**That Boy is a Monster**

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<td>Violence, LOTS of violence, Major Character Injury, Character Death, Past Character Death, Miscarriage, Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics, but not full on A/B/O, Mpreg, Werewolves vs Vampires, except the werewolves are called lycans, there is a distinction, Mentions of Rape, Harry is the King of the Lycans, Solo Artist Niall, Liam is Harry's Chevalier, That's his right hand man, Luke Hemmings &amp; Ashton Irwin Are Brothers, kind of, they're also mates, You'll see what I mean, Zarry is mentioned but not really important to the overall story, Lilo is important, very important, Everyone wants Niall - Freeform, EVERYONE - Freeform, So much angst, Angst and Smut, Rough Sex, First Time Bottoming, First Time Blow Jobs, do not use this fic as a guide to proper anal sex, Dry Sex, Mating Bond, Minor Self Harm, Superpowers, fuck there are so many tags I think that's everything, I'm not sure though, I'll add more later if I need to Very AU</td>
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### Summary

Niall Horan is lucky by nature, a man who's gotten to live his dream in a way that few do. His luck takes a turn for the worse one night when two men, two monsters, show up, and steal him away from the lie that is his life. A new world, hidden beside this one, is revealed to him as he finds himself at the center of a war being waged for the very fate of the world, one that's been raging for a millennium, and he may very well be the most powerful weapon on Earth.

Aka: The Supernatural-Creatures!AU that nobody asked for, where Harry is the King of the Lycans (aka werewolves on steroids), Liam is his servant and only friend left, and Niall is a very cruel joke by mother nature who gets kidnapped and might just fall for the gorgeous, dangerous lycan holding him captive. Vampires vs. Lycans, because I'm that cliche. Pulls
inspiration from True Blood, Underworld, and lots of other things. Warnings for gratuitous Twilight references and dog jokes, because Niall thinks making fun of werewolves is the funniest thing ever.

Notes

Holy shit, it's finally here. I've been working on this off and on (mostly off) for almost a year. I decided to sign up for the Summer-Bang as a way to motivate me to finish the story, and did it ever. I understand that the mythology might give people some questions, so feel free to come ask me about it at narryhadalittleliam.tumblr.com

A massive thank you to Kayla narrymusings (I still don't know how to make links here) for being my beta. I never would have made it through this without you BB. You're my rock and I adore you.

Title from Monster by Lady Gaga
Chapter 1

The packet in front of Harry told him almost everything there was to know about the lad, from favorite foods, to his career history, to his scandalous sexual past (which even the media hadn’t been able to get their hands on.) What the packet of painstakingly gathered information didn’t tell Harry though, was the only thing he needed to know. His people had been unable to figure out one ounce of information regarding their true objective, his blood line. Harry had a creeping suspicion about the truth, but the chances were next to impossible, and he refused to believe it until he had absolute proof. However, something about this lad had attracted his enemies, and he would damn well burn before he let them get their hands on someone who could harm him. The question was how could this boy, this little singing boy, be any threat to Harry or his people?

He knew that his spies had done their absolute best. They would take their own lives before they betrayed their king by being unable to find information that their enemies could. They’ve done decent work. Nothing surrounding this boy was concrete, even his enemies had to be running off of estimated information, guesses, and instincts. The problem was this meant Harry had to get personally involved now, and his work was less - elegant - than that of his spies.

“Liam.” he growls out, watching the blur that is his Chevalier work its way into the room and kneel before him. The whole thing takes less than a second, Liam looking up at Harry from his feet before his name is even completely out of his leader’s mouth.

“Sire?” he utters dutifully.

“Ready a plane for Dublin.” Harry tells him, dropping the folder at Liam’s feet and watching the photo of the blond drift out. “I want this done tonight.”

“How many men should I bring?” Liam asks, gathering up the information in his hands.

“None. You and I can handle this alone, I’m sure.” Harry grins. “One human can’t pose that much of a problem.”

“You - You want to go out?” Liam asks, unable to conceal his surprise. “Sire, we’re more than capable of bringing him in. You needn’t trouble yourself.”

“Liam-” Harry tuts, standing up and striding past his Chevalier towards the hall that leads to his personal set of chambers. “It’s been far too long since I’ve been on a hunt. I’m going.”

“Yes, Sire.” Liam says quietly. Harry can read the disapproval in his voice, the wish to stick to the unspoken rules of their society only suppressed by the instinctive desire to show his loyalty. If Harry’s tone wasn’t quite so gruff, if he wasn’t making it quite clear that he’s adamant about this with the scent he puts out, he’s sure Liam would fight him on it. He usually does with this sort of thing.

Before Harry disappears through the door he turns back and says “Be ready to go within the hour. The sooner the better with this one.”

Liam nods and then disappears as quickly as he had come. Harry makes his way down the hall, taking his own slow pace rather than the blistering one Liam is probably setting somewhere else within the palace. He strips down along the way, dropping his clothes on the floor, knowing that by the time he walks back out they’ll have been picked up by silent hands and prepared for him. His life is far too predictable lately, and he’s becoming bored with it. That’s not good for anyone
around him.

He takes himself in by way of the wall sized mirror in his main chambers. His eyes have become more feral lately, sharper like the predator he is. His skin is practically itching with the desire to let loose, to let the Beast out. He could spar, could order Liam to take him on at full strength, but that doesn’t seem like enough anymore. He needs a hunt. He needs to feel someone fight him. He has no plans to kill the lad, not yet, but that doesn’t mean he can’t have his fun.

Niall pulls up to his house, and not for the first time thinks to himself how lucky he is. His life has turned out so perfectly, so brilliantly, that sometimes even he can’t believe it. He doesn’t have everything he could want, like a boyfriend or, even better, a family of his own, but overall he’s happy. Ecstatic most of the time actually. Basil pulls up directly behind him and Niall sighs. He should have known he couldn’t shake the guard that easily. It’s not that he doesn’t like Basil, he does, but sometimes it’s nice to just feel normal and that’s next to impossible when you have a bodyguard following you everywhere you go.

“You’re pushing your luck Horan.” he grits out when Niall hops out of his car.

“You’re just mad because I almost lost you at the light.” Niall laughs. “Bring in the food? I need a shower. Mark is ridiculous with the whole exercise thing.”

“Sure.” Basil nods, but Niall can hear the irritation in his voice.

“Grab yourself a beer when you’re done. You deserve it after driving like that. The last two couldn’t keep up with me.” Niall grins.

“Why do you think the label hired me?” Basil smirks.

Niall lets out a loud laugh at that and then heads inside. The silence in his house is off-putting, but he chalks it up to just having gotten back from tour. Quiet of any kind feels strange after five months on the road, playing sold out shows to thousands of screaming fans. Still, this silence feels particularly suffocating and he gives an involuntary shiver at the sensation. He heads upstairs, straight for his shower, and pulls out his phone to play some music to help clear away the quiet.

The opening chords of Hotel California trickle out just as he turns on the water, and he climbs in feeling a little less tense than he did a moment ago. Silence isn’t something he’s ever really been comfortable with, always with a guitar in his hands, or drumming a beat out with his fingers, or even humming one of the seemingly endless tunes that gets stuck in his head. He doesn’t feel like he can fill this silence though. It’s too heavy, too strong. That’s what The Eagles are for.

He makes quick work of it, eager to watch the game that Mark had so adamantly refused to put on because Niall can never focus once he does. It was fair, but still annoying. He gets so little time to relax it feels like, and he likes to spend as much of it as possible with a beer in one hand, and the remote for a game in the other. It doesn’t seem like that much to ask for, honestly.

Once he doesn’t smell quite so bad he turns off the water, dries himself off, and then rummages around his room for a suitable set of clothes. He settles on a pair of cut off trackies and a t-shirt. This way if he falls asleep on the couch at least he’ll be comfortable. That silence has taken back over as soon as he sets his foot out the door and his fists clench involuntarily at his side. He should be able to hear Basil, but there’s nothing. The entire place is deathly still.

He wants to call out to Basil, to get some assurance that he’s just being paranoid after a long tour.
When he tries though, his voice gets stuck in his throat. His feet move forward of their own accord, and he’s not sure whether it’s to flee or to investigate. Nothing changes in the quiet as he makes his way through the house, not even a breath to push through the overwhelming sense of dread taking over his body. However, he ends up walking right past the front door because his fight or flight instinct is apparently completely wrecked. Lovely.

He walks into the kitchen and finds the fridge open, obscuring Basil partially. The sigh of relief he breathes out is legendary. “Grab me a cold one, will you?” he laughs, trying to push down the shakiness in his voice.

“Can’t.” comes an unfamiliar voice. The door to the refrigerator closes to reveal a man that is most definitely not Basil. He is, however, holding Basil up by the neck, unconscious and pale in the strange man’s hand. “This one dropped them when he saw me. Don’t think he was properly prepared.”

“What do you want? Money? I have money. Just let him go, and we can talk money.” Niall says carefully, edging towards the counter where he keeps his knives. He’s not sure how much good it’ll be against a man that could not only knock Basil out, but hold him with one hand like he weighs nothing, but he’d rather have something than nothing at all.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.” the stranger hums, looking amusedly between Niall and the knife block. “My associate doesn’t handle threats against me well. Actually- I suppose the term ‘well’ is relative, is it not? I mean, the people he deals with, I doubt that they would say it went well. I, on the other hand, would say that it generally goes extremely well. I so rarely have to lift a finger. Liam, please remove the temptation for Mr. Horan here before he gets himself in over his head, won’t you?”

“Sire.” says another voice behind Niall, so close that it nearly stops Niall’s heart, and then a man is standing between him and the knives. He picks them up and sends the entire block careening across the kitchen in the blink of an eye. Niall wouldn’t even be sure that something had happened if it weren’t for the clattering sound against the far wall.

“You could put an eye out behaving like that Liam.” the strange man holding Basil says with a wolfish grin. “Honestly, what are you, an animal or something?”

The other man, Liam apparently, rolls his eyes, but otherwise gives nothing in response. His face is completely calm, nothing like the expressive face of the man he referred to as ‘Sire’. In a way, it’s even more unnerving than the manic look in the other man’s eyes. “It’s time to stop messing around, Sire. We need to bring him in now.” Liam says quietly, looking at the other one. “They’re on their way. The fact that we’ve moved in won’t have gone unnoticed. He’ll send people to stop us.”

“Unless he comes himself, then that shouldn’t be much of a problem.” the leader says with a smirk. “But if you want to restrain the lad, then so be it. Try not to hurt him if you please. Not yet.”

“Listen, I’m sure we can come to some sort of-” Niall starts before all the air in his lungs is forced out. He’s almost positive he feels a rib crack when his torso hits the counter, but he’s more concerned with the sheer amount of pressure pinning him down. It feels like there’s a fucking truck on top of him, but it’s no more than a hand. His arm is wrenched around and the only thing that keeps him from crying out is the fact that he hasn’t had the time to breathe yet. This whole thing has taken less than a second. This guy Liam is almost inhuman.

“Mr. Horan-” the leader drawls out, sounding wearied with the conversation already. He drags Basil like a rag doll behind him, settling him in a chair at the table because he’s done with his toy
for now apparently. At least Basil must be alive, or the man probably wouldn’t bother. That’s what Niall is holding on to at least. “There is no agreement here. We don’t want your money, we want you. You are coming with us. That’s already been decided. Whether you’re willing or not, conscious or not, you’re coming with us. How about this for a deal? You come quietly, and I won’t tear this man’s throat out before we leave?”

“What?” Niall rasps out, his heart pumping so hard it feels like it’s going to burst.

“I said that if you don’t walk out that door willingly, I will kill your bodyguard.” the man muses, a smile quirking at his lips that belongs nowhere near a situation where a man’s life is literally on the line. “The choice is yours of course. I’m perfectly content with either option. I’ll get what I want either way.”

“I’ll go.” Niall whispers. “Just don’t hurt him.”

“Excellent.” the man laughs. “I do so hate having the blood scrubbed out from under my nails. Liam, if you would be a darling and take our guest to the car.”

“Sire.” Liam replies, releasing his grip on Niall’s wrist, only to place one on the back of his neck in turn. He steers Niall towards the door, half lifting him off of the ground. In a way that’s helpful, because Niall’s legs are trembling so badly that he probably couldn’t walk properly on his own. When they get out the door Liam loosens his grip and quietly says “I’m sorry about this. I really am. He won’t kill Basil. He wouldn’t have either way.”

“And I’m supposed to believe you?” Niall spits out.

“That’s irrelevant.” Liam sighs. “I just thought you should know that your man is safe. Killing him would actually work against us right now.”

“Good.” Niall grits out. He plants his legs firmly, reaching behind his head and wrapping his hands around Liam’s wrist. The rest is something he learned in self-defense courses that the label had encouraged him to take for situations exactly like this. He’d laughed at the time, but now, as he’s hauling Liam over his shoulder, he sends up a prayer of thanks for the hot instructor, whose delicious abs had ultimately made the decision for him. He can’t throw Liam far, but afterwards he lashes out with his foot and feels a sickening crunch under his heel when it connects with the man’s face.

He takes off down the street, adrenaline carrying him. He takes a glance backwards when he reaches the end of the block. The other man hasn’t exited his house yet, and Liam is still on the ground. He stifles the urge to scream for help, not wanting to alert the other man to his position until he’s far enough away to properly escape. His knee is already starting to burn and he knows he can’t take too much more of this sprinting. When he takes a turn down an alley he sees two men walking towards him.

“Help!” he shouts. “Please!”

“Mate, what’s wrong?” one of them asks.

“You’re Niall Horan, right?” the other one asks, his voice completely devoid of emotion in the same way the long haired man’s had been.

“Yeah.” he nods, fidgeting nervously in place. “There are two men at my house. They’ve knocked out my bodyguard and they’re trying to kidnap me. I need you to call the police.”

“Come with us.” the second one says, wrapping an icy cold hand around Niall’s wrist. It feels like
iron, as strong as Liam’s had been at least.

An unearthly howl splits the night and the man’s grip on Niall tightens, nearly to the point of breaking his arm. Then, as suddenly as it had happened, it’s gone. There’s a flurry of activity after that, and Niall isn’t sure that he’s not just having a nightmare at this point. The new set of men are baring fangs, actual fucking fangs. If that seems fucked up, it’s nothing compared to the new addition to the scene. Some fucking movie monster is standing between Niall and the men with fangs. It’s taller than they are by at least two feet, long arms that end in claws flexing as it growls menacingly. Niall can’t fucking process this, stumbling backwards away from whatever horror film he’s somehow found his way into.

“What the fuck is happening?” Niall rasps out, taking another shaky step back.

“This is what happens when you don’t listen to me, Mr. Horan.” a voice says behind him, accompanied by a firm grip on his arm. “Come on. Liam can handle this.”

“Li- Liam?” Niall stammers, turning back to find the long haired man. He’s not at all surprised to find his face more bored than shocked at the scene in front of them. “Where is he?”

“Tall, dark, and furry.” the man huffs, tugging Niall to his side.

“What the fuck are you people?” Niall asks, his voice breaking as his whole body begins to shudder.

“I think you know what we are.” he replies with a smirk. He hoists Niall up into his arms, completely unfazed when the blond starts thrashing around. He takes off at a breakneck speed, moving faster than any human possibly could, especially with someone in their arms. Within seconds Niall is being shoved into the back seat of a car, and then a sharp pain at the back of his skull makes the world fade to black.

“I assume things are taken care of?” Harry asks once Liam meets them at the car. Liam’s only reply is to hold up his hand and blow, dust swirling around in the air as he starts the vehicle.

“Was it really necessary to knock him out?” Liam sighs once they get on the road.

“Chasing him down just made me want to let out the Beast.” Harry grins. “It’s been so long, and I don’t want him dead yet. I probably won’t at all if my suspicions are confirmed.”

“And if you’re wrong?” Liam asks, irritation hovering on the edge of his tone. “What if we just kidnapped one of the most high profile people in the world for nothing?”

“Then we’ll kill him and be done with it.” Harry shrugs, looking back at the blond. He’s cute, but Harry couldn’t tolerate a threat to his people. If this man, this human, ends up being something more, then he can be allowed to live. He won’t be the same, won’t be allowed to resume his former life, but he’ll be granted a form of mercy. “We have ways of disposing of people. Even people like him.”

“We should have done more research first.” Liam mutters. “This is a terrible idea.”

“They were on their way to take him, Liam.” Harry growls. “I cannot let him get his hands on this one. Not if Niall Horan ends up being what we think he is. You know what a disaster that would be. He could destroy us with that kind of power in his hands.”
“This man is most likely just a human, an extremely lucky human, but just a human nonetheless.” Liam grits out. “And you, exposing us like this, because you wanted a hunt? At least if I’d brought my crew in, then we could have made sure there were no witnesses to this. I had to shift because—”

“Because this ‘just a human’ managed to take you by surprise and destroy your eye socket.” Harry says with a snarl. “We would have been gone before they ever found out we had been there if you had been able to handle one little thing. Instead, this tiny human managed to put you out of commission for a full minute, and you had to shift to fix your mistake. Don’t pull that rubbish with me, Liam. The two of us should have been able to handle this easily, but you had to go and let your guard down because you feel sympathy for him.”

“Somebody has to.” Liam scoffs. “He’s still a living breathing person who now has no hand in deciding his own fate no matter what his genetics end up being. He’ll live or die based on nothing more than guesswork. Somebody among us has to acknowledge this lad before he dies, and it’s clearly not going to be you.”

“He’s a threat, Liam.” Harry sighs. “I can’t let that pass. This war has been going on too long. We’re too few in number to let him get his hands on firepower like this. And you know that this poor kid would suffer a much worse fate at his hands than mine if he ends up being human.”

“He’ll still end up dead either way.” Liam says quietly. “You’re right I guess. If he does end up being human though, I want to be the one to take care of him.”

“Don’t trust me to make it painless?” Harry asks.

“No.” Liam says bluntly. “I don’t know what’s going on in your head these days. You’ve been unpredictable ever since—Since—”

“Don’t.” Harry growls, letting out his scent to shut Liam down before he can bring that up. “Remember your place, Liam.”

“I know my place, Sire. Do you?” Liam whispers. “You’re supposed to lead us.”

“I’m doing all that I know how.” Harry sighs, glancing back once more at Niall. The blond looks peaceful, as if he were sleeping. It tugs at Harry’s heart. He doesn’t want to kill this lad, so he decides he won’t. “If he’s human, then I’ll leave him alive. He still won’t be able to leave, but I won’t kill him.”

“It’s the right decision.” Liam says with a soft smile. “It’s the one he would have wanted you to make.”

“He was a defiant little shit.” Harry scoffs. “Never knew when he needed to shut his mouth. I see that’s rubbed off on you.”

“It was bound to happen sooner or later.” Liam chuckles. “You need someone to call you out occasionally. I don’t like doing it though, not like Louis did.”

“Nobody enjoys it the way Louis did.” Harry says quietly. “How much farther to the airport?”

“Ten minutes or so. I’ll have us wheels up in half an hour.” Liam tells him. “Now put a lid back on your scent. You reek.”

“Don’t give me orders.” Harry smirks, letting more of his overpowering scent leak out just to prove a point. Liam just shakes his head and rolls down the window with a smile playing across his lips. The rest of the drive is silent, Liam keeping his eyes glued to the road while Harry’s idly trace over
“Ah, he’s starting to wake up. Finally.” a voice says, deep and slow with a twinge of humor in it. Niall’s heart clenches at the sound, but he’s not quite sure why through the fog in his head. “I was afraid that I might have hit him too hard.”

“You hit like an infant.” another voice scoffs.

“Not compared to a human, Liam.” the first voice mutters. The name cuts through the haze in Niall’s brain like a knife and his eyes spring open. It’s impossible to know what to take in first. The long haired stranger is sitting by Niall’s feet, grinning wickedly from ear to ear. Past him, leaning against the door is the man whose face Niall is sure that he’d fucked up at least a little, a gentle smile set firmly in place. The room is- well, it’s insane. Its opulence personified. A mirror covers one entire wall, reflecting back the image of a bedroom that looks like an opera hall.

“Where am I?” he asks, scooting back until he hits the headboard. “What the fuck is going on?”

“You’re in England.” Liam says carefully. “You’re at our- Compound. We’ll call it that for now.”

“Compound? What the fuck are you people? A cult?” Niall snaps. “And you- You fucking shithead, what did you do with Basil?”

“Watch your tongue.” Liam growls, a deep rumbling sound that makes Niall shrink back. He remembers what the long-haired man had said, that the horrible monster they’d seen in the alley was in fact the man whose eyes are flaring up at Niall. “You’re in the presence of a k-”

“Relax Liam.” the other one laughs. “He’s feisty. That’s a damned sight better than the cowering mess he was back in Dublin. He doesn’t know who he’s addressing.”

“And just who am I addressing?” Niall snarls.

“My name is Harry. That’s what you can call me. No need for titles from you.” he says with a grin.

“Sire!” Liam blurs. “You can’t-”

“I can’t what, Liam?” Harry hums amusedly. “How would you care to finish that sentence? Or do you still believe you can give me orders? I do believe we just finished a discussion on that subject not too long ago.”

“Sire.” Liam replies, dropping down to one knee with his left hand gripping his right shoulder. “Please, forgive me.”

“Find something for our guest to eat.” Harry orders. “Mr. Horan, any requests?”

“A fucking explanation.” Niall says through gritted teeth.

“I will give you a bit of leniency, Mr. Horan, but do not expect to get away with pure rudeness. I asked you a question, and you will answer it before we continue our discussion.” Harry says, his tone sending a dominating vibe through the entire room that gives Niall shivers. “I will ask once more, do you have any requests for your meal?”

“I’m not hungry.” Niall says quietly. The truth is, he’s pretty sure he’d vomit if he were to eat right now. It’s all he can do just to keep his fear from showing on his face. His entire body wants to flee,
but somehow he knows he wouldn’t make it off the bed, let alone anywhere else. The look in Harry’s eye tells him that much.

“How about a drink then?” Harry asks. “Beer? Something stronger?”


“Liam.” Harry says, turning to the other man. “Bring a bottle from my personal stores, will you? Something acceptable.”

“I-” Liam starts, but he must reconsider because he just mumbles “Yes, Sire.”

He exits after that, leaving Niall alone with Harry. Somehow that seems far worse than having him there. Harry turns back to Niall with an appraising look. “Now, you wanted an explanation I believe?” Niall is too afraid to do anything other than nod, so Harry continues. “We’ve brought you here for a reason, though I’m afraid that it might be far above your head if I explain everything all at once. I’ll answer your questions over time, in order to let you adjust to your new reality. Ask your questions, and I’ll answer as best as I can for now.”

“What do you want from me?” Niall asks, the words sounding dry and scratchy from his fear-raw throat.

“Nothing.” Harry says with a laugh. “You, Mr. Horan, are an unfortunate casualty in a war you don’t even know is happening. I’m sorry for what’s happened. I know you probably don’t believe that, given the way you’ve been treated thus far, but I am.”

“Casualty-” Niall says numbly. “Do you plan on killing me then? For a war I have no part in?”

“No.” Harry says gently. “You’ll be allowed to live, but you won’t be allowed to return to your former life. I can’t take that risk.”

“What risk?” Niall asks, a manic laugh threatening to erupt from his throat. “I don’t know who you are. I don’t know where I am. If you let me go, I won’t-”

“That’s not going to happen, Mr. Horan.” Harry tells him. “I’m sorry, but it’s not. If you are what I suspect you are, then you could be used against me. If you aren’t, you still know too much. You’ll be given a comfortable life. That I can promise you.”

“Like I give a shit about your promises you raging sociopath!” Niall growls. “You fucking kidnapped me!”

“Trust me, I was the better of the two masters you could have served.” Harry sighs. “I am no saint, and I would never claim to be. The other man whose attentions you’ve managed to catch though—He’s far more dangerous than I. He would have either used you to commit genocide, or killed you after sapping away every bit of your will to live through forcing you into the most unimaginable acts.”

“Genocide?” Niall says, his eyes going wide. “I’m a fucking singer, not an atom bomb!”

“That may be true, or it may not.” Harry says with a shrug. “Tomorrow I’ll know for sure. Until then, I can’t be certain.”

“You’re fucking crazy!” Niall laughs, finally giving in to the manicual feelings bubbling up in his chest.
“No, Mr. Horan, I can assure you that I’m not.” Harry says quietly. “What I am is aware of a world beyond that which you know, of a reality that the world at large could not handle. I am the King of a broken people who are losing a war that has raged for centuries, and I cannot let you fall into my enemy’s hands. And I am sorry for what has happened to you, because it was completely out of your control.”

“I need air.” Niall tells him. Suddenly the room, though it may be as big as Niall’s house’s entire bottom floor, feels entirely too small. “I can’t breathe.”

“There’s a balcony out through those doors.” Harry says, pointing beside the bed. Niall scrambles off of it and out the set of French doors, drawing in gasping breaths when he hits the balustrade. The entire world feels like it’s spinning in Niall’s head, like he’s going to pass out at all the information that he’s trying to process. A soft touch is placed on his shoulder, and it takes everything in him not to flinch away at the contact. He doesn’t want to give Harry the satisfaction of knowing for sure that Niall is afraid of him. “Do you need anything? Water? I can put you out again if you want. It would only hurt for a moment.”

“What are you?” Niall asks, squeezing his eyes shut tight.

“I’m a King.” Harry says quietly.

“England has no King right now.” Niall grits out. “And you are definitely not a member of the royal family.”

“I am not a King of a country, but a people.” Harry sighs. “We have no borders, no true home beyond this place anymore. I am the King of my species, destitute as they may be by now.”

“Are you like him?” Niall asks. “Like that monster?”

“I am.” Harry confirms. “Though he would admonish you for saying it, so don’t let him overhear you.”

“I hardly think a verbal wrist-slap is the worst thing a fucking werewolf could do to me.” Niall replies, nearly choking on the word.

“We’re not werewolves. We’re lycans.” Harry says sternly. “There is a difference.”

“What, semantics?” Niall scoffs.

“No. We’re literally a different species. Werewolves are made. Lycans are born, except for a few rare exceptions.” Harry explains. “And lycans are able to make a full transition between human, anthropomorphic, and fully lupine forms at any time. Werewolves are slaves to lunar cycles, can only go between their human bodies and their wolf bodies, and they have no control over their actions when shifted. We do our best to keep them under control, but there’s a reason that the creation of them is outlawed within our society except under extreme circumstances.”

“Jesus fuck-” Niall breathes out, stunned by the ease with which Harry is saying all of this. For the first time since he exited the room he opens his eyes, and his jaw nearly drops to the floor. There’s a light breeze, but that shouldn’t be possible. There are massive cliffs surrounding them on all sides, reaching up hundreds of feet towards the sky. A city is carved into the rock-face, like some ancient society that Niall read about back in secondary school. It spirals down as far below where Niall is as the mouth of the rock is above them. “Where are we?”

“England.” Harry says, echoing Liam from earlier.
“No. No! This is like a fucking volcano or something! There aren’t volcanos in England! Especially not ones with fucking cities in them!” Niall yells, feeling himself lose control more and more by the word.

“Look up.” Harry says gently, pointing above them. “Do you see those shapes? The ones that make a sort of circle.”

Niall follows Harry’s finger and does see what he’s referring to, a dark, broken circle that stands in stark contrast with the moon that seems too far away. “What are they?” he asks.

“That’s Stonehenge.” Harry tells him. “We’re in an underground city made by magic millennia ago. That’s the gateway to my kingdom. We’re underneath it.”

“That- That doesn’t make any sense.” Niall mutters. “People have been researching Stonehenge for ages. This place would have been discovered. And you can’t see through solid earth. I can’t go anywhere, so just tell me where we really are.”

“I don’t know the original name, the one that the ancient witches who made the place gave it, but we call it Final Bastion now.” Harry says quietly. “And I’m not lying. I don’t understand it fully, honestly. I can admit that I have very limited knowledge of the workings of the higher arts, but that’s where we are. I can have someone take you through the portal and back if you need proof. Liam can do it when he gets back if you like. Though if you try escaping again he’ll have to take more drastic measures. His patience is near limitless, but you did make him have to regenerate half his face earlier. Even still, he was the one who convinced me to let you live if you turn out to be human after all.”

“Why do you keep saying that?” Niall asks. “Of fucking course I’m human!”

“You may not be actually.” Harry hums. “You may be something that nobody has seen in a very long time. Something we’d thought was long extinct. Your bloodline is unclear, due to your situation. Someone is coming tomorrow to find out the truth of the matter.”

“Is that why you brought me here?” Niall spits. “Because you think I may be something? Because I was adopted? What the hell am I supposed to be?”

“Fae.” Harry sighs. “You may be fae. The subspecies is up for debate, though I have certain theories.”

“I’m a fucking human!” Niall growls, smacking Harry’s hand off of his shoulder. “Can you go? Tell Liam not to bother with the fucking drink. I just want to be alone.”

“You won’t be left alone here. Not until you’ve accepted your place. I can’t trust you not to try and escape.” Harry tells him. “You can choose between me and Liam for company until I can arrange an attendant for you. If you choose Liam though, you’ll be moved to another room within the palace. These are my personal chambers, you see, and he’d never stay in here. Also, I don’t really fancy giving him my bed while I sleep in a guest room. It’s unbefitting of a king.”

“I’m surprised you can talk so well with your head so far up your own arse.” Niall mutters. Harry lets out a bark of laughter at that, echoing off the walls of the city until it sounds like it’s coming from every direction at once. The thing is, it’s not a bad laugh. It’s actually a really nice laugh, and if it weren’t coming from this particular man, under this particular circumstance, then Niall would probably do everything he could to hear that laugh over and over again.

He’s aware that Harry is physically attractive, as is the softer side he’s shown since Liam left, but
he’s also the monster who kidnapped Niall and expects him to believe these outrageous lies. It’s the most conflicted that Niall has ever been about anything, because on one hand he kind of wants to taste the candy-floss pink lips of the man beside him, and on the other he wants to try and pitch him over the banister. He blames the desire aspect on the fact that it’s been almost a year since anyone besides himself touched his dick.

“Sire.” Liam says behind them, making Niall startle.

“Well, what took you so long?” Harry hums, turning away from Niall and passing by Liam back into the room.

“I was - delayed.” Liam sighs. “People want to know what that scent is. They want to know why there’s a non-lycanthropic entity in Final Bastion. Everyone can smell him. It’s making the people restless.”

“Have an extra guard posted outside of your room tonight. Mr. Horan will be staying with you.” Harry muses. “I’m going to be busy. Having my head up my own arse is very time consuming.”

Niall flushes a bright crimson under Liam’s withering glare. He’s clearly furious, and Niall suddenly fears for his ability to survive the night. Liam’s voice is dripping with venom when he says “Yes, Sire.”

“Now, now, you’ll scare the poor lad.” Harry chuckles. “How’s he to know you’re just a sweet pup under that roguish exterior? He has every right to be angry, and I expect him to be returned to me tomorrow morning in the same condition as he’s in now. Better actually, for a wash and proper clothing. Have him measured, and my tailor set to task if you will. As for you, Mr. Horan, have a good sleep. Things will go much easier tomorrow if you have more energy.”

“If you’ll come this way, Mr. Horan.” Liam says curtly, walking towards the door at a pace that Niall couldn’t match if his leg did work properly, let alone right now. He throws one last nervous look at Harry before he exits, and finds the long haired man staring right back at him. Something about that sends Niall’s heart racing, and he scurries after Liam with a squeak. They exit out of a hallway, and then Liam turns to Niall and quietly says “I understand that you’re angry, but you’re going to have to watch your mouth about him.”

“I’ll say what I fucking want to.” Niall growls. “I’m not going to be some silent hostage in your weird fucking werewolf den.”

“That’s not what I mean.” Liam sighs. “I understand that you’re upset, but there are those around here who would rather rip your larynx out than let you speak a word against our King. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“I understand that your King wants me alive, and you aren’t going to do shit to me.” Niall scoffs.

“It’s not me you need to worry about.” Liam mutters. “It’s the others. Our kind isn’t known for their gentle natures. We’re a good people, but we have a literal animal side that can make it harder to control our emotions. There are those among us who let the Beast control their actions, who give in to their ‘id’ rather than rationalize things. Those are the ones that you need to watch out for. I’ll be making a list up of people I trust for you to pick through for your attendant, but I trust them precisely because they are fiercely loyal to our King, and if you speak like that around them, then I’m afraid you may push one too far.”

“So you’re saying my new bodyguard is going to do the opposite of his job?” Niall questions.
“He, or she if you prefer, will be more than a bodyguard, Mr. Horan.” Liam explains, heading out once more and apparently expecting Niall to follow. “They’ll be your link to our society. They will teach you our customs, they will accompany you everywhere you go, and they will handle all interpersonal business you have while you’re in Final Bastion. They will be your servant, your protector, and your guide, because you are not a part of our people.”

“What if the one I pick ends up being a total douche?” Niall asks. “Will I be stuck with them for the rest of my life?”

“Not if you don’t like them, no.” Liam responds, not bothering to look back at Niall. “The King has made it very clear that you are to be given a certain level of respect. Frankly, he’s changed his mind about you rather quickly. A few hours ago he was ready to end your life if you turn out to be human, but you seem to have caught his interest in some fashion or another. It’s rare for a human to even know about our species, and nearly unheard of for one to enter Final Bastion. You however, will receive an almost unprecedented level of esteem within our ranks. Higher still, if his suspicions are correct and you end up not being human after all.”

“I’m a fucking human. That’s not up for debate. I don’t howl at the moon, or have fucking fangs, or some other horror movie shit.” Niall growls.

“What you are, Niall Horan, is a mystery.” Liam replies coldly. “Nobody, and I literally mean nobody, especially a human, has ever gotten the drop on me like that. No human should be able to strike me hard enough to force me into regeneration. And no human who is adopted turns out to look exactly like their adoptive family. There are reasons that we were drawn to you, that our enemies were trying to capture you. Whether this ends up being coincidence or not, there are signs pointing a certain way that we couldn’t ignore. And were you to turn out to be what he thinks you may be, then you wouldn’t manifest in that way.”

“You keep saying that ‘he’ thinks that I’m something else. What do you think I am?” Niall asks.

“Lucky.” is all Liam says.

“I can fucking bathe by myself!” Niall grits out. Liam is quickly becoming tired of the boy’s antics, of his ceaseless capacity for self-pity. Liam feels sympathy for him, he really does, but at the same time the lad is so aggravating that Liam is considering shifting just to scare him into a sense of submission. It’s what Louis would have done if he were still alive. The only thing stopping him is a whispered voice in the back of his mind, replaying over again the scent that Harry had let out while he was ordering Liam to bring Niall back in perfect condition. He rarely releases that level of dominance, the magnitude of which was nearly overpowering. Liam’s nose still itches with it

“I’ve been ordered not to leave your side. You’re a flight risk in more ways than one.” Liam repeats for what feels like the thousandth time since they arrived to his chamber. “We don’t have to speak, and I don’t have to look at you, but you are not to be left alone under any circumstances.”

“There’s no exit other than the door! Why can’t I just have a few minutes to myself to fucking deal with this fucked up situation?” Niall asks, sitting back against the outside of the bathtub and pulling his knees against his chest.

“Because, Mr. Horan, if you attempted to kill yourself, we would have no way of reviving you. There are no healers outside of doulas in Final Bastion. If our bodies are harmed, we regenerate. Lycans are incapable of getting sick. Were you to slash your wrists, or something along those lines, I would be executed for having lost you.” Liam explains.
“I’m not going to fucking kill myself!” Niall hisses. The stutter in his heartbeat however tells Liam that the thought has at least crossed the lad’s mind.

“Do you trust me, Mr. Horan?” Liam asks.

“Fuck no.” Niall huffs.

“Nor I you.” Liam replies. “Your emotional stability is reaching dangerous levels, and the results of that could be catastrophic for me, the King, and for yourself. I have no interest in finding out whether or not it comes to fruition.”

“My emotional stability is fine.” Niall scoffs.

“You do realize that I can tell you’re lying, right?” Liam asks. “Your scent, your heartbeat, your voice, all these things are betraying you. It’s pointless to try lying to me. You could never reach the level of deceit necessary to pull it off. I can literally smell and hear the lies.”

“You are so fucking creepy.” Niall sighs. “You people can’t be real. This is all some fucked up nightmare, or drug trip or something.”

“I can say, without a doubt, that this is real, and it’s happening to you.” Liam says quietly. “Now, get in the tub. That water won’t be hot forever, and I’m not having a scullery maid heat more just so that you can be comfortable. My orders were to present you cleaned up, not happy. I would prefer it if you were at least semi-content, but I can live either way, and you’ve already worn my patience thin tonight. Rebuilding my orbital floor has a tendency to do that to me for some reason.”

“Rebuilding your what-floor?” Niall asks.

“Orbital. The portion of the skull that forms the bottom of the eye socket.” Liam tells him. “You completely caved in my left cheekbone and the bone behind it when you kicked me in the face.”

“You deserved it.” Niall spits out. “And why the fuck do you look perfectly fine if you had half your face crushed?”

“I told you, we heal.” Liam explains.

“Bullshit. That should take months, not hours.” Niall scoffs.

Liam rolls his eyes and decides that maybe a little demonstration is in order. He releases the grip he has on his Beast, just the tiniest amount, letting his hand shift partially until his fingers end in wickedly curved claws rather than human fingernails. Niall’s eyes widen and the stench of fear leaks out of him in buckets, but Liam’s focus is on hitching up his sleeve rather than the lad in front of him. He holds his bared arm out in front of himself, making sure that Niall is looking, and digs his claws into the muscle and sinew. The flash of pain he gets is brief, dulled by his regeneration abilities in order to help his body heal faster. He digs all the way down to the bone, and then retracts his claws. Niall’s face is a mask of horror as the muscle, and then the flesh, knit themselves back together within seconds right in front of his eyes. The blood pooled on the floor will be a problem, but not so much so that he will need a maid.

“It takes seconds or minutes for our kind to heal. A little longer if the damage is severe or bones need to be rebuilt.” Liam says gently, not wanting to startle the boy any more than he already has. His heartbeat is racing like a rabbit being hunted. Liam might have taken the display a little far, but it was better than transforming completely and scaring the lad to death.

“That- I- You-” Niall stammers, scrambling to his feet and rushing to stand in front of Liam. He
runs his fingers over the new flesh, not that his sense of touch is nearly sensitive enough to detect what’s new and what’s old. “How?”

“We are unlike anything you’ve ever seen before, Mr. Horan. Now, please, get in the tub.” Liam says, biting back his irritation.

“Okay.” Niall breathes out. “Just turn away, yeah?”

“I have no interest in your body, Mr. Horan.” Liam chuckles, doing as he’s told anyways. “But do hurry up. Blood is so difficult to get out of stone once you let it dry.”

Niall can’t help but fidget at breakfast. His clothes are uncomfortable, though not due to the fabric or fit. He looks like he’s from the early nineteen hundreds in tight trousers and a crisp white shirt with a fitted waistcoat over it. It’s the same style of dress that Harry and Liam are wearing though, so he isn’t surprised that it’s what he’s been forced to endure. Their speech patterns, their clothes, their oddly aristocratic social scheme, it’s all from a different time.

Niall doesn’t have the confidence to question it right now though. Ever since he saw Liam practically tear off his own arm he’s been unable to do much at all. He barely slept, especially with Liam’s gaze on him all night. He hasn’t spoken more than a few words since he woke up. He can’t bring himself to eat a single bite. All of this seems to have caught Harry’s attention, even as he deals with several tasks at once during breakfast.

“What’s the matter?” Harry asks, taking a seat next to Niall and setting Liam on another round of silently seething, along with the rest of the people attempting to gain a portion of their King’s attention.

“Nothing.” Niall squeaks out.

“You’re lying.” Harry hums. Fucking lycans.

“Please, don’t do this to me right now.” Niall whimpers. “Just go back to what you were doing. They all hate me enough without you ignoring them for me.”

“They don’t hate you.” Harry replies, leaning in to whisper in Niall’s ear. “Most of them are absolutely terrified of you, actually. Only a few of them have ever seen a human in these halls, let alone one who could take Liam out in two moves.”

Niall can’t be imagining the flash of rage he sees in Liam’s eyes at the mention of that. Whether it’s because it happened, or because Harry seems particularly amused by it, is open to debate.

“Please. Just leave me alone.” Niall begs quietly. “I’m not fighting this. I’m not trying to escape. Isn’t that what you want? If it’s not enough, then just tell me what I can do to correct it.”

“Liam, take our guest out to the garden, and behave yourself.” Harry sighs. “I’ll join him when I’ve finished up here.”

“Sire.” Liam nods. Niall follows him out of the room silently, keeping his eyes glued to the back of Liam’s feet so that he knows where to go without having to meet anyone’s stares. He’s been getting looks all morning, stared at like some sort of freak. He supposes they can smell it, his humanity. Whatever it is, not one person he’s passed has failed to gaze at him with one form of curiosity or another, several with outright disgust.

“It’s a bit warm out here, so if you’d like to take off the waistcoat then that’s fine.” Liam says,
startling Niall out of his head.

“Alright.” Niall mumbles.

“I scared you with the demonstration of my regenerative capabilities last night, didn’t I?” Liam asks gently.

“It’s fine.” Niall says quietly. “I’m going to have to get used to your kind if I’m going to be a prisoner here for the rest of my life.”

“I hope you can come to think Final Bastion as home in time.” Liam tells him. “It’s a good place with good people. Your circumstances are unfortunate, I know, but you can still have a decent life here.”

“No, Liam, I can’t.” Niall mutters. “Whatever happens, I will never be at home here. When I end up being human, and your King loses his interest in me, I’ll have nothing left. My family, my friends, my career, it’s all gone for me now. So just shut up with your false pity, and save your arse kissing for Harry. I don’t want anything to do with it.”

“Lycans don’t lie, Mr. Horan. There’s no point in it here, because we can tell the same way I can with you.” Liam explains. “My sympathy isn’t false. I wouldn’t have told the King that he should leave you alive if I didn’t mean what I was saying.”

“You shouldn’t have done it.” Niall grits out. “You should have let him just kill me. I can’t do it myself, because I’m still a Catholic, but I have no reason left to live. You may have thought you were doing the kind thing, but all you’ve done is force me to live under my captor’s thumb until I die, or one of you monsters fucking kills me.”

“Then find a new reason to live.” Liam says simply, opening up a door. It leads to somewhere impossible, but the last twelve hours have taught Niall that the limitations of that word are not quite as solid as he might have once thought. There’s a full courtyard, filled with trees and flowers, sunlight streaming down warmly on Niall’s skin. He feels a breeze again, just like the night before, but his mind can’t quite make the connection that it’s real. He can still see the walls around the city, though he’s higher up now than he was the night before. This shouldn’t be happening, and yet it is. “You live in a world with magic now, Mr. Horan. You can find something else to validate your existence. I can help you if you’d like.”

“I think you’ve ‘helped’ enough.” Niall mutters bitterly, furious that Liam thinks that he can just replace his old life. Sure, some of the things he’s seen are fascinating, but that doesn’t mean that any of it could adequately replace everything he once had. “I could go the rest of my life without seeing you or the King’s faces and be content.”

“Now, now, Mr. Horan.” Liam tuts. “You’re going to be here for a very long time. You should get used to seeing our faces. We’re pretty important here you know.”

“He is. You’re just an errand boy.” Niall scoffs. “‘Yes Sire, no Sire, three bags full.’”

“I don’t understand the reference.” Liam says, crinkling his eyebrows up in confusion. “Three bags full of what?”

“Wool. Never mind.” Niall sighs. “I should have known you freaks wouldn’t even have human nursery rhymes. I should just count my lucky stars I didn’t have to debone breakfast.”

“You’d do well to watch your tongue, Mr. Horan.” Liam growls. Like an actual fucking growl. It sends shivers down Niall’s spine, his knees knocking together until he falls back on his ass, all
thoughts of defiance knocked out of him in an instant.

“Liam!” a voice rings out, filling the courtyard with echoes. “Go check your people, and see that they’re ready for Mr. Horan to pick between them. Make sure that they know how to treat him properly since you apparently don’t.”

Harry strides out, looking positively furious. Niall can’t figure out why, not when this is how Liam has been since Niall was captured. “And prepare the yard for a sparring match between the two of us. If you need to let the Beast out this badly, then I’m only too glad to put it back in the bottle for you.” Harry grits out between clenched teeth.

“Sire-” Liam starts, looking as shocked as Niall feels.

“I’ve given my orders. Why are you still in front of me?” Harry asks, cutting him off. Liam disappears in a flash, the leaves rustling throughout the courtyard in his wake. “I’m sorry for him. He’s- He’s fiercely loyal to the point of being blinded by it. He doesn’t quite know how to handle you.”

Niall pulls his legs up against his chest, burying his face in his knees. He doesn’t care about any of this. He doesn’t care about Liam, or Harry, or this fucking city. He doesn’t care about Lycans. He just wants to go home, to forget about this place and these people. “What do you want from me?” Niall asks quietly.

“That depends on what you are.” Harry sighs, sitting on a stone across from Niall. “If you’re human, then nothing, though I hope that one day I can earn your forgiveness.”


“Do you hate me?” Harry asks.

“Will I be killed if I answer that truthfully?” Niall asks in response.

“No.” Harry chuckles. “It’s alright if you hate me. I would understand.”

“Then yes, I do hate you.” Niall answers. “But I hate you less than I hate the situation in its entirety. You’re the only one here who’s letting me feel anything. And you haven’t attacked yourself in front of me just to get me to obey. That helps a bit.”

“Liam showed you regeneration then?” Harry hums. “I imagine he probably went a bit overboard.”

“That’s the understatement of the century.” Niall scoffs. “He practically ripped his own arm off.”

“Does the sight of blood disturb you very much?” Harry asks curiously.

“Not really. I’ve become pretty desensitized by films and such. It was more the fact that he was doing it to himself like it was nothing.” Niall admits.

“Would you like to watch the sparring match? I can have you put up somewhere for the duration if it would make you uncomfortable to see it.” Harry tells him.

“I have to say, I might get a bit of joy out of seeing him get hit.” Niall laughs. “I’m surprised you bother though. Doesn’t he just let you win?”

“No. Actually Liam has won the majority of our matches.” Harry says with a grin. “But I haven’t had a good fight in ages, nor a good reason to win. He needs to be reminded of his manners, and I
want you to know that you’re safe here. I will protect you, regardless of how much you hate me.”

“I have a feeling that your life is a bit too busy to keep one eye on me at all times.” Niall mutters. “And I don’t need you to protect me. He may have won the majority of your matches, but I have a one hundred percent record of victory against Fluffy.”

“That you do.” Harry laughs. “Maybe I should make you my new Chevalier. Liam can fall down to my third.”

“Your chev-what?” Niall asks.

“Chevalier. He’s my second in command in all aspects. He’s the equivalent of a knight and a vizier.” Harry explains. “He’s basically my other half, the one who fills in all the pieces that I don’t have myself. He makes up for my deficiencies.”

“Sounds more like a spouse.” Niall scoffs.

“In some ways he is.” Harry hums. “Though not really, and we don’t have spouses. They’re called mates in our society. He’s more like my best friend than a husband. That being said, we disagree on most things and spend more time bickering than even mated pairs would.”

“You’re- You’re a mystery to me.” Niall says quietly. “Most kings probably wouldn’t take kindly to someone implying that they’re shagging a bloke.”

“Lycans have a natural tendency towards a more open sexual appetite.” Harry shrugs. “Gender matters very little in our world, unlike yours. You needn’t worry about that here, about that causing problems for you.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Niall asks, narrowing his eyes.

“My spies found out pretty much everything there is to know about you Mr. Horan. Our research into you was intensely extensive.” Harry laughs. “Your proclivities included, though the information wasn’t exactly of use.”

“Because being fae, and being a fairy aren’t the same thing?” Niall snorts.

“No, they are.” Harry says, his face confused. “I don’t understand.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Niall says, waving him off. “It’s a human term. You all act like you’re out of Downton Abbey or something. I shouldn’t have expected you to understand.”

“You say some very strange things Mr. Horan.” Harry hums amusedly.

“I’m strange?” Niall cackles. “You’re the King of the Werewolves, and I’m strange?”

“Lycans.” Harry corrects with an eye roll. “I told you, we’re different.”

“Whatever movie-monster weirdness you call yourselves.” Niall scoffs. “You’re all something out of a nightmare, and yet I’m the one that you find strange.”

“To me you are.” Harry chuckles. “I’ve only known a handful of humans in my life, and you’re very different from the one I knew best, though she wasn’t strictly entirely human, nor may you be.”

“I’m human.” Niall grits out.
“We’ll see.” Harry muses, standing to his feet and brushing the dust off of his bum. “Would you care to accompany me to the yard now? Liam will have it set for our match.”

“I guess.” Niall shrugs, letting Harry help him to his feet. “Wouldn’t mind watching either of you get a smack or two, to be honest.”

“It’ll be more than a smack or two.” Harry tells him. He keeps Niall’s hand tucked inside the crook of his elbow, and Niall can’t decide why he can’t bring himself to remove it.

“Come on then.” Harry growls, stripping off his shirt to a series of cheers from the audience. They think he’s going to shift, but he isn’t planning on it. He just doesn’t want to ruin the hard work that went into making the garment. Nearly the entire castle staff is gathered outside, along with the candidates for Niall’s attendant. Niall himself is perched in the seat Harry usually takes when watching others spar, set high above the crowd and surrounded by the candidates for his protection.

“Sire, is this really necessary?” Liam grins, disrobing just as Harry has. “We both know how this is going to end, and the only one who’ll be learning a lesson here is you. You’re not sparring with Louis after all.”

“Don’t I know it?” Harry scoffs. “He knew how to have repartee. Your tongue is as thick as your head, and twice as useless.”

“You’re going to regret that.” Liam laughs. Predictably, he makes the first move, rushing Harry like a train. Harry steps aside just in time, diving and rolling in the dirt before popping back to his feet. Liam gives him no time to breathe, swinging his fist right for Harry’s jaw. Harry drops back on his hands, flipping backwards and letting his heel connect with Liam’s bottom jaw. The Chevalier flies backwards, but manages to stay upright.

“When are you going to start taking this seriously, Liam?” Harry smirks. “I’m already considering replacing you with the last man who beat you down. If this is all you have, then maybe a human would be sufficient to take your place after all.”

Even through the crowd’s jeering Harry can make out the distressed squeak Niall lets out and smiles at it. The blond has captured Harry’s attention, and he hopes that Niall knows that this entire match is for his benefit. Harry wants Niall to feel secure, and this match is the best way to show Liam and the entirety of his people that the blond is not to be made unhappy in any way. He’s under Harry’s protection now, and that won’t be questioned again.

He lets Liam charge again, leaping over his head and kicking down harshly on his back. Liam lands face down in the dirt and Harry can physically feel the growl he lets out in response as it rips through the air. He lands lightly on his feet behind Liam and reaches down to grab his ankle. Liam is solid as a rock, but Harry has no trouble lifting him up all the same. He could lift dozens of Liams if he tried hard enough. Tossing him up in the air from this vantage is a bit difficult, but when his fist connects with Liam’s stomach he knows it was worth it.

Liam flies across the yard into the wall and the sound of bones cracking echoes through the air. It’s not enough to claim victory, but it might be enough to get Liam to start fighting back in earnest. Despite Liam’s earlier words, Harry can tell that he’s letting his King win so far, and he won’t have that. Harry is going to win fairly. Nothing else will suffice.

Liam stands up and rolls his shoulders, letting his bones mend themselves before attacking again.
His eyes flash angrily when they connect with Harry’s. Perfect. Harry feels a rush of excitement when Liam’s hands shift, his claws finally coming out. The crowd goes silent, but Harry can hear Niall’s heartbeat speed up just a bit. He’ll have to push things farther though before he can get his point across. Hopefully Niall won’t be too scarred by the experience. That would be counterproductive.

Harry moves first this time, driving right up the center of the yard towards his Chevalier. Liam catches his fist in mid-air, but that’s exactly what Harry was counting on. His leg lashes out viciously, connecting with Liam’s side now that it’s unprotected. Liam grunts as he flies, but catches the wall and manages to remain standing despite the blow. Harry jumps backwards towards the center of the ring, laughter ringing out from his lips. He hasn’t had this much fun in ages.

Liam charges him again, though faster than he had before. Harry raises his hands to brace himself, but at the last second Liam drops close to the ground and sweeps Harry’s feet out from under him in the first blow he’s managed to land. Harry just manages to roll out of the way when Liam’s fist lands where his face had been only a moment before. He flips backwards and back onto his feet, dancing out of Liam’s reach when he claws out for Harry’s side. He’s looking to end this now, but Harry is just getting started.

Liam leaves himself open after a barrage of swipes and Harry takes advantage, letting his knee connect with Liam’s stomach and bringing his fists down together on his back. He picks Liam up again and throws him determinedly across the yard. Liam rolls several times before he manages to get upright. It’s time now and Harry growls out “Shift.”

“Shift!” Harry roars, letting his throat transform just enough to make the word menacing. Liam bares his teeth and leaps towards Harry, his hand outstretched towards the King’s throat. Harry catches him easily and swings him around before throwing him once more into the wall. “Shift!” Harry bellows, much to the crowd’s delight.

Liam stands up, seething and lets the transformation take over. His trousers tear away as he grows, falling in shreds to the beast’s feet. Liam falls forward for a moment, the shift taking its toll as his muscles rearrange themselves. His back ripples, the vertebrae becoming more pronounced before the fur grows out over it. He looks up at Harry, his face becoming more lupine, and howls.

He moves faster in this form, his limbs lengthened and his muscles strengthened to reward him with superior abilities. Harry can’t quite keep up enough to take advantage of his openings, but he manages to stay out of reach of the fangs and claws his Chevalier is lashing out with. He’d overestimated himself, it seems, when he assumed that he could handle this easily, but he won’t shift too. He’ll win this, and he’ll win it without ever changing. His victory will be absolute.

Liam is herding him, shepherding him towards the wall to pin him down, and Harry lets him think that will work. Once he feels the cold stone of the wall behind him he freezes. If the lycan form could smirk, Liam would be. He bounds towards Harry and goes in for the winning blow. At the last second Harry leaps sideways and Liam crashes into the wall. He doesn’t recover quickly enough to stop Harry’s foot from connecting and is thrown across the ring. Harry follows quickly, his predatory instincts kicking in. He picks Liam up, hands gripping into the dark fur and pushes him into the wall. Both fists push into his stomach alternately at a speed that Harry is sure he’ll feel the strain of later.

Liam can’t seem to recover from the blows, his breath going ragged. Harry decides to end it here, before Liam is too humiliated to ever forgive him. He grabs the beast’s throat, forcibly keeping
himself from wincing when Liam’s claws dig into his arm. He reaches back and then swings his fist around into the side of Liam’s face. His body goes slack in Harry’s grip, hands falling to his side as his body shifts back involuntarily in order to mend itself.

Harry settles him gently on the ground and turns back to the cheering crowd. Instead of raising his arms in victory though, he signals for silence. “I would have words!” he calls out, the people settling down immediately. “All of you will have noticed by now that there is a newcomer among us, an outsider. Some of you know why, and most do not. The reason is irrelevant. He is my guest, and as such he is under my protection. Anyone who disrespects him will receive the same punishment that Liam has for it. Would anyone care to challenge me on this?”

The crowd doesn’t make a peep, casting their eyes downwards instead. “Excellent.” Harry laughs. “Now, someone get him cleaned up, and those of you who have been chosen as candidates meet with Mr. Horan and myself in the throne room once he’s recovered.”

“How did you enjoy the match?” Harry asks once he’s corralled Niall into the throne room.

“That was-” Niall starts, trying to find the right word. “Intense.”

“That doesn’t answer my question.” Harry hums.

“It was a bit terrifying, but also really interesting.” Niall admits. “It was like something out of a comic.”

“I don’t know what that means.” Harry chuckles.

“They’re stories about people with special abilities, told with pictures.” Niall explains. “Some are made into films with a lot of action.”

“I’ve never seen a film.” Harry laughs. “Are they very exciting?”

“They can be.” Niall shrugs. “It depends on what you watch I suppose. Can I ask a question?”

“You may ask as many as you like.” Harry smiles.

“Why didn’t you- You know- Go full werewolf on him?” Niall asks.

“One, because I’m not a werewolf.” Harry huffs. “And two, because I didn’t need to. I wanted to win the way that I did. I wanted him, and everyone else there, to remember that I am still the King, and, as such, I am more powerful than anyone else in this city. I won’t tolerate another uncivil word or action against you.”

“But why?” Niall asks. “Once whatever test you’re doing confirms that I’m human, what do you care what happens to me?”

“Because it has been a very long time since I’ve met someone like you, and I’m not letting the same thing happen to you that happened to him.” Harry says quietly.

“Was he- I mean- Were you two-” Niall stammers.

“Are you asking if he was my mate, Mr. Horan?” Harry smirks. “He wasn’t. He was actually Liam’s. But he was the dearest friend I have ever had, and he would have liked you very much I think.”
“Oh.” Niall breathes out.

“He never kept a word to himself, and his tongue was nearly as vulgar as yours can be.” Harry laughs. “And he refused to use honorifics, as I suspect you will.”

“Like ‘Your Majesty’ and shite like that?” Niall asks. “Because yeah, that’s not going to happen. You’re not my King, remember?”

“I’m perfectly aware that you aren’t one of my people, Mr. Horan.” Harry hums. “For one thing, you smell quite different.”

“Will you people stop smelling me?” Niall groans. “That’s generally considered creepy where I’m from.”

“We can’t help it. Lycans communicate as much through scent and body language as we do verbally.” Harry shrugs. “Even if we tried not to, our olfactory senses are several hundreds of times stronger than yours. We can’t stop smelling you any more than you can stop seeing colors.”

“Well stop talking about it.” Niall grumbles. “I have enough reason to be upset without being made self-conscious about how I smell. You all make it sound like I’ve been rolling around in rubbish or something.”


“What did you do with Basil?” Niall huffs, hoping desperately that he isn’t blushing. He decides to change the subject and asks “What did you do with Basil?”

“Your guard is fine. We dosed him with rohypnol so that he couldn’t remember what happened, and then we left him in your house. For the time being, it will seem as if you’ve escaped for some privacy. With your previous track record, that shouldn’t be too hard for people to believe. It will take weeks before anyone truly notices you’re gone.” Harry explains “If you’d like though, I can find a way for you to write letters to your family to let them know you’re safe. They’ll be read of course, to make sure you don’t expose our kind or Final Bastion, but you can still put their minds at ease.”

“You think that’s enough? A few letters?” Niall grits out. “You think ‘Hey mum, I’ve been kidnapped, but I’m safe. I’m sorry I’ll never see you again because some bastards decided I might be a fairy.’ is sufficient to make up for what you’ve done to me?”

“No.” Harry sighs. “Nothing will ever be enough, but I can’t let a threat to my people walk out of my grasp. You know far too much about us, about Final Bastion. And even if I did let you go, my enemies would just take you and have you tortured for information before they killed you.”

“What fucking enemies?” Niall spits. “Who on Earth could possibly be a threat to you people? Who could scare the King of the Werewolves?”

“You saw them last night.” Harry tells him. “And you know what they are. Don’t pretend you don’t.”

“No. I fucking refuse to believe in fucking vampires on top of werewolves.” Niall scowls.

“What you believe is irrelevant. They’re as real as lycans.” Harry says, stressing his species’ name. “And they’re far more dangerous. I wasn’t lying when I said that we’re losing the war against them. They’re just as fast and strong as we are, and all mercy leaves them when they die. Their King, the Master, he wants you, and he’ll stop at nothing to get his hands on you, whether for
information or power.”

“So basically I’m fucked up, down, and sideways.” Niall mutters. “And the closest thing to a bright side of my situation is that I get stuck with a bunch of bisexual werewolves- Sorry- Lycans, in a castle under Stonehenge for the rest of my life with no hope for parole, electricity, or plumbing.”

“Basically, yes.” Harry nods. “I can work on getting you some things from the human world to make your life more comfortable if you like. Books and such.”

“Is there a way out of this for me? Like any way at all?” Niall asks quietly.

“The only way out of this is if you find a way to beat their leader, and theory holds true.” Harry sighs. “If we can kill him, the Master, then the rest of his species should die alongside him, because they were all sired through him or his progeny, and his source of magical energy would no longer exist. He’s thousands of years old though, and I don’t even know that he can truly be killed. He’s- He’s like a hurricane. He’s impossibly powerful, and he doesn’t care what’s in his way.

“We’ve fought him for so long, but the tide is turning against us. He’s inching closer and closer to controlling the human world every day, and we’re the only thing holding him back. We aren’t going to be able to do it much longer though. I’m losing people every day, but he can just make more come nightfall. We used to number in the hundreds of thousands you know. There were four other cities like Final Bastion, but they’ve become nothing more than ruins. I’m the only King left.

“That’s why you’re so important. If you were to fall into his hands, and if you’re what I think you are, then that would be the final bullet in his belt. The fae left this world long ago, but occasionally one pops back up, the result of long sleeping bloodlines, or even a changeling once or twice, and they have immense power hidden inside them. The Master used them to obliterate the other Lycan populaces, wiping them out in a matter of hours each time.”

“Jesus.” Niall gasps.

“So do you get it?” Harry asks. “Do you understand why I can’t let you leave? He is a monster, a true monster, and if you’re a weapon, then he will use you to devastating effect. He will kill all of us here, and then sweep across the surface like a tsunami of blood and rage until all of humankind is enslaved or dead. Nothing, and no one will be left to stop him.”

“But if he dies, then I could leave? Why?” Niall asks.

“Because then my people could move from here and find a new home.” Harry sighs. “You might be able to convince people that we exist, but it’s likely that you would just appear crazy and be locked away. Either way, there would be no evidence of us left where you could expose us and put us in danger. I would take my people somewhere safe and destroy the portal that allows people to come into Final Bastion. You would no longer be a danger.”

“And if I’m fae?” Niall asks, unable to believe that he’s even considering the possibility. “What then?”

“We’ll discuss that if the time comes.” Harry mumbles. “You would have certain options.”

He doesn’t say more than that though, and Niall has a feeling that pressing it would be a mistake. He doesn’t get a chance anyways, as the door to the room creaks open and a line of people files in behind Liam, who looks grumpy, but otherwise unharmed. You could never tell that he’d been beaten bloody less than half an hour ago. “Sire. Mr. Horan.” he says curtly. “I’ve brought the
candidates. Each has been versed in all possible duties of the position, and each has agreed to fill the position with integrity and allow me to resume my normal responsibilities.”

“What, are you tired of being my babysitter Liam?” Niall hums, given confidence by the hand that Harry has on his shoulder. It’s probably not best to antagonize Liam, but Niall really wouldn’t mind watching him get beaten down again. He’s an ass.

“I have more important things to deal with than the likes of you, Mr. Horan, as does our king.” Liam sneers.

“Liam.” Harry says warningly, and there must be something more to it because all of the other lycans’ faces twist up like they’re in pain. “Mr. Horan, do you have a gender preference for your attendant?”

“Bloke, I guess.” Niall shrugs. “If I have to spend day in and day out with them, at least I might as well have something to look at.”

“Excellent point.” Harry laughs. “Ladies, your presence was appreciated, but your services are no longer required in this. Please return to whatever post Liam had you in before, with my gratitude.”

“Your Majesty.” comes a chorus of voices from the four female lycans that Liam had brought. They each drop to a knee and place their hands on their opposite shoulders, as Liam had the night before, and then disappear in flashes out the door.

There are four blokes left, and Niall is almost floored by the pure level of attractiveness of them. Lycans must have fantastic genetics. If his circumstances were different then he’d love to have a go at some of them. Even the one that kind of resembles a taller version of himself. “I would advise not choosing solely on the basis of looks, but you’re free to do as you please.” Harry chuckles.

“Maybe I should take Liam then, and let you pick his replacement from the leftovers.” Niall grins.

“Ah ah, Mr. Horan, that one is mine. Despite what you saw outside, he is still my most powerful warrior, and I need him by my side. Unless you’d care to fill his position.” Harry says with a conspiratorial smile. “After all, you did beat him in a fight. In two moves too. Even I had to hit him more than that to put him down.”

“That sounds like so much work.” Niall says with a melodramatic sigh. “And I’ve got a bit of a bum knee. Don’t think I’d be able to do all the walking he seems to have to do. And I don’t fancy being a punching bag neither.”

“Then I guess I’ll have to keep him and you can pick from the rest.” Harry giggles.

“If I must.” Niall shrugs. “Go on then, introduce yourselves why don’t you? You there on the end, the one the size of a bloody mountain, you first.”

“My name is Bressie, sir.” he tells Niall, appearing in front of the blond almost instantly and dropping to one knee.

“You’re Irish?” Niall asks bewilderedly.

“My mother was. I was raised by her alone, and the accent stuck.” Bressie explains. “I’ve never actually been to Ireland though.”

“Alright then. Next in line please.” Niall hums.
The blond one rushes up next, following the same gesture as Bressie and saying, “Luke, sir.”

“Australian?” Niall asks, looking at Harry.

“Me, and the other two candidates left were all raised by an Australian caretaker after being orphaned.” Luke says quietly. “Like Bressie, we’ve never actually been there.”

“I’m sorry.” Niall tells him. “I was adopted as well.”

Luke nods, but says nothing. The next one, a lad of Asian descent takes the next spot beside him and informs Niall that his name is “Calum.”

“And I’m Ashton,” the last one says, striding up at a leisurely pace and not bothering to drop down. “Pleased to meet you, Niall.”

“Oh, I want that one.” Niall laughs to Harry. “He’s almost normal.”

“Ashton, are you prepared for what the position entails?” Harry asks. “Are you ready to live and die for Mr. Horan?”

“Yes, but you better be worth it mate.” Ashton says with a grin. “Don’t plan on dying just because you can’t keep us out of trouble or you fancy pissing off our Liam.”

“Very well then. Liam will show you where the pair of you will be living from now on.” Harry tells him. “I have some matters to discuss with Mr. Horan, but you can retrieve him shortly.”

“How come Liam calls you ‘Sire’, but the rest all use proper terms?” Niall asks once they’ve all left.

“I’ve asked him to, as a sign of my respect for the work he’s done as my Chevalier.” Harry explains. “And honestly, I hate hearing ‘Your Majesty’ over and over again. It’s tiring.”

“Good, because all you’ll get from me is your name.” Niall shrugs. “Don’t think for a moment I’ll spend time stroking your ego.”

“May I call you Niall then?” Harry asks.

“I don’t know. I kind of like the idea of you always calling me ‘Mr. Horan’. Makes it sound like I’m your boss or summat.” Niall chuckles. “But I suppose turnabout is fair play. Liam can’t though. He’s stuck with ‘Mr. Horan’ until he learns to stop being a dick.”

“That’s unlikely to happen any time soon. As I said, you bear a striking similarity to his former mate in personality, if not in looks.” Harry sighs, dropping down on what Niall presumes is his throne. “But enough about that. You have a very important meeting in a few hours Niall, and that will determine a great many things about the future.”

“Like?” Niall asks.

“Like whether or not you’ll have a peaceful existence.” Harry says firmly. “If you are fae then there will be certain things we need from you, certain choices to be made. If you’re human however, then all that will happen is that you will be kept here and given a comfortable life within the palace walls.”

“I guess we’ll just have to wait for it to be done then, so that you’ll believe me.” Niall mutters.
“I’m human, and you’ll have done this for no real reason other than caution.”

“I hate to say that I can find no fault in that. What would you have done in my position, Niall?” Harry asks.

“I don’t know.” Niall admits. “I’m not a king. The question is, Harry, do you think that you did the right thing? Do you think that destroying my life, and the lives of the people who love me, will be worth it when you turn out to be wrong?”

“Only time will tell.” Harry says quietly, standing up and walking towards a different hall than the one Liam and Ashton exited through. “I will call for you when the test is ready. Until then, you have free reign to do as you please, as long as you are escorted by Ashton. You are welcome to call on me at any time. I will make time to hear you out.”

“What’ll happen to me afterwards?” Niall asks. “Will I still matter when I end up human? Will I still be worthy of your attention or sympathy? Or will you act the same way towards me that the rest of your kind does?”

“Whatever happens, Niall, I will spend the rest of your life making up to you what I have done. This isn’t fair, and I know that. I had to do it, but that doesn’t mean I don’t hate myself for having to.” Harry mumbles. “I will always be in your debt for the sacrifice you’ve been forced to make, and as such, you will always have my services at your call.”

He leaves without another word, disappearing behind the door. Ashton wastes no time letting his presence be known with a whistle from the doorway. “Mate, you’ve got to see our chambers. They’re amazing.” he laughs. “Luke is gonna love it.”

“Why?” Niall asks, walking over to the curly haired lycan. “I picked you, not him.”

“We’re a mated pair.” Ashton explains. “He’ll be living with us, but I promise, he’s very clean and we’ll keep the sex quiet for your sake.”

“Oh Lord.” Niall groans. This is either going to be very interesting, or completely insane and end in bloodshed.

“Sire.” Liam says, appearing in Harry’s chamber after having directed Ashton to his new living quarters.

“You’re healing alright?” Harry asks gently. “I didn’t hurt you too badly, did I?”

“Nothing I couldn’t handle, Sire.” Liam huffs, rubbing his still-sore jaw. “Though I would care to know when you learned to fight like that.”

“I had something to fight for.” Harry shrugs, stripping off his trousers. “Have them prepare a bath for me, will you? Some absolute fool decided to make me push myself to the limit in order to teach him a proper lesson, and now I smell like a pile of pups. Thank god Niall’s nose isn’t strong enough to really detect it.”

“Sire.” Liam nods, pulling the lever that lets the servants downstairs know that they are needed. “Might I ask though, why do you care?”

“Don’t tell me you don’t see the similarities, Liam.” Harry tuts. “It’s okay to admit it. He’s very much like Louis.”
“He’s nothing like Louis!” Liam grits out. To compare his mate, and this—this human—is nonsense. Louis could be a bit mouthy, yes, and he never bit his tongue when he should, and he was equally as strong in spirit, but that’s as far as the ‘similarities’ go. Well, maybe not entirely. They’re also both short and have bright blue eyes, but that’s it. Probably.

“I know you miss him, Liam. I do too.” Harry says quietly. “I need you to sever our connection though. You’re losing yourself in it. I need you to keep your humanity, but you’re becoming hard. Don’t let that happen. Don’t become the opposite of me in that. Don’t let magic drain away the parts of you that Louis loved. Break the connection before it’s too late for you to turn back.”

“He’s making you soft.” Liam scoffs. “I can smell you on him you know, and so can the others. Are you seriously marking a human?”

“No. I just can’t control it as well as I would like. He—He’s bringing something out in me, though what, I cannot say.” Harry sighs. “I haven’t felt this calm in so long that I’d nearly forgotten what it was like. It’s doing things to my body that I can’t quite figure out. But just because I’m no longer manic doesn’t mean that you need to become this way. I’m telling you to break the connection. We can have the witch set up a new one once your personality is back to normal.”

“Whatever you say, Sire.” Liam huffs, letting his fangs drop down and stalking forward. He lifts the King’s arm and bites down harshly, letting the blood fill his mouth before pulling away. He hates this ritual, hates magic in general, but mostly he hates the way that he feels completely unworthy to have this gift. Harry mirrors Liam’s actions, though his bite is gentler. They each reach forward and grab the other by the back of the neck, sinking their claws into the flesh, eyes locked as they swallow the mouthfuls of blood.

The sensation is instantaneous once he retracts his claws, and it feels like someone has let the air out of him. He drops to his knees, sobs wracking his body from the pain of Harry’s power leaving him. The connection allows him certain abilities, as is the reward for his position, but he feels them drain away like water through a sieve. His strength feels reduced, and he can no longer feel the King’s life force. If anything were to happen right now, Liam would not be able to sense it. He’d have to rely on his nose to track Harry down should he leave Liam’s sight. It feels like someone has taken a piece of him away, and he can’t quite cope with the sensation.

The pain alleviates rather quickly, but the empty part of him is still crying out. “You’ll be okay.” Harry mutters reassuringly, caressing Liam’s face. “I know it hurts. It hurts me too. It will only be a few hours though. We’ll have him fix it before he does the ritual for Niall, alright? How are you feeling? Is the anger subsiding?”

“Yes.” Liam nods. “I’ve been awful, haven’t I?”

“Only because I haven’t.” Harry tells him. “It’s not your fault. This spell kept you as a counterbalance for me, but I think we’ll have to work out a new one now that I’ve remembered what humanity feels like. Thank you, Liam, for bearing that on my behalf, for taking on my emotions in order to keep me sane.”

“I would take more for you, Sire.” Liam whispers. “Though I must admit, I am glad to see a bit of the old you. Louis would have been too.”
“Stop calling me ‘mate’!” Niall groans, pushing Ashton out of his face.

“Why?” Ashton asks, dropping down and taking a seat opposite Niall.

“Because you literally have a mate.” Niall huffs. “It’s weird.”

“Yeah-” Ashton drawls out. “That’s probably not going to happen, you know? I’m in the habit and I don’t really feel like changing the way I talk just because you can’t tell that it’s two separate terms.”

“Why do you talk like that?” Niall asks. “Liam and Harry, they- They talk like they’re from another time, but you don’t.”

“Mate, they are from a different time. The King is like, three hundred years old or something. I can’t remember the exact age. Liam’s actually older. They’re old as balls.” Ashton shrugs.

“You’re kidding me.” Niall sighs, dropping his head into his hands. The strangest part about it is that he’s rapidly learning that things like this aren’t strange at all. Not with these monsters at least.

“Nope. They’re super old. It’s the whole healing abilities thing. We age really slowly.” Ashton explains. “Did they really not explain this to you?”

“I didn’t exactly get a welcome packet.” Niall scoffs. “Liam went so far as clawing his arm open to show that you heal, but he didn’t actually explain anything. Harry has been a bit more helpful, but not really.”

“It’s so weird hearing someone call him that.” Ashton admits with a shy smile. “Don’t think I’ve ever heard anyone call him by his name without saying ‘King’ beforehand.”

“He said that it’s fine, and honestly I could not give a fuck either way.” Niall huffs. “He isn’t my king. I’m devoid of any extra hair or claws or shite, so he has no right to order me around. That said, he’s nicer than most of your kind.”

“King Harry? Nice?” Ashton snorts. “Not bloody likely. He’s been pissed off at everything ever since Louis died.”

“Is that Liam’s mate?” Niall asks, recalling the conversation that Harry and he had had earlier.

“Was.” Ashton nods. “Must be- I don’t remember- Twenty-five years ago now? He was the King’s Chevalier even before Liam was. I wasn’t in the King’s Guard then, so I didn’t really know him beyond a few interactions, but his death kind of unhinged the King and Liam both. Reckon it’s probably the bonds being torn open like that, what did it.”

“Bonds?” Niall questions.

“There are two. The kind a mated pair forms, and then the King has one with his Chevaliers. It lets us sense one another. There’s supposed to be some other things with the King’s version, but I don’t really know about it. It’s full blown magic, and I was never very interested in that shit. Doesn’t really matter for us lycans now, does it?” Ashton shrugs.

“Why not?” Niall asks.
“Mate, you are just full of questions.” Ashton laughs. “Lycans are- We’re like the opposite of magic, yeah? It’s weird though, because we were made by magic, and we have magical things about us, but magic kind of dies around us. We can make it not work sometimes. I don’t really get that part either. Nobody does.”

“How can the King have a magical bond?” Niall asks.

“There’s a ritual that they both do.” Ashton sighs. “It’s creepy from what I’ve heard, but nobody besides the King, his Chevalier, and the witch know what really happens. Whatever it is, it lets the magic work. We’re not completely immune to it, but most magic won’t work on us. When the Master destroyed the other cities, he used magic. It killed all of the lycans in those places anyways. Magic that’s powerful enough can still destroy us, but it takes a lot of extra power to get it to that point.”

“Power like a fae.” Niall murmurs.

“Exactly.” Ashton says quietly. “He pulls from them like a battery, but each kind of fae is different. Really, Luke should be the one explaining all of this. He knows more about it than I do. He actually gives a shit about that side of things. I just go where I’m told to go and do what I’m told to do, which is mostly ‘fight that’.”

“Sounds interesting.” Niall chuckles. “What did you think of the match then, from a professional standpoint?”

“I’ve never seen King Harry like that. Usually Liam wins when they spar, but today was legendary. I just wish it had been in the arena so that everyone could have seen it.” Ashton grins.

“I’m sorry, arena? Like a fucking Roman coliseum?” Niall asks.

“We don’t really learn human history to be honest.” Ashton shrugs. “It’s a big area where we do sparring matches for the people. It can get pretty intense sometimes. Especially for Lukey and me. We’re the current champion pair. Nobody has beaten us in over two years. We even came to a draw with Liam.”

“That’s not saying much from what I saw today.” Niall snorts.

“That was different. King Harry is more powerful than all of the King’s Guard combined. He’s insanely strong. I mean, Liam, Luke, and I, we’re no slouches when it comes to physical strength, but King Harry can outdo us easily. Liam is just a better fighter than he is. In a match of muscles, King Harry will win every time, but he lets his anger get the better of him most of the time and opens himself up. I’ve beaten him a few times myself. Today was the first time I’ve ever seen him control a match like that.” Ashton explains. “Louis was the only one who ever beat Liam so thoroughly before today as far as I know. You should have seen that. He was real little, like you, absolutely scrawny, but I heard he’d never lost a match in his career. He was fast, and stronger than he looked, and he had a wicked streak a mile wide. He and Liam were the best pair that the arena has ever seen.”

“How did he die?” Niall asks.

“The Master killed him.” Ashton says quietly, his left hand gripping his right shoulder. “He ambushed the King and nearly killed him, so Louis took over and beat him back while Liam got the King to safety. It worked, but Louis was killed and his body was never recovered. The Master burned the building they’d been in to the ground with all the people still inside it. It was a blood farm. That’s where vampires take people they’ve attacked and put them in a coma while they drain
blood from them continuously. It was a trap, and when the King went to destroy it, the Master was waiting for them. Liam and King Harry were the only survivors.”

“Shit.” Niall breathes out.

“Exactly.” Ashton agrees. “That’s not something you should mention in front of them by the way. It’s a bit touchy. I don’t know if even the King’s interest in you would stretch that far. Then again, judging by the smell of you-”

“Oh don’t you start,” Niall scowls. “I’ve heard enough about how I smell. I can’t smell anything awful, so you can all sod it.”

“It’s not like that. You smell like the King.” Ashton says with a puzzled expression. “It’s almost overpowering actually. If I close my eyes, my nose is just telling me that you are him. It’s like you bathed in his scent or something.”

“And that’s somehow better?” Niall scoffs.

“It is what it is. Better and worse aren’t really terms that apply to this situation. I am curious about it though.” Ashton nods. “I’ll need to ask him about it.”

“That’s your business.” Niall shrugs. “But don’t mention my scent anymore to me. I promise to bathe regularly, but that’s as much as I can do unless you all have some special werewolf cologne you want me to put on that would help me blend in.”

“We’re not werewolves. Those are different.” Ashton says, and Niall can but help but laugh. There’s none of the annoyance in Ashton’s voice that tints Harry’s when Niall calls them that. It’s probably because he thinks Niall doesn’t know any better, that he’s ignorant of this the same way he had been of bonds or their slow aging. The fact of it is, he just likes pissing them off over something so trivial. “What? What’s funny?”

“Nothing, it’s just-” Niall giggles. “You kind of look like him a little bit, you know? Harry that is. You’ve got the curly brown hair and the green eyes and shite. I’m not saying that the resemblance is strong, but it’s there. You two are totally different people though. He gets all pissy when I call you werewolves.”

“That’s probably because they were the slave class before he was king.” Ashton tells him. “He freed them, gave them homes in the city and equal standing in our society. Most of them end up slaves anyways though. They have a high crime rate.”

“You people have fucking slaves?” Niall gasps.

“Probably not like you’re thinking. They work a term of indentured servitude as penance for crimes. Our population is too small and involved in the war to support what humans call a ‘prison’, so they work their sentences off instead. They do have a choice though. They can serve, or they can die.” Ashton explains. “It’s all very fair compared to the old system under the former king. In that regime, you were killed for any crime committed against the King or his people, and if you were a werewolf who got captured, you were forced into slavery for your entire life.”

“Fuck, you people don’t mess around.” Niall breathes out.

“No. We don’t. We’ve been at war for a millennium. It’s all the way, or nothing with our kind in every aspect of our lives because who knows when we’re going to die.” Ashton shrugs.

“Is that your excuse for it then?” a voice says from the door. “He howls during sex you know. You
made a terrible choice Mr. Horan. You should have picked me. I would have left him in our house and been a good roommate to you.”

“I do not howl during sex.” Ashton scoffs. “Don’t listen to him. He’s just a pup, so he doesn’t know what he’s talking about. The young are so foolish.”

“Shut up, you. You’re only two years older.” Luke laughs. “Mr. Horan, I hope you don’t mind the state of things. The two of us sharing this place with you, that is.”

“You have a bedroom, and I have a bedroom. That’s better than last night when I had to stay in Liam’s room.” Niall shrugs. “I assume I’m going to be allowed to sleep without being watched, or is that the reason you two happened to be a mated pair, so that you could watch me on shifts?”

“You are, one-hundred-percent, not my responsibility.” Luke grins. “And you’ll be allowed to sleep without us watching, though we have been ordered to keep your door open at night until you’ve had time to adjust to all of this. And to keep all sharp objects out of your room. And to keep your window sealed shut. And the rafters—”

“My god, you all really think I’m going to kill myself as soon as I’m left alone, don’t you?” Niall huffs.

“Liam told us that you’d expressed a keen interest in dying only this morning.” Luke says firmly. “That you wanted one of us ‘monsters’ to kill you.”

“I said that it could happen, not that I wanted it to.” Niall counters. “I’m just being realistic. I’m not welcome here, and everyone knows it. That’s why Harry had to put Liam down in the dirt, to prove a point to all of you.”

“And is that why you smell of him as well? To keep us obedient?” Luke asks curiously. There’s no animosity to his tone, just inquisitiveness.

“I don’t know! I can’t fucking smell it!” Niall groans. “I smell like I normally do as far as I can detect. For the last time, do not mention my smell to me. I don’t want to hear it. It’s your problem, not mine. But I have half a mind to tell Harry that you all keep acting like me smelling like him is gross.”

“He doesn’t know about these things.” Ashton tells Luke.

“I didn’t expect him to.” Luke shrugs. “The witch is here. I’ve been sent to help you get Mr. Horan prepared for the ritual.”

“He’s not going to like that.” Ashton sighs. “Especially after what Liam said about last night.”


“Because the process is very- Intimate.” Ashton mumbles. “We have to clean you in a very thorough matter, and then use special oils in a specific order or else the ritual will fail. Luke here knows all about it though, so it should go fine. It’ll just be uncomfortable for you I think. Liam said you didn’t even want him in the room last night.”

“No I bloody well did not. Tell me what to do, and I’ll do it myself.” Niall grits out.

“It doesn’t work that way. A body must be prepared, it can’t do the preparation.” Luke explains. “It doesn’t have to be us, but someone will have to do it for you.”
“Get Harry. I’m going to kill him for not warning me about this.” Niall growls.

“Watch it.” Luke replies, bristling furiously. “You cannot make threats against him, no matter the reason. We are members of the King’s Guard and we won’t tolerate it.”

“Luke.” Ashton says warningly. “You know he’s no threat. He’s angry, yes, but there’s no bloodlust coming off of him. Ask the King to come and speak with him. He owes Niall an explanation.”

“I’ll do what I can, but apparently he and Liam were forced to break the bond and have had to get it resealed. They’ve finished, but they might be caught up in that for a while.” Luke explains, visibly relaxing at Ashton’s voice. “You know what it’s like when it’s formed.”

“Not that kind.” Ashton snorts. “Unless- No way. Is the King going to-”

“That’s none of our business, but I don’t think so.” Luke laughs. “They aren’t like that together. We’d have known by now. Besides, two alphas like that? They’d never work.”

“Liam and Louis did.” Ashton points out.

“Louis was different.” Luke counters.

“What, are they going to shag or something?” Niall snorts.


“I don’t know what knotting is.” Niall shrugs.

“Well you see, males have this-” Ashton starts.

“It doesn’t matter, Ash.” Luke says quickly, cutting him off. “He’s not one of us. Lycan sexual dynamics don’t need to be shared with him.”

“He’s going to be here for a long time. He may find a mate, and I think he should know what he’s in for.” Ashton argues.

“His body couldn’t handle a lycan partner, Ash. Look at him. He’d break in half.” Luke scoffs. “Maybe if he were Bressie’s size, but he’s puny. On top of that, he doesn’t have regeneration. He’d have a cave for an arsehole and a dozen broken bones.”

“You’re a bit of a twat, you know that?” Niall grumbles.

“I’m being honest.” Luke sighs. “It’s very likely that you’ll have to be celibate for the rest of your life, because lycans are just so much stronger than you. You may find one who could hold his strength in check, but even if you did, he could never knot you, because it would tear you to pieces. And it wouldn’t form a bond if he did, because you’re a human.”

“Does everyone here know that I’m gay?” Niall groans.

“Not everyone. We were given the file of intelligence on you when we were asked to serve as your attendant.” Ashton explains. “But it doesn’t matter much here. Male-Male partnerships are pretty common in Final Bastion.”

“How does your species survive?” Niall asks.
“I’ll let you explain that, Ash. I have to go speak with the King.” Luke laughs, disappearing in a blur.

“Arse.” Ashton huffs. “To answer your question, there are several ways. Most mated pairs are still Male-Female. And sometimes a Male-Male pair will make a deal with a Female-Female pair where members of each pair breed with one another in order to each get an offspring. And there’s another thing, but I suppose it will be a bit strange to you. Male-Male pairs can breed together under certain circumstances.”

“No fucking way.” Niall gasps.

“Yeah. It’s not often successful, but it can happen.” Ashton nods.

“You’re fucking with me.” Niall scoffs. “It’s not possible.”

“You can ask around.” Ashton shrugs. “Or you could just come here and feel my stomach.”

“You’re pregnant?” Niall asks, his eyes going wide.

“Do you want to feel?” Ashton asks. “He’s been pretty active today.”

“Can I?” Niall asks.

Ashton nods and Niall crosses the room quickly, eager to take part in this strange new thing. He places a hand on Ashton’s stomach, which the lycan moves down until he nods. “Wait just a minute. He’ll move for me.” Ashton grins. Niall does wait for a moment, but then Ashton lets out a horribly loud belch, followed by a cackle. “I’m not pregnant, you git!”

“I hate you.” Niall growls, punching Ashton in the shoulder and choking out a broken “Fuck-You’re like a brick wall!”

“Lycans are solid.” Ashton chuckles. “You’d know that though, wouldn’t you? After your fight with Liam that is.”

“He didn’t feel like fucking steel when I kicked him.” Niall grumbles, nursing his hand. “It just felt like kicking a normal person.”

“Interesting.” a voice muses behind them. He’d know it anywhere by now, the deep, slow thrum of it skimming across Niall’s skin and giving him gooseflesh. “Even my foot hurts when I kick Liam.”

“Can male lycans really get pregnant?” Niall blurts out.

“We can, yes.” Harry laughs. “Though members of my King’s Guard are under certain restrictions. If Ashton wants pups that badly, he’ll have to resign for a few years. Although, seeing as he’s done that to be your attendant, I suppose Luke will be on him about it now.”

“Fat chance of that.” Ashton snorts. “The idea of pups terrifies him, and I’d have to stop my arena matches. I don’t think it’ll be happening any time soon, Your Majesty.”

“Shame. I do so love having pups around the castle.” Harry hums. “Niall, Luke said that you wanted to speak with me, and that you were quite unhappy about it?”

“Yes, you great bloody oaf, I am unhappy about it!” Niall hisses. “You didn’t think to mention to me the whole ‘these two are going to bathe you and rub you down with oils’ thing?”
“Is there a problem with it?” Harry asks. “I know humans can be terribly ashamed of things like that, but it’s not sexual. It’s purely for ritualistic purposes.”

“They’re strangers!” Niall huffs. “I’m not in the habit of letting strangers touch me like that whatever the circumstances.”

“You really only have two options.” Harry shrugs. “Either they can do it, or I can. Liam is in no condition at the moment, and to be honest he’s not very good at things like this. He hates magic.”

“Your Majesty!” Ashton lets out a startled yelp.

“Now, Ashton, it’s not beneath me, and I don’t wish to hear you say that it is. Niall is my honored guest, and this ritual is being done at my behest. The least I can do is help him prepare for it if it would make him more comfortable.” Harry chuckles. “He’s right. The two of you are practically strangers to him.”

“But surely-” Ashton starts.

“Surely his comfort is more important than protocol, yes?” Harry asks.

“I suppose, Your Majesty.” Ashton mumbles.


“Well I can hardly turn you down after you’ve made a big fuss about it, now can I?” Niall sighs. “Besides, one set of eyes is still better than two in this case. And if I tell Liam that I had you wash my feet his head might explode.”

“No, he’s different now.” Harry says quietly. “It took me too long to realize it, but our bond was causing him some issues. We had to break it and have it redone. That’s my fault, and I’m sorry for it.”

“So what, he’s going to be pleasant now?” Niall scoffs.

“Liam is a kind and gentle person, and I know he doesn’t seem that way from what you’ve seen, but he did wish me to apologize on his behalf.” Harry tells him. “I won’t though. It wasn’t his fault. It was mine. So I apologize.”

“Alright, fine. I’ll forgive him the next time I see him. Let’s just get on with it, yeah?” Niall mutters. “The sooner this is over, the sooner I can drink it out of my memory.”

“I’ll have a bottle of whiskey sent up for you tonight.” Harry says with a smile.

“Strongest you have.” Niall nods.

“I very much doubt you could handle that Niall.” Harry grins. “Our alcohol is – shall we say, stronger - than yours. My strongest bottle of whiskey is what humans would categorize as one hundred and seventy five proof.”

“Jesus- That’s not whiskey, it’s gasoline.” Niall snorts. “Thank God for regeneration I guess.”

“You’re catching on.” Harry hums. “Ashton, you’re free to do as you wish for the time being. I’ll escort Niall down to the throne room for the ritual after this, so you have some time. Feel free to grab some things from your house, or have a romp with Luke, or whatever else you feel like doing.”
“I told you he was nice.” Niall laughs.

“I haven’t always been.” Harry shrugs. “I’d apologize for that too, but I would have weeks ahead of me doing that. Instead I’m having a feast for the staff and the people will have a festival with a tournament at the end of the week.”

“What’s the occasion?” Ashton asks. “You can’t very well throw a festival just because your mood has changed.”

“It’ll be in Niall’s honor.” Harry explains. “And I expect his attendant and his mate to take the pairs matches. It would be terribly unbecoming otherwise.”

“Alright.” Ashton smirks. “If you insist, I suppose I can make an effort, Your Majesty, but you know Luke. He’s completely useless in a fight.”

“I heard that you little shit.” Luke growls, walking in with two absolutely massive buckets of steaming water. “And you’ll pay for it once the King is out of earshot.”

“Promises, promises, Lukey.” Ashton laughs.

“Sickening.” Niall giggles. “Can’t believe I’m going to have to live with you two.”

“Ahh, but you chose well.” Ashton grins. “Bressie is as dull as a rock, and Calum is too easily distracted. Luke is just a useless lump with a pretty face. I was the only real choice.”

“I’m going to put you through the wall.” Luke sighs, carrying the buckets into the bathroom and pouring them carefully. “The oils are all set up Your Majesty. You know the proper order of things and marks to make?”

“The witch explained it all. I should be fine.” Harry nods. “Niall, if you would come with me, we can begin.”

“Fine.” Niall mutters, following Harry into the bathroom and closing the door behind them. “For the record, I’m not okay with this and I plan on getting you back somehow. I just haven’t figured out how to humiliate you yet.”

“I’m sure you’ll come up with something.” Harry grins. “Now if you could disrobe? The hotter the water, the better for this.”

“Stop trying to get me out of my pants before I’m ready.” Niall grumbles, undoing the buttons on his waistcoat. “And if I wasn’t dressed like a bloody butler or something, then it would be easier.”

“If you give me a list of things, then I can send Luke to the surface for some clothes and such that better suit your tastes.” Harry shrugs. “My tailor is well versed in the style that I wear, and as such made them for you as well. If you hadn’t run off last night then I would have had time to properly pack some things for you.”

“You are not seriously blaming me for that?” Niall growls.

“No. I’m just explaining the reason that you’re dressed like that.” Harry smirks, undoing the leather cord that ties together his own shirt.

“What the bloody hell do you think you’re at then?” Niall squeaks.

“I’m not ruining my clothes.” Harry says simply. “Don’t worry. My trousers are staying on.”
“They fucking better.” Niall hisses, feeling a bright blush cover his face and neck.

“Niall, do try and hurry.” Harry says with a weary sigh. “I have to pay the witch by the hour, and he’s very expensive. It’s cost me one-hundred kilos of gold to get him here today and do two rituals.”

“Whatever.” Niall huffs, dropping his waistcoat to the floor. “Wait, a hundred kilos of gold?”

“Yes, so some hurrying would be appreciated.” Harry chuckles.

“Jesus.” Niall breathes out, working on the leather tie that holds together his shirt. “That’s insane.”

“It’s a drop in the bucket as far as my resources go, but it’s still not something I want to add on to.” Harry shrugs, dislodging his shirt in the process. Niall tries not to let his jaw drop at the sight. Seeing Harry shirtless from a distance was one thing, but up close, it’s insane. His body is tight and hard, the bulge of muscle visible everywhere without being overwhelming. He may be a monster, but that doesn’t mean he isn’t fucking gorgeous. Watching the way his body moves and his muscles ripple when he uses a ribbon from around his wrist to tie his hair back doesn’t help matters.

“Fuck.” he groans before he can stop himself.

“Niall really, I can promise it’s nothing I haven’t seen before.” Harry huffs, clearly misreading the situation, much to Niall’s relief. “Lycans don’t mind nudity, and I’m not going to judge your body, so please get a move on with things.”

“Okay.” Niall says quietly, shucking his shirt to the ground and averting his eyes. “I expected you to be - Well - Hairier.”

“I can see why.” Harry chuckles. “I suppose it is a bit strange. Liam is a hairy beast.”

“I saw.” Niall snorts, pushing his trousers and pants to the ground in one quick movement and taking a deep breath. He reaches his hands down to cover himself and then steps into the tub. Harry grips his elbow to steady him, and Niall hopes desperately that the lycan can’t hear his heartbeat speed up. He’s warmer than Niall had imagined, like he has a furnace hidden under his skin. It’s a pleasant heat though, the kind that keeps you warm on cold winter nights.

“Alright, now relax and keep your hands on the side of the tub. If you interfere with the process, then I’ll have to start all over.” Harry tells him.

“Okay.” Niall sighs, clenching his hands on the rim of the bathtub. Harry grabs a large, fluffy looking sea-sponge and dips it into the water. “Don’t you need soap?”

“No. The water is enough. Coating you in animal fat won’t help cleanse your body like the ritual needs.” Harry explains. “Magic is very much about the basics of nature and their purpose. Cleansing can be achieved by using one of two classical elements; water, or fire. Fire does us no good here since we don’t want to destroy your body, so pure water must be used instead.”

“I don’t think I’ll ever understand this.” Niall mumbles. “Like, why do I have to be cleaned in the first place?”

“If you are fae, then it’s hidden deep in your blood.” Harry says quietly, pressing the sponge to Niall’s shoulder and rubbing it in circles across his chest. “The purpose of this is to remove the influence of the outside world so to speak. Then I’ll anoint your body with oils that will essentially pull the power out of hiding when combined with the ritual. They won’t harm you though, not even
if you’re human.”

“Which outcome would you prefer?” Niall asks curiously, trying to take his mind off of Harry scrubbing him clean.

“Honestly? I’m not sure.” Harry admits. “Part of me hopes that you are human, because then I can at least give you a peaceful life. Another part of me hopes that you aren’t, though that part is mostly being selfish.”

“Will you use me as a weapon?” Niall asks.

“I wouldn’t know where to begin.” Harry sighs. “I can’t perform magic like the Master can, and I wouldn’t know where to find him if I could. And on top of that, I’m not sure I could bring myself to do that.”

“Why not?” Niall asks.

“Because draining you of that power would kill you.” Harry whispers.

“Oh.” Is all Niall can think to say.

“I told you though, you’re under my protection. I won’t let anything happen to you, Niall.” Harry says firmly.

“You also said that you’re losing this war, and that you’ll do anything you have to do to protect your people.” Niall points out. “Sacrificing me would be a small price to pay for that.”

“I’m not going to do it.” Harry grits out. “I’ve remembered who I am, and I wouldn’t do that.”

“Well I’m not going to press it then. A reprieve is a reprieve.” Niall shrugs.

“I suppose so.” Harry hums, moving up to wash Niall’s arm.

“Are you really three hundred years old?” Niall asks suddenly.

“Older. Three hundred and fourteen.” Harry tells him. “I think. I stopped keeping track after a while. Liam could probably tell you if you want to know the exact number.”

“You look good for your age. One hundred and ninety at most.” Niall laughs.

“Don’t get cheeky now.” Harry huffs. “You’ll get terrible whiskey if you keep that up.”

“Don’t mind me then. Just bathe me, you big puppy-dog.” Niall snickers.

“If it wouldn’t decapitate you then I’d give you a smack.” Harry grumbles. “You’re lucky you’re so fragile.”

“And yet you’re as gentle as my mum with that sponge.” Niall hums.

“Don’t tempt me to lessen my restraints, Niall.” Harry says, leaning forward to wash Niall’s other arm. “It’s taking everything I have to hold back with you.”

“What if I’m fae?” Niall asks. “Will I be sturdier? Stronger maybe?”

“I think so, but I’ve never met one before.” Harry admits. “They went extinct before I was born. Judging by something you’ve said though, I would guess that you’ll be quite durable and strong.”
“Strong enough to handle sex with a lycan?” Niall asks.

“Wh- What?” Harry sputters.

“Luke said that I’d have to be celibate because having sex with a lycan would destroy my body.” Niall explains. “I thought that maybe if I was stronger, then I won’t have to live without anything but my own fucking hands for the rest of my life.”

“I don’t know.” Harry mumbles. “Possibly. Anyone in mind?”

“Your whole species is fit. That Bressie bloke attached?” Niall questions.

“Yes. She was one of the females you sent away today.” Harry nods. “And Bressie is strong, even for a lycan.”

“As strong as you?” Niall asks.

“Not even close.” Harry smirks. “Nobody comes close to me.”

“And yet you can be gentle.” Niall points out. “I don’t see why someone else couldn’t.”

“Could you hold everything back during sex every time?” Harry asks. “Could you make sure to perfectly control yourself during every second of it for your entire life? Would you enjoy it if you did?”

“No.” Niall sighs. “A monk’s life it is then.”

“Maybe not, if you’re fae.” Harry says quietly. “Lift your arms please.”

Niall doesn’t say anything, just does as he’s told while Harry scrubs him softly. The lycan’s mood seems to have shifted and Niall doesn’t want to make him angry. He can learn things from Ashton and Luke rather than risking putting Harry off of him. Harry is really his only lifeline right now, the one person that can really help him. He can’t afford to piss that man off.

“Lean forward for me.” Harry orders, and then scrubs Niall’s back when the blond complies. He’s apparently not got a good angle though, as he stands up to move behind Niall. “Is this alright? Not too rough?”

“It’s fine.” Niall replies, letting himself shrink back down to that place inside himself that he’d been in this morning.

“What’s wrong?” Harry asks.

“Nothing.” Niall answers dutifully.

“Niall-” Harry sighs. “I can smell your lies, remember?”

“It’s nothing you need to worry about.” Niall mutters, barely biting back the ‘Fucking lycans’ pushing it’s way out of his throat.

“Have I done something wrong?” Harry asks. “Have I upset you in some way?”

“No. This situation is upsetting me.” Niall admits. “I used to have the world at my fingertips. I was wealthy, talented, famous, and even moderately attractive. Now I have nothing. I have no friends or family, and whether I’m human or fae, I will always be alone here. And now I’m having to be bathed by someone else for something I don’t even fully understand, and it’ll likely be the last time
a man touches me like this for the rest of my life. It’s just- It’s a lot to take in when it hits me like this.”

“You’re handling it better than most would.” Harry tells him.

“I’m just trying not to let myself go mad.” Niall sighs. “You’ve helped with that, distracting me and such. You’re not going to be around me for much longer though. Not once the test proves that I’m human and I have nothing left that’s worth anything to you. I’m sure I’ll drive Ashton and Luke crazy.”

“They like you.” Harry hums. “You’re young, like them. And once you adjust I think you’ll all be good friends.”

“Luke doesn’t seem to like me.” Niall says quietly. “And I think Ashton is getting tired of me constantly asking questions.”

“You’ll learn how everything works soon enough.” Harry chuckles. “Okay, I’ve put this off for as long as I can for you, but I need you to stand so I can do your lower half now.”

“Fine.” Niall murmurs, bracing himself on the sides of the tub to lift himself up. “Back or front first?”

“Whichever way makes you more comfortable.” Harry says gently. “But either way I’ll need you to spread your legs apart so that I can get your thighs.”

Niall says nothing, carefully sliding his feet apart so that he doesn’t fall. Harry starts at his ankle, slowly working his way up the back of Niall’s calf and thigh, and then back down the inside of his leg before starting the other one. He hesitates when he reaches Niall’s arse, but the blond just says “It’s okay.”

“Just giving you a second. Bend over for me?” Harry asks softly.

“How romantic.” Niall scoffs, lowering himself and catching the side of the tub. If anything about this experience had felt even vaguely sexual, it disappears when Harry begins scrubbing over his bum and giggling. “Could you maybe not laugh right now?”

“Sorry.” Harry replies, though he doesn’t sound sorry at all. “That was funny. It took me a moment to understand, but it was funny.”

“Nothing about this situation is funny.” Niall grumbles. “You’re washing my arse. This is not, in any way, funny for either of us. I’m relatively positive that Liam is going to murder me for this.”

“Then we’ll just keep this our little secret, shall we?” Harry laughs. “He’s resting at the moment, so he won’t know any better if we don’t tell him.”

“He’ll know. I’m sure Luke will let it slip or something.” Niall sighs, gasping involuntarily when Harry’s finger catches his hole for just a flash.

“Sorry.” Harry mumbles. This time at least it sounds genuine.

“Are you fucking done back there?” Niall hisses.

“Just a moment longer.” Harry chuckles, dipping the sponge lower and washing behind Niall’s balls. “There, now I’m done.”
“You’re the absolute worst.” Niall growls, standing up and turning around. “Was that really necessary?”

“Niall, I am making concessions here.” Harry huffs. “It was either that or I lift your scrotum and do it this way. I’ll be fondling you enough today, so I figured that that was the better option for you.”

“How do you kill a lycan?” Niall asks harshly.

“You get stronger than him, and then beat him in combat without mercy to the point where even regeneration cannot recover the damage.” Harry replies casually. “Do you want to kill me, Niall?”

“At the moment, the urge is rather strong.” Niall scowls. “Can you finish up please? I’m getting cold and apparently you still have more to do after this. I’d like it to be over as quickly as possible.”

“Trust me, you should be in no great hurry to get to the next part of this. This is by far the more comfortable part for you.” Harry smirks. “At least there’s a sponge between us right now. There won’t be once I start with the oils and you’ll just have to accept that I’m going to be touching you everywhere. Multiple times for several places.”

“Oh my god.” Niall groans, mindful to keep from his normal habit of rubbing his palms into his eyes when he’s stressed. He really couldn’t handle doing this all over again. “Is one of them-”


“Is there a reason that you seem to be so amused by this?” Niall asks angrily.

“Human sexuality is just strange to me.” Harry shrugs, working the sponge over Niall’s legs on his way up. “Your kind seems terribly prudish to me. For lycans this sort of thing would be nothing. Nudity, and even contact like this, it’s all quite normal for us. You, on the other hand, are going mad over something that isn’t actually sexual.”

“You’re going to be touching my cock. I’d say that’s sexual!” Niall squawks.

“Why? I’m not going to be doing it for the purpose of pleasuring you or myself.” Harry argues. “Don’t your healers do the same thing?”

“They don’t- It’s not-” Niall groans. “It’s not the same.”

“Why not?” Harry asks.

“It’s just not.” Niall grumbles.

“I’ve explained everything you want to know. Can’t you do me the same courtesy?” Harry questions. “I want to know about your world, about your kind.”

“I thought you’ve known a human quite well.” Niall replies.

“I did, but she died a long time ago. Your world has changed so much since then.” Harry says quietly. “And she was a witch. She wasn’t entirely human.”

“Was she important to you?” Niall asks.

“She was my mother.” Harry murmurs.

“Holy shit!” Niall gasps.
“It’s not a secret.” Harry shrugs. “But there hasn’t been another human here on a permanent basis since her. I haven’t been able to learn about your world for a very long time except on occasional outings and I can’t just ask people about the way things work. I can’t ask them why it’s different if a healer touches them than if I were to do this.”

“They’re called doctors.” Niall sighs. “And it’s different because it’s brief. They’re checking the health of things. And they don’t have claws that could pop out and castrate me if they get angry.”

“I wouldn’t do that.” Harry scoffs.

“Is there anything else you want to know at the moment?” Niall asks, because the truth is the only thing keeping him soft right now is keeping the conversation flowing. If he can keep talking, then he can focus on something other than Harry’s face, those lips, being so close to his cock.

“What are you going to miss the most?” Harry asks.

“Music.” Niall responds immediately. “I miss my guitar, and writing songs, and listening to whatever fit my mood for hours at a time. I suppose I should have said my family, but you’d be able to hear the lie. I do miss them of course, and if I could go back and do things differently I would have spent more time with them before you took me, but it’s music that I’ll miss the most. It was a part of me.”

“My mother used to sing.” Harry says softly. “Lycans don’t have music, don’t give ourselves time to enjoy frivolous things, but I often think back to when I was just a pup and she’d sit with me and my sister in her room and sing to us.”

“You have a sister?” Niall asks.

“Not anymore, no.” Harry replies. “She died a long time ago too. She got more of my mother’s genes. She was a witch, and quite a strong one, but that gave her a much shorter life than me. Even so, she died young. She wasn’t much older than you are now. My mother actually outlived her.”

“Why wasn’t she a lycan?” Niall asks.

“I suppose it had to do with the magic.” Harry shrugs. “My father forbade my mother from performing any while I was in her womb because he needed an heir, and she refused to let him turn Gemma.”

“I thought lycans were born. Could a werewolf have been the heir?” Niall asks.

“The King can make new lycans.” Harry explains. “Only the King can though.”

“So you could turn me into a lycan?” Niall asks.

“If you wanted me to, then yes.” Harry nods. “I have to do all this first though, which means I’m going to have to touch your genitals.”

“Stop talking about it and get it over with then.” Niall huffs. “It’s so much worse when you talk about it.”

“Don’t sound so eager.” Harry mutters, running the sponge over Niall’s prick. Fuck if it doesn’t feel spectacular too, just this side of too rough from the texture, but kept soft from Harry’s touch. Niall barely traps a moan in the back of his throat, and he has to think of Liam in his anthropomorphic form just to stop the rush of blood. “Why are you scared of me?”

“Your heartbeat just sped up, and you smell terrified.” Harry says, standing up and dropping the sponge into the bath water before backing away several feet.

“I was thinking of Liam when he was that- That thing.” Niall admits.

“Oh.” Harry says, breathing out a sigh of relief. “I need you to step out of there now.”

“Should I dry off?” Niall asks.

“No. You can only be touched by flesh, stone, and the oils from here on out until the ritual is completed. Anything else will taint you.” Harry says quietly. “But I’ve had the halls cleared, so nobody but me and the witch will see you.”

“Thank you.” Niall sighs.

“I need to do this quickly, okay?” Harry asks. “There’s not really much time for you to accept what’s about to happen.”

“I’ve made my peace with it.” Niall tells him. “Just- Just don’t judge me if anything happens, yeah? Down there.”

“It won’t be your fault.” Harry chuckles. “One of the steps of this is to open your chakras. You will get an erection, and it will last until the ritual is completed. That’s the second set of oils though, so you have time.”

“I really hate this ritual.” Niall groans.

“It’ll be worth it in the end though.” Harry says softly. “Either you’ll be right, or you’ll be something new and powerful.”

“I don’t care about power.” Niall huffs.

“That’s because you’ve never had it before.” Harry smirks. “Alright, stand with your legs spread again and with your arms out.”

“I was named one of the UK’s most powerful people under thirty.” Niall argues.

“And what could you do with that power?” Harry asks. “Could you influence the fate of multiple species? Could you create fire with your hands? Could you break stone with a thought? Could you do anything of worth, or just make young people swoon and spend a lot of money?”

“Will I be able to do things like that?” Niall asks. “The fire and breaking stone with a thought?”

“It depends on what kind of fae you are. If you are what I think you are, then you’ll have some magical ability, yes.” Harry nods. “But your focus will probably be elsewhere.”

“What do you think I am then?” Niall asks.

“I’m not telling you that. You’ll think it ridiculous, and maybe a little racist.” Harry says with a light blush.

“Harry-” Niall draws out. “Do you think I’m a leprechaun?”

“I think it’s a distinct possibility.” Harry replies sheepishly.
“That’s prejudiced.” Niall huffs. “And what on Earth is taking you so long to get started on this?”

“Sorry.” Harry mumbles, stepping over and grabbing a large bowl of oil. “The first part requires me to coat your entire body from the feet up, though not the bottoms of them for some reason.”

“Might as well then.” Niall mutters. “Is this going to burn or anything?”

“No.” Harry laughs, kneeling down in front of Niall. “It may tingle though in some more sensitive areas. It’s peppermint oil, for purification.”

“At least I won’t smell like you anymore.” Niall snorts.

“What?” Harry asks, his eyes going wide.

“Luke and Ashton kept saying that I smell like you.” Niall tells him. “Ashton made sure to say that it wasn’t a bad thing, but that it was unusual.”

“I’m sorry about that.” Harry says quietly.

“I can’t smell it, so it doesn’t really matter for me.” Niall shrugs. “I suppose it’s because I’m human and I’ve spent so much time around you today.”

“Yes. That must be it.” Harry says quickly. “I’m starting now.”

The first touch of Harry’s hands on Niall’s skin sends shivers throughout his body, but Harry doesn’t even glance up at him. He must be able to pass it off as nerves, which is lucky. He’s not even sure what’s going on himself, let alone whether he could explain it away adequately. The last thing he needs right now is to start being interested in a fucking monster, no matter how attractive he may be. That is to say, very.

His hands work quickly, but he’s still very thorough, making sure that no inch of Niall’s skin is left uncoated as he works his way up. He moves his hands onto Niall’s hips and the blond’s breath hitches in his throat. He works his hands back first, rubbing over Niall’s ass in a way that has him biting back a moan and praying that his body can control itself. Then Harry’s fingers run down the cleft of his bum and it’s all he can do not to whimper as each of them drag against his hole.

“There’s no point muffling the noises Niall. I can hear them even when you attempt to bite them back.” Harry says gently. “And it’s okay. I’m not judging you for it.”

“It’s just been a really long time.” Niall whines.

“I know the feeling.” Harry chuckles. “Though I believe my version of a long time is probably quite different from yours.”

“Yeah, you’ve probably gone what, three or four days?” Niall scoffs, trying not to shiver as Harry’s hands slide back towards his cock so painfully slowly.

“One hundred and ten years.” Harry replies when he grabs Niall’s prick. Niall lets out a small whimper, his knees nearly buckling at the sensation, and just prays that Harry meant it when he said he wouldn’t judge. He wants to ask if Harry’s being serious, if he’s really gone over a century without having sex, but his mind can’t form words anymore. When Harry peels back his foreskin, coating his head, he moans unabashedly. “That’s the last time I had a mate.”

For Harry it’s business though, preparing his investment, and his hands move on without lingering, recoating themselves in oil before he stands and starts working over Niall’s lower stomach. Niall’s
blood pressure starts to return to normal after a few minutes, with only a slight hitch when Harry rubs over his nipples. His body feels like it’s on fire, and he’s not sure if it’s because of the oil, or because of Harry.

“What happened?” Niall asks.

“He died.” Harry says quietly. “The Master killed him when he was on the surface.”

“Do lycans mate for life?” Niall asks. “Like wolves?”

“Yes and no.” Harry shrugs, walking around to cover Niall’s back. “We don’t have a concept of divorce like humans. Once you mate properly, once you form the bond, then you’re with that person until one of you dies. You never want it to be any other way though. Even when you fight, your being is still intertwined with theirs. There’s a piece of them inside you that you can’t, nor would you want to, be rid of. That said, due to our long life spans, and the war, one of us is often left alive long after another dies and we can eventually find another mate.”

“Do you miss him?” Niall asks.

“I miss the way I felt when I was with him, but to be honest, I can’t remember his face anymore unless I try really hard.” Harry admits. “It takes me time to remember his name, or even that we were together. That’s what happens when your mate has been gone for over a century.”

“Do you think you’ll find another?” Niall asks before he can stop himself.

“I think I have too many duties to search for a mate.” Harry chuckles. “I was just a prince at the time I found him, which left me time to do things like that.”

“Well, what about Liam?” Niall suggests.

“No.” Harry snorts. “Liam and I- That’s not really feasible.”

“Luke said the same thing, because you’re both alpha males.” Niall tells him.

“That is a part of it, yes.” Harry nods. “And it would feel like a betrayal of a person we both loved immensely.”

“Louis.” Niall gathers.

“Yes.” Harry answers, running his thumbs over Niall’s cheeks and jaw. “Also, we’re not really ‘each other’s types’ as they say on the surface.”

“Oh.” Niall breathes out. “One more question, and then I’ll stop.”

“You’re free to ask whatever you like Niall.” Harry laughs. “Just try not to move so much or the oil will get in your mouth. It does not taste nearly the same as it smells.”

“Okay.” Niall says carefully. “What’s knotting?”

Harry chokes on nothing, jumping back away from Niall swiftly. “Where did you hear about that?” he yelps.

“Ashton said it’s how a mated pair forms their bonds.” Niall says, cocking an eyebrow at Harry’s strange reaction.

“It’s nothing you need to worry about. Your body can’t handle it.” Harry sighs.
“I just want to know what it is.” Niall mumbles.

“Lycans- male lycans- we have-” Harry stammers, blushing furiously in a way that Niall didn’t expect. He takes a deep breath and tries again. “It’s part of a mating ritual. Our penises have a special gland that can essentially lock us into our mates. It swells to around twice the usual size of our erections to keep our sperm from escaping in order to increase the likelihood of breeding.”

“Oh. I don’t understand why that’s so difficult for you guys to explain.” Niall huffs.

“It’s the only outward thing about our human forms that’s still essentially animalistic.” Harry says quietly. “And it’s extremely intimate. Our bodies are held together by just that for a long time, and essentially the penetrating partner continues orgasming periodically through the entire process leaving us quite vulnerable. It’s just not something that gets talked about very often, and I wasn’t expecting it.”

“I thought lycans weren’t prudish about sex.” Niall smirks.

“Knotting is more than just sex, Niall. It’s the most intimate thing two lycans can do together. It seals you together in body and soul.” Harry explains. “You never knot anyone other than your mate, and you do it because you feel a physical need to be as one, rather than two separate entities.”

“Oh.” Niall laughs. “Well that sounds sweet. I wish humans had something like that. Love might actually mean something to more people if they did.”

“What does that mean?” Harry asks.

“Love comes and goes for humans.” Niall mumbles. “One moment people are wildly infatuated and act like they’ll be together forever, and the next they fight until they can’t stand each other. It’s temporary in a way that it shouldn’t be.”

“Not for us it isn’t.” Harry huffs. “Forever means something to us, because we can live for centuries or longer.”

“Don’t get defensive. I think it’s a good thing.” Niall sighs. “How many more stages of the oil do we have?”

“Two. One for opening, and one for binding.” Harry tells him, stepping over and washing his hands in a basin filled with water.

“That seems counterproductive.” Niall chuckles.

“It might seem that way, but both serve a purpose.” Harry grins. “The next stage, as I told you, will open your chakras, or energy centers, with lotus oil. After that, I’ll apply witch hazel oil which will bind your magic inside of you, should it exist. It’ll essentially keep it from releasing out of your body.”

“Is that a thing?” Niall asks. “Would it just like, leak out of me?”

“It could. You don’t seem to quite grasp how much power you could actually have inside of you if you’re fae.” Harry mumbles. “Your body isn’t quite ready to have it all released at once and the binding will let your body adjust to it over the course of a few days rather than release it all out of you to keep you alive.”

“Is that going to hurt?” Niall questions nervously.
“I don’t believe so. If what the witch says is correct, then you’ll actually feel better than you ever have before. You’ll have a lot of excess energy and feel spectacularly alive.” Harry explains. “Alright, I have to start with your hair and work my way down through each of the chakras.”

“Will you tell me what they are?” Niall asks.

“If you like.” Harry nods, coating his fingers from a new bowl of oil. “Technically this chakra exists above of, and outside of, the body, and it’s the chakra of understanding and willpower. Your hair will just have to work though. It’s what the ritual calls for. Also, you should prepare yourself, because each step of this is going to release energy from deep inside you regardless of your species, though only a few will have any real physical reaction.”

“Okay.” Niall shrugs.

“On the plus side, lotus oil is excellent for your hair.” Harry giggles, working it through Niall’s fringe. “I use it myself.”

“Well I guess you don’t really have shampoo down here, do you?” Niall wonders out loud.

“I don’t even know what that is.” Harry replies, pulling his hands away and wiping them on a rag draped over his shoulder. “This next chakra is imagination.”

He rubs his finger in a circle on Niall’s forehead which feels quite odd. He quickly retracts his hand and once again wipes it before coating it all over. “This one is for power.” he says, swiping it in a straight line over Niall’s throat and repeating the process.

“Why are you cleaning your finger between each?” Niall asks, squeaking when his voice comes out much, much louder than usual.

“Because I don’t want to mix your chakras.” Harry says with a wince. “I know it is not your fault, but please try to control your volume. My ears are quite sensitive, especially when the two of us are this close together.”

“Sorry.” Niall whispers, though it still comes out close to his normal speaking voice.

“It is just the result of opening your power chakra.” Harry says with a shrug. “I am quite lucky that your actual powers haven’t been released yet, or it could have drastically different effects because it magnifies things. Should you be fae, your voice might have thrown me against the wall, or worse.”

“Sorry.” Niall repeats, keeping his voice as soft as possible.

“You need not be sorry for something out of your control.” Harry tells him gently. “I knew it was going to happen, and I failed to warn you. The next chakra will increase your heart rate and body temperature, and is the chakra of love.”

He runs his fingers over Niall’s chest, over his heart, and the effect is immediate. A flush spreads over his entire body, his heart fluttering in his chest like a trapped bird. “This next one is wisdom. I have no proper idea why it is centered in the stomach, but it is.”

“Any reaction?” Niall asks quietly.

“It would make you hungry under normal circumstances, however you haven’t eaten in almost a full day, so you’re probably already starving.” Harry laughs. “You should have eaten breakfast when you could have.”
“I haven’t had much of an appetite.” Niall mutters.

“I understand, but you need to keep your strength up.” Harry tells him, crossing two fingers over Niall’s stomach. It gives a lurch, growling loudly like Liam had earlier. “My-my, maybe there is a Beast inside you after all.”

“Shut up.” Niall huffs, letting his voice raise as punishment for the smirk on Harry’s face.

“This one is for order.” Harry grits out, clearly not amused by Niall’s reaction. He cleans his finger and then makes a swirl over Niall’s lower abdomen. His heart rate drops back down and his blush recedes almost immediately, much to his relief. “It should balance the effects of all the chakras before it.”

“Good.” Niall sighs contentedly. His voice has dropped back down to standard levels. It’s almost a shame, but his throat was starting to hurt from controlling it so much.

“This last one won’t be balanced though.” Harry grins, coating his hand in oil and grasping Niall’s cock.

“Fuck!” Niall gasps, blood rushing to fill him up inside Harry’s grip. His body reacts instinctively, rutting up into Harry’s hand like a horny teenager.

“Don’t.” Harry growls warningly, though it doesn’t sound dangerous, not like Liam’s had. His hand doesn’t retract, though whether that is a relief or annoying, Niall can’t decide. “If you release, then all my work will be in vain. The life chakra is essential for the ritual. Fae are beings of pure life energy.”

“Then stop touching me.” Niall whimpers, doing his best to stop his hips from stirring. “I- I can’t-”

“I need to finish.” Harry tells him, reaching down and cupping Niall’s balls. “I know how intense this one in particular can be. He warned me to make sure that you don’t climax though. It will reverse the effects of everything I’ve done so far.”

“I hate this ritual.” Niall whines when Harry pulls his hand back.

“I’m sorry for that.” Harry chuckles. “It’s not something I care for either to be honest. I detest magic.”

“Will you hate me if I’m fae then?” Niall asks. “Won’t I have magic?”

“I seriously doubt that I could hate you.” Harry laughs. “You’re so interesting, and I would have to say that I have grown quite fond of you.”

“Because I remind you of Louis?” Niall asks, pushing down a flutter in his stomach from Harry’s words.

“Because you are you, Niall.” Harry says softly, returning to the basin to wash his hands. “You are unabashedly yourself. You feel things so strongly.”

“Apparently there’s no point in hiding anything from you people.” Niall mumbles. “Not when you can smell lies and hear when I’m nervous.”

“And I also like you because you’ve managed something that no one else has been able to in a long time.” Harry says, preparing a new bowl of oil. “You’ve reminded me what it is to feel kindness rather than just hate.”
“How?” Niall asks in a whisper. “We haven’t spent that long together.”

“I can’t explain it.” Harry sighs. “Maybe it’s your fae blood protecting you. Maybe it’s the similarities between you and Louis. Maybe it’s my fondness for humans because of my mother. Whatever the reason, I’m not the same person I was yesterday, and you can be the only cause for it.”

“Is that a good thing?” Niall asks.

“I believe it is, though it’s caused a few problems in its way.” Harry chuckles. “Liam suffered for it, though that was my own fault. He was my anchor, my opposite, and when I changed so drastically his personality reacted. He took my rage and we had to break the bond because of it, which is extremely painful for both of us.”

“I’m sorry.” Niall says quietly. “I didn’t mean to-”

“I have told you Niall, you need not be sorry for events outside of your control.” Harry smiles. “This is a good thing, even if it had negative consequences. The pain is gone, and now I’m no longer the monster I was for years. Now this next step is going to feel a bit strange, and I’m sure you won’t enjoy it, but it needs to be done.”

“Just do it then.” Niall grumbles.

“Just remember that you told me to.” Harry smirks. He dips his forefinger into the new oil and reaches up, brushing it over Niall’s lips gently. “It seals your powers in by essentially putting a stop to any escape routes, meaning I have to magically plug every open hole on your body, and your eye lids.”

“I deserve a fucking medal for putting up with this shit.” Niall growls, regretting it immediately because the oil tastes terrible.

“Do try not to swallow that. Witch hazel is mildly toxic.” Harry laughs. “You would have to drink this whole bowl to die, but it could very well make you sick if you ingest a bit.”

“Fucker.” Niall grits out.

“Stop moving so much.” Harry giggles, placing his finger in each of Niall’s ears before moving to his eyelids. Niall’s nose is next, and he’s assaulted with the strange odor that makes him want to gag. “Only two left, and then we’re finally finished.”

“Two?” Niall asks, and then Harry’s hand is gripping his cock again. His finger slides over Niall’s slit and the word turns into a whimper.

“One more.” Harry smirks. “Bend over for me. You can hold onto my arm for leverage.”

Niall obeys immediately, gripping onto Harry’s bicep and spreading his legs. He feels foolish for it, but his body is crying out desperately for Harry to touch him. He wants to blame it on the oil, so he lets himself. Maybe lycans can’t sense it if he’s only lying to himself. Harry’s hand moves torturously slowly until finally he skims his finger over Niall’s hole. He runs it in circles that tear moans from Niall’s throat without abandon. When he dips it in Niall’s hips instinctively push back.

“That’s not what we’re doing here, Niall.” Harry says gently.

“Sorry.” Niall whimpers. “I just- I’m so-”
“I know.” Harry tells him, withdrawing his finger. “The oil is affecting you. The effects should wear off once the ritual is complete, though it might take a bit longer if you do, indeed, end up being human.”

Niall wants to say that it isn’t just the oil, that it’s Harry, but he can’t. He can’t bring himself to admit out loud that he likes the Lycan. He can’t even admit it to himself. How can he like the man who destroyed his life? So instead he just nods and pushes everything he’s feeling down to a dark part of himself to let out later once he’s alone.

“It’s time to go.” Harry mutters. “Do you want to walk? I can carry you if you prefer. It would save time.”

“You can carry me.” Niall breathes out.

“Brace yourself.” Harry smirks, gathering Niall up in his arms. “I move quite quickly.”

“I’ve noticed.” Niall says with a nervous laugh. Thankfully, the double-entendre goes right over Harry’s head.

Harry holds him easily, as if he weighed no more than a feather, and opens the door. Things move at a terrifying speed from there, Harry moving through the halls so fast that Niall has to close his eyes and cling tighter to him out of fear. Harry’s grip tightens in turn and he whispers “You’re fine. I won’t hurt you.”

“You’re horrid!” Niall yelps once Harry sets him back on his feet. “You could have ran a little slower, like maybe less than the speed of a car!”

“I thought you’d want to get this over with as soon as possible.” Harry admits sheepishly. “Which means you might want to wait until later to yell at me, because we’re not alone.”

“Shit!” Niall hisses, darting around to hide behind Harry once he notices the witch.

“You didn’t tell me the bloody captive was Niall Horan!” Mikey, the witch, yells. “What the bloody hell is wrong with you?”

“Does that change anything for you?” Harry asks the wild-haired witch.

“Fucking yes it does!” Mikey groans. “You’ve essentially made me an accessory in the biggest kidnapping since Jonbenet Ramsey! I didn’t even know he was missing!”

“How much is your silence going to cost me?” Harry sighs.

“Triple.” Mikey grits out.

“Fine.” Harry waves him off. “Now, can we get to it? Niall is not exactly thrilled about this, and I would like to know the results so I can act accordingly.”

“I am so sorry about this, mate.” Mikey tells Niall.

“Not that fucking sorry apparently.” Niall spits out furiously. “A few hundred pounds of gold is all it takes for you to leave me in a literal den of wolves.”

“If you’re fae, then this is the safest place on earth for you.” Mikey says quietly. “You’ll be so powerful, and at least here you won’t kill people accidentally. Lycans are immune to magic. You’ll
be able to get a grip on your powers without risking lives.”

“And if I’m human?” Niall counters.

“Then at least you have a king under your thumb, even if it is this furry arsehole.” Mikey shrugs. “I’ve set everything up. I need you to come over here and do what I tell you.”

“Go ahead. He won’t hurt you.” Harry murmurs. “I’ll rip his heart out and shove it into his skull if he does.”

“I will need a drop of your blood.” Mikey pipes up. Harry can hear the shiver he gives. “Mr. Horan’s that is. Not yours, Wolf-Man.”

“Then you will take it painlessly.” Harry growls, feeling his teeth sharpen and his lip curling up in a snarl.

“Calm down. I can take a little pain.” Niall says, the scent of fear rolling off of him in waves.

“Sorry.” Harry sighs, pulling back his fangs. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“It’s okay.” Niall tells him. “Just please calm down.”

“I am.” Harry says quietly. “I just don’t wish for you to be hurt. You’ve been through more than enough already.”

“A little prick for some blood isn’t half as bad as what you just had to do to me. At least it’s not humiliating for both parties involved.” Niall mutters, stepping around Harry and walking over to Mikey. Harry wants to tell Niall that it hadn’t been humiliating for him, but that isn’t strictly true. He’d fought so hard with himself not to let anything happen, but his entire body is thrumming with arousal that he’s sure will linger in the room for days. Ashton and Luke will easily detect it, and they’ll know exactly what’s going on, which means that the rest of his King’s Guard will know within the day. Liam is going to have an aneurysm. “Let’s just get on with it, yeah?”

“Is this a really bad time to say that I’m a huge fan?” Mikey asks.

“Until right now I’ve always thought it was nice to meet a fan.” Niall scoffs. “I can’t say the same about this situation. There’s about a thousand things wrong with it.”

“I can understand that.” Mikey laughs, pulling out an athame. Harry feel his claws come out and digs them into his palm to hide them. The pain is just enough to bring his mind down to a rational place. It takes everything he has to hold himself in human form when Mikey adds, “But I did always hope you’d be naked if I met you.”

“Can we not do this?” Niall squeaks out. “Just- Just do what you’re being paid for please.”

“Damn. I’d hoped those rumors about you being gay were true.” Mikey chuckles.

“They are. I’m just not interested.” Niall replies icily, holding out his hand. “Now do your job before I let Harry disembowel you after all.”

Harry takes no small amount of satisfaction in the exchange and puts the leash back on the Beast. He’s well aware that he has no claims to Niall, but that doesn’t help matters. The Beast still wants to make Niall his, and Harry does as well. Every bit of him is fighting with itself because he knows that Niall and he won’t work. Niall will never love the man who took away his life. He’ll never love the monster that brought him under the surface of the world as a captive.
“I’m sorry if this hurts.” Mikey says gently, digging the tip of the dagger into Niall’s fingertip and filling the room with the scent of the blond’s blood.

“It’s fine.” Niall says more to Harry than Mikey.

“Lay on your back in the center of the rune please.” Mikey tells him, holding the dagger flat to keep the dot of blood from falling off. “In the opposite direction of the pentagram.”

“My mum would have a strop if she knew what was happening.” Niall sighs. “Gay witches and werewolves, gladiatorial combat, black magic. It’s like her worst nightmare.”

“They don’t like being called werewolves.” Mikey whispers, though Harry can still hear him easily. “I don’t recommend keeping that habit.”

“He doesn’t mind, do you Harry?” Niall smirks, lying flat on his back.

“No, he’s right about that.” Harry huffs. “How many times do I have to say that we’re different?”

“At least one more time.” Niall laughs. “You can get all pissy about it later though. I’m a bit busy at the moment. Man-Witch, do your thing and let’s settle this once and for all.”

He’s pretending to be calm, but Harry can hear the rapid thump of his heartbeat which tells otherwise. It probably doesn’t help that he’s still naked with a painfully obvious erection pointing towards the ceiling. It certainly isn’t helping anything for Harry. His own cock is straining against his trousers and he thanks the Moon that nobody is looking at him, and that no other lycans are around to smell his desire.

“There’s not really much to this.” Mikey tells him. “The hard work was preparing you. I’m going to add your blood to the rune, and if there’s a reaction then you’re fae. If nothing happens, then you’re human.”

“Then fucking do it already, you wanker.” Niall growls.

“Veritas Vos Liberabit!” Mikey shouts, letting the drop of blood roll off the tip of the knife until it falls and splatters onto the rim of the rune. Harry’s breath catches in his throat, waiting for something, anything, to tell him he didn’t do all of this for nothing. The air is still, and Harry feels like he’s about to cry, while Niall in turn breathes out a sigh of relief. “Wait-”

The word is barely out of his mouth before he’s thrown backwards into Harry. Light fills the room, blasting out of the rune so hard that Harry can feel the warmth of it even with Mikey blocking his body. A scream rips the air in two and then ends as quickly as it started. Harry struggles against the force being emitted by the rune, Mikey abandoned on the floor behind him, but he can’t move very far even with all of his strength. He’s about to shift just so that he can push against it, but the light gives one last throb before dulling. Harry trips forward, barely catching himself. Niall isn’t in the spot he had been and Harry’s heart seizes. “What did you do?” he asks viciously, turning on Mikey with the beast pushing against its restraints.

“Mate-” Mikey breathes out, pointing a finger up in the air.

Harry follows it to find Niall floating in midair, unconscious and glowing from the inside out. Just as Harry’s eyes find the blond, whatever magic is holding him up releases and he starts to fall. Harry dives forward, catching Niall in his arms and landing lightly on his feet. “It’s real. He’s real.” Harry breathes out.

“Fuck. I really wasn’t expecting that.” Mikey says quietly. “I thought they were extinct.”
They were.” Harry says quietly. “Can we test his subspecies?”

“It’ll reveal itself soon.” Mikey replies, climbing up to his feet. “He’ll need to be careful until he gets a handle on his powers. I have some books on fae magic that I can leave here for him to learn from.”

“Can you teach him?” Harry asks.

“No. Fae magic is completely different than the kind witches use. They can use ours, but we can’t use theirs.” Mikey sighs. “Fuck! Fuck! This is so fucking crazy!”

“I can’t believe it either.” Harry admits. “I’m glad that I didn’t take him for nothing, but if the Master finds out, then he’ll come for him with everything he has.”

“My lips are sealed.” Mikey says quietly. “But have you considered turning him? It would make him useless to the Lord of the Fangers.”

“I have considered it, yes. It will be his choice though. I can’t turn him against his will, not when it could kill him.” Harry says, cradling Niall closer to his chest. “I promised that I would keep him safe. I owe him that. Whatever he chooses, I’ll find a way.”

“Alright.” Mikey shrugs. “About my payment-”

“The agreed upon price is waiting for you by the portal. The rest will be brought to you within a day.” Harry says curtly.

“Keep it.” Mikey smirks. “I brought the fae back into this world. The original price is more than enough when I figure that in.”

“Will he be strong?” Harry asks. “Will he have regeneration?”

“He’ll be as strong as a lycan at least, if not stronger. Regeneration is present in most species, but not all of them.” Mikey explains. “And of course he’ll have part of a range of magical abilities. He might be the most powerful person in Final Bastion now. Even more powerful than you. Of course he also has weaknesses. I’d keep him away from the salt and sugar. Oh, and cold iron. It’s his silver.”

“Do you have any texts for me to learn all of this from?” Harry asks.

“The books I’ll leave for him should explain pretty much everything.” Mikey sighs, pulling book after book out of his magical sack. Harry has no love for magic, but he can admit that one of those would be useful. “He should only wear natural fabrics from now on. Synthetics will irritate his skin because of his connection to nature. I brought this on the extremely off chance that you were right.”

He pulls out a long white robe of pure silk and places it over Niall’s body. “You have the most valuable treasure in the world here, Wolf-Man. You’d better treat him right.”

“I will.” Harry says softly brushing his fingers through Niall’s fringe. “I need you to do one more thing.”

“Name it.” Mikey laughs. “I’m so fucking thrilled right now I might do it for free.”

“One of my guards will be escorting you home per usual. I need you to help them pick something out. They have the information. Tell them if you require payment.” Harry tells him. “I’m going to
put him in bed now. How long will he be out for?”

“Until tomorrow morning I would guess. His body needs time to adjust to the power.” Mikey replies, placing his sack over his shoulder. “If you need me, you know what to do. Make sure to let me know if you need a sealing spell.”

“Why would I?” Harry asks.

“Because many of the fae could teleport.” Mikey smirks. “Who do you think created your portal? Or Final Bastion in general? As powerful as us witches are, we couldn’t have done all of this without the fae. He could easily escape if he discovers that power. I can remove the pages as a courtesy, but that doesn’t mean he won’t figure it out.”

“Remove them.” Harry mutters, walking away towards his chambers without a second glance. His focus is all wrapped up in Niall now. Nothing else matters. He was right, and Niall may just be the answer to all of his prayers. He’s also the most dangerous weapon in the entire world and could destroy everything that Harry holds dear. Only time will tell which will happen.

Liam’s entire body feels weak when he wakes, but he can’t waste any time. The bond pulls him out of bed immediately, and he’s out the door before he can even blink the sleep out of his eyes. He moves as quickly as his heavy limbs allow until he’s standing outside of Harry’s chamber. “He asked not to be disturbed.” Luke tells him, standing in between Liam and the door.

“Stand down, Luke.” Liam growls. “He’ll tell me to leave if he doesn’t want me here.”

“Sir.” Luke nods. Liam can smell his hesitance, and a part of him appreciates it, but a larger, sleepier part of him is annoyed. Luke moves aside and Liam opens the door.

“Luke, I said- Oh, Liam.” Harry laughs. Liam stops dead in his tracks at the scene in front of him, taking in the image and the scent with confusion. The entire room reeks of arousal and- mint? Niall is naked, curled against the King’s chest and snoring loudly with Harry’s hand tangled in his hair. “How are you feeling?”

“Weak, Sire.” Liam admits quietly. “What’s going on here?”

“I was right.” Harry tells him. “He’s fae.”

“What happens next?” Liam asks.

“That’s up to him. First he needs to rest.” Harry murmurs, his attention once more drawn to the boy in his arms.

“Surely he can do that in his own room?” Liam says nervously.

“He could.” Harry mutters. “But I wish to speak with him as soon as he wakes. He has some things to decide on, and I don’t believe that Ashton is the first person he should speak with. He’s so careless with some things. Don’t you agree, Luke?”

“I do, Your Majesty.” Luke chirps through the door. He sounds amused, but Liam is just embarrassed that one of his handpicked King’s Guards is eavesdropping on the King.

“Come here.” Harry says gently, patting the bed beside himself. “You’re upset. I can feel it.”
“I’m just hesitant, Sire.” Liam sighs, his feet carrying him forward to the bed. “I don’t like having something this powerful so close to you. Who knows how he could react?”

“Then I’ve got you here to protect me, haven’t I?” Harry chuckles, curling his arm around Liam’s shoulder.

“Don’t be condescending, Sire.” Liam grumbles. “Beating me in one fight per decade is to be expected. I wasn’t at my best this afternoon.”

“You’re such a poor loser, Liam.” Harry laughs. “You’ll have the chance to prove yourself again soon enough.”

“How so?” Liam asks. “I don’t think I’ll be ready to spar with you again for a few days at least. You know the bond is harder on me than it is on you.”

“It’s not me you’ll be fighting yet. It’s Niall.” Harry grins. “He’s going to need to be trained in combat, and you’re the best teacher I have. But I will need you in fighting shape by the end of the week. There’s going to be a tournament for the people, and I’m planning on having a match between us for the Primus.”

“You want me to embarrass you in front of the entire city?” Liam muses. “If you insist.”

“I see your head was damaged by the ritual. By the Moon, I hope it heals in time.” Harry giggles. “I want to beat you again when you have no excuses to hide behind.”

“Think you can do it again without the vain need to prove yourself in front of him?” Liam smirks.

“I was proving myself to you, not him.” Harry huffs.

“Sire, did you seriously just try and lie to me?” Liam asks with his eyes going wide when Harry’s heartbeat stutters.

“No, Liam, it isn’t.” Harry growls. “I know very well what you’re going to say, and I agree. I know this is stupid and childish. I’m dealing with it.”

“It doesn’t smell that way.” Liam mutters, the stench of Harry’s desire heavy in his nose. “You smell like you did before Zayn died.”

“I’m working on it!” Harry hisses. “The Beast is very loud about this, Liam! It wants him, and I’m trying to rein it in.”

“He can’t be your mate. He’s fae.” Liam says quietly. “You need an heir.”

“I can’t.” Harry chokes out, his face crumpling immediately. “Not again, Liam.”

“Sire, I know that-” Liam starts gently.

“No, Liam, you don’t!” Harry snaps. “You don’t know! I’ve lost two heirs already! I can’t handle it again. Especially not when I have only just managed to remember myself. Besides, I would need a mate for that. Niall is the only person I’ve cared for like that since Zayn, but that isn’t possible, so just drop it.”
“Sire.” Liam says quietly, pulling in on himself. He can’t bring himself to leave Harry’s side, not with the bond being this fresh. “Do you ever think how strange it was that our mates were who they were? Louis and I hated each other at first, and I paired much better with Zayn than you did.”

“Mates balance each other. Louis brought out the lighter side of your heart, and Zayn kept me grounded because I have a tendency to let myself get arrogant. In the reverse, you made Louis more focused, and I made Zayn more confident.” Harry says with a soft smile. “We all worked well together, didn’t we?”

“Very.” Liam nods, nuzzling into Harry’s side as sleep pulls at his eyelids once more. “Can I stay?”

“Of course.” Harry chuckles. “Sleep. You need it.”

That’s all it takes for Liam to drift off.
Niall wakes all at once, his body throbbing with energy like a surge of caffeine and adrenaline. His eyes spring open and he yelps, scrambling backwards from the face beside him until he falls off the bed. “What the fuck is going on?” he screeches when his ass hits the cold stone floor, making it extremely evident that he’s naked. “Liam! What are you doing in my bed?”

“You’re not in your bed.” a voice hums behind him. “You were in mine.”

“What happened?” Niall asks, covering himself with his hands.

“The ritual worked. You’re fae.” Harry says gently, offering a hand to help Niall to his feet, though the blond ignores it. “Quite a powerful one if the reaction is anything to go by.”

“No! No! I’m human!” Niall cries, slamming his fist into the floor. He’s proved wrong immediately when the stone gives way to his knuckles like it’s made of powder. What happens next really takes Niall’s breath away though, as the stone begins to glow under his hand until it turns golden instead of grey. “No.”

“Niall, I know this is a lot, but you need to relax. Take a deep breath, or else you could hurt yourself.” Harry says softly, crouching down to Niall’s level, but keeping a safe distance at the same time.

“I can’t control it!” Niall chokes out, watching fingers of gold work their way out over the surface of the stone.

“Niall!” Harry says sharply. “Focus! Tell it to stop. It will listen to you. Just tell it to stop.”

“Stop!” Niall yells, pulling his hand to his chest. The slow march of the gold halts in place, looking like a bursting star embedded in the floor.

“That’s good.” Harry chuckles. “You don’t actually have to say it out loud, but you can if it helps. Stand up. I have a robe for you to wear.”

“Harry- I’m scared.” Niall whispers.

“That’s okay. I can help you.” Harry smiles. “We have some things to talk about.”

“What are you going to do to me?” Niall asks, standing up on legs that feel weak, and yet overpoweringly strong at the same time.

“Nothing, Niall. You need to calm down.” Harry says, the picture of serenity itself. “Come with me, out to the balcony, and we’ll just talk, okay?”

“Robe first.” Niall squeaks, still cupping his dick with his hands. He’s fully aware that Harry has seen it, has had his hands all over it, but it still feels inappropriate.

“Right.” Harry laughs, walking behind Niall and draping soft silk over his shoulders. Liam stirs on the bed, looking at them with sleepy eyes that snap open after a moment. He opens his mouth to speak, but Harry beats him to it. “Liam, have something made for Niall. He hasn’t eaten since before he was taken. We’ll be fine here by ourselves.”

“Sire.” Liam replies with a resigned nod, racing out of the room.
“Are you okay to move?” Harry asks carefully, his hand splaying over Niall’s lower back.

“My body feels weird.” Niall admits. “I’m a little afraid to do anything.”

“Do you want me to carry you again?” Harry asks.

“No!” Niall squawks, pulling the robe tight around himself. As if he weren’t embarrassed enough, the silk tears like tissue paper which moves Harry’s hand directly onto his bare skin. “Fuck!”

“It’s okay.” Harry chuckles, rubbing his thumb soothingly over Niall’s lower back before removing his hand and walking away. “I have several of my own, though I would appreciate it if you wouldn’t tear them all.”

“I’ll just do this.” Niall sighs, wrapping the fabric around his waist as gently as he can until it hangs like a towel. “Don’t risk yours.”

“If that’s what you want.” Harry shrugs. “I don’t mind if you want more covering you. I know you’re shy.”

“I’m not shy.” Niall grumbles. “I’m modest. There’s a difference. Just because I don’t enjoy wagging my cock around in front of everybody and their mothers doesn’t mean I have a problem with my body.”

“Well my mother is dead, so that’s not a problem here.” Harry giggles.

“Well then, by all means, let me just wave it around!” Niall huffs dramatically. “I’m pretty sure that you’ve seen my naked body more than enough for the last twenty four hours.”

“If you say so.” Harry hums, striding towards the balcony. “As I told you, nudity is commonplace in Final Bastion. It doesn’t bother me.”

“How flattering.” Niall scoffs, following Harry. Thankfully his feet manage to neither destroy the stone, nor turn anything to gold. Thank god for small miracles. “I’m glad my naked body isn’t so horrifying that it disturbs your delicate werewolf sensibilities.”

“Are you always this unpleasant in the mornings?” Harry asks with a grin.

“Watch it, Fuzzy-” Niall growls. “Or I’ll see if I can make a silver bullet next.”

“Niall-” Harry sighs. “Will you please just relax?”

“How am I supposed to relax?” Niall snaps. “I’m a fucking fairy! I can’t control my body!”

“You can’t control your body because your emotions are going wild.” Harry says firmly. “If you calm down, then your body will too.”

“I don’t know how to calm down right now.” Niall whimpers. “Harry, my entire life just changed. Again.”

“Look at me.” Harry says softly, taking Niall’s face in his big, warm hands. “Just look at me. Nothing else matters. Don’t think about anything except your breathing. Let your body do the work. It will if you let it.”

“Okay.” Niall breathes out. He keeps his eyes locked with Harry’s and takes a deep breath, letting it out slowly, and repeating the process for several minutes until his heart stops trying to beat out of his chest.
“I know how scared you are,” Harry says gently. “But you’re still you. You can handle this. Things have changed, but you’re strong enough to cope with that, and I’m here to help you.”

“What am I supposed to do now?” Niall asks quietly.

“You have options. Some things will be necessary, and you won’t have a choice in them, but others you will.” Harry tells him.

“What are my choices?” Niall asks.

“You can learn about what you are, learn to control your abilities as a fae.” Harry says softly. “You can learn magic, and quite possibly become the strongest being on this planet.”

“Or?” Niall asks.

“Or we can bind your powers.” Harry sighs. “I can have iron shackles made that will keep your powers in check. They will hurt more than you can imagine, and you won’t be able to remove them under any circumstances. You won’t be able to do much except suffer, actually.”

“I don’t really like that option.” Niall scowls.

“There’s one more, but I’m hesitant to offer it.” Harry admits.

“Harry!” Niall whines.

“I can turn you into a lycan.” Harry says quietly. “It will negate your fae powers, if you survive. The transformation could, and likely will, kill you.”

“Do it.” Niall says firmly.

“Niall-” Harry starts.

“You said that it’s my choice. I choose lycan.” Niall growls. “At least if I’m a lycan, then I can’t accidentally turn someone into a gold statue.”

“Take some time to think about it, please.” Harry begs. “Give yourself time to learn about who you are. If you still want to be turned in a month, then I’ll do it. But please don’t make me break my promise to keep you safe already.”

“I don’t know if I can handle a month of this, Harry.” Niall whispers. “What if I hurt someone?”

“We’re immune to magic here, remember?” Harry asks desperately. “You can’t hurt us like that. You can’t turn us to gold or anything.”

“Am I just supposed to learn through trial and error?” Niall asks.

“The witch left some texts for you that should help you learn how to control your abilities.” Harry explains. “And Luke is well versed in magical subjects.”

“What about my strength?” Niall asks.

“You’ll be training with Liam to learn your limits and how to control it.” Harry tells him. “Please, I know this is a lot to ask, but please just take some time before you make that decision. I don’t want to kill you by accident.”

“What are my chances of surviving the transformation?” Niall questions.
“For a human your age it would be about fifty percent. I would guess that your inherently magical blood halves that at the very least, if it’s possible at all.” Harry admits.

“Fine. A month.” Niall sighs. “But if that’s what I choose, then you have to do it.”

“Fine.” Harry nods. “But I don’t think that you will choose that once you come to terms with things. Given the unusual display on my floor, I’d say that I was also right about your subspecies, and leprechauns have a very interesting power.”

“And that is?” Niall asks.

“They manipulate probability.” Harry grins. “Essentially you can make anything that is even minutely possible a sure thing. Here, test it. Think very hard about what you want for breakfast, and we’ll see if Liam brings it.”

“I want some fucking bacon.” Niall groans. “And toast with butter.”

“More. Something special.” Harry insists.

“When I was in Japan, I had this omelet with crab in it.” Niall says after a minute. “That was really good.”

“Now think about it really hard, and we’ll wait and see.” Harry smiles.

Niall squeezes his eyes shut and pictures Liam walking through the door with each of the items he’d mentioned on a tray. He thinks about it so hard that his head hurts with the effort of concentrating on it. “Do I have to keep doing this until he gets here?” he asks.

“No, I think that should have worked.” Harry giggles. “Your face just got really red.”

“Shut up.” Niall huffs, smacking Harry on the shoulder. He definitely does not mean to send the lycan flying back into his room, but it happens anyways. He slides across the stone floor until he hits the wall opposite the balcony with a loud noise, and then looks back at Niall who yelps “I’m sorry!”

“Your Majesty!” Luke cries, flying into the room and towards Niall with claws outstretched.

“Stop!” Harry shouts before Luke can reach Niall. “It was a mistake. He doesn’t have a grip on his strength yet.”

“I’m sorry!” Niall repeats, his voice going up an octave from fear.

“You are going to be very interesting to watch spar with Liam.” Harry smirks.

“I don’t know how to fight.” Niall says quietly. “Not really. I took self-defense courses, but the point of that is to escape your attacker.”

“Niall, with strength like that, technique may not matter much for you.” Harry laughs. “Do you mind if I test something?”

“What is it?” Niall asks cautiously.

“I want to see if you have regeneration.” Harry tells him, standing up and brushing himself off. “The witch said that it was possible.”

“How badly is this going to hurt?” Niall sighs.
“No more than the dagger did yesterday.” Harry shrugs. “I’ll slip a claw out and scratch you just enough to make it work if you have it.”

“Fine.” Niall agrees, holding out his arm. To be honest he’s just as curious about it. Regeneration is the one ability he really wants, if just so that celibacy isn’t a guaranteed necessity. “But be nice about it. The last thing I need is some big gash that can’t be healed because you get overeager.”

“Just a little scratch. I promise.” Harry grins, rushing over in front of Niall with a claw already out. He holds Niall’s arm steady with one hand, and uses the other to scratch a faint line a few millimeters deep into Niall’s arm. It heals instantly, closing up before Niall can even really feel any pain. “Fascinating!”

“I’m not a bloody guinea pig.” Niall giggles, unable to keep up the pretense of frustration when he got the one really cool power there is.

“Do I smell blood?” Liam asks from the door. He moves to the group of the three others in a flash, setting a tray down on the balustrade before turning to them expectantly.

“Niall has regeneration.” Harry beams.

“And why is Luke here?” Liam asks.

“Harry is a lightweight.” Niall shrugs. “What did you bring me?”

“Food.” Liam huffs, walking away without another word. Sure enough, the plate is loaded with bacon and toast, and there’s a large fluffy omelet next to them with red pieces that Niall is beginning to suspect are crab meat. Okay, maybe he will keep these powers.

“Hit me.” Liam smirks.

“What?” Niall asks, his eyes going wide.

“The only way I have of accurately measuring your strength is for you to hit me.” Liam tells him. “Based on that, I’ll decide how to proceed with your training. So- Hit me. And don’t hold back. I need to know what you’re capable of.”

“Fine.” Niall huffs. “I owe you for being such a cunt anyways.”

He rears his hand back in a tight fist, and then drives it forward into Liam’s stomach. Whatever Liam was expecting, it wasn’t this. Even having braced himself for the blow he flies backwards, slamming against the wall so hard the stone gives way behind him. Even Harry has never hit him this hard. Just what is this lad capable of?

Liam drops to the ground, several of his ribs, his right shoulder, and his left leg having shattered on impact. Healing them takes a moment, even drawing on Harry’s power through their bond as he decides he needs to, but he stands as soon as possible and walks back towards the fae. Harry, Ashton, and Luke are the only ones watching the fight, but Liam still feels embarrassed. Especially when Ashton howls out “Good on you, Niall!”

“Thanks, Ash.” Niall giggles back. “So, where do we start?”

“Here.” Liam answers, driving his own fist into Niall’s gut and knocking him back onto his arse. He’d expected the blond to go further, but he blames it on his body still adjusting to the new bond.
His fist throbs, making him dully aware of the familiar sting of pain that comes with hitting something truly solid.

“What the bloody fuck was that for?” Niall growls, staring up at Liam defiantly.

“I needed to see how durable you are.” Liam replies. “Apparently very.”

“Liam, behave yourself.” Harry sighs.

“Of course, Sire.” Liam nods.

“Of course, Sire.” Niall mocks, his voice going high and nasally.

“You’ve taken self-defense lessons before, according to my dossier.” Liam says, pointedly ignoring Ashton’s snickering. Harry’s hurts a bit more, but Liam assumes that it’s due to his infatuation with the blond. The scent of arousal isn’t quite as strong now, but it’s still there. From both of them. “We’re going to have a match.”

“My training was in escaping an attacker, not fighting off Jacob Black.” Niall growls, earning him a loud howl of laughter from Ashton.

All four of the others turn to him and he replies with, “What? I’ve grabbed some books while I was on the surface. I thought Twilight was good.”


“Should have picked me then, shouldn’t you?” Luke hums, nuzzling into Ashton’s neck.

“I regret my decision more with every passing second.” Niall mumbles.

“Aw, don’t be that way.” Ashton pouts. “Nobody else here will openly cheer for you against Liam.”

“What’s the point in cheering for the loser?” Luke smirks.

“Once I kick this one’s arse-” Niall grits out, jabbing his finger towards Liam. “I’m coming for you, Luke.”

“Why wait?” Luke asks. “Liam isn’t at one hundred percent right now. Sir, let me test his abilities. You might see something by watching that you wouldn’t if you were sparring with him.”

“Sire?” Liam directs at Harry, satisfied with the idea. He’s more than confident that Luke can handle this lad, and after that last hit, he’s not eager to take another.

“It’s up to Niall. I will put one stipulation on the match though. No shifting.” Harry says firmly.

“Bring it on then, Luke.” Niall grins. “You seem like more fun than Liam anyways. He’s got grumpy-face.”

“Ash?” Luke asks, looking to his mate for approval.

“Don’t hurt him too badly. I don’t want to have to step in. He’s still my charge.” Ashton shrugs. “And don’t get overconfident. He’s obviously stronger than you are now.”

“No. He’s stronger than Liam when he’s been drained.” Luke grins, hopping off the stand and landing next to Liam. “No offense, boss.”
“No offense taken. You are not wrong about me being drained.” Liam says with a soft smile before whispering. “He is stronger than you, however. He’s probably as strong as the King now.”

“What?” Luke asks, his eyes going wide. “You can’t be serious.”

“I am.” Liam admits. “Under no circumstances let a blow of his connect with your body, or you will lose. If it weren’t for the King’s energy, then I would not even be standing yet. He has no technique right now, but his brute strength is massive.”

“I’ll make it quick, then.” Luke says, turning on Niall with an eager smile.

“Let me get up above first.” Liam chuckles, climbing the stairs to take a seat next to Ashton. “Mr. Horan, are you ready?”

“Not quite.” Niall huffs. “First I want to know, what’s your problem with me, Luke?”


“His ego is super fragile.” Ashton laughs.

“Alright.” Niall nods. “And the only reason I picked your mate is because he came across like he would be my friend. The rest of you didn’t even seem like you cared, but he called me by my name and smiled at me. Also, I didn’t know he was mated and he was the most attractive of the choices.”

“I can agree there.” Luke replies with a laugh.

“Okay then-” Niall says, taking a defensive stance with his fists pulled up near his face. “I’m ready.”

“Fight!” Liam calls out.

Luke takes off immediately, using his speed to rush in for a quick jab towards Niall’s stomach. The fae dodges backwards, jumping in a way that seems to surprise even himself, if the way he barely manages to stay on his feet when he lands is anything to go by. Liam isn’t surprised by that. Niall has no real grasp on his abilities yet. Once he does, he could be a real demon in the sparring ring. If he takes his training seriously, unlike Harry usually does, then he’ll even be able to beat Liam quite easily.

Luke takes advantage of Niall’s imbalance and dives at him, catching the fae around the stomach with an outstretched arm and throwing him a few feet. Liam can’t blame that on his own weakness this time. Niall can just really take a blow. He recovers more quickly this time, jumping high into the air and coming down right as Luke dodges to the side. He seems to have predicted that and lashes out with his leg, catching Luke in the side and changing the tide of the match in an instant. Liam is shocked at the fae’s natural combat instincts. Luke hits the wall with a sickening crunch and crumples to the ground. It’s over, and in under a minute.

“Luke!” Ashton cries, leaping off the stand and rushing to his mate’s side.


“Are you okay?” Niall asks worriedly, running over to crouch next to the pair.

“I’m never going to live this down, but my body will recover.” Luke sighs.
“Well, well-” Harry hums. “Even I did not expect that. I thought that he might hold his own for a bit, but I fully expected him to lose.”

“He’s a monster.” Liam sighs. “You’ve brought a monster into our home.”

“He may be powerful, but look at him, Liam. He is no monster.” Harry says with a soft smile. Liam takes in the scene again, watching as Niall gently picks Luke up and carries him over to the stand.

“Guys, is regeneration supposed to take this long?” he asks timidly.

“It is when you shatter multiple bones.” Liam tells him. “It will take him a little while, but he will recover.”

“I’m sorry.” Niall says quietly. “Luke, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to really hurt you.”

“It’s okay.” Luke chuckles, wincing as he does. “Liam warned me not to let you catch me with a blow. I just didn’t think you’d be that good.”

“I just let my body do what it wanted to.” Niall admits. “I wasn’t really thinking about it.”

“Just imagine what you’ll be able to do once you can use magic too.” Ashton says quietly.

“If I keep it.” Niall mutters. “I don’t want to be this strong.”

“Why the hell not?” Luke scoffs. “Niall, do you even realize how much good you could do with this kind of power? You could turn the war around. You could save us.”

“I’m not a warrior, Luke.” Niall whispers. “I’m just a prisoner with too much power. Liam, are we done here?”

“Yes.” Liam nods. “I’ll need time to recover enough to train you properly. If you could beat Luke that easily, then only the King, and myself, are capable of teaching you control.”

“That’s all I want to learn from now on.” Niall mutters. “I don’t want any combat training. Just teach me to pull it back so that I don’t hurt anyone or break things anymore. I’d like to be alone for a while please.”

He jumps off the stand without waiting for a response, running towards the castle doors. Ashton moves to follow him, but Harry grabs his arm and says, “Let him be. He can find the room by himself, and if he can’t, then someone will help him. You take care of your mate.”

“Okay.” Ashton sighs reluctantly.

“Sorry for being such a bother.” Luke grumbles.

“Nobody is letting me do my job.” Ashton whines. “I’ve only spent two hours with him, but I’ve had the job for a full day.”

“Guys, go inside.” Liam says firmly.

“Yes sir.” Ashton mumbles, picking Luke up and walking away.

“Sire, Luke is right. Niall could change the tide of the war.” Liam says quietly.

“He could.” Harry agrees. “But it isn’t his war, and there’s a good chance he’ll die soon enough.”

“Because he wants me to try and turn him so that he’s not so dangerous.” Harry sighs. “But I’m afraid that that will kill him.”

‘Maybe that’s for the best.’ Liam thinks to himself, but he knows better than to give voice to that thought. He likes the blond to a degree, but the King is far too attached to him, which makes him dangerous in a way that has nothing to do with his powers.

Harry gives things as much time as he can stand before he goes after Niall, which roughly equates to twenty minutes. Even if Harry didn’t know where Niall was headed, and couldn’t track him through scent, it would still be easy to find him. Golden starbursts litter the floor, fingers reaching towards each other greedily in a frozen picture of Niall’s emotional status. The occasional portion of wall has sweeps of gold as well, where Niall must have stumbled and caught himself. He reaches the door and pushes it open.

“I knew it would be you.” Niall sighs, keeping his eyes trained on the sky rather than Harry.

“And I knew that you would come here rather than your room.” Harry returns, taking a seat under the same tree Niall has. “My staff are going to have heart attacks over the stonework.”

“I doubt they’re fatal in lycans.” Niall mutters. “Or me now, I guess.”

“Luke has probably healed by now. You might feel better if you go to your chambers so that you can see him.” Harry offers.

“It’s not my chambers. It’s my cell.” Niall says quietly. “And they’re my prison guards. I just wanted to forget for a minute that my life is beyond fucked now.”

“Ashton?” Harry calls out, having smelled the lycan from the moment he stepped into the courtyard.

“Yes, Your Majesty?” Ashton asks sheepishly, peeking out from where he’s hidden in a different tree than the one Harry and Niall are under.

“You’re an arse.” Niall scowls. “How did you even get in there without me noticing?”

“I scaled the wall very quietly and crawled in from the awning.” Ashton grins.

“I’ve had something delivered to Niall’s room. Can you bring it here to me?” Harry requests.

“Of course, Your Majesty.” Ashton nods, dropping down from the tree. “Niall, I just wanted to be sure you were okay. Luke is healed, and I wanted to check up on you.”

“Or were you just doing your job?” Niall asks icily.

“Mate, you’re going to have to trust that I just want what’s best for you.” Ashton says quietly. “You need a friend here.”

“I don’t want a friend. I want to wake up from this fucking nightmare!” Niall growls. “I want to go back to two days ago, before all this crazy shit happened to me and just live my life!”

“Well you can’t.” Ashton tells him. “Like it or not, you’re here, and you’re not going anywhere. Make the best of it. Feel whatever you need to feel, and then let it go. Being angry forever isn’t
going to help anything, you know? It’s really not going to help you control your powers.”

“Just go.” Niall huffs, curling his knees against his chest defensively. Ashton nods and disappears through the door that Harry had left open. “Why didn’t you just kill me?”

“Because I promised I wouldn’t.” Harry says gently.

“No, before that.” Niall sighs. “Why didn’t you just have me killed so that the Master couldn’t get his hands on me? Why bring me here at all?”

“I was going to use you.” Harry admits. “I was going to bait the Master with you, and then kill him when he came for you.”

“And now?” Niall asks.

“Now I don’t know what will happen.” Harry says quietly. “That depends on what you want.”

“I wanted you to turn me.” Niall mutters. “You refused.”

“You’re half out of your mind right now. There’s the scents of a hundred different emotions flowing out of you, and they have been since you woke up.” Harry argues. “Once your head clears a bit, then you can make a more informed decision. Having me attempt to turn you is the same thing as suicide. I thought you would want to think about it a bit more before you just decided to die.”

“Why offer it as a choice then?” Niall asks angrily. “Why even tell me that it was an option if you don’t think it’ll work?”

“Wishful thinking.” Harry tells him. “Ideally I could just turn you and everything would be okay. You could integrate into our society and be one of us. You could find a mate and have a somewhat happy life. But my wishes for you aside, the option is flimsy at best.”

“I hate this.” Niall whispers. “I’m King-fucking-Midas now, and I only have three options. Stay this way, suffer for the rest of my unnaturally long life, or choose to die.”

“I wish that it didn’t have to happen too.” Harry tells him. “I wish that there was something I could do to ease this for you.”

“And do the wishes of a king matter more than the ones of the people around him?” Niall asks. “Or is wishing just wishing, even for a king?”

“It’s just wishing.” Harry says quietly.

“Your Majesty.” Luke says softly, walking into the courtyard with the gift that Harry had had the witch procure with his lycan guards. “Ash thought it would be best if I brought this, to show Niall that I’ve healed.”

“Are you really okay?” Niall asks from behind his knees.

“Yeah Niall, I really am.” Luke tells him, putting on a bright smile and crouching down next to the fae. “And you are going to have to show me what to do with this some time. I’ve always wanted to know how to do it since the first time I went to the surface.”

“Is that-” Niall gasps, peeking his eyes out. “Is that a guitar?”

“The King had one procured for you.” Luke beams.
“Why?” Niall asks quietly.

“Because you said that you’d miss music the most.” Harry smiles. “The witch is also a musician on the surface, and he helped my people pick one out for you. Is it okay?”

“It’s amazing!” Niall laughs, but he doesn’t take it from Luke. He makes no move at all to acknowledge that he wants it. “But I can’t play it. Not right now.”


“Look.” Niall sighs, running the tip of his finger along a stone, leaving a trail of gold in its wake. “Ever since the match, it hasn’t stopped. I can stop it from spreading out on command, but I can’t get it to not happen. I don’t want to ruin it.”

“Luke?” Harry says, holding out his hands for the instrument. “Can you leave us alone for a bit?”

“Your Majesty.” Luke nods, placing the guitar in Harry’s hands and loping out of the courtyard.

“Tell me how to play it.” Harry says softly. “Then at least you can hear some music.”

“I’m no teacher.” Niall mutters. “I wouldn’t even know where to start.”

“Then will you sing for me?” Harry asks.

“No.” Niall huffs.

“Why not?” Harry pouts.

“Because, Harry, I’m just not- Singing is something I did because I was happy.” Niall whispers. “I loved it. How can I love it again? How can I be happy again? I’m a prisoner, and for the first time in my life, I feel like a freak. A monster.”

“A monster has no heart, Niall. You have a heart.” Harry says gently. “When you beat Luke, the first thing you did was worry that you’d hurt him, even though you knew that lycans heal. That tells me that you’re not a monster.”

“I turn shit to gold with my body, Harry!” Niall groans. “What- What if it’s not something your kind is immune to? What if I just touch someone and they turn into gold?”

“I want you to try something.” Harry tells him.

“I’m not touching you.” Niall growls.

“Not me. Liam would never stop lecturing me about taking that kind of risk, though I don’t think it’s a risk.” Harry laughs. “Turn around and touch the tree.”

“But I’ll kill it.” Niall whimpers. “Harry, I don’t want to kill it.”

“Please just trust me, Niall.” Harry pleads.

“I’m turning your dinner to gold for a week if I kill this tree.” Niall grunts, placing his palm against the trunk of the tree. Nothing happens, which Harry expected. Niall seems to flood with relief, but Harry isn’t done yet.

“Now try. Try and change it into gold. Will your power to work. Tell it to turn the tree into gold.” Harry orders.
“But-” Niall stammers.

“Just do it.” Harry says adamantly.

“Fuck you.” Niall growls, turning his eyes back to his hand and closing them. Once again, nothing happens. Seconds tick by until it turns into a full minute. The tree is still just a tree.

“Now look at it.” Harry grins.

“Why- Why didn’t it work?” Niall asks, pulling his hand away and staring at it.

“I don’t think that you can affect living things with your ability.” Harry smiles, plucking a leaf from a low hanging branch. “Now try it on this.”

Niall nods, grasping the piece of greenery between his fingers. Gold fingers spread in spider-webs over the surface until the entire leaf is one solid piece of gold. “Ha! Gold leaf!” he giggles, spinning it by the stem in his hands.

“If you can’t turn a tree to gold, then you can’t turn one of us to gold either.” Harry beams. “That’s one less thing that you need to worry about.”

“Good.” Niall sighs in relief, reaching out and grabbing Harry’s hand. “Thank you. I don’t- I was so scared that I’d hurt someone.”

“You still could, but not like that. It’s your strength that worries me most.” Harry admits. “Lycans have a natural instinct for controlling it. You don’t seem to though. That’s why I have to insist on the training.”

“I just don’t want to fight.” Niall murmurs.

“You’ll have to, a little, but from now on you’ll only face me.” Harry assures him. “I’m strong enough to handle it.”

“You’re the one I want to hurt the least.” Niall huffs. “At least if I’m sparring with Liam, I won’t be hurting someone who’s been kind to me.”

“I can’t let you put my Chevalier out of action.” Harry chuckles. “He had to pull energy from me just to recover after you hit him the last time.”

“Pull energy from you?” Niall asks.

“Our bond allows me to relinquish some of my power reserves to him. Even my body can’t handle all of my power at once, so it suppresses my energy for use during emergencies. Liam, as my Chevalier and bonded partner, can draw on the power-well, which allows him higher levels of strength and faster healing.” Harry explains.

“Are you really that strong?” Niall asks. “Could you stop me if I went berserk or something?”

“Easily.” Harry nods, though he’s not sure that it’s true. Niall has power rolling off of him in waves when he gets upset. Harry might have to draw on his reserves, himself, if Niall completely lost control.

“Don’t be arrogant.” Niall huffs, tossing the gold leaf into Harry’s forehead. The grip that Niall has on his hand is the only thing that keeps him upright. “Shite! Sorry!”

“You’ve got to get a grip on your temper.” Harry sighs, rubbing his forehead. “And stop hitting
me. I can only make so many excuses for you with my King’s Guard.”

“I can beat your King’s Guard.” Niall smirks.

“Don’t be arrogant.” Harry mocks, trying his best to imitate Niall’s accent.

“You’re an idiot.” Niall cackles, falling onto his back and kicking his legs in the air as he laughs. Suddenly all motion stops and he grits out “Fuck!”

“What?” Harry asks, eyeing him curiously.

“I think I accidentally just turned the back of my shirt to gold.” Niall sighs.

“You don’t have to stay.” Niall mumbles shyly. “I’m sure you have things to do. Kingly shite and all that.”

“I don’t want you to feel alone right now.” Harry smiles.

“How can I feel alone with the Wonder-Twins hanging around?” Niall scoffs, directing the words at the door that he’s sure that Ashton and Luke are hovering near.

“Twins don’t do the things we do with each other!” Ashton laughs.

“Seriously, do I even need guards anymore?” Niall asks. “I don’t know how to use the portal, or even where it is, and I can’t hurt myself anymore. Do they have to stick around?”

“Yes.” Harry nods. “They’re here for more than that, Niall. Ashton is your link to our world. And he’s here to do anything else that you might need.”

“I don’t want a servant.” Niall grumbles. “I know how to do things for myself.”

“Really?” Harry smirks. “Do you know where the kitchens are to request bath water? Do you know where to go to get new clothes made for yourself? Do you know how the financial system works in Final Bastion? What about how to navigate the city?”

“No, but-” Niall starts.

“No buts, Niall.” Harry says adamantly. “You need a lycan around to help you until you can understand Final Bastion. As preferable as I would find it, I can’t spend all my time with you to teach you how things work here. I’ll make as much time as I can in my schedule for you, however you will need Ashton, and even Luke, to help you adjust to this place. You couldn’t have picked a better match for yourself than Ashton. His heart is the same as yours, kind and gentle, and he knows more about the modern surface world than most lycans do. He has a fascination with it.”

“I beat his mate to a pulp an hour ago!” Niall huffs. “I hardly think that he wants to be around me anymore.”

“Of course I do!” Ashton calls through the door. “I told Lukey that you’re stronger than he is, and he doubted me. He deserved to lose.”

“And you may have won, but you hardly beat me to a pulp!” Luke replies indignantly.

“If something happened, could they stop me?” Niall asks Harry quietly.
“Why are you so afraid that you’ll completely lose control?” Harry asks back.

“Because- When I was fighting, my body just did what it wanted. I had very little say in what happened.” Niall admits, thinking back to the way his body had felt like it was trapping him inside itself, forcing him to watch as he attacked Luke without mercy. It was one of the most terrifying experiences of his life. “I’m scared that it’ll happen again.”

“Your body was protecting itself instinctively.” Harry says gently. “That’s why I want you to have some combat training, so that your mind knows what to do.”

“But I’m going to have to fight you to learn it?” Niall asks. “How is that going to help? What if my body just fights back harder because you’re stronger?”

“That’s a risk I’m willing to take.” Harry shrugs.

“What about the shackles?” Niall gulps. “Is there a less extreme version of that?”

“I could try, but, Niall, I don’t think you understand the kind of pain you would be in.” Harry sighs. “Your body is weak to it now. It’s like poison for you. It won’t kill you, but it will feel like your body is being burned by the hottest fires of Hell.”

“Is there anything else?” Niall asks. “Any other vulnerability I should know about?”

“Um- Yes.” Harry says sheepishly. “It might be a bit strange though.”

“What is it?” Niall questions.

“If salt or sugar is spilled in front of you, then you will be compelled to count it until you have accounted for every grain.” Harry explains.

“I hate this.” Niall mutters. “I have the stupidest weaknesses.”

“There had to be some downside to your species, some reason that the fae didn’t rule the planet.” Harry shrugs. “They were the most powerful of all of the sentient species, and yet they went extinct. Something had to be a downfall for them.”

“Lycans don’t have a weakness.” Niall points out. “You’re actually kind of the perfect species. Your breeding capabilities are phenomenal, you live for hundreds of years, you’re immune to magic, and you have all these abilities. I can’t see any downfall for them, and yet there’s only a few thousand of you, and you’re hidden from the world.”

“Niall, have you seen a single piece of silver anywhere in Final Bastion?” Harry asks. “Let me answer for you. No, you haven’t. There’s not even a salt grain sized piece of silver in the entire city. That legend is true. Both vampires and lycans are weak to silver in the same way that you are to iron. Every species has a weakness. Humans just don’t make weaponry out of silver, so we’re harder to kill.”

“Well at least I know that you aren’t invincible.” Niall shrugs. “That’s refreshing.”

“I can’t figure out whether you truly despise me, or if you mildly like me.” Harry hums, looking at Niall curiously.

“Neither can I.” Niall admits. “It changes a lot. Sometimes I wish I would never have to see you again, and sometimes I- Well, I don’t mind having you around. Let’s leave it at that. You aren’t who I thought you were, and you’ve been helpful, but you’re still the one who wrecked my life and
I’m not really ready to forgive you for it yet. That said, at least I can’t hurt people down here. You’re immune to my powers, and the Master can’t get his hands on me to use as a weapon. I appreciate that, and I’m coming around. Just give me a little while. I’ve only been here for two days.”

“You can take all the time you need. If you want to hate me, or if you need to hate me, then that’s okay.” Harry says with a soft smile. “I can take it.”

“Nah, I’ll just hate Liam instead.” Niall giggles.

“I do wish you’d give him another chance. Really, he’s a kind person.” Harry sighs.

“He sucker-punched me.” Niall huffs. “He can suck a dick as far as I’m concerned.”

Harry snorts out a laugh at that, his face cracking into a huge smile. He leans against the wall and cackles, clutching his stomach. It really wasn’t that funny, so Niall is confused. Harry takes a full minute to regain his composure enough to say “Suck a dick. You say some very strange things, Niall.”

“Not really.” Niall replies. “Are you telling me that nobody has ever said that to you?”


“Wait, do lycans not have a concept of oral sex?” Niall asks.

“What is oral sex?” Harry asks, his face intensely curious.

“Oh good god.” Niall groans. “I thought that your kind was sexually open, and you’re telling me that you don’t have oral sex? Not even blow jobs?”

“We might.” Harry shrugs. “You’d have to explain it to me in order for me to tell you if it happens here.”

“I am not giving a King a lesson in oral sex!” Niall squawks, flushing a bright red.

“Honestly Niall, you’re absolutely ridiculous sometimes.” Harry sighs. “I’m not asking you to perform the act on me right here and now. I just want to know what it is.”

“It’s exactly what it sounds like.” Niall mumbles. “You use your mouth to pleasure each other.”

“That sounds like a waste of time.” Harry chuckles.

“It’s really not.” Niall tells him. “It’s- It’s spectacular.”

“It really is!” Ashton calls through the door.


“Will you two just get in here if you’re going to keep butting into the conversation?” Niall huffs.

“Finally!” Ashton giggles, throwing open the door and landing on top of Niall with a flying leap. “I thought you’d never ask!”

“Get off of me you great bloody oaf!” Niall grunts, wiggling out from under the mass of lycan muscle on top of him. “Wait, did you say that you’ve done oral before?”
“Yup.” Ashton nods. “I told you, the King is as old as balls. Lycans are a bit more straightforward when it comes to sex. Foreplay wasn’t so much a thing here until the last fifty years or so. Oral sex wasn’t as common the last time he got any.”


“I’m fifty two years old, Your Majesty.” Ashton huffs. “I’m hardly still a pup.”

“And I’m hardly ‘as old as balls’ as you so loyally put it.” Harry counters.

“I can be loyal and still think you’re old, Your Majesty.” Ashton smirks. “And as for oral sex—”

“Will you stop it?” Luke growls, picking Ashton up by the back of the neck. “That’s not appropriate in the slightest. Let Niall explain it if the King wants to know about it, but you keep your mouth shut.”


“Your Majesty, even you aren’t allowed to interfere in relationships. Please, take this with the respect which I have for you, but butt out. I’m not comfortable with Ashton discussing our mating, particularly with you.” Luke says, his voice calm and even, despite the defiance in his words.

“Of course.” Harry nods. “I’m sorry.”


“Of course.” Harry repeats. “Their relationship is their business. I have no right to do something that makes them unhappy as far as that. He’s allowed to voice his opinion. I’m not a dictator, Niall.”

“I just wasn’t expecting him to tell you to ‘butt out’, I guess.” Niall tells him.

“So, I guess you’ll have to be the one to explain it to me then.” Harry muses.

“No, you’ll just have to find some ‘pup’ to do it for you.” Niall mutters, crossing his legs to hide the erection growing in his trousers.

“You say that like you aren’t still a pup yourself.” Harry smirks.

“I was never a pup.” Niall huffs. “I was a baby. I wasn’t ever anything even resembling a canine. And up until yesterday, I was probably about a quarter of the way through my lifespan. I may be the youngest one out of myself, you, Liam, and those two, but I’m not a child.”

“Not a child, no, but you’re still young enough not to know better about most things.” Harry hums, taking a seat next to Niall on the bed.

“And yet you’re the one asking me to explain things to you.” Niall counters. “You’re older than I am by almost three centuries, and you don’t seem to know that much either.”

“You would be amazed by the things I know, Niall.” Harry smirks.

“Back at you, Fuzzy.” Niall growls. “Don’t get all high and mighty on me just because you’re older than me.”
“I would never.” Harry giggles.

“Go get something done besides annoying me.” Niall grumbles, crawling off the bed towards a desk laden with books that definitely weren’t there yesterday. “I need to learn about this whole fairy thing.”

“Don’t!” Harry yelps, rushing to wedge himself between Niall and the books. “Don’t.”

“Why not?” Niall groans. “You’re the one who wants me to learn about my magic.”

“These texts are rare and irreplaceable.” Harry says quickly. “Until you have your abilities under control you can’t risk destroying them. You need someone to read them to you.”


“Yes?” Luke asks, popping his head in the door.

“You know more about magic than Ashton, yeah?” Niall asks.


“Would you be willing to help me learn about my abilities?” Niall questions.

“If the King permits me the time.” Luke agrees.

“Fine, yes.” Harry sighs.

“Good. Now you can go.” Niall says curtly, pointing towards the door.

“Alright.” Harry says quietly, exiting the room and taking his superior bullshit with him.

“Why did you make him leave?” Ashton asks, pushing his way into the room without regard to Luke’s annoyed expression.

“Because I don’t enjoy being talked down to.” Niall mutters.

“He wasn’t talking down to you, he was f-” Ashton starts before Luke’s hand slaps over his mouth.


“I agree with your mate.” Niall adds.

“Ugh, you two are impossible!” Ashton groans, throwing his hands in the air and storming out dramatically.

“Now, let’s get started, shall we?” Luke asks with a gentle smile.

Four days later Niall has had as much as he can handle. He literally hasn’t been able to sleep for a second, though he’s also not felt the need to, because he’s so full of energy. His appetite is massive, and he’s being fed every three hours now. Luke says that his body will adjust over the course of a few days or weeks, releasing more energy until his body can find an equilibrium with his power. He’s gotten his Midas touch under control, able to even just leave it on the surface of something in patterns that he makes with his fingers or his mind if he’s particularly focused.
Everything in the set of chambers is covered in swirling sweeps of gold; the walls, the windows, the floors, everything. He’s even managed to turn the surface of some fabrics into gold without them losing their flexibility or texture. Not every experiment has been so successful. He set a pair of curtains on fire yesterday, and that had been the end of his magic lessons about the classical elements for the time being.

The worst thing by far though, is that with each passing hour he’s gotten hornier than he’s ever been. Everything is affecting him in ways that they never have before. Sights, tastes, smells, everything. He can’t be in the same room as Luke or Ashton for more than an hour without having to sneak off for a wank, though his mind always wanders straight to Harry rather than either of his roommates. It took two days for Ashton to let him know that they could smell his arousal, which was completely humiliating.

He hasn’t seen much of Harry since he kicked him out of his room, the King only appearing for their daily training sessions in which he barely speaks to Niall. That’s what they’re doing now, and Niall is letting out all of his frustration in a vicious punch aimed at the lycan’s face. Harry dodges out of the way in time, leaving Niall’s fist to connect with the wall. The stone crumbles under his fist, falling apart for five feet or so in every direction.

“Niall!” Liam growls. “You’re supposed to be controlling your strength.”

“That was controlling it!” Niall yells, walking over to another wall and shoving his fist through it. The hole left from the impact is at least three times the size of the last one, crumbling an entire section to the ground in a pile of rubble “How much longer is my body going to keep this up? How much stronger can I get?”

“This level isn’t permanent.” Harry tells him quietly. “You’ll drop back down to around where you were on the second day I think.”

“That’s still too strong.” Niall sighs. “Even pulling myself back, I can’t be trusted to not hurt someone. I’m stronger than you or anyone else here.”

“Then control yourself.” Harry grits out. “Stop getting upset, and deal with it.”

“You said you’d be able to stop me.” Niall whispers. “You said that you could keep me from hurting people.”

“I’m trying to help you, but you’re not doing enough, Niall.” Harry mutters. “Liam, we don’t have any other choice. Bring them out.”

“Sire.” Liam nods, disappearing into the room where they keep the training equipment.

“What now?” Niall groans.

“Now I’m going to force you to control yourself.” Harry smirks. “I’m going to put lives on the line.”

“Harry, don’t!” Niall hisses.

“You’ve left me no choice, Niall.” Harry shrugs. “You’re not trying hard enough.”

Liam carries out a covered cage and sets it on the ground. He pulls off the sheet and opens it up to pull out one of the doves nestled inside. It’s awake in his hand, struggling valiantly against the predator holding it out to its inevitable death. “Hold this, and try not to kill it.” Liam tells him. “If you release it then we’ll kill another in its place.”
“You’re sick fucks.” Niall growls, keeping his hands firmly at his side.

“Take it or I kill it now.” Liam sighs, tightening his grip just enough to make the bird squeal in pain.

“Kill it and I’ll put you through a wall.” Niall growls. “I’m not doing this you piece of-”

He doesn’t finish the sentence with a word, but instead a scream. He drops to his knees, writhing in pain that’s spreading out from the back of his neck like fire. “Don’t make me do this again, Niall.” Harry snarls. “I can keep this up all day. This is just a ring of iron that I’m touching to your skin. If you don’t learn to control yourself then we’ll have to shackle you in this.”

“Fine! I’ll do it!” Niall cries, relief flooding through him when the burning stops. “Jesus! You don’t have to fucking torture me!”

“You threatened my Chevalier. At this point you could easily kill him, so I had to take certain measures.” Harry replies. “I don’t want to do this, Niall, but you’ve left me no other options. You’re too powerful to let walk around anymore without knowing how to control yourself.”

“What the fuck happened to you?” Niall mutters, standing up on shaky legs. “I thought you weren’t cruel anymore.”

“I take no pleasure in this.” Harry says softly. “I didn’t realize that the pain would be so intense for you. Our reaction to silver isn’t quite so strong.”

“Fuck you.” Niall grits out, deeply considering setting Harry’s clothes on fire. He’s not risking that ring touching him again though. He does, however, let gold spiral out in the sand under him in a massive swirl that makes Harry yelp and jump backwards. Niall has learned a new aspect of his powers over the last few days of his own personal practice, and, to a degree, he can move the gold he creates with his mind. Sand is a particularly fun material for him to work with, as he can build with it, and compress it into a solid form. He pushes the sand on top of itself until it creates a wall between the two of them that Harry could easily step around.

It’s what it symbolizes, though, that matters. He’s letting them know that he’s doing everything he can to control his powers. He has more things going on than just his strength, which is only really a problem when he’s sparring. He can dress himself now, read his books, play his guitar, but when he’s in the ring, his strength spikes. When he’s around Harry, his strength spikes.

“Stop being petulant and take this.” Liam sighs, holding out the dove again. Niall lets Liam place it in his hands and closes his thumbs gently around the terrified bird. “Don’t let it escape, Niall. Hold it gently.”

“Stop talking.” Niall growls. The bird gives a shrill screech in his hands and then goes still. Niall takes in a shaky breath and whispers, “No. No, I can’t do this.”

“Another.” Harry says quietly.

“Go away!” Niall yells at him. “I don’t need you here right now, you fucking bastard!”

“Niall-” Harry starts, but Niall isn’t having it.

“I said go!” he shouts, wrapping Harry up with the wall of golden sand and hardening it into a shell.

“Niall, I can’t breathe.” Harry wheezes. “You’re crushing me.”
Niall releases the grip on the sand, letting it fall to the ground and break back down into sandy grains. “Please go.” he whispers. “I can’t do this with you here. I can’t look at you right now.”

“If that’s what you want.” Harry sighs, walking away with a glance at Liam, who’s been still and silent throughout the exchange.

“You need to give him some credit, Niall. He’s just trying to help you.” Liam says quietly.

“By making me kill innocent animals?” Niall asks angrily, cradling the broken body of the dove against his chest.

“He has more confidence in you than you know.” Liam tells him. “He admires everything that you’ve managed to accomplish in the short amount of time you’ve had. The development of your powers so far is nothing short of extraordinary, but he worries about you. This exercise is supposed to appeal to your heart, forcing your body to control itself in lieu of your inherent kindness. He hated it when I suggested it, but I made him agree to it because I’m your teacher, not him.”

“He still agreed to it.” Niall huffs.

“It took me two days to get that agreement-” Liam counters. “After three fights in which you nearly killed him. Personally, I would rather just shackle you and be done with it, but he refuses.”

“He just threatened to do it five minutes ago!” Niall hisses.

“You can’t smell it, but he was lying when he said he’d do it.” Liam sighs. “He doesn’t want to do anything to hurt you, Niall. Pressing that ring to your skin upset him more than your senses can detect.”

“It wasn’t exactly a picnic for me, you arse!” Niall groans, rubbing the spot on his neck that’s still tingling painfully.

“You’re too thick for your own good.” Liam mutters, reaching into the cage again and grabbing another sacrifice.

“He killed four before he managed to get ahold of his strength, but he eventually managed.” Liam reports, shuffling nervously. Harry has been a wreck lately, his scent changing so rapidly that Liam can’t keep up. He’s just grateful that they’ve changed the nature of the bond, because he’s not sure if he could handle it if the complexity of the emotions his King is feeling took over his body again.

Harry doesn’t respond verbally, can’t in the lupine form he’s chosen to sulk in, but his scent lets Liam know that he’s happy about that. He curls in on himself tighter, tucking his front leg over his nose and lets out a long sigh. “Would you like some company?” Liam asks.

Harry lets out a snuffling sound, shaking his head as best as he can without dislodging his leg. Liam smiles despite himself, and says, “Are you sure? It’s been a long time since I took my wolf form. I could use the stretch.”

Harry looks up at him with his one exposed eye and then rolls it. He pulls his paw off of his face and sits back, nodding his head. Liam starts to strip off his shirt, but is stopped when Ashton’s voice says, “I wouldn’t do that, Sir.”

He turns around to find Ashton and his charge walking through the door. “Ash, what are we doing here? I was looking for- Jesus!” Niall yelps, jumping back through the door. “What the fuck?”
“He wanted to see the King.” Ashton hums. “I didn’t realize that he was-”

Harry lets out a high whine, cutting Ashton off before he can finish his sentence. He looks at Harry curiously, who gives a minute shake of his head. “I didn’t know he wasn’t around. I came to ask if you knew where he is.” Ashton supplies.

“He’s busy.” Liam tells them, though Ashton obviously knows the truth. Niall is too focused on the wolf to take much notice of the conversation.

“It’s the size of a fucking horse! How the hell is that thing so big?” Niall asks. “That’s not a normal wolf, is it?”

“He is a lycan, if that’s what you’re asking.” Liam answers. “The King will get to you later if he finds the time. He’ll be in the city for a while preparing for the games that are taking place in your honor, Niall.”

“Are you going to fight in them?” Niall asks.

“The King and I are going to be in the Primus.” Liam nods. “We’ll close out the tournament with a match between the two of us. After your attendant and his mate have dominated the paired challenges, of course.”

“Okay.” Niall nods. “I hope you win this time. Harry deserves to lose to someone other than me.”

He walks back inside without another word, followed by Ashton who pulls a sheepish face first. That could have gone better, and when Liam turns back he finds Harry burying his face under his paws and sighing loudly. “He’s just upset, Sire.” Liam says gently. “He’ll come around.”

Harry doesn’t respond, just lays there miserably, the scent of disappointment rolling off of him in waves. Of course Niall didn’t know that he was there, but that didn’t need to be said. He’s being spiteful, which Liam can understand, but he can’t possibly be completely ignorant of the King’s feelings for him, can he?

“Liam isn’t going to be happy about this.” Ashton giggles.

“I don’t care. This was cruel.” Niall huffs, carrying the birdcage out to the center of the courtyard. Apparently there’s a barrier that will stop the doves from escaping out of Final Bastion, the same one that allows them to see out to the sky even though they’re deep underground. At least they can be happy in the trees of the courtyard though. The ones that survived that is. Niall killed four of them before he could pull back enough of his power to keep them safe. He’s never felt worse in his life than he did during the exercise, but he did manage to get a grip on himself.

He opens the door to the cage, shaking it slightly until the birds understand that they’re free. “Are there even bugs here for them to eat?” Niall asks once they all escape to the trees. “I don’t think I’ve seen any since I got here.”

“There are.” Ashton nods. “Not many, but there should be enough to support these for a while. They aren’t common since the foliage is kept alive through magic more than scientific pollination. Sometimes they catch a ride through the portal though. And there’s always seeds and berries for the birds to eat too.”

“Okay, let’s go.” Niall mumbles, satisfied that the birds will be fine until Niall can find someone to sneak him extra bread to come out here and feed them. He grabs the cage and walks back through
the door that leads towards the throne room.

“What are you going to do with that?” Ashton asks, loping alongside Niall with the easy grin that seems to be a permanent fixture on his face.

“Leave a message.” Niall replies, stepping up to the throne that Harry uses for official business. He crushes the steel cage until it’s nothing more than a twisted ball of wire and drops it on the seat. He places his finger on the destroyed metal and smiles as it turns into gold. He doesn’t stop there though, letting his power continue to work its way out until the entire throne and cage are one solid mass of gold.

“You’re pushing your luck.” Ashton groans.

“I have all the luck in the world, Ash.” Niall smirks. “Don’t you know? Leprechauns are lucky down to our cores.”

“Whatever. I didn’t help you with this, alright?” Ashton huffs.

“Don’t worry. This was all me.” Niall laughs. “Let’s get back to the room. I want to work with water today. Less chance of me burning down the castle.”

“Harry!” Niall giggles when Harry gets to his chambers. Harry can smell the alcohol on Niall’s breath as soon as he steps in. Clearly Niall has taken advantage of Harry’s personal liquor storage. “Did you get my present?”

“I did, though I found it far less amusing than you seem to.” Harry mutters. “You wished to see me?”

“Kind of.” Niall shrugs, taking a gulp of his glass of whiskey. “I was going to tell you off for earlier, but I just decided to do the thing with your chair instead.”

“How are you doing?” Harry asks.

“Fine, not that you give a fuck.” Niall says bitterly, finishing off his drink and pouring another. “I did something pretty cool earlier. Luke was actually proud of me for once. He hasn’t been enjoying my magic lessons so much.”

“I’ve heard.” Harry chuckles. “What did you do?”

“I’d have to show it to you to explain it right.” Niall says, standing up and walking toward the bathroom. He stops at the door and turns to Harry. “You coming or what? It’s in here.”

“Sure.” Harry nods, following the blond. He sees what Niall was talking about immediately, a small floating orb of water over the tub. “What is it?”

“Infinite bath supply.” Niall grins, waving his hand over the orb. Water pours out of the bottom without reducing the orb in the slightest. It fills the tub halfway before Niall waves his hand again and puts a stop to the deluge. He sticks his hand in the water and it starts to bubble. “Now the servants don’t need to haul buckets of water up here. I’m the only one it’ll work properly for though. I can’t figure out how to do it with hot water, so it comes out cold unless I heat it. It’s no good for Ashton or Luke until I can. That didn’t stop Ash from playing with it all night though.”

“This is amazing, Niall!” Harry laughs, swirling his hand through the warm water. “You’re doing
so well at this.”

“That’s because Luke is willing to work with me for more than an hour a day.” Niall replies, pulling his hand out and stepping away from Harry before adding, “Unlike you.”

“Niall-” Harry sighs.

“Don’t. I don’t care. You can do whatever you want. You’re the King after all. I’m just an inconvenience to you, and I’ve accepted that.” Niall mutters. “I do want to know why you made them lie to me earlier though. I know you were the wolf that was with Liam.”

“How?” Harry asks curiously.

“I could feel you.” Niall says quietly. “I can always feel you. It’s like a warm feeling under my skin, letting me know when you’re around. I can tell when you watch me in the kitchens once the boys go to sleep and I cook to keep myself from going crazy. I feel it when you hide and listen to me play my guitar in the courtyard. And I felt it when you were sitting there as that huge bloody wolf, making them say that it wasn’t you.”

“Fascinating.” Harry hums. “Can you feel the others too?”


“I wonder why.” Harry says, taking a seat on the rim of the bathtub.

“Luke says it’s because of my connection to magic.” Niall shrugs. “You’re the most powerful thing around here besides me. I don’t really get that. Ash, on the other hand, says it’s like a bond, and that it’s probably affected by my relationships with each of you. I’m more inclined to agree with him, because I can’t feel the other people around here that I don’t know.”

“Then why would you feel me more than the other three?” Harry asks. “You’ve spent more time with Ashton and Luke than you have with me.”

“Don’t bother pretending that you don’t know why, Harry.” Niall mutters. “I know you can smell it and hear it, the way my body reacts whenever you’re around. You know what I feel for you, so don’t pretend like you don’t.”

“Niall-” Harry starts, seizing the opportunity.

“Go.” Niall says, cutting him off. “Just go the fuck away. I don’t have the patience to deal with this right now, and my filter is gone because I’ve had an entire bottle of your fucking whiskey.”

“Niall-” Harry tries again.

“I said go.” Niall growls, crushing the cup in his hand. It would have shattered, but Niall had apparently turned it into gold at some point during the conversation. “Don’t make me throw you out. I don’t want to deal with Luke bitching at me if I do it and hurt you in the process.”

“Fine.” Harry spits out, turning on his heel and walking out the door.

“Oh, and I won’t be coming to our matches anymore.” Niall calls after him. “I’ve got ahold of my strength now, so I don’t need any more training, and you don’t need any more broken bones.”

“I was holding back.” Harry mutters. “You may be stronger Niall, for now, but I could have won any of those fights. I chose not to because I didn’t want to hurt you.”
“Sure.” Niall scoffs. “And I’m the Queen of England.”

“Niall, I never shifted against you.” Harry points out. “Not even a little bit.”

“You could transform one hundred times over. You still aren’t good enough to beat me.” Niall smirks.

“You’re overconfident.” Harry grits out.

“Care to prove it?” Niall asks. “You’ll even have the advantage of sobriety, not that it’ll last long. This stuff only affects me if I keep drinking it continuously.”

“Get outside.” Harry tells him. “I’ll show you that I’m still more than enough to put you down.”

“I’ll meet you down there.” Niall grins, opening the door to the balcony in the chambers. “Don’t keep me waiting.”

He takes a running start and jumps off the balcony before Harry can catch him. He’s furious at Niall right now, but he doesn’t want him dead. Niall is having no problems though, plummeting towards the sparring ring feet first, and landing so hard it creates a crater in the sand. He stands up and waves up at Harry. Fuck. This isn’t going to end well at all.

“I thought you were going to prove me wrong.” Niall smirks, looking down on Harry’s bruised body. “Go ahead and shift if you need to. You’re no challenge like this.”

“I didn’t expect the sand.” Harry growls.

“Oh, but Harry, I have so much more than just strength.” Niall hums. “Did you think I was going to hold back just because I want you? Or did you forget that you made me kill things today? I’m just returning the cruelty you forced on me.”

“I never wanted you to have to do that.” Harry says quietly.

“You tortured me!” Niall growls. “You burned me with that ring because I hadn’t managed to completely contain my power in just a few days, even though it’s been getting stronger every day! You put blood on my hands! You left me alone when I needed someone to help me! I get that I don’t matter to you, but you shouldn’t have made me believe that I had someone I could trust!”

“Of course you matter to me!” Harry snarls. “I’ve left you alone because I can’t be around you without losing my mind with how much I care about you! All you have to do is ask any lycan. The whole castle reeks with it. Everyone in the city can probably tell how much I want you.”

“Bullshit.” Niall scoffs, raising his hand to form a barrier of golden sand. “Now get up and fight me, or I’ll wrap you up in gold and bury you up to your neck in it. It’ll take them days to cut you out, and you’ll miss your tournament.”

“I’m not lying.” Harry grits out, leaping off the ground and lashing out at Niall with a now-clawed hand. Niall dodges it easily, his speed far outdoing Harry’s. He sighs and catches Harry by the back of the neck before he can land, spins around, and throws him. The lycan catches himself on the wall, bouncing back off of it. His speed is kicking up, and the feral look in his eyes tells Niall that he’s not done yet. He must be drawing on his reserves to be healing this fast, but Niall doesn’t care. Harry has left him next to broken, and he wants to repay the favor.
He raises his hand, crooking his finger in challenge, but Harry doesn’t take the bait. He stays a safe
distance back, outside of Niall’s sphere of influence over the golden sand. Niall hadn’t expected
Harry to notice that. Maybe he does have a chance if he can figure something like that out on the
fly. Good. If there’s one thing he needs it’s for Harry to win this fight. He needs to know someone
can stop him if he gives in to all the rage inside of him now. He wants to deal a few more good
blows, but Niall still wants Harry to win this when he goes all out.

Niall smiles when Harry starts the shift. His clothes shred themselves when he grows, his body
covering itself in long, dark fur the same color as his hair. Niall isn’t afraid of the lycan form
anymore, having beaten Ashton, Luke, and Liam all at once while shifted. Harry had lost within
minutes during their third training session, and Liam insisted on carrying on with the training. He
knows this form is stronger and faster, but not by enough to make a difference when he’s this
strong. Not unless it’s got Harry’s extra power behind it. Maybe not even then.

Harry rushes forward, leaping over the wall Niall creates between them with ease. He dives
straight towards Niall, catching the blond off guard and slashing into his shoulder. Niall stumbles
back, blood dripping down his arm for a moment before the wound heals itself. His regeneration
is stronger than lycans, but not fast enough to help him recover in time. Harry grabs him, throwing
him into the wall and giving chase before he can even make impact. He manages to let out some
of his power and manipulate it, but not before Harry makes it to him.

He grabs Niall by the throat, pinning him against the wall with more strength than Niall even knew
he had. Before he can react, Harry shifts back, sliding his hand up to Niall’s cheek and pulling him
into a smoldering kiss. Surprised is an understatement for what Niall is feeling, but he wastes no
time tangling his fingers into Harry’s hair to keep him locked in place.

Harry is every bit the alpha, slipping his hands under Niall’s ass and lifting him up until the blond
wraps his legs around the lycan’s hips. The press of the cold stone against his back is an interesting
contrast to Harry’s warmth, making the lycan’s natural heat all the more evident. Also evident is
Harry’s hard cock, grinding against Niall’s own through his trousers in a way that leaves him
panting for more.

“Please don’t be fucking with me right now.” Niall whimpers when Harry breaks the kiss.

“Niall, you can’t want me.” Harry says quietly.

“I do though.” Niall insists.

“Everyone I’ve ever cared for has died horribly.” Harry tells him. “I’m cursed.”

“And I’m lucky.” Niall replies, combing his fingers through Harry’s hair. “We’ll balance each
other out. Besides, I’m next to invincible now.”

“If I beat you, then the Master could too.” Harry whispers.

“Harry, look behind you.” Niall grins. Harry turns his head to the side and chuckles at the pointed
spears of compressed golden sand that Niall has gathered behind him. “You didn’t win. I did. Give
me some credit here. If you hadn’t kissed me you’d be shishkebabbed.”

“That can’t be a real word.” Harry scoffs.

“I have so many things to teach you.” Niall laughs. “But right now there’s one in particular that I
have in mind.”

“Not out here.” Harry tells him. “My room.”
“You’re lucky that I like you enough for this.” Niall huffs, dropping his legs from around Harry’s waist and landing lightly on his feet. “Brace yourself.”

“Why?” Harry asks. Niall doesn’t bother responding out loud, choosing instead to focus on what he’s doing. Gold spreads out quickly under their feet, solidifying into one perfect circle that goes into the ground about four inches. He grabs Harry’s hand with his own, and then uses the other to twist and lift the disc. They hover about a foot off of the ground and Harry gasps. “What- How- Are you really this powerful?”

“More.” Niall smirks. “Now, which balcony is yours?”

“That one.” Harry gulps, pointing up and to the left.

“Hold onto me. If we fall, then I can take the impact better than you can. I haven’t actually tried this before.” Niall admits. Harry scoffs, but grips onto him anyways. Niall has to focus on keeping the disc level and lifting it at the same time, which proves harder than he thought it would. They make it to the balcony without any issue though, and Niall counts himself lucky for it.

“I’ve underestimated you.” Harry murmurs once Niall lays the disc down on the ground. “You have far more control over your abilities than I ever imagined.”

“Shut up and fuck me before I think too much again about what you did to me this afternoon, and throw you off of here.” Niall grunts, tugging Harry towards the bed.

“I thought you wanted to teach me something.” Harry smirks.

“Oh yeah.” Niall grins, pushing a hand to Harry’s chest and sending him flying back onto the bed. “Sit, boy.”

Harry rolls his eyes, but doesn’t balk at the joke. Niall takes that as a win. He unbuttons his trousers, his shirt long forgotten in the sparring ring, and lets them fall to the floor before stalking over to the bed. Before he starts, he gives Harry one last chance to back out. It might kill Niall if Harry takes it, but it’s only fair. “Are you sure you want this?” he asks.

“More than you can even imagine Niall.” Harry says gently. “Are you?”

“Harry, I just levitated a literal tonne of gold, plus us on top of it, thirty meters into the air just so we wouldn’t have to take the time to walk up here.” Niall chuckles. “If you can’t tell how badly I want this, then you need to have your nose checked.”

“My nose can’t discern exactly who you want, Niall. All it can tell me is that you want sex. Not that it’s me in particular that you want it with.” Harry explains. “I want to make it very clear that I have feelings for you. If all you want is a good time, that’s fine, but it can’t be with me. I care about you too much for that.”

“You’re the one I want.” Niall tells him. “I don’t know what it says about me that I feel this way about you, and I don’t really want to examine it right now, but I care about you too Harry.”

“Then I suppose that we’re ready.” Harry grins.

“Actually, I have a question first.” Niall laughs. “Do lycans only do it doggy style?”

“You’re an idiot.” Harry giggles.

“You won’t be saying that in a minute.” Niall smirks, dropping down to his knees between Harry’s
legs. He’s not ashamed to admit that his mouth waters a bit when he finally takes a look at Harry’s cock. It’s fucking gorgeous, long and straight with a sweet looking pink head peeking out from the foreskin. It’s thick enough to really feel it without being obnoxious. Overall it’s probably the prettiest prick Niall has seen in a very long time, if not ever.

“Oh!” Harry gasps when Niall fits his lips over the head, sucking a bit harder than he normally would at first, because he wants to make an impression. He dips his tongue into the foreskin, swirling it around the head and taking no small amount of pride in the way that Harry moans and writhes from it. He supposes that some of it has to do with the fact that Harry hasn’t had sex in so long that he can’t possibly remember what it’s like, but he’d also like to think that he, himself, is at least some of what’s making it good for Harry.

He keeps his hands firmly planted on Harry’s hips, trapping them in place because if they rut up too hard Niall could end up with a concussion or worse. He doesn’t fancy having to rebuild his throat, or testing if regeneration can repair a severed spine. That would take all of the fun out of this.

He focuses on the head for several minutes, pulling moans and whines out of Harry until he’s sure that the lycan thinks this is all there can be to the act. Once he’s content with his work he takes a deep breath, and then takes Harry as far into his mouth as he can without choking on it. That earns him a deeply-satisfying, rumbling growl from the back of Harry’s throat. Harry’s fingers wind their way into Niall’s hair, his nails scratching along the blond’s scalp and digging a desperate whimper out of Niall’s throat. “Did I hurt you?” he asks worriedly.

Niall shakes his head without letting Harry’s prick dislodge from his mouth. He does however push his head back into Harry’s hands until the Lycan finally gets the idea and does it again. Niall has always been a bit of a masochist, taking a perverse pleasure in a light amount of pain. He likes staying tight when he’s fucked, or having his lover leave scratches on his back that he feels for days, and letting them leave bite-marks that cover his skin. The problem with regeneration, in this regard, is that he feels less pain than usual and it’s taking more to satisfy him.

He pulls away, letting his hand stroke slowly in place of his mouth, and says “Use your claws.”

“What?” Harry asks. “Niall-”

“Harry, it’s okay. I want this. I don’t want you holding back with me. I may not be a lycan, but I’m capable of taking everything they can and more. I know it can get a bit rough when a lycan is involved. I live with Ash and Luke after all.” Niall tells him. “And I like the pain.”

“Will you let me know if it’s too much?” Harry asks.

“Yeah.” Niall nods. He feels Harry’s hands shift on the back of his head, growing larger with wicked claws that curl into Niall’s scalp. He gasps and breathes out, “Fuck that’s good.”

He dips his head back down and takes Harry all the way to the back of his throat, keeping his hand wrapped around the rest of the length that he can’t swallow down. He works them in tandem, pumping and sucking in the most concentrated blowjob he’s ever given. He’s using every technique and skill he’s ever learned for this, putting everything he has into the effort because he feels a physical need for Harry to want this to happen again.

Harry’s claws rake over the back of his neck, and it hurts so good. He moans his approval around Harry’s cock, working his tongue over the head in reward. Harry seems to have excellent control, so Niall lets his other hand wander away from Harry’s hip to explore the muscled torso and chest. For as much as Harry has touched Niall, the blond has barely gotten to feel him with anything other
than knuckles. Harry’s breath hitches when Niall’s finger skims over his nipple, so he files that information away for later.

“I want to try.” Harry groans. “Can I try?”

Niall pulls off with a pop that echoes throughout the grandiose room and smirks. “Like I’d turn down a chance to feel those lips.” he chuckles.

Harry grins and grips his hands under Niall’s armpits, flipping them so that Niall is pinned on his back between the lycan’s thighs. He buries his face in Niall’s neck, kissing and licking and biting until Niall feels like he could die happy from just this spectacular mix of sensations. Then Harry’s claws rake down Niall’s sides, and the moan he lets out probably wakes the entire castle. Harry does his best to muffle it with a bruising kiss against Niall’s lips, but he can only really do so much until the sound stops echoing off the walls. “Do you want one of my guards to interrupt this?” Harry mumbles against Niall’s lips. “Because if you keep doing that, then they will.”

“I can be a bit loud.” Niall says sheepishly. “And I wasn’t expecting that. It won’t happen again.”

“I don’t mind if it does, but you might when Liam comes through that door and catches us in the middle of things.” Harry smirks. “I know that you’re a bit shy.”

“Modest, not shy. But yeah, that might ruin things a bit.” Niall giggles.

“Are you going to be able to keep quiet once I start sucking you?” Harry asks.

“I might have to bite through my knuckles if you’re any good, but I’ll do my best.” Niall tells him.

“Don’t hurt yourself.” Harry says gently, looking into Niall’s eyes with a softness that the blond isn’t really prepared for. He feels the blush rise on his cheeks, a flaming red that he’d be embarrassed by in any other situation. Harry makes it okay though. He presses a soft, careful kiss against Niall’s lips and repeats, “Please, don’t hurt yourself.”

“I won’t.” Niall breathes out. “It’s just- It’s a surface expression.”

“Oh.” Harry giggles, a lopsided grin taking shape on his face that doesn’t quite fit any of the labels Niall has assigned to him, especially over the last few days, yet seems perfectly natural.

“Before you start, just uh- just make sure to keep your teeth covered, yeah?” Niall requests. “That’s not the good kind of pain.”

“Teeth covered, got it.” Harry nods, scooting down Niall’s body. The blond is shivering in anticipation by the time Harry’s breath ghosts over his prick. The first press of his lips is soft, tender in a way that’s nearly startling. Niall can’t find it in him to be surprised by much anymore though, not after the last week. Not after all the shit that’s happened to him.

So he also isn’t surprised when Harry’s lips wrap around him without any more teasing, jumping straight to the point. Ashton had said that Lycans are straightforward when it comes to sex, and Niall can now tell that it’s particularly true in Harry’s case. He sucks hard, hollowing out his cheeks and taking Niall to the back of his throat before the blond can even process that anything is happening. “Fucking Christ fuck!” he gasps out, tangling his fingers in Harry’s wild mane, shaken loose by their sparring match and new activities. Harry looks up at him curiously, and Niall tells him, “A bit slower please. I’d really like for you to fuck me, and I’m not sure how the whole fae thing affects my refractory period yet.”

Harry nods slightly, the muscles of his throat flexing around the head of Niall’s cock as he does,
and it dislodges whatever part of Niall was holding back his orgasm, despite his wishes. He cums so hard he sees stars, barely registering the pleased little noises Harry is making while he swallows down the load.

“Fucking told you I didn’t want to cum yet.” Niall slurs out once his body slumps back down onto the bed.

“I didn’t really do much.” Harry hums. “I think you might just be a bit sensitive.”

“You have no idea.” Niall mumbles. “Didn’t realize that the whole ‘life chakra’ thing was so literal. Been wanking fucking constantly lately.”

“Believe me, I’m aware.” Harry chuckles. Niall looks at him curiously, letting out a groan when Harry taps the side of his nose with a finger.

“You can smell it?” Niall sighs.

“It’s a very distinctive scent.” Harry grins, crawling up and lying next to Niall on the bed. “Liam has, on more than one occasion, had to physically remove me from the immediate area when you do that. I’ve spent a lot more time in the city recently than I have in a long time because I have to be placed far away to get away from the scent.”

“I thought it was just arousal that you guys could smell.” Niall mutters.

“You release a certain flood of hormones that’s very particular.” Harry shrugs. “I’m not sure if everyone can tell the difference, but not everyone keeps such close tabs on you as I do.”


“Yeah, they can probably tell.” Harry nods. “But I doubt they mind. As I’ve explained, sexuality is just more open in Final Bastion than on the surface. I’m actually surprised they haven’t offered to have you join them at some point. You wouldn’t be the first for them.”

“Oh really?” Niall hums out thoughtfully, though his body is far too sated at the moment to actually contemplate a threesome with both of his roommates. Harry’s eyes narrow dangerously, but Niall just snorts. “Relax, Fuzzy. They’re hot, but I’m not getting in between a mated pair. Besides, they probably haven’t asked me because everybody except you seems to be able to tell exactly who I’m attracted to. That, and your whole scenting me thing on my first day. Hadn’t realized that was so significant until Ash was explaining something to me the other day.”

“I didn’t scent you.” Harry huffs. “Not- Not exactly. The Beast wanted to, and it did its best to leak out, but I managed to reign it in. Scenting mingles a pair’s hormones until they’re indistinguishable, but Niall just snorts. “Relax, Fuzzy. They’re hot, but I’m not getting in between a mated pair. Besides, they probably haven’t asked me because everybody except you seems to be able to tell exactly who I’m attracted to. That, and your whole scenting me thing on my first day. Hadn’t realized that was so significant until Ash was explaining something to me the other day.”

“I didn’t scent you.” Harry huffs. “Not- Not exactly. The Beast wanted to, and it did its best to leak out, but I managed to reign it in. Scenting mingles a pair’s hormones until they’re indistinguishable, but it’s still both of them. You just kind of- I don’t know how to explain it. Your body had certain defenses as a sleeping-fae. I think it absorbed my scent as a mechanism to try and keep you safe. Kind of like how your body got stronger and denser when you fought Liam the first time, or how the longer I was around you, the more my mood eased.”

“Wait, are you saying that my powers are what got you to stop being a dick?” Niall asks, sitting up and scooting away from the lycan.

“I think it’s a possibility.” Harry admits, reaching towards Niall with one hand.

“Don’t touch me.” Niall scowls, smacking Harry’s hand away harshly. “Fuck!”

“What?” Harry asks, sitting up to mirror Niall’s position.
“You don’t fucking like me.” Niall mutters, climbing out of the bed quickly to pull on his trousers. “I just- I changed you to save myself. My powers manipulated you into this. Fuck, I basically just raped you without even knowing it!”

“Niall, it’s not like you’re thinking.” Harry says quietly, grabbing onto the blond’s wrist in a flash. “You didn’t control my mind or anything. Leprechauns don’t have that kind of power.”

“We manipulate probability.” Niall reminds him. “I don’t even mean to do it, but it happens. Ashton absolutely refuses to play games with me anymore because I literally always win. I get whatever I want as long as it’s possible. This is nothing more than that.”

“It’s not.” Harry murmurs, keeping his grip as tight as a vice even though Niall hasn’t been able to bring himself to struggle against it. “That’s magic Niall. I’m immune to magic. Things like the omelet, or winning a game, that’s different. Even a leprechaun can’t change the way someone thinks or feels.”

“You literally just said that I-” Niall starts.

“I said that your unconscious powers may, may, have managed to cut through the fog of anger and depression that I’ve been in since my best friend died. I didn’t say that it attracted me to you.” Harry says adamantly. “I’ve thought you were beautiful since the first dossier came into my hands. And then I met you, and it just got more intense from there. Not because of your powers, but because you are so unashamedly yourself, even if you’re still figuring out who that is.

“It’s been a long time since I was around anyone who had no reservations about acting however they want to act around me, who wasn’t obedient and placating. The only ones are Zayn, who was my former mate, Louis, Liam, and my mother. Everyone else always hides pieces of themselves away, terrified to let any weakness show in front of their king. Part of me admires them for the strength that must take, but most of me just wishes someone would let me in again. Even Liam has closed himself off to me with this new bond, though that’s mostly because our emotions should no longer be allowed to mingle as they did before. It was detrimental to his health.”

“How can you be sure it isn’t my powers?” Niall asks. “Or that I’m not just feeling this way about you because of some incredibly fucked up version of Stockholm syndrome?”

“Is that what you think?” Harry asks him.

“It makes sense, doesn’t it?” Niall asks back. “I shouldn’t have feelings for you. I still haven’t even forgiven you for destroying my life, even though I know now that it was for the best. I would have skewered you down there without a second thought if you hadn’t kissed me, and yet- Every part of me trusts you. I don’t know why, and I hate it sometimes, but I trust you.”

“I’d never hurt you on purpose.” Harry whispers.

“You literally tortured me and forced me to kill innocent creatures not twelve hours ago.” Niall grits out. “And still- Still- I don’t hate you for it. I want to, because I’m furious about it, but I just can’t. Something is stopping me from hating you like I should.”

“Maybe it’s your own version of the Beast.” Harry says softly. “Maybe it knows to trust me, even if you don’t know why.”

“I don’t want that!” Niall snaps. “I want to hate you! I want to hate all of you for this stupid bullshit you’re all putting me through! But I fucking can’t, because you probably saved my life along with all of your people’s lives! Even if you took everything from me, my home, and my friends, and my
family, and my music, I just can’t hate you.”

Niall is shaking by the end of it, his whole body numb from the confession. He’s not like this. He doesn’t get attached to people, especially not men. He’s had a few short relationships, pushing just past the realm of flings, but he stops once feelings start to take over. He always stops. He doesn’t want to stop with Harry though. Every cell in his body is crying out for the lycan whose firm grasp has turned gentle against his skin. Harry is some twisted nightmare given form, a literal monster, but so is Niall now. Apparently he always has been too.

So he shoves Harry back onto the bed, ripping his trousers back off and ignoring the pang of guilt he feels for ruining the tailor’s hard work when they flutter down in shreds against the floor. He flies forward, crashing their lips together and rutting against Harry until he feels the brunet start to get hard again. Once the lycan’s cock is twitching, hard and persistent against Niall’s thigh, he takes action.

Under no circumstances would he have done this before his transformation. He enjoys pain, but not like this. He knows it’s disgusting, that the slick feeling that makes the slide easier is his own blood from where he’s stretched to the limit on Harry’s dry cock, but that pain isn’t pain. It’s extraordinary pleasure. Harry doesn’t protest, his grip on Niall’s neck unrelenting as their mouths work against each other harshly.

His body is healed before he even bottoms out on top of Harry, immediately adjusting to the fullness with a lenience his human form never would have permitted. He rocks his hips experimentally, swallowing the groan Harry lets out as he checks his readiness. When his body doesn’t cry out against it, he takes it as permission and starts up in earnest.

He raises himself up, placing his palms down on Harry’s chest while he rolls back, hips rising and sinking back down like it’s the only thing left to live for. At the moment, that doesn’t feel too far off from the truth. He’d expected Harry to fight him on this, to be more dominating, as is befitting of his usual behavior, but he seems perfectly content to just let Niall ride him.

So Niall takes the opportunity, pushing down harder and harder, using his new strength and speed to go at a pace he never could have dreamed of before. For the first time in years his knee isn’t screaming from the effort this takes. In fact, Niall’s whole body is thrumming with pleasure, like every nerve ending has lit up just for this.

He doesn’t even need to get a hand on himself, not with the way his stomach is already starting to swoop with the feeling of another orgasm building up. He’s so full, so blissed out on Harry’s cock, that he doesn’t need anything extra to push him over the edge. He cums even harder than before, a primal roar of Harry’s name wrenching out of his lips as his body keeps moving out of pure instinct.

“Niall- Fuck!” Harry hisses. “My- My knot- Stop-”

“I can take it.” Niall whimpers, bouncing harder on Harry as he rides out what feels like an eternal high from his orgasm.

“No!” Harry growls, wrapping his hands around Niall’s waist and literally throwing him to the side. He rolls across the stone floor and crashes into the wall, feeling his shoulder shatter on impact.

Niall would be furious, but before he can snap, Harry screams. His whole body is stretched taught, pain etched in his features as stream after stream of cum erupts out of his engorged cock. The sound fades away, but Harry’s features are still twisted up in agony, nothing like what Niall
expected.

The door slams open to Niall’s side, nearly smashing into him as a blur rushes into the room. Liam stops halfway to the bed, turning to Niall with an unreadable expression. “What did you do?” he snarls.

“We- We were having sex, and then he said something about his knot and threw me.” Niall explains. “I- I don’t know what happened.”

“By the fucking Moon.” Liam grumbles. “Get him out of here, will you?”

“Yes, Sir.” says a familiar voice beside Niall. He hadn’t heard Luke approach, but he’s unsurprised. He lets himself be dragged to his feet, ignoring his usual modesty in favor of concern for Harry as he’s guided out and back to his own chambers.

Liam sighs as he approaches the bed, and, not for the first time, he wonders why he took the position of Chevalier. Harry is twisting around on the bed, whimpers of pain accompanying the cloying stench of sex in the air. There’s only one thing to do in this situation, and he’s not happy to be the one to have to do it. He isn’t letting Niall though. Not when the irresponsible little fae was the one who caused it.

He wraps his hand around the base of Harry’s knot, squeezing firmly as Harry slumps back onto the mattress with a sigh of relief. “You’re lucky that Louis isn’t here anymore. You realize that, right?” Liam asks sourly. “He’d never let you live this down.”

“I don’t know what happened.” Harry slurs out, rutting up into Liam’s hand as another wave shakes through his body and he drenches himself.

“You tried to knot him.” Liam growls.

“No I didn’t.” Harry shakes his head, whimpering as he works through the most recent orgasm. “I didn’t, I promise.”

“You realize that I am literally holding the evidence, right?” Liam scowls, clenching his fingers tighter to prove his point. Harry moans, rocking his hips forward as yet another stream paints over his now-soaked torso. Liam is seriously considering letting go, of letting Harry work through this on his own, but he remembers the times that this has happened to him and decides against it. Even as wicked as Louis could be, he never left Liam to deal with an unbound knot by himself, and Liam is far nicer than Louis was. Harry may not be his mate, but he is his King, and his friend.

“So not my fault.” Harry mutters. “I couldn’t control it. That’s why I threw him.”

“So now I have to work you through it.” Liam huffs. “This is not a part of my job, Sire.”

“Thank you.” Harry murmurs, letting his eyes flutter shut as he once more thrusts up and spills over himself.


“Wait, seriously?” Ashton giggles, suddenly looking far more awake than Niall would like. “Whose?”


“Finally!” Ashton beams, and Niall backs away when Luke scowls. “Good on you, Niall. Was wondering when you two would finally just fuck and get it over with.”


“It does.” Ashton grimaces.


“He deserves to know, Luke.” Ashton counters. “If Niall and King Harry are going to be having sex, then it’s only fair that he understands these things.”

“Fine.” Luke grumbles, stalking off towards their shared bedroom and slamming the door loudly.

“Knots are meant to be contained within something.” Ashton explains, apparently unfazed by Luke’s behavior. “A steady pressure is necessary to keep them from growing too large. Sometimes it happens though, when a knot isn’t properly sheathed inside somebody. It can get dislodged if not placed properly, or swell up on an out-thrust and not be able to go in. It really fucking hurts.”

“So what do you do?” Niall asks.

“Your mate wraps a hand around it or something, keeps the pressure down while you ride it out.” Ashton laughs. “It’s not quite the same, but it helps keep it from hurting.”

“So does that mean-” Niall asks, leaving the question hanging in the air.

“Probably.” Ashton nods. “I bet Liam’s real pissed off about it though.”

Niall feels like vomiting at the information, the thought of Liam’s hands all over Harry taking a firm hold in his mind. He takes a deep breath to steady himself once he feels his power start to circle out, turning the stone beneath his feet to gold before he can pull it back. “Why did it happen?” Niall asks once his body will let him breathe in more than just shallow, jealous pants.

“Ain’t that obvious?” Ashton grins. “He wants to mate you.”

“We’ve known each other for less than a week.” Niall breathes out.

“Doesn’t matter to the Beast.” Ashton hums. “When it knows, it knows. I’ve heard of couples who mate on the day they meet. And then some of us, like Luke and myself, take years of knowing each other before something clicks. It’s all a matter of what the Beast wants. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to go blow my mate to get him to stop being such a grouch.”

“Yeah, no that’s fine.” Niall mutters, retreating to the balcony and waiting until he hears the door close to let out the sob trapped in his chest.
Harry isn’t ignoring him per se, but he’s definitely avoiding Niall. The blond can sense it, that presence within his chest fleeing whenever he gets somewhere close. If they do end up in the same place, then Harry finds a reason to leave within seconds. It’s not even like Niall is looking for him. He’s not any more eager to see the lycan after last night’s debacle than Harry is to see him, because then they’ll have to talk, and Niall doesn’t do talks. He hates talks. It’s just that without training, Niall has more free time on his hands, but he’s still relegated to the castle grounds, and there’s only so much to do.

Luke won’t even look at him, so magic training is out, and Niall has already had to avoid Liam all day on Ashton’s recommendation. So now he’s tucked himself away in the library, the one room that he’s been assured by Ashton that Harry never visits. It’s peaceful, soothing in a way that Niall has never felt before. Books line every wall and shelf, towering dozens of feet into the air everywhere. Niall has never been much of a reader, but there’s something incredibly humbling about being surrounded by so much knowledge. The smell of books, that musty, dusty, incredible scent of knowledge hangs in the air so thick that it’s like a fog.

Apparently lycans don’t even read for pleasure according to Ashton, which goes along with their feelings on art, and music, and pretty much every other thing that makes life less monotonous on the surface world. They don’t have time for leisure activities, for anything really, other than this war that Niall still doesn’t understand. The closest thing they have to a distraction is the arena, and that’s not often used. So all they have in the library are books on history and things like that. Still, it’s something.

“Hey, I’m going to head out for something to drink. Do you want anything?” Ashton asks, pulling Niall’s attention away from the book he’s buried his nose in to try to get a better grip on how the war started. So far it’s just a bunch of rambling about the old cities of the lycan empires though.

“No, whatever is fine.” Niall waves him off. “Is there something more- focused- than this one?”

“Everything we have about the early days of the war is up on that shelf.” Ashton says, pointing to the top of the wall where Niall needs a ladder just to get to it.

“Thanks.” Niall mutters absentmindedly, already focused on his task. He hears the door creak as Ashton leaves, and starts working his way up the ladder. He has to slide himself to the side a few rows until he manages to get to the shelf Ashton had pointed at, but he does get there.

As it turns out, the problem isn’t in getting there. It’s in getting down. Niall has never been great at the whole ‘take things in moderation’ philosophy his mother tried so desperately to instill in him. He’s much more of a ‘whatever happens, happens’ kind of guy. That’s generally worked out pretty poorly for him though, so he shouldn’t be surprised that this time is no different. With ten books crammed under his arm, he tries (tries being the operative word) to make his way back down.

The universe isn’t so kind to him however, and his foot slips when he misjudges the distance to one of the rungs. His whole body lurches back, fingers slick on the rung he’s holding, and he has only a split second to make a decision before it’s taken out of his hands. He chooses to cradle the books to his chest, because his body will heal, but these ancient tomes are irreplaceable and somebody will probably be incredibly pissed if he destroys them. He closes his eyes and braces for impact as he
plummets, but a pair of strong arms catch him halfway to the ground.

He doesn’t open his eyes until they land back on the ground, but he knows who it is without needing to. That warmth in his chest is making it obvious. “Fucking shit fuck.” he grumbles, checking his load first to make sure that none of the books were damaged in the ordeal.

“You’re welcome.” Harry huffs, settling Niall on his feet.

“I could have taken the fall. I didn’t need you to save me.” Niall snaps, his defenses rising up like those walls of golden sand that he’s gotten so proficient at creating. He moves to the table quickly, setting the books down and inspecting each for damage that he knows full well isn’t there. It’s something to look at other than Harry though, and that’s enough of an excuse for Niall. “What are you doing here? Ashton told me that you never come in here.”

“I do hours of research every day. Ashton knows this well.” Harry sighs, crossing his arms over his chest.

“That little shit.” Niall growls. He can practically hear Ashton sniggering away as his plan to force them together works. “Still, why now? You’ve been avoiding me all day, so why come here when I’m here?”

“I didn’t know you were here.” Harry tells him. “I couldn’t smell you through the scent of the library. It masks other scents because it’s so strong.”

“And I was too distracted to notice where you were.” Niall mutters. “I’m going to kill him when I get back to our room.”

“He’s- He means well, I believe.” Harry says quietly. “I haven’t been avoiding you, Niall. Not for the reasons you think anyways.”

“Honestly, I don’t give a shit.” Niall grits out. “I don’t want to do this right now. I came here to keep away from you, so let me do that, please.”

“You have the text that I was looking for.” Harry says, loping towards the table. Niall waits until he sees which one Harry wants in particular, and then he places his hand on top of it. Harry lets out a warning growl, eyes flashing as he says, “Niall.”

“Harry.” Niall counters, matching every ounce of the lycan’s determination and fierceness with his own.

“Give me the book.” Harry orders.

“No.” Niall says petulantly. “I almost busted my ass getting this, and you don’t get to boss me around.”

“This castle and everything in it belongs to me, Niall. I will not be told that I cannot have what is mine.” Harry growls.

“Is that what I am then? A possession?” Niall spits out. “You want, you take. Nothing more and nothing less. I shouldn’t be surprised though, not considering how we met. I’ve been property to you since day one. A prisoner, a weapon, bait, a sex-toy, an inconvenience, a delight. You can’t make up your mind, can you?”

“Niall-” Harry snarls, reaching forward to grab the tome.
“I will turn this book to solid gold if you move another inch, Werewolf.” Niall warns him, letting a swirl of gold trace out over the old leather cover to prove his point.

“You have several other books to read.” Harry argues. “I need that one specifically. I don’t have time for your games right now.”

“This isn’t a game. This is a stand. I’m not your fucking puppet, no matter your position or power. Do you understand me?” Niall asks harshly. “I’m done being jerked around here. If I wanted to, I could take out this city, and nobody here could stop me. The least I deserve is some respect.”

“I would stop you.” Harry says firmly. “Never doubt that for a second, Niall. I will put you down if you go after my people.”

“It’s not about wanting to hurt them, Harry. I’d never hurt anyone on purpose.” Niall bites out. “It’s about the fact that I’m still a prisoner in the only place left that I’m allowed to call home. I get to make literally zero decisions about my life now, and I’m fucking done with that. You don’t just get to claim me, to take that choice away from me.”

“Why do you think I threw you?” Harry yells. “That wasn’t what I meant to happen, Niall! I didn’t want to knot you! I stopped it before it could happen precisely because you need to have that choice! The Beast wanted to do it, and I couldn’t stop it, so I did the next best thing and removed you before it could claim you without a choice. At great personal cost, I might add.”

“Oh yes, I’m sure that getting jacked off by Liam all night was such a terrible burden for you.” Niall sneers.

“I don’t want Liam.” Harry snarls, catching Niall off-guard and pinning him to the shelves in an instant. Their lips meld together on instinct, fingers digging harshly into each other’s sides to anchor themselves to the moment while they battle for dominance. Niall spins them around, and Harry does it again in a dance that has the blond’s head swimming until they end up on the floor, rolling around and trying to pin the other to the ground without ever letting their lips separate. Harry ends up on top, not that Niall minds, despite the effort he’d put into it, and slurs out, “I only want you.”

“Then why have you been avoiding me?” Niall asks before he can stop himself.

“Because we can’t be together.” Harry mutters, his words muffled by the skin of Niall’s neck as he sucks in bruises that’ll heal before they’ve even properly formed. His hands untuck Niall’s shirt, slipping underneath to scratch down his sides. “There’s a thousand reasons for that, no matter what we want.”

“Then stop.” Niall breathes out.

“I can’t.” Harry admits, sitting back on Niall’s hips and tearing his own shirt off. “Not unless you’re asking me to.”

“Those reasons aren’t my reasons.” Niall tells him. “They’re yours. If they matter so much to you, then we shouldn’t do this anymore.”

“Fair enough.” Harry nods. He pushes off the ground with his toes until he’s standing at full height again, and Niall is sure that he’s going to leave, but then he slips off his own trousers before reaching down and pulling Niall’s away effortlessly. The whole process takes only a few seconds, and then Harry’s body is back on top of Niall’s. “Just to be clear, that was you giving me permission, yes?”
“Yes.” Niall hums, taking it in good stride when Harry’s body pushes down into him harder than before. The stonework of the floor wouldn’t have done them any favors if they were human, but right now it’s doing wonders for Niall’s senses. Harry’s intense heat pairing beautifully with the nearly ice-cold floor under Niall’s back. “Not like- Not to knot me, but to keep doing what we were doing.”

“I have no intention of knotting you.” Harry smirks. “Rather the other way around if I’m being honest. I’ve never done this before though, so it might be a bit rough.”

“Wait- What?” Niall asks.

“After last night, I think it’s best if I don’t penetrate you during these encounters.” Harry explains. “The risk of spontaneous knotting is too high, and once it happens I can’t control myself so well. I’m not going to force you to be my mate, so instead we’ll just flip things around. That should be enough to keep my knot from forming, and from everything I’ve read on the fae they don’t have anything like that, so we should be fine. I’ll answer any questions you have later if you’d like, but right now I’d rather get on with things. Liam will come looking for me eventually.” Harry huffs.

“Yeah, alright.” Niall agrees.

“Excellent.” Harry grins, somehow managing to look both relieved and smug at the same time. He shimmies down Niall’s body until he’s face to face with the blond’s cock, and then looks back up. “Do try to last a little longer this time. If the King of the Lycans is going to let you penetrate him, at least make sure you get it to that point rather than going off in my mouth again.”

“If you say penetrate one more time, I’m going to call this whole thing off.” Niall growls, pushing up on his elbows to glare down at Harry. Why couldn’t Niall have fallen for anyone else? Literally anyone. They wouldn’t have the same self-satisfied smirk Harry has before he parts those obscene lips and latches on to the head of Niall’s cock. That would be so much better.

For a split-second he considers letting himself buck up, letting himself choke Harry with his cock, his hands on the back of the lycan’s head to keep him there while Niall fucks into his mouth, because he’s still absolutely furious about everything. He doesn’t though, because he has a carnal need for Harry. His entire body needs this, this proximity to the goddamned King of the Werewolves, the gentle, yet fierce, attention of the brunet on top of him. Nobody else will do. He knows now that if he spent a hundred years in this magical, impossible place, or even if he escaped to the surface, nobody else will ever come close to Harry anymore. It’s not love, exactly, but it’s something.

He’s not ready for anything like mating, not ready to forgive all of this enough to even consider committing himself, but he knows that this is enough for now, that this connection is more than just something simple and loose. No matter how fucked up it is, no matter how much stands in their way, this matters to both of them. It’s like fucking Romeo and Juliet, and Niall wouldn’t be surprised if they both end up dead too. Though it’s far more likely that they’ll be killed by something outside of these walls rather than themselves or each other.

But for now, they can let themselves have this moment. They can give each other this reprieve from all the pain, and the fear, and the stress of what their lives are. They can care about each other in secret without having to acknowledge everything else that’s making things so fucked up. They can get lost in the things that they give each other, the comfort, and the attention, and the pleasure. Were Niall a better person, a bit less selfish, then he would walk away, let Harry keep his mind focused rather than let himself be a distraction.

He’s not though, and he’s never claimed to be. So he fists his fingers in the curls that have fallen
out of the ribbon from the earlier struggle, focuses on the prospect of things to come rather than actually letting himself cum. Despite yesterday’s problems, Niall seems to have regained some of his former self-control, honed over years of random hook-ups to help keep him warm with the memories during the far more common nights that he spent alone.

He sees Harry swipe his fingers over the head of his own cock, letting out a moan around Niall’s prick to accompany the action, and then has to look away when the lycan’s hand snakes back through his own legs. Self-control be damned, there’s no way he’s not going to cum immediately if he watches Harry sucking down his cock so eagerly while simultaneously opening himself up for the first time in his three centuries of life. It’s just too much.

He has to focus on anything he can just to stop himself from peeking, letting his mind wander enough that he isn’t right on the edge, but not so much that he forgets completely about the pleasure and becomes soft. It’s not an easy task, but before he realizes it, Harry’s lips are crashing back into his own, reverting his attention. It’s hard and heavy, all teeth and tongue, screaming of pent up frustration and a need for release that Niall can relate all too well.

“You ready?” Harry asks.

“Think I’m supposed to be the one asking you that, since it’s your first time and everything.” Niall points out.

“Good point.” Harry nods, leaning back again. “I’m going to go now then.”

“Whenever you’re ready.” Niall tells him, though he’s sure it sounds less patient than he means it to be, because Harry’s ass grinds back into Niall’s cock when he moves, and he’s only human. Well, only fae. That might actually be worse. He’s definitely hornier as fae. Much, much hornier.

That gets a little bit of relief when Harry starts to sink down on him, taking a deep breath and then just dropping his hips all at once. “Christ almighty!” Niall groans, tossing his head back against the stone and feeling it give way under his skull, crumbling and pulverizing into dust from the force of it. “Warn a bloke if you’re going to take him like a bloody porn-star.”

“I do not know what that means.” Harry hums, swiveling his hips experimentally while a variety of expressions cross his face. “Is it a good thing?”

“That really depends on the situation.” Niall mumbles. “For now though, yes. It was just unexpected.”

“As is this.” Harry murmurs, rocking his hips with a little more force this time. “The Beast isn’t a fan of me submitting, like this, but he can stuff it. Feels good. I think I quite like this actually.”

“It gets better if you actually do something other than talk.” Niall snorts.

“I’m just trying to remember how this goes exactly. I’ve only had sex once in the last century, and that wasn’t exactly long-lived.” Harry grins. He braces his palms against Niall’s shoulders and then says, “Now how did you move? It was somewhat like this, I believe.”

The movements are more fluid than Niall would have imagined, Harry rocking back and forth, rotating his hips and arching his back like this is all he bloody knows how to do. It’s so far from a beginner’s level that Niall is definitely beginning to doubt that Harry has been truthful about this whole thing. “Fuck, yeah- Just like that.” Niall murmurs in appreciation, letting his hands rest on Harry’s hips, rather than guiding them like he’d expected to have to do. “’S good. Good boy.”

“Make another dog joke. I dare you.” Harry growls out, pumping himself down harder on Niall’s
cock while his claws slip out and dig into the blond’s pectorals. “See if I let you climax after you
do.”

Niall is about to make another joke, just to see if Harry would actually carry through on that threat, but a sudden tug in his chest tells him that’s not in the cards. “You need to hurry up.” he tells Harry.

“Why?” Harry asks.

“Liam and Luke are coming. Think they noticed you’ve been gone a bit long and I’m not with Ashton. He’s with them too.” Niall explains, propping himself up on one arm and wrapping his other around Harry’s lower back to give himself leverage to work with. “I’d like to cum before we get yelled at.”

“Yeah, alright.” Harry nods, groaning when Niall takes over the flow of their actions. He really loves this whole ‘super strength’ thing. It lets him pound up into Harry relentlessly, bouncing the lycan up and down on his cock with next to no effort. He has more control over his body too, allowing him to learn and hit the right angle on every thrust until Harry is letting out this beautiful symphony of whimpers, and growls, and moans.

He cums untouched, though Niall isn’t entirely surprised by it. It’s probably some of the finest work he’s ever done. What he is surprised by is the sheer amount of cum that Harry lets out, rope after rope painting over Niall’s chest, and shoulders, and even his face. It’s enough to push him over the edge, slamming up into Harry and pulling the lycan down by the neck until their lips meet when his orgasm hits him. Harry bites down harshly on Niall’s lip, using enough force with his sharp incisors to split the skin, but Niall just moans into the kiss and forces his tongue into the brunet’s mouth.

“By the bloody Moon!” Liam groans, walking round the corner of the bookcase only a few moments after they’ve finished.


“Don’t look at me. I just went to get myself a drink.” Ashton giggles, walking up behind the furious pair with a smirk.

“Sire, you’re expected at the meeting about the festivities tomorrow.” Liam sighs.

“Then I suppose that I should probably get myself cleaned up.” Harry chuckles, standing up with a wince when Niall slides out of him. “Oh, and Niall, I’m taking the book.”

“Feel free.” Niall hums, grabbing the back of his now sullied shirt and pulling it off over his head. He wipes his face free of Harry’s cum and the few drops of his own blood, and then offers it to the brunet.

“I have my own, but thank you.” Harry laughs, picking up his shredded shirt and wiping his own face while he follows Liam out, grabbing the text that had started this whole thing. Luke gives Niall one last furious glare and then leaves as well.

“Well at least this place smells like something other than books now.” Ashton hums while Niall pulls on his trousers.

“Don’t think that just because I got some means that you’re off the hook for making this happen, Ash. I’m still mad at you.” Niall tells him, walking towards the door. He stops at the bookcase nearest the door, placing a hand on it and turning back to his attendant. “You won’t be doing that
“Again. Understand?”

“Don’t think I’ll need to.” Ashton laughs. “Looks like you two worked out whatever you needed to.”

“I don’t enjoy being manipulated.” is all Niall says before he gives the shelving a push, watching as it tips towards the wall and catches, letting all the books from one side fall out while Ashton stares in horror. “Now clean those up and then make me something to eat when you’ve finished, or I’ll find a different way to punish you.”

“See if I do anything nice for you again.” Ashton grumbles. “You’re bloody lucky that the King had the witch place a spell over all the books in here to protect them from most damage.”

“Good to know.” Niall grins, walking out without looking back. He’ll thank Ashton later, but for now he’s riding a high of HarryHarryHarry and can’t be bothered.

“You are going to be the death of me, Sire.” Liam sighs once they’ve been left alone in the king’s chambers. Liam had sent a scullery-maid to fetch water for a short bath while they made their way here, and she arrives only a few minutes after them. She’s a gossipy little redhead girl, and Liam knows that the story of King Harry smelling like sex and the fae will be spread throughout the castle by the time the meeting has finished.

“What I’ve just done has nothing to do with you Liam, and no bearing on your job. You didn’t have to come looking for me.” Harry says, sinking into the tub and relaxing in the heat.

“What exactly is the matter with you?” Liam snaps. Harry looks taken aback, but Liam continues before he can stop himself. “You cannot do this! It’s bad enough that you’ve been neglecting the real work we need to do, but for him? That’s unacceptable! He’s not one of us! You cannot keep this up any longer! Louis would have knocked some sense into you a while ago, but I was hoping you’d just see on your own how fucking stupid you’re being!”

“Liam!” Harry growls, releasing scent in such powerful waves that it forces Liam to his knees.

“He’s not one of us.” Liam repeats through gritted teeth.

“Neither was my mother.” Harry snarls. “Need I remind you of that?”

“He can’t give you an heir! Your mother could!” Liam points out. “Your people would never accept him as their King. I will not accept him as my King.”

“I haven’t mated him, Liam!” Harry groans.

“But you’re going to.” Liam says. It’s not a question.

“Not if he doesn’t agree.” Harry shakes his head.

“You know the risks of falling out of favor with our people, Sire.” Liam sighs. “You know what could happen. You know how devastating it could be to everything we’ve worked for.”

“You would take my place.” Harry shrugs. “You would make a good king, Liam.”

“I would make a horrible king!” Liam growls. “I’ve been subservient for centuries, a second or third in command.”
“You put our people first, and you have a solid head on your shoulders.” Harry tells him. “I am not looking to create another heir, and I doubt I will be for a very long time. Losing two was enough for me. But you’ve forgotten one thing.”

“And what exactly is that?” Liam asks.

“I could carry the child.” Harry says simply. “Go round everyone up for the meeting. I will be there shortly.”

“Make sure to eliminate the scent as much as possible.” Liam says as he rises to his feet, ignoring the howl of protest inside of him at Harry’s solution. The king carrying a pup may actually be worse than him mating Niall. “Not everyone involved knows about your relationship with the fae, and it’s for the best if that is kept as much of a secret as possible for now.”

“I’ll do my best.” Harry smirks. “He’s got a very powerful scent.”

“You’re expected at the feast, Niall.” Ashton hums, though he looks very unbothered by Niall’s reluctance to move.

“Shut up. This book is finally getting good.” Niall mutters, settling back against the tree.

The courtyard is still his favorite place in the castle grounds. Ever since he transformed, he can feel something special about the area. Whether that’s because of his connection to nature, or the magic keeping the place alive, Niall doesn’t know. Whatever it is, he likes it.

The birds have taken to their new home already, and Niall occasionally pulls a piece of bread out of his bag to munch on and share with them. They’re gathered all around him now, one in particular perched on his shoulder as he reads. He thinks how funny this would have been on the surface, how he would have laughed and shooed them away. Now though, he feels a kinship with them, as well as a debt to them. They don’t belong here, don’t deserve to be trapped here, and it’s his fault that they are. But they’ve found one good thing to cling on to with this courtyard in the same way that Niall has with Harry.

Then he shakes his head lightly, because he’s comparing himself to a bunch of doves like some poetic twat. This isn’t him. It’s this situation. He’s changed in so many ways in such a short period. It’s more than just the physical change too. Every second he spends around these people, these lycans, affects him. He can’t even sleep to help cope with it either. His energy is too indefinite, too persistent, to let that happen so far. So from the moment he woke up with Liam’s face right next to his, it’s all felt like one very, very long day.

“How bad is it going to be if I don’t show up to the banquet?” Niall asks after another few minutes of comfortable silence. Ashton is sat next to him now, a bird settled down in the lycan’s hand as he strokes her back. Niall knows about lycans, knows how fierce Ashton is in particular when he gives in to the Beast, but he’s such a kind person that it’s still hard to put the two together in his mind. The birds seem to agree.

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“Luke likes you.” Ashton tells him. “He just doesn’t like you being with the King. It’s- It’s improper I guess. You’re not a lycan.”

“Harry’s mother wasn’t either.” Niall says quietly.

“No, but she could bear the previous king’s children.” Ashton hums. “As far as the research indicates, you can’t, and it’s likely that even if you did somehow possess that ability, which has so far been considered uniquely lycanthropic in nature, they might be fae. Lycans need a leader. It’s not a question of whether we want it. It’s in our nature. Our dynamics are centered on it.

“King Harry needs an heir, sooner rather than later. That means he needs a mate. A lycan mate. Hundreds of candidates have been brought before him, and he’s ignored them all. He isn’t ignoring you though. In fact he’s actually focusing on you so much that it’s starting to be questioned by the people around him. They’re afraid that you could be a distraction. Luke and Liam, despite their distaste for the two of you being together, are working to make people understand that you’re a worthwhile distraction. You’re important, even if they can’t see it yet.”

“So I should probably go inside then.” Niall sighs.

“Probably.” Ashton nods. “I won’t force you to, but you should.”

“I’ll need you to help me interact with people, okay?” Niall requests.

“They all speak English, Niall.” Ashton snorts.

“No, I mean like, I don’t really know your people’s customs or anything. I don’t want to piss people off by doing something wrong if I can avoid it.” Niall mumbles. “I’d rather not have to defend myself against a bunch of lycans just because I held my fork in a way that means I fucked their mother in the ass or something.”

“You’ve eaten plenty of meals with us, Niall.” Ashton points out.

“Yeah, well you guys all have to be nice to me because I’ll kick your arses.” Niall grins. “The counselors on the other hand—”

“Yes, okay, I see what you mean.” Ashton nods.

“What in the name of the Moon are you doing?” Harry hisses, grabbing Niall by the wrist and hauling him into the next room before he can embarrass either of them any further.

“Did I do it wrong?” Niall asks timidly, staring at the floor. “Ashton said that it was tradition for guests of honor to rip both of the legs off of each of the chickens to give to each of the diners.”

“Ashton is having a laugh at you right now.” Harry sighs. “I can hear him giggling from here.”

“Oh that little shit!” Niall seethes, his hand clenching into fists and the stone under his feet slowly swirling out in a golden starburst. He takes a deep breath and then the pattern stops before Harry can even point it out. He’s getting good at that, at pulling back his powers when they eke out of him. Harry is impressed. Gemma took far longer to understand and control her powers when they developed, and she had their mother to teach her. Niall is mostly self-taught, with Luke filling in the blanks through methodical research.
“Might this have anything to do with you tipping over a bookcase and making him clean it up earlier today?” Harry asks.

“Might do.” Niall grumbles. “I should have gone with Bressie or Calum. At least they wouldn’t be taking the piss out of me.”

“I don’t understand the expression.” Harry tells him.

“It means making fun of, or getting a laugh out of.” Niall says while he waves Harry off. “Just- Just tell me if you have any important customs that I need to follow. Any rules for this sort of thing.”

“How about you try not to jump on the table and start tearing poultry apart.” Harry chuckles. Niall glowers at him, so Harry adds, “I’ll let you know if you do anything wrong, but our customs are similar to yours in a lot of ways. Just be polite and make idle conversation with those surrounding you. Try not to use too many surface colloquialisms and you should be fine. Also, never take advice from Ashton again.”

“Yeah, I got that, thanks.” Niall sighs.

“Niall, these people are here to meet you, to see you for who you are.” Harry says gently, cupping Niall’s face in his hands. “Just relax.”

“Ashton said your counselors want to lock me in iron shackles and keep me prisoner until you can figure out how to use me as a weapon.” Niall says, his voice barely above a whisper.

“I won’t let that happen to you, Niall.” Harry insists, though he doesn’t deny that it’s what his counselors are pushing for. Many of them view Niall as a being who’s dangerous on the same level as the Master. Harry can’t argue with that either, though that’s exactly the point. They finally have a trump card. Harry won’t push Niall into this war, but he will admit that part of him hopes Niall eventually wishes to join their cause. They need someone like him on their side if they want to change the tide. Keeping him out of the Master’s reach won’t be enough. Not forever.

“And what if you can’t fight it anymore, Harry?” Niall asks him. “What if your people don’t feel safe having me here in the city? Would you risk losing their faith in you? Because you shouldn’t. You need to do whatever it takes as the leader of your people.”

“I still won’t let it happen, Nial.” Harry says adamantly. “Tomorrow the people will see how much faith I have in you. They’ll see their king fight in your honor, and they’ll understand.”

“You’d better not lose to Liam then.” Niall smiles. “No matter what I said yesterday, you have to win.”

“I’m in the best fighting shape of my life.” Harry smirks. “There’s no way I’m going to lose when I have you to fight for.”

“We should probably get back out there.” Niall says, nodding towards the hall where every person who lives or works in the castle is eagerly enjoying the feast, despite Niall’s little rampage against their dinner.

“After the feast, meet me in my chambers?” Harry requests.

“Was hoping you’d ask for that.” Nial grins.
“What did you do?” Liam hears Luke growl, low and menacing, directed right towards his mate. Liam is curious about that as well. Niall’s behavior just now was strange, even for the fae lad. Harry dragged him out after the third bird was amputated at the hips, but Liam can’t focus enough through all of the noise to hear the conversation they’re having, so he’ll have to find out from Ashton and Luke instead.

“Got a bit of revenge for him acting like a dick to me earlier.” Ashton shrugs. “It took me hours to right that shelf and put all the books back. Thought I earned myself a bit of payback.”

“You are his attendant!” Luke hisses.

“I’m his friend, Lukey.” Ashton giggles. “Friends fuck with each other occasionally. He asked me for tips on how to behave around the lycans, about our customs and traditions, and I saw an opportunity. You can’t blame me for taking it.”

“So that’s the fae you’ve all been so adamant about.” a low voice drones beside Liam. “Charming.”

“That wasn’t his fault.” Liam sighs, diverting his attention towards Ben. “Apparently he was misled about some of our customs. He’s chosen a rather mischievous attendant. He was trying to do right by our people and honor us. It just so happens that he was gullible and vulnerable to a lie about how we do things.”

“He wouldn’t need an attendant if you’d just shackle him.” Ben says, feigning an air of boredom that doesn’t fit well with the manipulation he’s trying to pull.

“The king has made it very clear how he is to be treated, Ben.” Liam says firmly.

“The king is making a mistake.” Ben replies quickly.

“You know, if you’re so eager for someone to be chained, I’m sure I can find someone on the surface to make a pair of silver shackles for you.” Liam says easily, bristling hypocritically at the same insolence he’d shown earlier. “You’re on thin ground already, Ben. Don’t be a fool.”

“You’d let a weapon of mass-destruction walk through Final Bastion unimpeded, and I’m the fool?” Ben scoffs. “This will turn around and bite us back, Liam. You know it, I know it, and even King Harry has to know it. Desmond would not have stood for this.”

“Desmond is not the king anymore.” Liam snarls. “Nor are you still Chevalier. You’d do well to remember your place here.”

“We did what we had to do for our people.” Ben says adamantly.

“You committed genocide.” Liam snarls, his hand clenching around his knife as he glares Ben down.

“Liam.” comes a call of Harry’s voice. It’s a reminder to pull back, but not scolding. Harry agrees with him, and Liam has known this all along. It’s why Harry did what had to be done all those years ago. Liam turns back and bows his head towards Harry in silent apology.

“I think it’s best if you and Meri went home now, Ben.” Liam says dismissively.

“I’ll give her your regards.” Ben smiles as he stands up. It twists something in Liam’s stomach to see.
The space next to him is occupied only a moment later, blond hair filling up his vision as Niall leans into his space. “What’s wrong, Fluffy? You look particularly grumpy.” Niall giggles.

“You are not helping my mood.” Liam sighs.

“Ashton told me that you and Luke have been defending me against the counselors.” Niall says quietly. “Why?”

“Because, despite the chaos you bring with you, I do not wish to see you tortured and used as a weapon of war.” Liam admits. “You have a kind heart, and Louis would have liked you very much, I think. He would definitely have enjoyed you attacking the chickens.”

“That’s Ashton’s fault.” Niall pouts.

“I’ve been made aware of the situation.” Liam chuckles. “Did you really want to learn about our customs?”

“Yeah.” Niall nods. “I’ve mucked things up before when I didn’t know how people were supposed to do things in certain places. Put my feet up on the table once in France, and it was like I’d shot the Prime Minister. And Japan has all of these rules about how you position your chopsticks when you eat rice. Those are the utensils they use by the way. Different cultures have all of these traditions, and I didn’t want to insult your people.”

“That’s a very different reaction than most would have in your situation.” Liam hums.

“I’m just kind of going with things right now.” Niall shrugs. “I’ll probably have a breakdown at some point, when everything finally hits me, but for now I’m just letting myself find something to cling onto and going with it.”

“Don’t use him Niall.” Liam says quietly. “I’ve accepted that I can’t do anything about it if you two want to be together, but please don’t use him. He’s been through too much already with losing Zayn, and his heirs, and Louis, and everything else that’s been taken from him over the last three centuries.”

“I’m sorry - heirs?” Niall asks, his eyes going wide. “He had kids? What happened?”

“You’ll have to speak with him and see if he feels comfortable sharing that with you.” Liam tells him.

“Okay.” Niall nods. “He’s lucky to have you, Liam.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that.” Liam mutters. “It should be Louis sitting here. Not me. He was a far better Chevalier than I will ever be.”

“I wish I could have known him.” Niall says gently. “If he meant so much to you two, he must have been a good man. Well, good Wolf-Man at least. Good werewolf.”

“He was.” Liam smiles fondly, ignoring the joke because he’s just learned to accept that it’s how Niall is going to be. He’s been called a werewolf at least a dozen times over the past week, and he’s just done fighting back against it.

“I’m sorry you two had to go through that.” Niall murmurs. “I do have to say though, that I’m a bit surprised you and he were together. From what I’ve heard about him, he was a right terror.”

“He definitely was.” Liam laughs, loud and unabashed for the first time in what may be years.
“There was one time, when we’d just first mated, he brought a witch through the portal with literally thousands of flowers in one of those magical bags that hold a near infinite amount of goods, and he silently placed them all over our chambers until the smell woke me up. It was horrid. I spent a week scrubbing every surface until it finally stopped reeking of them.”

“Didn’t that get to him too?” Niall asks.

“Louis had a tendency to be self-destructive when it was necessary for one of his practical jokes.” Liam grins, remembering how Louis had walked around sniffing for ages because his sense of smell was even stronger than Liam’s was back then, as were all his senses as the Chevalier. “He would have really appreciated the thing you did with the throne. I did not, by the way, but he would have.”

“Yeah, I’m so sorry about that. I was a bit pissed at being forced to kill living things.” Niall huffs.

“Did it work?” Liam asks.

“Obviously.” Niall mutters.

“Then they died for a reason, Niall.” Liam says softly. “I know that this will be hard for you to understand, but sometimes sacrifice is necessary.”

“I’ve made sacrifices, Liam.” Niall grits out. “For my career, for my family, for-”

“I mean a grander sacrifice, Niall.” Liam sighs. “A true sacrifice. Material things, convenient things, it may hurt to give those up for the sake of what you want more, but real sacrifice is giving up something you can never get back in order to do what is necessary. You had to shed your innocence to gain control over your abilities. It’s admirable that you could do that, even if you were given no choice.”

“Oh, I had a choice.” Niall growls. “But it was you or the birds, and I didn’t think it would be good for my health if I decided to rip your head off and throw it through the barrier.”

“No, I don’t believe it would have.” Liam hums. “I appreciate the leniency.”

“What, no repartee about how you could have taken me if you wanted to?” Niall asks dryly.

“No, I think we’re both fully aware of the fact that if you came at me with the intent to kill, I would not survive.” Liam muses. “Your natural combat instincts are phenomenal, and your strength and magical abilities put you at a clear advantage. Maybe once your power reaches an equilibrium and drops back down I would stand a chance, because then I could formulate a combat plan based on what I know of your abilities, but as you were yesterday, I would have died. There’s little point in bravado or idle threats Niall.”

“I agree.” Niall nods, leaning in to whisper as he adds, “Which is why I’m going to leave you with this. If you ever kick me out so that you can work Harry through an unbound knot again, I don’t care how detrimental it is to my health, I will destroy you. That is neither an idle threat, nor bravado.”

He stands up and walks away without another word, obviously unconcerned with how, or if, Liam would react. Liam is sure that Niall wouldn’t be expecting the small smile that graces the lycan’s lips though. He really is far too much like Louis.
“Took you long enough.” Harry giggles, tugging Niall into his chambers by the wrist when the fae lad knocks on his door.

“Had to get Ashton to distract Luke long enough to slip out of the room.” Niall shrugs. It had taken a promise to not seek revenge for what Niall is now calling ‘Chicken-gate’ (despite the fact that it’ll go right over the heads of everyone around him), but eventually he had managed to convince the lycan to go fuck his mate and let Niall get some as well.

“It’s fine. I needed to speak with Liam anyways, and the conversation ran a little longer than I expected.” Harry hums, placing his palm flat against Niall’s chest and directing him backwards towards the bed. “We had more to talk about than we should have after a feast.”

“This have anything to do with that one lycan that Liam practically shifted when he was talking to?” Niall asks.

“Yes. And also a certain fae who threatened to decapitate him if he should ever touch me intimately again.” Harry smirks.

“I was only specific about it being in the case of an unbound knot.” Niall tells him, unfazed by the fact that Liam has tattled on him. He’d half expected it when he made the very real threat. “But yeah, that was the overall message.”

“You’re as possessive as a lycan.” Harry chuckles.

“I don’t share well with others.” Niall grins, toppling back onto the bed with Harry crawling over him a moment later. “Especially when I’m at a disadvantage with them.”

“What disadvantage could you possibly believe that you are at?” Harry asks, undoing the leather cords on his shirt carefully for the first time during one of these encounters.

“He could give you kids.” Niall says quietly.

“Liam has never been, and will never be, a candidate for my mate, Niall.” Harry says softly. “He is my oldest friend and my greatest ally, but we are not a good pair like that.”

“Ashton says that you need an heir as soon as possible.” Niall admits. “And Liam said that you’d lost heirs before, though he said I should ask you what happened if I want to know.”

“I’ve only properly lost one heir.” Harry sighs. “Zayn got pregnant twice. The first time, we lost the pup after eight months. It took us decades before we were ready to try again, and we were supremely careful with the entire process, using doulas and even a witch to keep them both safe. We had a son named Edward. When Edward was twenty three, he led a mission to investigate rumours of vampiric activity in Scotland.

“He was too young though, not properly trained, though, not for a lack of trying on his educators’ parts, mind you. I loved my son, but he was a headstrong fool who spent far too much time enjoying the life of a prince rather than working towards becoming a proper king. He was killed in action because he refused to draw back his team when he should have. Louis was the only one who survived that night, and I felt it through him when my son died. Since then I have had no desire to spawn another heir.”

“But you do need one.” Niall says. It’s not a question. Not really.

“Technically, no.” Harry says with a shake of his head. “If I were to die right now at the hands of anyone other than a lycan, my power would pass on to the one of my people most deserving of it.
Likely that would be Liam. If I have an heir, they will be trained to handle the responsibilities of kingship, as well as receiving top notch combat training, and would likely gain the power instead.

“It’s not necessarily the case though. For instance, had I died before Edward, he probably would not have been found worthy of my power and would have been bypassed for it. It might have gone to Zayn, though I doubt it, as he cared little for responsibility over others. Most likely it would have been Louis or another member of my King’s Guard. Or it could just be any one of the thousands of citizens in Final Bastion. It’s magical, so it’s complicated. There’s no way to fully predict who it would be unless another lycan were to kill me, in which case they would gain my power.”

“So the ‘king’ thing, it’s magical?” Niall asks.

“Yes. It’s why I’m so much stronger than the other lycans.” Harry nods.

“I don’t understand you species at all.” Niall mumbles. “Half the time you seem more magical than I am, but you can’t use magic on your own, and you aren’t affected by it like normal beings are.”

“I’m well aware of the oxymoronic nature of our existences.” Harry chuckles.

“So- So why is everyone pushing so hard for you to have an heir?” Niall asks.

“Because an heir would be trained to handle this position.” Harry says quietly. “They would be raised with every intention of becoming a king, of being worthy to lead our people. When I have no heir it’s left more up to chance than normal. Like I said, it could go to any of my people, and that carries risks. My power would only pick the person worthiest for the position, but that doesn’t mean that they’d be prepared for the job. Believe it or not, most of my people would never want this job, or this power.”

“Oh, I believe it.” Niall hums. “You’re probably the only one here who can deal with me on a regular basis, and even if something were to kill you, it’s unlikely that they could take me out as well, so the next king would be stuck with me.”

“That is very much not the reason.” Harry snorts.

“So you really don’t want a kid then?” Niall asks.

“If you did, then I would carry it.” Harry shrugs.


“I would carry the child.” Harry repeats slowly, as if the speed of his words is the reason that Niall is floundering for something to say. “Since you cannot, I would.”

“You’re serious, aren’t you?” Niall groans. “Fuck, do I need to worry about getting you pregnant when we do this? Do I need to wear condoms when we do this? Do they make condoms that could handle lycan-fae sex? Oh god, what if you’re already pregnant?”

“I’m not. There are things that have to be done in order for me to become fertile.” Harry tells him, running a hand through the blond’s fringe and chuckling lowly. “Certain conditions must be met. It’s not as easy in same-sex lycan relationships as it is in heterosexual intercourse.”

“Good. I’m not ready to be a da yet.” Niall breathes out a sigh of relief. “Can you imagine?”

“Fatherhood is a blessing, Niall. Trust me.” Harry says with a soft smile.
“Maybe, but I don’t need some infant turning everything he touches to gold, or my baby turning into a wolf and running loose around the damn castle chewing on shoes and whatnot.” Niall laughs. “And my kid would definitely be a little hellion. A right monster no matter their species.”

“I can believe that.” Harry hums. “Are you always going to be this inquisitive when my plans are to have my way with you?”

“Eventually I think I’ll probably know everything to the point where I don’t need you to answer questions.” Niall shrugs. “Besides, all you asked was for me to meet you in your chambers. You never specifically said we were going to have sex.”

“What else would we have been doing? Paperwork?” Harry snorts. “Despite the goings-on in the library this afternoon, this is the one place where we can have some privacy. If I invite you here, then it is for personal reasons, Niall.”

“Well then, I guess I’m all out of questions.” Niall smirks.

The blond is ecstatic. He’s darting around like a madman, checking out every stall in the market. Ashton is by his side, leeching off of the fae’s enthusiasm until he’s just as rambunctious and excited as Niall is. Liam and Luke, on the other hand, are far more docile. They’re on alert, watching the other lycans closely for how they react to Niall. Everything has been done that can be, but eventually they were going to have to let him out of the castle and today being the festival in his honor means they can’t put it off any longer.

Most of the citizenry are too focused on the festival to notice the new presence in their midst. It’s really only when Niall stops and talks to a merchant, tasting new foods or admiring craftsmanship that anyone begins to notice him. When they take in the other three though, they lose interest and stare at their own hands instead.

“Chevalier! Chevalier!” comes a small squeaking voice that Liam knows all too well. He turns around to look just as a young female pup collides with his legs. She’s nowhere near powerful enough to do any damage, but Liam makes a big show of reeling his arms before falling back onto his bum with a loud yelp. Lux giggles and crawls up onto Liam’s chest, placing tiny hands over his face as she crows, “Pinned you!”

“If you keep beating me like this, then King Harry is going to make you his Chevalier, little one.” Liam smiles. Lux lets out a triumphant little growl, flexing her nearly non-existent muscles in the cutest display of dominance Liam can remember since Edward. For all his shortcomings, Edward had been an extraordinarily adorable pup.

“I’d be a good Chevalier!” Lux squeaks. “I’m strong and I’m brave! I’m not scared of anything! Not even vampires!”

“A wise Chevalier is scared of many things, little one.” Liam hums, righting himself with one arm as he holds Lux with the other. “Fear breeds caution, and a Chevalier’s caution keeps the king alive.”

“So it’s okay to be afraid?” Lux asks with wide eyes.

“It’s definitely okay to be afraid, as long as that doesn’t stop you from honoring your duties.” Liam nods.

“Good, because maybe I am a little afraid of vampires.” Lux admits in a whisper.
“So am I.” Liam whispers back.

“She’s too precious!” Niall giggles, popping up beside Liam and his tiny charge in a flash. “Who are you, Little Miss?”

“I’m Lux!” she pipes up after looking to Liam for approval. “You smell weird. Like plants, and dirt, and something sweaty.”

“Do I?” Niall asks with a grin. “I guess I need to take more baths then.”

“I hate baths.” Lux says, wrinkling her nose up in distaste. “Mama always makes me take them though.”

“Where is your Mama, Lux?” Liam asks.

“Right here.” a very tired and rumpled looking Lou says as she lopes up to them. “I can’t get anywhere in this crowd. She just slipped through people’s legs once she saw you. I’m so sorry, Sir.”

“It’s not a problem, Lou.” Liam says with a wide grin. “You know how much I love Lux. I always know it’s going to be a good day when she pins me.”

“He’s a real pushover, huh?” Niall smirks at Lux. “First time I met him, I beat him in two moves.”

Liam’s face flushes in humiliation when Niall brings that up, but Lux doesn’t seem to notice because she barrels ahead proudly with a loud, “I beat him in one!”

“Ooh, you might be even better than I am then.” Niall chuckles.

“Shift! We’ll fight right now!” Lux growls, popping claws and smiling with a mouth full of fangs. “I’ll win!”

“I can’t shift.” Niall tells her. “Besides, it wouldn’t do very good for my first public appearance to be getting beaten up.”

“Why can’t you shift?” Lux asks, curiosity mingling with caution as her hold on Liam tightens and she slides back into a fully-human form.

“I’m not like you, Miss Lux. I’m different.” Niall says with a soft smile.

“So this is the fae, then.” Lou says evenly, her heartbeat betraying her calm demeanor as she takes Lux out of Liam’s arms. “The one all the ruckus is about. Doesn’t seem like much, does he?”

“He’s- He’s on our side.” Liam offers, though he can smell Lou’s protective urges starting to take over.

“I won’t hurt your daughter.” Niall tells her gently. “Liam has taught me very good control over my strength, and Luke here is teaching me to harness my magical capabilities.”

“Magic?” Lux squeaks. “You can do magic?”

“Somewhat.” Niall nods. “I’m not very good at it yet though. There’s only one trick I do really well.”

“Can I see?” Lux asks softly.
Of course, Little Miss.” Niall says with a low bow. He stands back up and steals one of the flowers that he’s laced into Ashton’s hair. Once he’s back in front of Lux, he holds it up until she’s watching closely, and slowly turns it into gold. Once that’s done he offers it to her with a beaming smile and, “For the lady.”

“It’s so pretty!” Lux squeals.

“Is it safe?” Lou asks Liam, turning her body when Lux reaches for the flower.

“Perfectly harmless.” Liam hums. “Unless you happen to be the throne that this one turned into a solid lump of it.”

“Louis would have loved that!” Lou cackles.

“I get that reaction a lot.” Niall grins. “I still don’t know if it’s a compliment or an insult from the way people say it.”

“A little bit of both, I suppose.” Lou smiles back at him. “You don’t have to give that to her, Sir. I wouldn’t want to impose.”

“I literally make gold with my hands. Sometimes unintentionally. There’s no imposition.” Niall tells her. “Would you let me make a matching one for you?”

“Oh, please, Mama?” Lux begs still reaching for the flower that is just outside her grasp.

“That would be lovely, Sir, thank you.” Lou nods.

“Ash!” Niall calls, plucking another of the flowers from Ashton’s hair before transforming it and offering one to each of them. “They’re a bit heavy to put in your hair now, but it’s all I have to offer.”

“It’s so pretty!” Lux coos once she’s finally been allowed to take hers.

“Thank you, Sir.” Lou laughs, admiring the golden petals.

“Okay, that’s going to have to stop.” Niall huffs.

“Have I offended you somehow?” Lou asks quickly.

“My name is Niall. Don’t call me Sir. I’m not a member of the nobility or anything like that, and it’s likely that you’re a fair bit older than me, seeing as you knew Louis and he died before I was born. I’m not superior to you, and that means you don’t need to show me any sign of respect like that. Just call me Niall.” he requests. “That’s what my friends call me.”

“Alright then, Niall.” Lou laughs, her muscles letting out some tension.

“Good. Now that that’s settled, would you two care to join Liam, Harry, and myself in our box once the tournament starts?” Niall asks her.

“I couldn’t impose upon the King like that!” Lou gasps.

“It’s in my honor. The king won’t mind, will he, Liam?” Niall asks with a look at the Chevalier.

“You know he’s missed you since you moved out of the castle, Lou.” Liam tells her. “He’d be more than happy to see the both of you.”
“Alright then.” Lou nods tentatively. “I’ll need to change before I can see him though. And give this one a bath.”

“You traitor!” Lux hisses, narrowing her eyes at Niall.

“No baths or the future Chevalier will have my head at my own festival.” Niall giggles. “I beg of you.”

“You heard him, Mama!” Lux beams.

“Yes I did, and you’re still going to be getting a bath.” Lou muses. “We’ll be at the box, Niall. Thank you for inviting us.”

“She seems nice.” Niall grins once Lou disappears into the crowd.

“She used to be a part of my King’s Guard and my second in command.” Liam admits. “She’s almost as ruthless in combat as Ashton is.”

“I miss her.” Ashton pouts, dropping his chin over Luke’s shoulder. “She was great to have around. Always beat the shit out of me in training though. A real firecracker.”

“The opening is getting close, Sir. We should all go get ready for the main event.” Luke adds.

“Have fun dressing this one, you two.” Liam grins, disappearing into the crowd before their protests can reach his ears.

“I would have words!” Harry calls out, silencing the roar of the crowd in one motion. Energy is thrumming through him, the likes of which he hasn’t felt in a long time. He’s feeding off of the excitement of the crowd, a wide grin splitting his face as he continues. “Many of you have heard, or even seen, that we have a new guest among us. The rumors are true. We have snatched, from the hands of the Master himself, a being of immense power!”

A loud cheer echoes through the audience, threatening to crumble the arena with the sheer force of it. Lux flinches at the uproar off to the side of him, but Harry leans into it, letting it wash over him. He’s unsurprised to find Niall doing the same with closed eyes. He must feel very at home like this, with an entire army’s worth of people screaming for him. It must resemble what his career was like as a world famous singer.

Harry lets it go for a bit before he gestures for, and receives silence once more. “It is in that spirit, and in his honor, for which I present to you today’s tournament! Are you all ready for an amazing set of games?”

The crowd erupts once more, this time echoing so loud that Harry is sure he’ll still feel it in his bones for hours. He looks to Niall, and the blond nods. He steps forward to the edge of the box, and then leaps out of it, much to everyone’s surprise. He flips through the air gracefully, twisting and turning with the vibrations running through the air until he lands lightly on his feet in the sands of the arena.

He strolls over to the center of the circle of warriors assembled for the tournament, and all eyes are on him, a stunning golden god in the light armor he had apparently protested vehemently against wearing. It’s just for show, too clunky and heavy for actual combat, unlike the leather armor that lycans actually use. Luke and Ashton had managed to wrangle him into it though, and Harry is glad that they did. He looks magnificent, the sun reflecting off of him so intensely that it looks like he’s
contained it within himself. He dips a finger into the small container of oil that Harry had given him earlier, and swipes it in a straight line over his throat.

“Um, hello everyone!” Niall says, his voice made far louder than usual from the lotus-oil opening his power chakra again. “I um- I guess I should be used to this kind of thing. On the surface I’ve played to crowds even bigger than this, believe it or not. Never been this nervous though, and I’m not even the one competing. Can’t imagine how these ones are feeling. You okay, Ash? Oh shit! Sorry! Forgot about my voice.

“Anyways, as your King mentioned, I have been brought here to keep me away from the Master. Never met him, but I hear he’s a bit of a dick. At first I was terrified of your people. On the surface, you’re only supposed to exist in nightmares, so imagine my surprise when I found out that not only do lycans exist, but vampires as well. I was saved from two vampires that had come to take me, by none other than your King and his Chevalier.”

Niall pauses then, as if he knows that the crowd will cheer, and they do. Niall knows how to work the crowd, laughing and smiling with the raucous noise. He looks more natural at this than Harry has seen him during anything except for their sexual encounters. Liam elbows Harry in the ribs, and Harry realizes that he’s starting to leak out pheromones.Oops.

“I was brought back here as a security measure, and the next night it was discovered through ritual that I am, in fact, one of the fae. A leprechaun to be precise, because apparently Mother Nature is prejudiced, or just has a nasty sense of humor. So here we are, one week later, and this entire thing is being done just to introduce me to my new home. Now I know that I probably make some of you wary, but I want to assure you that I have no ill-will against Final Bastion, nor her inhabitants. I’m-I’m no hero, and I doubt I could ever be, but I’m going to do what I can to stand with your people against the tide of darkness that the Master threatens to bring! Now how would you like to see some of the power that I’m bringing to this fight?”

Harry has never heard such a cacophony. Every lycan in the city is here for this, and they are all roaring and screaming with all of the force that their lungs can muster. Even Harry has never received such an intense bout of enthusiasm. He’s not sure anyone in the history of Final Bastion has, actually. Niall beams, his eyes slipping closed again as the tidal wave of excitement threatens to flood the stadium.

Harry thinks for a moment that Niall is just enjoying the exhilaration of it all, but he soon realizes that it’s far more than that. All at once, golden tendrils race through the sand, far surpassing the sphere of influence that Harry had so carefully observed during their last fight, until they cover the entirety of the arena floor all the way to each of the walls. The crowd gasps at the display, but Harry knows that Niall is just getting started.

The next thing he does is cross his hand over his chest and reach under the breast plate, gripping it hard enough to crunch the metal. Harry rolls his eyes, when Niall rips it off and sends it flying into the wall, narrowly missing Ashton and Luke as they spring apart with a wide grin and a more reserved smile, respectively. Niall’s gauntlets fall off of his hands once the armor that they had been strapped to flies away, and then he leaps backwards out of his cuisses and boots in one fluid motion until he’s left in his usual loose, white, silk outfit peeking out from under the leather armor strapped over his body. That explains why he finally went along with what Harry had ordered for him to wear. He never planned on wearing it for long. Harry should have known better.

He lands harder this time, causing a ripple outwards from the center of the arena through the golden sand that makes the audience cheer out. That seems to get Niall going more, and Harry can smell the adrenaline starting to pump through the fae’s veins pick up just a tick. Niall focuses his
hands in front of himself, a small sphere of flame forming between his palms that he sends shooting into the sky after a moment. The audience goes quiet as the ball flies up, and then gasps when it explodes outwards in a shower of colorful sparks.

Explosion after explosion happens as Niall shoots more of the spheres into the sky over the arena, much to the delight and wonderment of the crowd. It still doesn’t appear that Niall is done, because he slams his hands down onto the ground beneath him, drawing in the sand that he’d turned into his weapon until it forms a column underneath him, propelling him straight up into the air. The crowd loses all sense of composure when Niall disappears into the center of his creation for a moment, and then scream wildly when the column bursts apart, falling in sandy grains to the ground as Niall levitates with a pair of golden wings that he’s fashioned onto his back from the sand.

Everyone, Harry included, is in awe of the sight, watching Niall unfurl them until he looks like an angel hovering above the stadium. He lets them dissolve back into the sand as he sinks back towards the earth below him, landing in the center of the circle of lycan warriors that are going to have to follow that performance. Half of them look incredibly nervous, and Harry can’t figure out why until he sees that Ashton and Luke have separated and are now on opposite sides of the group.

At the same time, they both rush him, claws and fangs bared on their human forms so that they’ve got some semblance of a chance of victory. Ashton reaches Niall first, right before he manages to stand to full height. Niall catches Ashton’s outstretched hand, wrapping his fingers around the wrist at the same time he ducks a blow from Luke. Everything moves so beautifully, so fluidly, that if Harry didn’t know better, he’d swear it was all choreographed.

Ashton and Luke crash into the walls opposite the directions where they’d started attacking from, and the arena floor bursts into a flurry of activity. Every other lycan in the circle springs forward at once. Niall has never even met most of them, let alone fought them, yet he seems to be able to predict their moves with pinpoint accuracy and timing. Not a single warrior lands even a glancing blow as Niall dances around inside the flurry of howling attackers, dodging every attack with a level of grace that Harry has never seen before, not even out of Niall. Especially out of Niall, actually.

He flits between strikes, his entire body moving delicately as he weaves and dodges before taking the offensive. It’s over in just a few moves, Niall launching himself in what seemed like every direction at once. His hands strike out expertly, gripping his assailants by whatever part he deems worthy and throwing them with a now practiced ease. His legs carry him through every motion without faltering, occasionally lashing out to send yet another of the lycans careening away. The crowd falls silent as the last of the warriors hit the wall, leaving Niall standing alone in the center of the arena with his chest heaving.

Nobody so much as breathes until Niall’s fist shoots into the air above his head, and the crowd explodes into a deafening cheer so heavy that Harry and Liam both have to cover their ears to save their enhanced senses. It’s like standing in the center of a thunderhead, feeling the electricity charge the air as Niall races to each of the combatants and helps them to their feet with a sheepish smile and an apology that can probably barely be heard over the noise.

Niall signals for silence, and Harry is surprised with how easily the crowd follows his command. “Now, I know that display may have been a little over the top. However, I wanted to make it clear, in no uncertain terms, that I will use this power of mine to help the people of this city stop the Master in any way that I can!”

Harry braces himself before it this time, because the sheer intake of air the audience takes beforehand is enough to echo off the walls. Harry can’t help but beam through it, watching as the
crowd gives their faith and adoration so easily to this man, this outsider, who’s stolen his own heart as well.

“Fuck yes! That’s how we do it!” Niall roars, pumping his fists in the air when Luke and Ashton simultaneously pin their opponents to the ground. There’s an uneasy feeling of dread building in his gut, creeping fingers of some subconscious fear that have wound their way through his body, but he’s ignoring it. He’s suppressing it with excitement and enthusiasm for his friends, who’ve just finally managed to dominate every round they’ve been in to claim victory over the entire tournament.

Ashton lets out an earsplitting howl with a triumphant grin settling over his features. Luke just bows to the audience, but Niall can practically feel the pride radiating off of him. As a matter of ceremony, the losing pair (a couple of startlingly fast female lycans named Perrie and Jesy, who, as it turns out, were actually two of the candidates that Liam had chosen for Niall’s attendant) stay on their knees on the ground, hands clasped behind their backs as they await judgement.

Liam explained earlier that it’s all about tradition. He said that no warrior has been killed purposely in the arena for centuries. Accidents happen very rarely, only occurring when two fully shifted lycans lose control completely to the Beasts inside of them. The stronger the form, the less potent their healing is because more of their power goes towards their combat capabilities and enhancing their senses.

Just as Harry finishes announcing Luke and Ashton’s victory, and granting mercy to Perrie and Jesy, another spike of ominous feelings races through Niall’s chest. It hits him hard, knocking the air out of his lungs more harshly than any blow he’s received in training. He grips onto Harry’s arm, gasping for breath as the pressure increases inside of him. Harry looks down at him, concern laced through his eyes, and Niall breathes out, “Something bad is coming.”

“A royal act of mercy from a king?” a voice calls out through the night, the icy cold of it sinking into Niall’s bones and flickering through the air to make the flames contained within the cressets waver. “Your father at least had sense, little lycan.”

A swirl of dark mist gathers in the center of the arena, like smoke drifting together until something takes shape within it. A man dressed in all black steps forward from it, tall and lithe, with a smirk that chills Niall from the inside out. “I think this audience of animals deserves a treat, don’t you?”

It’s over in an instant, twin streams of blood flying through the air before their owners can react. Perrie and Jesy are dead before they hit the ground, their heads rolling away from their bodies in a gruesome display by the man who looks unfazed by his own deed. Ashton and Luke, leap forward, bodies fully shifted by the time they reach him. It doesn’t make a difference. From what Niall can tell, they didn’t even touch him before they were propelled backwards like cannonballs through the stone walls of the coliseum. They’re alive for now though. Niall can sense that much from the connection he shares with them.

“You!” Harry roars over the screams that erupt from the audience.

“Lou, there is a bunker through that door in case of emergencies. There is a rope by the door once you get inside that will drop a silver barrier. He won’t be able to get to the two of you. Only open it for one of us. Take Lux and go.” Liam orders, pushing her through the doorway once she’s gathered up her weeping daughter.

Harry, Liam, and Niall all spring into action at once, leaping into the arena with every lick of
power that they can muster. The only thing that keeps Niall from charging forward is Harry’s arm darting out and stopping him once they’re about twenty feet away from the man. “How did you find this place?” Harry growls.

“I had help.” the man says with a wicked grin.

“None of my people would betray Final Bastion like this.” Harry snarls.

“Oh, my dear, sweet king.” the man muses, licking the blood of one of the female lycans off of a set of sinfully hooked claws. “I’ve known where Final Bastion was for one hundred and ten years. I’ve just been waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike, and you’ve finally given that to me. Well, you, and my two dearest little helpers of course.”

“Long time no see, Harold.” a voice sneers behind them. Harry and Liam both stiffen, turning to take in the source, but Niall refuses to take his eyes completely off of the one who he’s guessed by now is the Master.

In his peripheral, he sees Luke and Ashton climb through the wall. That’s all he’s been waiting for. The rest of the warriors are helping evacuate the coliseum, so these five are the final stand against the Master. Niall won’t let him escape. He pushes his fists into the ground, sending all the golden sand he’d created before the games out towards the edges of the arena. It takes a massive effort, but he lifts it all at once, forming a monstrous wall a dozen meters high around the fighting area that traps them all inside, and condenses it into a solid, two inch thick shield to keep it from constantly draining his power.

Over the last few hours he’s managed to recover the used up energy from his display before the games, but standing before this man, he feels woefully inadequate. “Well, well, well. It seems the fae has learned a few tricks in the time it’s taken for me to get down here. No matter. He’ll be mine soon enough.”

“You will not lay a hand on him!” Harry bellows, his shirt shredding as his arms elongate and shift. Niall can physically feel the rage rolling off of Harry, but in this one moment, he’s glad for it. It will be far more useful than the fear threatening to overwhelm the blond.

“Forgotten about me already, Love? I’m wounded.” comes another voice from the same area as the last one that Niall didn’t know. He freezes at that one, because it doesn’t take a genius to put together the pieces and figure out who it belongs to.

Niall whirls to find the source, and he’s met with two new faces. One belongs to a short brunet, a confident smirk fixed in place below glowing blue eyes. Niall can tell without looking that Liam’s eyes are locked on that one. Niall has heard far too much about the former Chevalier to not recognize Louis.

The other man must be Harry’s former mate. He looks dangerous, even compared to the beings that Niall has come into contact with lately. He’s darkness given human form. Deeply tan skin cloaked in black leather. Every line of his body is hard, perfect really, and all Niall can think is that he looks like a fallen angel. He’s as beautiful as Lucifer, and just as sinful.

“Are you not grateful for this mercy I’ve given you, little king?” the Master hums. “I’ve brought both your mate and your closest friend back to you. Where are my thanks? Or have you forgotten about them in lieu of that delicious little morsel that I’ve come to take?”

Niall isn’t sure why that in particular seems to send Harry over the edge, but everything snaps in one moment. Harry launches forward, taking the Master for himself, while Liam and Luke go after...
a cackling Louis. Ashton winds up on the other side of Zayn, already shifted and circling him warily. “You must be Niall.” Zayn says calmly. “And judging by the reaction, I’m guessing that you’ve been sleeping with my mate. That makes this personal, and I’m sure my Master won’t mind if I take you myself.”

Ashton lets out a low growl, his body coiling like a spring that’s about to snap, but Niall stops him with a loud, “Leave this one to me, Ash. Go help Harry. Act as support and don’t let either of you get hurt.”

Ashton looks to him cautiously, but something in Niall’s glare must make him listen, because he runs off towards the most dangerous fight taking place here. “If you want to fight over Harry, you can be my guest. Not that it matters. He’s with me now, and your dead arse will be dust in a few minutes.”

“Bring it on, Bottle Blond. I’ve just been dying to know what you’d taste like.” Zayn grins. Niall launches himself forward, swinging his fist with full intent to end this in one strike. Just as he reaches the vampire, he bursts into a cloud of mist, flowing out of the way while his harsh laugh rings out. “Fighting a vampire is different than fighting a lycan, little fairy. You’re going to have to be better than that.”

He materializes behind Niall a moment later, and the fae doesn’t have time to dodge the vicious kick Zayn aims at him. He barely has time to throw his arm up to help block it. He feels the bone shatter before he flies through the air, rolling on the ground while Zayn gives chase. He knows that he won’t have time to recover before another attack happens, so rather than focusing his power on healing, he lets it burst out of him into the sand, covering himself in a thick cocoon of it just before Zayn can reach him.

He can’t harden it in time to keep himself from feeling the impact at all, but it’s enough to soften the blow. He focuses his power into his arm, forcing it to heal at warp speed while he flies through the air. It’s at around eighty percent function by the time the shield hits the wall, and that’ll have to be enough for now. He can’t see inside the cocoon, so when it drops, he blows it outwards from his body in an explosion of hardened shards, hoping desperately that none of his allies are nearby.

He centers a ball of flame over the hand on his injured arm, and uses the other to compress the sand into pointed spears like when he’d fought Harry. He launches everything at once towards Zayn, who dodges every attack like Niall figured he would, by turning back into mist. He materializes once the assault stops and smirks, saying “Still not good enough, little fairy.”

Niall grins and pulls his hands back towards his body, bringing the golden spear he left hovering behind the vampire through his chest. “Fighting a fairy is also different than fighting a lycan, you dead piece of shit!” Niall growls. “Don’t underestimate me!”

Harry can see Niall flying across the arena out of the corner of his eye, and as much as he wants to help, he’s a bit preoccupied at the moment. The master is strong, so fucking strong, and it just shows Harry how weak he really is. He can’t keep up with the Master’s movements, let alone his magical abilities. When flames lick out of the vampire’s hands, it burns him. When the vampire turns into mist, Harry can’t revert him through force. Nothing he’s doing is working, and Ashton has had to save him from a blow more than once already by sacrificing his own body to shield the king.

“How does it feel to be the final King of the Lycans?” comes a whisper behind Harry, but before he can whirl around the Master has moved on again. “How does it feel to know that I took everything
from you, piece by piece, and now I’ll seize everything you have left in one fell swoop?”

“I’ll stop you here!” Harry snarls, though as time wears on he’s beginning to realize that it’s an idle threat. “You can’t have him! You will not destroy my people!”

“Oh, but I’ve already taken your lover once.” the voice continues. “And I must thank you for training him so well. He’s given me so much entertainment over the years. He used to scream and cry at first, to rail about how you would save him, even if he was vampire. But as time went on, he realized that you weren’t coming, and he gave himself over to me willingly. Now he begs for it. He’s given himself to my will entirely.

“Look at him fighting your new toy. He won’t kill the fae of course, as that isn’t what I want, but he will make Niall beg for death. Maybe the three of us will take turns with him as I prepare my final assault. Make him come to the same realization that your mate had to. That there is nothing you can do to save him.”

“I will burn this entire world to the ground before I let that happen!” Harry roars.

He hears Ashton yelp behind him, and catches it out of the corner of his eye as the lycan flies through the air into the wall, falling to the ground in a crumpled heap. Harry doesn’t have a chance to react before the presence that appears behind him grips tight around his chest and fangs sink into his neck. The last thing he knows is that he screams, and that Niall calls his name before he slips into unconsciousness.

“Louis! This isn’t you!” Liam whimpers, tears streaming down his face as he gives chase to his former mate.

“I always did hate when you’d cry.” Louis sneers, turning and catching Liam off guard with a backhand across the face. “You were so weak! So pitiful! I can’t believe that you were ever my mate!”

“Louis!” Liam sobs, falling to his knees and letting Luke take the offensive while he tries to push his emotions down enough to do his duty. Never in the last quarter of a century did he believe that Louis could have become this thing. That he’d become so cruel and hard. That he could not only turn his back on Final Bastion, but Liam as well.

“Pathetic.” Louis growls, sending Luke flying through the air with ease. His combat abilities don’t seem to have lessened in the last twenty five years, and Liam isn’t sure that he’s any match for Louis even with the power of the Chevalier. He was never as good of a fighter as Louis was. He lacks the level of grace and quick thinking that made Louis into an idol for thousands of lycans, the power and strength of will that made him into a legend.

“Look at what you’re doing!” Liam pleads. “You were the guardian of this place, of these people! Why would you do this?”

“Because there’s no point fighting against the inevitable.” Louis smirks, catching Liam on the chin with a foot and sending him crashing to the ground. Liam doesn’t bother fighting it. He can’t bring himself to hurt Louis, even if the man who was his mate isn’t still inside this creature that’s picking Liam up by the throat. “My Master will win this war. I couldn’t see that when I was alive, but Final Bastion doesn’t stand a chance. There is no fighting him. Harry, you, even the fae boy, none of you can win this. But I’ve been given special permission. You’ll be my pet. Soon enough I’ll break you and you’ll be a good little dog. Or maybe I’ll turn you, and watch you feed on human after
human.”

“No-” Liam breathes out.

“Oh, does that upset you?” Louis laughs, though it sounds hollow and cold compared to the ones that Liam loved so much. “I’d nearly forgotten how much you care for those walking blood-bags. That settles it then. I shall turn you and set you loose in an orphanage. Children are so sweet, so tender. You won’t be able to stop yourself. You’ll take them in every way imaginable. You’ll sink into them, and feed from them, tearing them apart before they can scream. You’ll make a masterpiece from the shredded remains of their corpses.”

“No!” Liam roars, gripping onto Louis’ arms and bringing both feet to his former mate’s chest. The kick sends him to the ground, but it breaks Louis’ grip and sends him careening into the wall of gold that Niall had created. Liam’s halfway there when he hears a scream split the night in two, chilling him right town to his marrow. He’d know it anywhere. Harry.

“Don’t get distracted now, Liam.” Louis’ voice whispers in his ear when his head whips around just in time to see the Master feeding from Harry’s still body. “We’re not done here.”

Turns out that a golden stake through the chest doesn’t kill a vampire. In fact, it doesn’t even really slow Zayn down all that much. Lovely. He’s a bit stunned at first, but then he pulls out the spear and sends it right back at Niall. The blond has to dodge, because his power can’t get a grip on the projectile fast enough to stop it.

“Don’t get cocky just because you have a slight handle on magic, little fairy. You’ve had a week to learn it. I’ve had over a century.” Zayn sneers. His arms shoot out to the side, and he clenches his fist as two objects materialize in midair. It only takes a second for Niall to recognize the glint of the blades. “If you want to make this a battle of the Noble Metals, then I choose iron.”

“God, do you ever shut up?” Niall groans, undoing the force that keeps the spears compressed and sending it chasing after Zayn in sandy tendrils instead. The extra time has at least allowed his arm to regenerate enough for combat, and he places that one on the wall behind him to pull a thin layer of gold over the arm without weakening the barrier. It’ll make his movements sloppy and slow, but it should protect him from the iron. “Nobody gives a shit about your ‘too cool for school’ attitude. You’re a vampire. We get it, Edward Cullen. This isn’t twenty-twelve anymore. Vampires are over.”

“This isn’t a film, little fairy.” Zayn says with a mirthless laugh as he dances away from the tentacles of golden sand that Niall is sending after him to give himself time to think of a plan. “This is reality, and in reality the more powerful monster wins.”

“Then I guess I’ll show you what a real monster looks like.” Niall hums, letting go of the leash he uses to keep his powers in check. Gold spirals out from under him, giving him more to work with as he sends it towards the vampire in a wave that crests close to ten feet in the air. Zayn’s swords fall to the ground as he dodges the attack by turning back into mist, and Niall brings them to himself with the sand, coating them in a layer of gold and claiming them as his own. Iron may damage fae, but it doesn’t break fae magic apparently. Good. At least one thing is going his way.

That doesn’t last though, because he’d forgotten about one thing in his little experiment. Zayn. Zayn, who can turn into mist and move as fast as lightning. Zayn, who’s dangerous beyond measure. Zayn, whose teeth sink into Niall’s neck without any preamble. There’s a sharp pain that forces Niall to the ground, his mouth stretched open in a silent scream as the life literally drains out
It’s instantaneous, the way his body starts to fall numb, some sort of venom making him compliant to the vampire’s desires. He reaches a shaky hand and wraps it around Zayn’s wrist in a last ditch effort to save himself, but he isn’t strong enough to pull the cold flesh away. He feels something throb inside of him, and then Zayn is gone. “No! What did you do?” Zayn growls.

The moment the fangs detach from his neck, Niall’s energy surges back, and he whirls on Zayn with a fury, only to find out that his work is already being done. It starts on the wrist that Niall grabbed, and is slowly making its way across his entire body. It hits Niall then. Vampires aren’t alive! His greatest power will work on them. He barrels forwards, catching the panicking vampire by the throat and growls out “Harry is mine now, and your boss is next.”

He pushes his power with everything he has until Zayn is nothing more than a statue of gleaming gold, beautiful beyond compare, really. He only gets one second to breathe before he hears it, a howling scream that comes from his nightmares. Harry is limp in the Master’s grip, and Niall can vaguely hear himself calling out as he rushes towards them both.

Something in Niall breaks, some internal limiter, and he retreats into his head as he lets his body take over. The wall comes racing down in a flood of liquid gold, changing states in an instant as Niall commands it to. He sends it all straight at the Master, using his power to feel where his allies are so as not to hurt them. Louis gets swept up in the waves, and Niall dedicates a portion of his power to wrapping the screaming vampire in gold and melding the prison to a wall. He’ll deal with that later. Right now the priority is on Harry, Liam, Ashton and Luke, and more importantly, getting them to safety.

The Master drops Harry’s body, disappearing into mist as the tide literally turns against him. Niall uses it to sweep Harry up, pushing him towards where Luke is raising Ashton up to his legs, shaken, but alive. Niall hears his own voice shout orders, “You two, get Harry out of here. Liam, get above and act as support for me. This ends now!” but he barely recognizes the voice as his. Instead he burrows further into himself and lets the power consume him.

Niall is a true monster now. Liam can see that as he leaps up to the top of the wall to perch and follow the orders of the man who isn’t his King. The man whose limbs are elongating, ending in wicked talons, as his hair grows outwards in spurts, long and flowing. The greatest surprise of it all is the wings that tear themselves out of the fae’s back, shimmering and catching the moonlight until they glow. He’s so distracted by Niall’s transformation that he barely gets it out in time. “Behind you!”

The Master materializes less than a meter away from Niall’s new form. He’s no longer the faster one on the field though. Niall lashes out blindly, using his limbs and gold to strike against the vampire before he can even react. He fades back into mist, disappearing in the night as Niall rages around the coliseum striking out at any shadow that moves. He’s gone, taken over by some fae version of the Beast, and Liam isn’t sure if that’s aid, or certain doom.

Out of the corner of his eye, Liam sees Luke and Ashton, with Harry carried between them, make it to the King’s box, and he hopes that Lou opens the door for the three of them. Liam can’t leave now. He’s Final Bastion’s last line of defense. If the Master or Niall walks away from this looking for blood, then he’s all that’s left. Harry is unconscious, the rest of the King’s Guard is following procedure and corralling the citizenry into a series of bunkers hidden across the city. Liam is all that’s left. Liam, and this monster rampaging in Niall’s body.
Every time the Master reappears, Liam lets Niall know, and every time, the vampire fades away before Niall can land a deciding blow. After minutes of this cat-and-mouse game, the Master gets his hands on Niall’s wings before Liam can call out, and rips them from his back. The transformation is nearly instantaneous, Niall shrinking back to a normal size as his body slumps over and falls into the now still pool of liquid gold.

Liam springs into action, catching the Master by surprise with a clawed hand. Niall isn’t moving, and Liam’s strength has dropped dramatically since Harry fell unconscious. He’s in no way a match for this man, but he has to do this. He has to try. It’s what Louis would have done. It’s what Harry would want. It’s for the best for everyone in Final Bastion. Liam was never supposed to be the Chevalier, but that doesn’t mean he won’t follow his duty. That doesn’t mean he won’t die in the defense of his people, and in the service of his King.

He lashes out with strike after strike, knocking the Master off balance with a flurry of attacks that probably deal far too little damage to do anything except buy time. Something hits his entire body at once, some force that sends him through the air until he smashes into the stone with a scream of pain. He can feel his bones shatter as he slides to the ground, but his resolve won’t let him die that way. He does his best to stand, ignoring how every cell of his body screams when he pushes up on legs that are shredded from the inside out.

The Master sneers at him, ignoring Niall’s crumpled body to take care of this one last nuisance. Liam coughs, watches the blood splatter into the golden liquid that has filled the arena up to his ankles. ‘All in all, there are worse places to die.’ Liam thinks to himself. ‘At least I got to see Louis again.’

The master dives, and Liam closes his eyes to swing his claws blindly, not wanting to see his death when it happens. Except it doesn’t happen. The Master’s talons never tear into him. He opens his eyes once more to see tattered white silk wrapped around a familiar body, long brown hair with blond at the end dangling in front of his face. “Rest now, Liam.” Niall’s voice is soft, but his grip on the Master’s arm is strong. “It’s done. You did well.”

“Nothing is done!” the Master snarls, bringing his opposite hand down on the arm that Niall is holding. He disappears into a cloud of mist, his partially aurified arm forgotten in Niall’s hand as he disappears into the night with a screeching, “This is not over!”

Chapter End Notes

Did you think things were going to stay nice and fun forever?
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Warning for some very severe angst in this chapter. Just from here on out really. Lots of angst all over the place with very little respite or reprieve. TW for a major character's suicide.

“You need to sleep.” Ashton urges, tugging ineffectually at Niall’s arm. The argument is pointless, but they’ve had it a hundred times over the last three days.

“I need to finish my research!” Niall snaps, using his power to throw a book at Ashton which he’d turned to gold in a fit of rage yesterday evening. The lycan dodges it easily, though Niall knew that he would. Ashton’s not the one who’s ended up weakened after the fight with the Master. Niall’s powers are far less potent than they were days ago, having barely recovered since the incident. He won’t admit it, but he does need sleep. For the first time since he was transformed into a fae, he actually needs it. But he won’t let himself sleep until he saves Harry.

The King of the Lycans hasn’t woken since the bite, lain out comatose in his bed with Liam by his side at all times. Harry’s regeneration is fighting the venom for now, keeping him from turning into a vampire, but it won’t last much longer and Niall knows it. He’s growing weaker by the hour, that warmth in Niall’s chest fading, and Niall doesn’t think that Harry can make it another day. These people need him though. They need a leader. They need Harry. So Niall will save him at any cost.

“What good will you do in this condition, Niall?” Ashton asks.

“I can do this, Ash!” Niall hisses. “I can save him! I know I can!”

“Not if you don’t recharge.” Ashton says softly, crouching down in front of Niall with pitying eyes. “Just an hour, please.”

“I-” Niall chokes out, wanting so badly to agree. “I can’t. I’m the only one who can save him. You saw what they did to Mikey. The only other magical being that could be trusted with this is dead, Ashton. It’s down to me, and I won’t let these people down more than I did by not finishing this that night.”

“You saved everyone that night, Niall.” Ashton urges. “You’re a hero. Not just to me and every single person out in that city, but on the surface as well. You are the only being on record to ever defeat the Master.”

“I didn’t defeat him. I just rebuffed him. He said this isn’t over, and you know that it isn’t.” Niall sighs. “Just- Just go. I need to do this. I can’t stop until I find a way to save him, or he dies.”

“Then what do you need?” Ashton asks.

“He’s not going to stop.” Ashton says quietly, returning from Liam’s latest attempt at getting Niall to rest.

“I know.” Liam mumbles. “He’s never going to.”

“He needs to rest.” Ashton mutters, taking a seat beside Luke at the King’s bed side. “We should tell him.”

“No.” Luke says adamantly. “If we tell Niall, he’ll try to stop us should we have to go to the last resort.”

“It should be stopped!” Ashton hisses. “It’s treason to even consider this!”

“It’s our duty.” Liam says gently. “King Harry would be the first one to tell you that. The King’s power cannot fall into the wrong hands.”

“We don’t know that it wouldn’t transfer.” Ashton argues.

“We don’t know that it would either.” Luke says calmly.

“And we cannot risk the possibility that the power of the King would end up in the Master’s hands. It would be devastating to our cause.” Liam tells him. “You are too young to have known King Desmond, but when he abused his power, King Harry cut him down. He did the right thing. This is the choice he would make, and I will honor that.”

“By taking his power for your own?” Ashton snaps.

“If you can think of a better candidate, then I’m all ears.” Liam growls. “I have no desire to become the next king. None. There’s nobody we can trust with it though. The counselors are circling like vultures, and the entirety of the guard, yourselves included, are too unprepared to handle it. I would gladly give this burden to someone else, and not just because it means staining my hands with the blood of my oldest and dearest friend. The only two people who deserve this role are wasting away in this castle, and one of them isn’t even lycan!”

“Niall is no more prepared for the role than we are.” Ashton grumbles.

“I’m not talking about Niall.” Liam mutters.


“Watch your tongue, or I’ll remove it!” Liam warns him, standing up and relinquishing his hold on Harry’s hand.

“He attacked this city, and you dare say he deserves it more than Niall?” Ashton continues. “Louis may have been your mate once, but now he’s nothing more than an undead monster who would kill you and everyone else in this city.”

“It’s not his fault!” Liam yells.

The door suddenly flies off of its hinges, crashing through the room and only stopping when it hits the balcony. It works particularly well as a distraction from the fight that was only seconds from breaking out. Niall storms into the room in a fury, long hair flowing behind him as he makes his way across the room. He slams down a book on the bed with a wide, tired grin and says, “I found it!”
“What?” Luke asks, shooting up to go investigate the text while Niall slumps back onto the floor.

“I can reverse the effects of the vampirism on Harry.” Niall breathes out. “But it’s going to be hell for him.”

“What about Louis?” Liam asks.

“No, I’m sorry.” Niall says quietly. “I can only do it while the body is alive and still fighting the venom. But—”

“Oh.” Liam whimpers, dropping down to his knees when he realizes his last hope is gone. Harry can be saved, and Liam is so grateful for that, but he’d hoped that Louis could be too.

“You didn’t let me finish.” Niall huffs. “I can’t turn him back into a lycan. That much is just impossible for me. What I can do is break the Master’s hold on his mind. I can’t give you back your mate Liam, I’m sorry, but I can free him from the control that the master is exerting over him and make him his own man again.”

“You can?” Liam asks.

“Yes, but I’m going to need a few things. I have a list of the things I’ll need to be retrieved, and it needs to be done quickly and without questioning me.” Niall nods. “Also, I have a finite amount of power to complete both spells. If it comes down to one or the other, Harry is my priority.”

“I understand.” Liam nods.

“No, Liam, you don’t.” Niall whispers. “Working both of these spells runs an almost sure chance of killing me because the drain on my power will be so intense, and once I start, I can’t pull back. Even just doing one of these would run a risk of ending my life, but both makes it almost guaranteed. I’ll do everything I can to save both of them, but there might not be a second chance to try with Louis if I fail, and it requires a fae to do that spell. Now I need all of you to leave, because I’m going to rest, and I’m going to do it with Harry. If any of you have any qualms about that, you can go fuck yourselves. I’m most likely trading my life for his, and I think that means I deserve a little time with him before I do that.”

“Of course.” Ashton says before anyone else can object, not that Liam planned on it. Luke looks a little disgruntled, but his scent says that he’s just as worried about Niall as the other two are. He probably knows better than any of them that Niall wouldn’t want a big fuss made over this. He’s clearly made up his mind, and none of them can object. Not even if it would save the life of the Hero of Final Bastion.

“I’ll take Luke, and we’ll be back with all of the supplies in three hours.” Liam tells him. “Will that be enough time?”

“It should be fine.” Niall shrugs halfheartedly. The exhaustion he’s put himself through is obvious on his face, but there’s no sign of regret about this decision. “I um- I should warn you though. The most important ingredient for Harry’s ritual is pure silver. It’s non-negotiable.”

“We have ways.” Luke says softly. “Will any of us need to touch it?”

“No.” Niall says with a shake of his head. “I’m going to melt it down, distill it into ritualistically purified water, and insert it into him. I told you it would be hell for Harry, and I wasn’t lying. He’ll recover though. Once it burns the venom out, I’ll remove it. He’ll be in a lot of pain afterwards, so you three have to make sure to take care of him.”
“We’ll take care of all three of you.” Ashton says firmly.

“Don’t go making promises you can’t keep.” Niall says with a soft smile before crawling into the bed beside Harry. “Go. We don’t have much time. If he slips any further, then even I won’t be able to help him.”

“Just three hours.” Liam says, and the three of them exit in a flash.

“Niall.” comes a soft voice, waking the fae instantly. He lashes out at the source of the noise before his mind can come to terms with what he’s seeing. Ashton is staring up at him, a sad look in his eyes as Niall comes back to himself.

“Shit! Ash, I’m so sorry.” Niall whimpers, taking in the damage he’s done to Ashton’s arm. It’s bent at an unnatural angle, and bone is threatening to tear through the flesh. It must be so painful, but Ashton just looks resigned. “I didn’t know.”

“You were having a nightmare.” Ashton tells him, gripping onto his broken arm and forcing the bone back into place so that it’ll heal properly. He doesn’t let so much as an ounce of pain show on his face, but that just makes Niall feel worse. He shouldn’t have told them about the risk of death. He just didn’t have the energy to lie about it. Now they’re trying to be brave for his sake, and that’s like a knife to the gut. Or maybe they aren’t trying to be brave. Maybe they’d be relieved if Niall dies. Maybe it would be best for everyone.

“I know.” Niall sighs. “I kept replaying my fight with him - with Zayn. I- I killed him, Ash. I killed Harry’s mate. I didn’t know that I could have saved him! You have to believe me, I didn’t know!”

“Niall, you’re shouting.” Ashton says gently. “Of course you didn’t know. None of us thought that anything like that was possible.”

“Just- Just tell Harry that I’m sorry.” Niall begs. “When he wakes up, just please tell him that I’m so sorry.”

“You’re going to tell him yourself.” Ashton says adamantly.

“Ash.” Niall pleads.

“I’ll tell him.” Ashton agrees after a moment of silence. “But you have nothing to be sorry for, Niall. You didn’t know.”

“I managed to keep myself from killing Louis.” Niall points out. “I should have done that with Zayn too. I should have done the same thing with Zayn. I was so jealous, so angry with him. What if I did it on purpose?”

“You couldn’t kill a bird without crying about it.” Ashton reminds him. “You didn’t do it on purpose, Niall. You didn’t even know your power would affect him that way, and there was no way of stopping it once it started. Even the Master had to remove his own arm to stop from being destroyed by it. Now, stop thinking about this, and get ready for the ritual. Liam and Luke are bringing everything up, including Louis’ cocoon.”

“No!” Niall yelps. “Not here. I have to do it in the courtyard.”

“Why?” Ashton asks.
“Because I need to drain the life energy.” Niall admits. “Fae magic works by using natural energy, and there are only two sources of that here in Final Bastion. I can drain the courtyard, or I can use lycan sacrifices. I refuse to do that one, so this is my only option. That’s exactly why I haven’t gone there to help recharge myself. I need every drop of magic that keeps the courtyard alive in order to do this. I’ll take Harry and meet you three there. Just go tell the other two.”

“Alright.” Ashton nods, exiting at a breakneck speed.

Niall walks over to the bed and picks Harry up as gently as he can. He relies on his human abilities as much as possible, trying to keep his power in reserve because this will literally come down to the tiniest amounts of energy. It takes him almost twenty minutes to reach the courtyard, the combination of him holding back, and his own exhaustion taking its toll on him. It doesn’t help that he wants to spend as much time with Harry as he can before the ritual, even if the lycan will never know the difference. For him, Niall will just be gone, and these few minutes won’t have ever happened.

“I made the symbols.” Luke tells him once he reaches the courtyard. Niall nods his head in thanks as Liam silently takes Harry from his arms and lays him down gently in the rune. “Ashton explained everything about the magic of the courtyard, so I’ve also set up a protective barrier around it to keep your drain from reaching outside of it, but you’re going to have to be the one to actually cast it. I can’t do that part on my own.”

“Thank you.” Niall nods. “Just point me in the right direction, and please, for the love of god, tell me you didn’t use salt or sugar.”

“I know better than that by now.” Luke hums. “After that incident at breakfast that one time-”

“Can we not remind everybody of that please?” Niall groans, flushing with embarrassment. Luke had tossed Niall the salt for his food, and it spilled, forcing Niall into a trance for the next two hours as his body involuntarily counted every single grain individually. It was horrible, but Ashton had laughed for ages afterwards until Niall finally used the water-orb to flood their room in revenge.

“All you have to do is draw the final line.” Luke says, directing Niall towards the barrier drawn on the walls. Niall dips his fingers in a bowl containing a concoction that smells just horrible, and does as Luke instructs him to in order to finish the spell. It probably negates having saved the energy he would have used on his way down here, but it’s worth it to know that nobody else will be harmed. It’s bad enough knowing that he’ll still end up killing the birds that he’d saved what feels like a lifetime ago. Has it really been less than a week?

“I can do all of the rest myself, so you three need to get out of here.” Niall tells him. He’s sure that he can keep his power drain away from Harry if he focuses, and Louis isn’t animated by life energy, but adding three more potent sources of natural energy to potentially draw from might put him over the edge.

“I’m staying.” Liam says adamantly.

“No, you absolutely are not.” Niall grits out. “If I lose control and drain from you, then your bond will pull energy from Harry, and he needs all that he can get. All three of you need to leave, but most especially you, Liam. I won’t do the spell if it’s not going to work, and having you here is more risk than reward.”

“We’ll be just inside the door.” Ashton says calmly. “Call out if you need anything. Literally anything.”
“I won’t.” Niall tells him, pushing them all towards the door. They leave without any more fuss, and Niall is glad for it. His heart aches that he won’t get to say his goodbyes, but he isn’t sure what he is to anyone here now. He’s not even sure if they care that he’ll be gone. He wants to believe that Ashton might miss him, and maybe even Luke, but he doubts it, honestly. Niall is just a means to an end, and that’s what he’s always been. Harry and Liam will probably remember him, but how those memories are tinted depends entirely on the success of Niall’s second spell attempting to free Louis. If he succeeds at that, maybe they’ll remember him as having done something good with his time here.

He walks first towards the golden cocoon, taking a breath to steady himself before he peels back the portion over Louis’ face. Louis’ eyes flash menacingly, and his teeth gnash, but Niall cuts him off before he can spit out a word. “You must be Louis. I’m Niall. I’ve heard a lot about you. Almost everyone says that we would get along.”

“Fuck you!” Louis hisses. “My Master will kill you!”

“Actually you are far more likely to kill me than your master is.” Niall says with a humorless laugh. “Tell me, Louis, do you remember who you were before?”

“My Mast-” is all Louis gets out before Niall grabs the lump of silver for Harry’s ritual and presses it to Louis’ face. The brunet screams pitiably, and Niall’s heart would ache for him if he had the energy to devote to emotions right now.

“Do you remember?” Niall asks more forcefully.

“Yes!” Louis screams, flinching away from the metal as best as he can. “We remember our living days!”

Niall takes the silver away and looks down on the vampire. “Do you remember Liam then? Do you remember Harry? Do you remember how much they truly love you?”

“Love is a useless emotion.” Louis spits out. “I’ve used it to wicked advantage far more times than you could know. Love makes people weak and stupid.”

“Their love for you is the only reason I haven’t killed you off, Dracula.” Niall says flatly. “Remember that when I’ve finished.”

Louis tries to speak again, but Niall wraps the gold back over his mouth and nose before he can get a word out. Vampires don’t need to breathe after all, and Niall needs to focus. His next task is Harry’s preparation. Niall unlaces the lycan king’s shirt, sliding it off over his head and adamantly ignoring the way the brown hair fans out so perfectly. Niall’s hands explore Harry’s torso one last time, dipping his finger first in peppermint oil, and then in asafetida to make markings over Harry’s body. They’ll strengthen the purification power of the spell. When he makes the marking over Harry’s lower abdomen, his chest floods with something, and a sob wrenches its way out of his mouth before he even realizes why.

The door to the courtyard flies open, and Ashton is at Niall’s side before the first tear can even fall. He wraps his arms around Niall and whispers, “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, Niall.”

“You knew?” Niall asks.

“We can smell it.” Ashton admits. “I think it’s why his regeneration isn’t as strong as it should be. It’s protecting-”

“My child.” Niall finishes for him.
“Yes.” Ashton nods.

“The spell will kill it.” Niall mutters. “He’ll lose the baby. There’s no way to do this without killing it.”

“Are you sure?” Ashton asks.

“I’m going to be sucking the life out of everything in this courtyard to perform the spell, Ash. The baby included. Why didn’t you tell me?” Niall questions.

“Because Harry is the priority.” Ashton echoes Niall’s words from earlier.

“Go. I have to do this now.” Niall says, his voice falling back into the emotionless place he has to go in order to keep from turning back now. “I’m out of time. It’s now or never.”

“I’m sorry, Niall.” Ashton sighs, exiting once more and leaving Niall alone with Louis, Harry, and his unborn, and soon-to-die, child. At least the kid won’t be going alone.

Harry awakens with a gasp, choking as his body purges itself of the flames licking their way through him. He’s vaguely aware of someone screaming somewhere around him, and he springs up to search for the Master. Instead, he finds a long haired brunet bent over a golden cocoon as wails wrench their way out of his body. He falls backwards, and Harry only just manages to catch him.

His entire body protests the effort, screaming that he’s battered and broken, but his heart clenches when he realizes that the being in his hands is none other than Niall. His blue eyes have faded to an unseeing steel-gray, and his body is weak and frail in Harry’s arms. He’s barely still there when he whispers, “Tell Harry that I’m sorry.”

“Somebody!” Harry croaks out, his throat dry and feeling like blades are shredding it with every breath. “Help!”

A door slams open, and three bodies work in tandem to come to their aid. “Give him here.” Ashton mutters, plucking Niall out of Harry’s arms and disappearing back through the door with Luke right behind him.

“Sire, are you- Are you alright?” Liam asks shakily.

“I’m fine.” Harry lies. His body feels weak, and shooting pains keep running through his abdomen. He’s not felt anything like this before, but he knows that he’ll recover. Niall’s heartbeat though, that had indicated otherwise for the fae. “What happened?”

“You need to rest.” Liam tells him, laying Harry out on his back. “We can explain everything later.”

“You know better than that, Liam. Harold was never any good at doing the sensible thing.” says a familiar voice. It can’t be though. It just can’t be. They would have killed him. They would have put an end to him, if just for his dignity. “Now can someone please help me out of this bloody gold?”

“It took.” Liam breathes out, a look of relief flashing over his face for just a second.

“Yes, yes, the lovely little leprechaun lad saved the day.” Louis says dryly. “Hip-hip-hooray! Now get me the fuck out of this cocoon and get me something to eat.”
“You aren’t going to get out of that until a magical being can confirm that there’s no longer any psychic link between you and the Master.” Liam tells him.

“I’m a magical being that is confirming that there’s no longer any psychic link between myself and the Master.” Louis growls.

“At least his senses of humor and entitlement haven’t been killed as well.” Harry sighs.

“I resent that!” Louis hisses. “I have a disability! You can’t mock me for my disability!”

“Most wouldn’t consider vampirism a disability.” Harry chuckles, wincing afterwards as another sharp stab of pain races through him. “A plague maybe, but not a disability.”

“Try not being able to tan for the last quarter-century.” Louis grumbles. “It was horrid!”

“I can’t do this right now.” Liam mutters. “I fucking can’t. Sire, you’re going to rest, and then we’ll tell you everything. Louis, someone will be along to collect you shortly. You’ll be placed back in your cell until somebody else can tell us if the spell worked the way it was supposed to.”

“Just have the leprechaun come back here and do it then!” Louis groans.

“Niall is- Unable to do that right now.” Liam says quietly, picking Harry up in his arms. “We’ll make sure that you are brought a pint of animal blood at least once per night until somebody can work it out.”

“Liam, wait!” Louis calls after them. “Will you come see me?”

“Not until I know.” Liam whispers, leaving the deadened courtyard behind as Harry watches the brown leaves blow around it over the Chevalier’s shoulder.


“Niall saved us all.” Liam says, his face softening for a moment at the mention of the fae. “He didn’t destroy the Master, but he managed to drive him off. He- He was amazing. Terrifying, but amazing. I’ll explain everything when you’ve rested. Your body needs to heal. It’s been through too much.”

“The Master was beaten back?” Harry asks.

“He lost an arm.” Liam smirks. “Niall turned it to gold, was turning all of him to gold, so he cut it off himself and fled. Now no more talking until you’ve rested.”

“Liam-” Harry huffs.

“I mean it, Sire!” Liam snaps. “You’re weak. Weaker than anyone in this castle right now other than Niall. You need to recover, and every bit of energy you use right now is you insulting Niall’s sacrifice. So shut it, and wait like the rest of us have had to.”

“Fine.” Harry agrees reluctantly. His body seems to agree with Liam’s sentiment, and he falls asleep before they can even reach his chambers.

“How is he?” Liam asks once he arrives in Niall’s room.

“Not good.” Luke says grimly. “I- I don’t think he’s going to make it. His energy levels aren’t
recovering, his breathing is shallow, and his heartbeat has slowed down to the point where I can barely perceive it.”

“Is there anything we can do?” Liam asks, looking down on the fae and kneeling by his bedside. He reaches for Niall’s hand, but is stopped before he can make contact.

“Don’t touch him!” Ashton growls, leaning over Niall protectively. “You don’t get to touch him! You kept that secret from him, and the last thing he did was sacrifice his own child for the good of our people five minutes after he found out it existed! He didn’t even have time to grieve!”

“Ashton.” Luke says softly, pulling his mate back by the shoulder.

“No!” Ashton snarls, ripping himself away and crawling back over to the fae lad fading away in the bed. “He deserved to find out before this happened! He deserved so much more than we gave him! He was our friend! He was our savior! And now he’s dying because he got wrapped up in a war that he had no choice in! He sacrificed himself twice, without any thought for himself, because it was the right thing to do for everyone except him!”


“To do what? Die?” Ashton yells. “He was the only one strong enough to do anything against the Master! The King was as useless as the rest of us! What can we do without Niall? What hope do we have against the Master without Niall?”

“He gave us time to prepare.” Liam murmurs. “We won’t be caught off-guard again.”

“All we do is get caught off-guard!” Ashton argues. “That’s how Prince Edward died! That’s how Zayn and Louis died! And now it’s how Niall is going to die! Except – Newsflash! - Niall was the last chance we really had! The Master is coming back, and next time it won’t just be him and two vampires. It’ll be an army with him at the helm, seeking revenge as well as ultimate victory. We should have let King Harry die if it would have saved Niall.”


“Tell me I’m wrong!” Ashton snaps. “Tell me that we’re better off having a king who’s been defeated twice at the hands of the Master, rather than the Hero of Final Bastion! You fucking can’t, because you know it’s true. Niall was far more important to this war than King Harry is.”

“We need a leader.” Liam tells him.

“Everyone, and I mean everyone, would have followed Niall to the ends of the Earth, Liam. Have you been outside the castle since that night?” Ashton asks. “The people are cheering him in the streets. There are constant vigils and prayers to the Moon for Niall. The golden sand he used in the fight is being distributed amongst the citizens to serve as a memorial for everything he did for us. I love the King, I do, and I would protect him at any cost, which is why I didn’t fight it when Niall decided to die to bring him back. But tell me that we really stand a chance without Niall. Tell me he made an even trade to bring back King Harry and that vampire. Tell me it’s enough to end this war once and for all, like Niall could have.”

“I can’t.” Liam admits, his stomach turning sour at the thought.

“Exactly.” Ashton mutters. “So go. Just leave him to die with someone who actually cares about the sacrifice he’s made.”

“He didn’t just save this city, Ashton.” Liam says softly. “He saved me personally. It may not seem
like it, but Niall has every ounce of my respect and gratitude. I care about him too. We may not have been friends exactly, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t care about him. I will never be able to thank him enough for what he’s done for me.”

“I said go.” Ashton grits out, fangs dropping down and eyes growing feral.

“Let me know if his status changes.” Liam tells Luke, who only gives a nod in response. Liam gives one last look to Niall, and then leaves to return to his King’s side.

“You’re awake.” Liam says gently as Harry’s eyes begin to flutter open. His eyes are barely open before another wave of pain hits him so hard that he has to curl in on himself and scream. Liam’s hand is soft on his shoulder, and his voice is sad as he says, “You’ll be okay. It’s going to be okay.”

“What- What is this?” Harry whimpers as a wave of nausea washes over him. He fights it back, but only momentarily. The sharp, metallic scent of blood hits him, and he can’t hold it in any longer. His stomach heaves, emptying onto the floor. Once he’s sure that a second wave isn’t coming he asks, “Whose blood do I smell?”

“That would be yours, Sire.” Liam sighs, pulling back the sheet to show where the linens are completely soaked in blood. “It happens with this sort of thing.”

“Happens with what ‘sort of thing’?” Harry asks him. “Why isn’t my regeneration stopping it?”

“Because it’s clearing out the remnants of the child.” Liam tells him.

“No! No! I can’t have been pregnant!” Harry gasps. “I didn’t take the herbs to promote fertility. I can’t have been pregnant.”

“You’re the King, Sire.” Liam says slowly. “It’s likely that your fertility would be much more potent than that of a normal lycan. Combined with Niall’s virility as a creature of life energy- Somehow you managed to conceive without the preparations any other male-male pair would have to go through.”

“Then what happened to the fetus?” Harry asks.

“Niall had to absorb its life energy when he cast the spell to push the Master’s venom out of your system.” Liam explains. “I’m sorry, Sire.”

“Three heirs.” Harry sighs, wrapping his hands around his waist. “I’ve lost three heirs.”

“This wasn’t your fault, Sire.” Liam tells him. “It wasn’t anyone’s fault. Niall did what had to be done to save your life.”

“How is he?” Harry asks. Liam doesn’t even say anything, yet his heartbeat stutters in his chest. “Liam?”

“He’s dying, Sire.” Liam whispers. “Healing you and breaking the Master’s control over Louis’ mind was too much for him. It’s been a full day since I brought you in here, but he’s been getting weaker since the ritual. There’s nothing we can do. He’s going to die.”

“I need to see him.” Harry says, leaping out of the bed on shaky feet.
“Sire-” Liam starts.

“I need to see him, Liam.” Harry growls. “If there’s no way to save him, then I need to at least say goodbye.”

“He’ll hold until you bathe, Sire.” Liam says firmly. “You can’t go around the castle right now smelling of your own blood. That would shatter morale. Losing Niall will already hurt the citizenry. He’s become the people’s champion, their hero. They need to believe that you are strong again before any of them see you if we are to keep this from crushing them.”

“The people accept him?” Harry asks.

“They adore him.” Liam nods. “They don’t know everything about that night, details of your injuries have been kept as state’s secrets for now, but they do know that Niall saved the city. They know that he drove the Master out of Final Bastion. They know that he almost died defending a people that aren’t his own. For that, they practically worship him.”

“Good.” Harry breathes out. “I’ll bathe myself, but I need to see him as soon as possible.”

“I’ll fetch the water myself.” Liam agrees. “Give me a few minutes.”

“Make it quick.” Harry sighs. “The scent of the blood is making me sick.”

“Of course, Sire.” Liam agrees before leaving out through what looks to be a new door.

Harry gathers up the bedclothes, bracing himself for the wretched stench of the life he’s lost. He walks them out to the balcony and drops them in a pile, only to be joined a moment later by his mattress. He takes a torch off of the wall, and tosses it onto the heap. His stomach churns at the smell, but he forces himself to watch, bowed on his bloodied knees, as the remnants of his third heir are erased from this world. He refuses to let himself cry out in grief, but he can’t help the tears that roll down his cheeks.

‘Stop fucking touching me!’ Niall screams, but of course it does no good. He can’t make it come out of his mouth. He can’t even open his eyes. There’s no way he can actually get Luke and Ashton to stop brushing across his skin and letting their life-force drain into him. He’s amazed that they don’t seem to feel it, that they don’t notice how every time there’s skin-on-skin contact his body starts instinctively funneling their energy into him. He just wants them to stop. He’s responsible for too many deaths already.

Perrie and Jesy died because the Master came for him. Mikey died because the Master needed the protection spells around the portal to be undone. Niall, himself, killed both Zayn and his own unborn child. If Ashton and Luke drain into him, then he’ll have that much more blood on his hands. He’s already going to Hell for all of it, but why compound the offense? Why do more damage than he’s already done? Why can’t he just slip away and die?

“No!” he hears Ashton growl. “Do you smell that? He can’t be coming here right now!”

“We have no right to stop him, Ash.” Luke says gently. “You can’t claim the same thing with King Harry that you tried to with Liam. You know he cares about Niall.”

“Niall wouldn’t want King Harry to see him like this.” Ashton argues.

“But he would want King Harry to have the chance to say goodbye.” Luke counters.
‘No, please, send him away!’ Niall cries out in his own mind. ‘If he touches me, my body will latch on to his power! Everything I did will be in vain!’

“It’s not fair.” Ashton mutters, running his fingers through Niall’s fringe and unknowingly relinquishing that much more of his own life-force into Niall. “It’s not fair to trade his life for the King’s.”

“It wasn’t anyone’s choice except for Niall’s.” Luke says sadly. “If he’d just rested and let himself recover, then maybe he wouldn’t be in this state.”

“You know as well as I do that he used his own energy first before draining the courtyard. Resting wouldn’t have made a difference.” Ashton sighs.

“Then he should have let me help look for the spell!” Luke spits out. “We would have found it faster, and maybe that would have made a difference.”

“It wouldn’t have, Luke.” Ashton mumbles.

“He’s such a little fool!” Luke whispers. Niall wants to be hurt by it, but then a tear splashes onto the skin of his cheek, followed by another, and another until Luke is openly crying and Ashton moves to take his mate into his arms. “I could have helped. Why wouldn’t he let me help? Why did he keep me away?”

“Because he had to do this himself.” Ashton says quietly. “It’s how he is. It’s the same reason he made the two of us and Liam stay out of the fight against the Master.”

“I hate this!” Luke whimpers.


“No!” comes and all too familiar gasp. “Is- Did he-”

‘Please, no!’ Niall wants to cry, wants to scream, but it dies before it reaches his throat. ‘Don’t let him touch me! Please, don’t let him touch me!’

“He’s still alive.” Ashton assures Harry. “But he doesn’t have long. His heart-rate is erratic. It picks up a little bit whenever someone is touching him, but we aren’t sure why.”

‘Because I’m fucking killing you, you fucking idiot!’ Niall growls inside his own mind.

“May I have a moment alone with him?” Harry requests quietly.

“I’m not leaving his side.” Ashton tells him. “It’s my job to stay with him, and I’m not failing him any more than I already have in that duty.”

“Of course.” Harry agrees.

“Don’t say anything stupid, Ash.” Luke mutters before Niall hears his footsteps depart with another pair that Niall recognizes as Liam’s loping gait.

“I know you must think this is all very unfair, Ashton.” Harry says softly. “His life being exchanged for mine.”

“Your Majesty-” Ashton sighs.

“You’re right.” Harry cuts him off. “I would have stopped him from doing this if I could have. This
is no equivalent exchange. Niall served our people far better and more faithfully than I have. He
doesn’t deserve this death. There isn’t one out there befitting a man of his honor and courage.”

“He wanted me to tell you that he’s sorry.” Ashton mumbles. “He- He killed Zayn by accident in
the battle.”

“Zayn died over a century ago. If he had known what would happen to him, then he would be glad
to have been given the mercy of death.” Harry says gently. “That- That thing wasn’t Zayn.”

“But he could have been again.” Ashton says, echoing the words Niall says in his own head. “Niall
didn’t know it at the time, but he could have saved Zayn. He blames himself for not being able to
give you back your mate, as he’s done with Louis. I’m sure that he also blames himself for the
deaths of the witch, as well as Perrie and Jesy. And then- And then to add the child to the list. He
blames himself for all of it.”

‘Because it’s my fault!’ Niall bellows to himself.

“Even saving you, and breaking Louis’ mind free from the Master’s control, or saving our entire
species, I don’t think it helped alleviate his guilt at all.” Ashton admits. He’s right.

“You feel far too much, Niall.” Harry sighs. “This isn’t your fault. Please, please hear me. Please
know that not one person blames you for the deaths that have happened. Our child would have
been extraordinary, but it isn’t your fault that it died. That blame lies solely on the shoulders of the
Master, and I will make him pay for all of this. I will avenge you and our child both and find a way
to honor the two of you.”

“Not just you, Your Majesty. All of Final Bastion will stand behind you to avenge Niall.” Ashton
says firmly. “All of us.”

“Do you know of his people’s customs for death?” Harry asks.

“The Catholics have a special ritual referred to as Holy Communion that is generally administered
when the devotee is close to death as part of their final rites. It must be done by a Catholic priest
though.” Ashton sighs. “Historically the church frowns on cremation, and they prefer burial in a
Catholic cemetery, but recently it has become somewhat more acceptable among the faithful for
cremation to take place.”

“So we can do nothing to respect his faith?” Harry asks.

“I had Luke retrieve a rosary for him when they went to the surface to gather materials.” Ashton
explains. “It’s not much, but I hope it gives him some comfort in his passing.”

Ashton had laid the beads over Niall’s chest earlier, wrapping his hands around the crucifix, and
Niall can’t deny that it has been a small comfort for him. He knew once he was brought here that
the church was out of his reach, but Ashton has helped Niall in the one way he could, and that
means more than the lycan can possibly know.

“I’m sure it would.” Harry breathes out. “He was lucky to have you, Ashton. He picked the right
man for the job.”

“He’d have said ‘the right Wolf-man for the job.’” Ashton says around a choked laugh. “I’ll uh-
I’ll give you a moment, Your Majesty. I’m sorry to have intruded.”

“Don’t be. I can tell you cared for him a great deal.” Harry says gently. “I won’t take long. You
deserve to be here at the end.”
“Let him know you’re here. Like I said, his heart-rate picks up whenever someone touches him.” Ashton mutters before his footsteps retreat.

‘Fuck!’ Niall yells within his head. ‘Don’t! Please, Harry, don’t touch me!’

Of course, per usual, Harry doesn’t listen to a single thing Niall tells him to do. Whether or not he can hear it is irrelevant. The drain starts from the second Harry wraps his hands around Niall’s. It’s much more intense than it has been with anyone else so far, latching onto the king’s power and ripping it out of him hard and fast. Harry lets out a cry of shock, dropping Niall’s hands and flying backwards from his body. It sounds like he hits the desk containing all of Niall’s things, but the fae can’t really tell over the yelp of, “Something happened!”

“What?” Ashton’s voice is first, three sets of feet carrying the furry bastards though the door despite Niall’s silent screeches of protest.

“When I touched him it- It felt like I was being drained.” Harry stammers. “Like I was losing energy.”

“Oh, by the bloody Moon!” Luke yells. “He draws power from bloody life energy! That’s why his pulse accelerates with touch! He’s sapping energy!”

“Could he recover enough from the four of us to kick-start his regeneration?” Ashton asks, not bothering to wait for an answer before he grips onto Niall’s bicep.

“It’s possible, but it would be smarter to take him through the portal and let him absorb as much as he needs from natural surroundings.” Luke explains, attaching his hands to Niall’s leg despite his words.

“No. He’d hate that.” Ashton sighs. “He’d feel like he was killing things just to stay alive. I have a better idea.”

“What?” Liam asks.

“The people. They’ll do anything for Niall now. Let each of them donate a portion of their life-force to him until his body recovers.” Ashton hums. “Let them feel like they can repay him for what he’s done.”

“He’d hate that even more.” Luke argues, and Niall would cut off his own foot right now just to be able to tell them that he agrees with Luke.

“Nothing would die my way.” Ashton huffs. “We might each lose a few years off of our total lifespan, but that’s nothing when we live for centuries.”

“Niall wouldn’t want people to see him this weakened. And it would kill morale to see the Hero of Final Bastion in such a state.” Luke chastises.

“Or it could raise it.” Niall expected that to be Ashton’s line, but instead it’s Liam who says it. “The people want to repay their debt to him in whatever small way they can. Let them decide whether or not to give him their power.”

“Make the announcement.” Harry decides. “We’ll set him up in the grand hall. He’ll be furious once he wakes up, but at least he might wake up.”

‘I’m going to skin all of you and make you into fur coats.’ Niall growls.
“I bet you right now, he’s thinking something incredibly angry and wolf-related, like how he’s going to make us into rugs or coats or something.” Ashton laughs.

“He can do whatever he wants if he just gets better.” Harry whispers, touching his fingers to Niall’s cheek for just a second before he yelps and starts arguing with Liam while he’s presumably dragged away if the way his voice fades is anything to go by. Niall is going to kill all of them for this. Right after he hugs them, he’s going to kill them.

The response is overwhelming, even more so than Harry expected. He had underestimated things when Liam said that the people loved Niall. He’d thought it was just something to comfort Harry, but it wasn’t. There are thousands gathered around the gates, which can be seen from the wide open doors of the great hall, a large crowd making no fuss as they each creep forward to lay a hand over one of Niall’s for ten seconds before they give their thanks and move for the next person to go, seemingly grateful for the opportunity to lose years off of their lives.

Some people smile, and some cry, but most of them stay silent, one hand clasped around Niall’s, and one around the miniature vials of golden sand that seem to have been distributed to every citizen. Niall has become revered, and Harry still doesn’t think it’s quite enough, but he may be biased.

Liam is watching him like a hawk, making sure that Harry stays at least ten feet back because Niall’s drain seems to be far more effective on him, and it would be a waste of Niall’s near self-sacrifice if Harry were to be sapped completely. So Harry makes no move towards the fairy, whose (suddenly, somehow) knee-length hair is fanned out from his body, whose pale skin is starting to pink-up again, and whose heartbeat grows stronger with every passing citizen. And who is probably also cursing Harry with every fiber of his being. Harry accepts that.

It’s a little girl who does it in the end. Harry knows her and her mother well. They’d spent the day in Harry’s box at Niall’s invitation, and it seems fitting when she breaks free from her mother’s grasp and sprints across the hall. Her hand is grasped around something that shines as she hops up onto the altar where Niall is lain out, burying her face in Niall’s chest and whispering, “Wake up, Niall. You still have to fight me.”

“Guess I do, don’t I?” comes a groggy voice, dry and rasping because he hasn’t used it in a full day.

“Niall!” Ashton cries, abandoning his post along the side of the room with the other members of the King’s Guard to cover the distance as fast as lightning. Luke is right by his side once he stops.

“Once the pup is gone, we’re going to have a very serious conversation.” Niall says with a glare at his attendant. “Somebody get me a fu-”

“There’s a bit of an audience, Niall.” Luke cuts him off. “Try to be dignified for once, won’t you?”

“Yeah, yeah.” Niall mutters. “Miss Lux, would you mind terribly if I put you down? I’m still not feeling very well.”

“That’s fine.” Lux beams, scooting backwards until she’s standing next to the altar again. She holds up her hand, displaying a bright golden flower. “Look, I still have the present you gave me.”

“Think I owe you a few more flowers than just this one.” Niall chuckles. “Where’s your mum, Little Miss?”
“Right here, Sir.” Lou says quickly, popping up beside her daughter and kneeling.

“Lou, what did we discuss?” Niall sighs. “Call me by my name.”

“Sir, things have changed.” Lou says quietly. “You- You’ve earned the respect of every lycan within Final Bastion. This is the least I can do.”

“I’m no hero, Lou. I just did what I had to do. You can only call me ‘Sir’ once I’ve defeated the Master once and for all, deal?” Niall offers.

“Fine.” Lou nods. “But you have about ten thousand other people to convince of that agreement.”

“Oh Christ.” Niall groans. “Suppose I have to face the music now. I hope they’re not expecting eloquence. Never was good at speeches, and I’m definitely not at the top of my game right now.”

“Then maybe just a simple thank you will suffice for now, until you can think of something better.” Ashton murmurs in his ear, getting far too close for Harry’s liking.

“Does anyone have some peppermint oil?” Niall sighs.

“Allow me.” Harry tells them, standing up off the throne. “Niall, will you join me up here please?”

“Sure, make the guy who had to absorb life-energy from literally hundreds of people just to wake up walk across this big-arse room.” Niall grumbles, slinging his legs over the side of the altar and dropping down to his feet. Harry can tell that it’s taking more effort than it should for Niall to make his way up the steps, but he does it without faltering, putting on a brave face for the crowd gathered behind him. Harry just hopes that he can keep it up. “What can I do for you, H- Your Majesty?”

“Don’t react negatively.” Harry whispers. Harry only gets a glimpse of Niall’s confused expression before he drops down to one knee, attaching his left hand to his right shoulder. A small gasp echoes through the audience, followed by the crowd gathered outside. After a few seconds though, there comes a series of thuds that echo off the walls. Harry peeks out of the corner of his eye to see that the citizenry has indeed followed his example.

“I’m going to make you pay for this.” Niall says through gritted teeth, an embarrassed flush pink-ing up his cheeks quite nicely.

“What the fuck was that?” Niall growls, sending a furious glare at Harry over the mountain of food that his body is demanding he eat. His damn ‘dignity’ was thrown out the window after Harry’s little stunt, but it got so much worse when his stomach basically roared in front of literally thousands of people and all of them burst into laughter. He hasn’t been able to eat until now because he’d had to give a short speech thanking everyone for helping him, even though he felt awful about it, so he’s fucking starving.

“I just thought it would help.” Harry shrugs.

“I’m not Mulan, Harry!” Niall snaps. “And this isn’t China!”

“I’m sure that is a reference to something I won’t understand.” Harry waves him off. “Niall, I paid you only a bit of the respect you deserve. You may not agree with it, but you are the Hero of Final Bastion. There’s no getting around that fact. Any king would have done the same.”
“I don’t want that responsibility, Harry.” Niall sighs. “A hero shouldn’t do what I’ve done. They shouldn’t cost people their lives.”

“You didn’t cost anyone their lives, Niall. The Master did.” Harry argues.

“Because he was gunning for me!” Niall groans. “He came after me, and three people died in that pursuit. And then I killed two more.”

“Countless lives would have been lost if you hadn’t rebuffed him, Niall. Literally every living being on this planet owes you their thanks.” Harry says gently. “Zayn would have thanked you for giving him release from what he became.”

“And what about our child, Harry?” Niall asks in a whisper. “What about them? You told me that there were preparations you had to take to become fertile. You told me that we wouldn’t conceive a child unless we wanted one.”

“I didn’t take into account my increased fertility as the King, and your increased virility as fae.” Harry mumbles. “Were we any other pair, it would not have happened.”

“Then it isn’t going to happen anymore.” Niall mutters. “I- I can’t do this anymore, Harry. Whatever this thing is between us, it’s done. We’re allies and nothing more.”

“Niall—” Harry sighs.

“No!” Niall growls. “I took the life of our child to save you! I get to back out! I get to call it quits on this! I just can’t do this anymore, Harry. I can’t be attached to you. I can’t be what I need to be if I have to think about you! My only goal now is destroying him, and stopping him from ever harming another person! Nothing else matters!”

“You think I don’t fully understand that?” Harry yells. “You think this whole thing hasn’t affected me just as much? You may have taken its life, Niall, but I’m the reason our child, my third heir, was in danger in the first place! I’m the one whose body had to reject my own child! I’m the one who lost focus during the most dangerous fight of my life, because of what the Master threatened to do to you! And let’s not forget that my only goal for centuries has been to defeat the Master and save my people!”

“But you can’t fucking do it, can you?” Niall bites out. “He’s almost killed you twice in your life. I’m the only one who can do it. I’m the only person powerful enough to destroy him once and for all, and I can’t do that if I’m thinking about you. I gave my life for yours once, but this whole entire planet can’t afford for me to do it again. Both you and Ashton were right. I’m more necessary than you are. That’s literally all there is to it. I need to complete what I’ve set out to do. I need to kill the Master.”

“And what about afterwards, Niall?” Harry asks. “What will you do after you’ve vanquished the greatest evil this world has ever known?”

“I’m not staying here, if that’s what you’re asking.” Niall tells him. “Once I destroy him- I’m going to disappear somewhere and live out the rest of my days alone. I’m too dangerous to the world around us for anything else.”

“Why?” Harry asks. “Why not stay with me?”

“I killed your mate. I killed our child. I will never forgive myself for either of those things.” Niall mutters, grabbing a single piece of bread as he stands up and walks to the door. “Please just accept that, Harry.”
“For now.” Harry says quietly. “I will give you time to grieve, Niall, but I will not give up on this. I won’t give up on you.”

“You should. It’ll save you a lot of trouble.” Niall murmurs before he exits.

“Come to investigate me, little leprechaun lad?” Louis grins.

“How did you know it was me?” Niall asks, stepping out from around the corner.

“You have a very peculiar energy that radiates off of you.” Louis muses. “It sings in my veins. Makes me hungry. I bet you taste delicious.”

“The last vampire that tried to feed on me is a statue right now.” Niall says, his pulse and voice both calm and even in Louis’ ears. “Would you care to repeat that process?”

“Not really.” Louis chuckles. “I wouldn’t object if you decided to bleed yourself into a cup and feed it to me though. Liam promised that I’d be fed, but my guards have been less forgiving than he has.”

“I’ll let somebody know that you need to be fed.” Niall nods. “For now, I just need to check that your mental-connection to the Master is severed. I don’t feel much like repeating the ritual. Personally, I’d rather just kill you and be done with it, but I have a feeling that you could be of use to my cause, and I can’t just ignore that.”

“Your ‘cause’ being the slaying of the most powerful monster on the face of the planet?” Louis asks, though he already knows the answer. The fae’s eyes are hard and unforgiving, devoid of any ideas of mercy or innocence. Louis knows that look far too well. It’s the same one that the Master has.

“I’m just going to finish what he started.” Niall mutters.

“And why should I help you accomplish that end?” Louis questions. “You can check, and you’ll find that the connection is indeed severed, but it still wouldn’t work in my favor to let you kill him.”

“So Harry was right. Killing the Master will cause a domino effect.” Niall hums.

“It’s likely, yes.” Louis tells him. “Nobody knows for sure though. Maybe the Master’s power would transfer like one of the lycan kings’. Maybe another vampire would inherit it. Nobody has ever come close to killing him, so I couldn’t tell you for sure one way or the other. Either it would work, and I’d die, or it wouldn’t work, and I’d be on the outs with the new Master.”

“Does the Master have a Chevalier?” Niall asks. “Or something similar?”

“No.” Louis laughs. “Vampires are inherently selfish, my dear leprechaun. They would never share their power. A lycan’s first priority is his pack, his people, but a vampire cares about themselves first and last. Many won’t even participate in the Master’s war because they have no desire to risk their un-lives for someone else’s goal of world domination, even if the ultimate result would benefit them more than the current system.”

“So the Master has to specifically exert control over a vampire to change their will?” Niall asks.

“More or less.” Louis nods. “Neither Zayn nor I started out the way we were the night that you
killed him. We were very much like our living selves. It took time for the Master to wear us down enough to force his own will into us. Vampires are not any more inherently evil than lycans are. We feed on blood, yes, but not because we wanted to be this way. I was a proud lycan. I was Chevalier. I had no choice in my transformation.”

“I’m well aware of your circumstances.” Niall says dryly. “Don’t try to manipulate me by using my emotions, or I’ll keep you wrapped up in that cocoon for the rest of eternity without so much as a drop to drink.”

“How did you know?” Louis asks. “My best skill is manipulating people without them knowing.”

“Vampires are inherently selfish.” Niall echoes. “You may be back to your old self, but you’re still a vampire. It serves you to try and get me to let you loose with your tragic vampiric origin story. A few days ago, it probably would have worked. Not anymore.”

“Oh, I like you.” Louis giggles.

“I’ve heard that you would.” Niall huffs. “Now that I’ve met you, I’m not sure at all how that wasn’t an insult. Everyone I’ve met here thinks so highly of you, but I can’t figure out why. You just seem like an asshole.”

“Maybe I always was an asshole, and people are just remembering me with rose-tinted glasses.” Louis says, cocking his head to the side in lieu of shrugging, as his body is still wrapped too tightly in the gold to move.

“Liam wouldn’t love you so much if you weren’t a good man somewhere underneath that.” Niall says, shaking his head. “He’s too good for that.”

“Ah, my Liam. Such a boy-scout.” Louis hums. “Big cock though, and one hell of a sexual appetite.”

“He’s not yours anymore, Louis.” Niall says fiercely.

“So you’re sleeping with my mate as well as Zayn’s?” Louis asks in surprise. “I suppose that’s only fair. Zayn and I have had each other countless times over the last twenty-five years.”

“I’m not sleeping with Liam, nor am I sleeping with Harry. But I will protect them at any cost, and that includes protecting them from you.” Niall tells him. “I don’t trust you for a second, and I won’t let you harm them.”

“I have no intention of harming either of them.” Louis admits. “I’ve known them for centuries, leprechaun. I was bonded to both of them. They matter more to me than you can imagine.”

“Then help me defeat the Master.” Niall says firmly. “Help me protect them.”

“You have something in mind.” Louis guesses.

“I have a lot of things in mind, but I need your help for some of it. If you refuse, then I’ll keep you like this, but if you agree, then there’s every chance that you’ll be allowed to move again one day soon.” Niall offers.

“Good. My nose has a terrible itch.” Louis grins. “Come back with something for me to drink, something fresh, and we’ll talk about your plans.”

“I’ll be back in the morning. For now, I’ll just do this.” Niall smirks. He steps forward, placing his
hand on the cocoon and closes his eyes. Before Louis can figure out what’s happening, his body is being twisted as the gold shifts.

He ends up with one finger poking through the gold, jabbing himself in the cheek, and he squawks in protest when Niall starts to walk away. “What the hell did you do that for?” he asks.

“Now you can scratch your nose.” Niall hums before shutting the door over the sounds of Louis’ cackling. He really likes that leprechaun.
“Niall, you need to rest.” Liam sighs.

“I can keep going.” Niall pants out, hunched over the sand and bleeding from a wound in his abdomen.

“Well- I need to rest then.” Liam says firmly. His body is littered with cuts, and his muscles are sore. The last five days have been almost nothing except training, at Niall’s insistence. He still won’t tell Liam why though. He’s done a complete flip on his attitude about training, sparring with anyone who can teach him and not hesitating in the slightest to hurt people during the matches. Liam has banned any of the King’s Guard except for Luke from fighting Niall now because of it.

“We can rest when we’re dead. Until the Master is defeated, I can’t stop.” Niall grits out, standing up straight and curling his hands tighter around the grips of the blades in his hands. “If you can’t do that for me, if you can’t push me farther, then find me someone who can.”

“You refuse to see the King.” Liam points out.

“I’m not talking about the King.” Niall mutters. “I’m talking about Louis. Bring him out here. I’ll fight him instead. I need to fight a vampire anyways, to learn more about how it’s done.”

“It’s still light out. He’d die before you could land a hit.” Liam tells him. “Just give me a few minutes and then we can go again.”

“Good answer.” Niall says harshly. He drops to the ground, legs crossed in front of him as he buries the swords in the sand up to their hilts. His hands find each other in a pose that Liam has become all too familiar with over the last few days. He’s gathering energy from the air around him to aid in his regeneration.

His newly re-shorn hair blows in the light breeze, his natural color catching the sunlight differently than the blond had, and Liam sighs because Niall only ever looks peaceful now when he’s doing this. Something changed in him after he woke up, and he’s become hard. Liam doesn’t like this version of the lad. He misses the lighter, happier man that he knew before. That Niall was kind and good. Liam isn’t so sure about this Niall.

But he says nothing, because whether Liam likes it or not, this Niall could be their last hope as a people. This Niall is a warrior of unparalleled discipline and determination. This Niall could beat the Master if he can recover his power. That seems to be the problem though. Niall’s power has waned significantly from what it was before. He can only create gold in a small area around him, and he can’t work with it fast enough to use it in combat. He refuses to absorb any more energy from living beings, so his recovery is already limited. Combining that with upwards of sixteen hours a day of training between Liam, Ashton, and Luke (and that’s just what Liam knows about for sure) - Well that’s probably not helping him.

“Niall.” comes a call from the doorway to the training area. “It’s time.”

“I thought it would take a few more days.” Niall sighs. “I’m not ready yet.”

“It’s now or never.” Luke tells him. “I cashed in every favor that either Ashton or I had in order to call this meeting together, so get your fae-ass inside and make yourself presentable.”

“What’s going on?” Liam asks.
“Just get the King and meet us in the council chambers in fifteen minutes. You’ll find out with the rest of them.” Niall mutters, plucking his blades out of the sand and walking inside. Liam gives Luke a curious look, but neither of them acknowledge him.

Liam sighs, but accepts it. Pushing Niall about anything other than combat is a mistake these days. He’s completely walled off his emotions, which isn’t good for anyone. Liam is actually pretty sure that it’s why Niall’s control hasn’t been getting any better. Niall’s powers are firmly rooted in his emotions, and if he’s not accessing them, then he can’t use his powers as well. Of course the last time that Liam told Niall this, he’d gotten skewered through the thigh with a hardened tendril of sand just so that Niall could prove a point.

He packs away the gear and heads inside to the room that he’s been sharing with the King ever since Niall turned him away. Harry has been unable to leave his room for much of anything, too grief-stricken by the loss of both Niall and their child to do more than the bare minimum that is required of him. Liam has been acting as his regent for the time being, but it’s becoming increasingly difficult to make excuses for the King’s absence when they haven’t told the counselors about the short-lived romance between Harry and Niall, or the child.

“Sire, I’m afraid you’re going to have to come with me.” Liam says quietly once he enters the chambers. He won’t get a response though, because, per usual when Harry is upset, he’s retreated to lupine form. There’s a hulking mass of brown fur, knotted and matted from improper care, curled up on the bed and sulking moodily. “Sire, I can’t let you sit this one out. The council is meeting.”

Harry rolls his eyes, as if to say ‘so what?’ and lays his head back down.

“Niall is the one who has called the meeting.” Liam informs him. As expected Harry perks up immediately at the mention of the fae’s name. “He requested for me to bring you to the council chambers in about ten minutes from now.”

The shift is quick, probably painfully so judging by Liam’s experience. Harry doesn’t seem to care though as he stumbles forward off of the bed, hands thrown out as he pitches from side to side before finding his balance. “Ten minutes? How am I supposed to be presentable in ten minutes?”

“This isn’t a courting, Sire.” Liam sighs.

“Obviously.” Harry scoffs. “I don’t want the council to see me in such disarray.”

There’s a stutter in Harry’s heartbeat, but Liam doesn’t bother pointing it out. They both know the truth, but nobody else needs to. Harry sniffs at the air and grimaces. “I smell awful.” he groans.

“This isn’t a courting, Sire.” Liam agrees.

“Shove off.” Harry mutters, sounding far too much like Niall as he heads straight towards the bath. The water will be cold, leftover from Liam’s bath this morning, but they don’t have time for anything else. “Find me some clothes, and then go get changed. You’re covered in blood, and your shirt is more holes than fabric at this point.”

“I should start making Niall replace my clothing if he’s going to keep doing this.” Liam chuckles.

“How is he doing in training?” Harry asks, sinking into the water and grabbing the soap to scrub at himself vigorously. His tone feigns disinterest, but Liam can tell how invested he is in the answer.

“He’s improving.” Liam hums, teasing the king gently as he looks around for an outfit that the king hasn’t shredded in one of his fits of emotion over the last few days. He finds one that isn’t really
appropriate for a council meeting, but will have to suffice. The King will like it anyways. It’s very form-fitting and will probably catch Niall’s eye. By the Moon, Liam hopes it catches Niall’s eye and snaps the fae out of whatever state he’s in now.

He’s late. He’s late to a meeting he’s been planning for four days. Not a great impression. Then again, he isn’t doing this to ask permission. He’s simply telling them what he’s planning, and that it’s going to happen, with or without their approval. He’s done being ordered around. He’s done waiting for things to happen.

Ashton is by his side, and Luke is taking care of the other part of the plan. Niall fiddles nervously with the pommels of the swords strapped to his sides, a reminder of what he’s done, of the lives that he’s taken by not being prepared for this war. They’re the same blades that Zayn had summoned to kill him with, the ones he’s coated in gold and sharpened to deadly purpose.

“You’ll be fine, Niall. They can’t deny you.” Ashton says gently, snapping Niall out of his head.

“I should have told Liam about this ahead of time.” Niall sighs.

“No. It’s about time that somebody in Final Bastion took charge.” Ashton says firmly. “I’m glad it’s you.”

“And you’re with me?” Niall asks.

“Until the end. You’ll have Luke and me by your side no matter what, Niall.” Ashton nods.

“I don’t need loyalty, Ash.” Niall mutters. “I need someone who’ll tell me if I’m doing the right thing.”

“I wouldn’t be loyal to you if I thought you were doing the wrong thing, Niall.” Ashton tells him. “This plan, it’s our best hope. You’re our best hope. Besides, you know Luke wouldn’t stand for it if you weren’t doing the right thing. Now come on. We’re late enough as is.”


“He should be on his way back. I’m heading out now to meet with him.” Ashton cuts him off. “This is the one portion that I’m hesitant about.”

“Me too.” Niall admits. “But it’s the only plausible choice. Go on. I’ll be fine on my own until you guys get here.”

“Don’t let them give you any shit. They’ll eat you alive if you show even a hint of weakness.” Ashton tells him softly before darting off, leaving Niall in front of the door to the council chambers by himself. He takes a deep breath, tries not to focus on the fact that he can feel Harry inside the room, as strong as ever, and pushes open the doors.

“Niall.” Liam says with a nod as the fae walks to the spot at the head of the table opposite Harry.

He adamantly keeps his eyes averted from the King while he sweeps them over the rest of the table. “I assume you’re all wondering why I’ve called this meeting.” he says slowly.

“I’m actually wondering why you think you have the authority to call this meeting.” one of the counselors sneers. Niall recognizes him as the one who had nearly set Liam off during the night of the feast.
“I think no such thing, and yet you all came. Fancy that.” Niall says dryly. “I’m doing your people the courtesy of addressing you all properly. Regardless of what you all think, I’m following my plan. Your approval matters very little to me. It would make things easier, but it’s not necessary.”

“You speak haughtily for a guest.” the lycan fires back.

“But not for the Hero of Final Bastion.” Niall counters. “Now, may I speak, or would you like to continue bickering for a good long while?”

“Continue, if you will, please.” Liam says before the counselor can object.

“Thank you.” Niall says without looking at him. “I’m going to be blunt about this, because I don’t have time or patience for your political bullshit. I’m leaving.”

“What?” comes Harry’s voice, shrill and surprised.

“I’m leaving, Your Majesty.” Niall repeats. “Not- I’m not going back to my old life. That much is beyond my reach now. I’m leaving for the sake of the people of Final Bastion. It’s quite clear to me now that your people are no longer safe here, and I’m going to find them a new home.”

“You think that has not been tried?” the counselor interjects again.

“I think that I have access to something that you don’t.” Niall smirks. “Magic, my furry friend. More specifically, portal and teleportation magic. Not that somebody hasn’t tried to keep that a secret from me.”

He says the last part with a pointed glare at Harry, who he definitely does not have the intense urge ogle in that exceedingly tight outfit, before continuing with, “However, during my research, I’ve come across quite a bit of information regarding the fae and portals. It’ll let me access certain places that your people can’t. For instance, the Necropolis, or Maluti.”

“Those portals were sealed for a reason.” a female counselor, whom Niall vaguely remembers from Ashton’s lessons on the council is named Caroline, says harshly.

“And now I’m going to reopen them and investigate to see if any of the other ancient lycan empires are still livable.” Niall grits out. “We need somewhere to house the citizens while I carry out the rest of my plan.”

“Niall-” Harry says carefully. “Can you explain your plan to us?”

“I’m going to evacuate Final Bastion.” Niall sighs. “Then – Alone - I’m going to draw the Master here for a confrontation to end this once and for all where nobody can be hurt. Whether I die or not will be irrelevant. If I win, then Final Bastion will be inhabitable again. If I die, then I’m going to have already cast a spell to tie the portal to my life, and it will collapse, trapping him here forever because it requires fae magic to recreate a portal. I just need to find a place to house the lycans before I can have the battle.”

“And what if the Master attacks while you’re gone?” a squat male counselor, the one that Ashton had told Niall is named James, asks. “What if you aren’t here to defend against him?”

“I’ve that thought out too.” Niall smiles softly at him. “I need a group of people that I’ve chosen to accompany me. Ashton, my attendant, Luke, my magic teacher, and the last person I need to bring with me is the Chevalier. If Final Bastion is attacked, the bond will let me know and I’ll come back immediately.”
“You want to remove not only yourself, but Liam as well?” the first counselor scoffs. “We can’t be without both yourself and Liam right now.”

“I’m not talking about Liam.” Niall hums. “Boys?”

“Hello, all. Did you miss me?” Louis chuckles, walking through the door, freed from the gold except for one large piece binding his hands together.

“What is the meaning of this?” Liam growls, slapping his palms down on the table.

“The bond was never severed between Louis and His Majesty.” Niall explains. “That’s actually something that the Master used to his advantage. Because the bond for the Chevalier is formed by blood transference and magic, it never broke when he ‘died’. The Master used it to manipulate the King’s emotions which is why he was such a dick.”

“Niall.” Luke sighs, though it doesn’t cover Harry’s little huff of protest.

“I’m just going with my own experience and what I’ve heard about what his behavior was like ever since Louis died.” Niall shrugs. “Anyways, my unconscious magic was enough to break the spell that the Master had cast to manipulate him in order to protect myself, but the bond can only be broken by a true death, or by the Chevalier and the King themselves. It’s giving us a unique opportunity for me to leave and still be ready to defend Final Bastion should anything happen, and I can’t ignore it.”

“Why should we let you leave?” the asshole counselor asks.

“I invite any and every person in this room to try and stop me if they think that’s best.” Niall says calmly, placing a hand on the grips of each of his swords. “The blood on my hands will never wash clean, but if you’d care to add yours to it, then I’ll gladly oblige you. It’ll be winter soon enough, and I could use a new coat.”

“And you two, you support his plan?” the guy asks, looking between Ashton and Luke.

“One hundred percent.” Ashton says firmly.

“I don’t believe there is any other option.” Luke tells him. “We can’t be on the defensive anymore. We can’t just stand around and wait to be slaughtered. Attacking the Master on his own terrain is suicide. Let us decide the terms. Let us end this.”

“Once and for all.” Niall adds. “Within a few months, your people will be free. I will do my utmost to give them back their home, but it is very likely that I’ll die and that won’t be an option. At least I can do this. I can trap him here if I can’t kill him.”

“And what good would that do?” the man asks. “If he doesn’t die, then his army will still exist.”

“Louis?” Niall requests.

“The vampires are tired of the Master’s war. They want out. There will be a few extremists who still follow through on his plans, but his army will mostly just evaporate and try to live their un-lives peacefully.” Louis explains. “Your people could handle the stragglers. Within a few years they would be wiped out, if not faster. The plan is solid.”

“Nobody asked you what you thought of the plan vampire.” the counselor snaps.

“Watch your tongue with me, Benjamin.” Louis growls. “Even bound at the wrists, I’m still
powerful enough to take you out.”

“Your Majesty, you can’t be considering this.” Ben sighs. “An outsider, a vampire, and two pups who’ve not yet celebrated their centennial years cannot be allowed to just do as they wish.”

“I need some time to deliberate.” Harry says quietly.

“I said it when I came in here, and I’ll say it again.” Niall speaks to the room at large. “I am not asking for permission. If you want to stop me and these three from leaving, then you’ll have to kill me. Or bind me in iron, but when the Master comes back, you’d regret having done that. I wouldn’t be strong enough to fight him if you did. I’m leaving in two nights. That’ll give me enough time to rework the magic protection on the portal, and prepare for the trip. Do what you think that you must by then, but I will defend my actions without mercy. I’m doing what needs to be done. That’s final.”

“How dare y-” Ben snarls. He’s not even out of his chair before Niall’s swords are out of their sheaths, hovering in the air in front of him. Ashton and Luke have their claws and fangs bared, and Louis looks positively spoiling for a fight.

“Stop this at once!” Liam roars. “You’re all behaving like pups! Benjamin, sit down and close your mouth. You three, leave us to speak about this. Put Louis back in his cell. We’ll have an answer for you by tonight.”

“Louis stays in my chambers until we leave.” Niall says firmly. “He’s the most important part of my plan, and I won’t let him out of my sight until my mission is completed, or at least one of the two of us is permanently dead.”

“Fine.” Liam nods. Niall doesn’t think he imagines the flash of relief that crosses the Chevalier’s face for a fraction of a second. “But that makes him your responsibility.”

“Oh, however will we occupy ourselves?” Louis hums, slinging his arms around Niall’s neck and hugging him tightly from behind. “I’m sure I can think of a few ways.”

Liam’s eyes narrow dangerously, but Niall keeps his own face devoid of emotion. Still, he doesn’t dare to look at Harry before he ducks out from Louis’ grip and strides out of the room with his swords hovering behind him as a warning. He will not be fucked with anymore.

“You really planning on keeping me with you all the time, Sunshine?” Louis asks as they make their way through the castle.

“Yes.” Niall nods. “I don’t trust the counselors not to kill you just to throw a wrench in my plans. You’re too valuable to me right now to waste on a pithy revenge plot.”

“So- About the other thing?” Louis whispers over the shell of the fae’s ear.

“Not on your un-life.” Niall mutters, drawing the blades back into their sheaths.

“Which one is it that’s got you holding back?” Louis asks. “Liam or Harry?”

“Neither.” Niall says curtly. His heartbeat stutters, but Louis knows that pushing it right now won’t do him any good. Teasing on the other hand is a perfectly viable option. “I’m just not interested in you.”
“Have you seen my arse?” Louis offers. “I’ve been told it’s a work of art.”

“I want nothing to do with a body that’s been tainted by the Master.” Niall growls. “Listen to me, and listen well, Louis. If I need to, I will remove your arms and legs. Nothing about this mission requires you be able to move on your own. We can carry you on our backs.”

“Mm, perfect position for a snack.” Louis giggles, dropping his fangs to brush them over Niall’s pulse point. He has no intention of trying to feed on the fae after what happened to Zayn, but he wants to learn Niall’s limits now so that he has something to entertain himself with as he wanders around the world looking in ruins for a place to store twelve-thousand lycans without drawing attention to them. He can’t very well be expected to be serious.

“One more crack like that and we’ll see how long it takes for vampiric regeneration to regrow fangs.” Niall huffs, placing his palm flat against Louis’ face and giving a hard push. Louis falls back onto his arse, grunting at the shock of it, and turns back to give Niall a piece of his mind for such rude behavior. The look in the fae’s eyes says that won’t be forgiven though. “You need to know something now. You’ll only be fed from me, and it’ll be once a day from a cup. If you make one wrong move, Louis, I will make you pay in ways you can’t imagine. I’m not only bringing you along as a warning bell. You’re also coming because I don’t trust you with Liam and Harry. They wouldn’t be able to bring themselves to kill you, even if it were necessary, but don’t assume the same thing about me.”

“I figured that out already.” Louis grumbles, using the gold that binds his hands to give himself leverage as he hoists his body up. “Has anyone ever told you that you need to relax a bit, Sunshine?”

“Do you want to be the first to try?” Niall asks, placing his palm over the gold and squeezing it tighter until it feels like Louis’ hands are about to break.

“Fuck!” Louis hisses, tearing his shackle away. “Fine! I get it! You’re no fun! I’ll leave the other two to entertain me, just stop bloody breaking my fingers!”

“You only get one chance with me.” Niall says firmly, relieving the pressure with a wave of his hand. “Don’t believe otherwise for a second.”

“How did anyone ever think we’d get along?” Louis huffs.

“Because, before your master came along, I was as easygoing as they come. Then I had to kill my kid.” Niall mutters, turning on his heel and marching ahead of the lycans that glare Louis down until he starts following. This is going to be a very interesting few weeks.

“Well, that was sufficiently horrible.” Harry mutters, dropping his shirt to the floor. It’s quickly joined by his trousers, and then Harry lets the shift start to take over. The muscles of his back stretch, elongating as his vertebrae dislodge and separate.

“Sire, don’t.” Liam says firmly. “You should be the one to deliver the council’s decision to the four of them.”

Harry stops the transformation, reining it back in with a groan of pain. “Why can’t you do it?” he asks once his jaw has pulled back to its normal shape and size.

“Because it would be better coming from you.” Liam sighs.
“Oh yes, I’m sure that he’d be thrilled to see me right now.” Harry scoffs. “Or did you not notice that he only looked at me once, and that was to glare for doing what I thought was the right thing?"

“Sire, this may be your last chance.” Liam whispers. “Don’t let him leave without speaking to him. He should know.”

“He already knows.” Harry mumbles. “It doesn’t matter what I say to him, Liam. Besides, what would I even tell him? ‘The council wants to stop you, but I put my reputation on the line to defend you, please love me back’?”

“Maybe not quite so forward.” Liam says softly.

“Did you two ever- Did you lose a child?” Harry asks. “For the life of me I can’t remember.”

“We were always in service to the crown.” Liam says with a shake of his head. “We weren’t allowed to conceive.”

“Then you can’t imagine what we’re going through right now, Liam.” Harry tells him. “He needs space to grieve.”

“And you need someone with you.” Liam says firmly. “He’s not the only one grieving. It’s not fair of him to-”

“To resent me for getting him involved in all of this?” Harry offers to finish the Chevalier’s sentence. “Yes, Liam, it actually is. This is my fault. Everything he’s feeling, that’s my fault.”

“By the Moon, you two are bloody made for each other!” Liam groans. “It’s the Master’s fault! All of it! He’s the one who forced us to retrieve Niall. He’s the one who attacked our home. He’s the one whose venom forced Niall to save your life at the expense of your child. Neither you, nor Niall, is to blame for any of this mess.”

“I got distracted, Liam.” Harry admits. “I got distracted during the battle because he threatened to harm Niall in the same ways that he harmed Zayn and Louis. I got so worked up that I forgot to think rationally and that’s why he had to save me. It was my own fault.”

“You can’t blame yourself for that, Sire.” Liam mumbles. “He’s a monster who uses emotional-manipulation to deadly effect. Besides, had you not fallen when you did, Niall may not have gotten worked up enough to use his powers to the level that he did, which is why he won. If it hadn’t been for that - That Fae-Beast - Then who knows what would have happened? Which is why I think you should talk to him. If seeing you harmed worked him up that much, then clearly he has feelings for you.”

“Since when do you approve of me and Niall anyways?” Harry asks.

“Since I realized that maybe he’s exactly what you need, regardless of how inappropriate it might be.” Liam says reluctantly. “And you might be what he needs before he pushes himself too far over the edge to come back from it. He’s- He’s become hard and merciless. He’s not Niall anymore, and I believe that you’re the only one that can bring him back before it’s too late.”

“I’ll speak to him before he leaves, but not tonight.” Harry sighs. “You should go tell them now. He’ll hear it better coming from you anyways. And I’m not the only one who needs to talk to one of the four of them.”

“It’s not the same, Sire.” Liam grumbles.
“Oh, and why not?” Harry asks, sitting on the edge of the bed. “You’ve been avoiding him, even though Niall has made sure that the connection is severed. You told him you’d see him when you know.”

“He’s- He’s not the same.” Liam mutters. “He thinks I’m weak and pathetic. He wants to turn me and set me loose on children.”

“That was the Master’s influence.” Harry says firmly. “You saw him today. The old Louis is still inside there.”

“The old Louis would never have implied what he implied.” Liam growls.

“The old Louis would have been allowed to speak to you by now.” Harry points out. “He said that to get a rise out of any number of people, but mostly you.”

“He almost got one hell of a rise.” Liam huffs.

“Going to fall back into your old pattern of fighting and fucking then?” Harry grins.

“Absolutely not.” Liam says with a hard glare.

“We’ll see.” Harry hums. “Now go tell them the news.”

“As you wish, Sire.” Liam nods.

He turns on his heel to leave, but Harry asks “You’re coming back afterwards though, right?”

“As you wish, Sire.” Liam repeats with a soft smile before stepping out through the door.

“I am not sleeping in a cupboard!” comes a screech before Liam steps through the threshold to Niall, Ashton, and Luke’s chambers. “You can just go fuck yourself, Sunshine!”

“By all means, argue this until daybreak, and we can just wait until you burst into flames before I shove you inside.” Niall hums. “It’s the only space in the chambers that is completely devoid of sunlight.”

“Just get a few more blankets and I’ll stay in the bed!” Louis hisses. “It’s just direct sunlight that harms vampires. If I filter it enough, I’ll be fine.”

“See, the cupboard has a lock, and that’s the other reason you’re staying in there.” Niall tells him.

“When I said that he was your responsibility, I didn’t mean you should treat him like a pet, Niall.” Liam sighs, leaning in the doorway. “Especially not as a really bad pet owner.”

“See, at least someone remembers that I’m a person.” Louis grins, flitting across the room towards Liam. “Hey Babe, come here to stop me from shagging Sunshine’s brains out?”

“Sunshine?” Liam asks.

“That’s what I’ve decided to call the leprechaun, because we get along about the same way I do with sunlight.” Louis explains. “That said, he is shaggable. I see why Harold is so- God! Stop doing that!”

“Stop talking then.” Niall growls with an outstretched, clenched fist.
“You are the worst!” Louis snarls, his fangs dropping down as the scent of his blood permeates the air.

“Stop harming him, Niall.” Liam says firmly.

“Don’t know how in the fuck someone like you ever put up with him.” Niall mutters, splaying his fingers apart and earning a sigh of relief from Louis. “I’d gag him if I could, but unfortunately I need him to be able to speak.”

“I could be into that.” Louis smirks. Niall starts to clench his hand again, but Louis tuts and adds, “Nuh-uh, Sunshine. You heard the big man. No more hurting me.”

“He won’t be around forever.” Niall tells him. “But out of respect for Liam, I’ll let your hands off the hook for now. Say another word about me and the King though, and you won’t be so lucky. My patience only runs so deep, Louis, and even my respect and admiration for Liam will only get you so far.”

“Sir, I believe you came here for a reason, and not just to settle a row.” Ashton pipes up.

“I did.” Liam nods. “The council doesn’t approve of your plan.”

“And they thought you alone would be enough to stop me?” Niall asks, hands slipping to the grips of his swords. “Don’t do this, Liam. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“I didn’t come to stop you.” Liam tells him. “The council doesn’t approve, but the King does. He’s put himself on the line over this. Don’t make him regret it. You’ve been given leave to go.”

“That’s nice.” Niall says dryly, hands still tight on his swords. “And what about you, Liam? What do you think?”

“I think you’re taking a risk by just going with two guards.” Liam admits. “I think you leaving Final Bastion is a mistake, because if the Master finds out, then he will come after you with everything he has, and the three of you won’t be able to do much against that kind of force.”

“There are going to be four of us, thank you very much.” Louis huffs, brandishing his gold-bound hands like a club.

“My point is still valid.” Liam sighs. “I want to send more people with you.”

“No. When I haven’t been training with you, I’ve been working on teleportation. I can move Luke with me now, but that’s it. The portal should give me enough of a boost in power to move a few more bodies, but I can’t do more than three without running the risk of exhausting myself too much to be of any use. I’ve thought this through, Liam, I promise.” Niall says calmly.

“Yes, you seem to have thought of everything. So why, may I ask, was I not informed of this ahead of time like these three were?” Liam asks.

“Because I didn’t want to risk any of you trying to stop me.” Niall tells him. “I needed time to research everything, and for you to train me enough with the swords to use them in combat. I would have already left otherwise.”

“Then why tell us at all?” Liam asks harshly. “Why not just go?”

“Because I owe your people my life, and I wasn’t just going to drop the ball on them and let them think I’d left them high and dry. I’m doing this for them, for every person out in that city. For
people like Lux.” Niall mutters. “I don’t want them thinking that I’ve abandoned them. Now you have something to tell them about why I’ve left.”

“Niall-” Liam sighs.

“That is the only reason, Liam.” Niall spits out. “They saved my life by giving me their energy. I will never be able to repay that unless I can save them. I’m the only one who can reopen the portals, which means that I’m the only one who can do this. That’s it.”

“You can’t lie to me, Niall.” Liam says adamantly.

“Louis, my room, now.” Niall orders.

“Knew you’d cave, Sunshine.” Louis smirks, sauntering through the door. “Lovely to see you for once, Liam.”

“Give your King my gratitude for his support. I’ll do my best not to let him regret allowing me to leave without spilling blood.” Niall says icily. “Now if you would leave, that would be aces. I have several things to do before I depart.”

“Like me!” Louis giggles as Niall shuts the door. Liam’s stomach turns at the thought, and he barely has time to nod at Ashton and Liam before he has to run out of the room because his insides want very badly to be outside.

“Get off of me.” Niall groans, pushing at Louis’ chest to remove the vampire from his presence.

“But you said-” Louis starts with a pout.

“I said ‘not on your un-life.’” Niall huffs. “That hasn’t changed.”

“Then why did you have me come in here?” Louis grumbles, flopping down on the bed and sighing melodramatically.

“Because there are preparations to be made, and I don’t want you out of my sight.” Niall tells him.

“Well then you’re about to get real upset, because I need a bath.” Louis grins. Niall glares at him, but Louis just adds, “I’ve been living in a cell for a week, and I don’t exactly have access to my hands.”

“Because you can perform magic.” Niall explains again. “I can’t risk having you take me on in a magical battle. I also can’t force a vampire back from mist form through proximity like a lycan can. Keeping you bound is the only way I have of leashing you.”

“How long is it going to be before you trust me?” Louis asks.

“Longer than five days.” Niall says with a roll of his eyes. “Give me one reason I should trust you, and we’ll build from there.”

“He just left.” Louis mumbles. “There’s nothing on Earth that I wouldn’t do for Liam. Nothing. That includes playing ‘suicidal maniacs’ with you and the ‘Dukes of Hazard’ out there. If it’s going to save him, then I’ll do it.”

“Then why exactly do you keep fucking with him?” Niall asks.
"Because, while I love him more than you can possibly understand, I can’t be with him anymore. I can’t.” Louis mutters. “He- He’s beyond me now. I don’t des-”

He stops talking when Niall’s hand finds a home on his cheek. The vampire rolls off the bed with a yelp and a groan that tells Niall that the gold binding his hands managed to land hard on some part of his body. “What the fuck, Sunshine?” Louis huffs.

“He’s so in love with you that he let your vampiric ass stick around after you turned on this city, even though he had no idea of whether or not your mind could be freed from the Master!” Niall spits out. “Don’t pull the ‘I don’t deserve him’ card, because whether you deserve him or not, he loves you, and you torturing him isn’t going to change that!”

“He needs to move on!” Louis argues.

“He’s never going to!” Niall counters. “If the things you said to him during the fight didn’t change the way he feels about you, then nothing will. If you don’t want to be with him, fine, but don’t treat a good man like shit just because you feel guilty about actions that you were forced into.”

“You’re doing the same thing!” Louis hisses. “Harry is a good man, a great one even, and you’re doing the same thing to him!”

“I don’t want to be with him anymore.” Niall mutters. “It was stupid to do anything in the first place. He fucking kidnapped me. He held me prisoner. It was Stockholm Syndrome and nothing more.”

“No it wasn’t.” Louis smirks. “I can’t smell as well as I could when I was a lycan, but I can definitely hear heartbeats better. You keep trying to tell yourself that though. Maybe one day you’ll believe it. Or maybe you’ll just pull your head out of your ass and realize that you’re in love with him.”

“What did I tell you would happen if you said another word about me and the King?” Niall asks, drawing his blades and advancing on the vampire.

“You want to do this before we even leave?” Louis hums, planting his feet on the ground and pushing until his body is thrown into the air. His feet attach to the ceiling like a fucking bug or something, and he grins wickedly. “I’m at a disadvantage without my hands, but you still shouldn’t prove too much of a problem for me. I’ve never been beaten in single combat, and I don’t plan on losing that record just because of a few pounds of gold.”

“You forgot something.” Niall says calmly, leaving one of his swords floating in order to gain an aurokinetic grip on the gold around Louis’ hands. He yanks the vampire down harshly, sending him crashing to the floor before launching the sword to pierce through his stomach. “I fucking own you, vampire. Don’t forget that. Speak another word about me and the King, and I will cut out your tongue.”

“Niall, stop!” comes a hard voice from the door.

“Ash-” Niall sighs.

“I said stop.” Ashton reiterates, forcing himself between Niall and the vampire writhing around on the floor. “You said you needed someone who would tell you when you’re not doing the right thing. That’s what I’m doing now. You’re going too far. Remember who you are, Niall.”

“Who I was!” Niall grits out. “That man is dead! That man died when he murdered his own child!”
“Niall, please.” Ashton begs, cupping Niall’s cheeks in his hands and pressing their foreheads together. “Don’t become like the Master. Don’t lose your humanity just to sate your appetite for vengeance. We’ll help you get justice without you becoming a monster along the way.”

“It’s the only way.” Niall whispers.

“No. It’s just the easy way.” says Luke’s voice as strong arms circle the fae from behind. “It’s easy to get lost in the pain and the hate. What’s not easy is rising above that to do the right thing. Let us help you.”

“Please.” Niall chokes out as his knees start to give way beneath him.

“This is a lovely moment and all, but I have a fucking sword sticking through me, so could somebody help with that?” Louis growls.

“I see why the temptation is so strong.” Ashton chuckles, putting his hands under Niall’s arms and lifting him up to carry him over to the bed. “Get some rest. The two of us will watch Louis while you do.”

“If he gives you any trouble, just bring him in here and I’ll weld the gold to the wall.” Niall mutters before sleep takes ahold of him and drags him down.

“He fucking stabbed me!” Louis hisses, wincing when the motion of Luke dragging him out through the door shifts the blade protruding out from his stomach. “Why does he get to nap?”

“Because he hasn’t slept since his coma, and he deserves it more than anyone.” Luke tells him, gripping onto the sword and ripping it out. “The more he sleeps, the more he can recover his power and the better chance we’ll all have of surviving this mission.”

“And because if you keep pushing him, then he’s bound to snap eventually.” Ashton chimes in. “Leave it alone when it comes to him and King Harry. He’s protecting everyone in the best way he knows how. That includes himself and King Harry. I’m not- I’m not saying he’s doing the best job on all fronts, but he’s trying.”

“He still stabbed me.” Louis huffs.

“He also gave you more than enough warnings.” Ashton hums. “I heard you were mouthy and insolent, but I never imagined this. You’re just kind of an asshole.”

“I was always kind of an asshole.” Louis snarks. “But I haven’t exactly been living a dream holiday since I was fucking murdered! Sorry if I can’t be ‘Mr. Fucking-Sensitive’ after spending a quarter of a century as the left-hand man to the most evil fucker on the planet. I must’ve missed the fucking memo where it mentioned that being tortured and forced to kill innocent people actually makes you more fucking fun now.”

“I’m not saying that you have to be happy, Louis. I’m saying that you need to lay off the one person on the planet who is willing to give you a real chance at reclaiming yourself.” Ashton says calmly in the face of Louis’ rant. “Feel whatever you need to feel, regret whatever you need to regret, just don’t take it out on him.”

“What did he ever do to make the two of you so loyal to him?” Louis asks. “I was Harry’s Chevalier for a very, very long time, and I don’t think even I had as much confidence in him as you two have in Sunshine. He’s only been here for, what? Less than two weeks?”
“In those two weeks he took up a cause that wasn’t his, for the people that destroyed his former life, defended our home against the Master when otherwise we would have been exterminated, managed to actually ward off the most powerful being on the planet, then he gave his life, and the life of his unborn child, in order to revive our King, along with his former Chevalier, and finally, he’s going to search for a new home for our people despite the fact that this plan ends in almost certain death for him. What hasn’t he done to earn our unwavering loyalty and faith?” Luke asks back. “Despite what you’ve seen of him, Niall is probably the best person I know. King Harry, Liam, even Ashton here, who I chose as my mate precisely because of his kind heart, I don’t think anyone else could do what he’s done without any hesitation, which Niall has never had, were their situations switched.”

“Liam would.” Louis says adamantly. “He would in a heartbeat.”

“And Niall would in less.” Ashton says, gripping onto the gold over Louis’ hands and hauling him to his feet. “Don’t doubt that. He’d give his life for any single person on this planet, even you, without a second thought or regret. He sacrifices himself with every action he takes, because everyone else is always his primary concern.”

“I don’t want you thinking we don’t respect Liam, because we do. He’s like a brother to us. He pulled me out of the military, and Ash out of the espionage division, when he was looking to rebuild the King’s Guard after your death, because he saw something in us that was more than what we were at the time. He got us into a relationship. He’s the first person we told when we’d mated. I admire him more than almost anyone else I know, which should tell you just how much I respect Niall.” Luke explains.

“Well he fucking stabbed me, so it might take me a bit to warm up to him.” Louis sighs. “Did- Did Liam really get you two into a relationship?”

“Technically no. We were raised together and that comes with a sort of relationship.” Ashton laughs. “But he got us to realize that we were attracted to each other more than brothers would be.”

“You two are brothers?” Louis snorts.

“Again, no. We were just raised by the same caregiver. She was the sole survivor of the Uluru Incident. She wasn’t suited to combat after that, because she lost her leg fleeing, but she raised us war-orphans just fine.” Ashton explains. “We lived together for a few years, and then I turned sixteen and joined the espionage division. You may not remember it, but you recruited me. We didn’t talk for a very long time, and we actually didn’t recognize each other when we met again because of Liam. If it hadn’t been for the accents, then we might not have even realized until a few years later when we went to visit our caregiver.”

“I remember her.” Louis nods. “Lovely woman. Lots of attitude. Refused to take money from the crown to help run the orphanage until Harry personally insisted.”

“She’s a stubborn old bat, but she does love a good-looking man.” Ashton hums.

“That she does.” Luke chuckles. “You should have seen Liam when we introduced her to him. I’ve never seen him look so nervous.”

“He’s really bad at handling flirting.” Louis giggles. “So, what are you two going to do to occupy my time until Sunshine wakes back up?”

“Nothing. You’re going to sit quietly and behave yourself or I’ll hang you off the balcony until sunrise.” Luke grins.
“Can we talk?” Harry asks, finding Niall alone in the library.

“No.” Niall says quietly, not even bothering to look up from the text in front of him.

“Why not?” Harry asks, doing his best to keep his voice even despite the frustration building in his gut.

“I have too much to do, and not enough time to do it in. Ashton and Luke convinced me to sleep last night, and it’s coming back to bite me in the arse.” Niall grumbles. “I’m leaving tomorrow night at sun-down. Before then I have to piece together a barrier spell for the portal. I don’t have time for a fight right now unless it’s one that I can end with my swords.”

“I didn’t come to fight, Niall.” Harry murmurs. “I came because I-

“Don’t say it.” Niall whispers, his voice breaking at the end like a plea. “Please don’t say it.”

“Niall-” Harry sighs.

“If you say it, then I won’t be able to leave, Your Majesty.” Niall says through gritted teeth. “I’m not that strong. I have to do this, and you know it. I have to do all of it.”

“We can find another way.” Harry urges.

“No we can’t.” Niall mutters. “I’ve spent so much time thinking about this, Your Majesty. More than you know. This is the only option. I’m the only one that can end this with any chance of winning.”

“From what I hear, you’re barely even a match for Liam anymore, let alone the Master.” Harry argues. “We have time, Niall.”

“Your Majesty-” Niall groans.

“Stop calling me that!” Harry snaps. “That’s not you! You told me that you’d never use honorifics! Now you haven’t said my name since you left me that night!”

“Because I can’t let myself think of you as anything other than the leader of these people who need me!” Niall yells. “If I let myself feel anything for you then I start to hesitate! I can’t think, or even fucking breathe, because the thought of what I have to do scares me too badly when it means that I won’t be with you!”

“Then stop before it’s too late!” Harry growls. “Nobody will blame you!”

“I will!” Niall screams. “I killed it! I killed my child! There’s no coming back from that until I make him pay for everything he’s ever done! For forcing me to rip out a piece of my soul! For forcing me to commit two different mortal sins! For putting more blood on my hands with every second since I let him escape! Every bit of damage he causes between now and his death is on me, because I could have finished him, and I didn’t! I hesitated for a split-second when I could have pushed my power into him, and that gave him time to get away. And if I stall, if I hesitate in what I have to do, again, then that’s just more of a stain on my soul!”

“Niall-” Harry says gently. “You can’t blame yourself for not managing to kill a being that has plagued this world for millennia. You did more than anyone ever has. Anyone.”
“It wasn’t enough!” Niall spits. “This whole planet is at risk until I put an end to him!”

“The entire world isn’t on your shoulders, Niall.” Harry tells him.

“It literally is, Your Majesty.” Niall mutters, collapsing back into his chair and rubbing at his eyes. “Nobody else can beat him. It comes down to me, and only me.”

“I used to feel the same way.” Harry admits. “I used to think that, because I have all this power, it was my duty to defeat him all by myself. Then Louis reminded me that our people are all working towards that goal. That the King needn’t shoulder the burden himself, because my people want to help carry it.”

“They aren’t my people, Your Majesty.” Niall sighs.

“They accept you as one of their own.” Harry insists. “Look how they came together for you when you needed help.”

“I never wanted that.” Niall mumbles. “God, a fucking child gave me her life force. A little girl that barely comes up to my hip had to reduce her lifespan just to save me. Some fucking hero I am.”

“Must heroes be perfect to be worthy of our admiration?” Harry asks. “Must they be invincible paragons of power for us to adore them? For us to lo—”

“I said don’t say that!” Niall snaps. “What do you even want?”

“You.” Harry tells him.

“I can’t.” Niall chokes out.

“Yes, you can.” Harry says softly, crossing the space between them and pushing the old oaken table out of the way so that it bumps into a wall across the room. “You want this too.”

“Of bloody course I want it.” Niall breathes out, not flinching away when Harry hauls him out of the chair, which Harry takes as a good sign. “Can’t you see how much this is killing me? But there are more important things than what I want. There are things I need to do. What I want is secondary to those things.”

“And what about what I need?” Harry asks.

“You don’t need me, you want me.” Niall mutters.

“I need you.” Harry whispers, leaning in close until all he can breathe is NiallNiallNiall and it fills his nose and lungs and veins. His lips ghost over Niall’s, and the shiver that the fae gives makes the Beast rattle against the bars of its cage inside of him. “I need you, Niall.”

“Don’t.” Niall pleads.

“I need you.” Harry repeats, his hands finding the small of Niall’s back because even the smallest gap between them feels like an impassable canyon, and Niall’s body molds against his so beautifully that Harry can’t not have it there.

“Fuck you.” Niall says just before his lips collide with Harry’s, arms coming up around the lycan’s neck to anchor him in place. It’s intense; grief, and anger, and pain, and want are all mixed together on the tip of Niall’s tongue, and Harry can taste it all. It matches his own, and he wonders
if Niall can sense it too. If Niall can tell that Harry is feeling everything that he is. That they don’t have to go this alone.

“I wouldn’t object.” Harry hums into the kiss, slipping his hands under the red leather jerkin that Niall has taken to wearing instead of his white silk tunics. Harry has to admit that it looks good on him. It exposes the newly defined musculature of his arms, and the tan he’s gained from spending so much time training in the sun. Harry wants to know how that bronzed skin would taste under his tongue.

“Of course you wouldn’t.” Niall huffs, steering them until Harry is backed up against a bookcase, the slats digging into the lycan’s back. It feels delicious. His hands move as quick as a flash, grabbing Harry’s hips and turning him roughly. “Just gagging for it, aren’t you?”

“I miss feeling you.” Harry admits.

“Drop your trousers.” Niall growls. Harry doesn’t need to be told twice, his hands undoing the clasp and pushing them down to the floor so he can step out of them. There’s the slick, wet sound of a tongue wrapping around something, and then the press of two of Niall’s fingers against his hole. “That what you want?”

“It’s a start.” Harry says with an emphatic nod.

“It’s all you’re going to get.” Niall tells him. “Not fucking risking it again. Not leaving you with a baby when I won’t be here to protect you.”

“I- Please, Niall- Please-” Harry whimpers.

“I can get you off with just these. Trust me.” Niall says smugly, pressing through the ring of muscle slowly, as if he knows that the pace is just driving Harry even wilder. Actually, he probably does. They’ve only done this a few times, but Niall knows exactly how to take Harry apart. He’s masterful. A genius even.

“It’s not enough.” Harry groans, pushing his hips back to get Niall’s fingers deeper inside of him.

“It’s either this, or nothing. Make your choice.” Niall orders, curving his fingers and brushing over a spot that makes Harry shiver and moan without abandon.

“This.” Harry pants out. “If this is all I get, then I’ll take it.”

“Good boy.” Niall murmurs in his ear, giving another stroke over that sensitive spot that has Harry sinking claws into the wooden shelf of the bookcase in case his legs give out, because that seems like a very real possibility at the moment. It’s enough to make Harry ignore the dog reference. “Taking it so good for me, aren’t you?”

“Please.” Harry whines, his head dropping down between his shoulders when Niall thrusts back in harder, picking up speed with his fingers to match Harry’s level of neediness. “Fuck- Niall! I- Oh fuck!”

Harry is painfully hard when Niall’s hand closes around him, taking advantage of the slick precum leaking out of the slit to smooth out his quick tugs to match the blistering pace he’s setting with his fingers. And it’s like Harry can’t get enough air, because his moans are coming out as these breathless, broken little whimpers, and he can’t say Niall’s name all in one go anymore, so instead it comes out as “Ni-uhl, Ni-uhl, Ni-uhl!” in a private little chanting prayer because all he can think about is NiallNiallNiall inside of him and surrounding him and finally, finally giving himself back to Harry.
He cums with a loud sob, his knees hitting the shelf in front of them as they buckle and he spurts in streams that have him seeing nothing but white as the pleasure takes over his body. By the time he comes back to his body, Niall’s presence is gone behind him. He turns around to find the blond wiping his fingers on a dusty old rag used for cleaning. “What-” he starts to ask.

“I need to get back to my work.” Niall mutters, his voice gone cold and distant again like it was when Harry first came into the library. “Do not follow me.”

“Niall-” Harry sighs.

“I gave you what you wanted, now do the same for me.” Niall says icily, gathering up his books and rushing towards the door. “Please, Your Majesty, just- Just stop.”

And then he’s gone, and Harry feels more broken than ever.

“You didn’t.” Ashton sighs.


“He’s working on getting the supplies that you forgot to formally request at the meeting.” Ashton huffs. “You can’t keep doing this, Niall.”

“We’ll be leaving tomorrow night.” Niall shrugs. “He wanted a goodbye, so I gave him one. If it gets him off of my back for the next twenty eight hours, then I’d say it was worth it.”

“You know this isn’t helping anything.” Ashton chastises. “Either break things off entirely, or give yourself over to him like he’s doing for you. Don’t string him along.”

“String him- Fuck you!” Niall spits out. “I did break things off! He refused to accept it! I kept my distance as much as I could! I told him to leave when he cornered me in the library! I’m leaving on a fucking suicide mission tomorrow! He’s the one who won’t let it go, not me!”

“And yet you fucked him.” Ashton says harshly.

“To get him to leave me alone.” Niall growls. “I don’t want anything like that from him. I just want to accomplish my goal. Kill the Master and save as many people as I can. That’s it. Nothing else matters now. Not the king, not me, not anything.”

“Stop.” Ashton tells him. “You asked us to help you keep your humanity intact, and that’s what we’re going to do, Niall.”

“You’re not human!” Niall says through a mirthless laugh. “You’ve never been human! What would you know about humanity?”

“It’s a blanket term for sentient beings.” Ashton waves him off. “You know what I mean, Niall. You don’t want to become this thing any more than we want to watch you become it.”

“Becoming this is my best chance of winning.” Niall grits out.

“No, that’s just the excuse you’re using to keep yourself guarded because you’re so fucking scared!” Ashton snaps. “You’re scared of the Master, you’re scared of yourself, and you’re scared of letting yourself love King Harry.”
“There is almost a one hundred percent chance that in a month I will be dead, Ashton!” Niall roars. “Of bloody course I’m scared! But do you know what else I am? Pissed off! My world has been turned upside down so many times over the last few weeks that guarding myself is the only way I can keep my head above the ever-rising river of shit that constitutes my life! Three weeks ago I was a human living the best life you can have! Now look at me! I’m a fucking monster!”

“You don’t have to be though.” Ashton murmurs, gripping hard onto Niall’s shoulders and hauling him as close as he had been with Harry only a few minutes ago. “Niall, you don’t have to be a monster. I’m not going to let you become one.”

“You didn’t see me that night, Ash.” Niall whimpers. “You didn’t see what I became when my powers went out of control. It was worse than your lycan forms. It was horrible, and it’s inside of me. I feel it now, and it wants to be let loose again. It wants to get out.”

“Is that- Niall, is that why you keep expending all your energy and refusing to let it build back up?” Ashton asks. “Is that why you force yourself not to sleep?”

“I can’t keep the leash on it unless I deprive it of sustenance.” Niall admits. “No power means no Fae-Beast.”

“I can teach you.” Ashton says firmly.

“No, Ash, you can’t.” Niall sighs. “It’s not the same. Mine hasn’t been there since I was born.”


“I can’t ask you to risk yourselves like that.” Niall says, shaking his head. “I’m already asking too much of you.”

“We want to do it, Niall. You aren’t asking. And we wouldn’t let you go alone anyways. We are with you until the end.” Ashton says adamantly.

“Why?” Niall whispers.

“Because I’ve never believed in anything the way I believe in you.” Ashton tells him. “You’re strong, and not because of your powers. That day I met when you picked me to be your attendant, you weren’t scared even though you were in a den of wolves. You stood up to a king without blinking. You fought the Master without hesitation. You’re strong of will, you’re courageous, and you’re unwavering in your convictions. You’re worth putting my faith in.”

“What if you’re wrong?” Niall asks. “What if putting your hopes on me ends up being a mistake?”

“It’s not going to be.” Ashton says gently. “I know it all the way to my bones.”

“Oh no. Sire, what did you do?” Liam asks gently upon finding Harry in his chambers. Everything has been torn to shreds. Everything. The bed is a wreckage, the doors are kindling, and the great mirror that constitutes an entire wall is shattered in multiple places. Harry’s lupine form is in the center, clawing and biting at a pillow that hasn’t completely exploded yet, and must therefore be seen as an affront.

Harry doesn’t even acknowledge that Liam has spoken, so the Chevalier steps forward and says, “Sire-”
The wolf whirls on him and Liam sees it immediately. The Beast has taken over completely. A low growl erupts from its throat, and Liam backs away slowly. He’ll need some help to put the leash back on the Beast this time. Whenever Harry loses it like this, it takes the entire King’s Guard to bring him down. He stays only long enough to make sure that he has the wolf’s attention, and then races through the halls. He lets out a long howl, a signal to anyone who isn’t a member of the King’s Guard to lock themselves in the closest room, and for the warriors who are capable of it to meet Liam in the sparring ring where the wolf can be contained by the walls and gate if they can’t stop the rampage.

Liam bursts through the doors, leaping forwards when a snap from the wolf’s jaws comes too close to his arm. It hurts to transform as fast as he does, but his lycan form is necessary to keep his speed up until someone else can join the fight. For now he just has to bait and dodge. He can’t risk getting in close enough to fight because Harry’s lupine form is strong enough to tear him in two if his reflexes are even momentarily off.

A blur hits Harry in the side while he’s lunging for Liam, and another soon follows. Ashton and Luke each deliver another blow before dodging backwards as Harry recovers his footing. “What’s happening?” Niall calls out from the wall opposite Liam.

“It’s King Harry. The Beast has taken control.” Ashton yells to him as he dodges and weaves with Luke in a pattern Liam recognizes well. “We have to knock him out, or else he’ll just rampage.”

Luke leaps high into the air, pulling his body tight to avoid Harry’s jaws snapping at him. It serves as enough of a distraction to let Ashton land a crushing blow to Harry’s shoulder, knocking the Beast down long enough for Liam to rush in and pound on the side of his face.

It seems to have no effect, and that tells Liam that this is going to be a very long fight, and he’s going to spend quite a bit of time recuperating afterwards. The three of them leap back when Harry climbs back to his feet snarling at all of them. “Stop!” Niall cries as a wave of golden sand crashes into Liam’s chest, pushing him back until he’s backed up against the wall. “Don’t risk getting hurt, or hurting him. Let me take care of this!”

“Niall!” Ashton yelps, attempting in vain to struggle against the sand.

“Niall, he’s too powerful like this for you to take on alone!” Luke yells.

“Not if I don’t hold back.” Niall growls, pulling out his swords and circling around the wolf. Harry snarls, matching every step with keen, predatory calculation. Niall moves first, feinting to the left before spinning off when Harry lunges at him. He brings his knee up in a hard blow that sends Harry careening off to the side, and gives chase, raining blows down on the side of Harry’s head with the pommels of his swords.

Harry snaps at Niall’s leg, but the fae leaps up in the air. He pulls from the waves of golden sand, twining it in thick strands around the wolf’s legs before he lands. Harry tugs at them harshly in an attempt to escape, but Niall sends his power into the sand, bringing it up in ropes that lash around Harry’s back and pull him down into a pile of thrashing, growling wolf.

Niall sighs and shakes his head. “Never should have done it.” he mutters, much to Liam’s confusion. He lashes out with his foot, and Liam knows that it’s over now. Harry collapses against the ground limply, and his body begins shrinking back to normal. Niall lets the sand slide away from Harry’s unconscious form and turns on his heel. “Get him out of here.”

“Niall, do you see how your actions pan out?” Ashton growls.
“What did you do?” Liam asks, slipping from his lycan form to rush forward and turn Niall around by the shoulder.

“What do you think?” Niall sighs.

Liam’s Beast pushes against its boundaries, roaring to be let loose against the man standing in front of him, but Liam doesn’t give in to it. Instead he brings his fist around so harshly that it sends Niall crashing to the ground. “What the fuck is wrong with you?” Liam snarls. “What part of you broke so badly that you’d hurt him on purpose?”

“Ash said that he needed to be knocked unconscious.” Niall shrugs, looking to the sand rather than meeting Liam’s eyes.

Liam strikes out with a kick that has Niall flying through the air. He pursues the fae, catching him by the neck before he can slide down the wall. “That’s not what I meant and you know it.” Liam grits out. “He fucking lov-”

“I don’t care.” Niall says icily. “I have a mission Liam. I can’t concern myself with the King’s feelings and desires. I can’t waste time on something like that when the Master is gathering power every day.”

“Then you leave tonight.” Liam says forcefully. “Cast whatever spell you have prepared for the barrier and make sure you’re ready, because I want you gone before he wakes up, or, I swear by the Moon, I will bind you in iron and leave you to rot. Hero or not, you will not treat him like this anymore.”

“Fine.” Niall nods. “I only need a few hours and we’ll be gone.”

“Liam, please.” Ashton says softly.

“He’s made his choice, Ashton.” Liam spits, dropping Niall to the ground. “He’s chosen to give in to the pain, to lose himself and the qualities that make him someone worthy of admiration. I hope you see that before he gets you killed. You know what to do if the Master closes in.”

“I won’t.” Ashton says defiantly.

“Then the lives of our people will be on your head.” Liam bites out, pushing past the attendant, and his mate, to recover the King’s sleeping body. “I wish you luck in your mission. Don’t fail.”

“Get up.” Niall says harshly, tearing off the blankets that kept Louis from bursting into flame during the day.

“What happened?” Louis asks. “I heard Liam-”

“The King let the Beast loose.” Ashton tells him. “Move. We have to leave tonight.”

“I need your help with the barrier spell.” Niall sighs. “I used up most of my energy knocking the King out.”

“Well if you hadn’t bloody kept us out of the fight-” Luke snaps. “Then you’d be fine!”

“Luke-” Niall starts, his voice low and full of regret.

“No!” Luke roars. “You fucked up, Niall! You reduced the miniscule amount of time we had, and
now we’re going to have to leave unprepared! This mission has so many obstacles on the path to success already, and you just increased them tenfold!”

“I didn’t mean to.” Niall says quietly. “I- I thought if I gave him what he wanted, then he’d give me room to breathe. I didn’t think he’d go crazy.”

“Well he did, Niall.” Luke bites out. “Because he’s grieving, and scared, and angry, just like you. And you gave him hope, only to smash it to pieces a moment later. You have to accept that you’re responsible for what just happened.”

“I know I am.” Niall mumbles. “I know. I just wasn’t thinking. I let myself feel something for the first time in days, and it overwhelmed me. I never should have-”

“What you never should have done was cut him off!” Luke hisses. “It’s not doing either of you any good!”

“I have to.” Niall says, though his voice lacks the conviction it should have if he wants to keep up that front. “I can’t- I can’t be with him again. I killed our child.”

“So?” Luke asks. “What is your fucking point, Niall? He loves you, and you very clearly care about him still. No matter how cold and horrible you become, we can still tell that.”

“We don’t have time for this argument.” Ashton interjects. “Niall, gather up whatever you need for the barrier spell. Luke, we need to requisition as much of the list as we can before we leave. Louis, just- Just don’t fuck anything up right now.”

“I really hate to do this, because I’m pretty sure that one of you is going to hurt me for it, but I won’t be any good for a major spell if I don’t get fed.” Louis admits. “I’m running pretty low on energy myself.”

“Shit, sorry.” Niall sighs, crossing the room and picking up the chalice they’ve been using to feed Louis from. He grabs a dagger and opens up the vein in his wrist, letting blood poor out until it comes close to the rim. “I keep forgetting about this part. You two go. We’re good from here. We’ll meet you at the portal in two hours, so be ready to leave.”

“You didn’t even flinch.” Louis observes once the other two leave the chambers.

“What are you talking about?” Niall asks.

“When you cut yourself, you didn’t even flinch.” Louis explains, taking the cup between his wrists and maneuvering it to his mouth. He drains it all before continuing with, “You didn’t react at all actually. I’ve never seen anyone do that before.”

“Regeneration takes away the pain.” Niall mutters.

“Not completely.” Louis counters. “You like it, don’t you? You like the pain. You think you deserve it.”

“I don’t have time for this conversation.” Niall huffs, grabbing the chalice and walking towards the bathroom. Louis, of course, isn’t going to let it go so easily.

“You literally attacked me for saying that I don’t deserve Liam, and now you’re going to act like some depressed high-school kid?” Louis scoffs. “I expected more from the great ‘Hero of Final Bastion’ than this.”
“Don’t call me that.” Niall growls. “I’m not the ‘Hero of Final Bastion’. I never did anything to earn that title.”

“You mean you don’t want to accept the responsibility that comes with it.” Louis argues.

“What the fuck do you think I’m doing with this fucking mission?” Niall snaps.

“Running!” Louis groans. “Running from what you did when you brought King Harry and me back.”

“I’m doing what I can to be what they think I am.” Niall sighs. “I’m trying to be the hero that they need.”

“And that conveniently gets you away from the man who’s so in love with you that he’s literally going mad with it.” Louis snarks. “The one who also lost the child, his third by the way, in case you didn’t know.”

“I know.” Niall says quietly, waving his hands over a sphere of water hovering over the tub to rinse out the goblet. “I know about Edward, and about Zayn’s miscarriage.”

“And do you know that after the miscarriage, King Harry grieved so badly that neither he nor Zayn left their chambers for a month? Or how about the fact that when Edward died, King Harry had to be shackled in silver because he tore open his own stomach with his claws?” Louis asks harshly. “He had Zayn then though. He had someone to turn to when he lost those heirs. Now he’s lost you as well as the child.”

“I’m not his mate.” Niall mutters. “I can’t be responsible for him as well as the rest of the people here.”

“Well you are!” Louis hisses. “Like it or not, he’s in love with you, Niall. And I have a good feeling that he isn’t the only one who feels that way.”

“I have a choice, Louis. It’s either him, or the citizens of Final Bastion.” Niall says icily. “So I can do this, I can fight to find a way to save them, or I can be with Harry. I can’t do both. I choose them.”

“You should choose the King.” Louis huffs. “The lycans have been fighting this war for a millennium, Niall. They would find another way.”

“They’ve been losing this war for a millennium!” Niall snaps. “Lycans are all but extinct! Out of five empires, this is all that’s left! And what have they accomplished in all this time?”

“Do vampires rule the Earth?” Louis counters. “That’s what we’ve accomplished! We’ve been protecting humanity at our own expense!”

“Well it’s time to end things!” Niall shouts. “It’s time to put a stop to this once and for all.”

“Big talk coming from a man who can’t even do the right thing by one person.” Louis sneers.

“What should I have done then, Louis?” Niall asks harshly. “Should I have stayed with him at the expense of every other lycan’s life? Or how about at the expense of my own sanity? I can’t look at him without thinking of what I’ve done, of what I took from him. I killed his mate. I killed our child. Being in the same space with him fills me with so much guilt that it makes me physically ill. How can what I’ve done ever be forgiven?”
“He wouldn’t be trying to be with you if he hadn’t forgiven you, Niall.” Louis says gently. “You’re the one that needs to forgive yourself.”

“I can’t.” Niall whispers. “Not yet. Probably not ever.”
Harry wakes up slowly, but as soon as he moves he knows the jig is up. Lips attach to his neck and there’s a low, gravelly rasp of, “Morning, you lazy oaf of a king.”

“’M allowed to be lazy.” Harry mumbles. “Kingly privilege and extenuating circumstances.”

“Doesn’t help that you’re up half the night, back and forth, back and forth.” Niall chuckles.

“It’s not my fault.” Harry pouts, opening his eyes to the light just to increase the efficacy of the pitiable expression. “You’re the one that’s done this to me.”

“Oh, and you had absolutely no part in that.” Niall scoffs. “Didn’t practically beg me for this.”

“I have no idea as to what you might be referring.” Harry hums, nuzzling into Niall’s neck and nipping at his earlobe. “What’s on the docket for today?”

“Not much, which is why I let you sleep.” Niall tells him. “I can take care of most of the meetings, but I have a doula coming by in a little while to check you out, so I need you up and around.”

“Up and around isn’t as easy as it sounds these days.” Harry sighs. “I’m too fat.”

“I like it.” Niall grins, sliding a hand over Harry’s stomach. “You look good like this, swollen with my pups.”

“Your pups are little devils.” Harry grumbles. “They both decided to practice combat maneuvers last night, and it wasn’t fun for me.”

“You should have woken me up.” Niall hums, scooting down the bed until his face is hovering over Harry’s stretched out stomach. “You both always calm right down for your da, don’t you? Yes you do.”

“I’m their father too.” Harry points out.

“But I’m their favorite.” Niall smirks. “Don’t worry. They’ll like you well enough if I tell them too.”

“Them and half of my citizenry.” Harry mutters, though it lacks any real bite. Harry loves Niall even more than their people do, and that’s saying something. “I don’t know why I bother to do anything other than just watch you do my job.”

“You don’t these days.” Niall giggles. “Wake up, Sire.”

“What did you call me?” Harry asks, his eyebrows crinkling in confusion.

“Sire, please. Please wake up.” Niall begs. “Don’t do this to us again. We need you.”

Harry gasps as the world dissolves around him, Niall shattering into a thousand pieces as reality asserts itself forcefully, mercilessly. Liam’s face swims in Harry’s vision, the result of tears that are beginning to sting at the corners of his eyes. “What happened?” he croaks out.
“Your Beast took over.” Liam says gently.

“Did I hurt anyone?” Harry asks.

“No. Niall managed to bring you down by himself and kept us all out of the fight.” Liam admits. “You’ve been unconscious for far longer than you should have been though.”

“How long?” Harry asks.

“Almost a full day.” Liam sighs.

“I need to go see them off.” Harry murmurs, scooting towards the edge of Liam’s bed. “I need to talk to Niall.”

“He’s already gone.” Liam mumbles. “They left last night.”

“What?” Harry whimpers. “No. They were supposed to leave tonight. You said I’ve only been out for a day.”

“After what he did, I thought it best to have them leave early.” Liam explains. “They’re gone, Sire, and I’m not sure when, or if, they’ll be back.”

“How dare you!” Harry growls. “What gives you the right?”

“You gave me the right.” Liam says sharply. “You asked me to act as your regent because you weren’t in the right frame of mind to be handling anything. I did what I thought was best, and I stand by it. The barrier spell is in place, they have the supplies they need, and now they’ve started their mission.”

“You’re the one who encouraged me to talk to him!” Harry hisses.

“And look how that turned out, Sire!” Liam snaps. “You’ve completely lost control of yourself. This kingdom needs you to be at your best, and you very clearly aren’t. I know that you’re grieving, but eventually you need to pull yourself together and put your people first. Niall cannot be your main priority.”

“Fine.” Harry spits out. “You’re relieved of your duties, Liam. I no longer need you to act as my regent.”

“Good.” Liam nods. “It’s about time that-”

“I’m not finished.” Harry cuts him off. “You’re also relieved of your position as Chevalier and head of my King’s Guard. You will remove your belongings from this castle and join the other soldiers in the barracks.”

“Sire-” Liam gasps.

“That’s ‘Your Majesty’ to you.” Harry bites out. “Now come here. I need to break the bond.”

“Your Majesty, please! Reconsider what you’re doing.” Liam begs. “This isn’t-”

Harry rushes forward, grabbing Liam around the throat to cut off anything else he may have to say. He yanks Liam’s wrist up to his mouth and bites down hard, using his other hand to sink claws into Liam’s spinal column. Only his participation is necessary to break the bond. That way, any scheming Chevalier could be relieved of duty before they used their king’s own power against them. Harry has never heard of it actually being performed this way, but he knows it works when
something snaps inside his chest like a thread that’s been pulled too tight.

A sob works its way out of Liam’s closed off throat before Harry lets him slide down to the ground. “You have ten minutes to get out of this castle.” Harry growls. “Find Benjamin and tell him I wish to see him. I need a new Chevalier.”

Harry walks out without another word, not sparing a glance at the crying pile of limbs that was his greatest ally, that was his only true friend.

“Fuck!” Louis hisses, screwing up his face and falling to his knees. “Oh, Harry- No.”


“He’s broken his bond with Liam.” Louis rasps out. “Fuck- That stupid ponce!”

“You can tell that?” Ashton asks.

“I can tell by his emotional state.” Louis sighs. “Nothing else messes with it like this.”

“Why would he do that?” Niall asks quietly. “Why would he remove Liam as Chevalier?”

“Because he’s pissed off about Liam kicking us out?” Louis offers. “I don’t fucking know, do I? It’s not telepathy for fuck’s sake. I get a vague sense of his emotions and a signal if he’s in danger. That’s it. The Master’s spell was only broken on Harry’s side, so I don’t even have the extra benefits of being Chevalier. I can’t access his power or sense where he is. He did that so that Harry wouldn’t know it was still active.”

“Should- Should we go back?” Luke questions.

“No. We have to trust that Final Bastion can run itself while we’re gone.” Niall mutters. “Our mission is to find a new home for the lycans, not settle political disputes.”

“Niall-” Ashton groans.

“I know, Ash.” Niall mumbles. “I’m worried about it too. I am. I hate the idea of Liam suffering like that. We can’t go back yet though. We have to let things play out there while we do what we’re out here to do. Unless the bond alerts us that the King is in danger, then we have to keep going.”

“You don’t think this is him being in danger?” Louis scoffs. “Final Bastion is without a Chevalier now, Niall. There’s no second in command. There’s no head of the King’s Guard. There is nobody there to protect the King in the time it takes us to get back there if an emergency happens.”

“This isn’t a democracy, Louis.” Niall mutters. “I want to go back too. But I can’t. We can’t. I’m sorry.”


“Just that Harry is upset and in pain. He’s not scared though.” Louis says quietly. “The bond was broken by his choice, not by death. He’s not in any immediate physical danger.”

“Then Niall is completely right.” Luke sighs. “We should carry on and let Liam take care of himself.”

“You know how he’ll be treated, Luke.” Ashton groans. “A Chevalier that was forcibly removed is
a major taboo. He’ll suffer countless humiliations until we go back and talk some sense into King Harry.”

“Liam can handle it.” Luke says, though he sounds as uncertain and apprehensive as Louis feels. Liam is more sensitive than most people know. He’s hard on himself too, almost as much as Niall is. Liam will be a risk to himself if Harry doesn’t fix this soon.

“If anything happens to him over this, Sunshine, I’ll make you pay.” Louis grits out.

“And I’ll let you.” Niall nods. “Now let’s get some sleep. In a few hours the sun will set and we’ll need to move on.”

“How aren’t they recognizing you?” Ashton asks quietly.

“It’s a glamour. A spell to change my appearance.” Niall shrugs. “I have to recast it every few hours, but it should be fine for a while.”

“If you’re glamoured, then why am I seeing you as usual?” Ashton asks.

“Because it doesn’t work on people who know who I am.” Niall explains. “You three will be able to see me as I am, but everyone else will see someone that just looks sort of vaguely like me, but also not. It makes me unnoticeable to most people. Just another face in the background. It’s not a very powerful glamour, but it’s enough for this sort of thing.”

“I forgot that you were famous on the surface when we planned this. It’s kind of an obstacle.” Luke huffs.

“I’m so sorry that the life I built for myself is such an inconvenience for you.” Niall scowls. “Whatever was I thinking in being a full-fledged person with dreams and goals before all of you came into my life?”

“Don’t be a bitch, Sunshine.” Louis hums, staring down at his hands which are free for the first time in weeks. He hasn’t stopped since they got to the airport. “I was on route to Dublin with Zayn on the night that Liam and Harry picked you up. You got off easy.”

“Louis, what were the conditions of letting you free from the cuff?” Niall snaps.

“No snark and no magic.” Louis mumbles dutifully. “That wasn’t snark. Those two vampires that came for you were just supposed to watch the house and make sure that you stayed put. Zayn and I were going to take you. If Liam and Harry had been even twenty minutes later, then you’d have already been used to destroy Final Bastion. That is, after we’d had our way with you as much as we could without killing you, of course.”

“I know full well what would have happened to me, Louis.” Niall sighs. “I was referring to you calling me a bitch.”

“Oh, whoops.” Louis laughs with a shit-eating grin. “It’s going to take me a while to get used to speaking a bit more civilly. Vampire nests aren’t generally very polite.”

“I doubt you were too polite to begin with.” Ashton snorts, making a grin crack Niall’s steely demeanor before he can help it.

“Holy shit, you can smile!” Louis giggles, poking a finger at the corner of Niall’s lips. “First time
I’ve seen that without it being followed by pain for me.”

“It still might be followed by pain for you.” Niall mutters, batting Louis’ hand away from his face. “Will somebody watch him while I go have a fag?”

“Oh, but Niall, I’m right here.” Louis smirks.

“You’re an idiot.” Niall laughs despite himself.


“Will do.” Ashton beams, hooking an arm over Niall’s shoulder and dragging him towards the smokers’ area. “You don’t actually plan on smoking, do you?”

“I bought them for a reason, but I can’t stomach them anymore. I think it’s all the chemicals in them messing with my fae nature.” Niall admits. “I just need a minute.”

“How come?” Ashton asks.

“Because Liam was booted because of me.” Niall mutters. “I just- I wish there was something I could do. I hate leaving him in the lurch. I hate knowing that Harry is so far gone that he’s pushing Liam away. Maybe- Maybe we should go back.”

“You made the right choice, Niall.” Ashton says softly, stroking the fae’s cheek with his knuckles. “Don’t start doubting yourself now.”

“But Liam-” Niall sighs.

“Liam will be fine, Niall. Not right away, but he will.” Ashton murmurs. “Our mission is too important to turn back now. We have to see this through.”

“What if none of them are livable?” Niall asks. “What if we’re just wasting time when we should be in Final Bastion, preparing for war?”

“Even if they aren’t livable, it won’t have been a waste, Niall.” Ashton says gently. “At least we’ll know. You’re trying to help our people. You’re doing what you can to save as many people as possible.”

“If I can’t get to another portal before the Master attacks, then there’s nothing I can do to get back in time with all three of you.” Niall mumbles. “I might – Might - be able to get back by myself, but I need the power boost to be sure.”

“Why um- Why didn’t we use Final Bastion’s portal to start with?” Ashton asks.

“Because the barrier spell I used prevents vampires from using the portal.” Niall tells him. “It’s why I had to cast it from outside. If we have to go back, I’m going to have to release the spell. Of course, if we have to go back, that means that the Master has already undone it somehow. My- My magic isn’t as powerful as his. I don’t think it would take too much for him to undo it. It’s basically just a stopgap.”

“Your magic is much more powerful than his, Niall. That’s why he needs you.” Ashton points out. “Yours just isn’t as refined. Yet.”

“It’s never going to get there, Ash.” Niall mutters. “I- I don’t want to ever use it again once this is
all over. There’s a good chance I won’t be able to anyways. We all know that my plan is probably
going to end up with me dying.”

“Niall-” Ashton sighs.

“Ash, honestly, it’s true.” Niall cuts him off. “I only care that the plan succeeds. I don’t care how
that happens. Either way, he’ll be gone for good. Either way the Master will be purged from the
world.”

“But you want to live right?” Ashton asks. “You want to win?”

“Of course.” Niall nods. “You and your mate are helpless without me.”

“Don’t be a dick.” Ashton huffs.

“I uh- I want you to know, Ash, there’s nobody I’d be happier to have at my side for this than you
two.” Niall admits. “I haven’t had a lot of people I could count on like I can with you.”

“We’re with you until the end, Niall.” Ashton says with a soft smile, bumping his forehead against
the fae’s. “We both mean that.”

“I hope I don’t let you down.” Niall says before turning back to the other two. They have a flight to
catch, and it’s going to be a long one. Smuggling Louis through Cairo is going to be the much
harder part though. Vampires and the Egyptian sun seem like a bad combination.

“Liam?” Lou asks, looking utterly shocked. Liam doesn’t blame her. He’s a wreck. He can barely
move. Getting here took more effort than he feels like he can muster again. Hopefully Harry
doesn’t actually expect him to report for duty in the morning. Hopefully he isn’t so far gone that he
can’t see what he’s done to Liam.

“Chevalier?” Lux asks, peeking out from behind her mother’s legs.

“I’m sorry.” Liam chokes out.

“Come in.” Lou says softly, wedging herself under his arm and carrying him inside. She lays him
out on the bed and asks, “What happened?”

“He- He broke the bond.” Liam admits, biting back the sob he knows is going to erupt from his
throat sooner or later. “The King relieved me of my position as Chevalier. He forced it.”

“When?” Lou asks.

“A few hours ago.” Liam tells her. “I- I didn’t know where else to go. Ashton, Luke, Niall-
They’re all gone. There’s nobody left to talk sense into him. He’s making Benjamin the new
Chevalier.”

“He isn’t!” Lou growls. “That little-”

“Don’t.” Liam cuts her off. “He’s grieving. He’s in pain.”

“He’s put Final Bastion in the hands of a maniac!” Lou hisses. “A maniac that I voted to execute.
I’ll be damned if I see Benjamin as Chevalier again!”

“There’s nothing to be done.” Liam mutters. “I just- I need a place to stay tonight. I haven’t got a
“I’ve lived in the castle for close to two centuries.”

“Stay as long as you need, Love.” Lou murmurs.

“Just for tonight.” Liam repeats. “I have to report to the barracks.”

“No. No- He can’t be wasting you in the military.” Lou sighs. “Wait- Did you say that Niall is gone?”


“Louis is alive?” Lou asks with wide eyes.

“Not technically.” Liam mutters.

“Oh- Oh, Liam.” Lou whimpers, gathering Liam up into a tight hug. “I’m so, so sorry.”

“He’s himself again, only he’s a vampire now.” Liam tells her. “I- I’ll explain in the morning. I promise.”

“Of course. You just get some rest, Liam.” Lou says with a soft smile, laying Liam back down against the pillows. “It’ll hurt less in the morning.”

“No, it won’t.” Liam whispers before sleep sinks claws into his chest and drags him down.

“Who the fuck do you think that you are?” comes a booming screech through the throne-room.

“Allow me, Your Majesty.” Ben smirks. Harry nods, and Ben stops Lou before she’s halfway across the room. “The King isn’t accepting any visitors, Lou.”

“Benjamin, you haven’t been made Chevalier yet through the bond. I can smell it. Don’t you dare, for even a second, think that you can stop me.” Lou growls. “Without a witch to cast the spell for the bond, you can’t draw from the King’s reserves. You’re Chevalier in name only.”

“And you would turn against that title?” Ben titters.

“I would have words with our foolish young King, and if I have to widow Meri to do that, then I will.” Lou grits out. “You’re a bottom-feeding piece of shit that I will gladly crush beneath my heel if you give me even the slightest reason. You’ve had far longer than you should have already. Please, make my day and give me a reason to finish off what the King put a stop to all those years ago because he didn’t want to add more Lycan blood to his hands.”

“Try it, woman.” Ben snarls.

“Stand down, Benjamin.” Harry orders. “I’ll speak with her.”

“You sniveling little brat.” Lou spits out, crossing around a shocked looking Ben to stalk her way up to the throne. “Have you lost your mind?”

“I see that Liam has been to visit you.” Harry sighs.

“He’s half dead, Your Majesty!” Lou hisses. “To break the bond in a fit of anger is one thing, but to waste a warrior of Liam’s abilities on the front line? You must have gone stupid as well as crazy.”
“Watch your-” Harry starts.

“No, Your Majesty, watch yours.” Lou says with a low, rumbling growl. “And watch your back as well.”

“Is that a threat?” Harry asks icily.

“No. It’s a warning. You have chosen the only snake in this den of wolves to be your guardian. You chose wrong.” Lou mutters. “Liam has never, ever had anything but your best interests at heart.”

“Liam stepped beyond his role and made decisions that affect the lives of every citizen in my kingdom.” Harry snaps. “He’s endangered every soul in Final Bastion with his actions. Any other person would have been executed for treason, Lou.”

“Don’t you forget, Your Majesty, Liam was the one who earned the trust and respect of your King’s Guard. Liam is the one that every lycan in this city admires. And Liam is the People’s Champion. You’ve taken that away, you’ve taken our champion away, and replaced him with a man who is universally hated for committing a genocide against our own people.” Lou says quietly. “And now you don’t even have Niall here to lend credence to your name. You may be found wanting in the eyes of the people, and your own Chevalier would sooner slit your throat than protect you. You’d better hope that Niall can get back in time to protect you once the people find out what you’ve done, because they need someone they can trust, and that certainly hasn’t been you for the last twenty-five years.”

She storms out without letting Harry respond, a hurricane in human form that sends shivers down even Harry’s spine.

“What’s the matter?” Ashton asks, pulling open the door.

“I can’t sleep in the same bed with him. He’s like an ice cube.” Niall sighs. He takes a look inside and groans “Christ! You two do realize that we’re not in final Bastion anymore, yeah? Clothes aren’t so optional on the surface.”

“We run hot, Niall.” Luke mumbles, fanning himself with a folded piece of paper. “This heat is killing us.”

“Are you coming in, or not?” Ashton asks.

“If that’s okay.” Niall says sheepishly.

“It’s fine with me.” Luke nods. “Just hurry up. The cooling device can barely keep it up without the door being open.”

“You don’t mind sharing the bed with us, do you?” Ashton asks, tugging Niall inside and closing the door.

“Suppose not.” Niall shrugs. “It’s bound to be better than staying under four duvets with a vampire who snores. Are you sure you don’t mind?”

“Not in the slightest.” Ashton chuckles, draping himself over Niall’s shoulders. “Your skin is nice and cool compared to ours. It might actually help.”

“What?” Ashton asks, feigning innocence as he strides towards the bed. “I didn’t say anything that isn’t true.”

“Don’t you think we should discuss this?” Luke asks.

“Like we haven’t already?” Ashton fires back. “At length, I believe.”

“What am I missing here?” Niall asks.


“And Lukey is being overly cautious.” Ashton laughs.

“I’m still confused.” Niall sighs.

“Ashton wants to invite you into our bed both literally and figuratively.” Luke explains.

“Oh- I mean- I- Oh.” Niall stammers.

“You’re under no obligation, Niall. If you’d just like to sleep here for the day, then by all means, we can sleep.” Ashton hums.

“I- Uh-” Niall says dumbly, trying hard to divert his brain power from his cock, which agrees heartily with the idea.

“We’re just giving you the option.” Luke adds.

“Not uh- Not right now. I should go.” Niall mumbles, flailing towards the door and escaping before he can give in to the rush of hormones that are racing through him right now. He closes the door behind him and flees down the corridor until he gets back to the room he’s sharing with Louis. Louis will be easier to deal with right now.

“Did they send you packing already?” Louis laughs from under the pile of blankets when Niall gets inside. “I thought for sure that they’d let you stay with them.”

“I decided it was best to stay here.” Niall mutters. “If you fucking bite me though-”

“I’m not risking being turned into the world’s sexiest piece of bullion.” Louis hums. “You don’t need to worry about that.”

“And keep on your side of the bed.” Niall grumbles, slipping off his shoes and climbing into the bed. “If your cold feet touch me, I’ll break one.”

“Aww, but I’m a cuddler.” Louis whines.

“Do you want the manacle to go back on, Louis?” Niall asks sharply.

“No. Jesus, what’s got you in such a bad mood?” Louis asks.

“None of your business, Louis.” Niall mutters. “Go to sleep. We’re heading for the Necropolis at sundown, and I’m going to need some sleep if I’m going to reopen the portal.”

“Alright.” Louis sighs.

“Hey, Louis?” Niall asks after a few minutes.
“Yes, Niall?” Louis muses.

“Where did you learn Arabic?” Niall asks.

“Zayn’s father was from Al-watan, before it was destroyed.” Louis explains. “That’s the name of the empire hidden under the Necropolis. He spoke Arabic, Urdu, and half a dozen other languages. Over the course of a few centuries, you pick up enough to get by.”

“Oh.” Niall says, because he doesn’t really know what else to say. He’d forgotten that he hasn’t just taken Zayn from Harry, but from Liam and Louis as well. It settles in his gut, joining the guilt that’s already pooled there and sliding in seamlessly to add to the weight of his manifold sins. At least he’s not horny anymore.

“How long is this going to take?” Louis whines, tossing about handfuls of sand as he watches the moon crawl across the sky.

“Shut up. I can’t focus if you keep talking.” Niall mutters.

“Can’t you sense portal energy?” Louis asks.

“Yes, but I’m trying to cover a few square miles here to pinpoint it, and that requires some fucking concentration!” Niall snaps. “So stay on guard and make sure no humans come near me while I find the damn thing!”

“Am I allowed to feed from them?” Louis questions.

“Absolutely not.” Niall growls.

“Why not?” Louis pouts.

“Because I will kill you if you do.” Niall snarls. “I’m not fucking around here, you - Found it!”

“Finally!” Louis beams.

“Boys!” Niall yells.

“We heard you already.” Ashton hums, showing up at Niall’s side, Luke appearing a few seconds later.

“You might want to keep the noise down.” Luke says quietly. “We’re not supposed to be here. I had to scare off a couple of security officers.”

“How did you do that?” Niall sighs.


“Fucking lycans.” Niall mutters, grabbing his pack off the ground. “And vampires. How the fuck did this turn into my life?”

“You were born with repressed fae abilities.” Louis chuckles.

“Do any of you know what a rhetorical question is?” Niall huffs.

“Yes, but it seemed rude not to answer.” Louis smirks, thoroughly enjoying the way that Niall’s
eye twitches. “Where to, Sunshine?”

“It’s to the south of everything, a little bit past the causeway.” Niall explains.

“Let’s go then. We only have a few hours before the sun rises and I would like to be inside Alwatan before then.” Louis says, sprinting through the sand while the other three follow behind. It’s hard to keep his footing, but he moves fast enough that the sand hardly has time to displace under his feet before they’re gone, so he manages.

Niall speeds past him, riding a wave of golden sand that he lets fall limp when they pass the causeway. He jumps forward, landing on the sand soundlessly. His legs fold beneath him and he pulls a few items out of his bag. “Okay, everybody stand back.” he murmurs as he spreads a mixture of herbs over the sand in front of him. “This shouldn’t take long, but I don’t know exactly what’ll happen.”

“What is he going to do?” Ashton asks once they’ve retreated a few dozen meters away.

“Basically his power will just reach out to the collapsed remnants of the original portal, and he’ll pour in his energy until it decides to open up.” Luke explains. “A portal can’t actually be closed by anything except a fae. A portal is a doorway between two spots, and when they open a permanent one, all they’ve essentially done is place a brick in the door to keep it from closing. A witch can cast a spell to take out the brick, but they can’t actually destroy the door. Niall can use his power like a key, and open it back up to stick the brick inside again.”

“Brace yourselves.” Louis gets out before he throws himself down on the sand. He barely has time to bury his face in it before a tremendous force explodes out from where Niall was sitting. There’s nothing to grip onto, and Louis gets blown away after a few seconds of desperately struggling against it. Ashton and Luke are both long gone because Louis didn’t have time to give them a proper warning.

He bounces across the sand like a pebble on a still pond, unable to slow himself down until he transforms into mist just to get the world to stop moving around him. He drops back onto the sand and races forward to where Niall was, but there’s no sign of the fae. He’s simply gone. If Louis’ heart were still alive it would be pumping away in his chest like crazy as he searches frantically for the leprechaun who’s supposed to be leading them.

“Where is he?” Ashton growls, showing up after a few moments.

“I don’t know!” Louis says as he listens for anything to give him Niall’s position. A groan, a heartbeat, anything. “I can’t- I can’t find him.”

“Can you sense the portal?” Luke asks, his voice steady despite the panic in his heartbeat.

“No.” Louis admits. “I- I don’t sense anything magical at all. He’s - He’s just gone.”

“Liam, Love, you need to wake up.” someone whispers while they shake lightly at his shoulder. “Someone is here to see you.”

“Five more minutes, Louis.” Liam mumbles.

“He’s really out of sorts, isn’t he?” asks a deep, familiar voice that definitely isn’t Louis.

“That’s what happens when you forcibly break a bond.” Lou- that was the first voice, also not
Louis huffs. “I asked you to wait outside, Your Majesty.”

“Your Majesty!” Liam yelps, pushing himself up into a sitting position so fast that it makes him queasy. He pushes past it to crawl onto the ground and kneel.

“Liam, please don’t do that.” Harry murmurs. “I- I came to see if you were alright.”

“Does he bloody look alright to you?” Lou snaps, forcing a blush onto Liam’s cheeks. He can’t even interject before she carries on with, “He’s been sleeping for a full day! He’s sweated through my mattress because his temperature is so high! He’s been having nightmares and crying out so badly that I had to take Lux to a neighbor because her idol was breaking in front of her eyes!”

“I’m sorry.” Harry choking out, crouching down to Liam’s level. “Liam, I’m so sorry. I- I wasn’t thinking when I did this to you. I lost control again and now you’re paying the price.”

“Per usual.” Lou scoffs.

“Lou, please.” Liam whines. “It’s not his fault.”

“He’s not a child anymore, Liam!” Lou huffs. “He’s got to learn to take responsibility for his actions. You forgiving him for every transgression isn’t helping anything. It isn’t making him a better king. It’s just making him a spoiled brat.”

“Lou!” Liam groans.

“Liam!” Lou hisses back. “A Chevalier and a King are supposed to work together to better each other. You’re the only one who’s been trying to be a better person. You’re the only one who’s worked towards the fulfilment of the bond, and in allowing the King to remain like this, you’ve also failed in your duty.”

“I wasn’t supposed to be Chevalier.” Liam mutters. “Louis was. I was never right for the position. I’m not good enough for it. I’m- I’m a failure. I’m second best, if that.”

“Liam-” Harry says gently.

“Stop feeling sorry for yourself and get off of the floor.” Lou cuts him off, hooking a hand under Liam’s arm and lifting him up gracelessly. “You were twice the Chevalier anyone else could have been. You’ve been a hero to every person in our city since you took over. The problem isn’t entirely on you, Liam. It’s on him.”

“You don’t understand what he’s been through, Lou.” Liam bites out.

“I think I understand pretty damn well, Liam!” Lou snaps. “I lost my mate while I was pregnant! The King doesn’t have a monopoly on suffering! But the rest of us eventually pick ourselves up and move on with our lives. To allow grief to overcome you isn’t becoming of a lycan, let alone our King. We have to be stronger than that. He has to be stronger than that. And you need to help him find that path.”

“That’s why I’m here, Liam. I want you to be my Chevalier again.” Harry tells him. “I need you. Final Bastion needs you.”

“The witch is dead.” Liam points out.

“I have people working on finding a new one.” Harry explains. “Please, say you’ll come back. Say that I haven’t made too big of a mistake for you to forgive me.”
“Of course, Your Majesty.” Liam nods. “It would be my honor to-”

“Stop right there.” Lou cuts in. “Liam, if you do this, you can’t do it because you feel like it’s your duty, or because being Chevalier is an honor. You have to do it because this is what you want, and because you’re going to work hard towards bettering the both of you. Obligation can have no part in the decision this time around. It has to be because you want to be Chevalier for yourself as much as Final Bastion.”

“I- I don’t-” Liam stammers, caught off guard by Lou’s words. Nobody has asked him what he wants in a very long time. He’s not sure what that is anymore. “Um- I- May I have some time to think about it, Your Majesty?”

“Yes, but I need an answer soon.” Harry says softly. “I cannot leave Final Bastion without a Chevalier for any longer than necessary. If you don’t take it, then I’ll have no choice but to grant the position to Benjamin.”

“I’ll have an answer for you by the morning after tomorrow.” Liam mumbles, glancing to his feet because he’s ashamed that he could even consider turning down the offer. He doesn’t know if it’s what he wants though. He doesn’t know much of anything anymore.

“Fucking hell.” Niall grunts, pushing himself up on his elbows and taking a look around. He’s definitely not still in Cairo. “Fuck!”

“I see the leprechauns are still foul-mouthed as ever.” a light voice chuckles behind him.

Niall’s head whips around, hands already on the grips of his swords as he scrambles to his feet. But there’s nobody there. A cat is sitting on a stump not too far away, but there’s no person who could have spoken unless they’re hiding behind one of the trees that litter the edge of the clearing he’s somehow managed to teleport to. “Alright, come out and tell me where I am.” Niall grits out when the frustration begins to build in his gut.

“You’re in Sídhe.” the voices announces, but Niall still can’t see the person who’s said it.

“Where the fuck is Sheeth-uh?” Niall asks, drawing his swords.

“Sídhe is the otherworld dwelling of the fae, and you need to put those away before you put your eye out, little boy.” the voice hums. “I mean you no harm.”

“Then show yourself to me.” Niall tells him.

“I’ve been right here the entire time.” says the voice as the cat prances off the stump to slide between Niall’s legs. “You just thought that I’d look human because I sound it.”

“Oh, fuck no!” Niall groans, darting away from the feline. “How fucking hard did I hit my head?”

“Pretty hard, but that’s not why you’re carrying on a conversation with a cat sìth.” the cat laughs. It fucking laughs.

“A ket shee?” Niall asks.

“Do they teach children nothing in the earthly realm?” the cat asks through a sigh. “I’m a type of fae, just like you, only I take the form of a cat. It’s very simple.”
“Simple my arse.” Niall mutters. “Okay, so if I’m not going crazy, then what exactly is happening here?”

“I’d like to ask you the same question.” the cat muses. “I was enjoying a perfectly fine day until your portal opened up and dropped you on top of the mouse I’d been chasing for my lunch. What is a leprechaun doing messing with portals in the first place? Or carrying around weapons for that matter? Your species isn’t inclined towards such things.”

“I don’t have any choice.” Niall mumbles. “There are things I have to do, and that means there’s something I have to be. I’m a warrior now, whether I’m inclined towards it or not.”

“Halflings.” the cat sighs. “You’re all the same. The power of a fae mixed with the impetuosity of humans. You’re all time-bombs waiting to go off.”

“I had no choice in what I am.” Niall says defiantly.

“No, but you have a choice in what you do with what you are.” the cat says smugly. “We fae are beings of life. To be a warrior is to go against that. It is to fight your very nature.”

“I have to do it.” Niall says adamantly. “And I have to get back.”

“Then let me ask you this, Halfling. What could be so important as to defy your nature and take life?” the cat asks. “What must you do that could turn you so against yourself?”

“I have to stop the Master.” Niall tells him.

“That old blood-bag is still walking around?” the cat asks.

“Yes, and if I don’t destroy him, then he’ll drive the lycans into extinction and enslave the world.” Niall explains.

“How will he do that?” the cat questions.

“He’ll use the power of a fae to wipe out the last empire of the lycans and nothing will be left to stand in his way.” Niall says, growing increasingly frustrated with the conversation. Why the hell is he even talking to a fucking cat?

“So would it not be better if you were not to return to the earthly realm?” the cat asks. “Halflings show up rarely. If you were to stay here in Sídhe, you would be putting off the destruction.”

“Another will show up eventually, and it’s unlikely that the lycans would be able to catch them before the Master does again.” Niall admits. “I’m strong enough to stop him, and I’m going to before he destroys everything.”

“So you believe that you must go back and defeat the Master by yourself?” the cat hums. “You believe an entire world rests on your shoulders?”

“It does.” Niall nods.

“It doesn’t actually.” the cat tells him. “The world will survive whether or not humans exist. It might even be better for it if the last time I was there is any indication. They’re messy and barbaric, and they care little for the world around them.”

“I can’t tell you whether or not Humans deserve to exist. All I can say is that I refuse to allow seven billion people to be enslaved by vampires.” Niall says quietly. “Most humans are innocent. They
may not be perfect, but I can’t allow them to be tortured and killed off as livestock. Now I need to go back. Where’s my portal?”

“It disappeared when you went unconscious.” the cat explains. “I can open one for you, because as one of the Aos Sí portals are a specialty of mine. Leprechauns, let alone Halflings, are not strong in that type of magic. You can’t lose focus if you are going to play with them, as it won’t come naturally to you. You must put all of yourself into it. Portals are like living beings, and each will react differently to you. You’ll need to find out how to work each individual one until it allows itself to be tamed and fixed between two points.”

“Can- Can you teach me?” Niall asks cautiously.

“Very well.” the cat nods. “But first you must catch me lunch to replace the one you squashed.”

“Stop asking me where Niall is!” Louis groans. “I don’t fucking have the answer for you! I didn’t have the answer last night, I didn’t have the answer five minutes ago, and nothing has changed since then!”

“You told us to brace ourselves.” Luke points out. “You knew something was coming.”

“I can’t really explain it. I just had a bad feeling and knew that it was best to get down.” Louis sighs. “Niall messed something up with the portal, but I don’t know what. Only the fae know how portals work, and unfortunately our resident fae is fucking missing!”

“What are we going to do?” Ashton asks weakly.

“We go back.” Louis tells him. “We go back to Final Bastion before anything gets any worse.”

“You can’t get back into Final Bastion.” Ashton grunts. “Niall set the portal up to deny vampires access to the city.”

“I know. I helped him set it up.” Louis huffs. “I can undo the spell and cast a new one once we get back inside.”

“No offense, but why the fuck would we trust you to do that?” Ashton scoffs.

“Because I’m still here.” Louis says quietly. “Niall is gone, and I’m free. I could very easily escape the two of you, but I’m still here. I want to help Final Bastion however I can. I want to save our people, because despite the fact that I’ve been made vampire, I am still a lycan at heart. I am still the man I used to be. I’m just colder now.”

“And you’ve killed how many of our people?” Ashton asks harshly.

“My body was used to kill forty-three lycans over the last twenty-five years.” Louis admits. “That wasn’t me though, Ashton. You have to understand-”

“I know. I know you were under the Master’s influence.” Ashton cuts him off. “But that doesn’t absolve you, Louis. It doesn’t change what you did.”

“I know that!” Louis snaps. “I have so much lycan blood on my hands! I killed people that I knew! People that I trained! People that I once led into combat, that I shared victory feasts with, that I called friends! I know all of that, Ashton, and I know it far better than you ever will! I’m just asking for a chance to redeem myself in whatever small ways that I can!”
“Redemption won’t be as easy as you casting a few spells and fighting by our side, Louis.” Luke says softly. “But you do deserve a chance to try for it. You haven’t tried to escape, and I thank you for it, as would Ash if he weren’t so worried about Niall. For now, I believe that you’re right and we should go back. I want to wait one more night though, just in case Niall comes back.”

“I’m not even sure that he’s still alive.” Louis confesses. “His energy was completely gone. I’ve cast every locator spell that I can, but I can’t find him.”

“One more night.” Luke repeats, his tone firmer.

“Fine. We need to figure out how to get back anyways.” Louis sighs. “It’s not like we have any more money. Niall had all of that stuff.”

“I’ll contact the Espionage Division in the morning.” Ashton tells him. “They’ll send a plane for us as soon as they can.”

“I’m not exactly eager to get back, so don’t put a rush on things.” Louis mutters. “Harry is going to kill us all for having lost Sunshine.”

Harry can’t sleep. He’s trying, fuck is he trying, but he just can’t manage to actually sleep. He hasn’t really slept well since after his rampage anyways though. Knowing that Niall may never come back, combined with the possibility of losing Liam, it’s too much to allow his mind to settle. He’s isolated himself for so long, but for the first time he truly feels alone.

He’s too caught up in his thoughts to notice the footfalls, or the creak of his door, until it’s too late. His body is covered in something that wrenches a scream out of him before he can even react, crisscrossing lines burning their way into his skin and trapping him in place. Fucking silver, in Final Bastion of all places.

“You’re a poor replacement for your father.” an all too familiar voice sneers. “Then again, we all knew you would be after coming out of that witch. I tried to warn Desmond, but you kings never like to listen to those smarter than you, do you? I suppose arrogance must flow in the bloodline. That would explain Edward.”

“Benjamin, what do you think you’re doing?” Harry growls.

“What should have been done to you in the womb.” Ben hums, slipping his hands out from a pair of leather gloves and sauntering closer to the bed. “You were never fit to be King. All this power in your hands is a waste.”

“At least I had the courage to challenge my father to single combat to take his power.” Harry snarls. “You’re not only treasonous, but a coward as well.”

“Your father was old and fat. You are in the prime of your life. I know when to pick my battles, which is exactly why I must be King.” Ben grins.

“And what battle will you pick, Benjamin?” Harry asks. “I see no warrior standing here, only a scared little pup pretending to be a man.”

“Our people cannot keep up a war for the purpose of saving another species. Simply put, Your Majesty, the battle I choose is no battle at all. We have other options, other avenues that could be afforded to us, if we just know what deals to make.” Ben explains haughtily. “And who to make them with.”
“You sniveling little pissant!” Harry grits out. “You would dare?”

“I would do what I must.” Ben says adamantly. “I won’t see our people driven to extinction for the sake of humanity, or your infatuation with the fae boy.”

“You won’t catch Niall off-guard the same way you did with me.” Harry growls.

“I don’t need to. It seems that the fae has disappeared.” Ben smirks. “I’ve had my people trailing that group since they left, and the leprechaun vanished and hasn’t been heard from since. He’s abandoned the cause already. The other three will be taken care of by sunrise, as will that pitiful lump that used to be Chevalier.”

“Like hell they will!” Harry roars. “I’ll kill you!”

“Empty threats as your last words. No surprise there.” Ben sneers, raising his now-clawed hand. He swings it down harshly, aimed right at Harry’s throat. Harry feels his skin shred, feels blood rush to fill his trachea, but it’s not deep enough to kill him yet, not when Benjamin’s body slams against the wall before he can finish the job. He stands quickly, dropping fangs as he snarls, “Liam.”

“This time, Benjamin, no one will save you.” Liam says calmly.

“Heads up, boys. We have company.” Louis says, flying off of the mattress at the first sound of footsteps.


“Besides, it’s too close to dawn. Vampires wouldn’t risk attacking right now.” Ashton adds.

“There are three sets of boots on the roof along with squads of three coming from both sides of the hallway. It’s not patrons, and it’s not vampires.” Louis tells them. “I taught this attack pattern. I know what I’m talking about. Besides, there’s something else going on right now that pretty much guarantees this.”

“What are you saying?” Ashton asks, sitting up.

“Come here, now.” Louis orders, dropping his fangs and tearing open each of his wrists. Luke and Ashton stare at him curiously, but he just holds them out and says, “Drink. Just a little bit.”

“No way am I-” Ashton starts, but Luke stuns them both by following the command without protest. “Luke!”

“Just shut up and do it, Ashton.” Louis growls, centering his hearing on the approaching sets of attackers. They’ve got about thirty seconds before the assault, which is enough time for Louis to pin the pup to the ground and force the blood down his throat if necessary. Ashton huffs, but does as he’s told. “Good dog.”

“Well, what the fuck was that for?” Ashton asks.

“Can you hear me?” Louis asks, speaking the words with his mind rather than his voice.

“What the-” Ashton yelps before Luke gets a hand over his mouth.

“Temporary telepathy.” Louis explains to them. “We need to stay silent. This is how vampires ambush lycans. You have better senses of smell, but we have this. Now shut up and do exactly as I tell you, and we may well make it out of this. We should be fine, as long as—”

Then Louis hears it, that distinctive clicking sound that spells trouble. “Fuck!”

“What?” Ashton asks through the connection.

“They brought artillery.” Louis groans inwardly. “Silver laced bullets if I know Benjamin.”

“What makes you think Benjamin has anything to do with this?” Luke asks.

“That’s the other thing that’s happening. Harry has been attacked.” Louis admits. “He’s not dead, but he’s in a great deal of pain right now. I think it’s silver.”


“Only if we make it out of this.” Louis reminds them. “Now, Ashton, I need you to go to the bathroom window, and then, Luke, you need to position yourself behind the door and wait for my signal to kick it as hard as you can. Go now.”

“What are you going to do?” Luke asks, letting himself shift into full lycan form.

“I’m going to take these fucks by surprise.” Louis chuckles. He reaches into himself and grabs his power, dissolving into mist. The lycans will revert him through proximity, but not before Louis manages to take a few out. He’s not proud of it, but he’s become quite proficient at combatting lycans over the last twenty-five years.

He pours himself out through the door, dispersing himself so that the mist is nearly invisible in the low light. The hallway outside of the door is open to the world, a small railing acting as a half-wall. Louis flows through it, pushing himself out into the air and up towards the roof. Their backs are turned to him, and if Louis had a body right now, he would smirk. They’re making it too easy.

“Alright boys, they’re right outside the door now.” Louis informs them, positioning himself above the three on the roof. “On the count of three, I want Ashton to jump out the window and come around the building, and Luke, you already know what to do. Try and get them all into the courtyard. This will go better if we aren’t separated for long. One, two, three!”

Louis surges forward, using the element of surprise to his advantage the same way Luke is. He can hear the sound of the door splintering, exploding outwards and sending one of the hunters down over the railing with a yelp and a thud. Louis had hoped that Luke would be able to take out at least two with that move, but their spacing must have been just enough to keep that from happening. The distinct noise that glass makes when it breaks echoes through the air on the other side of the building, distracting the three that Louis is after just enough for him to plant himself in the center of them before he’s forced to reform.

“Hello boys!” he says cheerfully, lifting his leg and catching one square in the chest with a kick that sends him flying off of the roof. At the same time, he grabs the heads of the other two and brings them together with a ‘crack!’ that rings in his ears. He knows they won’t be out for long though, so he tosses them down after the first one. Inside his head he asks, “Ash, how much longer until you reach the courtyard?”

“Five seconds.” Ashton informs him.

That’s enough time if Louis does this properly. He jumps off of the roof, pivoting in mid-air to grab
onto the railing on their floor as he passes it. One second. His feet catch the wall that constitutes
the floor of the hallway, and he pushes off of it, using the bar to swing up and wrap his legs around
one of the five hunters still on that level. Two seconds. He throws himself into a backflip, sending
the captive hunter crashing into two of the others. Three seconds.

“Toss those three into the courtyard.” Louis mentally commands Luke, rushing up to take out one
of the two that’s still standing before he can level his gun. He delivers a blow to the inside of the
arm, and then a quick strike with his knee to the gut to disarm the fucker. Four seconds.

The last one squeezes off a round, narrowly missing Louis’ arm as he flips over the previous target.
Five seconds. He grabs the one currently heaving his guts out and throws him with all of his might
into the one that fired, sending them both tumbling over the railing. He hits the ground of the
courtyard only a moment later, but it’s enough time for Ashton to say, “I got here first. You’re
getting slow in your old age, Louis.”

“Shut up, Pup.” Louis laughs. “We have hunters to take care of, but then I’ll make you eat those
words.”

“Bet they taste better than your blood.” Ashton counters smugly.

“Shut up and dis-” Louis starts, but he’s cut off by the sound of a bullet firing. Luke howls,
pitching forward off of the balcony and shifting back before he even hits the ground. Ashton starts
to move in his direction, but Louis splays out a hand to stop him. “There’s a sniper. If you go to
him, you’ll be an easy target. Let me take care of the sniper before you do anything. Just keep
moving and disarm as many of the ones on the ground as you can.”

“I’ll kill you if he dies.” Ashton growls, taking off once Louis bursts into mist. Another shot rings
out, and a bullet digs into the ground where Louis had been standing only a moment before. He
carries himself high into the sky, but the shadows are giving the sniper cover and it takes him a
few seconds to spot the fucker. Once he does though, it’s over.

He dives through the air, solidifying just before he hits. There’s a sickening crunch from the bones
of the hunter’s spine, and then Louis twists the lycan’s neck to make sure that he can’t fight back.
He lifts the man up, fear evident in his eyes as his neck lolls to the side, the perfect little morsel
offered up for the vampire. Louis slips out his fangs, but before he can bite, a massive flare of
energy burns up in his chest and he drops the lycan. He knows this energy, and he knows what it
means.

“Ash! Get Luke up to higher ground now!” Louis orders, stepping up to the edge of the building.
Ashton follows the command without question, scooping Luke up and leaping onto the second
floor just in time to avoid the tidal wave that crashes into the courtyard, golden sand gleaming in
the moonlight as it floods in and covers the bastards unlucky enough to be on the ground still.

Louis spots him then, standing in the center of the mess he’s created as he commands the sand like
conducting a symphony. In less than five seconds, each of their attackers, bar the one at Louis’
feet, are pinned against the wall in solid gold cocoons that make Louis’ spine shiver in sympathetic
remembrance. Louis grabs the hunter off the ground and leaps, racing through the labyrinth of
buildings until he reaches their hotel.

“Wondered when you’d be back, Sunshine.” Louis hums, dropping the man at Niall’s feet.

“Why are you three still here?” Niall asks, drawing one of his swords and turning on the lycan
whimpering on the ground. He lifts the blade high, but Louis stops him before he can strike.
“Don’t. They’re lycans acting under orders from who I can only assume is Benjamin.” Louis tells him. “It’s an act of treason, and only the King can decide what to do with them.”

“Fine.” Niall mutters, replacing his blade. “Louis, why are you three still here in Cairo?”

“We wanted to give it two days before we left in case you came back.” Louis explains.

“Two- Two days.” Niall says, his eyes going wide before narrowing. “Fucking Sidhe.”

“It’s only actually been a little over a day.” Louis offers.

“Good. That’s good.” Niall nods. “Brilliant, actually. What happened? Why are Benjamin’s men attacking the three of you?”

“My guess is that- Fuck!” Louis screams, sinking to his knees and clenching at his throat. They’ll never get back in time. “Harry is being attacked by Benjamin. He’s going to kill him.”

“Ashton, is Luke alright?” Niall asks loudly.

“He’ll survive. The bullet was a through-and-through.” Ashton calls back.

“Can you hold things down here for a while?” Niall asks Ashton.

“Yes.” Ashton nods.

“Alright.” Niall says, turning back to Louis and grabbing his wrist. “Hold on, because this is not going to be fun for you.”

“Pathetic.” Ben sneers, catching Liam in the ribs with his foot and sending him flying. He crashes into the remains of the mirror, slumping down onto the ground with a grunt. He’s not strong enough. He still hasn’t recovered from Harry forcibly breaking the bond. He’s not even as strong as a normal lycan right now. Without Chevalier powers, he’s nothing.

That doesn’t mean that he’s going to stop though. Harry’s life is on the line, and Liam isn’t going to stop fighting for it until he’s dead. Given the way his legs shake when he stands up, though, that may not be too far off. He lunges forward, but a bright flash of light fills the room and stops him in his tracks. There are two bodies between him and Benjamin, and until something shoots through the air, he doesn’t understand it.

Benjamin screams in pain as he’s pinned to the wall, a blade of gold protruding from his chest. “Take care of him.” Niall’s voice says roughly to the figure beside him. “Leave him alive for the King to decide his fate, but make it hurt.”

“Yes, Boss.” comes Louis’s gleeful chuckle.

Liam doesn’t know where to focus, dropping down to his knees once he realizes that the fight is over. Niall grabs the silver net off of Harry, pulling it away and sending it flying out the door. Louis, on the other hand, takes things more slowly, strolling over to Benjamin with a manic look in his eyes. He slips out his fangs and rakes one down the side of Benjamin’s neck. The traitor growls as Louis dips his tongue down and licks along the wound, lapping up the blood oozing out, but Benjamin’s arms are pinned to his side by Louis’ hands, and he can’t fight back.

“Oh Bennie, I never wanted to do this, but I have to admit that it’s crossed my mind. We’re going
to take it nice and slow.” Louis murmurs in his ear, making Liam’s stomach churn with the words. “You ready to feel me inside you?”

Without waiting for an answer, Louis pulls back his hand and points all of his fingers. He pushes it forward, and even Liam cringes at the sight of his former mate’s hand disappearing into Benjamin’s stomach. “That was for Harry.” Louis snarls. He twists his arm, causing an aborted scream to choke out of Benjamin’s mouth. “That was for sending assassins after us.”

In a flash, Louis’ hand moves out of Ben’s torso and into his open mouth. Something hits the ground in front of Liam with a wet slap, and Liam nearly retches when he realizes that it’s Benjamin’s tongue. “And that was for Liam.” Louis hums, dropping the traitor to the ground. He holds his hand up in front of his face and licks eagerly at the blood coating it like it’s some sort of treat. “All done, Boss. Anything else?”

“Just make sure that he doesn’t heal enough to do anything.” Niall says absentmindedly, holding his hands over the wound on Harry’s throat. He seems to be focusing intently, and Liam figures out why a moment later when Harry sits up and chokes out blood over his legs. Niall rubs at Harry’s back, murmuring comforting things in the King’s ear while he coughs up lungsful of the thick liquid. “You’re okay, Your Majesty. Just breathe.”

“Niall?” Harry wheezes.

“None other.” Niall nods. “Thought you could use some help. He sent his men after us, and then Louis felt that you were in trouble. Took me a few minutes to get here. Sorry about that.”

“How?” Liam asks, the first words he’s spoken since the pair arrived.

“Got a bit of training on how to control portals.” Niall sighs. “I’m- Let’s just say that leprechauns aren’t naturally suited to creating, or manipulating, portals. I had to do a lot of work to get to this point.”

“You’ve only been gone for three days.” Liam says, furrowing his brows.

“I’ve been gone for almost a month actually.” Niall says quietly. “For me anyways. Obi said that time flows differently in Sídhe, but I didn’t realize that it was that different.”

“What are you talking about?” Liam asks.

“I’ll explain later.” Niall mutters. “For now, I have to head back to Cairo. Ashton is basically by himself, and I left a bit of a mess.”

“Benjamin said that you’d vanished.” Harry whimpers, clutching at Niall’s arm. “That you’d abandoned us.”

“I didn’t, Your Majesty, I promise.” Niall says softly. “I was training in order to help your cause. Now, Louis, I need you to do something.”

“Just say the word, Boss.” Louis hums.

“Can you cast the spell to re-bond these two?” Niall asks.

“Yes, actually.” Louis grins.

“Not unless Liam consents.” Harry choke out.
“I was on my way here to do that already.” Liam tells him. “When I found the members of the King’s Guard all unconscious in the throne room, I figured that Benjamin was making a play for the crown.”

“Is this really what you want, Liam?” Harry asks.

“Somebody has to whip you into shape, Sire.” Liam smirks.

“Luke has been shot, so can we please move this along?” Niall grunts. “Do whatever you three need to do, but be quick about it. The sun is going to rise in Cairo in less than an hour.”

“I can manage that.” Louis says solemnly. “Do you want to head back and take care of those two?”

“I’ll stay until you’ve finished. I can’t manage too many long-distance portals in one day, and I still have to bring back the guys who attacked us.” Niall says, shaking his head. His heartbeat doesn’t stutter, he gives off no scent that speaks of deceit, but something deep inside Liam tells him that Niall isn’t telling the entire truth. Maybe it has something to do with the arm he still has wrapped protectively around Harry’s shoulder. Yeah, it’s probably that.

“Bloody took you long enough.” Ashton huffs once they return. Niall is too winded from using so many portals in such rapid succession to argue, so he just waves Ashton off instead. He has about two minutes to rest, and then he needs to get started on taking back the other men. It’s going to take at least three trips to get all ten of them back, and then he’ll have to use another portal to get them into Al-watan before the night ends. It’s going to be really close.

“Relax, Sunshine.” Louis murmurs in his ear. “Take a minute to recover. You’ve more than earned it.”

“Just need to catch my breath.” Niall mutters. “Just give me a second, and then I’ll take them back to Final Bastion.”

“Why aren’t there any human police or anything?” Louis asks Ashton after rolling his eyes at Niall’s stubbornness.

“I used Luke’s trick and scared them off by shifting my head.” Ashton hums, looking down at his mate, sleeping with his head cradled in Ashton’s lap. “They’ll be back soon though, I think.”

“Better get moving then.” Niall sighs, pushing himself back up off of the ground. “Too much to do, and not nearly enough time to do it in.”

“Niall-” Louis says gently. “We can stay in the city for another day if we need to. You don’t have to get us into Al-watan tonight.”

“For you guys, it’s only been a day, Louis, but for me I’ve been putting this off for too long.” Niall mumbles, stepping towards the edge of the roof and looking down on the mess he’s created. There are nine lycans wrapped in gold cocoons, their eyes and noses the only things uncovered so that they can still breathe. Niall gathers up his strength, aurokinetically gripping his creations, and thrusts them into one large pile in the center near the lycan that Louis seems to have somehow paralyzed. He’s going to have to try for two trips, because that takes more out of him than it should have. Opening seven more portals in the next hour might just kill him.

He jumps down and lands next to the pile, lifting the unbound lycan onto his back and then draping himself over the pile to cover as many of the cocoons as he can. He takes a deep breath,
and then opens a portal to absorb anything he’s touching.

His teachers had done a lot to help him learn to control these things, but he’s not sure that he’ll ever actually get used to the feeling. They’re wild energy, untamed and reckless, pulling him to pieces before putting him back together on the floor of Harry’s chambers. They land with a hard thump, the portal dumping them out a few feet above the ground rather than on it like Niall had instructed it to. He fucking hates portals.

“Sorry. Sorry.” Niall mutters when Liam’s head springs up from the bed, exhaustion pulling his features into a worried frown. “It’s just me, Liam. Well- Me, and these five. Just give me a minute and I’ll go back and grab the others.”


“I don’t have a minute.” Niall grits out, pushing himself up to his feet and slinging the hunter to the ground. Harry takes a step forward towards Niall, but the leprechaun closes his eyes and opens another portal for himself back to Cairo. He’s gone in a flash, but not before he can see the frown that tugs at the corners of Harry’s mouth.

He lands on his back in the courtyard, three faces peering down at him worriedly. “You look like hell, Mate.” Luke says gently.

“Weren’t you shot?” Niall grumbles, lifting himself up and trudging towards the rest of the cocoons.

“Niall, the police are coming. They’ll be here any minute.” Ashton tells him.

“Find somewhere to lay low.” Niall orders. “I’ll find you when I get back. I’ll try to be back before sunrise, but make sure that it’s somewhere that Louis can stay if I’m not. Here’s all the money I have.”

He pulls out the wad of cash stashed in his satchel, passing it over to Luke. “Don’t wreck another hotel, please. I feel bad enough about this one.”

“We make no promises, Boss.” Louis chuckles.

“Fucking arses, the lot of you.” Niall scowls, gripping onto the cocoons with his power and surrounding himself with them until all five are pressed against him. He opens the portal once more, feeling his energy rush out of him as they’re all transported five-thousand kilometers away back into Harry’s chambers. Well- his balcony actually. Accuracy is still a slight problem for Niall, but he’s getting better.

He lets his power loose and the cocoons tip back, dropping away from him before he sinks to his knees, gasping for lungsful of air that just aren’t coming fast enough. He’s going to have to stop for at least a minute before he can leave again, and damns himself for his own fucking weakness. He thought that his time in Sídhe had helped him build back his reserves, had helped him get stronger, but it’s still not enough. He’s still not enough.

“Don’t say that.” comes a sad voice behind him once again. “Niall-”

“Don’t-” Niall wheezes out, furious that the thought somehow made itself verbalized without his permission. “Please, don’t.”

“You need to rest, Niall.” Harry tells him, his voice more adamant this time. His hand brushes over Niall’s back, and even through the leather of his jerkin, it still lights Niall’s skin on fire. He lurches
forward, away from the touch, but the motion sends him toppling over onto the ground before he can catch himself.

“I can’t. I’ve been gone for too long.” Niall breathes out, struggling to lift himself up onto his hands. “I have to get into Al-watan. I have to complete my mission. I’m not doing any good to anyone if I’m resting.”

“You won’t do anyone any good if you kill yourself, Niall.” Harry says sharply. “Look what happened last time you overexerted yourself. You nearly died.”

“I can do this.” Niall says, though even he can hear that his voice is fragile and wavering. “I can do it. I know I can do it.”

“Niall, you looked better in the coma than you look right now.” Harry murmurs. “I don’t think you’ll make it if you try to leave again right now. Give yourself some time to recover.”

“I can recover once I get us into Al-watan.” Niall grunts, forcing his body to stand up despite its protests.

It’s going to be tight, Niall can tell, but he should have enough power to do this. He has to. There’s no other option. He lifts his hand, focusing on finding the right wavelength of that wild energy to grab onto, but from the second he does, his body goes numb. The portal barely flickers to life before closing again, and Niall falls backwards, the world slipping away from him before he hits the ground.

Chapter End Notes

Here are some pronunciation lessons for everyone!

Aos Sí: a(as in apple)-shee

Cait Síth: ket-shee

Sídhe: shee-thuh

Al-watan: all-wah-tahn
“You’re awake.” Harry sighs in relief once he feels Niall begin to stir in his arms. “Thank the Moon.”

“Moon has nothing to do with it.” Niall mumbles, still sounding half asleep. “You won’t stop touching my hair.”

“You keep nuzzling into it.” Harry says with a soft smile, thankful that the reformation of the bond is keeping Liam nearly dead to the world behind him. He gets to have this time alone with Niall, and that’s more than he thought he’d ever get again.

“Didn’t say it didn’t feel good. Said it woke me up.” Niall slurs out, pressing his face into Harry’s neck. No sooner does Harry curl his arms around Niall than the fae freezes. Then he’s gone, all at once, standing in the middle of the room and glaring at Harry. “What the fuck did you do to me?”

“Nothing.” Harry huffs. “You tried to open another portal, and then you passed out.”

“Fuck!” Niall spits, reaching up and curling his fingers into his hair as he lets out a long, low groan. “Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!”

“Calm down, Niall.” Harry tells him. “Getting angry won’t solve anything.”

“How long have I been out?” Niall asks. “And why are my clothes gone?”

“Just a few hours, six or so, I would guess. And I changed them because they were disgusting.” Harry explains. “I have someone already on task to make you new ones. Don’t worry. You’ll have everything you need soon enough.”

“I don’t have time to waste, Your Majesty.” Niall mutters, hitching up the pair of Harry’s trousers that the king had wrestled onto his unconscious form after he’d undressed him. “How the fuck can I be swimming in these at the hips, and still barely feel my thighs from the constriction, at the same time?”

“You can’t do anything about it right now, Niall.” Harry says, ignoring what was probably a rhetorical question about the trousers. “It’s the middle of the day in Cairo. You can’t do anything until nightfall, unless you already managed to get Louis into Al-watan. Judging by what you said last night though, I would guess that that isn’t the case.”

“You don’t understand. I left them there, alone, and probably being pursued by the police.” Niall says quietly. “I already left them alone for so long, and-”

“It wasn’t as long as it feels to you, Niall.” Harry interjects. “I know that you said that a month has passed for you, but it hasn’t for everyone else. For them it’s only been a little over a day that you were gone according to Louis.”

“I- I know that.” Niall sighs. “Like- I know it, but my mind is having trouble understanding it. I went through so much in the last month. I’ve put in so much fucking work. You can’t even begin to understand it. And then to come back and find out that basically no time has passed at all- It’s weird.”

“Tell me what happened.” Harry requests.
“God, I don’t even know where to start.” Niall says, dropping to the ground with his legs crossed under him.

“The beginning is a very good place to start.” Harry offers.

“You- God, you aren’t even making a reference.” Niall scoffs, shaking his head. “It started when I tried to open the portal to Al-watan. It- Well, it backfired. I couldn’t control it, and it took me to Sídhe. That’s- That’s where all the fae are. They didn’t go extinct, Your Majesty, they left. They didn’t want to deal with humans, or vampires, or witches, or lycans, or anything else anymore, so they left.

“Anyways, I ended up in this field, and Keth was there, he’s a cat sìth, and told me that I shouldn’t be mucking around with portals, because leprechauns aren’t a species that can handle them well, because we aren’t Aos Sí. So I asked him to teach me, because I didn’t want a repeat incident to happen where I ended up somewhere that I didn’t mean to. He made me catch him dinner, and he taught me what he could, but he was pretty vague about it and I couldn’t get it right, so he introduced me to Obi. That’s not his real name though. His real name is Oberon, but that’s a mouthful. Obi-”

“Oberon?” Harry squawks, cutting off whatever Niall was about to say.

“Yup.” Niall nods, his eyebrows crinkling up in confusion.

“Niall, please tell me that you know the significance of who Oberon is.” Harry groans.

“Why do you know who Oberon is?” Niall asks, his eyebrows practically melding together now.

“Because, I would have to be an idiot to not know the name of the King of the Seelie Court!” Harry hisses. “Oberon is the King of the Golden Ones! He’s the most powerful creature to ever exist, even more so than the Master!”

“No shit?” Niall muses. “Well I probably shouldn’t have dumped my stew over his head then.”

“You didn’t!” Harry gasps, eyes practically bulging from his head at the confession.

“He made fun of me for tripping over my own feet while I was blindfolded.” Niall shrugs. “It was one of his stupid tests, and I was tired of getting made fun of all the time.”

“I’m surprised that you survived.” Harry sighs. “Oberon was notorious in his temper.”

“Oh, he was a cranky old bastard alright.” Niall nods. “But he was also a laugh. Anyways, he put me through all this training, learning to find and control portal energy. Took me fucking weeks, but I finally have enough of a grasp on it to do what I need to do. I haven’t mastered it by any stretch of the imagination, and I’ll probably never be able to as a Halffling, but I can do enough.”

“I thought that you seemed to do a splendid job last night.” Harry frowns.

“You don’t get it.” Niall says softly, with a shake of his head. “Portals are- They’re the ultimate magic, yeah? They’re time, and space, and energy, all rolled up into a living thing. They have wills of their own. The fae, we can control that to an extent, and with enough power we can freeze one open to function permanently, but we can’t fully tame it. What I did last night wasn’t how you’re supposed to work a portal. What I do is offer my power and life-force in exchange for it doing as I ask. Every time I do that, I’m cutting years, or even decades, off of my life.”

“You idiot!” Harry scowls.
“I don’t have any choice, Your Majesty.” Niall murmurs. “I’m doing what I have to do. I’ll deal with the consequences later. For now I have a mission that is far more important than a few centuries that I probably won’t have lived to see anyways. The future beyond my mission isn’t in any way significant to me.”

“You’ve had a month, and still you’re so wrapped up in your own guilt that you can’t see a damn thing.” Harry growls.

“I’m not the blind one.” Niall mutters. “You’re the one that can’t see past his own desires enough to realize that there are things that need to be done. You’re a selfish prat.”

“And you’re just a pup who can’t get over himself!” Harry snaps. “You’re arrogant, and foolish, and reckless beyond anyone that I’ve met in my life.”

“And you’re more pathetic than anyone I’ve ever met in mine.” Niall snarls.

“Careful, Niall.” Harry warns him, feeling the hair on the back of his neck beginning to rise as his Beast threatens to break loose again. “Wouldn’t want you to do something you might regret and then try to kill yourself over it. I know that that’s how you like to handle things now.”

“I’m going back to Cairo now.” Niall grits out, standing up and closing his eyes.

“No, you aren’t.” Harry argues, launching himself off of the bed and catching Niall around the stomach before he can open up a portal. They crash to the floor, and Harry pins Niall’s wrists down before he can fight back. “I’m fucking tired of you running away from me all the time, pretending that what we have doesn’t matter.”

“What do you want from me?” Niall asks, screwing his eyes shut and going slack beneath Harry. “Why can’t you just let me do what I have to do?”

“Because I don’t think you plan to make it out of this, Niall.” Harry admits in a whisper. “I think you plan to die, and I can’t just let that happen. I will tear down the Moon if that’s what it takes to save you. I’ve lost too many people I love already. I won’t lose you too, not even to yourself.”

For the first time since the fae was brought to Final Bastion, Harry sees a tear slip out from Niall’s eye. It’s followed by another, and another, until they run in rivulets down his cheekbones and he’s shaking under Harry’s hands. “Don’t.” Niall whimpers. “Please don’t.”

“I love you, Niall.” Harry murmurs, pressing his body along Niall’s to bury his face in the blond’s neck. He smells slightly different; it’s still like his usual self, only stronger, more potent. It’s good. Harry really likes the way Niall smells.

Niall’s hands wrench loose from Harry’s, burying themselves in his hair and tugging him into a kiss that Harry knows will linger on his lips for centuries. His grip is hard, unrelenting, like he’s afraid Harry will disappear if they separate, even though he’s the one that’s been running. They kiss until Harry’s head starts to go light from a lack of oxygen. “Hold on tight.” Niall says, closing his eyes.

A flash of light blinds Harry before he can close his own eyes, and his skin prickles like it’s being shredded off of his body before they land on their feet and a scent fills Harry’s nostrils like nothing he’s ever smelled before. He looks around, taking in the ruins of some broken marble temple, surrounded on every side by a field that stretches farther in every direction than the eye can see. “Where are we?” Harry gasps.

“Sídhe.” Niall breathes out. “I- I’m not supposed to bring you here, but I needed to.”
“Why?” Harry asks.

“Because we just don’t have the time back on Earth.” Niall explains. “If time flows faster here, then we can do this without putting my mission at risk.”

“What did you have in mind?” Harry asks softly, letting Niall’s arms slip around his waist while he drinks in the freshness of a world unspoiled by man. It smells like what Desmond said that the Earth did when he was young. It’s crisp and clean and clear. It’s beautiful.

“I want you to mate me.” Niall whispers in his ear. “I- I may not come back from this mission, but I want to be yours before I go back.”

“Are you sure?” Harry asks, his heart pounding so harshly in his chest that he can barely hear the words. He turns around, eyes focused solely on Niall now because he’ll be able to see the answer in Niall’s eyes, even if his lips lie.

“Right now, it’s the only thing that I’m sure of.” Niall tells him. “I don’t know if I’ll make it back. I don’t know if I’ll find anywhere for your people. I don’t know if I’ll survive another fight with the Master. What I do know is that I’m fighting on too many fronts of too many wars, and I’m done fighting you. I’m done pretending I don’t want this, so if you’ll have me, then I want to be yours.”

“And I want to be yours.” Harry murmurs. “But you must be absolutely positive Niall. This- This is a lifelong bond. It can’t be undone.”

“And for however long I live, I want to belong to you.” Niall says quietly. “I can’t stop myself from feeling guilty about what I’ve done, but I also can’t stop myself from loving you. It’s- It’s going to be a long time before I’ll be okay, so you’re going to need to be patient with me.”

“I’ll wait centuries if I have to.” Harry breathes out. “I’ll wait a millennium, as long as I have you by my side.”

“Then what are you waiting for?” Niall asks, tilting his head up enough to let the words whisper over Harry’s lips. “Knot me, Harry.”

“I want you to say it again first.” Harry growls, low and possessive as his hands find Niall’s hips.

“I love you.” Niall says softly, setting Harry’s skin on fire with three simple words.

Every ounce of restraint inside Harry breaks, and he pushes Niall backwards, attached to the fae at the lips, until they collide with a column. Harry hears the stone crumble to the ground, but he’s much more focused on the sound of Niall’s heartbeat under his skin. It’s a symphony, a hymn, just for Harry.

Niall’s body is both familiar and foreign to Harry’s hands at the same time, harder and firmer than he remembers it, but still as responsive and sensitive as it ever was. His skin tastes the same under Harry’s tongue, sweet and salty and Niall. The sounds that work their way out of his mouth are melodic, whimpers and whispers that mean nothing and everything.

Niall slips out of Harry’s borrowed trousers easily, leaving them both bare and pressed together from head to toe, no air between the two of them because the very thought of that seems profane, blasphemous. They fall to the ground, Niall’s body fitting under Harry’s like they were born just for this, and Harry thinks that, maybe they were.

He fits his hands under Niall’s hips, lifting them up to grind desperately against one another until
Niall digs his nails into Harry’s back and moans, “Harry, please- I need you. Need to be yours. We can do the slow thing later, but right now I need this.”

“It’s going to be rough if we don’t take our time.” Harry tells him.

“Don’t care.” Niall groans. “I don’t want to waste another second by not being yours.”

“Deep breath.” Harry murmurs against Niall’s lips, waiting until the blond follows the instruction before he guides himself in. Harry is leaking buckets, which helps ease the slide a bit, but he can tell that Niall is in pain by the way he hisses. “Relax. That’s it. So good for me, Love.”

Niall doesn’t say anything, just grips tight around Harry with his legs, pulling the lycan inside further, inch by inch, until he’s fully sheathed inside. A guttural growl tears free of Harry’s lips, and he buries his face in Niall’s neck, pouring scent out of himself like his life depends on it. He loves Niall’s scent, could live on it forever, but the Beast is insisting that Niall be marked in every way, and Harry doesn’t want to fight that. He wants Niall to be his, and only his.

“Move.” Niall keens, giving short, aborted rolls of his hips in an effort to spur Harry on. That’s all the permission Harry needs. He drags his hips back, and then slams hard into Niall’s body. “Oh fuck yes!”

Harry picks up a rhythm quickly, lifting himself up on his hands a bit to get to an angle that leaves Niall whimpering and screaming with each thrust, panting raggedly into Harry’s mouth when he can’t take enough of a breath between each go. Harry feels himself getting close, feels his knot starting to unfurl, and growls out, “It’s coming, Niall. Gonna knot you.”

“Please.” Niall moans. That’s all it takes for Harry to let go, burying himself inside of Niall with a savage, primal roar, while Niall screams and clutches around him, back arching off of the ground and streaming cum over his chest. Harry’s mouth finds the juncture between Niall’s neck and shoulder by instinct, and he sinks his fangs in, solidifying the bond.

The world vanishes around them, their minds melding into one and leaving everything else behind. Niall’s pain, his grief, his guilt, become Harry’s, but so do his joy, and his hope, and his ecstasy. In this space everything is shared, every emotion and feeling and thought and desire. Harry is Niall, and Niall is Harry. They aren’t two people anymore, but one being split between two bodies that are a thousand universes away from where they are now.

It takes millennia for them to pull apart, but eventually the moment ends and they find themselves locked together, skin tinged with electric energy wherever they’re touching. Harry’s knot gives another pulse, and his body can’t hold up anymore. He collapses on top of Niall, whimpering and moaning and grinding because everything about Niall is his now. Niall is his now, and he’s Niall’s.

They stay in Sídhe for three days, their own personal version of a honeymoon. Whenever they aren’t fucking, they’re talking, or Niall is singing, or Harry is hunting for Niall to make them dinner. It’s easy to forget that they have to leave, have to get back to the real world, rather than staying here and just falling into each other. But they both have responsibilities that they’ve put off for too long.

“You know, Liam is probably having a strop right now.” Niall hums against the back of Harry’s neck, curled up on the bed-mat of thatched grass that Niall made after the first time Harry knotted him.
“I’m not even sure if he’s awake yet, honestly.” Harry chuckles. “Forming the bond that Liam and I have is a bit more – draining - than the one between us.”

“Don’t talk about your bond with him right now.” Niall growls, biting down on the same spot that Harry had done to bond the two of them. It can’t do anything of course, but it’s the thought that’s important. “Makes me jealous.”

“You have nothing to be jealous of, Love.” Harry giggles. “I’m yours.”

“And I’m yours.” Niall says automatically, the words at home on his tongue after the last three days. “But we have to go back now.”

“I never want to leave this place.” Harry admits softly. “Does that make me a terrible king?”

“No.” Niall says adamantly. “I’d love nothing more than to stay here with you forever, but I was never supposed to bring you here in the first place. Your kind isn’t supposed to be here.”

“So you do remember our rules.” says a stern voice behind Niall, causing the leprechaun to flinch automatically in recognition.

“Obi!” Niall squawks, jumping to his feet and turning on the man behind him. “I- We- It’s-”

“Are you going to introduce us, Niall?” Oberon asks, cutting him off.

“This is Harry.” Niall rushes out. “He’s- He’s my mate.”

“I see.” Oberon hums. “A lycan King and a Halfling have mated. The world is certainly still an interesting place.”

“Your Majesty.” Harry says quietly, kneeling and clutching at his shoulder in the lycan version of a salute. “It is an honor.”

“Rise, my child.” Oberon orders. “I think that formalities are rather irrelevant in this situation. You’ve bonded your soul to my student’s; thus we are family.”

“I’m sorry that I disobeyed, Obi.” Niall sighs.

“I never truly expected you to obey all of the things I asked of you, Niall.” Oberon chuckles. “Though I had hoped that you wouldn’t blatantly disregard the single most important rule that we have in Sídhe.”

“I needed time that we don’t have back on Earth.” Niall admits sheepishly.

“I’ve figured that much out for myself.” Oberon laughs. “Keth isn’t so happy about this development, but I understand it.”

“Keth knows?” Niall groans.

“He’s been around.” Oberon waves him off. “I had to have someone make sure that the lycan posed no danger to my world. Apparently the only danger he poses is to your arse.”

“Shut up!” Niall huffs.

“Niall!” Harry hisses.

“Oh, you’re just fangirling over him.” Niall mutters. “You don’t know him like I do. He’s an arse
who likes playing practical jokes and leaving me by myself on top of a bloody mountain.”

“You got down.” Oberon smirks.

“Two days I froze my arse off and starved!” Niall growls, narrowing his eyes at the king in front of him rather than the one to his side. “All because you wanted to get back at me for sleeping five minutes late.”

“If you’d created a portal, it would have taken you seconds. I hope he takes instruction from you better than he does from me.” Oberon chuckles, directing the last words at Harry.

“Not at all.” Harry giggles.

“Horrible husband you are.” Niall grunts. “Obi, it’s been nice to see you, but we have duties to attend to.”

“Don’t die.” is all Oberon says before he waves his hand and sucks himself into a portal back to wherever the fuck he came from.

“Can’t believe I spent a month with him.” Niall huffs. “Alright, give me a minute to grab my things, and we’ll get back to the real world.”

“Kiss me first.” Harry hums.

“Bloody greedy you are.” Niall snorts, doing as requested anyways and meeting Harry’s lips in a slow kiss. “Love you though.”

“I know.” Harry grins. “Love you too. Now gather your trousers and open a portal before I decide to run into the field and make you catch me before we can go back.”

“Mischievous little shit.” Niall scoffs, keeping a careful watch on Harry as he tugs on the borrowed trousers. His mate looks like he’s about to follow through on the threat, but Niall latches onto his wrist before he can. “Don’t even think about it, Fuzzy. Sídhe recharges my batteries. I’d catch you in a few seconds, but it would be annoying, so I wouldn’t kiss you again before I go back to Cairo.”

“Then I suppose we should get back.” Harry sighs. “I hate this.”

“I do too.” Niall murmurs, pressing a kiss to Harry’s pout. “Now brace yourself.”

“I hate this part too.” Harry groans, but the words are lost back in Sídhe as the portal rips them from the pocket dimension until they land back in Harry’s chambers.

“What was that?” Liam gasps, lurching up into a sitting position with wide eyes, clearly still half-asleep. “What happened?”

“More than I have time to tell you.” Niall chuckles. “I’ll leave that up to Harry. Looks like they’ve brought my clothes, so I have to catch a portal over to Cairo.”

“Wait—” Harry whimpers, circling his hand back around Niall’s wrist. “You still have a few hours before the sun sets in Cairo.”

“I know.” Niall nods. “But if I don’t leave now, then I never will, Love. My bite is already itching. I have a feeling that these are not going to be a fun few days like the last three.”

“What is going on?” Liam interjects.
“We’ve mated.” Harry tells him.

“With me in the room?” Liam squawks.

“You weren’t even in the same universe.” Niall laughs, pressing a quick kiss to Harry’s lips before disentangling himself from the lycan and heading towards his things. He slips out of Harry’s trousers, and tugs on his own, relishing the familiar size of them rather than the ones fitted for his mate. Next he attaches his scabbards to his sides, the weight of them heavier than he remembers. His jerkin is last, and Harry insists on doing up the laces on it rather than just letting Niall do it himself. Niall doesn’t have it in him to object. He wants as much time with Harry as he can get, even if it’s only a few moments of being pressed together like this.

“I miss you already.” Harry mumbles as he finishes the process.

“I miss you too, Fuzzy.” Niall says through a soft smile. “I’m coming back though. Nothing out there can stop that. You’ll tear down the moon to save me, and I’ll tear it down to get back to you, if I need to.”

“Promise me.” Harry whispers.

“I promise.” Niall says adamantly. “I have to go now, but I’m coming back.”

“I love you.” Harry says so quietly that Niall almost misses it.

“I love you too.” Niall tells him, cupping his cheek and pulling him into a deep kiss that he wishes they could just stay in for eternity. But they can’t. Things need to be done, and that means they have to be apart for a little while. Niall doesn’t say goodbye, can’t bring himself to do anything more than choke on the words, so he just presses one last peck against Harry’s lips before stepping back and letting a portal swallow him.

It’s agony from the second he leaves Harry behind, a furious burn building up from his bite that makes him want to scream in the empty void of the portal. So he does, letting that blank space swallow his pain and rage until he falls to his knees five-thousand kilometers away from his mate. He chokes out a sob, feeling hollow in his chest in that spot that had beat for nothing but Harry over the last three days.

He only gives himself one minute, eyes squeezed shut to prevent any more tears from leaking out, and then he stands up and focuses on two of the other weights in his chest, directing him towards Ashton and Luke. Niall checks around to make sure that nobody can see him, and then casts an invisibility glamour on himself because he doesn’t want to take the streets to get back to the others.

He hops from roof to roof, following the tug in his chest that leads him to another hotel. Finding the room is easy, and when he knocks on the door after dispelling his glamour, it opens immediately. “You’re back!” Ashton giggles, pulling him into a tight hug.

“Close the bloody door!” Luke groans, naked and hunched over the pathetic air conditioning unit like it’s his life-support.

“Nice to see you too, Luke.” Niall scoffs as Ashton whirls them around and kicks the door shut.

“Fuck, you reek, mate.” Ashton laughs. “You smell just like-”


“You mated with Harry?” comes a screech from a lump of blankets that Niall assumes to be Louis.
“That obvious?” Niall asks sheepishly.

“I can’t believe you bloody abandoned us here just so that you could get knotted!” Louis’ lump huffs.

“It wasn’t like that.” Niall sighs. “I was on my way back, but porting so many times, so fast, took up too much of my energy and I kind of collapsed. Then when I woke up, Harry and I started arguing, and one thing led to another, and we’ve spent the past three days in Sídhe.”

“Well I guess this means that having that threesome is out.” Luke hums.

“There’s always me!” Louis offers with a laugh.

“Or we could do a four-way with-” Ashton starts.

“Absolutely not.” Niall cuts him off. He’s not sharing Harry any time soon. Probably not ever, actually.

“You mated Niall.” Liam says quietly.

“For the fifth time, yes, Liam, I mated Niall.” Harry sighs in exasperation.

“It’s going to take a minute to wrap my head around that, Sire.” Liam grunts, pushing himself up off of the bed. “You’ve been- You’ve been erratic lately, and it’s a bit worrisome that you would choose now, of all times, to run off to another world and mate someone.”

“We knew that we might not have another chance.” Harry mumbles. “We wanted to belong to each other for as long as we could before anything could happen. This wasn’t a mistake, Liam. I know that I’ve made a lot of those lately, but this wasn’t one.”

“As long as you’re sure.” Liam nods. “We- We should get the council together as soon as possible to discuss Benjamin’s treason.”

“Give me a minute.” Harry requests, rubbing his hand over his chest. “This is- It’s difficult. Even when Zayn died, you know, the first time, I didn’t feel anything like this. It’s like he took a piece of my soul with him when he left. I can feel him, he’s still alive, but it’s like an echo compared to the way we’ve been feeling. He’s so far away, Liam.”

“He’s coming back, Sire.” Liam tells him.

“Not soon enough.” Harry sighs. “He could come back this instant, and it wouldn’t be soon enough.”

“I’m sorry.” Liam offers, placing a hand on Harry’s shoulder in solidarity.

“How are you doing?” Harry asks. “You’ve been through more than anyone over the last few days.”

“I’m feeling- I’m tired, Sire.” Liam admits. “It’s going to take me a while to recover from what you did to me.”

“Liam-” Harry starts.

“Don’t apologize.” Liam cuts him off. “Frankly, Sire, I just don’t want to hear it right now. I’ve
come back to serve as Chevalier, yes, but that doesn’t mean that I’ve forgiven you, and you giving me half-focused apologies out of guilt isn’t going to help that. Just give me some time. That’s what I’m asking of you. I need you to give me that.”

“Of course.” Harry nods. “Whatever you need, Liam.”

“Thank you, Sire.” Liam breathes out a sigh of relief.

“I have a question.” Harry says cautiously.

“I might have an answer.” Liam chuckles.

“What are you going to do about Louis when he gets back?” Harry asks.

“I’ve been trying not to think about that.” Liam confesses. “This- This plan of Niall’s- If it succeeds, and our theory holds true, then he’ll die again. Permanently this time.”

“And you think that keeping your distance will make it easier to deal with.” Harry finishes Liam’s unspoken thought. “It won’t, Liam. No matter how hard you try to avoid it, that would hit you hard. Keeping him away from yourself isn’t going to change that. When they get back, you should talk to him.”

“Mating again has made you soft.” Liam mutters.

“It’s reminded me what it’s like to love somebody with all your body and soul.” Harry hums, apparently unfazed by Liam’s words. “And I know that you still feel the same way about Louis that you did two and a half centuries ago when you mated. These years without him haven’t wiped that away. And he still loves you too.”

“He what?” Liam asks, snapping his head up so fast that he’d have gotten whiplash if he were human.

“He’s still in love with you.” Harry says softly. “Last night, after you fell asleep, and before they left, he told me to watch over you, and to make sure that I didn’t let you push yourself too far, as you have a tendency to do. And then he asked me if you’d found anyone new. He was greatly relieved when I told him that you haven’t.”

“What did you go and tell him that for?” Liam scowls.

“If you think I can lie to a vampire, you’ve greatly overestimated my capacity for deceit.” Harry says with a shrug.

“You could have told him that it was nobody’s business but my own.” Liam points out.

“I could have.” Harry nods. “But you know Louis. He wouldn’t have left until I answered or Niall stabbed him. I’m not completely positive which would have happened first, but I think that it would probably have been the stabbing.”

“Probably.” Liam sighs. “I really thought they would have gotten along.”

“Niall is- He’s difficult.” Harry chuckles. “He feels things so strongly, and sometimes that gets the better of him. His emotions spin out of control, and that makes him shut them off. It can be very frustrating. He’s frustrating. I think that he might not be so cold to Louis now though. He was different in Sídhe.”
“That’s because he was freshly mated.” Liam scoffs. “Now he’s on another continent, continuing on his mission. Poor Louis will probably get stabbed repeatedly.”

“That, Liam, is a distinct possibility.” Harry hums. “But I think that the more important thing to note here, is that you feel sympathy for Louis, which is just one more of the many indications that you’re still in love with him.”

“Sire?” Liam huffs.

“Yes, Liam?” Harry asks.

“Shut up.” Liam mutters, standing up and walking out the door to gather the counselors. If he has the ulterior motive of trying to escape from Harry hearing his heart pounding, that’s his own secret to keep.

“Ow! Quit fucking stabbing me!” Louis hisses, jumping back from Niall’s sword and climbing up a wall to put himself out of reach.

“Quit calling me ‘Your Majesty’ then.” Niall grumbles.


“Oi, do you want some to?” Niall scowls, turning his blade on the blond.

“He’s not the King until he’s had his coronation.” Ashton hums. Fucking suck-up. And of course it works, Niall giving him a small smile and a nod before sheathing his sword.

“Which I will never let happen.” Niall smirks. “After a few years of trying something, they’ll give up.”

“Obviously you underestimate how much Liam loves rules.” Louis giggles. “The second we pop back into Final Bastion, you’re going to have a crown on your head and a kingdom on their knees, and I’ll laugh my arse off.”

“Louis, don’t make me come up there and let my sword become reacquainted with your liver.” Niall growls.

“I’d like to see you try, Sunshine.” Louis muses, standing out straight from the building and walking backwards until he’s by the edge of the roof.

“Just remember, you asked for it.” Niall grins. Louis is expecting him to use the sand to his advantage, to turn it to gold and send it chasing after Louis until one of them wins. What he isn’t expecting is for Niall to unlace his jerkin and drop it to the ground. He hunches over and grunts in pain as two glittering wings rip out of his back.

They’re thin, practically transparent if not for the shimmering flecks of gold in the veins of them. Niall flexes them, splaying them out from his body and giving them a few flaps while Louis, Ashton, and Luke all look on in wonderment. He moves as fast as lightning, launching himself at Louis with a blade drawn, and stabbing him through the abdomen with a smirk. “I have a few secrets, Louis, and you really don’t want to piss me off anymore.” Niall hums, yanking back out the sword and beating his wings furiously to stay aloft.
“You’re a grumpy little sod.” Louis mutters, releasing his magical grip on the building and landing on the sand below him. “Aren’t we here for a reason?”

“This place isn’t going to work.” Niall sighs, shaking his head as he drops down next to Louis. “Almost all of the buildings are blown apart, and the air is full of soot. How long ago was Al-watan attacked?”

“Shortly after I was born. It was the third empire to fall,” Louis tells him. “But he used an ifreet to do it. It’s a fire elemental subclass of djinn, which are themselves a subclass of faeries. Legend has it that they could summon the flames of Hell, and that nothing is invincible in the face of their power. They could set oceans and mountains ablaze with a thought. It’s no surprise that there’s still so much ash.”

“God, the fae are terrifying.” Niall says with a shiver.

“Yes, they are.” Louis agrees with a nod. “Don’t forget, this is what he was going to use you for, Niall. This place is a testament to what he wants to accomplish. Eighty-thousand souls were snuffed out in a matter of hours when he attacked. One of the oldest, proudest civilizations on the planet was wiped out of existence in the blink of an eye.”

“What do you think I’m trying to prevent?” Niall mumbles.

“I just want to be sure that you know exactly what you’re fighting against, Niall.” Louis says gently. “He is the source of the word monster. He is every nightmare that humanity has ever had, and he will stop at nothing to use you as a weapon.”

“I’m not like them.” Niall says quietly. “They were taken before they were turned. They never learned to control their powers. He won’t take me. He won’t. I have more than my life to fight for. I have all of them. I have the entire world at my back, and I’m not leaving all of those people defenseless.”

“Don’t lose that determination.” Louis tells him, clapping a hand on Niall’s shoulder, just above the protruding wing. “But also don’t forget that you aren’t alone. Luke, Ashton, and the rest of Final Bastion, are in this with you. So am I. So is Harry. You don’t have to just march into this as an army of one.”

“If you keep getting sincere with me, I’m going to stab you again.” Niall says with a soft smile before wandering off to look through the ruins. “We’ll stay here tonight, and tomorrow I’ll take us to Alaya.”

“Wait, wait, you are taking time-zones into account when you do these jumps, right?” Louis asks. “Because if you mistime them, I’ll die.”

“Well, to be fair, I don’t actually need you anymore.” Niall says with a sly grin. “I’m bonded to Harry now, which means I’ll be able to tell if he’s in danger. Try and remember that before you call me ‘Your Majesty’ again.”

“Benjamin.” Harry says evenly, watching the former Chevalier get forced to his knees in front of the throne. “Would you care to say anything in the defense of yourself, or your men?”

Benjamin glares at him, eyes cold and furious, but says nothing. Of course, he couldn’t if he wanted to. Louis had ripped his tongue out from the root, leaving no cells left to regenerate it from. Harry finds him much more pleasant this way. “No? Excellent.” Harry quips. “It makes it so much
Benjamin growls gutturally, but it’s nothing more than a final defiant act. “You stand accused of treason against the crown, of bringing silver into Final Bastion to use against a fellow lycan, and, most importantly, intention to collude with the enemy. Do you deny any of these charges?”

Benjamin gives a jerky shake of his head, admitting his crimes to the court of counselors gathered along the walls. Meredith chokes out a sob, turning away in shame from her mate. She’s been found innocent of any charges of conspiracy to act with Benjamin after an inquest this morning. He’d kept his plans from her, and, thus, she isn’t guilty. Harry almost feels bad for her, but he can’t help think that this is the best thing for all of them.

He understands the instinct to take the life of an unworthy king, the urge to protect Final Bastion when the King has done wrong by their people. After all, he’d killed his own father after he and Benjamin had committed the act that pushed Harry too far, after they’d sent a spy to inform the Master of the location of Yiwarla when he’d captured a fae that they couldn’t get their hand on in time. It had saved Final Bastion, known then as Sanctum, but had damned their sister city and allowed the second to last lycan empire to fall. Harry couldn’t just stand by and accept what his father had done, so he’d challenged him to single combat and prevailed. His father had thanked him with his last breath.

Benjamin was given lenience, because the plan had been Desmond’s, and he’d just followed orders, but now, Harry can’t help but wonder now if this is what Benjamin has been planning all along. If he’s just been waiting for Harry to slip, and leave himself unprotected in order to take the power for himself. And whether or not that’s true, Harry cannot forgive him for deciding to partner with the Master and end this war by turning against the surface world. It’s an affront to every life lost in the course of this war, and Harry won’t allow those souls to be disrespected like that.

“Then I have no choice.” Harry tells him, standing up and striding down the steps to where Benjamin kneels. “The punishment for your crimes is death.”

Meri stifles a wail into Liam’s shoulder, and the Chevalier cocks an eyebrow at Harry in question. Harry shakes his head, refusing to let Liam take on the duties of the King anymore. He tilts Benjamin’s head up gently by the chin and says, “You were like an uncle to me, Ben. I admired you from the time I was a pup. Fear changed you, it made you weak, and I want to hate you for it, but I cannot. I take no pleasure in this sentencing. If it gives you any comfort, know that Meri and your children will be taken care of.”

Ben blinks up at him, eyes softening for a moment, and then closing as he gives the faintest of nods. Harry blinks back a tear, and holds his hand out. Calum walks up to him, pressing the grip of a blade into his hand, and the weight of it hits Harry hard. He lifts the sword into the air as Benjamin bares his neck, and brings it down in an arc that takes the life of a man he had once loved like family. The room falls silent, and Harry walks out, unable to control the frantic beat of his heart any longer.

“It’s done.” Louis sighs, his eyes slipping closed as his hand clutches at his shirt.


“Harry executed Benjamin.” Niall explains, sure that Louis is feeling the same sinking grief that he is right now. “He- When we were in Sídhe, he told me stories about how when he was a pup, Benjamin practically raised him. He trained Harry in combat, tutored him in his studies, he even-”
“Took us on our first hunt.” Louis finishes for him. “He was a good man once. He wasn’t always a traitor or a man who would condone genocide.”

“I’ve only ever known him as an arse.” Ashton mutters.

“That doesn’t mean that that’s all there was to him.” Louis says quietly. “Sure, for the last two hundred years, he was an arse, but I spent a century looking up to him and emulating him. He raised me as much as he did Harry. He was my idol, the one who made me want to be Chevalier one day. He got scared. He made a bad decision.”

“He turned against Yiwarla and sold out an entire populace!” Ashton hisses.

“He followed the orders of his King.” Louis counters. “Desmond was to blame for Yiwarla, not Benjamin, and he paid his price.”

“The Chevalier isn’t there to blindly follow orders!” Ashton growls. “They’re there to guide the King and represent the will of the people!”

“You will never understand the kind of pressure put on a Chevalier, Ashton.” Louis says icily. “It’s not as easy as just telling the King, ‘No, I don’t think that’s a good idea.’”

“It’s not about doing what’s easy!” Ashton argues. “It’s about doing what’s right!”

“He did do what was right.” Louis tells him. “Was it perfectly moral? No, but it was right for the people of Final Bastion. They’re still alive as a result of that decision, and in the end, it’s the same decision I would have made.”

“You kill and eat people, so excuse me for taking anything that you say with a grain of salt.” Ashton scoffs.

“Enough!” Niall roars, his head beginning to throb with the endless noise of the argument. “The past is the past! You can’t do shit to change it, so accept it and move the fuck on! Our mission is about the future, and if you can’t focus on that, then you’re welcome to go back to Final Bastion and sit there until I get back!”

“He’s trying to excuse genocide!” Ashton huffs.

“So are we, Ashton.” Niall says firmly. “Have you forgotten what could happen if I kill the Master? Have you forgotten that millions of vampires, all over the world, might just die without even knowing why?”

“They’re vampires!” Ashton hisses.

“Not all vampires want anything to do with this war.” Niall says softly. “I’m going to have their blood on my hands too, Ash. Some of them just want to exist peacefully. Some of them don’t want to hurt anyone, and they didn’t have a choice in becoming what they are. Some of them are innocent. Don’t forget that. Don’t forget that, while we’re doing the right thing, we’re also trying to commit our own genocide. We’re making the same choice that Desmond and Benjamin made. We’re sacrificing the lives of others to ensure our own survival. I understand if any of you want no part in that, so if you want to back out, then I’ll send you back to Final Bastion with my blessing.”

“We’re sticking with you, Niall.” Ashton tells him, scooting over and resting his head on the fae’s shoulder while Luke mirrors it from the other side instantly.

“You two do remember that he’s been mated, right?” Louis drawls out.
“Do vampires even know the difference between intimacy and sex?” Luke grumbles.

“Do you two know how possessive Harry is?” Louis fires back. “Spreading your scent all over Niall might not be in your best interest.”

“We’re not scenting him.” Ashton scoffs.

“No, but if you two keep cuddling up to him like that, then it’s going to happen eventually, and Harry will have you boiled alive or summat.” Louis smirks.

“I won’t let him boil you boys alive.” Niall hums, slinging an arm around each of the lycans. “Not sure I’ll be able to stop him before he gives you each a good smack, but I’ll make sure you live through it.”

“Oh thanks.” Ashton snorts. “So glad to have you in our corner, mate.”

“Oh shut it, you know I’d fight him myself to keep him from laying a hand on you.” Niall says softly, bumping his face against Ashton’s. “You’re my best mates, and if I smell like you, then I guess he’s just going to have to scent me all up again to change that. If he goes after you, then I’ll just have to beat his arse and stick him to a wall for a few hours.”

“Is it treason to say that about the King if he’s your mate?” Luke wonders.

“Nah, he may be my husband, but he’s still not my King.” Niall grins. “There’s only one place I’ll take orders from him, and that’s the bedroom.”

“Shouldn’t we be looking through this place?” Louis huffs. “You know, completing our mission?”

“Am I the only one who sees a forest growing through almost every single building in this place?” Niall asks. “What even did this?”

“She was a yakshini.” Luke explains. “The yaksha and the yakshini were spiritual beings of nature and magic. They dwelled underground and guarded treasures. According to the legend, the yakshini that the Master used was the most beautiful woman in the world, and that, even in the wake of the destruction she caused, the Earth wept for her loss and keeps this forest in the stone alive to mark her grave.”

“These trees used the blood of a civilization as fertilizer and were created by a very powerful nature spirit. The Earth has nothing to do with it.” Louis mutters. “We could clear away the trees. Or live around them. It’s not ideal, but it could work.”

“If we find nothing else, then this might work.” Niall agrees. “But let’s try to find something better. Clearing this place out would take time that we just don’t have right now, and we don’t know what kind of magic may still be living in these plants. I sense a lot of power, and I don’t think they like being intruded upon. We’ll split up and search the place now, see how many structures could be used to live in, and then we’ll leave tomorrow for Yiwarla.”

“Sire?” Liam asks tentatively. “May I speak with you for a moment?”

The wolf lets out a long sigh, rolling onto his back and shifting. Harry sits up a moment later, and he looks completely ragged. His skin is sallow, a sickly sheen of sweat spread over him. His eyes have lost their usual brightness, a stone gray taking over the usual emerald. “What is it, Liam?” he croaks out, his voice like steel on flint.
“Sire, what’s wrong?” Liam asks, rushing across the room and kneeling in front of where Harry is clutching at his knees just to stay upright.

“Niall moved on.” Harry mutters, dropping onto his back. “He keeps getting farther and farther away. I’m better than I was a few hours ago. It was just pain when he went to Al-watan, and it was a bit worse when he went to Alaya, but now it’s more than that. I’m coming back from it, but it’s going to take me a little while. What did you want to speak about?”

“It can wait.” Liam mumbles.

“Speak, Liam.” Harry sighs. “I’m fine.”

“I- I wanted your permission to appoint someone to fill Ben’s slot on the council.” Liam admits.

“I assume that you have a candidate in mind?” Harry guesses.

“I do.” Liam nods. “I want Lou.”

“I had a feeling she was who you were thinking of.” Harry grunts. “I have no objections to her appointment, but out of respect for Meri, we should wait a few more days. Ben was only executed yesterday. It would be-”

He’s cut off by himself as he lurches forward and retches over the floor. He’s sweating even more now, so much so that it’s dripping off of him, running in little rivulets down his arched back while he heaves. Liam is at his side in an instant, pulling his hair back with one hand while the other places itself under the King’s chest to help support him. “Sire, I’ve never heard of this kind of reaction between bonded partners.” Liam tells him.

“I think it’s because he’s fae.” Harry admits. “When we bonded- It- It was like a spiritual experience. Bonding to Zayn was nothing compared to what happened between Niall and I. We didn’t just share a piece of our soul. We melded them together. We’re like one soul split between two bodies now. It’s like I’m thousands of miles away from myself.

“I feel everything. I feel when he smiles, when he hurts, when he has a nightmare, when he lets down his guard enough to be happy. I feel every single thing that he does. If I close my eyes and clear my mind, I can see the things he sees like an imprint on the back of my eyelids. I catch scents that I couldn’t possibly smell here in Final Bastion. I feel sunlight on my skin in the middle of the night. Earlier my entire body felt like I was surrounded by water, so he must have been submerged. He’s moved now, but I don’t know why. It’s just messing with me.”

“That sounds dangerous.” Liam sighs.

“How?” Harry asks.

“Well, Sire, what happens if Niall dies?” Liam questions. “What happens if he’s made into a vampire, or chained in iron, or put into a trance through salt?”

“I don’t know.” Harry mutters. “I really don’t know.”

“Fuck!” Louis screams, feeling the prickle of flames that lick along his skin as the fading sunlight catches him full bore. He plunges under the water and curses himself for forgetting that Yiwarla was destroyed by a bunyip, a water monster capable of creating massive floods. The entire city is under hundreds of feet of water, and Niall clearly misjudged the time for this trip. He’s been off
since he got back from Sídhe, and it’s been getting worse the more they move around. Louis should have paid more attention to it, should have known that something like this would happen if he stopped being vigilant.

He swims downward until the sunlight becomes distorted enough that the process of magically burning to ashes stops and regeneration starts to rebuild his face. Luckily for him, he doesn’t need to breathe. Being undead has certain advantages, and that is definitely one of them at the moment. Niall is swimming straight for him, Ashton and Luke hot on his trail.

Niall’s hand circles around Louis’ wrist, and the other two grab onto his shoulders. Louis only has a second to understand before the now-familiar sensation of being pulled apart takes over.

The sun must have just set wherever they land, because Louis skin still feels like it’s about to burst again. He doesn’t have the luxury of caring about that though, because a wonderfully familiar scent hits him, and his mouth begins to water. There are humans nearby. Lots of them.

“Don’t even think about it.” Ashton growls, his eyes narrowed like he knows exactly what Louis was thinking of.

“Hey, I’ve only been off of it for like, a little over a week. It’s going to take time not to want to do it.” Louis huffs. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Niall, where are we?” Luke asks, stepping in between Louis and Ashton to end the conversation.

“Closest safe place I could think of.” Niall mumbles, picking himself up off of the ground. “It’s my cousin’s place.”


“Yeah.” Niall nods. “I couldn’t manage an intercontinental jump right then. It’s too much right after jumping from Alaya. What- What happened to Yiwarla?”

“It was a creature called a bunyip.” Louis tells him. “Very powerful water dwellers that were capable of creating massive floods in the blink of an eye without needing a water source. I knew that. I fucking knew it, and I fucking forgot.”

“We did too.” Ashton admits. “We grew up with stories of the attack, and we forgot it too.”

“We need to get inside.” Niall sighs. “I can’t do another long-distance jump until I recover a bit.”

“Isn’t this a bad idea?” Ashton asks. “Word of your disappearance will have spread by now, but we’re not going to be able to use a glamour or your cousin will have no reason to let us stay.”

“It’ll be fine.” Niall waves him off. “Deo and I have always been close. Come on.”

Niall stands up and walks towards the house that belongs to the patch of lawn that they’ve landed on. He knocks on the door a few times, and Louis walks up behind him. “It’s the bond, isn’t it?” Louis asks in a whisper.

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Niall mutters.

“You smell like you’re sick.” Louis tells him.

“I said I don’t want to talk about it.” Niall says with a glare that probably isn’t as intimidating as he meant for it to be. He’s a bit too green for his eyes to look hard.
Before Louis can push it any more, the door swings open to reveal a brunet that smells a bit too tasty if Louis is being honest. He hasn’t had human blood in far too long. Niall’s blood is good enough to replenish his energy levels, but vampires aren’t biologically designed to drink the blood of supernatural beings continuously. Humans are supposed to be their prey, and they taste far better than lycans, werewolves, Halflings, or, especially, other vampires. Louis might be the only vampire left on Earth right now to have tasted all five. Besides the Master of course. He’s had it all.

“Niall?” Deo asks, his eyes going wide. “What- What are you- I heard you’d gone missing.”

“It’s a really long story.” Niall says quietly. “I need a place to stay for tonight. Can we come in?”

“Of course.” Deo nods, stepping out of the way and letting the group shuffle in. “I’m going to need you to explain what’s going on though.”

“You- You literally wouldn’t believe me if I told you.” Niall sighs. “Let’s just say that I’m avoiding some very bad people because I got mixed up in a really bad situation.”

“Are these three mixed up in it too?” Deo asks, eyeing Louis, Ashton, and Luke in turn. Louis preens a bit that Deo’s eyes went straight to him first.

“Unfortunately, yes.” Niall admits. “But you don’t need to worry about them. Well, maybe Louis, but I have ways of dealing with him if he tries anything.”

“Has anyone ever told you that you smell exquisite?” Louis asks, ignoring Niall’s vague threats in favor of stepping close to Deo. “Like a campfire, sweat, and mint all rolled up into one.”

“You must be Louis.” Deo scoffs.

“I am.” Louis grins. “And you must be an angel.”

“Louis, do you remember what I told you back in Al-watan?” Niall growls. “About how I don’t really need you anymore? It’s not just using the title that’s off-limits.”

“Relax, Sunshine.” Louis smirks. “I don’t want to take anything from him. I just want him to fuck me.”

“Well aren’t you forward?” Deo snorts. “Niall, what exactly are you running from with these guys?”

“I promise, it’s better if you don’t know.” Niall says gently. “Deo, I know it’s a lot to ask, but we’ll be out of your hair tomorrow.”

“You can stay.” Deo sighs. “I don’t like this though. You show up on my door out of nowhere, looking like you’ve been at a renaissance faire, when you’re supposed to be missing, with fucking swords strapped to your hips, and you won’t tell me anything. And you’re all soaked. Why are you wet?”

“Went for a little dip.” Louis hums. “I can take off my clothes if you’re worried about me dripping everywhere.”

“Will you two watch him for a minute?” Niall groans. “I need to talk to Deo in private. That means no listening in by the way, Louis.”

“I doubt you have anything interesting to say, Sunshine.” Louis fires back. “But I’d love it if you put in a good word for me.”
“Fucking vamp—” Niall starts to mutter under his breath, before he clamps his mouth shut. Louis just giggles and turns back to the other two. “Don’t wreck anything, you three. We’re guests, so you’d better act like it.”

Niall wakes up with a start, hand immediately clamping down on the arm of somebody who’s shaking his shoulder. He looks up with wide eyes to find Ashton in a panic. “Wake up!” Ashton hisses.

“What’s wrong?” Niall asks, shooting out of the bed and reaching for his swords.

“Something is about to go down.” Ashton murmurs. “Louis noticed it first, but then Luke and I picked up on it too. All the humans on the block have left. Every single one of them except for Deo is gone. We can’t smell them at all.”

“What does that mean?” Niall asks, lacing up his jerkin as fast as he can. Once he has that done, he fastens his swords to his side and takes an internal inventory of his power levels. He’s running low. As soon as he entered Yiwarla he felt like he was slowly dying, and he hasn’t recovered much since then. He can tell that Harry is feeling it too. His skin is shivering and his stomach heaving. It’s like the worst flu he’s ever had, magnified by a hundred times. “Vampires?”

“The sun is about to rise, so I don’t think so.” Ashton sighs. “Louis has gone down for the day, but he’s panicking. Luke is keeping a watch on the street and Deo. We need to- Fuck.”

“What?” Niall asks, racing out to the living room.

“Three vans just pulled up out front.” Luke tells him, his body hidden to the side of the window while he peeks through the crack of the blinds.

“Sounds like two more on the street behind us.” Ashton adds.

“They don’t drive, I’m guessing.” Niall growls.

“Why would they?” Ashton asks. “They have better means of transport.”

“Then what are these?” Niall questions.

“Whatever they are, they mean to cause trouble.” Luke mutters. “Deo, go lock yourself in your bedroom, hide under something heavy, and don’t come out unless one of the three of us tells you to, understand?”

“Not in the fucking slightest.” Deo mumbles.

“Hey, I’m not going to let anything happen to you, Deo.” Niall insists. “But you need to go now.”

“What the fuck are you mixed up in, Niall?” Deo asks harshly. “What the fuck is going on?”

“If we get out of this, I’ll tell you, but for now you need to go do what Luke told you.” Niall orders.

“I’m not-” Deo starts.

“Go!” Ashton roars, his fangs dropping down and eyes going feral and bright. Deo flees immediately, and even Niall can practically smell the fear rolling off of him.
“Fucking- Did you have to do that?” Niall sighs.

“We don’t have time to argue here, Niall.” Ashton huffs.

“They’re on the move!” Luke calls out. “I think they’re human!”

“Humans?” Niall asks.

“Fuck, get down!” Luke screams, throwing himself onto the ground. Ashton hits the floor immediately, but Niall takes a different tack. He opens a portal that takes him onto the roof, and just barely manages to avoid the hail of gunfire that opens up on the front of Deo’s house. Twelve men, all dressed in black commando gear that looks directly out of some military fantasy movie, are lined up on the lawn with automatic weapons. The flashes from the muzzles of the guns come in terrifying sync, and it tells Niall that these men know exactly what they’re doing.

He launches himself off of the roof, swords drawn, and crashes into the center of the line. The deafening blasts of gunfire halt immediately as the ones that Niall didn’t manage to take down try to rush him. He’s not at his best, but they’re still just human. It’s like stepping on worms, only Niall is trying to do everything without mortally wounding any of them. Humans don’t heal, and Niall isn’t about to kill all of these men without a reason. Even if they are trying to kill him.

He dances around in the tangle of bodies, striking the backs of their helmeted heads with the pommels of his swords to send them crashing to the ground, unconscious. He only realizes when the last body hits the grass that Luke and Ashton haven’t joined in. He hears a series of clicks behind him, and whirls back towards the house. Seven men are standing there. Four have their weapons trained on Niall, two have their guns pressed to the backs of Ashton and Luke’s skulls, and one is walking towards him slowly.

“They have fucking silver bullets!” Ashton chokes out, blood trickling out of the corners of his mouth towards where his chest is torn open in two places. Luke is even worse off with four wounds and his eyes glazed over. He’s alive, but the rise and fall of his chest tells Niall that it’s just barely the case.

“Lay down your weapons or we kill the lycans and the vampire.” comes a static, distorted voice through the mask of the one in front of him.

“Fuck you!” Niall snarls.

“I said lay them down.” the voice says evenly, drawing out his sidearm and firing a bullet behind him, straight into Ashton’s gut. The lycan screams and falls to the side, clutching the new wound.

“I’m going to kill you.” Niall grits out, letting his swords fall to the ground. “I promise you that right now. I. Will. Kill. You.”

“I don’t think so.” the voice says before its owner reaches up and tugs off the mask. “It’s good to see you, Niall.”

Niall’s knees buckle under him, and the world begins to go dark around the edges. His heart is pounding so loudly in his ears that he thinks he may go deaf from it. It can’t be him. It fucking can’t. Niall takes a shaky breath and whispers, “Da?”
“No!” Harry roars, shooting off of the bed towards the balcony. He hits the balustrade hard enough to crack the stone, but his mind is a thousand miles away from that. A howl like no other that Harry has ever produced wrenches itself free from his throat, long and mournful and furious. It bounces off of the cliffs, echoing back his rage in a chorus that seems to never end.

The door to Harry’s chambers bursts open, and Liam’s arms wrap around his waist before he can fall to his knees. “Sire, what happened?” Liam asks.

“Noah has been captured.” Harry chokes out. “I- I don’t know who by, but he felt betrayed, and then he passed out. I can’t even get an imprint of the image now.”


“I don’t know.” Harry whispers. “I couldn’t make out what happened exactly. There was a fight, and he won, but something happened and he surrendered. He was taken. If it was Louis, then he’s using humans. Dawn has risen wherever they are. I felt it on my skin when Niall was fighting.”

“Can you sense where he’s being taken?” Liam asks.

“They’re- They’re moving.” Harry tells him. “It’s fast, very fast, and in our general direction. I think they’re on a plane. It’s faster than usual though. I- I think it’s military. Fuck! I can’t fucking tell! With all the power of this bond, I still can’t tell!”

“We need to consider the possibility that this is the work of the Master, Sire.” Liam says softly. “We need to gather our forces and prepare for battle.”

“Convene the council. Get Lou too.” Harry mutters. “We’ll decide what to do when they stop moving.”

“You should have let me eat him!” Louis snarls, glaring at the human sitting across from him. His fangs pop out unconsciously, and the commando next to him raises their gun level with Louis’ temple. Louis huffs and retracts his fangs, keeping his eyes locked on the shivering lad. “I don’t take betrayal lightly, Deo.”

“All I did was text Niall’s dad that he was alive!” Deo whimpers. “I didn’t know he had a fucking commando squad!”

“Leave him alone, Louis.” Niall says quietly. His voice is hollow, numb. It’s even more worrisome than the rest of the situation. “Deo didn’t know about any of this. I never should have taken us to a human.”

“Niall, what the fuck is going on here?” Deo asks.

“Well, Louis is a vampire, Ashton and Luke are lycans, those are basically werewolves on steroids, and I’m a fucking leprechaun.” Niall explains. “And apparently my adoptive father is some sort of creature hunter.”

“You’re fucking kidding me.” Deo scoffs.
“Did you not pay attention to the fucking fangs?” Louis growls. “Would you like me to drain you as proof? To tear you to pieces and grind your bones into dust until the biggest pieces of you left are your teeth? I’ll wear them as a necklace and a reminder to never trust a fucking human again!”

“I suggest you calm yourself, vampire.” comes a warning from the door that leads to the cockpit. “He’s a member of my family, and you’re already on thin ice even without threatening him.”

“You shut up!” Niall roars. Louis can sense the shift in his emotions, numbness fading in the way of pure rage that lights up his eyes. “If you speak again, I will kill every human on this plane and-”

“Those cuffs are steel, Niall. The alloy is made of just enough iron to keep your powers in check without putting you in the physical pain that silver does for vampires, lycans, and werewolves.” Bobby, as Louis had learned is his name through the research done before Niall was to be taken, cuts him off. “I have a pair of pure iron ones if you keep this up though.”

“You fucking bastard.” Niall scoffs. “The second - the second - that I get loose, I’m going to make you pay for all of this.”

“I’m doing my job, Niall.” Bobby mutters. “Creatures like you are too dangerous to allow to just walk around. You’re a danger to humanity.”

“We’re fucking saving humanity!” Louis spits out.

“Do you think I don’t know who you are?” Bobby asks, turning his gaze away from Niall to look at Louis now. “Do you think I don’t recognize the left hand of the Master?”

“The left hand of the Master was removed by Niall.” Louis smirks. “Along with the rest of the arm. He freed me much the same way.”

“So it was you.” Bobby hums, looking back at Niall. “You’re the one that pushed him out of Final Bastion.”

“I am.” Niall says defiantly. “Don’t underestimate me just because you knew me when I was human. I’m going to make you regret this, Da. You’ve made a massive mistake here.”

“I told you, Niall. I’ve just done my job.” Bobby says calmly, turning back towards the cockpit and slamming the door behind him.

“If we can’t communicate with them, then how do you know they’ve been captured?” Meri asks.

“There’s- There’s something we haven’t told people yet.” Liam sighs. “You see-”

“I’ve mated Niall.” Harry says bluntly. Liam really wishes that he would have eased them into that. They probably don’t have time though. According to Harry, they only have a few hours before the group’s captors enter Britain.

“You what?” Lou asks, her eyes going wide in shock.

“Niall and I are bonded, and the nature of that bond is far more potent than one between two lycans.” Harry tells them. “I can access his senses to a degree. I felt the fight that he was in, and I felt the betrayal that caused him to surrender. Now I feel his fury. I do not know who has done this, but I do know that we can’t waste time waiting and arguing when the most powerful creature on Earth might be delivered directly into the Master’s hands in a matter of hours.”
“Weapon you mean.” Meri mutters.

“That’s the exact same train of thought that led to Benjamin’s execution, Meri.” Harry growls. “He is my mate, and you will respect that.”

“And are you suggesting that we wage war for your mate?” Meri snaps.

“I’m suggesting we wage war to keep Final Bastion from becoming nothing more than a memory.” Harry says evenly.

“Why was Niall even allowed to leave?” Lou asks.

“He’s been on a mission to find a place to house our people while he brings this war to a close.” Liam explains. “There is a plan to end all of this. He’s the only one who could do it, and he would not be deterred.”

“And now he’s been captured.” Lou counters. “So was it really a good plan?”

“We’re working with what we have.” Harry mutters. “For too long we’ve sat back and played at war. All we’ve done is stay on the defensive. I’m done with that. I’m done with this war. I want a world where our pups can be free. A world where we aren’t only raising warriors to be slaughtered. I want Lux to have a choice in what she does with her life. I want to have an heir who won’t be born with the responsibility of the world on their shoulders. I want Final Bastion to know peace. This plan is the best path to that.”

“Was, you mean.” James scoffs. “We told you that this was a terrible plan, and now you may have sped our destruction up just to support your mate.”

“He did it because this was the only choice we had.” Liam counters. “This war would have been coming to an end, whether or not Niall left. We all know that. There’s no point in looking down from your high horse, because it isn’t morality that led you to opposing the plan. It was fear. It’s time to step up to the front lines and make sure that when the war ends, we’re the ones left standing.”

“So what do you want to do?” Lou asks.

“I want to prepare for battle.” Liam says, standing up and placing his palms on the table. “I want to take the fight to them this time. The King and I will go ahead with the King’s Guard, and you will get our troops ready for the last battle for Final Bastion.”

“Get your hands off of me!” Niall snarls.

“Get in there.” Bobby mutters, pushing Niall into a cell. The door slams shut behind him, leaving a row of bars between Niall and the man who’s lied to him for his entire life. “Stand up and bring your hands close to the bars. I’ll take off the cuffs.”

“You really shouldn’t.” Niall mumbles, following the instructions. The cuffs fall to the ground, and Bobby steps away from the obviously iron bars. “What are you?”

“Human.” Bobby says simply.

“You were a butcher.” Niall grits out.
“That was my assignment.” Bobby tells him. “As you know, you aren’t my biological son. You were found when a girl stumbled into a police station, blathering about a man who made gold with his fingers. She swore that she’d only been pregnant for a week when you came out. We weren’t sure if the story was true, or the delusions of a mad woman, because she hanged herself afterwards. My superiors took possession of you, and they gave you to me to watch for any hints of the supernatural.”

“So I was nothing more than a job to you.” Niall says quietly.

“Of course not, Nial.” Bobby says gently. “You are my son, and I love you.”

“You’ve spent my entire life lying to me!” Niall screams. “You could have protected me! You could have kept me out of a fucking war! You have no idea what I’ve been through since I was taken! I’ve almost died! I fought the Master! I killed my own fucking child! You could have prevented all of that! You could have told me what I was and-”

“It was only a possibility, Nial.” Bobby cuts him off. “There was no way to know for sure what you were. I never wanted this for you. I never wanted you to be-”

“What?” Niall asks harshly. “Fae? Well guess what? I fucking am! I am fae, and I had no idea until two men came and took me from my home. I was completely unprepared for everything! You can’t imagine what it’s been like since that night. The things I’ve seen- The things I’ve done- And you- You just let it happen.”

“Basil was supposed to protect you.” Bobby mutters.

“Is he one of yours too then?” Niall asks. “Was anything about my life real? What about X-Factor? Did I win that, or did your people rig it in some sort of fucking silent apology for lying to me about who and what I am?”

“You won on your own, Nial.” Bobby tells him. “I did the best I could with you.”

“It wasn’t fucking good enough.” Niall growls. “But I suppose I should be grateful. Not everything has been bad. I’ve trained with the King of the Golden Ones. I’ve found a mate. And most of all, I learned to do this.”

Niall’s power bursts out of him, turning the cement floor to gold. It races up the bars of his cell, turning them before Bobby can move. Nial takes ahold of them with his power and sends them forward, wrapping them around his father and planting them in the wall behind him like staples.

“How fucking dare you call me your son?” Niall roars, stepping out of the cell. “How dare you act like you haven’t just interrupted a mission, my mission, to save every living soul on this planet? I am more powerful than anything you could imagine, and you have pissed me off more than anyone except the Master!”

“Niall, stop this!” Bobby gasps as Nial tightens the grip of the gold bars wrapping him up.

“My friends and I are walking out of this facility now, or so help me, I will bring this entire place to the ground!” Niall snarls. “You are not my father anymore. I will not hesitate to kill everyone in this place. Too many lives depend on my mission being a success.”

“Let him go, Nial.” comes another familiar voice from the door that makes Niall’s heart clench.

“Should have fucking known.” Nial mutters. “I- I hoped that you wouldn’t have done this to me too, but I should have known better. Why should I let him go, mum?”
“Because I will put you down if I have to.” Maura says harshly. The gun is trembling in her hands. Niall can see how much this is killing her, but he doesn’t care.

“Just try.” Niall grits out, opening a portal just as a bullet digs into the wall beside his head. He pops out behind his mother and wraps his forearm around her neck. “Good. I was worried for a second that you weren’t a monster like Da. Now I know.”

“Run. They’re coming for you.” Maura whispers too low for Bobby to hear. “I’m on your side. I’ll do what I can to keep them from killing your friends, but you need to run, Niall. They’ll kill you.”

“I’ll be back.” Niall growls, pushing his mother to the floor and opening another portal back to Final Bastion.

Harry steps up to the portal with Liam by his side, and his Guard at his back. The dais glows with a flash in the center, blinding all of them. He feels Niall before he sees him, a sudden sense of peace coming over him at the proximity to his mate. His feet move automatically, and he rushes towards the blur running at him. They collide hard enough to send them sprawling to the ground, cracking the stone underneath them when they land.

“You’re okay.” Harry sobs, gripping Niall close to his chest. “I’ve got you.”

“I have to go back.” Niall chokes out, burying his face in Harry’s neck. “They still have the others.”

“Who took you?” Harry asks. “Who has them?”

“My dad.” Niall admits in a whisper. “He- He’s part of some organization dedicated to the eradication of supernatural creatures.”

“MI-Zero.” Harry mutters.

“You know about it?” Niall asks.

“Somewhat.” Harry nods. “They’ve been a minor thorn in our side for the last hundred-and-forty years or so. They’re the ones who first developed silver bullets. Come on. Let’s get you inside.”

“I have to go back.” Niall repeats.

“I know, Love.” Harry murmurs. “But if we’re going to assault MI-Zero, then we need to formulate a plan.”

“Destroy the entire place and kill anyone who wants to hunt us like fucking rabbits.” Niall snarls.

“What about your father?” Harry asks.

“Him too.” Niall spits out.

“Niall, I killed my own father. I can tell you now that it creates a stain that won’t ever leave your soul.” Harry says softly. “We’ll find a way to save them, but we’ll do it without killing all of those humans. You can’t give into this anger. Let me help you before you fall back into the darkness again.”

“They have to be stopped, Harry.” Niall sighs.
“And we’ll stop them.” Liam says above them. “But first you two need to pick yourselves up off of
the ground. Our Kings can’t keep lying around on the ground in front of half of the city.”

“Oh fuck.” Niall mutters, scrambling up to his feet. “Could have mentioned all of them, Harry.”

“I was a bit preoccupied.” Harry chuckles, picking himself up and looking out over the crowd. “For
the first time in days I can breathe again.”

“I know.” Niall says with a soft smile. “I felt it too.”

“We need to get back to the castle.” Liam interjects. “Now that we know it was MI-Zero and not
the Master, we need to rethink our strategy, and pull back on the army’s preparations.”

“I didn’t get much of a look at the facility.” Niall admits. “But I did get this before I left.”

He holds up a key-card with his mother’s face on it.

“It should get us around once I get us inside. I can’t bring too many people though. I need to be at
the top of my game, so I think six is my limit.” Niall explains.

“Calum, Bressie, Leigh-Anne, Jade. Stay here.” Liam orders. “We’ll leave in a few hours. Make
sure nothing survives if it tries to follow Niall through the portal.”

“Sir.” comes a chorus of voices, each of them taking a place equidistant from the others around the
portal dais.

“Let us take our leave.” Harry says, placing a hand at the base of Niall’s spine and walking towards
the castle. “Liam, take care of gathering the council and delaying the plans for the army. We’ll
meet you in the council chambers in half an hour.”

“Sire, surely you two can wait to - reacquaint yourselves.” Liam scoffs.

“He needs to be cleaned up, Liam.” Harry says firmly. “I can’t have my mate presenting to the
council covered in blood and grime.”

“Very well, Sire.” Liam nods, a playful smile tugging at the corner of his lips.

The group splits once they reach the throne room, Liam and a few of the others spreading
throughout the castle, and Harry tugging Niall down the hall towards his – their - chambers. The
doors are barely closed behind them before he has Niall pinned against the wall. “Harry, I missed you
too, but now really isn’t the time for-” Niall starts.

“You reek of them.” Harry growls, popping out a claw to cut the leather chord that binds Niall’s
jerkin together. “Did you take them up on that offer they made you in Cairo?”

“You’d have felt it if I had.” Niall huffs. “I’m yours, Harry.”

“Mine.” Harry echoes forcefully. He licks a stripe up the column of Niall’s neck, displacing the
scent of Ashton and Luke with his own. His tongue flicks out over the only scars left on Niall’s
skin since regeneration removed every blemish from his skin, the punctures of the bond-mark.
They never regenerate until the bond is broken, and Harry has never been gladder of that than he is
now with the way Niall shivers under the touch. Harry lets his fangs drop down, grazing them over
the pink flesh and repeats, “Mine.”

“You’re yours.” Niall whispers. “Harry, we need to get cleaned up. We don’t have time for you to be all
“I’ll scent you while I bathe you then.” Harry hums. “Two birds, one stone, as they say on the surface.”

“I can bathe myself.” Niall grumbles.

“You can.” Harry agrees, scooping Niall up into his arms and ringing the bell for hot water to be brought up. He carries Niall into the bathroom and sets him back on his feet. “But I’m going to do it anyways.”

“I’m not sure I can take the next few centuries of you doing this.” Niall says flatly.

“You’ll get used to it.” Harry grins. “A couple of decades will pass, and you’ll learn to let me take care of you.”

“Not bloody likely.” Niall scoffs. “I don’t plan on going easy on you, Your Majesty.”

“Don’t you call me that ever again.” Harry growls, nipping harshly at Niall’s neck. “It wasn’t that long ago for me that you were saying that because you wanted to keep a distance between us.”

“Point taken.” Niall chuckles. “Stop biting me. You’re going to accidentally turn me into a lycan, and all of my plans rely on me having my fae abilities.”

“The bite has to be given with intention, Niall.” Harry grins against Niall’s skin. “Otherwise you’d have been made lycan when we bonded. I wouldn’t have risked that.”

“What if that’s what I want?” Niall asks. “When this is all over, what if I want to be made lycan?”

“Why would you?” Harry asks.

“So I could carry our pups.” Niall says softly. “So that I don’t have all of this power.”

“I thought you were past this.” Harry sighs. “Niall, I don’t want you to change yourself. Being made lycan isn’t something you can take back. You are fae, and that is a beautiful thing.”

“What if our kids turn out like me?” Niall asks quietly. “What if my fae genes overpower your lycan ones?”

“Then we’ll have to keep trying, won’t we?” Harry smirks.

“I’m not having twenty leprechauns running around because you refuse to stop trying for a lycan.” Niall says with a roll of his eyes.

“Niall, if this all works out, then we will have centuries together. It is likely that we’ll have dozens of children.” Harry tells him. “And if it doesn’t, then we’ll have none. There’s no point in thinking about this now, let alone arguing about it.”

“Will you turn me if I ask for it?” Niall asks, voice firm and face neutral.

“If you come to the decision that it’s absolutely what you want without any hesitance or trepidation.” Harry agrees.

“Good.” Niall says with a soft smile. “Now where’s the girl with the bathwater?”
“Your son is much better at this than you are.” Louis chuckles, spitting out a mouthful of blood with the words. It’s strange to him, even after all this time as a vampire. He can taste what a human had for dinner a fortnight ago, can discern if they grew up near forests or mountains or seas, can make out if they’ve had sex recently based on the way the chemicals in the blood taste; but his own blood is completely tasteless to him. It’s just like thick water. He has no idea why. It drives him a bit mad though. “Is torture a family hobby then?”

“Answer the question, vampire.” Bobby growls.

“Remind me of it again, Sunshine Senior?” Louis grins. “This foreplay has me too hard to remember what you asked me.”

“What was the mission you four were on?” Bobby asks again, irritation swirling in both his eyes and voice.

“Oh, right, yes.” Louis hums. “Let’s see, have I said the one yet about us going on a road-trip, looking for the best human cocks on Earth yet? We were going to check out Deo, but you interrupted us before we could have the orgy. They’re so very tiring, and we needed to rest up first.”

“Fucking vampires.” Bobby scoffs, launching his fist forward into Louis’ gut again. He’s wearing a glove coated in a silver mesh that burns so intensely that it takes pieces of Louis’ flesh with it when Bobby pulls it away. Louis doesn’t scream though. He refuses to scream.

“Niall says that all the time too.” Louis chokes out around another fit of coughing out his own blood. At least it wasn’t the face this time. Louis really hates regenerating his face. “Like father, like- Well, you know the rest. Not that you’re much of a father.”

“Shut it.” Bobby hisses, pressing his gloved hand over Louis’ mouth. Somehow the Horan boys have a special talent for picking out exactly what Louis doesn’t want to happen, and doing just that. It occurs to him to stop antagonizing them, but it’s just so much fun. “Believe it or not, vampire, my relationship with my son is not your business. What was your mission?”

“We wanted to get some good tans.” Louis tells him with a wicked laugh once Bobby pulls his hand away.

“You severely underestimate me, vampire.” Bobby snarls.

“No, you just overestimate yourself.” Louis says smugly. “I was tortured for years at the hands of the monster who invented the act. A silver glove? My moisturizing routine is more intense than that.”

“Well then, how about we take things up a notch?” Bobby smirks. He produces a blade from his pocket, and Louis sighs.

“You’re going to need to take it up a few more if you want me to even take an interest in this conversation.” he mutters. “What were you planning? A few stab wounds? Cutting something off? Or maybe you’re creative enough to consider flaying my skin off? That’s always a crowd pleaser, and I assume the people behind those cameras are looking for a good show.”

“If you insist on jumping straight to the big leagues, I’m more than happy to oblige you, vampire.” Bobby muses, indicating to someone behind the cameras. A few seconds later one of the commandos shuffles in with a cart before leaving again. Bobby picks up a syringe off of the table and uncaps it. “We have people working all the time you know. A few months ago, they came up
with this beautiful work of art. You see, they dissolve silver in a saline solution. Each of these is a stage, and the magnitude of pain they cause increases exponentially with each stage. The last vampire I tried this on turned to ash by stage six. We’ve never gotten to stage ten. I wonder if your original life as a lycan will make you more or less vulnerable to it.”

“I’ve always enjoyed new and interesting forms of torture.” Louis says calmly. “I have some very intriguing ideas planned for you. I’m thinking that I’ll stick my hand up your arse and pull out your organs one by one. I’m willing to wait for you to get your shits and giggles first though.”

“Let’s not keep you waiting then.” Bobby counters, shoving the needle into Louis’ neck and pressing down the plunger.

Louis has to clamp his jaw shut just to keep the scream in his throat. It’s like fire licking through his veins. His body is burning from the inside out, and it isn’t stopping. Somehow, through the incredible powers of his own malice, he manages to spit out, “Is that all you’ve got? Refreshing.”

Bobby says nothing, picking up two more syringes and pushing them into Louis’ bloodstream in rapid succession. Louis’ body goes rigid, bucking against the silver bonds holding him to the chair as his arteries start to break down from the solution flowing through them. By the grace of the Blood, Louis manages not to scream during his convulsions, but he doubts it’ll happen again.

“Fuck, you like it kinky, don’t you?” Louis asks through gritted teeth. “Did you pass that on to Niall too? I’ll have to test that out.”

Bobby raises another syringe, but before he can plunge it into Louis leg, an alarm goes off outside the door. Bobby stiffens and sighs. “I look forward to continuing our talk once I spank my son for being a brat.” Bobby mutters. “I’ll give you something to remember me by for now though.”

He pushes in the next syringe, and Louis only barely manages to hold in his scream until Bobby is out the door.

“Ashton and Luke are down this way.” Niall tells them, focusing on the tug in his chest to confirm that the two of them are together.

“What about Louis?” Liam asks.

“I don’t know for sure.” Niall admits. “I can’t sense him specifically because he isn’t alive. My power senses their life-energy. Louis doesn’t have any. He’s animated through blood-magic. Harry and I will go after Ashton and Luke. Liam, you try and find Louis. Since you’ll be alone, you should take this key-card. The strongest source of magic I can sense is in that direction. That’s the best I can do for you, because there’s a lot of magic here. You four, make one hell of a noise and try to keep them focused on you. Don’t get hurt, and don’t kill anyone if you can avoid it. I want them taken alive, and I will deal with them afterwards. You’ve all seen my file. You know what my family looks like. My parents are mine.”

“Your Majesty.” Calum consents with a nod.

“Don’t call me that.” Niall grumbles. “Everyone clear on the mission?”

“Provide a distraction, take the humans alive, and keep an eye out for Ashton, Luke, and Louis.” Jade says with a nod.

“You all know the signals if you find someone or run into trouble.” Liam says firmly. “Take a radio as soon as possible, and use those to stay in communication with one another.”
“Sir.” they chorus, darting off as a group.

“Liam, you stay safe, alright?” Niall says gently. “Don’t get hurt. Don’t get in over your head.”

“I’ve been in over my head for twenty five years.” Liam chuckles. “I do my best work with a handicap. I’m trusting you to take care of the King, Niall. He fights like a child.”

“I’m aware.” Niall grins, ignoring Harry’s squawk of protest. “And I’m trusting you to get Louis out safely. I’ve kind of become attached to him and I don’t want him dead. Well - deader.”

“If he’s still alive - undead – whatever - I’ll find him.” Liam says with a solemn nod before rushing off in the direction that Niall had indicated.

“Are you ready for this?” Harry asks.

Niall doesn’t get a chance to answer before the doors swing open in the direction that they’re supposed to be going with four armed commandos opening fire immediately. Niall didn’t come unprepared. He doesn’t have his swords since they were confiscated, so he’s brought his next best weapon. The large container on his back bursts open, and golden sand creates a barrier just in time to stop the bullets from hitting Harry. “Don’t have much choice now, do I?” Niall sighs.

“Let’s go then.” Harry says with a now-fanged grin, his arms shifting to their lycan state. Niall explodes the shield apart into fragments, turning them towards the commandos and shooting them forward as return fire. He makes sure to avoid any vital points, but he does enough damage to put them down. Harry lopes up to their struggling bodies, and delivers a blow to the back of each of their heads that makes them go still. “Coming, Love?”

“Let me just-” Niall mutters, stepping over to the four and holding his palms out over them. Oberon taught him a lot of things, but one of the most useful was his ability to lend his regeneration to others. The flesh he’d torn open with the gold fragments begins to knit back together. It takes a bit of effort to do it without letting them wake up, but Niall manages. He grabs a radio for each of them, crushing the leftover ones that the other commandos have, and then says, “Now we can go.”

“Did you just heal them?” Harry asks as they move down the hall.

“Yeah.” Niall says with a nod. “Same thing I did for you when your throat was torn open and pouring blood into your lungs.”

“Oberon?” Harry questions.

“He insisted that I learn it as a being of life.” Niall explains. “What I’m doing, this war, it’s not what I’m supposed to be like. Fae aren’t fighters. We take care of nature and life. We’re guardians, not warriors.”

“What you’re doing is guarding life, Niall.” Harry says gently. “This isn’t like the humans’ petty version of war. It isn’t a dispute over resources or religious beliefs. It’s to save the world from destruction. We are fighting for the side of life.”

“I know all of that.” Niall grunts, shoving his elbow into the side of a commando that comes around the corner and then wheeling the guy around to smash his head into the wall. “That doesn’t mean that it doesn’t conflict with my nature, Harry.”

“You seem pretty natural at this.” Harry laughs, dashing forward and taking out two men coming at them from further down the hall.
“That’s my human half.” Niall snorts, reuniting the gold to create a barrier when one of the
commandos raises his gun at Harry. They’re underestimating Niall just because Harry looks scarier
with his big lycan arms and mouth full of fangs. That’s a mistake.

He launches himself forward, letting his own transformation take over partially. There are certain
advantages and disadvantages to using his Fae-Beast. He speeds up significantly, and his senses
are heightened. His wings give him spectacular maneuverability. His bones become hollow though,
so that his wings can actually lift him off the ground. His arms elongate and become ungainly. He
can put himself at a distinct disadvantage if he doesn’t watch himself carefully during a fight.
Luckily, he’s fighting humans, and they’re as slow as slugs to him when he’s in this state.

Six of them throw open a door, and Niall has them all unconscious before the door can hit the wall.
Harry comes up behind him and says, “So, this is the Fae-Beast?”

“Not really.” Niall admits. “I’m just letting a little bit of its power slip through the veil between my
soul and it. It’s kind of like your lycan form, in that I haven’t completely let out the beast inside of
me. If I let it take over any more than about twenty-five percent, I can’t control it. Plus my hair
grows down past my arse, and I hate cutting it back down.”

“I like the ears.” Harry hums, running his finger over where Niall’s ear has become sharp and
pointed on top.

“I hate them. When my hair grows I look like a brunet Legolas.” Niall huffs.

“I don’t know who that is.” Harry chuckles. “Is he a friend of yours?”

“When this war is over, I’m going to bring you to the surface and expose you to human culture.”
Niall laughs.

“I’d like that.” Harry says with a soft smile. “I’d like to learn everything about what makes the
world special to you.”

“Don’t get all soppy on me right now.” Niall sighs. “We have a lot more work to do. Case in
point-”

Three men show up at the end of the hall, and Niall only has a split second to react when one
throws something at them. He spreads the gold thin, stretching it out as a shield that attaches to the
walls, floor, and ceiling. It’s not enough. He can feel the explosion tear his shield to pieces, and as
they both fly backwards through the air, Niall uses his enhanced abilities to analyze the situation.
The explosion doesn’t look like a normal grenade. It looks like mist. The glint in it tells Niall that
it’s more than just mist though, so he grabs ahold of Harry and throws him even further away from
the blast.

“Stay back! It’s silver!” Niall calls to him, shoving his hand into the wall to stop his flight. He
lands lightly on his feet and shoves his hands out in front of him with his palms facing the enemy.
He’s still not really any good at elemental magic, but the spell is simple. Air begins to spin at a
high speed in front of him, and he releases it forward in a miniature tornado. It blows away the
silver and picks up the exploded pieces of gold. They glint dangerously as they dance through the
men, slicing them to ribbons before they can even process what’s happening.

Three bodies hit the floor, and Niall rushes forward to do what he can to save them. One is
mortally wounded from where a fragment tore open his carotid, and Niall has to push it to the back
of his mind in order to piece the other two back together. When he closes his eyes, he can still feel
the blood on his hands.
Fucking MI-Zero. Fucking humans. They understand so little. They don’t live long enough to really
consider the big picture, to see that the world is more than just this small thing they’re trying to
make of it. There’s beauty in how fleeting human lives are, but there’s also ignorance. Liam
admires them, but at the same time he wishes that they’d just fall in line and realize that sometimes
they need to stop trying to control everything.

The twelfth commando falls under his claws, and silence takes over once he hits the ground. At
least Liam is probably going the right way. They wouldn’t have all this security for nothing. He
checks to see that each of them is breathing, takes the radio off of one of them, and then moves on
in the direction he’d been heading. The key card is making things significantly easier to move
around because he doesn’t have to knock the doors off of their hinges every time his path is barred.
This place is well fortified, but Liam is on a mission that nothing will deter him from.

He steps through a set of doors, and sees a familiar face at the end of the hall. He’d memorized it
when researching Niall. Bobby must spot him too, because he sprints through the doors closest to
him, and a silver shutter crashes down after they close. Liam doesn’t care about Bobby. Niall said
that he wanted his father, and Liam is more than prepared to leave the bastard in the fae’s hands.
All he wants is to find Louis.

A scream rips through the air down an adjoining hallway, and Liam would know it anywhere. It’s
haunted his nightmares for the last twenty-five years. He races down the hall to the door where the
noise is coming from. It’s coated in silver, but Liam won’t let that stop him. The wall next to the
door is made of brick, and it falls easily away in the face of Liam’s rage. Humans really plan so
poorly.

Louis is panting heavily when Liam steps through his makeshift entrance, but the screaming has
stopped. “I’ve got Louis.” Liam says into the radio, praying that one of the others has picked up
one by now.

“Confirmed. Bring him back to where we entered. We’ll find you when we finish.” Harry’s voice
says back.

“Tell that arsehole that we’ll meet up with him.” Louis grunts.

“I’m getting you out of here.” Liam tells him.

“I’m not leaving this place without Bobby Horan’s head on a platter.” Louis growls.

“You’re in no condition for a fight.” Liam sighs, wrapping his fingers around one of the restraints
on Louis’ arm before flinching back at the distinctive burn of silver.

“Stand back. I’ll do it myself.” Louis mutters. “I’ve gotten used to the burn.”

“Shut the fuck up, Louis.” Liam huffs, bracing himself and grabbing onto the restraint. It burns so
fucking bad, but Liam isn’t about to let a stupid piece of metal stop him. He wrenches it open,
tossing the damn thing on the ground and kicking it away before repeating the process on the other
side. “Can you stand?”

“Are you offering to carry me?” Louis asks with a smirk.

“I’d prefer not to have to, in case we have to fight our way out.” Liam says softly.

“I can make it just fine, Li.” Louis murmurs.
“You look like hell.” Liam says, kneeling down in front of him.

“You’ve got a chunk of commando on your cheek.” Louis chuckles, reaching forward and picking something off of Liam’s face. He pops it in his mouth and sighs contentedly. “For being such dicks, they sure taste good.”

“Disgusting.” Liam mutters.

“Yeah, I know.” Louis giggles. “Can’t help it though. I’m running a bit low on energy trying to regenerate my blood vessels.”

“Your blood vessels?” Liam asks.

“They’ve liquidized silver and use it in syringes for torture.” Louis explains, pointing at a tray on a cart. “Burns like a motherfucker. Doesn’t last that long though. My body vaporized it and leaked it out through my pores.”

“Are you okay?” Liam asks gently.

“Do you actually care, or are you asking for strategic purposes?” Louis questions.

“Louis, of course I care.” Liam sighs. “I- I’m sorry about the way I acted before you left. I don’t know how to handle this though. I thought you were dead for so long. I thought I’d lost you forever. Then you came back, and I’ve just been trying to keep my head above the water with how it’s making me feel. Because I still love you so much, but I’m scared.”

“Of me?” Louis asks in a whisper.

“Of losing you again once I let myself give in to you.” Liam admits.

“I’m not going anywhere, Liam.” Louis murmurs. “I won’t leave you behind again. I won’t.”

“You may not be able to help it.” Liam points out. “When the Master dies-”

“I’m not going anywhere.” Louis repeats, cutting him off. “Hell couldn’t take me from you again.”

“We’ll talk about it when we get back home.” Liam says quietly, lacing his fingers through Louis’. “For now-”

“Liam, get down!” Louis screams, dissolving into mist.

Everything happens in slow motion from there, keeping Liam trapped in a temporal bubble as he turns around. Louis moves through the air towards the gunman at the hole that Liam had knocked in the wall. Liam spots the radio on the man’s shoulder, and realizes his mistake. He’d broadcasted his position, and then stayed here making confessions when they should have been on the move. That’s the reason there’s a bullet heading towards the side of his skull.

That’s the reason Liam is dead before he hits the ground.

“No!” Harry screams, falling to his knees in the middle of a swing of his fist. A tendril of golden sand pierces through the shoulder of the man that Harry had been targeting, pinning him to the wall before he can squeeze off the shot that he’d been trying to put in Harry’s chest.

“Harry, I need some fucking help!” Niall yells, ducking under the back of one man and using him
as a shield against the hail of gunfire targeted at him while sending his sand forward to stop them.

The beast is raging inside of Harry, but he refuses to let it out. He wants to remember making them all pay. He wants to see the blood leak out under his fists. He wants to know that he’s avenged his friend, his Chevalier. He stands back up to his feet and launches himself into a group of them, claws swinging with murderous intent as he shreds them to pieces. They fall away from him like dominos, limbs and bodies dropping to the ground with wet thuds that do nothing to soothe his fury.

Something wraps around his ankles and sends him crashing to the floor. He finds himself being suspended by his ankles before he can even think about what might have happened. Niall takes down the leftover attackers while using one hand to keep Harry off of the battlefield. He snaps and snarls, lashing out with his claws even though nothing is in range for him to hit.

“What part of ‘leave them alive’ don’t you understand?” Niall growls once the last of them are down.

“They killed him!” Harry screams. “They killed Liam!”

“I know.” Niall says softly, setting Harry down on the ground. “I felt it through you. But I can’t let you lose your head. I can’t let the same thing happen here that happened when you fought the Master. I won’t let you get hurt again.”

“I’m going to kill all of them!” Harry snarls.

“Don’t.” Niall says adamantly. “Don’t forget that they’re just trying to do their job. They’re following orders just like your soldiers do. The ones at the top, they’re the ones to blame. Not these men.”

“Don’t you dare compare what my people are doing to these animals.” Harry grits out.

“They’re just trying to protect their species from threats they don’t understand.” Niall says softly. “We’re terrifying, Harry. Look around us. Look what we’ve done as just two of us, against dozens of highly trained soldiers with weapons specifically designed to stop us. Now imagine knowing that there are thousands of things out there that could do to your people what we’ve done here. What would you do as the King?”

“I’d- I’d do everything in my power to stop them.” Harry admits quietly. “Fine. I won’t kill any more of them unless I have to, but there must be restitution for this.”

“We’ll make them pay. Don’t worry.” Niall tells him. “They won’t get away with this. Not with any of it. But we have to remember that they’re just trying to protect humanity, same as us.”


“I know.” Niall nods. “I can feel them.”

They step through another hall, and follow the scent to a pair of doors. Harry takes the one on the left, while Niall takes the one on the right. Luke is strapped to a chair with a necklace of barbed silver wire wrapped around his throat. Niall had said that Luke was shot multiple times, but they must have removed the bullets so that they could interrogate him.

Harry wrenches away the restraints, his rage burning far hotter than the silver against his skin, and breathes out a sigh of relief when Luke blinks awake. “Your Majesty?” he asks, his voice little
more than a rasp.

“Come on. We’ve come to get you out of here.” Harry says gently.


“Got him right here.” Niall says behind them. “We need to go find Louis and- And the others.”

“I can gather them once we reach the area where we entered.” Harry tells him. He pulls out his radio and says, “Ashton and Luke are secured. Delay them until we signal for you to meet us at the spot we entered from.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.” Calum’s voice comes crackling through, followed in succession by the other three.

“I’ll take care of the fighting from here on out. You just watch these two.” Niall says, leaving no room for argument in his tone.

“We can fight.” Ashton insists, though the way he’s leaning on Niall’s shoulder just to stay standing doesn’t support that statement.

“No. I’m not losing anyone else on this mission.” Niall mutters. “You three just stay out of the way and let me handle things.”

“Anyone else?” Luke asks, climbing to his feet.

“Liam is dead.” Harry informs him.

“How?” Ashton asks, pushing himself upright with a snarl.

“We don’t know yet.” Niall sighs. “Presumably it was one of the soldiers, but it could have also been - been-”

“It wasn’t Louis.” Harry grits out. “He was happy, and then he was dead. There was no betrayal, no confusion. It happened too quickly for him to feel anything besides happy. It wasn’t Louis.”

“Good.” Niall nods. “Now let’s go.”

Ashton and Luke fall into step behind him, while Harry takes the rear position. Niall had told him to stay out of any fighting, but if they get attacked from the rear then someone needs to be able to mount a defense. They follow the trail of bodies back to where Niall first opened the portal to let them in.

“Allright, Fuzzy, do your thing.” Niall says, grouping them so that every door is within at least one of their lines of sight. “Call everyone to us.”

Harry lets his vocal chords shift, lets his face transform enough to shape the howl properly. He has to work at keeping the grief out of it, to keep it from being misinterpreted. The radios would have worked, but they don’t know if Louis has one. They have to rely on this because he’ll recognize the signal.

Leigh-Anne shows up first, and Bressie is right on her heels. Jade shows up next, carrying Calum on her back. He’s got a wound in his shoulder, and it doesn’t appear to be closing. “Why isn’t he healing?” Niall questions.

“The bullet is still in there.” Calum grumbles. “And my regeneration isn’t as strong, because I’m a
“werewolf, not a lycan.”

“You are?” Niall asks, his eyes going wide.

“Surprised?” Calum smirks.

“A little.” Niall admits. “Hold still. This is going to hurt, but I can help speed up the regeneration process once I dig the bullet out.”

“Just do it.” Calum huffs. Niall does as directed, plunging two thin tendrils of golden sand into the wound and wrapping them around the bullet to pull it out before he holds his hands over it and starts aiding in Calum’s regeneration.

“They killed him!” comes a snarl from the door behind Harry. He’s carrying Liam’s body, limp and pale in his arms. “Niall- They - They killed him!”

“I know.” Niall says softly from where he’s leaning over Calum. “Come on. We’ll grieve back in Final Bastion. I need you all close to open the portal properly.”

“I’m not leaving until I kill every one of these human bastards!” Louis growls.

“Louis, damn it, I’m not fucking around here!” Niall yells, the light under his hands flashing brighter with his spark of rage.

“What are you doing there?” Louis asks. “Are you- Are you healing him?”

“Yes.” Niall nods.

“Heal Liam.” Louis begs, setting Liam’s body down in front of Niall.

“I can’t bring him back to life, Louis.” Niall mutters.

“Can you reconstruct the damaged parts?” Louis asks. “Because I can bring a body back to life if they haven’t been dead long, but they have to be whole. Please, Niall, I can’t lose him now.”

“I- I think I can do it. We’d have to do it here though. Without his life energy to hold him together, I can’t guarantee that he’d make it back to Final Bastion in any state to be reconstructed.” Niall explains. “Portals are fickle.”

“He’ll never forgive you for this.” Harry says harshly.

“At least he’d still be alive.” Niall says gently, moving from Calum to Liam. The sides of his head are blown out, but it all starts to build back up under Niall’s hands. Harry watches carefully as the brain matter reconstitutes itself, pushing out small fragments of silver, and then the skull grows back together. Finally his skin and hair come back, and he looks like Liam again.

“This is blasphemy.” Calum murmurs.

“Blow it out your arse, pup.” Louis snarls.

“Liam will hate this.” Leigh-Anne sighs.

“I don’t care. I’m not letting him die.” Louis hisses.

“He’s already dead, and so are you.” Bressie grunts.
“Stop it!” Niall snaps. “Louis, do whatever you have to do. We’ll make sure you’re safe through the process.”

“It should only take a few minutes.” Louis informs them. His fangs drop down, and he tears open his wrist. One hand pries open Liam’s jaw, and the other drips the blood down his throat. Harry can’t watch anymore after that. Liam will never forgive any of them for this. Not Louis, not Niall, and certainly not Harry.

Suddenly, just after Harry hears the distinctive sound of flesh breaking under fangs, all of the doors surrounding them fly open at once. Dozens of troops shuffle in, surrounding them in a large circle with weapons drawn. Harry and the others take positions around Louis and Liam, fangs and claws bared. What remains of Niall’s golden sand hovers in the air, ready to adapt to the situation to be used as either weapon or shield. It won’t make much of a difference if Niall’s not willing to kill these men though. There are just too many to take out with non-lethal tactics.

“It’s time to surrender, son.” Bobby says as he steps through the crowd.

“Never!” Niall growls.

“One of your number has already died. Don’t make us increase that.” Bobby says calmly.

“You can try.” Harry snarls. “We’ll take you all out. So far we’ve done our best not to kill your men, but if you try to stop us from leaving, that’ll stop.”

“From what I’ve seen on the camera feed, you haven’t done much at all not to kill my men, lycan.” Bobby spits out.

“You’re speaking to a king, human.” Ashton says icily. “Learn some respect.”

“I do not recognize the monarchy of monsters.” Bobby replies.

“Then how about my husband?” Niall asks harshly. “They’re one in the same.”

“Why should that make any difference to me?” Bobby questions. “You’re no different than they are anymore, Niall.”

“Oh, that’s where you’re wrong.” Louis says with a mirthless chuckle, standing up and striding in between Niall and Harry. “He’s the only one here keeping us from killing all of you. Our respect and admiration for the Hero King of Final Bastion is the sole reason that you aren’t all dead. However, not even that will stop us if you try to keep us here any longer. You don’t have any hostages this time. You won’t catch us off-guard again.”

“We have you surrounded.” Bobby points out.

The words are no sooner out of his mouth, than Louis dissolves into mist that spreads throughout the room. He appears randomly throughout the crowd, arms and legs striking out and knocking commandos to the ground so hard that they crush the tiles. Half of them fall in just a few seconds before Louis appears in his complete form behind Bobby.

“You were saying?” Louis hisses, gripping the back of Bobby’s neck and forcing him to his knees. “Those of you who are still conscious, put your weapons on the ground, or I kill him.”

Not one of them makes a move, their guns trained on Louis without any hesitance. “Do you think that we aren’t all prepared to die when we take this job, vampire?” Bobby grits out. “Take my life. It means nothing in the defense of humanity.”
“What do you think we’ve been doing for a millennium?” Harry asks. “We’ve been defending humanity for far longer than you’ve been able to do it yourselves.”

“Bullshit, monster.” Bobby spits out. “You’ve killed thousands of our kind in your war.”

“To save billions!” Harry roars. “You cannot possibly imagine what would happen if we weren’t standing between your species and the Master.”

“And what happens when a species that knows nothing but war has no war left to fight?” Bobby asks angrily. “When you don’t have the Master to fight, you’ll turn against humanity.”

“My people number less than twenty thousand. We have no interest in your world or species.” Harry counters. “We just want peace. Nothing more.”

“That’s not in your nature, lycan.” Bobby growls. “You’re beasts of war.”

“And what about me?” Niall asks, stepping forward. “I’m a creature of life. War is against my nature.”

“You’re waging war against us right now!” Bobby yells.

“I’m rescuing my people!” Niall shouts back at him. “You came after us, not the other way around! All I wanted was to complete my mission. I had no interest in, or knowledge of, MI-Zero before you came after us. All these men died because you don’t know how to stay out of the way of your betters.”

“Is that what you think?” Bobby scoffs. “You think humanity is less than monsters?”

“No. I think that anyone like you, who lies and attacks innocent people without mercy, is inferior.” Niall says firmly. “Humanity as a whole still has my respect. You’re the one that’s lost it, Bobby. You, and these men who would stand in the way of someone trying to save humanity.”

“He’s right.” says a softer, female voice. “We’ve lost our way, Bobby. This organization is supposed to be about defense, not war.”

“They made it into a war, Maura!” Bobby roars. “They’ve been killing our kind for centuries. They’ve already made a pact with a vampire! How long until they make one with the Master?”

“I will never let that happen!” Niall growls. “He made me kill my own child, and he’s going to fall beneath my power for that. Nothing will stop me from achieving that. Not you, not him, nothing. I don’t want any more blood on my hands than is already coming to them, but if you get in my way any more than you already have, I’ll add to it.”

“If your mission wasn’t to gather vampiric forces, then what was it?” Bobby asks, uncertainty sparking in his eyes.

“To find a new home for the lycans in case I fail to kill the Master and can only trap him.” Niall admits. “I need them to have somewhere in case Final Bastion is no longer an option.”

“We would never ally ourselves with the Master.” Harry adds. “Our mission, our purpose, is to stop him. Niall has the power to end this once and for all, and we’re going to, but my people need somewhere to live once this is all over.”

“What- What if we have somewhere?” Maura asks.
“Maura!” Bobby hisses.

“Shut up.” Maura snaps at him. She turns back to Harry and continues. “We built a facility. It was meant to be a prison, but it’s large enough to store the lycan populace. That’s why it was built.”

“Why would we trust humanity to house our people?” Luke scoffs. “Five seconds ago you were prepared to kill us. Now you want to help save us?”

“I want to save everyone that I can.” Maura says gently. “I raised Niall well, and I know that he wouldn’t devote himself to monsters. I know that he wouldn’t being doing all of this to save your people if they weren’t worthy of being saved. I’m offering a chance for peace between us.”

“The fact remains that we have no reason to trust you.” Harry tells her. “You killed my Chevalier. You’ve been systematically hunting my people for years. I can’t entrust the fate of my people to your hands.”

“What if you could?” Niall asks, stepping between them. “What if I had a way to guarantee their safety?”

“What are you talking about?” Harry asks.

“Give me some time.” Niall asks, looking back at his mum. “Let us walk out of here, and I’ll come back with a way to bind both humans and lycans in an agreement that will benefit both species.”

“He’ll have to release your father first.” Maura says, pointing at Louis.

“He’s not my father.” Niall mutters. “Louis, come over here. If they make another move against us, then you have my permission to kill and drain every human here.”

“You’d better know what you’re doing, Sunshine.” Louis huffs, pushing Bobby to the floor and stepping over his body to get back to the group.

“I do.” Niall nods. “Mum, how much influence does this organization have?”

“Plenty.” Maura confirms.

“I need you to gather the Prime Minister and the Queen. I need the leaders of your people for it to work.” Niall explains. “Tomorrow night, Harry and I will return to the surface, and we will make a deal that neither side will be able to break. Will you do that?”

“I’ll make sure of it.” Maura nods.

“If you betray us, I won’t have a choice.” Niall says softly. “I’ll have to declare war against all of Britain for attacking my people. You don’t want to go to war against us. We’ll lose people, but we’ll win that war.”

“I know.” Maura sighs. “I’ll do what you asked. Tomorrow night at midnight. We’ll be here.”

“No.” Harry interjects. “Neutral ground. I’m not foolish enough to walk back in here.”

“Then what do you suggest?” Maura asks.

“Shut down London Bridge, and meet us in the center of it.” Harry offers.

“Fine.” Maura agrees. “Stand down, troops.”
Niall and Harry move back to the center of the group once the soldiers lower their weapons, and Niall opens a portal back to Final Bastion. It sucks them all in, and Harry wonders just how much trouble they’re in.
“Everyone out.” Niall orders as soon as they land in the throne room. “We need to discuss some things.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.” Calum says with a nod, exiting with the other three guards that originally came with them. Niall doesn’t even bother correcting him.

“I meant you two as well.” Niall says, looking to Ashton and Luke. “Go rest. You two deserve it. More than that, you need it.”

“Thank you for coming back for us.” Ashton whispers, pulling Niall into a tight hug. “Thank you for saving us.”

“You’re my best friend, Ash.” Niall mumbles. “I wasn’t leaving you two behind. I’d have gone back alone if I’d needed to.”

“Call for us if you need us.” Luke says, linking his arms around Ashton and Niall. “We’ll be with you in a heartbeat.”

“I will.” Niall nods, stepping back before their scent can linger. “Now go rest up. Tomorrow is a big day.”

“How is he?” Niall asks, looking down on where Louis has Liam cradled against his chest.

“It- It should have worked by now.” Louis stammers. “I don’t understand what’s happening. I don’t know why it’s taking this long.”

“Have you ever done this before?” Harry asks.

“No.” Louis admits. “I’ve never been a maker. I had no reason to be when I was a guard and advisor to the Master. There are people who do this specifically if we need people.”

“Are you sure that you did it right?” Niall asks.

“Of course I am!” Louis snaps. “If I fucked it up, I wouldn’t have been able to try again. I know that I did it right. This is because of you! You messed something up when you healed him!”

“Louis-” Harry starts. Louis cuts him off, moving quick as a bolt of lightning and throwing Harry through a wall.

“You fucked it up, and now he’s not coming back!” Louis snarls, eyes burning a bright red while he glares at Niall. “You took him away from me!”

“You fucked it up, and now he’s not coming back!” Louis snarls, eyes burning a bright red while he glares at Niall. “You took him away from me!”

“I did everything I-” Niall tries to calm him down, but Louis’ hand is around his throat before he can say anything more. Bringing so many through two different portals, not to mention all the fighting, has drained Niall down. He can’t rip himself free of Louis’ grip.

“I’ll kill you!” Louis roars. “I’ll fucking kill you for this!”

“What did you do to me?” comes a whimper off to the side. “No. No!”

“Liam-” Louis gasps out before he drops Niall to rush back to Liam’s side. “You’re alive!”
“No I’m fucking not!” Liam screams, planting his fist into Louis’ temple and sending him sprawling across the floor. “How could you?”

“I couldn’t let you die.” Louis whispers, lifting himself back up to his feet.

“I did die!” Liam grits out. “I died. I’m still dead. You tainted me! You turned me into a vampire! You had no right!”

“I- I couldn’t lose you again.” Louis murmurs.

“You would ignore my wishes just to keep me around?” Liam asks harshly. “You would turn me into something I hate, just to keep me tethered to this world?”

“I’m sorry.” Louis breathes out.

“And you!” Liam growls, turning on Niall. “You let this happen?”

“I supported it.” Niall confirms.

“Why?” Liam asks venomously.

“Because you’re too good of a man to let die like that. Final Bastion needs you. So does Harry.” Niall admits. “And so do I. I couldn’t just sit back and let you cease to exist. I know that you can’t forgive me for this, but you should forgive Louis. He did this out of love.”

“If he loved me, then he would have let me go.” Liam mutters. “Turning me into this? That’s not love. That’s betrayal. He took my dignity as a lycan away.”

“But he saved your life.” Niall argues.

“For how long?” Liam snaps. “Soon, you’ll kill the Master, and what then? What if he only kept me around for a few days, and in doing so, he destroyed everything about myself that I could take pride in?”

Niall doesn’t have the chance to answer before Liam disappears, moving past him as a blur and exiting through the great hall. “Fuck!” Louis whimpers, falling to his knees.

“Go after him.” Niall orders. “He’s an unstable vampire, loose in Final Bastion. Either he’ll hurt someone, or they’ll hurt him. Track him down, and bring him back, but don’t do it by force. He’ll only resent us more for it.”

“Niall, I’m sorry about-” Louis starts.

“I’d have been the same way.” Niall cuts him off. “Go find him, Louis.”

Louis nods and turns into mist before following after Liam. Niall makes his way over to the hole where Harry’s legs are sticking out, and finds his mate silent and pensive. “Would have been nice if you’d said something, Harry.” Niall sighs.

“I- I couldn’t face him.” Harry admits quietly. “I betrayed him by letting this happen. I should have stopped it.”

“Why didn’t you then?” Niall asks.

“Because I need him.” Harry whispers. “I need Liam more than I need anyone except you. He’s my guardian, and my moral compass, and my only friend.”
“Come on. We need to go.” Niall says gently, reaching down a hand and hauling Harry up to his feet.

“Go where?” Harry asks.

“We need to sleep. I need to be at the top of my game tomorrow, and so do you.” Niall says softly. “Because I don’t trust them, and I’m not getting caught off guard again. Liam died because I forgot about the second group of soldiers back at Deo’s. If I’d just- If I’d been paying better attention, then he’d still be alive. We’d have never been captured in the first place.”

“It wasn’t your fault.” Harry murmurs.

“Yes, it was actually.” Niall mutters. “I wanted to keep from killing them, so I made things more difficult for myself. If I’d just done it, then I would have finished in time to keep the others from being captured.”

“You said yourself that killing is against your nature, Niall.” Harry says, taking Niall into his arms.

“But I’ve done it when I needed to.” Niall mutters. “Zayn, that guard tonight; I’ve killed when I had to.”

“Zayn was already dead, and you killed the guard by accident.” Harry counters. “Both were in self-defense. You’ve never taken someone’s life when you didn’t have to, Niall. Not killing a dozen men isn’t something you should regret.”

“It is when it results in the death of a man like Liam.” Niall mumbles, burying his face in Harry’s neck and finally letting loose the tears that he’s managed to dam away until now.

Everything feels strange. His skin is different, can sense the slightest change in airflow. He can hear far better than he could before, can practically feel the heartbeats of the citizenry pummeling his head in. The moon is hidden by clouds, but Liam can see everything as clearly as if the sun were shining. His throat and stomach are burning with something, but he doesn’t know what. But most of all, when he turns his focus inwards, he can’t feel the Beast any longer. He’s alone in his soul now, except he also isn’t. He’s still attached to Harry, can feel the King’s presence back at the castle. There’s something else there too, though he can’t identify that.

Louis materializes in front of him, and Liam comes to a halt, snarling. “You need to come back to the castle, Liam.” Louis says gently. “You’re too dangerous to let run loose.”

“I wouldn’t hurt anyone.” Liam spits out.

“You don’t understand.” Louis sighs. “I can feel it already. Your hunger is growing. You need to feed soon, or else you’ll fall into a blood-rage and kill anyone you can get your hands on.”

“What do you mean you can feel it?” Liam snaps.

“I’m your maker. I’m- I’m bonded to you essentially.” Louis explains. “You were made by my blood. You are my child, my brother, and my partner. You are bound to me throughout eternity. That feeling in your chest, that fluttering pressure, it’s me.”

“I’m bound to the man who betrayed me?” Liam asks harshly.

“Yes.” Louis nods, keeping his eyes locked on the ground. “I’m sorry. Once you’ve learned what
you need to learn as a vampire, I can break that bond, but there are certain qualities about it that I might need until then.”

“Like?” Liam questions.

“I can give you commands that you won’t physically be able to disobey.” Louis admits.

“So you’ve made me your slave?” Liam growls.

“No!” Louis blurts out. “Nothing like that! I mean that it would make it easier to stop you if you lost control. A blood-rage is like letting your Beast completely loose. But a maker can stop their progeny, even in a blood-rage, if they command them. It will also work to shut down any magic you perform if it goes beyond your capabilities to control.”

“I have no interest in magic.” Liam mutters.

“It’s a part of you now, Liam. Whether you like that or not matters little.” Louis says quietly. “You don’t have to use it if you don’t want to, but I have to teach you to control it so that you don’t access it by mistake and hurt people.”

“I’m not going back to the castle.” Liam says adamantly. “Not yet. I can’t be there yet. I don’t deserve it. I’m no longer the Chevalier. I’m not the man I was, which means that it’s no longer my home.”

“You are still the Chevalier.” Louis counters. “And so am I. That bond wasn’t broken. You know that.”

“The Chevalier must be lycan.” Liam spits out. “I’ll break the bond when I see King Harry next.”

“What if he wants you to stay in the position?” Louis asks.

“I- I don’t know.” Liam admits. “I don’t know anything right now.”

“Then let me help you.” Louis pleads. “Liam, I love you. I don’t want to see you suffer.”

“Then you should have left me dead!” Liam spits out.

That burn in his stomach and throat is really starting to bother him, to make him bristle. He feels his fangs drop down, and then everything starts to go red. His body pushes his mind back, forces it into the background, and he has no choice but to submit. He watches from inside his own mind as he lunges forward, claws and fangs ready to tear Louis to shreds.

Louis’ voice cuts through him like he’s made of paper, booming and unwavering in its intent. “As your maker, I command you to stop!”

Liam drops to his knees, his mind once again reasserting itself over his body. “Thank you.” he chokes out, digging his claws into his palms.

“You need to feed, Liam.” Louis says gently.

“I will not feed on a citizen of Final Bastion.” Liam mutters defiantly.

“No, you won’t.” Louis agrees, much to Liam’s confusion. “For now, you’ll only feed from me. You’ll need to drink human blood eventually, because we can’t subsist on the blood of supernatural beings forever, but for now I should be enough to sate your appetite.”
“I don’t want to do this.” Liam whispers. “I don’t want to drink blood.”

“I know.” Louis replies, crouching down so that he’s level with Liam. “Li, I’m so, so sorry that I did this. I’m sorry that I turned you into this. I couldn’t let you go. Not when I finally had you back.”

“I wish you had.” Liam croaks out, feeling something like tears prickling at his eyes. Nothing comes though. He can’t even cry anymore. He doesn’t know if that’s a blessing or a curse.

“You’re awake. Stop trying to hide it. I can feel it.” Harry chuckles into the back of Niall’s neck.

“I’m not ready to be awake.” Niall mumbles sleepily.

“We don’t have anything to do for a while. We can just stay here.” Harry murmurs over his skin. “The rest of the world doesn’t have to matter for a little while.”

“I wish that were true.” Niall sighs, rolling over until he’s got his forehead pressed against Harry’s. “But we both know it isn’t.”

“No, it isn’t.” Harry replies softly. “But we could pretend.”

“Do you realize that this is the first time we’ve woken up together in the same bed?” Niall hums, lacing his fingers through Harry’s. “I always had to leave before anyone woke up before, and in Sídhe we slept on that mat made of grass.”

“Terrible for the back.” Harry muses.

“I didn’t mind so much, but this is definitely better.” Niall says with something like a smile.

“Much.” Harry agrees. “How are you feeling?”

“I- I don’t know.” Niall admits. “I’m not ready for tonight yet.”

“We have a while left, Love.” Harry reminds him. “For now, let’s just rest and relax. You haven’t been relaxed since Sídhe. It’s making my back knot up.”

“I haven’t been able to relax.” Niall huffs. “Between the distance, the capture, and Liam dying in the assault, I haven’t had ten seconds where everything didn’t feel like it was on the verge of collapse.”

“I know.” Harry nods. “But we have a few hours to catch our breath, and I think we should take it.”

“We don’t have anything we need to get done?” Niall asks.

“No.” Harry confirms. “We can’t do anything about Liam right now with the sun up, and we can’t speed up time for the meeting tonight. I’ll need to gather the council and debrief them on everything that happened, but that can wait.”

“Do we have time for you to knot me then?” Niall asks timidly.

“If you want, Love.” Harry grins. “Is that what you want?”

“Please.” Niall breathes out. “I need it.”
“Lay on your back then.” Harry instructs, waiting until Niall follows the direction to position himself over the fae.

He brings himself down until he’s hovering over Niall’s lips with his own, connecting them in a slow, lazy kiss to start the process of easing the tension out of Niall’s body. It’s amazing how this bond works, the way it transmits the sensations back to him. He can feel Niall’s lips against his own, but he can also feel his lips against Niall’s. He’s feeling each touch of his fingers on Niall’s skin, the slow roll of his hips in between Niall’s thighs, the weight of their tongues touching, from both sides. It takes intimacy to another level that Harry could never have imagined before they bonded.

He moves his lips down Niall’s jaw, attaching them to the fae’s neck. He bites at the skin in the way he knows Niall likes, pleasure shooting down Niall’s spine and into him. Their hips roll together in perfect synch, dragging a moan out of them in tandem.

“Why do you want it?” Harry asks, mouthing his way to Niall’s collarbones and dipping his tongue into the concave shape.

“I need to feel you like that again.” Niall pants out. “I need you everywhere inside me and outside. I need to be more than just me right now. I need to be us.”

“Do you want to re-bond?” Harry asks.

“Is that- Is that a thing?” Niall asks tentatively.

“It is.” Harry confirms. “Normally, mated pairs only do it every few months or even years, but there’s no reason we couldn’t do it again. I’m not sure if it’ll be as intense as the last time though. It was done so recently that it might not have much effect.”

“Are you okay with doing it again?” Niall asks.

“I can’t imagine anything I’d rather do.” Harry hums, ducking back down to continue his mouth’s assault against Niall’s skin.

“Wait- No. We shouldn’t.” Niall sighs.

“Why not?” Harry asks, sitting back on his haunches.

“I- There’s something I need to tell you.” Niall mumbles, pulling his legs out from under Harry to scoot into a sitting position and hide behind his knees. “This- This thing I’m doing with the humans- I won’t be the one doing it. Oberon will. It’s magic that I can’t even begin to understand, let alone perform.”

“What is it?” Harry asks.

“It’s basically a magical contract.” Niall explains. “It magically binds people together over an agreed upon set of terms, and sets a consequence if broken. You and I will represent Final Bastion and the lycans as a whole, and the prime minister and Queen of England will represent the people of the UK. Basically, what’ll happen is that both parties will sign, and if either side breaks the agreement, then their people will die instantly. All of them.”

“What?” Harry roars. “You can’t be serious!”

“I am.” Niall says quietly. “And it’ll continue throughout eternity. If the UK ever attacks the lycans, or if the lycans attack the humans, the side that committed the act will die. Because of the
“Why would I agree to that?” Harry bites out.

“Why wouldn’t you?” Niall fires back. “Why wouldn’t you be willing to say that your people will never start a war with humanity?”

“I would, but-” Harry starts.

“‘But’ nothing, Harry.” Niall cuts him off. “This is the only way. There’s nowhere left to go. The old empires are a lost cause. Al-watan is mostly rubble, and the soot in the air makes it hard to even breathe. It would take months, at the very least, to clear out Alaya. I don’t have the kind of power it would take to drain the water out of Yiwarla. There’s no time to check out Wasi by tonight, and even if there was, I don’t think it’ll be any better off. Besides, if we broke the agreement, there would be no reason for the humans not to attempt to destroy us.

“We’re in a corner, Harry. They are our last hope. If the Master comes back before we’ve evacuated, then there might not be any way to save them. The point of all of this has always been to save your people. If we don’t make peace with the humans, we’re doomed. We won’t survive what happens after this war if we don’t have their support. All I’m asking is that you sign something that says that your people will never declare war on the UK, and in return, they’ll say the same about the lycans.”

“You’re asking me to gamble my people’s lives on peace that hasn’t even been properly discussed.” Harry sighs.

“I’m asking you to trust me, and to trust that I only want what’s best for everyone, human and lycan.” Niall says softly.

“I do.” Harry admits, reaching forward and taking Niall’s hand. “I trust you. I can feel that you think this is the best course of action. I understand it. I- I don’t like it, but you’re right. Peace with the humans is the only path left, and I have no desire to go to war with them. I don’t understand what this has to do with us re-bonding though.”

“There’s a condition Oberon placed on me ever asking for this kind of magic to be performed.” Niall mumbles. “I- I’ll have to serve him for a year as payment.”

“Oh.” Harry breathes out.

“A year of time in Sidhe, not here.” Niall adds. “It’s only a little over 2 weeks here if the time difference holds to what I think it is. Roughly, one hour here equates to a day there. But- But I’ll have to go with him right after the contract is finished. I’ll send you back to Final Bastion though, don’t worry. And he’ll temporarily allow me to come back if the Master attacks during that time.”

“I- I don’t even know how that’ll affect us through the bond.” Harry sighs.

“Not well.” Niall mutters. “I don’t know what’ll happen either. I don’t think re-forging the bond is a good idea though, under those circumstances.”

“You’re right.” Harry agrees. “But I want to do it anyway.”

“I do too.” Niall admits with a soft smile. “It might hurt us both more.”
“I know, but I can do anything as long as I have you bonded to me.” Harry grins. “If you’re willing-”

“I am.” Niall nods. “Please.”

“I’m still mad at you for not telling me about this before now.” Harry mutters, leaning back in over Niall and nipping harshly at his chest.

“I’m willing to accept that.” Niall groans, gripping onto Harry’s shoulders and spreading back out beneath him. “But try not to be mad at me for too long. We’re going to be apart for a very long time, on my end at least. I’d rather not have you be pissed at me through the worst year of my life.”

“Yeah, I’ll get over it.” Harry grunts before biting again, hard enough to draw a bit of blood this time.

“Oh, fuck!” Niall moans, arching up into the contact. “Gonna punish me?”

“No, because bonding and knotting aren’t things that I ever want you to associate with punishment.” Harry tells him. “I’ll punish you later. I don’t know how yet, but I will.”

“Promises, promises.” Niall mumbles, pulling Harry up into a deep, desperate kiss. His legs wrap around Harry’s waist, pulling them flush against one another. Niall’s movements are more frantic now, bucking and grinding and scratching, fraught with some kind of anxiety that’s clenching in Harry’s stomach through the bond.

“Calm yourself, Love.” Harry murmurs against his lips.

“I can’t.” Niall breathes out. “I need it. I need you. I need us.”

“We’ll get there.” Harry hums.

“I don’t like waiting.” Niall huffs.

“I know. I can feel how impatient you’re getting.” Harry says through a grin, biting down on Niall’s lip. He lets it fall from between his teeth only after Niall lets out a high whine, his fingers scrambling for purchase on whatever parts of Harry he can reach. “It just makes me want to drag it out longer.”

“I know.” Niall says, his tone growing short and clipped with frustration that prods sharply at Harry’s temple. “You aren’t the only one feeling things through the bond.”

“Are you telling me to hurry things along?” Harry asks. His hands move like lightning, grabbing Niall’s wrists and pinning them down to his sides. He licks up along the line of Niall’s throat, feeling it flex and tighten under the tip of his tongue as Niall lets loose a low groan. He lets his fangs drop down to graze over the skin before saying, “Because I can’t see any reason to rush things along. If this is the last time we’ll have for a year, shouldn’t we savor it?”

“I guess.” Niall hums.

“Good boy.” Harry smirks.

“That’s my line, Fuzzy.” Niall huffs.

“Don’t care.” Harry mutters, grinding into Niall’s hip. “You’re mine, so that line is mine as well.”

“You don’t own me.” Niall growls.
“Not any more than you own me.” Harry returns, working down Niall’s chest with his lips and teeth and tongue. “You’re mine, but I’m also yours. I share with you my body, my kingdom, and my soul. All of me is yours. What is mine is yours. That’s what it means to be mated. I have no wish to control you, because your wild, unrestrained, vehemently passionate nature is part of why I love you.”

“Ugh, how is the King of the Werewolves such a sap?” Niall chuckles.

“Lycans.” Harry says with a sharp bite over the surface of Niall’s stomach that earns him a beautiful little gasp.

“Same difference.” Niall laughs.

“If you’re going to be the Hero King of Final Bastion, you can’t keep that mind-set.” Harry sighs.

“I only say it to piss you off.” Niall giggles. “I wouldn’t risk offending anyone now that I’m the King too.”

“Well stop offending me or I’ll take even longer before I knot you.” Harry growls.

“We’re going to run out of time eventually.” Niall huffs.

“Eventually.” Harry agrees, settling between Niall’s legs. “But something has been on my mind for a while, and I want to try it out.”

“Oh?” Niall hums contentedly as Harry scrapes over his protruding hips with his teeth.

“You never said that oral sex was limited to genitals.” Harry explains, releasing his grip on Niall’s wrists to fold his back his legs. “And until you topped me, I never realized how sensitive this area was, so I was thinking-”

He trails off, leaning down to lick at Niall’s entrance. Niall fists his fingers in the sheets and moans loudly enough that if people didn’t know for sure what they were up to before, they do now. “Is this something humans do?” Harry asks before licking over him again.

“Yes!” Niall gasps out, his legs twitching under Harry’s hands. “It’s called rimming.”

“That’s stupid.” Harry scoffs.

“Yeah, they have some pretty ridiculous names for things.” Niall mumbles. “The technical term for it is analingus, I think. Don’t care what it’s called. Feels amazing.”

“I know.” Harry moans, spreading his tongue flat and lapping over Niall’s hole. The sensation sends shivers down his spine, the connection sending it through in full force.

“This bond makes- Makes sex- So much more- More interesting.” Niall pants out. “I wonder if I can get you off just by getting myself off.”

“We’ll have to experiment once you come back from Sídhe.” Harry hums in agreement.

“God!” Niall groans, tossing his head back against the bed when Harry presses in a finger. “Finally!”

“Stop talking and just enjoy things, will you?” Harry smirks, leaning back in to run his tongue around where Niall is stretching around the digit. Niall gives a short nod, and Harry can feel the shift through the bond. He’s not submissive by nature, but there’s a pleasure in being taken care of
by Harry that he probably wouldn’t admit. He doesn’t need to. The bond does it for him.

Once Niall’s body relaxes, Harry pushes in a second finger, curling them up and practically collapsing once he finds that spot that Niall had taught him about. He’s still not used to it, only having had his own stimulated a few times since Niall is still afraid to get Harry pregnant again, not that Harry feels ready for it either, and therefore refuses to switch positions. Feeling it through the connection mutes it just a little bit, and that’s what keeps Harry from giving in completely to the pleasure.

There’s something magnificent about how Niall’s body accepts Harry so easily, almost greedily, and Harry finds himself mesmerized by it. He’s hypnotized by the way Niall’s body flexes and tightens and loosens, always reacting to Harry in the most beautiful ways. He nearly forgets where this is all heading until he feels a sharp tug on his curls. “Harry!” Niall growls. “This is great and all, but if you don’t fuck and knot me soon, then I’m going to put you through a fucking wall. Stop teasing me!”

“Think you’re ready?” Harry asks.

“I’ll heal if I’m not.” Niall huffs, his face flushed and sweaty, silently begging for more. Harry is more than happy to oblige. He can’t resist once Niall gets this way. It’s somewhere between defiant and desperate. Both and neither at the same time. The juxtaposition is gorgeous on him. “Please, Harry.”

“Of course, Love.” Harry muses, crawling up Niall’s body before falling off to the side. Niall gives him a look that’s equal parts confused and irritated, so Harry adds, “If you’re so impatient for it, then you can do the work. Go ahead and ride me.”

“Gladly.” Niall grunts, kicking a leg over Harry’s stomach and straddling his hips. He reaches behind himself, taking hold of Harry’s thus far neglected cock, and presses it inside. He slides down on it quickly, hungrily, making Harry’s eyes roll to the back of his head. Niall’s forehead collides with Harry’s own, and the fae lets out a low, thundering moan that Harry can feel in every part of him. It vibrates in his bones, hums through his skin, coils in his stomach, sends his heartbeat sprinting. He can feel Niall’s pleasure as well as his own, and it’s always overwhelming when they get to this point.

They both fall still and silent, basking in the glow of the bond. The closer they are to one another, the stronger every sensation gets. When they reach this place, it feels like they’ve become split between bodies and they need to adjust to it because it can drag them under before they’re ready. Harry can feel Niall around him, clenching and rocking just the tiniest bit, but he can also feel himself inside of Niall, the fullness and blissful stretch of it.

Their breathing is shallow and shared, lips glancing against each other because neither of them can focus enough to connect them properly. Their hearts pump in perfect synch, a tempo that Niall uses to set the rhythm of his movements. He picks himself and drops back down in time with every beat, hands gripped onto Harry’s shoulders in the same needy way that Harry’s are around Niall’s hips. They can’t get enough of the skin on skin contact, slick and smooth and tingling.

“I love you.” Niall breathes out, dropping himself down a bit harder as a familiar warmth builds in Harry’s stomach. He’s not sure whose it is, or if it’s both of them, but he knows that things are about to build to that crescendo.

“I love you.” Harry echoes, digging his fingers into the milky skin of Niall’s thighs as the fae’s breathing becomes more clipped.
“Knot me. Please.” Niall whimpers. “Want to cum on your knot.”

That’s all it takes for Harry. His knot unfurls as soon as Niall’s ass falls flush against his hips. That warmth explodes through him, shaking him to his core as Niall’s bares the muscles where the mark is. “Do it.” Niall says through a moan.

Harry doesn’t hesitate, sinking his teeth into Niall’s skin and letting them drop over the edge completely. They fall into each other, their minds mixing as they plummet through eternity, reality giving way to bliss.

“Wake up you two.” comes a familiar voice, dragging Louis out of his first real sleep in a quarter of a century. “The sun has set, and there are some very important things to discuss.”

“Food.” Liam breathes out over the back of Louis’s neck, springing forward out of the bed before Louis can process the desperate intention behind the word. He’s on Luke in a flash, pinning the lycan to the wall and sinking his fangs into the blond’s neck.

“As your maker I command you to stop eating him!” Louis yelps, leaping up to drag Liam off of Luke before Ashton can attack him for the offense. “Luke- I- I’m so sorry!”

“It’s fine. I should have known better than to do that.” Luke mutters, waving him off.

“Food!” Liam hisses, clawing at the air in front of him futilely whilst still in Louis’ grip.

“Liam, come back!” Louis snaps, wrenching Liam’s head back so that their eyes meet. The wild, frenzied look recedes from that soft brown immediately. “There you are.”

“What happened?” Liam asks sleepily, rubbing at his eyes like he used to when he was younger and Louis had just met him.

“You just tried to make a snack out of Luke!” Ashton growls, fangs bared as he moves himself between his mate and the vampires.

“What?” Liam asks, his eyes blowing out wide. “No- No, I fed last night. I wouldn’t have-”

“You did.” Ashton cuts him off icily. “You’ve still got his blood on your lips.”

“Ash, calm down. He didn’t mean to do it.” Luke says, stepping forward on shaky legs to wrap a hand around his mate’s shoulder. “He’s still adjusting.”

“I want out of these chambers.” Ashton bites out.

“I’ll find a place to house the two of you.” says another, more familiar voice.

“Your Majesty.” Liam breathes out, dropping to his knees as Harry walks into the room. “I’m so sorry.”

“May we have a moment?” Harry asks.

“Of course.” Ashton nods, leading Luke out in front of him with a glare over his shoulder at Louis.

“I can’t leave.” Louis tells him. “I need to be here in case the hunger takes back over.”

“That’s fine.” Harry says with a soft smile. “Liam, let me preface this by apologizing. I’m sorry
that I did nothing to stop this. I was selfish, and I wanted you to come back to me, so I let it happen. I know that you must hate me for it.”

“I- I do.” Liam admits quietly. “I’m sorry, but I do.”

“Don’t be sorry for that. I deserve your hatred.” Harry says gently. “I doubt there is anything that I could do to earn your forgiveness, but if you’d tell me something that would help, I will do everything in my power to make it come true.”

“Kill me.” Liam says immediately.

“What?” Louis screeches.

“I want him to kill me.” Liam repeats. “I don’t want to be this thing anymore. I hate myself for this. I hate both of you, and Niall too, for letting it happen. Through every day of my life, the only being I have ever truly hated was the Master, and now I’m just like him.”

“You’re nothing like him!” Louis growls, fisting his hand in Liam’s shirt and hauling his progeny up to meet his eyes. “Being made vampire doesn’t make you anything like the Master, any more than being lycan made you like Benjamin. We’re not all the same, and you are as far from being akin to the Master as is possible. Your species changed, Liam, but you didn’t. Your heart, your soul, it’s all still intact.”

“But-” Liam sighs.

“Look me in the eyes and tell me that this is what you honestly want.” Louis demands. “Tell me you want to leave me when we finally have a chance again.”

“I don’t want to be this way.” Liam chokes out. “I don’t want to do things like what I did to Luke.”

“You’ll learn to control it in time, Liam.” Louis whispers. “It’s like re-taming your Beast. It takes commitment, but you can do it, Liam. Please, don’t give up. Don’t leave me all alone. You’re the only one who could understand me, the only one I’ve ever loved. Give me a chance before you decide to die.”

“We might die again soon, anyways.” Liam points out.

“Then you’ll get what you want.” Louis mutters. “Wait until this war is over, and then decide if we survive his destruction. I’m begging you.”

“Fine.” Liam concedes. “I’ll wait until the Master is dead. But if I choose to die, then you must agree not to use your power as my maker to command me not to.”

“I- I promise.” Louis agrees reluctantly.

“Might not have a choice anyways.” Liam says quietly. “Your Majesty, why have you come?”

“To apologize, and to ask if you’d still be willing to serve as my Chevalier.” Harry admits.

“That- That’s insane, Your Majesty.” Liam sputters. “I’ve been made vampire! I can’t continue to serve as Chevalier.”

“Why not?” Harry asks.

“Because it’s not right!” Liam spits out. “A vampire cannot represent the will of the people.”
“Nobody knows the people better than you do, Liam.” Harry says softly.

“That doesn’t mean that they’ll accept it.” Liam counters.

“Harry, I think he has enough on his plate right now without you relying on him to act as Chevalier.” Louis steps in. “He has a lot to learn about himself. He’s not in control yet.”

“I- Alright.” Harry says with a nod. “I’m sorry to have bothered you then. Louis, I’ll need you to join us tonight on the bridge. Your ability to change into mist might be needed should they turn against us. You can avoid the bullets and help keep it from becoming a bloodbath.”

“I understand.” Louis agrees. “Who all is coming?”


“And me.” Liam says firmly.

“Absolutely not.” Louis huffs. “I’m not bringing you to peace talks that would look like an all-you-can-eat buffet to you.”

“So instead you’ll leave me here with nobody who could stop me if I go into another blood-rage?” Liam asks. “You can stop me if I go after the humans. Nobody can stop me if I go after the residents of Final Bastion and you aren’t here.”

“You have a point.” Louis sighs. “Fine. But I’m feeding you before we leave to try and reduce the risk.”

“If we could do that now, actually, that would be great.” Liam admits sheepishly. “His Majesty smells delicious and I didn’t get much from Luke before you managed to stop me.”

“I’ll um- I’ll leave you two to that then.” Harry says quietly. “We leave in a few hours.”

“We’ll be there.” Louis tells him. “Go take care of whatever you need to before we go, and I’ll take care of Liam.”

“I’m not a child.” Liam says with a scowl. “I’m just hungry.”

“Come here.” Louis says gently when Harry exits the chambers. He holds out his wrist and says, “Drink.”

“Can- Can you do it for me again?” Liam asks tentatively. “The opening up part, I mean.”

“No. You need to get used to the sensation of sinking your fangs into someone.” Louis mumbles.

“I don’t know if I can do that.” Liam sighs.

“I hope you can’t.” Louis confesses. “That queasy feeling, it’s the best way to learn to control yourself. It’s the best way to stop from killing someone.”

“Is that a risk here?” Liam asks.

“Technically, yes.” Louis nods. “Draining all of the blood from a vampire would kill them. But I can stop you before you kill me.”

“By command?” Liam questions.
“Yes, and no.” Louis shrugs. “As the blood of my blood, even if I were to break the bond between us as your maker, your strength won’t matter against me. I will always be physically stronger than you. It’s-”

“A magic thing.” Liam says, waving it off. “I understand.”

“Okay, then I need you to drink.” Louis tells him. “I don’t like the idea of wrestling or commanding you into submission.”

“You never used to mind wrestling to see who’d submit.” Liam scoffs. Before Louis can respond, Liam’s fangs drop down and he bites into Louis’ wrist.

The bridge is clear when the group steps onto it, but Niall doesn’t lower his guard. Ashton and Luke are off to Niall’s right side, and Harry is on the left with Liam and Louis. It’s not a big group, not one that can properly defend themselves if the humans decide to betray them, but Niall isn’t too worried. Final Bastion’s army is gathered at the portal, and if the group hasn’t returned in half an hour, they’ve been given the order to go to war. He and Louis have also been working some defensive spells that will spring up if their lives are endangered, and should give him enough time to get them all back home.

That thought hits Niall hard. Home. He has no idea when he started thinking of Final Bastion as home. He has no idea when he started thinking of a kingdom hidden below the earth as the place that he belongs. He has no idea when he became a leader, a man willing to declare a war on an entire country to protect his people, nor when he stopped thinking of humans as his people.

“Stop.” Harry says gently, curling a hand around Niall’s wrist. “You’re the lynchpin of this plan. You can’t panic right now.”

“I’m fine.” Niall sighs. “There’s just a lot riding on this. There are so many variables, and I’m not good at dealing with that.”

“Well you’d better get good really fast, because we have company.” Louis tells them, pointing towards the north end of the bridge.

“Louis, check for snipers in the immediate area. Take them out if you find any.” Niall orders. “Non-fatally.”

“You never let me have any fun.” Louis huffs before bursting into mist and rushing off into the night.

“Liam, how are you feeling?” Niall asks, watching as four black SUVs approach slowly.

“Louis fed me twice before we left.” Liam mumbles. “I’ll be fine.”

“That’s not what I’m asking about.” Niall says quietly, walking over to the new vampire. “I haven’t had a chance to talk with you today. How are you feeling?”

“Can we not do this right now?” Liam asks, his tone broken and desperate. “We’re kind of in the middle of something.”

“I won’t see you again for a while after tonight, Liam.” Niall says softly. “I need to know before I leave that you aren’t going to do something stupid, like taking a sunlit stroll.”
“I’ve said I’ll stick around until this war is over, and I’m going to, Niall.” Liam mutters. “If I survive after the Master dies, then I’ll have a choice to make, but until then, I’m not going to die. I’ve put too much time into this war to just kill myself.”

“You live in a world with magic, Liam. You can find a new reason to live.” Niall smiles, echoing back Liam’s sentiment from his first morning in Final Bastion. “I know it doesn’t feel like it right now, but it’ll get easier. I know what you’re going through.”

“Don’t try and fix this, Niall.” Liam scoffs. “I’m not going to forgive you for it.”

“I don’t expect you to.” Niall shrugs. “You should forgive Louis though.”

“Never.” Liam whispers, turning his attention towards the vehicles, which have stopped about ten meters short of their location. “Just do what you’re here to do, Your Majesty.”

“I didn’t find anyone.” Louis says, reforming next to Niall. “I checked a mile radius. I didn’t want to stay away long, or I would have gone further.”

“You did fine, Louis.” Niall tells him. “Checking was just a precaution.”

“They’re getting out.” Ashton says sharply, appearing at Niall’s side instantly.

Maura and Bobby step out of the vehicles first, quickly getting flanked by a squad of armed commandos. The other three cars stay closed, nobody moving in or around them. Niall’s parents make their way over quickly, surrounded by their guards, and Niall’s group falls into their original positions with Harry and Niall ahead of the others.

“You came light on personnel.” Bobby observes when he walks up.

“I’m sure you’ve watched security footage of last night’s raid.” Niall counters. “Do you want to guess how many seconds it would take the six of us to tear apart your team and vehicles? My guess is about four. Don’t get cocky just because you have more people. You did last night too.”

“Stop, both of you.” Maura says, stepping between them. “This isn’t the time or place for this fight.”

“Did you do what I asked?” Niall questions her.

“I did.” Maura nods. “It took every bit of credibility I have within this organization, but I managed to do it. And I brought something else.”

She slides a large duffel off of her shoulder and holds it out to Niall. “You have good taste in weaponry. You get that from me.” she smiles. “Your father prefers his Walter PPS over anything else. No imagination.”

“Are you honestly trying to bond with me right now?” Niall asks, opening up the bag and pulling his swords out. “We’re here to negotiate a peace treaty between two species, one night after I find out that you’ve been lying to me for my entire life, and you want to make small talk about weaponry?

“Do you know where I got these? From the first person I ever killed, who just happened to be my mate’s former mate. I didn’t decide to use these because I like them, Maura. I took them to remind myself of what I’ve become, and what has to be done.”

“Niall-” Maura sighs.
“Just get those two out here.” Niall mutters. “We need to work quickly, or we’ll have a war on our hands. I’d rather it not come to that.”

“Of course.” Maura nods, throwing up her hand in a signal. The other cars open up, two figures stepping out and being quickly surrounded by guards. Both groups make their way over, and Niall recognizes the faces of the Prime Minister and the Queen through the gaps. Both are wearing what appears to be silver threaded clothes and thick necklaces of the same material.

“Everyone step back.” Niall orders, unsheathing one of his swords. “He likes to make an entrance.”

“Who likes to-” Bobby starts, but Niall ignores him, slicing open his own hand and letting the blood drip to the ground.

“By the word of the pact, and the blood of my progenitors, I invoke thee.” Niall calls out. Bright light flashes out of the blood, and Niall rolls his eyes as the puddle stretches out, and a featureless body begins to rise out of it. It stands tall, and flicks its arms out, the blood flying off of him to reveal Oberon in all his pretentious glory.

“Niall, my child!” Oberon laughs, smiling widely at him. “And Harry! You look better without clothes.”

“Obi!” Niall hisses, feeling the bark of laughter that bubbles out of Harry’s throat before it sounds in the night. “I didn’t bring you here to talk. We’ll have plenty of time for that later.”

“So you are invoking The Eternal Pact?” Oberon asks, his eyes widening in surprise.

“We have no choice. Time is running out, and I need a place for my people.” Niall explains. “They have one, but-”

“But you do not trust them.” Oberon finishes for him. “You remember your end of this bargain?”

“I’ve made my peace with it.” Niall nods. “A year of service in exchange for finding my people a safe haven is no question.”

“You’re becoming a true king.” Oberon smiles. “I will make this agreement for you. Have you all come to terms?”

“I’ve had something drawn up.” Niall tells him, gesturing for Ashton to hand over the scroll of parchment in his hand. He turns to the two leaders in the other group, both of whom look a bit pale and queasy, and says, “You two are welcome to read over it if you like, but we’re on some pretty tight time constraints, so I’ll explain the basic points to you.

“It dictates that our two peoples will become allies. You will provide a home for our people with the facility that you built to imprison them, though it will no longer serve as a prison. The facility will be run entirely by the lycans, with no interference from humans. They will not be allowed to set foot on the land once we take it over, unless invited. Our resources will be used to buy the supplies that we use, and thus, we will not be dependent on you for anything after the facility is given over. Any attempt by humans to interfere will be seen as a violation of this contract.

“In exchange for this, the lycans will be your allies in times of war. They will not participate in political struggles, holy wars, or matters of resources, but will aid you in times of need. They will also protect your people from supernatural threats, namely, vampires. Along with that, we will pay you for the facility, the land around it to work as our own, and a tribute of one hundred million pounds. Also, neither side will be allowed to declare war against the other from this point forward. If either side sanctions the death of the other, their people will die for breaking this pact. As the
leaders of our respective peoples, the four of us will sign this, and all future generations of our people will be bound by it. Do you understand?"

“Why would we agree to this?” the Prime Minister asks, stepping forward.

“Because refusing these terms will be seen as a declaration of war after what MI-Zero did to a King of Final Bastion.” Harry answers, stepping forward. “We have ten thousand troops at the ready, and if we aren’t back in time, or we come back without this contract signed, they will attack tonight. We are prepared to do whatever it takes to ensure the safety of our people, even if it means turning against the surface to guarantee it.”

“How long have you been in charge, boy?” the Prime Minister questions. “A year? Two?”

“Over five times as long as you’ve been alive - boy.” Harry returns. “Do not presume that my appearance has any bearing on my experience as a ruler. My kind lives far longer than yours. I have led Final Bastion for two-hundred-and-fifty-four years, and my training to take the position lasted longer than you’ve been on this planet.”

“Ignore him.” the Queen says, stepping forward. “He’s a temporary leader, chosen by the people. He doesn’t understand the lifelong devotion of the monarchy.”

“Few do.” Harry agrees. “It’s a pleasure, Your Majesty.”

“Will you agree to these terms, or won’t you?” Niall asks.

“With one addition.” the Queen replies. “From now on, one of your people will be appointed as a supernatural advisor to the government. If we are to continue forward as allies, then we must know about your world through more than just gathered intelligence.”

“It will take some time to find someone suited to the position.” Harry tells her. “And our first priority will be the evacuation of Final Bastion. But, in place of a direct advisor, I can have a portion of the royal library sent to your people to help them begin to understand the history of my people, and the magnitude of the supernatural world.”

“That will be fine.” Elizabeth nods. “I have been shown what only a few of you are capable of, and I have no intention of my kingdom being on the receiving end of that. Our people will be allied from here until the end of time. I think that is best for both sides.”

“If the terms are decided upon, then let us begin.” Oberon interjects, waving his hand over the scroll to magically add in the new portion. Niall barely suppresses a sigh at his teacher showing off.

“Where do I sign?” Elizabeth questions.

“The pact is formed by willingly given blood.” Niall explains, stripping off a portion of the gold on his blade to create a needle. He pricks the end of his finger, and places it on the parchment. “I’m sorry. It’s a magic thing.”

“How exciting.” the Queen beams, repeating the process after Niall hands over the needle.

“And now you, Harry.” Oberon orders. Harry follows the instruction, and then hands the needle over to the Prime Minister, who sighs reluctantly before finishing off the deal. Oberon re-rolls the scroll, and then forms a golden flame in his other hand. “The pact is made, and now cannot be unmade.”
The flame consumes the scroll, turning it into glowing embers that fly into the skin of the four signees. They don’t burn like they should, rather sinking into their flesh and filling them with an immense, tingling warmth. Niall has already done this before, when he made the pact to be able to invoke Oberon’s services in exchange for his own, but he can tell that it’s shocking to the other three by the way they scrub at the embers.

“We will send some people to Stonehenge in the morning to lead you to the facility.” Maura says as the Queen and Prime Minister are shuffled off back to their vehicles. “After that, you’ll be on your own as far as transporting them.”

“That’s fine.” Harry nods.

“You may have a few minutes to say your goodbyes, Niall, and then we must go.” Oberon tells him.

“You two should go.” Niall says to Bobby and Maura. “I have nothing left to say to you.”

“Niall—” Maura says gently. “I know that you’ll need time to forgive us, but we did the best we knew how to do.”

“Go.” Niall repeats, turning his back on them to face Harry, He waits until he hears the heavy sounds of booted feet and his mother’s sniffling fade away before he speaks again. “I’m going to miss you.”

“It’s not that long.” Harry says softly, stepping forward until they’re pressed flush against each other.

“Not for you.” Niall scoffs, feeling tears start to prickle behind his eyes. “I haven’t been around for centuries like your ancient arse has. A year is still a long time for me.”

“And we’re going to have a lot more together.” Harry murmurs. “This will all be over before you know it, and then we’ll have centuries to be together.”

“You’re an optimist.” Niall mumbles. “I might be doing all of this just to end up dead as soon as I come back.”

“You’re not going to die.” Harry says firmly. “Not any time soon. We’re going to have more children, and they’re going to be nightmares that we never want to wake up from, and I’m going to knot you so many times that you lose count. We’re going to have the time we’ve earned.”

“Promise me.” Niall begs in a whisper.

“I promise.” Harry says gently, swiping his thumbs under Niall’s eyes to wipe away the tears. “I promise we’ll get our time.”

“I have to go now.” Niall chokes out. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Harry says softly, pressing his lips against Niall’s tenderly. “Now go. The sooner you leave, the sooner you’ll be back.”

“Don’t trust my parents.” Niall tells him. “And don’t let humans into the facility. The world is treacherous and has changed a lot since your mother’s day. Transport all of the supplies yourselves, and don’t get caught up in any promises they try to make.”

“I know.” Harry says quietly.
“And don’t get too in your own head. I’m coming back, but our people can’t afford to lose you to your own emotions.” Niall adds.

“I know.” Harry repeats, a fond smile forming on his lips.

“And don’t fuck anyone else while I’m gone.” Niall grumbles.

“And here I was, planning a ‘Goodbye, Final Bastion’ orgy.” Harry snorts.

“Arse.” Niall huffs, punching Harry in the shoulder and wincing when the pain comes back at him. “I’m just saying. You don’t have to be a dick about it.”

“Niall, I only want you.” Harry murmurs. “Now go. You’ve kept Oberon waiting long enough, and I’d rather get to our ‘hello’s’ as soon as possible.”

“Alright then.” Niall nods. “I guess I’ll be going.”

“You mean we’ll be going.” Ashton pipes up.

“I’m sorry, what?” Niall asks, whirling around on the lycan.

“I’m your attendant. Whether it’s in Final Bastion or Sídhe, I’m by your side, Niall.” Ashton says adamantly. “Luke and I have talked it over, and decided that this is what needs to be done. We saw how the bond affected you from Al-Watan on, and we’re going a lot further away this time. Any task that you can’t do in service to Oberon, I will complete for you.”

“Interesting.” Oberon hums. “I will allow it.”

“How did you even know about this part in time to talk about it?” Niall asks. “I only told the council just before we left.”

“Luke and I were standing guard outside your chambers this morning.” Ashton explains. “We heard everything.”

“Ugh, I hate you both.” Niall growls. “I can’t stop you, but you have to understand, Ash, this is a year we’ll be gone.”

“A year in which time, we aren’t even sure you’ll be able to move, let alone serve a king.” Ashton counters. “I’ve made the decision, and it’s final. Now, let’s get going.”

“Fucking lycans.” Niall mutters under his breath, earning himself a harsh slap on the ass from Harry that’s quickly followed by a hiss when it rebounds back to him. “Alright, everyone gather up. I’ll send you back.”

“Allow me.” Oberon chuckles, waving his hand and opening a portal in front of himself. Niall hasn’t managed to do that trick yet, to get one to appear and stay open for longer than it takes to suck him and his passengers up into it. As he watches each of his friends disappear though, he realizes that he’ll have time to work on it. And as he watches Harry go as well, he realizes that he’d trade everything that he has in order to never have to be apart from him again.

“Come, my child.” Oberon says gently, closing the portal that the others had left through. “We have our own adventures to deal with.”

“Adventures?” Niall asks.

“You’re going to serve the King of the Seelie Court. Surely you did not think I’d have you
“Scrubbing floors and carrying trays of food?” Oberon smirks. “Now, one of the villages in the north of Sídhe is being plagued by trolls. I need someone to take care of them.”

“This is going to be a really long year.” Niall sighs, stepping into the portal that Oberon creates with Ashton by his side. He has no idea how long it’s actually going to feel.
“The next group of people is out and off, Your Majesty.” Luke says quietly.

“How many are left?” Harry asks, his voice raw, painful on lips chapped and cracked and broken by stomach acid. He’s adjusted to the distance between himself and Niall, but he’s ready for this to all be over. Just a few more hours. He can handle that.

“Seven groups, Your Majesty.” Luke tells him after checking his list.

“How are our resources looking at the facility?” Harry asks.

“It’s- It’s tight.” Luke admits. “Finding reliable vendors that are willing to follow our specifications is becoming difficult, and we don’t have the farms up and running yet.”

“And morale?” Harry questions.

“Honestly, it’s not great, Your Highness.” Luke sighs. “It hadn’t even really had a chance to recover after the Master’s attack. Then there was the execution of a counselor after he betrayed you. And now, they’re being moved from their home onto the surface, into a prison, and neither of their kings are there to guide them.”

“I’m not leaving until every-” Harry starts.


“Then quit pushing for me to leave.” Harry mutters.


“I can’t.” Harry says for what feels like the millionth time in the last two weeks. It probably is, knowing Luke’s incessant nagging of him. “There’s too much to do. Moving twelve thousand people takes too much work to concern myself with rest.”

“There are other people working on this too you know!” Luke snaps.

“I’m well aware, Luke.” Harry sighs. “And I’m glad to know that you’ve handled this so well. It means that you might be ready.”

“Ready for what?” Luke asks, looking taken aback by Harry’s lack of reaction to his insubordination.

“I want to appoint you as the supernatural advisor to the British government.” Harry explains. “You’re knowledgeable in many subjects that few lycans are, such as magic and history. You’re young enough to adapt to human culture better than your elders. And you’ve earned a place of respect among our people.”


“Of course, that’s only if everything else goes according to plan.” Harry adds. “There’s another position that I’m considering you for as well. If Liam dies, or lives and still rejects my offer, I’d like you to be Chevalier.”
“Stop!” Luke squawks, dropping his list and scattering papers everywhere. “Your Majesty, I’m not worthy of the advisor position, let alone the title of Chevalier.”

“Both Liam and myself disagree.” Harry tells him. “Do you think that you’ve gone unnoticed for the last twenty five years, Luke? I’ve seen in you what I saw in Liam when we were young. I’ve seen a capacity for greatness in you.”

“Liam wasn’t even your first choice for Chevalier.” Luke argues.

“Actually, he was.” Harry smiles, the memory tugging at his heart strings. “When I took over as king, I first offered the position of Chevalier to Liam. He turned me down immediately. He thought he wouldn’t be worthy of the position, and more than that, he thought that it would hurt Louis.

“Louis wanted to be Chevalier from the time that we were just pups, you see. He followed Benjamin around constantly, learning everything that he could about the position when Ben was serving my father. He became a warrior of unparalleled genius on the battlefield, every single movement a masterstroke. He familiarized himself with every aspect of Final Bastion’s history. He ran scenarios with Benjamin on what path a Chevalier should take in any situation imaginable.

“But he was also reckless. He was brash. He lacked any sort of respect for authority. We were friends, and that was the relationship he prioritized. I knew that, as much as he wanted to be Chevalier, he would have difficulty actually taking the position seriously, rather than just as a chance for glory. So I chose Liam. I chose Liam because he understands duty, and putting Final Bastion ahead of any single individual, and how to listen to the will of the people. But he turned me down, so I picked Louis, and we never told him about me choosing Liam first.

“I see that same dedication in you that I saw in Liam. I see a man who is willing, and able, to challenge me for what he thinks is best, but one who also has a respect for my position. I see someone who can handle change with a level head. I see someone capable of great things, who has already given himself fully to the protection of Final Bastion. I see someone that I would like by my side as we move forward after this war. So, if it comes to it, would you take the position?”

“I’d have to talk it over with Ashton.” Luke says quietly. “Being Chevalier would mean giving up on ever having pups, and the advisor position would mean separating from the rest of our people. I can’t make the decision alone.”

“Then I’ll give it some serious thought.” Luke says with a shy smile.

“I understand.” Harry nods. “Take all the time you need.”

“Am I- Am I the first person you’ve come to about this?” Luke questions.

“Besides Liam, of course.” Harry confirms. “He told me that he doesn’t want to continue as Chevalier, but I don’t know if he’ll change his mind once things settle down, or if he’ll even be around to change his mind.”

“How are you doing with Ashton being gone?” Harry asks.

“We’ve been apart for longer than this before.” Luke shrugs. “And our bond isn’t like the one you have with Niall. It’s not taking so much of a physical toll. I miss him, of course, but I know that he’s alive and safe enough not to set off any alarm bells for me, so I’m not too worried about him.”

“Niall’s been in danger quite a few times.” Harry sighs. “He’s gotten hurt a few times too. But everything is moving too fast for me to feel properly. Every one of his emotions and senses that
passes to me, they’re moving at warp speed because of the different time flows. Is it the same for you?”


“Very.” Harry chuckles.

“The next group will be leaving soon.” Luke tells him. “I need to go check on all of them and give them their instructions.”

“Go ahead. Report back once they all get off.” Harry mumbles.

“Try and rest while I do this, Your Majesty.” Luke says gently. “Niall will be back in a few hours if the time estimation is correct. If you sleep, it’ll be here sooner for you.”

“I’m not sleeping until he’s back in my arms.” Harry mutters.

“Again!” Louis growls, launching another fireball at Liam. He jumps and rolls out of the way, but Louis changes its course midair to land between Liam’s shoulder-blades. Liam screams, falling to the ground and rolling around to put out the flames spreading over his back. “That’s not what you’re supposed to be doing, Liam! I know that you can do this! Change into mist!”

“I’m trying!” Liam snarls.

“No, you’re fighting like a lycan!” Louis groans. “You’re not a lycan anymore, Liam. You have new advantages. You have different abilities. If you’re going to fight vampires, then you need to know how to do it with your current powers. You’re not immune to magic, and you can’t force a reformation through proximity. You have to mingle your mist form with a vampire’s to bring them out of it now.”

“I don’t understand how to make it happen!” Liam snaps.

“Then stop trying to understand it.” Louis tells him. “Magic isn’t about understanding. It isn’t about concrete knowledge. It’s about intention and feeling. You have the power to do this. All you need is the desire. The magic will work around what you do and don’t understand.”

“Do you think I want to keep getting burned?” Liam scoffs.

“I think you’d rather get burned than accept that you’ve been made vampire.” Louis counters mentally. Liam’s been consuming his blood regularly, and as much as Louis has tried to leave this part of that connection alone, he needs to use it to prove a point.

“Get out of my head!” Liam roars, baring his fangs and claws. “You promised not to do that!”

“That is how vampires talk to one another, Liam.” Louis says, returning to the use of his voice to avoid agitating Liam any further. “That is part of being a vampire. Magic is part of being a vampire.”

“I don’t plan on staying a vampire for long.” Liam argues. “Chances are that I’ll be dead in the next few days, and even if I’m not-”

“Then you’re going to choose to die.” Louis spits out. “I know.”

“Don’t say that like you don’t understand.” Liam huffs.
“At first I would have agreed with you, Liam.” Louis sighs. “But being a vampire is something that I’ve come to accept. If I wasn’t - I would never have found you again.”

“And what good has come of it?” Liam asks. “What good has finding me done for you?”

“It’s reminded me that there are things worth sticking around for.” Louis whispers. “Worth living for.”

“We’re not alive, Louis.” Liam mutters.

“That’s a technicality, and you know it.” Louis says with a scowl. “We walk around, we talk, we think. Just because our hearts aren’t beating doesn’t mean that we aren’t alive.”

“The hell it doesn’t.” Liam scoffs.

Louis rushes forward, gripping Liam around the neck and pushing him against the wall. The nails of his other hand sharpen into points, and he scratches them down Liam’s chest, digging them in deep enough to earn him a scream of pain while Liam tugs impotently at his arm, all of his strength useless against his maker. “Do you feel that?” Louis growls. “Do you feel that pain?”

“Yes!” Liam screams, thrashing against Louis’ hold on him.

“The dead don’t feel, Liam.” Louis says softly, releasing Liam and pressing in close against him. “They don’t feel. Not pain, or hate, or rage, or love. I have spoken with the dead, and they feel nothing. I’m not dead. You’re not dead. If you were, you wouldn’t feel anything from this-”

He punctuates his sentence by leaning up and pressing his lips against Liam’s for the first time since they’ve found each other again. Liam responds immediately, his palms pressing flat against Louis’ chest and pushing him back a few feet. “Don’t!” he spits out.

“Admit that you feel it.” Louis counters.

“No.” Liam snarls.

“Don’t make me command you, Liam.” Louis says harshly.

“Don’t.” Liam growls.

“As your maker-” Louis starts.

“Yes, I feel it too!” Liam shouts, pouncing on Louis and sending them both tumbling to the ground. “But I don’t just love you, Louis. I hate you. I resent what you’ve done to me.”

“I can take that.” Louis tells him. “I can take the hate, Liam. I can take all of your anger. Just don’t fight the rest of it.”

“Come on then.” Liam huffs, finally successfully bursting into mist and racing through the night up towards the balcony that leads to what used to be Niall, Ashton, and Luke’s shared chambers. They’ve been using it as their living area, since Liam refuses to reclaim the Chevalier’s chambers. Louis gives chase immediately, wishing he had physical eyes in this form so that he could roll them.

“I don’t know if I should be annoyed, or flattered, that the opportunity to shag me is what it took to get you to finally change forms after days of practice.” he says once they reform in the room.

“Shut up.” Liam mutters, reaching forward and ripping Louis’ shirt open and off of his shoulders.
“Just fucking shut up for once.”

“Give me something else to do with my mouth then.” Louis says with a smirk.

“Excellent idea.” Liam says with a wicked grin, forcing Louis back against the wall and shoving the tattered remains of his own shirt into his mouth. “You were always too loud in bed. Not even a hint of modesty. Kept half the citizenry up with your howling.”

“Had to let people know how good you were, didn’t I?” Louis asks through his mind.

“I said to stay out of my head.” Liam growls, turning Louis roughly and slamming him against the wall again. Louis lets him. Liam couldn’t do it if Louis didn’t want it, and he very much does. He fully expects this to be less than gentle, and that is the exact opposite of a problem. “I won’t let you do to me what he did to you. I won’t let you force your way into my mind to assert your will over me.”

Louis whirls around immediately, throwing Liam off of him so hard that he crashes into the opposite wall. Louis tears the makeshift gag out of his mouth, seething as he grits out, “What would you know about it? What would you know about any of it?”

“You project your memories into my head when you’re sleeping because of all of the blood you’ve been feeding me.” Liam admits quietly. “I’ve seen everything. I’ve seen you murdering humans left and right, draining them and then ripping them apart for fun. I saw you kill Andy, my best friend and a lycan that you trained, when he realized that you weren’t dead because he saw you on a mission. I’ve seen you in every position with Zayn, and the Master, and others whose names even you don’t know. And I’ve seen the first three years that you spent as a vampire, being tortured and force-fed his blood until his voice was all you could hear, and you fell under his will, because he wanted to break you rather than just command you. He wanted you to choose to be his.”

“And you think I’d repeat that process with you?” Louis snaps. “You think I’d recreate the worst experiences of my life with you?”

“I think you’d do anything to keep me from killing myself, and leaving you all alone again.” Liam mutters.

“Fuck you!” Louis growls. “You think this is about me not wanting to be alone? Fine. Let me prove you wrong.”

“Louis-” Liam sighs.

“As your maker-” Louis starts, the words forming reluctantly on his tongue just after they form in his mind. The Master never released him, Niall did with a spell, so he’s never actually heard them. Somewhere in the back of his mind, they come to him instinctively though.

“Wait!” Liam gasps, his eyes widening in shock.

“I release you.” Louis finishes despite Liam’s protest. Something in his chest snaps, releasing a flood that pours out of him, leaving him hollow and cold where Liam’s presence had been before. “I don’t give a fuck about being alone, Liam.”

“What have you done?” Liam grunts, dropping to his knees. “What if I have another blood-rage?”

“Then anyone you murder is on your own head.” Louis bites out. “Find your own way to feed. Find your own way to train. Find your own place to sleep. I’m done with you. I could take the hate. I deserve that. I don’t deserve to be compared to him though. I don’t deserve for you to accuse me of
being the same as him, of trying to do the same thing to you that he did to me. Get out of my sight.”

“Louis-” Liam whimpers.

“Go!” Louis roars, darting forward to grip Liam’s shirt and throw him out the window. Liam had better remember how to turn into mist again, because, otherwise, it’s going to hurt like hell when he lands. Louis makes up a quick barrier, more than enough to stop someone with Liam’s lack of magical knowledge, and places one at each entrance to the chamber. There was never any point in trying with Liam anyways. They’ll both be dead in a matter of days. He just wanted a few moments of happiness before they disappear.

“You just can’t stay out of trouble, can you?” Ashton chuckles, looking down on Niall with a wide grin. Niall hates that look. It’s too smug for someone who’s been lounging about for the past year while Niall does all the heavy lifting.

“How is this my fault?” Niall scoffs.

“Four giants attacked this village without smashing a single house, and somehow there are now ten crushed residences and six shops have been completely flattened. All with flecks of gold over them.” Ashton laughs.

“Yeah, well it’s a bit hard to direct how the bodies fall when I kill them.” Niall huffs. “And it would be a lot fucking easier if my fucking sidekick hadn’t fucked up his fucking part of the fucking job.”

“Keth is right. Leprechauns have such filthy mouths.” Ashton hums, straddling over Niall’s body and dropping down onto his stomach. “It’s like you’re all genetically programmed to curse like sailors.”

“Get off of me you oaf!” Niall grunts.

“When are you going to give in and just shag me already?” Ashton asks, leaning forward to press himself flush against the length of Niall’s upper body.

“Not until both of our mates are dead, or agree to a foursome.” Niall giggles, batting at Ashton’s chest. “You’re going to have to stop hitting on me soon. We only have five days left here.”

“Yeah, but once we get back, I’ll actually have the real thing to occupy me, rather than you, Mini-Luke.” Ashton says with a shit-eating grin.

“Whatever you say, Harry-Lite.” Niall snorts. “You’re in love with me, and we both know it.”

“Maybe.” Ashton says softly, nosing at Niall’s cheek with his lips just barely brushing off-center of Niall’s own. “But I’m more in love with Luke.”

“Then you should have stayed with him back on Earth.” Niall muses, brushing Ashton’s hair back out of his eyes. “You’ve been about as helpful here as a wet pair of pants.”

“Refreshing on a hot summer day in Sídhe.” Ashton snarks. “Good to know you want me clinging to your arse though. It’s taken you long enough to admit it.”

“You’re such an idiot.” Niall giggles, pushing at Ashton’s shoulder to knock him off. The joke may be pushing into territory that’s inappropriate, but this flirtatious banter is all that’s really
helped after all of the time that they’ve been gone. They both know nothing is going to come from it, but it helps take their attention away from the mates that are currently missing from their lives. And maybe there’s a bit of truth behind the words, maybe they hit a bit closer to home than either of them would ever admit, but it’s not enough to overshadow the Harry-shaped hole in Niall’s chest, or the similar Luke-shaped one in Ashton’s.

“Yeah, but you love me anyways.” Ashton hums, settling off to Niall’s side with one of each of his arms and legs slung over the fae.

“Come on. We’ve got to get back. I’m pretty sure that Obi has one last big quest for us to take care of before we get to go back. Probably going to have to stop an army of Ifrits or something.” Niall mumbles after a few minutes of just lying there, enjoying each other’s company.

“Remember the Dullahan?” Ashton sighs. “That was so much nicer than the stuff we’ve been dealing with lately. An immortal headless horseman with a fear of gold. That was a good job.”

“Couldn’t expect him to take it easy, now could we?” Niall says dryly. “He’s making the most out of this year, having us slay every monster in his kingdom because all the members of his precious court are too prissy to get their hands dirty. He’s probably been waiting for an opportunity like this for ages, for some unwitting Halfling to stumble in here and fall for his shit.”

“I wouldn’t put it past him.” Ashton sighs in agreement. “I’m pretty sure he’s clairvoyant. He seems to know everything before it happens.”

“Probably because he’s as old as dirt.” Niall snorts. “Or maybe he’s just faking it. I bet I could predict behavior if I’d been around for ten thousand years too.”

“I highly doubt that.” comes a smug voice behind them.

“Oh yeah?” Niall scoffs. “I knew you’d come if we started talking shite about you, Obi.”

“I have no idea what you mean.” Oberon hums, stepping forward to look down on Niall and Ashton. “I just came to give you your final mission before your indentured servitude is concluded.”

“How likely are we to die?” Niall asks flatly.

“Given the amount of growth you’ve displayed over the last year, I’d say about sixty-five percent.” Oberon says with a smile. “But I’ll make you a deal. As soon as you finish, I will send the two of you back, whether that’s tonight, or in five days.”

“Deal.” Niall nods. “What are we killing this time?”

“This.” Oberon tells him, dropping a scroll onto Niall’s lap. “You’ll find it in the mountains to the north. Bring me its heart, and you’ll have your ticket home, to your actual mate, and not this surrogate.”

“Hey!” Ashton yelps. “He’d be lucky to have me as his mate!”

“Oh, he could definitely do worse.” Oberon agrees, looking over Ashton lecherously.

“Get out of here, old man.” Niall scoffs. “Go back to your golden throne and diamond palace while Ash and I take care of another one of the pest problems that you seem to have coming out of your arse.”

“Cheeky.” Oberon laughs before disappearing.
“So, what does His Royal Horniness want us to kill?” Ashton asks.

Niall unfurls the scroll, and his jaw hits the ground once he sees the picture. “Oh you’ve got to be fucking kidding me!” he screams.

“What is it?” Ashton questions.

“Take a look.” Niall groans, tossing the scroll over to his attendant and standing up.

“Well it’s definitely not a Dullahan.” Ashton sighs.

“Well get up.” Niall orders. “The sooner we do this, the sooner we get back home. It’s not that big of a deal. We just have to slay a dragon.”

Liam is trying so fucking hard to convert his body into mist, but it’s just not happening. He’s hurtling towards the ground, watching a bright light flash in the window he’d been hurled out of only seconds before, and trying his damnedest to recreate the magic that he’d used to get up there. It just won’t come to him though. His mind is racing, and his chest is clenching, and he just can’t do it.

He closes his eyes to brace for the impact, curling in on himself to keep his brain from being crushed when he hits the ground. He’ll at least survive if he can manage that. Something stops his descent in mid-air, a pair of arms curling around him to keep him from the fall, or rather, the landing. He breathes out a sigh of relief and says, “Louis, I’m so-”

“No Louis.” says a familiar voice in his ear. “Sorry about that, but it looked like you could use some help.”

“Niall?” Liam asks, opening his eyes to take in the fae as they move towards the ground slowly. “You’re early.”

“You would not believe what I had to go through to get us that courtesy.” Niall mutters, landing lightly on the ground of the sparring area and pulling his wings back in. “I’ll tell you about it later. Ashton is already inside, but I saw the predicament you were in and chose to help. What happened to you?”

“Louis abandoned me.” Liam whispers. “He released himself as my maker, even though I’m not anywhere near ready.”

“What did you do to him?” Niall sighs, setting Liam on his feet.

“What makes you think that I did anything?” Liam snaps.

“Louis loves you so much that he brought you back from the dead so that he wouldn’t lose you again.” Niall says quietly. “You, on the other hand, have been a bit of a dick since then.”

“He turned me into a vampire!” Liam hisses.

“And you can either accept that, or you can’t. Either way, it’s your reality now.” Niall counters. “As is the fact that he’s released you. So, what are you going to do about it?”

“There’s no other option. I have to manacle myself in silver.” Liam grunts. “He won’t allow me to feed from him anymore. I’m too dangerous without being fed.”
“You can feed from me.” Niall tells him. “We’ll work it out. I need to see Harry right now, but I’ll speak with Louis afterwards, okay?”

“I said that he was the same as the Master.” Liam admits in a whisper.

“Like I said, you’ve been a bit of a dick since he turned you.” Niall shrugs. “Are you hungry right now?”

“Louis fed me about an hour ago.” Liam mumbles.

“How often do you feed?” Niall questions.

“Every three hours or so when the sun is down.” Liam sighs. “I’m not really hungry that often, but it’s a precaution.”

“I don’t know if Harry and I will be done by then, but if we’re not, I’ll have someone run you a chalice of my blood.” Niall tells him.

“He also kicked me out of the room I’ve been staying in.” Liam explains.

“Then go back to your old one.” Niall offers.

“I can’t.” Liam says, shaking his head. “I’m not fit for-”

“Liam, I just spent the last two days killing a dragon just so I could get home sooner, so if we could skip past all the self-pitying bullshit, that would be aces.” Niall huffs, interrupting him. “You’ve never thought you were good enough to be Chevalier. It doesn’t seem to matter to you that this entire city idolizes you, nor that Harry wants to keep you on in the position. Do whatever you feel is right, but stop feeling sorry for yourself. If you want to be the Chevalier, be the Chevalier. If you want to be with Louis, then stop wallowing in your resentment. If you truly want to die, then tell me, and I’ll cut off your head.

“I’m so beyond done with this pitiful act you have going on. So you were made into a vampire. Why does that fucking matter? It doesn’t mean that you have to give up on everything that’s important to you. Does it stop you from wanting to protect Final Bastion? Did it fundamentally change who you are as a person? Did it take away all of the good things that you’ve done for your people? From what I’ve seen, none of that is the case, but please, tell me if it is.”

“It’s not, but-” Liam starts.

“‘But’ what, Liam?” Niall interrupts. “I know that you’re scared, but fighting everyone who’s trying to help you, everyone who loves you, isn’t going to change things. You mean more than you can imagine to so many people, but, instead of letting anyone help you, you’ve been raging against us because you’re terrified.

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“I get it. More than almost anyone in the world probably, I get it. I’m scared too. But someone a hell of a lot wiser than me once told me that ‘Real sacrifice is giving up something you can never get back in order to do what is necessary.’ He trained me to be a warrior that could avenge the people who’ve been lost. He’s given his life to do what’s right. And he’s the only person that I could truly call a hero of mine. Let me know when you find him, because I miss him a lot, and I could really use him by my side.”

Niall walks away without waiting for Liam to respond after that, heading towards the castle at a steady gate. This year has given Niall something, some inner-peace, or wisdom, and Liam feels it take ahold of him. Maybe Niall is right. Maybe Liam has been letting himself be so angry just
because he’s scared. He doesn’t know for sure, but he does know that he needs to be the one to talk to Louis now. That seems like the right first step.

“Sorry about that. Unexpected detour.” Niall smiles, finally meeting Harry at the door after his conversation with Liam. Harry has been patient, watching without eavesdropping. Now that Niall is finally back tough, Harry can’t help but launch himself forward and jump into Niall’s arms, wrapping his limbs around his mate like a net to keep him from going anywhere again.

“I missed you so much.” Harry mumbles into Niall’s neck.

“I missed you too, Love.” Niall murmurs, wrapping his arms around Harry’s back in an embrace that’s somehow too tight, and yet not nearly tight enough. “More than you can even imagine.”

“You’re back early.” Harry observes as Niall carries him back through the castle, not giving a damn who sees him wrapped around the Halfling like an octopus.

“Yeah, I did something special to get back a few days sooner than I was contracted for.” Niall hums.

“You reek.” Harry giggles.

“That would be because I spent two hours in the digestive tract of a dragon.” Niall laughs. “It was the only way to get at his heart to kill him. Took me two days to figure that out. Tried pretty much fucking everything to kill it before I came up with that. I dropped half a mountain on the damn thing, and it shrugged it off like it was a wad of parchment.”

“A- A dragon?” Harry asks, his brain going static trying to process the information. “You let yourself get eaten by a dragon?”

“A mountain, Harry.” Nial loughs. “A mountain being dropped on top of this thing didn’t even keep it down.”

Harry drops his legs down to the ground, pushing himself off of Niall with a furious glare, and shouts, “You let yourself get eaten by a fucking dragon to come home a little early?”

“Well to be honest, I didn’t let it happen so much as it just happened and I didn’t really have a choice.” Niall says sheepishly. “It was really strong, Harry. I- I’ve gotten a lot stronger over the last year, but it was still a fucking dragon.”

“You’re unbelievable!” Harry groans, stomping off towards their chambers. He’s irritated, something beyond the foul smell of the dragon saliva itching at his nose that he can’t quite put together yet, and it’s turning his mood foul.

“The thing was practically bigger than this fucking castle!” Niall argues in his defense.

“Then you shouldn’t have been fighting it!” Harry yells, throwing open the door to the room.

“I didn’t get to pick and choose what I did, Harry.” Niall scoffs, closing the door behind him. “I was his servant.”

“You’re never doing that magic again.” Harry growls. “I’m not letting you go back there to fight fucking dragons, while I sit here miserable and feeling like I’m dying.”
“Like it was a fucking picnic for me!” Niall shouts. “You aren’t the only one who was feeling it, and I felt it for a lot longer than you did! Now imagine fighting fucking giants and trolls and a bloody dragon on top of that!”

“Try having every injury, every emotion, and every pain come in at warp speed!” Harry yells. “I didn’t have time to rest because I was experiencing everything you were at twenty-four times the speed that you did! I couldn’t even move for the first four days after you left because I was adjusting to it all!”

“It’s not like I wanted this, Harry.” Niall huffs. “I did this for our people.”

“You almost died!” Harry screams. “You’re our one hope, and you almost died!”

“I didn’t die though.” Niall says softly, stepping forward and stroking his hand down Harry’s tensed arm. “Harry, I didn’t die. Nothing in Sídhe could have stopped me from getting back here to you. Not giants, or trolls, or even a bloody dragon. Oberon himself couldn’t have stopped me. Because I had you here, and there was no way that I was leaving you without a way to defeat the Master.”

“It’s not just about that, Niall.” Harry mutters. “I don’t want to lose you. I don’t want to be without you. This plan of yours, we need to find another way. Trapping him isn’t worth it if you die in the process.”

“Harry-” Niall sighs.

“It’s not worth it, Niall.” Harry says firmly.

“I don’t know what else to do.” Niall whispers. “He’s- God, he’s so much stronger than anything I’ve fought in the last year. Even the fucking dragon could only breathe fire and eat me. He’s ancient and powerful. The only one who could outmatch him is Oberon. I’m no Oberon, Harry. I don’t think I can beat him.”

“Then you’re not going in alone.” Harry decides. “I’m going in with you.”

“Absolutely not.” Niall argues. “You can’t do anything against him, Harry.”

“I don’t care. As long as I’m alive, I will be by your side. Apparently, if I’m not, you get eaten by dragons.” Harry says with a soft smile. “And you should know by now that there’s no point in fighting me on this. I’m going in with you, and that’s settled.”

“Don’t make me port you to Sídhe, Harry.” Niall huffs. “You’re not going in with me. From the beginning, I’ve had to do this myself. If I have anyone else there, then I won’t be able to concentrate fully on the fight. It has to just be me.”

“If you don’t think that you’ll make it anyways, then what’s the difference?” Harry questions.

“I still have a chance.” Niall murmurs. “I’ve spent the last year fighting every kind of monster the fae have to offer. I’ve gotten strong. I’ve learned how to counter the flames of hell, and eternal ice, and the power of the four winds. I’ve learned to fight with both magic and my body. If you’re there though, if any of you are there, then I’ll try to protect you, and that will end up getting me killed.”

“I can hold my own, Niall.” Harry counters.

“Fine.” Niall sighs. “If you can stand against me for five minutes in a fight, then you can come.”
“Niall!” Harry groans.

“Get going.” Niall says firmly. “Down to the sparring area. Five minutes, or else you stay on the surface.”

“And when I do it, you promise that you’ll let me go in with you?” Harry questions.

“You won’t make it thirty seconds.” Niall chuckles. “But sure.”

Liam is bouncing off of the barrier, wincing in pain each time it burns him. His mouth is moving, but Louis can’t hear what he’s saying because the barrier he’s erected blocks out sound. It’s sad, like watching a fly repeatedly launch itself into a bug-zapper. Louis turns his head away after the twentieth time, unable to keep watching Liam do this to himself.

When the stones fly in, Louis shouldn’t find himself surprised, but he does. Liam is standing there panting, scorch marks all over his skin and clothes, in the new entrance he’s created where a wall used to be. Louis raises his hand to create another barrier, but Liam growls out, “Don’t even think about it.”

“Go away, Liam.” Louis sighs, dropping his hand back onto his lap.

“No.” Liam says harshly, stepping through the hole. “I have something to say to you, and I’m not leaving until I do.”

“You’ve done nothing but yell at me for the last fifteen days!” Louis snaps. “What new grievance could you possibly have?”

“Well you did just throw me out of a window.” Liam huffs. “But that’s not why I’m here.”

“I don’t care why you’re here, Liam.” Louis bites out. “I’m done trying to-”

“I’m sorry.” Liam says softly, crouching down in front of Louis. “I-I know that I’ve been horrible to you, and I’m sorry.”

“Wait- What?” Louis says, his whole body going stock-still except for his eyes, which widen considerably.

“I’m sorry.” Liam repeats. “I- I know that you weren’t doing all of this to hurt me. I know that. I’ve always known that. I’m just- I’m scared, okay? I’ve never been this scared before. I always thought I’d live my entire life as a lycan. I never thought that this would happen. But I shouldn’t be taking that out on you, because you didn’t do it to hurt me.”

“I never wanted to hurt you.” Louis whispers.

“I-I’m not ready to forgive you.” Liam murmurs. “But I am ready to start moving on, and I’d like to do it with you, if you’ll still have me.”

“Are you just saying all of this so that you don’t lose your safety net?” Louis asks.

“I’m saying it because I love you, Louis.” Liam sighs. “In spite of everything, I love you, and if there’s one person who can convince me to keep going in this new life, it’s you. I know it’s not going to be easy for either of us, but-”

“I’ll do it.” Louis cuts him off. “I’ll keep training you and feeding you.”
“But will you give me another chance?” Liam asks quietly.

“Suppose you’ll just whinge at me until I do, won’t you?” Louis chuckles. “Go around breaking shit and throwing tantrums like a pup.”

“You wouldn’t let me in.” Liam huffs, pouting just the slightest bit.

“You said the worst thing that you could possibly say to me, Liam.” Louis mutters.

“I didn’t mean it.” Liam says quietly. “I-I know that you weren’t trying to do to me what he did to you. I just said it because I wanted to hurt you like I feel hurt.”

“Mission accomplished.” Louis sighs.

“Is there any way I can make it up to you?” Liam asks.

“Just give me some time.” Louis says with a slight shrug. “I’ll get over it soon. Nothing affects me for too long.”

“Anything I can do to speed that process up?” Liam hums, skating his hand up the inside of Louis’ thigh.

“Oh, now you want to fuck me?” Louis scoffs. “After you’ve ‘seen me in every position with Zayn, and the Master, and others whose names even I don’t know’?”

“I don’t care about any of that, Louis.” Liam murmurs, leaning in closer until he’s on his knees between Louis’ legs. “That wasn’t you.”

“That doesn’t mean that it didn’t happen.” Louis mutters.

“Do you know what memory you project into my head the most?” Liam questions.

“Obviously I don’t.” Louis says with a scowl.

“The night we met.” Liam says, a soft smile that Louis remembers all too well settling on his features. “When you found me sneaking out of the barracks to-”

“To use the portal to get out and look at the moon.” Louis finishes for him. “Because you liked being as close to it as you could.”

“And you grabbed me by the neck, and hauled me to the castle, where you threw me in front of Prince Harry.” Liam chuckles. “I hated you for embarrassing me like that in front of the prince.”

“I know.” Louis laughs. “There was something about you, even then, that I just wanted to piss off. I wanted to watch that perfectly composed little soldier come apart at the seams. But no, you just bowed down, and asked Harry to punish you as he saw fit. Always the model of self-restraint. Drove me mad. I think that’s why Harry decided to keep you on as a part of his guard.”

“So you decided to punish me instead.” Liam hums. “Gave me every shite duty, every horrible job, in an effort to get me to come undone.”

“But you didn’t.” Louis giggles. “Not until you came to my chambers to make your report, and found me bathing.”

“You did that on purpose, didn’t you?” Liam asks. “That’s why the water was still so hot when I climbed in with you.”
“I’ll never tell.” Louis smirks.

“I never would have believed that getting caught sneaking out would have been the best thing that ever happened to me.” Liam says gently, lacing his fingers through Louis’. “But it was. It led me to my mate, even if it took us a few years to figure it out.”

“You.” Louis counters. “My Beast told me that first night that you were mine.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Liam asks.

“Because you weren’t ready yet.” Louis muses. “If you had been, then your Beast would have told you the same thing.”

“Well it’s not here anymore, but some part of me is telling me that you’re still mine, and I’m still yours.” Liam murmurs, leaning in closer and looking up into Louis’ eyes. “So let me be yours, and let me remind you why you’re mine.”

“Come on then.” Harry growls, tightening his grip on Niall’s arms where he has them pulled near to snapping behind Niall’s head. “Just give in.”

“You’ve still got one minute left.” Niall grunts. “And I’ve still got a few tricks up my sleeve.”

He opens a portal, sucking the both of them in, and dumping them out fifty feet above where they were a second before. Without the ground keeping him trapped, he falls loose from Harry’s grasp, letting his wings rip out of his back while Harry plummets downwards.

Niall winces when Harry lands, screaming as several of his bones shatter. Niall feels it too, through the connection, but he doesn’t let his wings stop flapping. He stays suspended in the air until the hourglass empties, and then descends to crouch by Harry’s side. “Cheater.” Harry huffs.

“Do you think the Master will fight fair, Harry?” Niall asks softly, picking the lycan up in his arms and heading inside.

“I’m coming in with you.” Harry mutters wincing as his vertebrae reform themselves. It almost makes Niall drop him because the pain is so severe, but he’s dealt with worse than this over the last year. Having his leg nearly burned off by an ifrit was a lot worse than re-growing his back. He knows from experience.

“You didn’t win, Harry.” Niall sighs, nodding for Calum to open the door to Harry’s chambers as he carries him down the hallway, and passing the werewolf with a murmured, “You’re dismissed for tonight.”

“I didn’t lose either.” Harry argues. “And all you said was that I had to hold my own for five minutes. You didn’t attack me for the last minute, so I held my own.”

“You’re not coming in with me!” Niall yells, dropping Harry down on the bed. “It’s not fucking happening!”

“You don’t get to decide what-” Harry starts to argue.

“Yes, Harry, I do.” Niall cuts him off. “You’re the King. You can’t come down there, because there’s just too much riding on your survival.”
“I don’t want to live if you don’t make it!” Harry growls.

“You have to!” Niall screams. “I can’t do what I need to do if I don’t know that you’re still going to be around after I’m gone. I’m doing this, all of this, to save you!”

“Niall-” Harry whispers.

“I’m doing this to save you.” Niall repeats, choking on the words as he drops to his knees.

“There is no saving me if you’re not still around.” Harry murmurs, leaning over and plucking Niall off the floor to hold him against his chest. “I literally don’t know if the bond would even allow me to survive. What I do know is that I wouldn’t want to. Niall, without you, I’d have nothing left. You’re my entire world.”

“They need you to be the King, Harry.” Niall insists.

“I would never be any good to anyone ever again if I lost you, Niall.” Harry whispers. “A new king could take my place for the people, but I could never recover if I survived and you didn’t.”

“They need you.” Niall repeats.

“And I need you.” Harry says gently. “I’m coming in with you, Niall.”

“I don’t have a choice, do I?” Niall questions.

“No.” Harry confirms. “So let’s stop arguing, and just enjoy the time we have now.”

“God, I missed you so much.” Niall breathes out, gripping tighter to the tattered remains of what’s left of Harry’s shirt. “I never once felt okay in the entire time I was gone.”

“Niall?” Harry asks, his voice gentle and soothing over Niall’s skin.

“Yes?” Niall hums, burying his face in Harry’s neck.

“Why do you smell like Ashton?” Harry questions.

“Oh, because we had loads of sex.” Niall giggles.

“Niall.” Harry growls, gripping tightly onto the fae’s biceps.

“We spent a year together, Harry.” Niall chuckles. “In very close company most of the time. The fae didn’t take the presence of either of us too well, me being a Halfling, and Ash being a lycan. They’re pretty racist in Sídhe, and we were ostracized by most of the fae. So we spent just about every minute together while we were there. We didn’t really have anyone else to spend time with. It’s only natural that I’d smell like him after so long. We never had sex.”

“Did you want to?” Harry asks, knotting his fingers in Niall’s hair and yanking his head back to expose his throat.

“Do you want the real answer, or the comforting one?” Niall asks wickedly.

“The real answer.” Harry replies, spreading his tongue flat and licking heavy stripes up Niall’s exposed throat.

“I called him Harry-Lite, because he looks a little bit like you.” Niall admits. “And I missed you, a lot. We flirted pretty heavily, and once or twice we may have gotten a little too close to losing our
“Good.” Harry hums, licking and sucking and biting methodically over Niall’s neck. He flips them around, pinning Niall underneath him and growls out, “Say it again.”

“The only one I want is you.” Niall murmurs.

“Again.” Harry demands, digging his fingers between the laces of Niall’s jerkin and tearing it open forcefully.

“The only one I want is you.” Niall breathes out, writhing under the sharp bites that Harry starts sinking in over Niall’s chest. They’re painful, but it’s a grounding kind of pain. It reminds him that he’s really back, that this is really Harry on top of him rather than just another of the countless dreams he’s had of this over the last year.

“Again.” Harry orders, leaning back onto his knees to tear away Niall’s trousers as if they were made of tissue, rather than leather.

“The only one I want is you, Harry.” Niall whispers, pulling his mate back down into a searing kiss with one hand, while the other does away with the remains of Harry’s clothes. “Knot me.”

“No. You don’t deserve it right now.” Harry growls, rolling Niall over onto his stomach and lifting him up by the hips so that he’s prostrated for the lycan’s use. Niall spreads his legs farther apart, opening himself up for Harry and twisting his neck to look back. Harry’s eyes are dark, and his fangs are out when he adds, “You go around, rubbing yourself all over someone else, and you think you get to have my knot?”

“Harry, please.” Niall whimpers, groaning when Harry leans down and laps over his rim.

“Why should I?” Harry asks between licks. “What makes you think that I would give you something like that after what you’ve been up to?”

“I need it.” Niall breathes out, fingers clenching in the blankets as Harry starts to open him up on his tongue. He hears Harry moan, knows it’s the result of the sensation being passed through the bond and into him. It’s muted though. Niall can barely feel himself clenching on Harry’s tongue, can barely feel his own hips under Harry’s palms. “It’s fading, Harry. It’s been too long.”

“I know.” Harry mumbles, his hand sliding back and pushing in a finger to substitute for his tongue. Niall tightens around it instinctively, his body doing its best to draw his mate further into himself. Harry’s finger pushes in and out roughly, mercilessly, prodding away at Niall’s prostate and making him shake with the force of it. “But that’s not going to change my mind.”

“Do you want me to fucking beg?” Niall whines. “Because I’ll do it.”

“Do it.” Harry growls, pushing in a second finger alongside the first without ever slowing down his pace.

“Please. Please knot me, Harry.” Niall cries, his body rocking with the force of Harry’s thrusts. “I need it. I need you. Please, please, please knot me.”

“No.” Harry responds, and, as muted as things may be, he can still feel the cocky smirk that tugs at Harry’s lips.

“Maybe I should have slept with Ash then.” Niall grits out. “Let him make me his.”
“Don’t say that.” Harry growls, ripping his fingers free and adjusting his position so that he’s lined up right behind Niall’s hole. He pushes in slowly, and Niall savorsthe drag of it, but refuses to let himself make a sound. Harry loves it when Niall moans, and if he won’t give the fae what he wants, then Niall isn’t going to do that for him. “You’re mine.”

“Prove it then.” Niall challenges him. “Show me why I chose you as my mate. Show me why I’m yours, and you’re mine.”

“I’m not going to knot you just because you’re trying to make me jealous.” Harry snarls, giving a harsh snap of his hips that drives Niall further into the mattress.

“Then do it because we may never have another chance.” Niall pleads, practically sobbing with the desire to renew their bond. He needs it. His whole body is crying out to be properly reunited with Harry’s. He needs more than this, more than just sex. He needs that connection back to its strongest level. If they don’t have much time left, then he wants to spend as much of that time as is possible with their bond at its maximum power.

Harry pulls out of him, flips Niall onto his back, and reenters him, all in one fluid motion that leaves Niall screaming breathlessly into where Harry’s lips are hovering over his own. “No.” Harry says quietly, gripping Niall’s hips and pushing in harder with each thrust.

“Please!” Niall chokes out, wrapping his hands around the back of Harry’s neck to anchor himself.

“Give me the right reason.” Harry growls.

“Because I love you.” Niall breathes out, letting his eyes open to lock with Harry’s. “Because I love you, and you’re mine, and I’m yours.”

“There you go.” Harry smirks, plastering his hips against Niall’s ass and letting his knot unfurl. Niall arches off the bed, cumming in hard streams between them while Harry fills him up. He doesn’t have to say anything when he bares his neck. Harry sinks his teeth in, and the rest of the world drops away, taking their souls to another place and mixing them back together the way they’re supposed to be.

“This is our replacement?” Liam questions, walking through the entrance to the facility. “This is where we’re supposed to live?”

“It’s no Final Bastion.” Louis agrees next to him.

“It’s all we have left.” Harry sighs.

“At least it has electricity.” Niall snorts. “And plumbing. I’ll take that over oil lanterns and fucking chamber pots any day.”

“I’m so sorry that our incredibly ancient and sacred home wasn’t up to your exacting standards.” Liam huffs.

“Relax, Edward Cullen.” Niall chuckles, bumping Liam with his shoulder. “It was a joke. You know that I love Final Bastion. It’s my home now too.”

“He’s right about electricity.” Louis hums. “Humans are basically awful, but they got one thing really right with electricity. Oh, and porn, but that’s another story.”
“Shut up.” Liam mutters while Niall laughs raucously at whatever Louis is talking about.

“They’re just trying to make the best of things.” Harry says quietly, standing by Liam’s side while they watch Niall and Louis run around and look over everything. “I know how you’re feeling, Liam, but we all have to handle this in our own way, and that’s theirs.”

“We fell for some very ridiculous mates.” Liam mumbles.

“Yes, we did.” Harry muses. “They’re good for us though. They’re probably the only people that could pull the two of us out of our own heads. That freedom of spirit that Niall occasionally lets out when he lets his guard down, I need that. I know that it’s similar for you and Louis.”

“He’s not the same.” Liam admits softly. “He tries to be, but the Master broke something in him. I think it’s going to take a very long time to heal.”

“Are you going to help him?” Harry questions, turning away from their mates to look Liam in the eyes.

“I- I think I want to try.” Liam whispers. “If we survive this, that is.”

“Good.” Harry smiles. “Have you given any more thought to the position of Chevalier?”

“I can’t take it.” Liam replies, shaking his head. “The Chevalier needs to be a lycan.”

“I see.” Harry sighs.

“But I have a compromise.” Liam offers.

“What is it?” Harry asks.

“If we live, then make Louis the advisor to the government.” Liam tells him. “I’ll train Luke in the position of Chevalier in exchange, and continue on as acting-Chevalier for as long as it takes him to get a proper handle on it.”

“I’ll think about it.” Harry nods. “I don’t want to lose you permanently, Liam.”

“Well, that’s something that may happen.” Liam says with a shrug. “I don’t know why you keep trying to sort this out before Niall fights the Master.”

Harry grabs Liam by the arm and leads him back outside through the entrance. He looks around to make sure that nobody is listening, and then whispers, “Because he’s not going in alone.”

“What are you saying?” Liam asks, narrowing his eyes because he already has a sneaking suspicion of what Harry is telling him.

“I’m going in with him.” Harry mumbles. “Whatever happens, we’re going in together. I need to know that there’s someone who can teach the new king, should I fall.”

“Your Majesty, you- You can’t!” Liam groans. “We don’t know if the power will pass if you’re turned into a vampire!”

“He wouldn’t have time to turn me.” Harry says, shaking his head. “It’s just going to be him, and us. If Niall falls, then I’ll kill myself to stop the power from passing into his possession, and he wouldn’t be able to turn me if I die first, because he’d still have Niall to deal with. But the point of us going in together is to help keep that from happening. If we fight him as two against one, then hopefully we’ll have the upper hand.”
“Ah, there you two are.” Louis hums, walking out through the entrance with Niall on his back giggling. “We wanted to find you before we left.”

“Where are you going?” Liam asks.

“Niall needs to get a few things.” Louis explains. “Magical preparation for the fight. I know how to help him find them. We won’t be gone too long.”

“Alright.” Harry nods. “But hurry with this. We need to gather the council and form a plan of action for the upcoming fight.”

“We’ll be back soon.” Niall agrees. He gives a small wave of his fingers, and then the two of them disappear in a flash of light that leaves Liam blinking profusely.

“I hate when he does that.” Liam grunts, rubbing at his eyes. “I don’t know how Louis stands it. Our eyesight is more sensitive.”

“It helps knowing when it’s going to happen.” Harry chuckles. “I’ve learned to detect it through the bond.”

“Well warn me next time.” Liam huffs.

“I’d rather not.” Harry hums. “Because when you get caught off guard, that’s when you let the old you out.”

“It’s going to take time to adjust.” Liam mutters. “I’m trying though.”

“And I’m proud of you for trying.” Harry says, his voice as soft as the hand he places on Liam’s shoulder.

“You’re a fool going down in there with him.” Liam sighs.

“I know.” Harry says with a nod. “But I can’t let him go alone.”

“The people are going to need you to help them move on.” Liam argues.

“No, they’re just going to need someone. That someone doesn’t have to be me. Maybe it’s about time that the lycans had a new king.” Harry says quietly. “One who earned the position through worthiness, rather than killing for it.”

“You did earn the position through worthiness.” Liam bites out. “You did what nobody else could, after your father betrayed Yiwarla. You earned your title, Your Majesty.”

“I guess we’ll see if the power believes I’m worthy of it then, won’t we?” Harry asks, turning on his heel and heading back through the entrance. Liam sighs and makes no move to follow him, choosing instead to sit down on the grass and wait for Louis to return.

“This is all of it that I have in stock.” the witch says, sitting down a large hunk of metal. “It’s hard to find it as a naturally occurring substance, but the artificial versions don’t have the same kind of power.”

“It should be enough.” Niall mutters. “I don’t need more than a few pounds.”

“So, what’s a missing pop-star doing in my shop, with a vampire, looking for something like this?”
the witch questions, her eyes lit up in amusement.

“Since when do you ask questions, Kate?” Louis asks back before Niall can respond.

“Since there was something worth asking questions about.” the witch, Kate, says with a wicked grin. “Where’s your boyfriend? The gorgeous one you always come in here with, I mean.”

“I killed him.” Niall cuts in. “How much for all of this?”

“What have you got?” Kate fires back.

“My funds are unlimited.” Niall smirks. “Do you take gold as payment?”

“I’m not opposed.” Kate chuckles. “I’ll take an equal sized lump.”

“Louis, give me your shirt.” Niall orders. Louis scoffs, but takes it off anyways. Niall wads it up in his hands, and gold creeps over the fabric until it’s all one twisted lump.

“Ah, a fae.” Kate says, her eyes widening in surprise.

“A Halfling.” Niall corrects her. “Will this suffice?”

“More than.” Kate grins. “It should have some very interesting qualities.”

“Whatever you say.” Niall shrugs, picking up his own treasure and walking out with Louis following behind. There’s wind whipping around on the street, but Louis’ skin is colder than it, so he doesn’t feel anything, even with his exposed chest.

“Does my gold actually have different properties?” Niall asks as they walk towards a deserted alley to open up a portal.

“I haven’t cast any spells with it, so I don’t really know.” Louis admits. “Presumably, gold created by a leprechaun or a Halfling would be pure, which makes it stronger than any type of alloy that occurs in nature. Since it’s magically created, it might have different magical properties. I’d have to do some research on it to be sure.”

“Louis, is this wind weird to you?” Niall asks, shoving his bundle into a bag on his shoulder.

“Actually, now that you mention it-” Louis says, letting his sixth sense, his magical perception, take over. “It’s magic. This isn’t natural.”

“What should we-” Niall starts to ask, but he’s cut off by a high pitched scream from someone nearby. They race around the corner, back towards the shop, just in time to see Kate get thrown through a window. She’s already coated in blood, one of her arms missing, and they find out why a second later when someone steps out through the broken window.

She tenses, looking directly at Louis, and snarls, “Louis!”

“Eleanor, stop!” Louis cries, recognizing her immediately. He darts forward and grips her by the shoulders. She claws at him harshly, but Louis refuses to relinquish his grip until she lifts her legs up and kicks them into his stomach. He slides back a few feet, but before he can try to restrain her again, a clenched fist hits her in the back of the head and she crumples to the ground. Niall raises a hand, golden sword gleaming in the low lamplight. Louis knows that it’s too late, but he cries out all the same. “Niall, no!”

She’s ash before the words are out of Louis’ mouth. “Is she alive?” Niall asks, wiping his hand on
his clothes. “Louis! Is she alive?”

It takes him a moment to realize that Niall means Kate, and not Eleanor. He listens for a heartbeat, but the only one in the immediate vicinity is Niall’s. “No.” Louis informs him.

“You tried to stop me. Why?” Niall asks.

“She- She wasn’t one of the bad ones.” Louis whispers. “If she was like this, then there must be a reason.”

“Fuck!” Niall grunts, dropping down to one knee and clutching his chest with one hand.

“What is it?” Louis asks, rushing over to the Halfling’s side.

“He’s here.” Niall whispers. “He’s in London. And he has an army. People are dying in scores. I can feel it.”

“What?” Louis asks, focusing his ears again. He can hear it now. The air is thick with screams from the north. “This- This isn’t- It wasn’t supposed to happen yet.”

“Well it is.” Niall mutters. “Warn Harry. The Lycans are going to war.”

Louis doesn’t have a chance to respond before he’s being transported back through a portal, getting dumped out on the grass outside of the facility. There’s activity everywhere, lycans pouring out through the doors and taking off into the night in full battle gear. “Liam!” Louis cries out, climbing onto his feet. “Liam!”

“London is under attack.” Liam says, appearing at Louis’ side in his leather armor.

“I know.” Louis says quickly. “How do you know about it?”

“MI-Zero called.” Liam informs him. “Harry is already heading to Final Bastion. He’ll meet up with Niall when he draws him there because they’ve decided to go in together. The rest of us are heading into London to delay the army that the Master has with him.”

“Shit!” Louis hisses, realizing that he’s been manipulated by Niall. It was a masterful plan, really. He’s smarter than Louis gives him credit for.

“What?” Liam questions.

“Grab Luke and Ashton. We have to go to Final Bastion.” Louis tells him. “We don’t have time for you to ask. Just do it.”

Right about now, Niall really wishes that he had the ability to revert vampires through proximity. He has a plan for this situation, but he’s not ready to let it loose yet. It’s going to use up a lot of energy, and his reserves only go so deep. Instead he has to focus on timing, lashing out with his swords whenever one tries to strike at him. With six enemies that he can’t sense properly, it’s proving quite difficult.

He takes the hand off of one vampire, but another one catches him around the waist while he’s opened up. They roll on the ground, and Niall presses his hand against the girl’s face, pushing his power into her to turn her into a statue, while he kicks out with his boot to catch another one in the chest that’s trying to take advantage of his vulnerability. He leaps into the air, ripping off his jerkin
to let his wings loose, but making sure not to lose his bag. He needs the maneuverability to stand a chance against this group.

They’re different than whenever he and Louis would practice sparring while Ashton and Luke slept. Something is making them attack like animals, rather than like warriors. They have no fear though. Watching their comrades fall doesn’t deter them in the slightest. He’s lost track of how many he’s killed since he sent Louis back, but every time he kills one, another shows up. They seem to be coming for him specifically, so he takes advantage of that, and speeds towards Hyde Park. It should be mostly abandoned by now, so it’s the perfect place to lure his attackers.

They follow him with a vengeance, and he sees several new clouds of mist join the ones trailing behind him. Good. The more there are that are focusing on him, the less of them there are to attack the humans. Until the lycan army, or MI-Zero, gets here, he’s on his own. He’s strong, but he’s still only one person.

He spots what he’s looking for, and dives. The water is cold, but Niall doesn’t have time to register the shock. His power rushes out from him, turning the water of Tyburn Brook into thick liquid gold. He explodes back out, using the liquid gold like a tidal wave that he crashes down on the vampires that have reformed on the shore. He catches three of them, and forces the gold down their throats to stop them from transforming back into mist. As long as he can plant something under his control on them, they can’t change forms. He’d prefer to be working with sand, but he has limited options here.

“You want me?” Niall roars into the night. “Come fucking get me!”

The ones that are left lunge for him, and he tears them to pieces with his swords. He tries to focus on hardening the water, on freezing it back to a solid state, but it takes too much effort when he’s still fighting. He just needs a second. Just one second of reprieve, and he’ll have the upper hand.

The vampires must know that though. He can feel them coming, a tempest of death rushing towards him from every direction. Dozens start coming at him from out of the shadows, and Niall can’t even catch his breath between swings of his sword. His fae side is threatening to overwhelm him, railing against its bonds, but Niall refuses to let it loose. It’s uncontrollable, and Niall’s control is the only thing that’ll keep him standing until some backup arrives.

He pushes himself harder, speeding up his swings until they’re moving so fast that even he can barely track them. He can’t even see through the cloud of ash, but he doesn’t need to. There are so many coming at him that he’s slicing through multiple vampires with every swing of either of his swords.

He takes a set of claws to his right shoulder, and then another to his leg because he’s not getting enough time to recover. He can’t draw in a breath, can’t see through the sweat pouring into his eyes from his forehead. His chest is heaving, begging for a proper lungful of air, but his enemies refuse to allow him that courtesy. He has to make physical contact in order to turn one of them to gold, and he can’t focus enough to make the liquid into a proper shield, so when he gets knocked onto his back, he realizes that he has no options left. He’s going to die and leave London unprotected.

A howl pushes through the haze in his mind, and the heavy weight on top of his chest is gone. It’s chaos around him, wolves and lycans pouring into the park like a flood loose from a dam. He did it. He held out long enough to let the lycans get here. Louis must have worked quickly, because it can’t have been more than an hour since he packed Louis off, if the path of the moon is anything to go by.

“You Majesty.” comes a familiar voice in his ear as a pair of hands lifts him up off of the ground.
“Bressie.” Niall breathes out a sigh of relief.

“You need to go.” Bressie says roughly. “The Master will intervene now that we’ve gotten here. Go back to Final Bastion and finish this.”

“I can help.” Niall grunts, flapping his wings and launching himself into the sky. Oberon had taught him this spell during the beginning of the year that he’d been gone, but he’d never had the energy to perform it properly. So he’s waited, storing every bit of energy that he could. So much, in fact, that his fae side had to be restrained with Oberon’s help. He’d been warned not to keep this level of energy inside of him for too long, that it’ll start eating through his life span if he does, but it’s worth it.

He gets himself high above the park, and then he breaks the seal on his reserves. Energy floods through him, humming so strong that his skin looks like it’s glowing. He murmurs the words that Oberon had taught him, and the effect is instantaneous. Light bursts out of him, blazing like a sun over the center of London. That’s exactly what he’s going for. The spell mimics all of the properties of sunlight, including killing vampires.

The ground below him erupts with hundreds of gut-wrenching screams, but the sounds of them quickly fades in the wake of an earth shattering howl from the lycans. As the spell fades, he looks down to find the lycans standing in a sea of ash. Niall knows that he’s just committed genocide, even if it was in the name of the greater good. He doesn’t get a chance to grieve for them, or his own soul, before a horribly familiar voice, the one from his nightmares, says, “Excellent. Looks like you’ve worn yourself down enough to pose me no problems.”

Niall doesn’t think. He just lets the transformation take over as much as he can before it overwhelms him, and takes off towards Final Bastion, hoping that what’s left of his energy is enough to finish this.

He’s coming. Harry can feel it. Niall is coming at him, and fast. His heart is practically beating out of his chest. He’d felt Niall’s fear, his guilt, only a moment ago. He’d felt the attacks that had landed Niall on his back, seen flashes of the vampires that were overwhelming him, and cursed himself for being unable to do anything.

He’s standing around the entrance to the portal, just waiting. He’s impotent. Powerless. He just has to wait until Niall arrives, so that they can finish this. Until then, he can do nothing.

“Harry!” screams a familiar voice, and the King whips his head around to find Louis, Liam, Ashton, and Luke all running towards him. A bright light flashes, dropping Niall down between Harry and the group, and Louis yells, “Niall! Don’t do it!”

“I’m sorry.” Niall whispers, reaching into a bag at his side and pulling out a hunk of golden metal. He flattens it in the blink of an eye, and splits it into five bands. One rockets at Harry, and wraps itself around his neck before he can even react. The same thing happens to the others, and they drop to their knees just like Harry does.

It’s gold, but it’s having the same effect as silver. Harry reaches up to try and tug it off, but it burns to the touch, and he can’t pull it off. “What are you doing?” Harry gasps out.

“I can’t let any of you die. This is my mission, and I can’t finish it unless I know that you’re all going to survive.” Niall mutters. “Stay out of sight. He’s after me, so he shouldn’t notice any of you at all if I can draw him into the portal as soon as he gets here.”
“You promised!” Harry cries, tugging at his collar despite the burn.


With that, he lifts Harry up and throws him over towards the other four. Harry has no option but to watch as Niall moves in front of the portal and stands there, unmasking it to the world. A cloud of mist descends at him, and he jumps inside, followed by what can only be the Master. Harry can hear himself screaming, but it sounds like it’s coming from far away.

A hand grips around his shoulder, and he’s pulled against a hard chest while he tries to claw his way towards where his mate disappeared. “Stop!” comes a hard voice in his ear. “Harry, stop! There’s nothing you can do!”

“He’s going to die!” Harry sobs, choking on the words.

“I know.” Louis whispers. “He’s doing what he thinks is right. He’s a stupid fuck for this, but he’s just doing what he has to.”

“You knew!” Harry grits out, whirling around and punching Louis square in the jaw. “You knew what he was doing!”

“I knew that he never planned on making it out of this fight alive.” Louis admits. “But I didn’t know about this part.”

“What is this?” Harry asks, pointing to the collars.

“Electrum.” Louis answers. “It’s an alloy, made mostly of gold, but it’s also about twenty-five percent silver. He told me that he’d heard about it in Sidhe, and he wanted it to use as a weapon against the Master. I didn’t know that you were supposed to be going in there with him until Liam told me. I only realized the truth when it was too late.”

“Why?” Harry asks, dropping to the ground and punching at the grass. “Why didn’t he let me go in with him?”

“Because he knows that his best chance is going in alone.” Luke says softly.

“Because you’re our King, and he thinks that we need you more than he does.” Ashton adds.

“Because he loves you.” Liam says, leaning down and placing his hand on Harry’s shoulder. “You’re the only person he has left that he truly loves, and he’d do anything to save you.”

“Stupid fucking fairy.” Harry chokes out, tears pouring down his cheeks.

“That’s my kid you’re talking about. Watch it, lycan.” says a rough voice off to his side.

“You!” Louis snarls.

“Don’t make me put a bullet in you, vampire.” Bobby scoffs, drawing his sidearm. “I’m here to help.”

“Why aren’t you in London?” Liam asks.

“Because I know my son, and I know how he thinks.” Bobby says quietly. “He said that he needed a place for the lycans to go in case he failed to kill the Master, and could only trap him. I figured that meant he had some way of trapping the Master in Final Bastion. When the Master attacked, I
figured that Niall would draw him here, so I headed straight over. Do you want me to let you out of those collars, or not?”

“Fuck!” Niall screams, rolling out of the way of the wall of hellfire that the Master launches at him. It catches his leg, and he opens a portal to Sídhe that dumps healing water on top of it. It’s the only substance that can put out the black flames of hell.

“I see you’ve been taught well by that doddering old fool, Oberon.” the Master sneers.

“Fuck you!” Niall snarls, lifting spears of golden sand and hurling them at the Master. “You don’t get to say his name!”

“You would rather I talk about your mate then?” the Master hums, bursting into mist before the spears can make contact. “About how I’m going to kill him with your power?”

“You’re not making it out of here, Nosferatu.” Niall says with a mirthless laugh, raising a barrier of gold around himself so as to not be caught off guard. “This is it for you. I’m ending you here. Tonight.”

“You don’t stand a chance.” he whispers, his voice right next to Niall’s ear. Niall whirls around with his blades singing as they slice through the air. There’s nothing there when he finishes moving. “You’re too weak. Maybe if you had not wasted your power trying to save the wolves’ army, then you would have been able to avenge your child. But you have no such chance anymore.”

“Come out and fight me!” Niall yells, his anger turning white hot at the mention of his child.

“Why not fight me again?” says another voice behind him. Niall lunges at the source, but stops dead in his tracks when he sees him.

“No!” Niall growls. “I killed you!”

“And yet, here I am.” Zayn smirks. “Looks like you can’t do anything right. You steal my mate, just to abandon him and get him killed. You make a child together, and then kill it. You defend London and make a deal with the humans, only to have it rendered useless when the Master destroys them all after he captures you. You can’t do one single thing right. How did you ever think you could be King?”

“Shut up!” Niall screams, launching tendrils of sand at Zayn. They go through him like he’s made of water, not affecting him in the slightest as he stands there with that wicked grin that’s been haunting Niall since the night he killed him. “Just die already!”

“I already did.” Zayn says, his entire body turning a gleaming golden color and freezing in place where Niall had left him all those nights ago.

It’s in his head. It’s all in his head. Zayn is dead. The Master must be using some kind of magic to mess with him. Niall drops his swords, clasping his hands together and using the mental-dispel ability that Oberon had taught him. It’s like a sheet is lifted off of his brain, and he opens his eyes to find himself cocooned in gold.

He bursts out of it, feeling the familiar sting of venom burning through his veins. The Master must have caught and just barely bit him when he’d whispered in Niall’s ear, and his body had instinctively protected him while the Master’s spell worked against him.
“Impressive.” the Master laughs, striding towards him with a black flame in both hands. “That power is really something. I’ll do magnificent things with it.”

“You’ll die at the hands of it!” Niall growls, launching a wave of gold at him.

Of course the Master transforms again, but Niall can’t track him, because something slams into his side and sends him flying through the air and into the wall. His shoulder fractures when he hits it, but Niall uses his other hand to launch a counter attack.

It’s not quick enough though. A hand wraps around his throat before he can even hit the ground. Niall opens his eyes, and his heart clenches in his chest. The one holding him isn’t the Master. Those blue eyes are familiar, that wicked smirk a part of his daily life now, and he can’t believe that he didn’t see this coming.

“All me, Master.” Louis laughs, dark and hollow, completely unlike the one he’d used to lull Niall into a sense of false security. “You need not waste your time with this insect.”

“It’s about time you’ve returned, Louis.” the Master scoffs. “Your mission was a success, I take it?”

“They’re all dead.” Louis grins, holding up a bloodied hand. “The father let me out first, and I slayed all of them. I’d have liked to take my time, especially with the human, but you know how it goes.”

“Traitor!” Niall snarls.

“Double-agent actually.” Louis smirks. “I never betrayed my Master, and my only loyalty was to him.”

“Liam!” Niall chokes out around the hand that tightens on his throat.

“Never mattered.” Louis shrugs. “Nothing matters except the Master’s plan.”

“You’ve done well, Louis.” the Master muses, dusting himself off. “Do as you like to him, as your reward, but make it quick. I want to finish off London, and the lycans, by sunrise. I’ve waited long enough to end this war.”

“Thank you, Master.” Louis nods. He turns back to Niall, and pushes his lips against the fae’s. “Shut up, shut up, shut up!”

The words echo inside Niall’s head, and he tastes the slick, metallic bitterness of blood on Louis’ tongue. “Play along. We have a plan, but it’s going to need the element of surprise.” Louis says inside his head. “Just do as I tell you, and we may all make it out of this, you stupid cunt. Now struggle, but not hard enough to get away from me.”

Niall pushes his hands against Louis’ chest, ignoring the vampire’s words and fighting for his life. Louis flips him around and pins him to the ground, biting into Niall’s bare chest and making him scream. He writhes, but Louis’ grip is strong and he gets nowhere. “Good. I like it when they don’t go willingly.” Louis sneers, rolling Niall onto his stomach. “And after all that I’ve put up with over the last few weeks, this is going to be one hell of a fuck.”

“Don’t kill him.” the Master says sternly, watching as Louis wraps his hand around the top of Niall’s trousers.

“When I give the signal, go for him with everything you have.” Louis says inside Niall’s head,
while outside he says, “Of course not, Master. Would you like to share him?”

“Might as well.” the Master shrugs, taking a step towards where Niall is trying to break free of Louis’ grip, thrashing as hard as he can. “He is awfully beautiful, my little weapon.”

“I’ll kill you!” Niall screams.

“Now!” Louis cries out inside his mind, jumping off of Niall and bursting into mist as the coliseum explodes at intervals around the circular wall. Ashton, Luke, Liam, and Harry all fly through the new holes in the stone. Niall is the first one to reach him though, planting his fist against the Master’s temple with a satisfying cracking sound.

Before he hits the ground, the Master transforms. He rises up into the air, but something comes tumbling out of it. Louis is locked with him, fangs sunk into the Master’s neck, as the Master mirrors the action on the other side. They land on the ground hard, Louis underneath, but Luke and Ashton dive forward and claw into the Master’s back.

He transforms again, but this time he only makes it a few meters into the air before he reforms with Liam on his back, driving him down. Harry is waiting underneath them, and his claws tear into the Master’s stomach before he throws him to the ground with a primal howl. He dives forward, teeth bared, but the Master is gone before he can make contact again, and he smashes his face into the ground.

He reappears above Harry, and Niall lunges at him. He’s stopped before he ever gets there, some telekinetic force grabbing ahold of him and slamming him into the wall. Out of the corner of his eyes, he sees the same thing happen to Louis, Luke, Ashton, and Liam. He struggles against it, but he can’t even breathe through the crushing force.

“You thought the six of you would be enough?” the Master roars, picking Harry up by his hair and holding him suspended in the air. “You thought that you pitiful little weaklings would be enough to kill me? I am darkness! I am power! You could never hope to succeed against me!”

“Let go of my son-in-law, you fucking monster!” comes a shout, before multiple loud popping sounds break the night. Niall turns his head just in time to watch Bobby step out from one of the holes in the wall, gun firing rapidly with no fear in its owner’s eyes. “You can’t have him, or my son!”

The Master moves as quick as lightning, dropping Harry from his grasp and speeding towards Bobby. The man never stands a chance, and his head is torn from his body before Harry even hits the ground.

“Da!” Niall screams, his vision going dark as the fae side starts to take over.

“I’m finished with this little game.” the Master snarls, tossing Niall’s father’s head to the side carelessly as he stalks towards the Halfling. “This ends now.”

He stands in front of Niall, and pulls something out of the air. A gleaming iron dagger, wickedly curved, and lethally sharp. He plunges it into Niall’s stomach, and lets loose the power that’s holding him to the wall. “I was going to make it quick, for the sake of saving time, but now you’re going to watch as I tear your mate apart.” he growls, kicking Niall in the shoulder so that he slumps back against the wall.

“Do you mean me?” comes a guttural snarl behind the Master. Before he can turn around, Harry sinks his teeth into the Master’s neck and forces him to his knees. He reaches forward over the
fallen vampire and pulls out the dagger from Niall’s stomach, throwing it to the side.

“Turn him into gold!” Louis screams. “Do it now!”

Niall doesn’t do that though. Instead, he uses what power he has left to cocoon the Master in sand, leaving only his head and neck free. “You made me kill my child!” Niall screams, planting a hard punch to the Master’s jaw, and another and another as he screams, “You killed my Da! You killed the witch, and Jesy, and Perrie!”

“If you’d like the full list, it’s going to take a long time.” the Master spits out with a mouthful of blood. “If you’re going to kill me, Halfling, then do it. But you’ll kill every vampire on the planet. You’ll kill more than even I have. Millions.”

“I’m not like you.” Niall growls, forcing the gold up and over his head when Harry lets him go. “I’m not going to kill him. I can’t murder on that scale.”

“Niall, you have to!” Harry says desperately. “He’ll escape from this eventually!”

“I know.” Niall nods. “I need you, Luke, and Ashton to lend me some energy.”

“Why?” Harry questions, even as he reaches out and latches onto Niall’s arm.

“Because I have a plan.” Niall tells him. “I’m sending him away from here, so that he’ll never be able to come back.”

“How?” Luke asks as he and Ashton grab onto Niall’s shoulders. The pull is strong, and Niall regrets taking this much from them, but he needs it.

“I’m putting him somewhere that he’ll never be able to get back here from.” Niall answers. “But I may not come back from it either.”

“Niall-” Harry chokes out.

“It’s the only way, Harry.” Niall cuts him off, shaking his head. “I’ll do everything that I can to get back, but I don’t know how my body is going to react.”

“Don’t die.” Harry whispers, pulling Niall into a searing kiss. Niall gives himself over to it, cries into where their lips meet, because he thought he’d already done his goodbyes. They draw back, just an inch, and Harry’s eyes lock with Niall’s as he pleads, “Come back to me.”

“I’ll try, Fuzzy.” Niall murmurs, placing his hand on the Master’s cocoon. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” Harry says gently, pecking one more kiss against Niall’s lips before the Halfling lets himself and his cargo get sucked into a portal.

It’s cold. Beyond cold. That’s the only thing that Niall can register when they pop out in the infinite blackness. The Earth looks beautiful below them, and Niall appreciates it as his final sight before he closes his eyes and focuses what’s left of his power into his hands. He launches the Master away with all of it, propelling him through the emptiness of space like a bullet, a meteor of solid gold.

Even if he ever manages to break free of it, he won’t be able to return to the Earth. The sun will guard them for eternity, or at least until they’ve all gone. He’s placed them outside of the Earth’s gravitational pull, making sure that there’s nothing that could pull the Master back in. It’s taken its toll though. The power required to open a portal further away than the moon, not to mention to
launch the Master off in the gold, combined with the screaming pain of being so far from Harry - it’s too much.

Niall doesn’t have enough to get back, so he lets his eyes drift back towards the Earth in his final seconds. His body is durable, giving him a little longer than a human would have, but he begins to lose consciousness after about fifteen seconds, and gives in to it just after he feels something tug at his waist. He hopes Harry can feel how sorry he is through the bond.

“When one of you idiots let him do this?” Oberon sighs, stepping out of a portal just as Harry starts to collapse from the emptiness forming in his chest.

“Niall!” Harry breathes out, stumbling forward and kneeling next to where Oberon places the Halfling’s body on the ground. “Please! Please come back!”

“Move!” Oberon orders, pushing Harry back and crouching over Niall’s body. His hands flare brightly, pushing light into Niall’s body.

“Please, you have to save him!” Harry begs.

“What do you think I’m doing, my child?” Oberon asks softly, looking at Harry with sad eyes. “I can’t let him die. Not after all the work I’ve put into training him. He’s the only worthy disciple I’ve had in two thousand years.”

“Fuck you, Obi.” Niall chokes out, coughing harshly and rolling onto his side. “You just don’t want to lose your best pest controller.”

“Fighting dragons is so bothersome when I have to do it myself.” Oberon laughs.

“Niall!” Harry whimpers, crawling forward and taking Niall’s hand in his own. “You’re alive!”

“Looks that way.” Niall says weakly. “Guess I really am lucky.”

“You fucking idiot.” Harry sobs. “I love you so fucking much!”

“Love you too, werewolf.” Niall says with a soft smile before he slips into sleep. Harry panics for a moment, but he can feel Niall’s heart beating in his own chest, and he relaxes.

“Thank you, Your Majesty.” Harry says quietly, looking up at Oberon.

“No formalities.” Oberon chuckles, standing back up. “He should be fine. He’ll need rest, but he’ll recover.”

“How did you know?” Harry asks. “How did you know what he’d do? How did you know where to find him?”

“I know him.” Oberon shrugs. “I knew that he wouldn’t be able to bring himself to kill the Master if it meant committing a worldwide genocide.”

“Don’t let him fool you.” Ashton scoffs. “He can predict the future.”

“That I can.” Oberon laughs. “Don’t name him Niall, Ashton. That’s just asking for trouble.”

“What are you-” Luke starts, but Ashton cuts him off with a yelp, grasping at his stomach.
“Well, fuck!” Ashton groans.

“Not yet, but soon.” Oberon assures him. “Around the same time as this one.”

He points down at Harry, and the king feels himself blush deeply. “I- What?” he stammers.

“They’ll be twins.” Oberon grins. “And I thank you for the honor. The world can always use another Oberon.”

“I am not naming one after you.” Harry huffs.

“Niall refuses to call them anything different. It’s Oberon and Robert.” Oberon smirks. “You give in after arguing for three days.”

“Never.” Harry grumbles.

“We’ll see.” Oberon hums.

“Any advice for us?” Louis asks. “Since you’re just doling it out.”

“Yes.” Oberon nods. “Louis, don’t make the joke about Bobby that pops into your head on your first day as advisor. You’ll be shot four times and Niall’s mother will cut out your tongue. You recover, but then she tells Niall, and he leaves you in the arctic during the middle of the day and you have to swim back. Plus, it’s just in really bad taste.”

“Alright then.” Louis snorts.

“Liam, don’t give in to your doubts. Listen to Lux. It will keep you from a world of pain.” Oberon smiles. “She will save you, if you let her. Oh, and watch out for her right hook. She fights like her mother.”

“Should you be telling us all of this?” Louis questions.

“It won’t change anything.” Oberon chuckles. “None of this information will alter your lives just by knowing it.”

“You didn’t tell me anything.” Luke says quietly.

“That’s because you have an important choice to make soon, and that decision will forever change your path. I can’t tell you which way is right.” Oberon explains. “The only thing I can tell you is this; don’t make your choice based on what other people want from you. Choose your own destiny. You can be a great man, but only if you choose for yourself to be one.”

“Shut up, Obi.” Niall mumbles, turning over in Harry’s arms, obviously still asleep. “Just five more minutes. I’m so tired.”

“I’ll take that as my cue to exit.” Oberon laughs. “I’ll see you all again at the ceremony. Until then, goodbye.”

“What ceremony?” Liam asks, but Oberon disappears before he can answer. He probably wouldn’t have anyways.

Harry is okay with that. He’d rather find out his future for himself, with the fae sleeping in his arms, one day at a time.

“Shut up!” Niall growls, stepping away from the shattered shards of the mirror that he’d smashed only a minute before. “I look fucking stupid as hell in this.”


“Has he been fed recently?” Niall asks Luke, narrowing his eyes suspiciously at the vampire eyeing him up from the couch.

“I was talking about you being sexy, not a meal.” Louis snorts. “Got Liam for that now.”

“Let him breathe.” Ashton huffs, shooing the other two out the door until it’s just Niall and him left in the room. He turns back after the door is closed and asks, “Better?”

“Much.” Niall nods, dropping down on the couch and dragging in a deep breath. “Why did you let them do this?”

“I did everything I could to stop it.” Ashton chuckles, taking a seat next to Niall and throwing his legs over the Halfling’s lap. “You know how Liam is. Once we all knew that you were going to survive, he started putting the plans in motion. If you hadn’t slept for four days straight, maybe you could have stopped it.”

“Yeah, that was totally my fault.” Niall scoffs. “Didn’t have anything at all to do with the fact that I died or anything.”

“You didn’t die.” Ashton laughs.

“I basically did though.” Niall mutters. “I don’t remember a thing from the last four days. When I was in the coma, I could think and feel, but now- Now I’m just missing those four days. It’s like I was out in space one second, and I blinked, and then I was in the bed with you five arse-holes crawling all over me as soon as I opened my eyes.”

“Stop that.” Ashton murmurs, slinging an arm over Niall’s shoulder and dragging him down until his head is nestled against the lycan’s chest. “Stop acting like a dick just because you’re nervous.”

“Why does this have to be such a big thing?” Niall sighs. “I feel like shit. I’ve been awake for three hours, and now I have to do this?”

“It’s not for you.” Ashton says gently, combing his hands through Niall’s fringe. “I know that sounds awful, considering, but it isn’t about you or King Harry. It’s about the people. We’ve spent our entire lives mired in fear and pain and duty. We’re free of that now, and we need something big to mark the occasion. We need something to signify the end of one era, and the start of another. And I know that you’re going to hate it, but you’re just going to have to get over that, because you’re a king now. Kings have to do shit they hate sometimes.”

“I know.” Niall huffs. “I just wish that I’d had more time to prepare for it. It’s not fair of them to ambush me with this.”

“Liam was pretty sure that you’d try to port out if we gave you too long.” Ashton giggles. “That’s why he had the three of us watching you.”

“That’s not a half bad idea.” Niall muses. “Let’s go fight some trolls or something. The others will never even know we left.”
“Like you’ve ever fought a troll without destroying what you’re wearing.” Ashton snorts. “And that outfit is a bit too important to let you get it torn to pieces and covered in mud, blood, and who fucking knows what else.”

“It’s so ugly.” Niall whines.

“It’s tradition.” Ashton counters. “And you only have to wear it through the ceremony. After that you can get back into your flowy silk pajama things.”

“I don’t know. I kind of like the jerkin and leather pants.” Niall says thoughtfully. “Harry can never stop staring at my arms and my arse when I wear those.”

“Whatever works for you, I guess.” Ashton grins.

“I’m glad you sent the other two away.” Niall admits. “It’s easier just having you here for this. Since Harry can’t be here, that is.”

“Nobody knows you the way I do.” Ashton hums.

“Ass.” Niall huffs.

“I liked your music.” Ashton says with a shrug that does nothing to dislodge Niall from his shoulder. “Not that I have a lot to compare it to.”

“Well, I guess lycans will get exposed to a lot of things now that they didn’t have time for before.” Niall replies. “There’s a whole world of things out there that you can explore now that the war is over.”

“I’ve been thinking about learning to play the drums.” Ashton chuckles. “I like the idea of hitting things with sticks and actually making something out of it besides a mess.”

“Luke will probably start up on me about those guitar lessons again.” Niall says with a soft smile. “And Harry too.”

“But first, we have to go do this part.” Ashton points out.

“I guess.” Niall grunts, lifting himself back off of Ashton. “Can’t wait until the feast. Haven’t had real liquor in ages. That fairy wine was too weak to even give me a buzz.”

“I guess this officially marks the end of our professional involvement.” Ashton hums, standing up. “You won’t need me as an attendant when you’re the king.”

“Good.” Niall smirks. “I was getting tired of you always butting into my business with that excuse.”

“I was only fulfilling my duty, Your Majesty.” Ashton returns with a shit eating grin. “I’ll be glad to have you out of my hair.”

“Better get going then.” Niall says lightly, dragging Ashton in for a hug. “You’ve got your place in the ceremony as much as I do.”

“Oh yes, lining the path with the rest of the King’s Guard. How thrilling.” Ashton says dryly.

“Just be glad you aren’t the main focus.” Niall laughs. “Let’s go. Liam’s head will explode if we’re late.”
“Don’t forget to do the salute.” Ashton reminds him before walking out through the door.

Niall takes a minute to himself for the first time since he woke up, and looks at himself in the other mirror that he didn’t break. The outfit is ridiculous, like something out of a medieval fantasy. There’s lace trimming on every seam, and ruffles underneath a collar that goes up to his chin, and a fucking fur cape that drags on the ground behind him whenever he moves. He knows that it’s a traditional outfit that dates back ages, but he just thinks that he looks like a pompous twat. The things you do for love.

He steps out of the room to find Louis waiting in the hall for him with a wide grin. “I know you don’t believe me, but you really do look good.” he hums.


“It’s not about the outfit.” Louis shrugs. “You look lighter.”

“I feel lighter.” Niall admits. “I can’t take back the things that I’ve done, the lives that I’ve ended, but it’s- It’s-”

“Freeing.” Louis finishes for him. “Not having him around anymore. I know. We’re all feeling it, but I think it’s a bit more intense for you and me in particular.”

“It doesn’t feel like it’s over for me.” Niall confesses as they make their way through the empty halls. “You guys have had days to adjust to it, but for me, it was just a few hours ago. I’m still coming down from it.”

“I’m sorry.” Louis tells him, much to Niall’s surprise. “I tried to convince Harry and Liam that we shouldn’t be doing this so soon after you woke up, but-”

“It’s not for me.” Niall echoes Ashton’s earlier statement. “It’s fine. It could be worse.”

“It could.” Louis nods. “Just try and look happy for them. Later, we can get pissed and you can bitch all you like about the stupid outfit while we burn it.”

“You’ve got yourself a deal.” Niall grins, stopping at the doors that lead out of the facility and towards the ceremony. “I hadn’t said it yet, but I’m sorry too.”

“Why?” Louis asks.

“Because- Because I thought that you’d really turned against me down in the arena.” Niall confesses. “I lost my faith in you, and I’m sorry for that.”

“It’s alright.” Louis smiles. “We both still have a long way to go to repent for our pasts. I don’t exactly inspire confidence and trust.”


“Back at you, Sunshine.” Louis laughs. “Now stop getting soppy, and put on a brave face for the crowd out there. They can’t see you as a nervous wreck, or else this whole thing kind of falls apart.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Niall waves him off. “How long does this whole thing take, anyways?”

“Not long. I promise.” Louis chuckles. “Harry is already making his speech, and then you’ll do your little walk down the path, say ‘I do’ a few times, and it’ll be over. You’ll probably want to say
something tonight at the feast, but you won’t be expected to do it right now unless you want to.”

“Might as well get all of it out of the way, right?” Niall sighs. “Then maybe some booze and a bonfire can turn this day around.”

“I guess you’ll be staying behind with Liam and I during the hunt, too, huh?” Louis asks.

“I’ll stay behind, yeah. Harry tried to get me to kill a deer in Sídhe. I threw him into the middle of the lake.” Niall remembers. “He came out looking like a drowned puppy. I felt kind of bad afterwards. Especially when he still had to go hunt down and butcher dinner after that.”

“He should have seen that coming.” Louis snorts. “Creature of life and all that. Alright, sounds like Harry’s speech is winding down. Are you ready?”

“As I’ll ever be.” Niall nods. Louis gives him a pat on the back, and makes his way back through a side door to join the crowd.

Niall has to make the walk alone. Except, he’s not really alone. He’s never alone now. Even though Harry isn’t next to him, Niall can feel him there. He can feel the pride and happiness radiating off of him, can feel the excitement and the relief swirling in his chest, and it feels good. It feels right. Harry feeling truly joyful is something that Niall will never get enough of, never get tired of the way that it fills him from head to toe, warming him from the inside out.

He hears his cue, the one that Liam had drilled into his head relentlessly, and throws open the doors, letting Harry’s emotions fill him up to take away his nervous anxiety. A wide smile stretches his lips when the crowd erupts at the sight of him. Ashton and Luke are the first guards on the path, faces stoic even though Niall knows that they both want to crack a big smile at Niall being forced to endure this.

He walks quickly, but not too quickly, not letting himself rush through it just for his sake. Ashton was right. This celebration may be about him, but it’s not for him. It’s for them, the ones who’ve been released from the shackles of a duty passed down by their ancestors for a thousand years. It’s for his people.

That concept is so strange to him still. He’d had fans before, people who’ve loved and admired him without ever having met him, people who’ve claimed that he’d saved their lives with his music. He’d always felt a certain responsibility towards his fans, a gratitude for helping him live his dream. It’s nothing like this though, because all Niall could do for his fans was continue doing what he was doing. Now he’s in a position of power, can actually make a difference in the lives of these people, and that’s the best feeling he can imagine.

Harry is standing at the other end of the path on a stage that Niall has no idea where they got it. He supposes that they probably built it to function in place of the arena, where this is usually held. It would have been too much of a hassle to get everyone back into Final Bastion in time for this, so they’re doing it at the facility. He’ll be the first and only King of Final Bastion to ever be crowned outside of the city.

He sees a small form break apart from the crowd, a little blond girl in a white dress, with flowers in her hair. Lou’s face is mortified as Lux rushes over towards Niall, but the Halfling feels the opposite, opening his arms wide for Lux to jump into. “Niall!” she squeals when he catches her, wrapping her thin arms around his neck.

“Hello, little miss.” Niall chuckles. “Would you care to escort me as far as getting back to your mummy?”
“Can I?” Lux asks.

“I’d be honored if you would.” Niall grins.

He sets Lux back on the ground, taking her hand when she reaches up for him, and walks with her. It makes it easier this way. The focus of the crowd is still on him, but now he has something other than the crowd to focus on for a minute. It helps. It’s not like Niall isn’t used to being the center of attention, isn’t used to thousands chanting his name and singing his praises, but this is different. They’re exalting him. They’re idolizing him. He doesn’t feel like a role model, doesn’t feel like he’s someone to be emulated anymore. But they do.

He walks Lux all the way to Lou, who still looks completely horrified that Lux broke away from her and interrupted the ceremony, so Niall tells her, “Thank you very much for walking me and making sure I wasn’t lonely, little miss. I’ll see you later, alright?”

“We’ll fight!” Lux squeaks.

“If you want to, then we will.” Niall laughs.

He continues the rest of his march, making his way towards his mate, who’s smiling away on the stage so beautifully that Niall can barely look at it without having to blink. And yeah, that’s what makes this all feel worthwhile. Because when Harry looks at him like that, Niall really feels like a hero. He feels like Harry’s hero, and that’s such a massive responsibility, such an unyielding pressure, but it’s one that Niall is only too happy to accept. Because Harry is his world now. Everything he’s given up, everything he’s done, everything he’ll have to do, is all worth it when he does it for Harry.

The thigh high leather boots he’s wearing make it hard enough to walk as is, but when he reaches the stairs, things get infinitely more difficult. There’s not a lot of flexibility, and Niall is glad that the cape is there to hide the jerky, clumsy movements of his legs from the audience. He trips on the last step, but Harry is there before Niall even realizes that he’s started to fall.

His arm is tight around Niall’s waist, and his hand is gentle the way it laces with Niall’s. There’s no admonishment in his eyes when Niall finally looks up, red-faced and scared that he might have just messed everything up. “It’s alright, Love.” Harry murmurs. “I tripped at my coronation too.”

“Good thing I had you to catch me this time.” Niall says softly.

“Every time. I’ll catch you every time, for the rest of our lives.” Harry whispers before releasing his grip on Niall now that the Halfling is upright. He signals for Liam to hand over the jar that he’s holding, and takes out a thin brush to make a small line over Niall’s throat. Niall knows what he’s supposed to do from here, but it takes a great deal of difficulty to drop to one knee. He manages after a moment, bringing his left hand up to grip his right shoulder. Harry’s voice is raised when he asks, “Niall, are you prepared to take upon yourself the mantle of a King of Final Bastion?”

“I am.” Niall confirms.

“Do you promise to bear the responsibility of the welfare of your citizens?” Harry asks.

“I do.” Niall agrees.

“And do you swear to uphold your position with the honor, respect, and dignity which befits it?” Harry questions.

“I do.” Niall says again. Harry signals again, and Liam steps forward with a crown, slightly smaller
than the one that Harry himself is wearing, made of bleached white wood that is carved in the shape of thorny vines. It’s beautiful in a macabre way, interspersed with shaved pieces of rubies as red as blood that look like roses. He passes the crown to Harry, who then lowers it onto Niall’s head. It’s heavier than Niall expected, weighted down with the responsibility that it stands for.

“Rise.” Harry orders. “Rise, and name yourself, King of Final Bastion.”

“I am Niall Horan, son of Robert, mate of Harry, slayer of the Master, and King of Final Bastion.” Niall announces after forcing himself back up onto two feet. His voice is booming and unwavering over the crowd, but is quickly drowned out by the howls of the entire citizenry. And Niall can’t help but smile and let his eyes slip shut, taking in the noise with Harry’s hand intertwined with his. It’s not what he ever pictured when he planned out his life, but he’s never felt luckier than he does in this moment, because he’s been given something that he never even realized that he was looking for. He’s been given a home.

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