with two people who are already in love with each other? How do we know that won’t make him feel even more lonely? He looks depressed enough as it is--I don’t want to make it worse for him.”

“We don’t have to be in love with him, Bruce. We just need to love him a little. And there is a difference, you know--you showed me that.”

Now it’s Bruce’s turn to look shy and he gently kisses Martin. “I guess you have a point. Besides,” his smile turns wicked as he grabs Martin’s ass and growls in his ear, “who the fuck ever heard of a headmaster with only one student or a priest with only one altar boy?”

Martin laughs delightedly, somehow managing to still make it sound a little obscene--and somehow, in spite of Bruce’s tight embrace, managing to shimmy his entire body against Bruce’s. Bruce makes own obscene little sound, then says, “Are you ready to go over and have a wee chat with young Mr. Martin?”

“Oh, you know I’m always ready, darling,” Martin purrs, grinning widely.

Across the room, Johnny hears Martin’s delighted (but intriguingly dirty) laughter and doesn’t know whether to roll his eyes or cry. Those two. Good God, from Day One, they’ve been going at it like horny jack rabbits.

If he recalls correctly, within a couple of hours of meeting (and an initial misunderstanding), they were already holed up in the nearest available bedroom, literally causing plaster to rain from the ceiling. They rarely surface except to eat. Johnny knows this because his bedroom is directly below theirs.

He tried to switch rooms, but discovered to his consternation that he was unable to sleep without the constant rhythmic thumping going on above his head--so constant that it had already become
kind of like white noise for him.

Adding to his misery (thanks in no small part to the mansion’s ancient venting system), he can not only hear the sounds of their *constant* fucking, but all of the tender endearments they spout at each other—not to mention the details of all the role-playing they love to do. Johnny spends a great deal of his time torn between nausea and horniness. He’d be horrified if anyone knew how many times he’s whacked off while listening to those two go at it. And it’s getting to where any time he’s not feeling well, he gets a boner, now associating the feeling of nausea with sex.

If possible, he huddles even further down into the couch, just wanting the day to be over. He has no idea of just how much his life is getting ready to change.
Chapter Summary

Depressed and lonely, Johnny is receives an unexpected offer from Bruce and Martin to be a part of something more. But, while Johnny’s tired of being alone, he’s not sure he’s willing to settle for less than all. Will he have the courage to try?

Chapter Notes

FYI--Martin's insistence on calling Johnny "Johnny-Max" is a just my reference to the character (Max Campion) that Johnny was impersonating in the film 'Penelope'.

Johnny watches from under his hat as the two men who are the current focus of his thoughts, laugh and grope at each other. Though he’d die before he would ever admit it, he envies the look they share just before they disentangle from one another to cross the room. He becomes mildly alarmed as he realizes that they’re headed in his direction—that, in fact, they are headed straight for him.

The one with the beard (‘Bruce…? Brian…?’ He’s heard him called both), strides over to the couch and casually loops an arm over the back as he flops down next to Johnny, giving him a wicked grin, the look in his eyes very intent.

The other one, Martin, slinks his way over to Johnny’s other side (there’s just no other word for the way he moves), his grin equally wicked, and lazily drapes himself like a cat over the arm of the couch. Johnny finds that for all intents and purposes, he is penned-in by their arms.

Nervous, he has defaulted to his usual defense posture—a more extreme version of what he was already doing—slouched down, shoulders hunched, hat pulled low, arms crossed tightly over his body practically hugging himself.

“Martin and I, we wanted to talk to you for a moment,” Bruce says, grinning a grin that makes him look every inch the cop that Johnny knows him to be. Given his history of run-ins with the law, cops tend to make Johnny nervous. He huddles in tighter on himself.

Martin leans in, pressing himself against Johnny’s side. “Now, love,” he purrs (he never talks, he purrs), “why so nervous? If you keep that up, Johnny-Max, you’re in danger of disappearing,” he laughs. “Like Bruce told you, love, we only wanted to talk to you for a moment.”

Johnny isn’t buying it. Though Martin gives the initial impression of being small, almost delicate, Johnny has heard enough through the vents to know that he is clearly the more predatory of the two.
“Yes,” Bruce says, “You looked a bit lonely sitting over here all by yourself, and we thought you could use a bit of company.” He shares a wicked grin with Martin, then glancing at back at Johnny, adds, “I promise, we won’t bite.”

“Well, unless you ask,” Martin purrs. “Now let’s have a look at those lovely eyes,” he continues, tipping up the brim of Johnny’s hat. “Oh, yes! So lovely!” he sighs with pleasure, gazing into Johnny’s blue eyes.

“Yes, lovely,” Bruce agrees, his own heated eyes focused on Johnny’s mouth. “Very lovely, indeed.”

Johnny is blushing furiously at their scrutiny. He’s nervous, scared, suspicious, and helplessly turned on. ‘What do they want with me!? ’ He wonders frantically.

Having to have yet said a word, Johnny finally stammers out, “Wh–What…Why…What do you…?” He manages to unwind his arms from around himself long enough to flap his hands in a confused manner before folding them tight again.

“Actually, Johnny-Max,” Martin begins, tracing a finger coyly up and down Johnny’s arm, “we—that is, Bruce and I—couldn’t help but notice your predicament.” He waves his hand about, indicating the fact that Johnny was sitting all alone. “And after discussing it amongst ourselves, we have a wee proposition for you…”

“Yes,” Bruce picks up, sidling closer, tightening his arm around Johnny. “We couldn’t help but notice that you looked terribly lonely, and well, no one deserves to be lonely—especially someone as lovely as you. We were wondering if, well, you’d perhaps be interested in making an arrangement of sorts with Martin and me…?”

Johnny croaks out, “An arrangement? What do you mean by ‘an arrangement’?” He’s already pretty sure he knows—he’s not stupid—but he’s not sure how he should feel: excited, flattered, terrified, suspicious, eager? All of the above?

“What we have, Bruce and me, is good, really, really good. And we love each other very much.” Here, they share another one of those looks that Johnny envies so much. “But after careful consideration, we’ve decided that we would like you to be our third.”

“Yes, we think that you would be a welcome addition to our happy household,” Bruce says, giving Johnny a through once-over.

Not giving Johnny a chance to answer, Martin continues, “We know that the dynamic might be a little strange for you, coming into an already established relationship, but we believe we can make it work. If you’re willing to try, that is…”
He was expecting it, but he’s still shocked to actually hear it, “I--I don’t know what to say…” he trails off.

“You don’t expect you to love us, of course. But maybe that will come with time.”

“Er…o--ok, then…?” What else could he say?

“Excellent!” Martin and Bruce chorus, and Johnny finds himself being enthusiastically groped.

Later that night…

Johnny is laying in his new bed, feeling a little out of sorts as he watches his two lovers, curled around each other, sound asleep.

The sex was fantastic—beyond fantastic, given how long it’s been for him. He knows for a fact, if nothing else, that part of his new relationship will be a roaring success (even if he did lose the bet against himself about never getting laid again). But laying beside Bruce and Martin, watching how they orient to each other, even in their sleep, he’s right back to feeling the odd-man-out. Even though it’s only their first night together, he still can’t help the pang of loneliness in his chest. His gaze drifts to the ceiling as he wonders if they will ever really accept him—if he’ll ever be more than just their third.

His eyes are drawn back to the men sleeping beside him. He is a little surprised to see that Bruce’s eyes are partly open. Still looking at Johnny, Bruce reaches across Martin’s body to rest his hand on Johnny’s chest over his heart. He smiles a soft, sleepy smile, then his eyes drift closed and he goes back to sleep, snoring softly. Johnny swears that he can feel the heat from Bruce’s hand spread from his chest, through his entire body, warming places he didn’t even know were cold. Just before he falls into a warm, relaxed sleep, he feels Martin’s foot curling around his calf. Johnny falls asleep with a smile curving his lips, his last thought of the day being, “I belong.”
Chapter Summary

Dinner is delayed yet again by a visit from The Brotherhood (Wes proves that he is a total BAMF) and by the unexpected arrival of two new Not-Charles. Matters are further complicated by a stoned Valentin Bulgakov, and an AWOL James McAvoy (which leads to an emotionally disturbed--to say the least--Joe Macbeth), leaving Charles to wonder just when the inmates had taken over the asylum…oh yeah, that would've been while he was busy ‘getting busy’.

Chapter Notes

Part one of this chapter, we'll get to the interesting stuff in the second part. Just needed this to set it up a little. Feedback is still very welcome...

Having straightened their clothing and smoothed back their hair into some semblance of order, Charles and Erik finally arrive back in the dining having built up quite an appetite. Erik comes to an abrupt halt as he walks (eagerly strides) in and sees a roomful of Not-Charles, all perched precariously on the furniture, staring blankly ahead.

“Er…Charles, darling…when you said you took care of everything…what exactly did you do?” The strangled noise coming from Charles does nothing to ease his suspicions.

“Oh, don’t worry about them,” Charles says, just a little too casually, his face turning redder by the second. *Yep, guilty as sin.* “They’ll be fine.”

“Why are they all just sitting there like that?”

“I *told* you not to worry about it.”

“I thought you were just going to make them not notice us, Charles! I didn’t think you were going to actually *do* something to them!”

“I *was* a *little* distracted at the time, Erik!” Charles snaps, annoyed. “I had to think fast! You’ll just have to forgive me if my control was not up to its usual standards! Besides, I *told* you, they’re fine.”

And just like that, they all started and blinked a few times before seeming to pick up their conversations exactly where they’d left off. The closest Erik ever came to finding out what may have really transpired, was when an incredibly sexy Not-Charles (as if there was any other kind) in chef’s whites had suddenly let out a loud cluck. The man had frowned in confusion for a moment, then shook his head and shrugged (looking oddly as though he was settling feathers) before continuing on his way, singing quietly off-key to himself. From the various comments made by the others (“… nutter!”, “Crazy bastard!”, “Fucking looney-toon!”), he’d had to go on the assumption that this, however strange, was not an unusual occurrence and had decided it best to just forget the whole thing.
Besides, he has been highly anticipating dinner anyway. He can’t remember the last time he’s been this hungry (he shark-grins as he recalls just how he worked up such an appetite), and while he is being introduced to the rest of the Not-Charles, Charles has been waxing poetic about the talents of the mansion’s resident chef, Joe Macbeth.

“Ah!” Erik recalls the sexy, singing chef. *I hope he doesn’t quit his day job. “The clucker!”*

“Yes, Erik,” Charles sighs. “The clucker. I know he’s a bit eccentric, but…” his statement is interrupted by snorts of laughter from all over the room.

“‘A bit eccentric’!? Eccentric!?” snorts a Not-Charles with a Scottish accent and a painful-looking black eye (*Dr. Nicholas Garrigan*, Charles supplies). “Bug-fuck crazy’s what he is! But Charles is right about one thing, the crazy fucker can cook!” Nods and murmurs of assent from the others accompany this statement.

Ruffling the Scot’s longish, shaggy hair, Wesley laughs, “Saying that Joe is ‘a bit eccentric’ is like saying that Nicholas, here, is a bit testy.”

More laughs and a loud chorus of: ‘Get the fook oot ay mah infirmary! AN’ STAY OOT!!’

Highly offended, Nicholas snaps, “Piss off, you fuckers!” giving them all the ol’ two-fingered salute.

Erik is surprised when the man (Nicholas) shoots a glare at Wesley, adding, “And if someone ever fucking wants to get laid again, he might want to be careful about what the fuck he says!”

He’s even more surprised when Wesley slings his arm around Nicholas’s shoulders to hug him close and kiss him, still laughing, “It’s too late for threats now, Nicky! I know your secret: you’re just a big old softy under that gruff exterior.”

The doctor flushes bright red and glares at Wesley, growling out a string of unintelligible threats and curses. He looks, for all the world, just like a tiny, fierce, blue-eyed kitten hissing and mrrrowrrring and flexing its little claws, trying to establish its dominance while being cuddled against its will. He’d be horrified if he had any idea of how unbearably cute he looks right now. Erik finds Nicholas nearly as adorable as he does Mr. Tumnus. *Oh, if only he had a tail…*

The others (even Charles) are looking on in horrified fascination, as Wesley continues to cuddle Nicholas (who like the rest, Erik has noticed, blushes beautifully). Erik is a little confused, though, considering the earlier conversation about Wesley’s feelings for Robbie and about Wes’s declarations of adamant loathing for the very man at whom he is now gazing, seemingly love-struck (not that Erik can blame him--the man is adorable, in spite of his surly attitude). But still… “Er, Wesley…? What…? I thought that you…Robbie? And…Hey!…what happened to your nose???”

“Oh, that!” Wesley waves dismissively, settling back in his chair. “Well, it’s kind of a long story, but--” loud groans erupt at this, confirming Erik’s theory about Wesley’s love of the spoken word. “Hey! Fuck you guys!” Wes scowls. “It’s not my fault if you Philistines unable to appreciate a good story! So anyway, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted--”

“Oh, no,” Charles says suddenly, looking worried. “We have company.” Glancing, first at Erik, then Wesley, he says, “It’s The Brotherhood. They’ve come for Erik.”

In spite of his alarm at this announcement, Erik is astounded by the change that comes immediately over Wesley. Gone is the joking, good-natured young man of moments ago. Gone,
even, is that beautiful, deadly, creature who managed to best Magneto (not that Erik is admitting to that). No, the man standing in front of him now is a focused deadly predator, with but a single mindset—to protect his territory. He has no trouble at all believing Wesley to be the assassin he claimed. In fact, he wonders now how he could have ever, even for a moment, mistaken Wesley for Charles.

Wesley and Charles share a look, then Wes nods and slips away so quickly and quietly it’s almost as though he’d disappeared. As he exits the room, only the briefest pause to brush his hand against Nicholas’ shoulder reveals that there is any humanity in him. Erik is left with the sudden, humbling realization that the Wesley he’d first encountered had only been playing with him. He had never seen Erik as a threat. Remembering what Wesley had said about protecting Charles at all cost and about what he’d do to anyone who hurt Charles or any of his students, Erik is suddenly very, very worried about the members of The Brotherhood.

And very, very thankful that Wesley counts Erik as one of his.

The Enemy at the Gates…

“…and this is where you left him?” Emma asks, glaring at Azazael, the unspoken ‘you idiot’ is loud and clear.

“Da.” It’s hard to tell, but they are all pretty sure that Azazael is flushed with embarrassment right now. Well, Mystique, Janos, and Angel are pretty sure. Emma knows for a fact.

“You just left him here. With no protection.” This from Mystique, who snorts in disdain as she holds out Magneto’s helmet, which she had found discarded near the gates. “And you didn’t think to tell anyone…!”?

“Da,” he says again, shrugging. “Told me leave him. Contact me when he want come back.”

The whole group might well been telepaths so loudly were their accusing gazes shouting, ‘Dumbass!’.

“He is grown man,” Azazael says defensively. “He not need baby-sitt--ACK!!” he shouts as Mystique hits him with the helmet.

“You fucking idiot!” she yells, still hitting him. “He never--” Whack! “takes this stupid--” Whack! “looking--” Whack! “--thing off!” Whack! “God only knows what they’ve done to him!” Whack!

Azazael finally manages to teleport away from her. He is no coward, but that woman is psychotic when it comes to Magneto. It would be understandable if the two were a couple, but everyone knows the only Xavier that Magneto is interested in bedding is not the one currently attempting to kill Azazael. Well, almost everyone knows, he amends, sourly, as he teleports away from another one of Mystique’s frenzied blows.

Damn! She’s already coming at him again. Desperate to save his own ass (ok, maybe he is a coward, just a little), he has no choice but to throw Emma under the bus. Knowing he’ll pay for it later, in a big and very unpleasant way, he points at Emma (first, making sure to hide behind Angel), yelling, “It was her! She the one tell that him to spy on Xavier in first place!”
Emma shoots him a look of disgust as Mystique stops in mid-swing and turns her head to stare at Emma in disbelief. Azazael breathes a small sigh of relief as Mystique switches the focus of her rage to Emma—though he is still highly unnerved by the look in her shimmering, golden eyes. ‘Unbalanced’ is the first word that comes to mind. ‘Unhinged’, being a close second.

“You did what!!?”

Unlike Azazael, Emma is not a coward by any means, and she returns Mystique’s glare with cool indifference. “Unlike some people in this organization,” her chrystalline blue gaze sweeps over them, making it clear who she means, “I actually gather intelligence for Magneto instead of sitting around, either being terrified of, or mooning over him. And I share what I think is useful to The Brotherhood.”

“What’s that got to do with this?” Mystique growls.

“Something strange is going on here at the mansion. Something that is possibly a danger to the Brotherhood. Magneto didn’t believe what I told him, so I told him to check it out for himself. But I did not tell him, or even suggest to him, that he come here alone!”

Azazael pokes his head out from behind Angel to say, “I know you not think much of my opinion, but I do not think Xavier want to harm Magneto.”

“Oh, no! Of course not!” Mystique sneers. “Charles just wants to turn him into a tame little lap dog! Without this,” she holds out the helmet, “Charles can make Magneto do what ever he wants! Can’t you see?—AAHHHHH!!!! FUCK!” she yells, dropping the helmet as a bullet hole suddenly appears in it.

Everyone freezes in shock at the bullet hole n the sides of the helmet. “What the actual fuck!?” Mystique yells again, as divots of sod start exploding out of the ground all around them. “Oh, shit! GUN!!!!”

Emma shimmers into her diamond form, while the others runs about frantically on the open lawn, screaming and looking for a place to hide.

Inside the Mansion…

“Charles, will Wesley be ok? You know, by himself? ” Erik asks.

With a smile that confirms Erik’s earlier fears, Charles answers, “Wesley is more than capable of handing their asses to them. I’d be more worried about The Brotherhood, if I were you. Don’t you worry about Wesley.” Charles taps his temple, “If he finds himself in need of help, he knows how to ask.”

Turning back to the room at large, Charles claps his hands to get everyone’s attention, “Alright, gentlemen, listen up! It seems that we are having a little security issue at the moment.” Everyone starts talking and asking questions. “Quiet! As I said, we are having an issue with security. Mr. Gibson is kindly seeing to it, but until he returns, I ask that all of you stay inside the mansion—and keep an open line of contact with me. Dinner is going to be delayed for a bit, so there’s no use in sitting here worrying needlessly. I’ll let all of you know when this issue has been resolved. Until then
find something to do.”

As everyone files out of the room, Charles calls out, “Dr. Garrigan? Would you mind staying behind for a moment? I’d like to have a word with you, if I may?”

Face pale and pinched with worry, Nicholas comes over to Charles and Erik. “What do you need, Charles?”

“Nicholas, I need for you to head down to the infirmary and make sure that is stocked and ready for guests.”

“We never quite got around to completing the inventory today,” he replies, gently probing at his black eye. “But I’m pretty sure that we’re well stocked. It’s not like we go through much besides burn ointment and anti-histamines, anyway. Fucking Summers kid. Fucking nerds,” he mutters under his breath.

“Well, it’ll give you something to do while Wesley is taking care of our little problem. Not used to being worried about him, are you?” Charles says, kindly.

Still looking tense and pale, Nicholas gives him a small, but genuine, smile, “It was a fuck of a lot easier when all I ever wanted was for the wee bastard to meet a nasty fucking end. Now, all I can think of is, What if something happens to him? The fact that no one else would put up with my arse, being the least of my fucking concerns. I ken I’m a selfish bastard, and I’m at a bit of a loss, having never cared about anyone but myself before.” He runs his hands through his already wild-looking hair and sighs deeply, “I tell you, it’s been one hell of a fucking day.”

“Wesley will be alright, Nicholas. In fact, I suspect that he will be the only one not injured. That’s why I need you to get the infirmary ready. Get Mr. Turner’s help if you need it.”

“No. I’ll let him have his time with Tom, tonight. Besides, I’m not good company at the best of times. Right now, I’d be a nightmare--more so than usual, I mean.”

“I understand, Nicholas.”

“Er…Nicholas, I know that we just met, but I’ve seen enough of Wesley to know that Charles is right about him. He’s pretty impressive in action,” Erik adds.

Nicholas shoots him a droll look. “So I hear.”

“Uh--?” Both Erik and Charles look at each, reddening.

“It’s ok, Erik, it’s ok. I’m just fucking with you. Mostly, I just need something to fucking torture Wesley with when he gets back. Actually, I thought it was pretty fucking hot.” Nicholas quirks and waggles an eyebrow, grinning. “You ken, impressive.”

“Well that’s a relief,” Charles laughs awkwardly. "Wouldn't want things to be awkward."

“However,” Nicholas continues, “if you find yourselves needing any further assistance with 'facilitating matters', I would be glad to offer my services. I am a doctor, after all.” Nicholas gives Erik a once-over, grinning his own version of a shark-grin, which Erik gladly returns.

“Charles? I think you’ll be wanting to see this!” They all turn toward the door to see Hank standing in the doorway, looking excited, his expression quickly changing to one of panic when he
spots Nicholas, and utter terror when he spots Erik. “M-Mag-Magneto!!”

“It’s alright Hank! Calm down. He’s not here to hurt anyone. Didn’t you get my message?” Charles asks, waving a hand at his temple. “Now, what is that’s got you so excited?” Charles asks. He concentrates for a moment, then a raises and eyebrow. “Oh. Well. That is interesting.”

“What, Charles!? What is it?”

“Oh, you’re going to love this, Erik.”

“What!?”

“Yeah, Charles! What the fuck is it!?” Nicholas asks.

“Would you like to meet Max and Simon?”

“Who the fuck are Max and Simon?” Erik and Nicholas ask in tandem.

“Why, our two new, er…Not-Charles, of course.”

“Oh, you’re right, Charles. I am going to love this…” Erik doesn’t even make a token effort to hide his grin of anticipation.
Hail, Hail The Gang’s (Almost) All Here--Part IIB

Chapter Summary

Takes up where we left off with Part IIA. Erik is excitedly anticipating meeting the new Not-Charles (who we’ll finally meet in the next part). Charles worries about a missing James McAvoy (among other things), but is trying not to panic...yet.

But mostly, Wesley just has fun with the Brotherhood--too bad they can’t say the same about him.

Right where we left off previously…

“You’ve got to be fucking shitting me, right?!”

“No, Dr. Garrigan, I’m afraid that the mansion is about to get just a bit more crowded,” Charles tells him. “Considering the current circumstances, I believe that Erik and I will walk down to the infirmary with you to meet our new guests.” Putting a finger to his temple, he adds, “I suppose I should let Joe know tha—” he breaks off, looking a bit alarmed. “Well…that explains why James wasn’t present…um, well…yes…”

At Nick and Erik’s startled looks, he smiles a big fake smile, “Oh…nothing to be alarmed about…it just looks like we may be ordering pizza tonight, is all.” He laughs nervously, “No. No worries at all.”

“Well, fuck me running! Joe’s gone and offed the poor bastard, hasn’t he?” Nicholas gripes. “If it doesn’t fucking rain about this place, it fucking pours!” Throwing a look over his shoulder, as they leave the study, he tells Erik, “You know, mate, you can stop grinning like that any fucking time now—you’re starting to creep me the fuck out.”

Still anticipating meeting the new ‘Not-Charles’, Erik just grins wider.

“Christ! I mean, seriously, just how many fucking teeth do you have, anyway?” In spite of his earlier words, Nicholas can’t help but be impressed. *If I had a smile like that, that fucking McCoy wouldn’t dare to step foot…paw…whatever the fuck it is, in my infirmary ever again’.

Meanwhile, between worrying about Erik, Wesley, the arrival of The Brotherhood, the two new ‘Not-Charles’, and now—a missing James McAvcoy (and potentially homicidal Joe Macbeth),
Charles is trying valiently not to have a nervous breakdown.

**Outside again…**

Bullets and clods of dirt flying all around, Emma (as usual) finds herself the only one standing her ground, trying to do *something* useful, while the rest of the idiots to whom she is irrevocably bound, run about on the open ground screaming in panic. “*Why do I have to do everything myself?*” she thinks in disgust, using her telepathy to try and locate the shooter.

Sensing said shooter hiding in the trees, Emma points to a location about a thousand yards to her left, shouting, “There!”

The other members of The Brotherhood immediately turn…and run in the opposite direction, into the surrounding woods. Emma sighs and rolls her eyes. *Useless fucking cowards. Why Magneto didn’t just kill them all, remains a mystery.*

Emma will deny to her dying day the shriek she lets out when a bullet grazes the tip of her still-pointing finger. But when she sees that the bullet somehow managed to break her *diamond* fingernail, she looks at her hand in disbelief and completely loses it. “My manicure!!” she screams in rage. “Oh, it’s on now, bitch! I am going *own* your ass!!”

Lashing out with her telepathy, she grins in vicious satisfaction, fully intending to make the shooter crawl to her, crying and begging for a forgiveness that will never come—only to be completely shocked when her mind encounters…nothing. “What the--?”

“Oh, girlfriend, you’re gonna have to do *much* better than that.”

Emma’s head whips around and she watches in shock as a smirking *Charles Xavier* drops down from a tree limb (somehow much closer than she’d sensed earlier) to land lightly on his feet, rifle slung across his back. As he saunters toward her, she knows her mouth is gaping open like a fool, but she can’t help it. “*Xavier!* You--You’re *walking*!!”

Still smirking at her, he raises an eyebrow and asks, “Am I, now?”

Emma frowns, sensing that something isn’t quite right (*I certainly don’t recall him being that well-dressed*), but she for some reason, she is unable to read his mind—and, no, it’s not because he’s more powerful, no matter what Magneto says. She also doesn’t realize that in her shock and confusion, she’d reverted back to her human form. So it comes as a complete surprise when, still smiling, “Charles” hits her in the face with the butt of the rifle, knocking her out.
When the remaining members of The Brotherhood finally come creeping cautiously out of the woods, they stop dead as they are treated to a sight both hilarious and frightening: a calm and relaxed *Charles Xavier*, casually cradling a sniper rifle in his arms and sitting on a hog-tied Emma Frost (who, now conscious and in her diamond-form, is cursing like a sailor).

The sight is hilarious, well…for obvious reasons.

Frightening, because Emma is going to kill them all for thinking it’s funny, and because, *come on? Charles* shooting at them, then physically besting Emma…? In what universe did anyone ever see *that* happening? And where’s his wheelchair?!

“Holy shit! Emma, what happened!?” This from Angel.

“Oh my God! *Charles!!!!*” Bursting into tears, Mystique runs toward him with her arms outstretched, only to stop short, mouth open and eyes crossing as she looks at the muzzle of the rifle suddenly pressed against her nose. “Guh?! *Ch-Charles!*??”

Still completely relaxed, smirk never leaving his face, “Charles” says, “Back off, sister. Don’t you think it’s a little late for that shit now?”

Ignoring her shattered look, he stands up, using the rifle to move her back, then walks past to confront the rest of The Brotherhood.

Mystique finds her voice again. “You’re *walking*!! But Charles!? Wha--? *How*?”

Wesley turns to stare at her. “Are you really that fucking stupid!??” (Mystique recovers from her shock long enough to shoot a glare at Emma’s emphatic, “*God, yes!*”)

In a rare show of bravery, Azazael teleports behind “Charles” while he is distracted and tries to take him down. As everyone looks on in amazement, in one smooth motion Wesley neatly dodges out of the way and pivots, firing the pistol that he’d pulled out of nowhere. A smirking, Azzezel gives him the finger and teleports out of the way—only to have bullet somehow follow him, hitting his shoulder when he reappears.

Wesley can’t help but grin at the chorus of amazed “*Ooohhh!*” from The Brotherhood (even Emma is impressed). Azazael is so surprised (and in pain) that it doesn’t occur to him to move, and he is soon given the same treatment as Emma—a rifle butt to the face (Wes makes sure to give him the finger, first).

Angel takes a try at spitting acid at Wesley, but quickly backs down when he grabs her by the back of her neck, growling out, “Don’t even *think* about it, little girl. I will fucking pull your wings off and feed them to you. You got me?!” He gives her a little shake to emphasize his threat.
“Y-Yes, sir, C-Charles. I’m sorry,” she says meekly.

“Jesus fuck, you people are stupid!” Wes snorts, butting her with the rifle.

Janos tries to sneak up behind “Charles” and grab him, and is knocked out cold when Wesley’s foot lashes out behind him catching Janos in the face. Wes drags the unconscious Azazel, Angel, and Janos over next to Emma, and dumps them in a pile.

All the while, Mystique has been standing there, unable to move, as she watches her supposedly-paralyzed pacifist brother, single-handedly kick The Brotherhood’s collective ass. Without even using his telepathy.

“Charles! What happened to you?! When did you get so mean!?” she whines.

“God! You really are that stupid, aren’t you?”

Mystique looks at him with wounded, tear-filled eyes, as Emma beats her head against the ground.

Wesley looks down at her, “What are you doing, Girlfriend?”

“Trying to knock myself back out so I don’t have to suffer listening to that,” Emma replies, pointing her chin at Mystique. She and Wes share a brief moment of commiseration, and he rifle-butts Mystique, dumping her unconscious body on the pile with the others.

“I must say, your sex appeal has ramped up considerably, Xavier…or whoever you are,” Emma comments slyly. She gives him a once-over and a coy smile. “If you untie me, I’ll help you kill them all and put them out of our misery. Then maybe we could…?” she flows back to her human form and waggles her eyebrows.

“Sorry, Girlfriend. I’m batting for the other team at the moment.”

She rolls her eye. “Figures.”

“Now, back to business.” Here Wes shows her a strange looking bullet, “If you don’t quit trying to poke around in my brain, like NOW, I’m gonna to shoot you with this.”

Emma flows back into her diamond form, smirking.

“Smirk away, Girlfriend. But an armor-piercing explosive round will do more than just ruin your
“But just so you know, Charles taught me to shield, so good luck getting anything out of here,” he points at his head. “Besides, it would be a real shame to kill you, since you appear the only one of these dumb-asses with more than two brain cells to rub together.”

Emma just shrugs. What can she say, when the man’s right, he’s right.

Wesley kneels down next to her, “Now, here’s what you’re going to do: you are going to use your (Wes wiggles his fingers at his temple) to wake up Red and have him take us all to the infirmary. If you try anything, you and Mr. Armor-Piecing Explosive Round are going to become very well acquainted.”

Emma just looks at him.

Wesley waves the bullet in front of her face. “Now would be a good time, Girlfriend. You already know that I can kick all of your asses--and that was just me having fun. You don’t want to see what I can do when I started getting pissed off. You won’t be needing the infirmary--you’ll be needing a cemetery.” He smiles and taps the explosive round against Emma’s diamond nose and says, “Well…they’ll be needing a cemetery. You’ll be needing a Dust-Vac.”

Azazael’s eyes snap open. “What!??”

Wes smiles at Emma. “Good girl.”
Chapter Summary

When we last left Valentin, he had awakened with a massive Sudafed hangover, shocked to find himself in a strange bed…and not alone. Now, we reunite with him as he discovers the identity of his mystery man and tries to piece together the events of the previous night.

Chapter Notes

This not all of the story for Valentin and Miller. It goes without saying that neither of them is looking forward to Nicholas crowing about being right (or as Miller puts it, "being more of a dick than usual") about a 'good shag' fixing Valetin's sneezing problem.

When we last left Valentin, he had awakened with a massive Sudafed hangover, shocked to find himself in a strange bed…and not alone. Now, we reunite with him as he discovers the identity of his mystery man and tries to piece together the events of the previous night.

Valentin freezes in the midst of gingerly attempting to extricate himself from the grip of the warm, naked body next to him, when the warm naked body (definitely male) stirs and chirps, in a cheerful, and excruciatingly loud, American-accented voice, “Good morning, Sunshine! Leaving so soon?"

In spite of the nausea and spikes of pain in his head, Valentin immediately recognizes the voice and cringes in horror as his greatest fear (hopefearhopefearhope) has just been realized. The warm, naked body with whom he apparently shared a bed last night is none other than one Private James Miller.

As Valentin remains frozen in place, Miller snakes an arm around his waist, pulling Valentin back against his (warm! naked!) chest, and murmurs teasingly in his ear, “Trying to sneak out on me? And after all we shared last night…?” He runs a finger down Valentin’s arm, chuckling at the way every inch of Valentin’s exposed skin (that would be all of it) erupts in goose-flesh.

Valentin’s startled gasp of pleasure morphs quickly into a whimper of embarrassment and he wishes the creature that’s been trying to beat its way out of his skull would just kill him and end his misery. But of course not. He fails to hold back another pitiful moan as his aching head and roiling stomach fight it out for supremacy against his urgent need to pee.

With uncharacteristically evil glee in his voice, James (still speaking unusually loud) says, “I was even going to make you breakfast.” He cackles evilly when Valentin heaves, his skin paling then taking on a distinctly greenish hue. “Mmmm…soft-scrambled eggs. And some nice, greasy bacon to go with it…”

Valentin’s roiling stomach scores a knock-out punch against his desperate need to pee. As Miller cackles, Valentin leaps out of the bed and just makes it to what he thinks is the bathroom, before projectile-vomiting all over what he realizes too late is actually a closet. Still cackling, James asks, “Or maybe fried eggs--mmmm, sunny-side-up, with nice runny yolks?” Valentin is already vomiting again before James even finishes his sentence.

Miserable and exhausted, Valentin finally slumps against the doorway and slides to the ground,
praying for death. He hears the sound of James’ put-upon sigh, then the rustling of bedclothes and the sound of footsteps moving towards him. He moans again in misery—just the vibrations from the footsteps are enough to make his stomach knot again. James kneels next to him and pushes Valentin’s sweaty hair back from his face, before sliding his arms under Valentin’s to gently haul him to his feet, saying quietly, “C’mon, Valentin. Let’s go get you cleaned up.”

Once inside the bathroom, James eases Valentin to the floor where he gratefully sprawls, almost sobbing with relief as his feverish skin and aching head make contact with the blessedly cool tiles. Valentin caresses the wondrous tiles, murmuring quietly to them in Russian. He can hear Miller snickering at him, but he doesn’t care. The tiles are beautiful and he loves them and they love him and he will never, never leave their cool, soothing beauty. When James drags him away from heaven of his beloved tiles to deposit him in the shower, he protests mournfully—though his protests quickly turn to shrieks of outrage when James turns on the cold water.

Once the shock of the cold water has done its work of partially reviving the hung-over Russian, James takes pity on the shivering, sodden figure huddled miserably on the floor of the shower. Ignoring Valentin’s glare of loathing, he reaches past him to turn on the hot water. Valentin’s glare melts into a look of utter ecstasy, and he moans in decadent pleasure as the hot water cascades over his freezing body. He doesn’t think he’s ever felt such pleasure. And to think, he could have thrown away his love on those tiles. Yes, they were lovely, but nothing could compare to the sinful love of the naughty temptress now caressing him.

His pleasure is interrupted, once again, when Miller thrusts a bar of soap and a washcloth at him. For some reason James is blushing and won’t look at him. “Here, wash up. There should be some shampoo in there somewhere. I’ve found a fresh—towel for you. There’s toothpaste and a toothbrush on the sink. I’ll be in the other room.” As James walks out of the bathroom, he finally looks over his shoulder at Valentin, and the usual serious look is now back in his eyes, “We need to talk about last night.”

Oh, dear. Last night.

Valentin cringes as he is suddenly assaulted by a barrage of confusing and seemingly unrelated flashes of memory: karaoke (they don’t have a karaoke machine), a drinking contest (he doesn’t drink), a very vivid image of a shocked and speechless Nicholas Garrigan (he feels a strange sense of satisfaction at this, though he’s not sure why), and…oh no, grabbing Miller’s ass…

Valentin wonders if it’s possible to drown himself in the shower, changing his mind when he realizes that he hasn’t sneezed even once since waking up.

James walks out of the bathroom, not knowing whether to laugh or feel guilty. The expression on Valentin’s face had been hilarious, but still…he’d been awfully sick when he finally came to. But the puking was going to happen anyway—James had merely sped things up a bit (though, admittedly, he didn’t think there would be quite so much…and be so…blue).

On the other hand, Valentin deserves to suffer a little payback for the shit-storm he stirred up at dinner last evening and for the trouble and torture that he put James through all night. He knows that Valentin is celibate, so he definitely feels guilty for letting Valentin think that they’d had sex—and he feels even more guilty for wanting it to be true. But, did he also forget to mention that the fact they didn’t have sex hadn’t been for lack of trying on Valentin’s part…?

After winning the drinking contest that he’d started, Valentin had shouted that he wanted to dance and celebrate his victory—then had proceeded to leap onto the dinner table and do just that. He was actually quite good, though his moves would be classified as less traditional Russian dancing and more ‘Magic Mike’—not that James ever watched that movie (twelve times), he’s just saying.

When the singing started, Charles had ‘politely suggested’ that perhaps Valentin should go to bed and sleep it off. Valentin had obstinately refused, insisting that one could not simply stop in the middle of a Lady Gaga song, and had continued to belt out the lyrics to “Bad Romance” (he really was quite a good dancer—too bad he couldn’t sing any better than the rest of them). But, it wasn’t
until Valentin attempted to give a lap dance to a for-once speechless Nicholas Garrigan (‘Who is frigid, tight-arsed wee poof, now, eh, Nicolai?’), that they’d figured out something more than simple drunkenness was going on and Charles had to resort to using telepathy to convince Valentin that he wanted to go to his room.

And guess who got 'volunteered' to escort him…?

“Please, James,” Charles had begged, going for the coup de grace: his patented ‘You-Are-My-Only-Hope’ look. “He’s not himself, right now.” Cheeks flushed and eyes shining, he had laid the subtle emphasis on ‘you’, “He trusts you. And I trust you to make sure he gets back unharmed.” And just like that, Miller was screwed.

Nicholas, who’d finally got his voice back, had snorted incredulously, as James had led an increasingly-wobbly Valentin out of the room, “Not himself!? I’ll fucking say! Wee bastard’s high as a fucking kite!” And speaking for everyone, he’d added, “Wouldnae have ever thought he’d have those kind of moves on him though, that’s for fucking sure!”

James wishes that Charles had taken Valentin’s behavior more into consideration and had been a bit more specific than simply suggesting to Valentin that he wanted to go to bed. The non-specific nature of that mental suggestion had, unfortunately, left a lot of room for interpretation on Valentin’s part. Then again, having come in a very close second in the drinking contest, Charles had been none too sober himself.

Getting the inebriated Russian back to his room had been an almost Herculean task. One minute Valentin would be a boneless heap having to be practically be dragged along by James. The next minute Valentin would be clinging to him like a spider monkey. And the stuff he was saying!

Valentin’s mouth had gotten increasingly more filthy as they went along. Hell, James had been in the Army and hadn’t heard of half of the stuff that came out of Valentin’s mouth!

Where did someone who claimed to be not only celibate but a virgin even learn to talk like that, anyway!!

Although some of it had been in Russian, it hadn’t been hard, er…rather, it hadn’t been difficult (oh, it had definitely been hard, James recalls with a blush) to understand Valentin’s meaning. Especially when his hands had seemed determined to demonstrate.
Chapter Summary

We finally Meet Simon and Max Lewinsky. They don't like or trust each other, but they discover that they do have something in common.

Chapter Notes

This part is told from Max's POV.

The song Max is singing in his Jail cell is from Monty Python's "The Life of Brian"

Max

The last thing (former) D.I. Max Lewinsky remembers was sitting in a jail cell, under arrest, and contemplating the very real possibility of spending the rest of his life in prison. However, given that he is (was) a cop--in prison--he had a sneaking suspicion that the ‘rest of his life’ probably wouldn’t be all that much longer. “Always look on the briiiight si-de of life…dada, da, da, dada, dada, dada…” he sings to himself.

He was trying very hard to not think about the various and sundry gruesome ways that he could meet his end--as a cop in prison--when he is suddenly, somehow, somewhere else--and staring into a face that could be his own, but isn’t.

“Who the fuck are you!?” he asks his doppelganger.

“Who the fook are you!” comes the snarled reply. Hmmm, Scottish.

Okay, definitely not me, Max concludes, not sure if that’s a good thing or not. “I asked you first!”

His doppelganger rolls its eyes, “Ye cannae be serious. Wha’ are ye five years old?”

Prevarication. Max’s cop-senses go on high-alert. Oh, yeah. He can practically smell the stink of criminal intent rolling off this guy. He makes a fist, “I’ll give you five, if you don’t start talking!”

He gets a surly look, but the guy backs down, finally muttering, “Simon! My name is Simon! Now who are you!?”

“Max.”

“Max, what?”

“None of your business, you little shite!”
“Fookin’ copper…” Simon mutters under his breath, “You’re all alike.”

Max takes exception to being told off by a low-life criminal (his instincts are never wrong) and gets in the man’s face, “What was that?”

Simon doesn’t back down this time, “Fookin’ copper, I said!”

Max looks at him suspiciously, “How did you know I was a cop?”

More eye-rolling. “Oh, please! I can spot a tight-arsed wee fookin’ copper like yourself a mile away. Arseholes, every one!”

Max can feel his temper spike and his anger boils over when Simon adds snidely, “And if I can’t spot ‘em, the stench ay pork is a dead give-away.”

“And like that, they’re nose-to-nose, ready to throw down and fight.

They absolutely do not scream and clutch at each other when they are suddenly confronted by an enormous blue furry man…thing. Did Max mention that it was blue…and furry…?

“Oh. Hello. Didn’t mean to startle you,” the furry, blue man-thing says, pushing its glasses up on his nose…snout-thing. “I’m Hank,” the man-thing continues, holding out a hand…paw…thing. “Dr. Hank McCoy. And you are…?”

Max feels a wave of dizziness come over him at this surrealistic turn of events—a look at Simon’s face tells him that he is not alone.

He is a bit surprised when Simon manages to pry a hand loose from where it’s wound up in Max’s shirt and tentatively takes the offered hand, paw, “Nae problem. Er…hello, I’m Simon…” he says faintly.

Not to be outdone (he’s no coward, after all), Max takes Hank’s hand…paw, as well. “Max Lewinsky.”

Hank gnaws on his lip (Careful there, mate, Max thinks, looking at Hank's fangs) and shuffles his feet nervously, looking toward the door. “I should probably tell Charles about this.”

“What’s Charles?” Max asks.

“If you’ll just wait here in the infirmary, I’ll go and get him for you,” Hank says, and quickly scurries off.

“That didn’t exactly answer my question,” Max grouses.

Simon snorts at him and says mockingly, “What? Can’t figure it out, Sherlock? Isn’t it elementary?”

“If you don’t shut it, you little bastard, you’re going to get a first-hand lesson in police brutality! How’s that for elementary!”

Simon shuts it.
Max doesn’t trust Simon No-Last-Name further than he could throw the little bastard, but they have seemingly declared an unspoken (reluctant) truce. They’ve been discussing their current situation and neither of them knows where they are or how they got here. Unlike Max, Simon claims that he doesn’t remember what he was doing before this all came about. All he will say is that he is an art-dealer. It’s clear that he can see Max’s look of, ‘Oh yeah. I’ll bet you’re a dealer alright!’ But when Simon gives the name of the auction house where he works, Max’s eyebrows climb into his hairline—even *he*’s heard of the place. But Max still knows that Simon’s lying. Well, lying about not remembering, anyway--the dodgy little bastard’s eyes were shifting all over the place when Max had asked him. He also knows that whatever else Simon claims, the man is definitely a drug addict (probably coke--his nose has been running non-stop) and he’s been eye-balling the infirmary’s medicine cabinets with increasing interest. Better nip that in the bud now. “You try to steal any drugs out of there, mate, and I’ll beat the shit out of you,” Max says casually, smirking when Simon gives him a caught-out death-glare.

“I wasn’t going to steal anything!” Simon says, sounding outraged at the very idea, while looking guilty as hell. “I was just desperate to have a look at something besides your ugly face!”

“Yeah! I know what you’re desperate for!” Max almost crows with triumph, at the guilty look on Simon’s face. *Gotcha!* Admittedly, though, Max feels a bit hypocritical as he’s been eye-balling those drugs himself. He knows that desperate, needy look for a reason. To make matters worse, his bad knee is really starting to throb and he doesn’t have his pills with him. If the pain gets any worse, he’s going to have to bite the bullet and work some kind of arrangement with Simon for getting them both some relief.

And probably sooner than later. From the sudden sharp gleam in his eyes, Simon has just figured him out.

“Oohhh! So that’s how it is! Seems I’m not the only one feeling a bit desperate!” Simon smirks, tracing a finger down Max’s face, which is already starting to lightly sweat. “Not so fucking high and mighty now, are ye?”

“Piss off!” Max snaps, unable to stop himself from grimacing in pain as he massages his knee.

Simon leans in and whispers in Max’s ear, low and seductive, “Bet those pills are starting tae call your name now, eh, Copper? Bit like a Siren’s call ain’t it? Promising to easing yer troubles, and offering sweet oblivion from yer pain.”

Max looks up at Simon, their eyes meeting in perfect understanding, for the briefest moment each man seeing the other’s pain.

Then Simon kisses him.

Max makes a shocked sound and pulls back. “What the fuck are you doing?!”

Simon smirks again, and says, “Distracting you from that knee while I figure oot how we’re gonnae get those pills.” Then grinning, he kisses Max again.

If this is what it takes to secure Simon’s help...Mentally rolling his eyes, Max’s lips part and he relaxes into the kiss. He can honestly say that it’s not exactly what he would call a fate worse than death (at the risk of seeming narcissistic, Simon is hardly ugly). At any rate, it certainly beats the shit out of what he’d had to look forward to in prison. And Max *does* need those pills. With all of this in mind, he deepens the kiss—even managing (in spite of his increasingly painful, throbbing knee) a small, though genuine, smile when Simon presses closer with a soft, surprisingly eager moan. Maybe this won’t be so bad, after all.
Yeah, he and Simon are sort of in the same boat at the moment. And while he still doesn’t trust Simon, he trusts everything else even less. So as far as Max is concerned, they’re going to have to stick together and depend on one another for the time being, God help him.
Chapter 35 Breaking the Law--Max and Simon, Part II

Chapter Summary

Slight rehash of Ch 34 told from Simon's POV

Simon

“Who the fuck are you!?”

Looking into the face of the man asking the question, my first thought was, “Oh fuck no! I’ve snuffed it and been reincarnated as an Englishman?!?” Please, no. But surely God wouldn’t be that cruel. Besides if I’d been reincarnated, my new self wouldn’t be talking to my old self because my old self would have been reincarnated into my new self and my old self would…oh, never the fuck mind—that train of thought was good for naught but making my head hurt. Better to just dive in and find out what the fuck was going on here. “Who the fuck are you!?” I snarl back at him, and thus setting the tone for our ensuing conversation.

Just my luck, it turns out that my new ‘acquaintance’, Max, is a cop. And not just a cop, but a supremely uptight, bullying, self-righteous English prick of a cop. A cop who within seconds of meeting had already judged me to be a criminal and addict.

The fact that he was right on both counts being beside the point.

I am well aware of my own short-comings. So I’ve got a bit of a problem with gambling. And drugs. And organized crime. I also have a nagging suspicion I may have done something very bad that, for some reason—which I suspect is for the best—I can’t quite remember. But the point I’m trying to make is that nobody’s perfect and that arsehole had no right to be so fucking judgmental right out of the gate. Within the space of no less than five minutes, he’d already threatened to beat me up twice. Once, because I didn’t tell him my name fast enough and had gotten cheeky with him, and again because I had gotten really cheeky with him (okay, maybe, I deserved that one…a little--I may have suggested that he smelt of pork).

Seriously, though, what was that bloke’s fucking problem!? Oh, don’t worry, I’ll get to that later...

Anyway, insults start flying and before I know it, we’re squaring off to fight. As I’m mentally preparing myself for the arse-beating I’m about to receive—oh come on! I’m a fucking art dealer for Christ’s sake! I knew going in that I didn’t stand a chance. It was more a matter of national pride, you see: if I backed down from a fight with an Englishman, I’d never be able to live with the shame. I’d lose the right to call meself a Scotsman.
So, anyway…as I was saying before I interrupted myself: one moment we’re nose-to-nose, Max and I, preparing to fight. The next…? Max is suddenly screaming in terror and clinging to me like a wee bairn (I was not clinging to him, nor did I scream—I don’t care what the bastard says). Though in truth, I can’t say that I blame him. After all, it’s not every day that one is confronted by a seven-foot-tall Cookie Monster—a muscley, vicious-looking one with giant fangs and enormous claws, I might add. So if Max screamed…well, I suppose it’s not too terribly cowardly. As for myself, I was far more in control. I actually thought I was hallucinating at first, especially when I noticed that it was wearing spectacles.

Then stepping us further into the Twilight Zone (and, no I’m not talking about sparkly vampires), it spoke. *Apologized* for “startling” us—actually *apologized*, it did! Told us that its, *his*, name was Hank McCoy, *Doctor* Hank McCoy (as if that makes it better somehow) and offered his hand…paw…? mitt…? just like a normal bloke. Still feeling as if I was hallucinating, I managed to pry a hand loose from Max’s shirt (alright, I *may* have underplayed my reaction to seeing Hank) and take his hand…paw, being careful of the claws, of course, and introduce myself. His grip was surprisingly gentle—good thing as his hand completely swallowed half my arm (not to be outdone, Max followed suit—though I will *never* let him forget that I went first).

He seems nice enough, but instead of telling us where we were or anything *remotely* useful, Doctor McCoy mutters something about someone called Charles, tells us to wait in the infirmary, then nervously scurries off. I mean, what the fuck is it about this Charles that has a giant, fanged man-beast nervously scurrying about!? What does that mean for Max and me? More importantly, what does it mean for *me*?

After Hank scurried off (I’m still shaking my head over that one), Max and I were left a bit shell-shocked to say the least, though we finally get around to discussing our current predicament. Well, at least that was the plan. As you can probably guess it all went downhill pretty quick. Hank was barely out the door before Max pulled a hat-trick and threatened to beat me up again (admittedly, I *may* have deserved it, but this has not been an easy day—forgive me if I’m just not my usual charming self…).

I can see in his eyes that Max doesn’t believe me when I tell him that I don’t remember what I was doing before I ended up here. I’m mostly telling the truth. I remember some things, but everything is jumbled up in my head—sort of like looking into a kaleidoscope. Mostly I remember a painting: *Witches in the Air*, but thinking about it makes my head hurt, for some reason.

And while I was thinking about that, Max just threatened to beat me up *again* for the crime of simply looking at the drug locker.

“All wasn’t going to steal anything!” I say, offended. I was just looking. Okay, and *maybe* thinking about *borrowing* a couple of things. *What!?* It’s not like this is turning out to be a stress-free day, after all. No need for Max to be an arse about it. My snappy come-back to his accusation: “I was just desperate to have a look at something besides your ugly face!”

Well, no one ever accused me of being a genius.

Smug bastard is looking all full of himself at catching me out—but in his arrogance, he doesn’t realize that I’ve been observing him, too. I’ve been watching as he absently rubs his knee, so much of a habit that he doesn’t even seem to know he’s doing it. I’ve also noticed increasingly tense look on his face and the slight sheen of sweat gathering about his hairline—*Ooohhh!* Well, that certainly explains a lot. Bastard noticed me looking at the drugs because that’s where *he* was looking! Just like a fucking copper, wouldn’t ya know! *Hypocrite.*
I see the exact moment when he realizes that I’m onto him. He may have been right about me, but I was right about him, too. And now I know his dirty little secret. And even though I know exactly how he’s feeling right now, he’s been such an arse that I’m not going to make this easy for him. So I lean in close and whisper in his ear, taunting him, “Bet those pills are starting to call your name now, eh, Copper? Bit like a Siren’s call ain’t it? Promising to ease your troubles, and offering sweet oblivion from your pain.”

Max looks up at me and just for a moment, I see in his eyes a pain that tells me we’re more alike than I could ever have imagined. Both of us are fighting against a pain that nothing can seem to ease, an emptiness in our lives that nothing can truly satisfy. I know that he sees my pain, too, and we share a moment of complete understanding.

Before I can stop myself, I lean in and kiss him. Although I wouldn’t have been entirely surprised by a punch to the face, I am relieved that he only pulls away wanting to know what I’m on about. Somehow, though, I had a feeling that he would be amenable to my overture--our, er... ‘common interests’ for lack of a better phrase, seeming to have created an unspoken bond of sorts between us.

I reply to Max’s inquiry with a mostly honest answer: “Distracting you from that knee while I figure out how we’re gonna get those pills.”

Then making good on my word, I kiss him again. This time, he not only lets me kiss him but leans in to it and pulls me closer. To my surprise, Max is the one that deepens the kiss. He’s a surprisingly good kisser--firm and slightly aggressive, but without feeling like he’s trying to bludgeon me with his tongue. He’s good enough that I may have moaned just a little, because I can feel him the smug bastard smile against my mouth. That’s okay though. I’m up to the challenge and give as good as I got. I’ll bet that wanker’s knee is not the only thing that’s stiffened up now!

Even as we kiss like the world is ending, I know that Max still doesn’t trust me, nor I him. After all, we’re two selfish, needy bastards more than willing to use each other to further our own ends. And I’m sure that Max initially allowed this kiss because he had some sort of vague idea about gaining the upper hand, but he can forget that shite. As much as either of us loathe to admit, we need each other. And until we meet this mysterious Charles character and find out what’s going on here, like it or not, we’re in this together.
He Who Controls the Spice... Leto II & Mr. Tumnus

Chapter Summary

Mr. Tumnus is excited because Leto is going to read to him. It's sort of their version of "As you wish..."

Chapter Notes

Their love is purely platonic/romantic. No slashy stuff. Just couldn't do it. If you want that for them, you'll just have to use you're imagination.

As the evening draws to a close and Mr. Tumnus follows Mr. Leto back to his room, excited and happy because Mr. Leto is going to read to him tonight--an extra chapter or two, he’d promised Tumnus. Extra chapters to make up for his thoughtless earlier. But Tumnus knew that it was really because Mr. Leto just wants him to not feel embarrassed about panicking earlier. And while Mr. Tumnus is a very nice faun, he’s afraid that he’s not quite nice enough a faun to not take advantage of Mr. Leto’s promise.

Ever kind, Mr. Charles had loaned his favorite book to Tumnus. It was called The Once and Future King. The way that Mr. Charles had described the book made it sound terrifically exciting. Tumnus simply hadn’t been able to resist taking a peek and had instantly been enraptured. He felt a bit guilty for peeking, though. Mr. Leto had been so kind to offer reading to him tonight--and now, here Tumnus was, so excited that he didn’t think even Mr. Leto’s voice could make him sleepy. As it was, he is having a very hard time keeping his tail from wagging (and he does pride himself on appearing dignified).

Then again, he could hardly be blamed for a little bit of tail-wagging--after all, it had been a very exciting evening altogether. Meeting Mr. Charles’s friend, Mr. Erik, had been a frightening experience, at first--he was so tall and so many teeth, and he had been staring at Tumnus so strangely. He’d been quite intimidating. If Mr. Leto hadn’t been there with him, Tumnus would have been very frightened, indeed. But, really, who could be frightened of someone able fully appreciate a lovely tail? Tumnus took very good care of his, and Mr. Erik’s attention was very flattering (but he thinks it may have hurt Mr. Charles’s feelings, since his tail didn’t work anymore).

Leto hadn’t liked Mr. Erik at all. Strange, because Tumnus could never before recall Leto truly disliking anyone (well, aside from Dr. Garrigan, but everyone disliked him). If anything, Leto was indifferent to others--but unfailingly polite (though a bit cold) when he did have to interact with them. Leto mostly preferred to keep his own company or Mr. Tumnus’s. Why Mr. Leto disliked Mr. Erik so, is very puzzling to Tumnus. Perhaps Mr. Erik’s teeth had frightened him, too. Tumnus had stopped being frightened when he saw the way Mr. Erik looked at Mr. Charles. That look had made Tumnus feel warm inside and very happy for Mr. Charles.

He had felt a different kind of warm, a strange, fluttery warm, when Leto had leaned down and whispered that, tonight, Tumnus could pick whatever book he wanted. Leto’s warm breath had
ticked his furry ear and made him blush and shiver.

Tumnus had never picked out the book before, he was just always content to listen to whatever Leto was already reading (he mostly just paid attention of the sound of Leto’s voice, anyway). He very much hoped that Mr. Leto liked the book that he had chosen. It was a marvelous story, but quite unlike the books that Leto liked to read. He knew that Mr. Leto wouldn’t complain even if he’d didn’t like it, but all the same Tumnus wanted him to enjoy the book with him. He supposed he would find out soon enough. He could hardly wait for the story to begin.

“Why, Mr. Tumnus, you must have picked out a magnificent book. I do believe you’re trotting.”

“Oh!” Tumnus realizes that he’s gotten ahead of Leto and blushes fiercely, dropping his eyes. He usually conducts himself in a far more dignified manner. “I--I’m so sorry, Mr. Leto! I--I didn’t realize…,” he stammers.

“I’m only teasing you, Mr. Tumnus. You’ve done nothing wrong. Anticipating a good book is certainly no reason to be embarrassed.”

Tumnus looks up cautiously, and sees that Leto is wearing the smile he wears when Tumnus asks Leto to read to him when he’s not really tired--the smile that says that he still knows a secret but it doesn’t make him sad. Tumnus smiles back a little. He’s still embarrassed, but not so badly now.

“It truly must be a very good book that you chose, for you to be so excitable. I’m finding myself quite eager to get started, as well.”

That makes Tumnus smile and say excitedly, “Oh, Leto! It is a wonderful book! So full of adventure…and magic! And so many amazing things!”

Leto smiles fondly at the little faun’s excitement, so evident in his flushed face, shining eyes, and wagging tail. “Mr. Tumnus, did you peek ahead?”

This time Tumnus knows that Leto is just teasing him and says sheepishly, “Well, maybe just a bit.” Then anxiously adds, “But only because I wanted to make sure that it was good!”

“I’m sure it will be just as amazing as you say.” He holds the door open for Tumnus, “Now, shall we go inside?”

Leto stokes the fire to get it blazing, but to Tumnus’s surprise, doesn’t settle into his chair by the hearth where he always reads to Tumnus. Instead, he walks over to his bed, settles in, and looks at Tumnus expectantly. Tumnus is nervous now, not sure what to do. Finally, he asks, “M--Mr. Leto? I thought you were going to read…?”

“I am, Tumnus. But come over here and sit. Since I’m going to be reading to you longer tonight, I thought you would be more comfortable here than sitting on the floor.”

“Oh. Oh, well that’s very kind of you, Mr. Leto.” Tumnus nervously shuffles over to Leto’s bed. Well, it’s not really a regular bed, not a human bed. It’s a cross between a human bed and what Tumnus would call a nest. He supposes that makes sense, since Leto is human-shaped, but not human (he suspects that Leto’s shape has very little to do with who he really is). He doesn’t know why Leto has a bed, as he never sleeps--as least, as Tumnus understands sleep. But even if he doesn’t sleep, Tumnus supposes that Leto still needs to rest. He’d always thought that the bed/nest looked very comfortable (he doesn’t care for human beds, either)--he guesses that he is about to find out for himself.
Thankfully, the bed is low to the floor, so Tumnus doesn’t have to embarrass himself by trying to jump on it or having to climb up something to get to it. He was always nervous anyway, and now with Mr. Leto watching him so intently with those blue-in-blue eyes that see everything, if it had been a human bed, Tumnus would have fallen for certain.

But finally he is on the bed, settled in next to Mr. Leto—he’d asked Tumnus to sit beside him rather than at his feet, this time. Tumnus feels a bit awkward and out of place and his hands are all nervously twisted up in his scarf, but Leto is smiling at him (the good smile, not the funny-but-not one) so he must have done everything right. That makes him feel good and he smiles back.

As Leto begins reading The Once and Future King, Tumnus is beside himself. The amazing tale, told in Leto’s beautiful voice, is the most wonderful thing that Tumnus has ever heard. As Leto reads, Tumnus creeps ever closer, eyes wide with almost child-like wonder. Without missing a word, Leto moves his arm so that Tumnus can wriggle under it to press close to Leto’s side.

True to his word, Leto reads for a long time (he seems to enjoy the tale almost as much as Tumnus) and, still pressed against his side, Tumnus hangs on every single word. But at long last, Tumnus’s eyes begin to grow heavy. Now that he’s sleepy, he knows that it’s time to thank Leto and retire to his room, but he simply can’t bear to leave—not while there’s more story. He fights the coming sleep with every fiber of his being, but finally sleep takes him and his eyes drift closed.

Tumnus wakes during the night, confused because he feels so warm and the room doesn’t smell like his room. He also has a crick in his neck. Then he remembers that he had fallen asleep in Mr. Leto’s room. He had fallen asleep on Mr. Leto! Oh, my! He looks over and Leto is sleeping next to him, still sitting up (that’s why Tumnus’s neck was all cricky!) his arm still around Tumnus’s shoulders. Then he’s confused again. But Leto never sleeps! Then he thinks, Maybe Mr. Leto is warm and comfortable like me. Maybe that’s why Leto is sleeping so peacefully. It makes Tumnus happy.

He knows he should leave now, but he’s so warm and snug. And what if, while trying to leave, he wakes Mr. Leto from his sleep!? That would certainly be a poor way to repay Leto for his kindness. ‘In fact’, he yawns to himself, eyes already heavy again, ‘it would indeed be the height of rudeness.’ Yawning again, he thinks, ‘No, I will be a good friend and stay here.’ With a brief wish that he could stay here always.

When Tumnus is asleep, Leto’s eyes crack open and he gazes fondly at his little faun. While Leto never sleeps—not since the Golden Path, anyway—he does rest (Tumnus was right about that), and he can’t remember when he’s rested so peacefully (though, admittedly, after several millennia it can be difficult to keep track). Leto smiles at the sleeping faun, a smile which would have surprised Tumnus had he been awake to see it (though he would have recognized it from his dreams). Tumnus reminds Leto of how he used to feel before.

Who would have thought such a nervous, timid little creature would move him so? That Tumnus could new breathe life into Leto’s long, jaded existence and make him want to do more than simply exist? That one little faun would come along and hold the heart of Leto Atreides, God-Emperor of the Known Universe, in the palm of his hand. He showed Leto that the world is still beautiful and ever-changing—not the ugly, stagnant thing he had come to believe. By simply being, Tumnus has showed him that there were so many new and marvelous things in the universe to still be experienced—one had to simply look with the right kind of eyes to see all of the variety of wonders. For variety, as we all know, is the spice of life—and he who controls the spice, controls the universe.

So, with that smile still lingering on his lips, and Tumnus snuggled against his side, Leto closes
his eyes and rests.
Chapter Summary

The mansion is already bursting at the seams with the recent additions of Max, Simon, and now the Brotherhood. But just as everyone is getting settled in, two more newbies show up: Victor and Conor.

Super short chapter...

Victor is looking into the eyes of a creation more perfect than anything he could possibly have imagined in all his years of study and experimentation. Victor is captured—nay, *mesmerized* by the intensity of the other’s gaze, unable to move. He can practically *feel* the electricity flowing between them, so strong he could almost *see* it bridging their connection to each other. So he is genuinely shocked when this creature of unparalleled perfection scowls and shoves him away, growling, “Get the fuck off my foot, you moron!”

“I *beg* your pardon!” Victor huffs, outraged, and not a little insulted, by this otherwise perfect creature’s lack of decorum. “You didn’t have to be rude!”

“You were *standing* on my *foot*!” the other man says, still glaring at Victor. “My sincerest apologies for not being polite about it.” Cradling the injured foot, he adds, “You know, you might want to consider going on a diet. You could stand lose a couple of pounds.”

“Well, I...I...*never*...” Victor sputters, for the first time in his life completely at a loss for words.

“Well, maybe you should. It might do you some good.”

Victor stares, open-mouthed. He simply can’t believe this...this...*abominable* creature’s attitude. *What an atrocious, foul-mouthed...Oh, I don’t even know what to call it!* Affronted, Victor turns on his heel and crosses to the other side of the room, determined now to ignore the ill-mannered git. He has more important things to worry about anyway. *Like where the hell is he and how did he get here?*

Conor feels a little, okay, a *lot* ashamed of himself as he watches the strange, foppish (but somehow-familiar) man huff and retreat to the other side of the room, shoulders stiff, back ramrod straight with self-righteous indignation. As he’s been with everyone as of late, Conor knows that he was indeed rude to the man. After all, it’s not like the guy stepped on his foot on purpose. He was probably just as shocked as Conor to find himself in this place. *Wherever ‘this place’ might be...*

Conor’s shoulders slump. *Oh, for fuck’s sake.* He’s going to have to apologize to the man. He hates apologizing. But he hates feeling guilty even more—he’s spent too much time and energy feeling guilty over things that weren’t his fault. *I won’t be anyone’s sacrificial lamb ever again. But this...the way he treated that man...that *is* his fault and he feels like a real asshole now.*
Victor hears the creature cautiously, reluctantly approach him. He can sense an apology in the air and he knows that the rules of Society say that he must accept, but he certainly does not plan to make it easy on the foul creature. No, the creature will have to work for his forgiveness. Victor can’t help but allow himself a smile of smug satisfaction. Considering that even on his best day he can be, shall we say, “socially awkward”, he so relishes the rare opportunities when he is the one in the right.

The shuffling footsteps stop behind him, and he hears the creature clearing its throat as it prepares to humble itself. Victor’s smug smile turns into a smug grin of anticipation.

Conor rolls his eyes, when he realizes that the man is not going to turn around and make it easy on him, so he bites the bullet and forces out his apology: “Um...I, uh...look buddy, I...I’m, uh, sorry for yelling at you. You, uh, you...well, you were hurting my foot and...,” Conor pauses, noting that the man’s rigid posture has not changed. He tries again. “It’s just that, um...I was in pain and...” still no response “...you just caught me at a bad time and I’ve just not been myself lately...”

Just as Conor’s guilt is about to turn to frustration and he nearly gives in to the urge to tell the man to shove the apology up his ass, the man finally turns around.

Brilliant blue eyes look over Conor coolly and appraisingly before the man says, stiffly, “As Society dictates I must, I accept your apology, sir.” There. Victor has followed the rules of Society, while effectively telling Conor what he really thinks of him.

Conor only barely restrains himself from retorting with, ‘And I wish Society would tell you to take that stick out of your ass.’

Instead, with a mental eye-roll, Conor bites back the insult and holds his hand out to the other man. “Thank you for accepting my apology. My name is Conor. Conor Ludlow.”

Victor gazes at him for a moment, then takes Conor’s hand. “Victor Frankenstein.”

Conor nearly chokes on his own spit as he wonders what rabbit hole he’s tumbled down.

TBC...

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