"You what?" Jack says into the phone.

"I'm stuck to the Stanley Cup," Kent says again. "Really."

Notes

Happy 'Swawesome Santa SweetCaroline91!

Thank you to Schuyler and sunfair for coordinating this nifty thing, and a big thank you to robokittens for beta-reading.

I don't think we know who won the 2015 Stanley Cup in the Check Please universe; for the purposes of this story, the Aces did (for the second time).

Title from "Stuck On You", Elvis Presley

Content notes: one brief reference to past drug addiction.

*"You what?" Jack says into the phone.

"I'm stuck to the Stanley Cup," Kent says again. "Really."
The image that comes instantly to mind - memory, really, a certain morning they'd woken up awkwardly glued - can't possibly be right.

"Like, your tongue?" Jack says instead. "Get someone to pour some warm water on it and quit calling me."

"Zimms, it's July," Kent says. "Also I'm on the phone with you, does it sound like my tongue is stuck to something?"

"You could have frozen it," Jack says, swallowing the how should I know what you do with the Stanley Cup that wants to follow. "Does this involve glue? This is the stupidest prank I ever heard of."

"Fuck," Kent says, "Craig, will you talk to him?"

"Hey," Jack starts, not happy about the idea of who knows how many of Parse's friends listening in, but he's interrupted by a polite cough.

"Mr. Zimmermann?" someone asks. Male and blandly Canadian. "I'm the Keeper on assignment to Mr. Parson's Cup day, and I assure you, Mr. Parson is telling you the truth."

"He's stuck to the Stanley Cup," Jack says flatly.

"Through no fault of his own," the ostensible Cup Keeper says. Jack still isn't buying it. "I'm afraid the Stanley Cup has a mind of its own sometimes."

"Um," Jack says. Do you know who I am is not something he ever, ever wants to hear coming out of his own mouth, but sometimes it's hard. "I'd think I would have heard about that?"

"In the '70s, the most it could do was small shocks, usually mistaken for ordinary static electricity," the guy answers smoothly. "By the early 90s, it could turn beverages sour or flat, when poured into it, but only did so on rare occasions. We've been... circumspect about more recent manifestations. So, in fact, your father might well not be aware."

"I'd have liked a warning," Kent calls out in the background.

Jack sighs. Bullshit he's not getting out of easily is an unfortunately familiar category after four years at Samwell. "So what does this have to do with me?"

"Mr. Parson thinks that -"

"Put me back on," Kent yells. "Hey. Uh, can you put it on speaker and leave the room for a sec?"

There's a fumbling noise, then the familiar echoey, staticky sound of a speakerphone connection, and a door closing. Jack doesn't hear any muffled laughing, at least.

"Sorry," Kent says, "He was holding the phone for me, but I thought you'd. Maybe rather talk like this."

"I don't know why I'm talking to you at all," Jack says. He means, specifically, but winces a little in the silence that follows; he might mean generally too, a bit.

"Look," Kent says, after that uncomfortable pause. "I guess the Cup gets jealous. Like, it wants to be the star of the show all the time, so if you think about... something else, it might do stuff to get your attention?"
"Like stick you to it," Jack says disbelievingly.

"Yes, I was carrying it and then I couldn't put it down," Kent says. "It's pretty freaky, it took Craig plus my mom to calm me down, honestly."

"Wait," Jack says, "You're telling me if I talk to your mom, she'll play along with this?"

"I'll call her in here right now if it'll convince you," Kent says immediately. "Look, Jack, I need you to come down here."

"What?"

"It's not like a cat, I guess. Like I tried focusing as hard as I could on the Cup, who's a good Cup, all that, but Craig says it's more likely to let me go with you... here."

"What if I was in Russia or something?" Jack says, taken aback.

"What the hell would you be doing in Russia?" Kent asks. "Please tell me you're not, right, you're home in Providence? This really sucks, Jack."

Jack sighs. It's the please, maybe, or the possibility that if he says no, Kent really is going to get his mom on the phone.

"Fine," he says, and he can hear Kent sigh, huge and relieved, making him suddenly feel guilty he'd almost said no. "You're doing your Cup day at your parents' again?"

"Yeah," Kent says. "You, uh, remember - "

"Yes," Jack says. "Listen, I don't know what this is, but if I see your Cup day media team - "

"No people," Kent says immediately. "No cameras, we, ah, sent the party to a bar already, actually, I'd already put on a good show - anyways. I'll, uh, see you in a few hours?"

"I might call from the road," Jack says, surprising himself, and probably also Parse. He pulls the phone away from his ear and stabs the red button before he can say anything else spontaneous.

* 

Forty minutes out of Providence, heading west into the slowly darkening July evening, mercifully now past sunset, Jack keeps turning on and off the radio. It's too distracting. It's too quiet in the truck without it.

He doesn't like using his phone while he drives, but he imagines calling someone. Not Parse, despite what he'd said. A fantasy call, the kind he never actually makes, I'm so lonely or I don't know if I can do this.

"I'm doing something stupid," he imagines saying.

Shitty would - cheer or something; Shitty would hear something stupid and be sold before he even heard the details.

Lardo, maybe. Lardo would just say "okay" and wait for a minute, to see if he was going to elaborate.

"Media stupid?" she might say, when Jack didn't. "Bitty stupid?"
Jack shakes his head a little. "Said goodbye to that in Georgia," he says in this imaginary conversation, where he can confess to anything. "Parse stupid."

"Parse stupid," pretend-Lardo says, in a different voice, worried. "Jack, is that... actually a good idea?"

It probably isn't, but, fuck, he's going to have _that time I drove six hours roundtrip for your stupid prank_ in his pocket for the next ten years, at least. That's worth something right there.

And if Kent actually does need him for something... well. He doesn't really want to take the risk of ignoring that.

*

He gives in and calls back about an hour from Kent's town.

"Hey," Kent says, on speakerphone again. "Notice how I picked up right away and didn't make you call back twice? Nice, huh?"

"He asked me to, but I told him he could save that nonsense for when he could answer his own phone," Parse's mom says wryly. Jack hasn't heard her voice since he was 18, but he remembers. "I'll leave you boys alone."

"I didn't really mean it," Kent says when her footsteps fade. "I know you're doing me a favor here, Zimms. You are still coming, right?"

"No," Jack says, "Decided to go for a three hour drive in a totally different direction, just for fun."

"Ha," Kent says, "We all know you don't have fun, Zimms."

Jack stares very fixedly at the taillights ahead of him. He's closer to the Parsons' house than to Providence, there's no point in turning around now.

"Shit," Kent says. "Can I - retract that? You're doing me a favor, and I'm having a rough day."

"Sucks for your Cup day," Jack says, pretty much entirely without sympathy, except it comes out sounding sympathetic after all. "Uh, tell me about it?"

"My Cup day?" Kent asks, sounding way too astonished and pleased. "Sure, okay. We did this whole spay/neuter/adopt thing at the animal shelter - they, uh, went through on their threat to name it after me, after my last donation, so that got unveiled - oh, get this, they renamed the rec center, too? Like, I threw Damon Hagman's backpack on the roof of that rec center, and now they're naming it after me?"


"He was at the party, actually, I kept wondering the whole time if he was going to say something. But almost everybody there was from middle school - and, like, my parents' friends - and, I don't know, we were all assholes back then. Half our lives ago we were stomping on each other's history dioramas and now we're _old friends_." He sighs. "By that logic, I get absolved of my late teens around the '22 Olympics, and if I play as long as Jagr, I can be old friends with you?"

"'26," Jack says, because he doesn't know how to touch the other part.

"Ouch," Kent says, but he's laughing.
Jack almost says something about Georgia - about his own questions about how long it will take to put certain things behind him - but he doesn't, just tells Parse he needs to get off the phone to navigate.

* 

Jack is wary, when he pulls up to Kent's parents' house, but he doesn't see any media vans, and, technically, if the paparazzi get some telephoto shots of him going into an old friend's house, that's not major news.

Parse's dad answers the door.

"We're so glad you're here," he says. "Drive went okay?"

Jack hasn't seen him since before everything, and suddenly he needs a moment to compose himself before facing Parse. In the downstairs washroom, he pisses, splashes water on his face, looks at himself in the mirror, and tries not to remember that he'd once gotten a hand job in here.

"Okay," he tells himself.

Parse is in the den, which unlike the living room has a door that can be shut. (Jack remembers quite clearly.) He's sitting on the couch with a pillow on his lap, and the Stanley Cup shiny and sideways across it. His mom is sitting next to him, and someone vaguely familiar in a suit is in a chair by the wall, poking a phone.

"I'd shake your hand," Kent says when Jack comes in. "But."

"You're sticking with that?" Jack asks. "Really?"

"Yes, I'm sticking, Zimms," Kent says. "Craig here tried to pry my fingers off. No luck. I had to piss in a Gatorade bottle held by my mother. Did you drive out here thinking I was fucking faking this?"

"Kent," his mother says under her breath.

"Uh, hello, Mrs. Parson," Jack says belatedly.

"I'm Craig," Craig says.

"Okay," Kent says, "Can I have a few minutes with Jack, please?"

"Of course," his mom says, patting his hand. "Just call if you need anything, sweetie."

Craig gives the Cup a concerned look, and follows her out.

"Hey," Kent says, when the door closes behind them. "Sit or something?"

He gestures with his chin at the couch, but Jack drags a chair out from the card table.

Kent stares at him for a minute. Jack can see the muscles of his hands flexing.

"Fuck," he finally says. "I was really hoping it would just... go away, if you showed up."

"You're really stuck to the Stanley Cup," Jack says, shaking his head. Of course there are pictures of him with it as a baby - infamous pictures - but he's never actually been this close when he could remember. It's kind of hard to look away. "You really think it's because of me? This didn't happen the first time you won."
"The first time was overwhelming," Kent says. "I don't know. I just... missed you today."

Jack looks at him, really looks at him: he looks tired, and his cowlick is crazy. There's cat hair on his plaid shirt and the legs of his pants. He's sitting on a couch where Jack has had more than one orgasm with him. He's still the person in the world who knows the most about Jack, although not everything.

Jack has never really thought they could work again, but now he's not the most impossible thing, and he's beautiful, and Jack still loves him.

"Hey," he says, getting up and coming over to Kent. "Kenny." Jack puts his hands on his shoulders and leans down, over the Stanley Cup, making sure not to touch it, moving slowly enough that Kent can say something if he wants to.

He doesn't; he sucks in a breath, and then they're kissing, Kent's head tipped up for Jack, all tongue and suction, like he's trying to get him closer without using his hands.

"Hey," Jack says, breaking off. "Did that... do it?" They look down at Kent's hands, which wiggle, but don't come off the Cup.

"No," Kent says, "Did you... just to -"

"No," Jack says, "I wanted to, I - miss you, I - " He tries to lift his hand to cup Kent's cheek, but it doesn't.

"What," Kent says.

Jack blinks, tries again. He can feel his muscles tensing, but his hands don't move off Parse's shoulders. It's like his palms have melded into his shirt, which is also fused to the shoulders underneath it.

"Fuck," he says. "You're fucking kidding me."

*

"I have to call Toronto," Craig says when they tell him, and vanishes. Kent's mom drags over a chair for Jack, although he's still leaning forward awkwardly.

No one has commented on why Jack was so close to Parse in the first place, although Jack assumes there must have been some kind of conversation already about why Parse thought his old hockey buddy might help the situation.

Parse keeps looking at him and snickering, which Jack thinks is completely unfair. Jack can feel his shoulders shake under his hands.

"Okay," Craig says when he finally comes back - Jack has no idea how much time is passing, he can't see a clock and he hasn't wanted to ask either of the elder Parsons to get his phone out of his pocket. "We have a theory."

"A theory!" Kent says. "Do tell." He smiles, not nicely.

"Well," Craig says - he's only about George's age, Jack realizes - "We think the Cup recognized Mr. Zimmermann as a hockey player, but not as a member of any particular team, and since NHL players don't usually get within arms reach of the cup, and Mr. Parson may have thought of him as, ah, a teammate - "
"It thinks I'm one of the Aces?" Jack asks.

"It thinks you're on Mr. Parson's team," Craig corrects. "Folded into the same open problem about, ah, lack of satisfaction with your Stanley Cup experience - "

"Well, obviously," Kent snaps. "I'm sure he wants to win it himself, but if the Cup is waiting for that, we're gonna have a problem, 'cause I just don't see it happening like this." He jerks his chin sharply at the whole situation, then frowns. "But why would the Cup be jealous of him wanting the Cup?"

Craig raises his index finger. "I may not have been clear before, it's a misunderstanding that the Cup gets jealous?"

"You said - " Jack starts. Kent purses his lips at him.

"It's more - compersive, actually," Craig says. "It wants to meet who you love, to share what you want... I thought I said that?"

Jack looks at Kent, then quickly away.

"I gotta talk to Zimms again," Kent says. "Sorry to keep kicking you out, but I'm honestly not sure we could get through the door like this."

*

"Jack," Kent says, once they're out. "I'm sorry I have to ask this, but... is it pills?"

"What?" Jack says, completely lost.

"Your thing," Kent says. "Whatever you miss, or - wish you could have, whatever... "

"God," Jack says. "No. I mean... sometimes... but not usually? Not for awhile."

Kent exhales, hard; Jack can feel it on his face. It's the sort of point where it would be more comfortable to turn away from each other, if Jack's hands weren't stuck to Kent's shoulders. They are, though, and Jack can't see anything to do but plow on.

"There's... someone. Else?"

Kent's eyes go kind of wide. "Shit, Jack," he says. "I had no idea you were with someone - I wouldn't have - "

Jack shakes his head. "I'm not... with him."

"But you want him more than the Stanley Cup?"

"No!" Jack says. "I didn't think so."

Kent would never ask more than me?, but Jack thinks he can see it in his lowered eyes, in the way he's breathing carefully so he doesn't snap and lash out when neither of them can walk away, maybe.

"Not more," Jack says, because Kent is trying, so he has to, too. "More hopelessly, maybe. I never even told him."

He has to close his eyes, remembering Bitty in Georgia, catching Jack looking more than once, staring at his kitchen or his bed, places he wanted to be able to picture him later. Never calling him on it.
"This'll be a big day for you then," Kent says.

Jack's eyes pop open: Kent's looking right at him, face set.

"You have to," Kent says. "If that's - I want my fucking hands back, Jack."

"You calling me here didn't do anything," Jack says, sounding whiny even to his own ears. "Why - "

"I wanted you here and happy," Kent says, still not looking away. "The Cup wants to meet who you love, can we just... get on with it?"

* *

Jack never really agrees, it just... happens out of his hands. Literally, of course, his hands being stuck to Parse's warm and broad shoulders. Parse yells for everyone to come back in and asks Craig to fish Jack's phone out of his pocket; Jack can't exactly dodge. With Parse and Craig and Parse's parents all standing there when Parse asks for Jack's passcode, and then for the name of the contact Craig should dial, Jack can't think of a good reason to refuse.

Bitty picks up right away.

"Jack," he says, crackly on the speakerphone. "Is everything all right? It's almost midnight."

"Sorry," Jack says. He hadn't thought about the time at all. "I. Um." He stares helplessly at the phone.

"Jack?" Bitty says.

It's just too fucking ludicrous - leaning over the Stanley Cup, phone balanced on one of Craig's gloves on the curving surface to try to keep it from sliding off, Kent's head unavoidably right there too.

"Hi Eric, Kent Parson here, we have you on speaker, sorry," Kent cuts in. "Here's the thing, this is going to sound completely unbelievable, but Jack has a problem we think only you can solve."

"What?" Bitty says, sounding worried. "Jack, are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Jack says. "I'm just - Parse is right, this isn't a joke, I - "

Nothing in his media training has ever covered what to say when trying to convince someone you secretly love to make emergency travel plans to rescue you from an impossible situation with someone else you slightly-less-secretly love. Should he try to explain about the Cup?

"We need you to come to New York," Kent says. "We can tell you why, and you can spend the trip not believing it, or not tell you and you can wonder."

"What?" Bitty says again.


It's not a selfie, of course, since neither of them have a free hand; it takes both of Parse's parents plus Craig fussing with Jack's phone, while Jack and Parse give conflicting instructions, to get a photo taken and sent to Bitty and Bitty back on the line.

"Why am I looking at y'all snuggling with the Stanley Cup," he says, sounding unhappy. "Jack, is this - I don't - "
"The Stanley Cup has emergent reliclike properties due to its non-re-creation," Craig cuts in. It sort of sounds like something he’s been rehearsing under his breath. "Do you know the story of the Golden Goose? Mr. Zimmermann and Mr. Parson are in a similar situation. Stuck."

"I have no idea what you're talking about," Bitty says apologetically. "Jack? Are you still there?"

"Yes."

"I have no idea how I would get to New York," Bitty says. "But - if you really want me there, for... whatever..."

"Don't worry about that part at all," Kent interrupts. "We'll have a car, a flight - uh, Jack knows your address?"

"Yes," Jack and Bitty both say. "But - " Bitty adds.

"Tell your parents it's my fault," Jack says. "Tell them I - made a stupid bet, about your pie or something. Samwell ball hockey vs some guys here, everyone knows celebrities do stupid things."

He hates it, but he can't imagine Coach and Suzanne letting Bitty get whisked away without some sort of explanation.

"Okay," Bitty says. "Do I - need a suit, or, uh, gear, my rolling pin - "

Kent smirks.

"No," Jack says quickly, "Thank you, Bittle," and makes a lunge for the phone with his nose. He knocks it off the Stanley Cup and it goes skittering into Kent's lap, but he can hear it hang up as it does.

"Rude," Kent says.

"I could see you about to be an asshole," Jack says. "He's doing us a giant favor, he doesn't need you messing with him."

Kent shrugs under Jack's hands. "Hey," he says, "Can someone get my phone, I need to make more calls."

*

"I can't believe you chartered your flight here," Jack says under his breath, when they put Parse on hold in the process of chartering a flight for Bitty. "First class wasn't good enough?"

"Kit Purrson really hates the carrier," Kent says. "The flight out here last time was awful, she did much better on my lap. So, yes."

"You chartered a flight for your cat," Jack says. It's ridiculous and also somehow the sweetest thing.

"I had to put her in the Cup, obviously," Kent says. "I'm not completely deficient at this show-the-Cup-what-you-love game. Ah, yes, I'm here, Athens, I guess?"

Jack pictures Bitty, climbing into a big black car-service car in the middle of the night, and Kent on a private jet, trying to soothe his cat. It doesn't seem quite real, that Bitty is coming here, for him, that Kent is making travel arrangements while his mom holds the phone and occasionally pets his head.

"Okay," Kent says, when his mom hangs up for the last time. "5 hours, I guess?"
"Great," Jack says. "Can we rearrange, my back is killing me."

* 

Rearranging is not simple - the Stanley Cup is like a barrel between them. They knock heads trying to stand up, and Kent staggers when Jack accidentally puts weight on him. Jack presses as close as he can get, once they're on their feet, easing the strain in his shoulders and back. He rocks his pelvis a little, trying to get the ache out of his lower back.

"I know I was once voted best forearms in the NHL," Kent says, "But I can't actually hold 35 pounds for 5 hours."

"You were not," Jack says.

"It was someone's Twitter," Kent concedes. "They almost had me do a not-so-mean-Tweets about it though."

"What if we put the Cup on a stool," Kent's mom suggests, and Kent's dad is dispatched to fetch a bar stool from upstairs.

"Does that feel better?" she asks brightly, once the Cup is resting on it.

The Cup is hip-height between them and Jack is desperately trying not to meet Kent's eyes, which is hard when they're stuck face-to-face.

"This isn't at all pornographic," Kent mutters, "We're definitely not humping our sport's most honored trophy," and Jack just loses it, curling forward laughing into Kent's neck. Kent's shoulders shake under his hands.

"What was that?" Kent's mom asks.

"Coach Sherman," Jack says, "All those team-building exercises, remember the knot game?"

"Oh god," Kent says, "On a scale of trust falls to the lava river, this is the worst ever."

"Huh, lava game," Jack says. "Couch cushions?"

It takes cushions, blankets, and pillows from all over the house, plus the moving of a bookcase and a storage ottoman, but eventually, Jack and Kent are settled belly-to-Stanley-Cup-to-chest on the floor, sandwiched between furniture and padding. Jack is up on a stack of cushions, his legs thrown over Kent's hips, but not actually resting on them. They're as buttressed and neutrally-postured as two men and a giant metal trophy can be.

"I think I'm actually comfortable," Kent says, once his mom has assured them she'll be in earshot for nose scratching or sips of water or whatever else might come up. "Back support is an amazing thing."

Jack's waistband is digging in, a bit - he hadn't wanted to ask anyone to unbutton his pants - but it's not bad.

"So tell me about this guy," Kent says, and Jack tenses. "Eric Bittle of Madison, Georgia."

"He's, uh, a forward," Jack says.

Kent rolls his eyes. "Why am I not surprised," he says. "He went to Samwell?"
"He's still there," Jack says. "He'll be a junior."

"Wait," Kent says, "So he's like twenty?"

Jack frowns. "He's going to be captain."

"Calm your tits," Kent says, "I'm sure he's a leader among men. But come on, have you ever had a chance to talk about this guy?"

Jack sighs. "He has a great smile, is that what you want to know?"

"One anecdote," Kent bargains, "And then I'll shut up for, like, twenty minutes."

"Forty," Jack says. "Okay. One time at a Haus party, a couple of the D-men put him up on a table, and I thought I was going to have to, like - "

"Bust heads?" Kent suggests.

"Remind everyone about the hazing rules," Jack says. "But he was fine. He sang." He can feel himself smiling, remembering it. "He makes fun of me and I don't mind," Jack says. "I don't know what else to tell you, really."

"Ok," Kent says. "Sounds... nice." He closes his eyes and tips his head back against the ottoman and pillows behind him.

In a few hours, Bitty will be there, and Jack doesn't know what's going to happen then. But for now...

He squeezes his hands on Kent's shoulders. "Let's just try to nap, huh? Can't be too much worse than the bus."

*

It's a little worse than the bus - 15 kg starts feeling pretty heavy on his legs even on a pillow, and for all that he's used to wearing a face mask, it's pretty annoying not being able to scratch his nose. Kent actually dozes off for awhile and makes little sleepy surprised noises doing the head-falls-forward-then-jerks-up thing, which is way too familiar, and really frustrating when Jack can't arrange him comfortably on his shoulder.

There is, at least, no possibility of other bus-type hijinks, with their hands so unavoidably out of play. And the Stanley Cup is one heck of a guardian angel, in the "leave room for your guardian angel" sense... Jack amuses himself for awhile trying to figure out if there would be any possible way they could, like, make groin contact, and concludes that he'd have to grow several new elbows in each arm.

Kit Purrson comes wandering in after an hour or two and makes a beeline for them. She hops up on the Stanley Cup and stretches, whacking Jack in the face with her tail and showing him her butthole, and then slithers down into the gap where the Stanley Cup curves down into Kent's chest. Kent stirs and mumbles "hey, pretty" and dozes off again. Other than that, and an interlude with a Gatorade bottle Jack never wants to think of again, time moves smoothly towards dawn.

*

Jack doesn't hear a doorbell or anything, but suddenly Kent's dad is showing Bitty into the den. He looks red-eyed and exhausted and he's cut his hair in the ten days since Georgia. Jack's breath might
catch, a little.

"Jack," he says, lighting up a little. "...Parse. What on earth are y'all doing down there?"

"Trying not to cramp up, mostly," Kent says. "His hands. My hands. Stuck."

"Wait, really?"

"Déjà vu all over again," Kent says, blowing a breath up at his cowlick.

"Yes, really," Jack says. He thinks he sounds hoarse.

"The Cup can do that?" Bitty asks. "Jack, did this ever happen to your dad?"

"No," Jack says, "I guess it's gotten more powerful since then."

"Wait," Bitty says, "The Cup is, like, a magic thing that's been getting more powerful, and we're all just fine with that? We don't need to take it to Mordor or something?"

Kent laughs. "I like you," he says, sounding surprised. "Wanna bet Jack doesn't know what you're talking about?"

Jack frowns. "I've seen those movies," he says. Technically, Shitty had watched them in his room while he tried to work, but Mordor sounded familiar.

Bitty smiles at him, twisting up his insides. Something more is going to have to happen here - his hands are still stuck to Kent's shoulders - and he can feel it coming, too fast.

"Why'd you think we wanted you to come up here, if you didn't believe we were stuck?" Kent asks, offhandedly but obviously actually curious.

"Oh," Bitty blushes. "I, um. This is going to sound... I don't know, but I thought maybe you were, um. Getting married in secret, while you had the Stanley Cup here, and wanted me as a witness?"

Jack looks at Kent in time to see his mouth open wide in sheer delight.

"Eric Bittle," he says. "Do you write fanfiction about me? Secret marriage with the Stanley Cup, that is... kudos-worthy."

"I do not," Bitty says, blushing more. He kneels down next to Jack. "I'm sorry if that was ridiculous," he says. "I just couldn't imagine what you'd need me for, but I thought maybe since I, had some idea, you know, and I guess I liked the idea of you trusting me... that I'd get to be there for that... why am I here? I don't see how I can possibly help with this... situation."


Kent nods at him encouragingly.

"I guess the Cup... doesn't like people holding it and not being happy," Jack says slowly. "Kent missed me, but I miss... you?"

Bitty's eyes are huge.

"Jack," he says, "Am I here to vow friendship on the Stanley Cup?"

"Not friendship," Jack says. It's so weird to be trying to say out loud, in front of Kent, things he
promised himself a million times he'd never say at all. "I, uh, I'd like to kiss you. A lot."

"Oh my god," Bitty squeaks. He puts his hands over his face. "I... for a long time, oh my god."

Jack's hands still won't come off Kent's shoulders. "I can't really make a move here," he says, turning as much as he can towards Bitty. It isn't very much. "Hey, Kenny, close your eyes?"

He doesn't know if Kent does or not; Bitty puts his hand on Jack's arm, leans in across him, and kisses him. Jack has a second to think that Bitty's at a terrible angle, if he gets stuck too, and then he's lost in the tentative press of Bitty's lips.

Jack's hands come free before he's even aware that he's trying; he cups Bitty's head in his hands and kisses him with every bit of the conviction he'd had that he'd never get to do this.

"Oh, bravo," Kent says loudly. "I'd clap, there's just one problem, my hands are still stuck to the fucking Stanley Cup."

Jack blinks. Sure enough, Kent is still sitting there with the Cup across his lap, Kit Purrson's head peeking out against his shirt.

"Huh," Craig says.

Bitty twitches and Jack instinctively pulls him closer; he hadn't heard Craig come in.

"Really thought it would resolve both of you, if one of you got loose," he says. "I'm going to have to talk to Toronto again."

"How 'bout you go do that," Bitty says, sounding jittery. He takes Jack's hands when the door closes. "If me kissing you worked on you, would you kissing him work on Parse?"

"I tried that," Jack admits. "That's, uh, when I got stuck."

"Good thing it wasn't your lips," Bitty says. "I, uh, am absolutely not saying I'm not interested in kissing you more, but maybe you should kiss him again now?"

Jack looks at Kent, who's making a strange face at Bitty.

"Might as well," Kent says. Jack scoots back over towards him, grabs his chin, and smooches.

"Really kiss him," Bitty says, and - it hits Jack suddenly that this might be the last time, and that's painful to think about. Kent's mouth is so familiar, compared with Bitty's, and he tastes like Jack thinks kisses taste like, and Jack doesn't see how the Stanley Cup could possibly want more than this.

His hands slide easily free of Kent's hair when he pulls away. Kent's hands shake the Stanley Cup in frustration. Kit Purrson yowps and jumps free of Kent's lap, darting out of the room.

"Jack," Bitty says. "Can I talk to Parse for a sec?"

It's scary and awkward to leave them there together, but it feels amazing to stand up and stretch. Jack steps out into the hall and is descended upon by both Parson parents.

"Is it all over?" Kent's dad asks. "That kid was able to... do something?"

"Uh, it's in progress," Jack says, not touching their apparent assumption that Bitty is some sort of magical locksmith. "Can I just, uh, the washroom?"
He pisses, washes, drinks about a quart of water out of his cupped hands. Goes back and knocks on the door. "It's Jack?"

"Yeah," Kent says, so he goes in. Kent is still holding the Stanley Cup, although he's moved back to the couch.

"No progress?" Jack asks redundantly.

"I wouldn't say that," Kent says. "Lorax, go."

Bitty rolls his eyes, and Jack doesn't know what to think - he was out of the room for five minutes, and they have inside jokes?

"So you like me and you still like Parse - Kent, sorry - and Kent likes you and apparently falls really fast, so I'm going to kiss him now and then we're all going to sleep flat in a bed without any giant metal guests and then go out for the world's most awkward brunch, okay?" The whole last bit is fast and all in one breath, and he's an adorable pink.

"Uh," Jack says. "Okay?"

Bitty crouches down in front of Kent to kiss him, and then realizes he can't reach and stands up and puts his hands on Kent's shoulders. Jack almost says no, wait, but if he's going to get stuck now, they're probably all doomed.

Bitty kisses Kent, and, wow, it's pretty much the most gorgeous thing Jack has ever seen, all blond hair and necks.

Kent's hands come free of the Stanley Cup and he makes an orgasmic noise into Bitty's mouth. The Stanley Cup threatens to roll off of his knees and Bitty catches it.

"Wow," he says, lifting it to chest level. "Holy shinola, the Stanley Cup."

He carries it over to the card table, and turns it upright. Jack holds his breath while he sets it down and steps away.

Kent is windmilling his arms and bouncing on his toes.

"Flat in a bed?" he says. "A bed, or...?" He makes a grabby motion at Bitty, and then seems to get lost in stretching and wiggling his fingers.

"I think I'd like to talk before anything else," Bitty says. "If you guys - um." He grins sort of sheepishly at them.

"What about one bed, but we all keep our hands to ourselves now that we've gotten them back," Jack suggests. Rationally, he thinks he should want some time to himself, now that he can, but if he's honest, he doesn't want to let either of them out of his sight just now. "You get to explain to your parents why we're sleeping with the locksmith though," he adds to Kent. Kent makes a face but heads for the door.

Bitty catches him by the arm before he can follow Kent out the door.

"This is really okay with you?" he asks Jack.

Jack sort of stares at him, like, how can he not realize that Jack's two love interests being interested in each other is a dream come true?
"Of things in this room," Jack says slowly. "I still really want to win the Stanley Cup. And I thought I had to choose that over both of you. But it feels like it just told me I didn't? It wanted Kent to have... us, I guess."

"I really like you," Bitty says. "I don't know if it would have, um, helped anything, made it easier, if I'd said that. In Georgia. Or before. But I just wanted to be sure you knew that."

"Okay!" Craig says, throwing open the door. "Toronto says - oh."

Jack laughs. "I hope we'll meet again," he says a little loopily, "But not for, like, eleven months at the minimum. Come on, Bitty, you should meet Kent's parents."

Bitty's eyes go wide and he lets himself be drawn out of the room.

"You're what?" Jack hears Kent's mom saying.

"Cup days are the best days!" Kent tells her cheerfully, and Bitty squeezes Jack's hand as they go find him.

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