I'll take that as a compliment

by ClaraCivry (Kat Of Dresden)

Summary

A place for all and any Daniel Atlas centered angst/hurt comfort oneshots. Requests open!

Chap 1. Merritt helps Danny get rid of recurrent nightmares about drowning

Chap 2. Danny gets sick on stage

Chap 3. Danny and Lula share a moment after Danny is shot

Chap 4. Someone from Danny's past comes back and teaches him a lesson

Chap 5. Danny was in the safe in Macau instead of Dylan

Chap 6. Lula sees all of Danny's scars and ends up having a conversation about they came to existence

Chap 7. Suicidal Danny

Chap. 8 Nightmares/panic, comforting Dylan

Notes
requested by Cookie

See the end of the work for more notes
The drowning incident

There was a lot of water, surrounded him everywhere. When Dylan had been in danger, he'd acted on instinct and got there in time, managed to be the hero. Danny should be proud, forget about the part he played on everyone's danger and move on. But he couldn't. There was something about that moment, once the excitement and adrenaline of their last act wore off, that brought him back there.

He dreamt about being back underwater and being too late, or not going in at all. Danny rationalised it thinking it was probably some sort of underlying guilt at his attempt at substituting Dylan and all the consequences it had had. His ego had got the best of him, again, and everyone had suffered. Yes, it was probably just that. Nothing else. His repressed guilt made him dream about not being able to save Dylan because he felt it had been him who had put the older man in danger in the first place.

But even after rationalising it and telling himself it hadn't been his fault, even apologising to Dylan, the dreams didn't stop but started to change. Danny dreamt it was him that was there, underwater, unable to open that damn safe, feeling the level of the water rising, and rising and he couldn't breathe anymore... The dreams were too vivid, too recurrent, they were starting to become a problem.

He tried to stay as alert as usual with copious amounts of coffee and red bull, but couldn't hide the dark rings under his eyes. (He even tried using concealer, but didn't get he skin tone right and ended up making them more obvious). He was more tired, more on edge. It took longer for him to learn new tricks and sometimes he messed up. Which was absolutely unacceptable, J Daniel Atlas never messed up.

So, he had a problem but he didn't know why or how to solve it. He had never been scared of water or too much of enclosed places despite having a bit of claustrophobia or he'd never been able to pull off half his tricks. No, there needed to be something else there, something that his trip underwater had reignited. He just couldn't figure out for the life of him what the hell it was and how to solve it. He kept it going for two or three weeks, documenting himself on nightmares and sleep disorders, on recurrent dreams and the ways to stop them, but nothing seemed to fit exactly what he was going through, no solution seemed to help. He hated going to bed, but sometimes he didn't even need to be in bed, just fell asleep in random places. Things changed when he had the most real dream in his life, one thursday night.

Danny is in a water tank, one of those like the ones Henley used to use and he can't get out. There's water everywhere and he can't hold his breath for much longer and he's going to drown because he doesn't know how to get out and there's people watching him and laughing at him and they aren't doing anything, why aren't they helping? He's searching frantically for the way out, for a trap door, for something, but he can't find anything and he's swallowed so much water already, he can't, CAN'T breathe and he's hitting the glass and no one's helping him and he's desperate, desperate for some air, desperate to breathe and there was only water, water in his mouth, water in his lungs, he wanted to cough but he couldn't, it wasn't too much and the scene in front of him was getting blurry...

And suddenly he awoke with a start, eyes flying open, and took the deepest breath ever, gasped with nearly all his body, suddenly out of the water tank but feeling as if he'd been deprived of air for all that time. Then he doubled over himself, and, without time to reach his bathroom, was violently sick on his bedroom floor. Part of him still felt trapped there, in the water tank, only water and nobody to help, drowning in front of an audience, dying without no one caring.

“Hey, what's happening? You all right, man? You were screaming in your sleep.” A concerned looking Jack said from the doorway, followed by an equally worried Lula.
Danny could hardly focus on either of them.

“I don't feel so good.” He muttered.

Jack moved from the doorway to next to Danny, taking in his pale skin and the hair plastered to his forehead with sweat. He noticed the mess on the floor, but didn't say anything.

“You must have had the mother of all nightmares, huh?”

Danny attempted a smile and in the middle it changed into something Jack didn't recognise, like a silent cry for help, desperation in his friend's blue eyes and a second later he promptly passed out.

“Danny? Come on, man, don't scare me. Danny?”

There was no response as he cradled the unconscious body of his friend in his arms.

When he awoke, Danny could hear voices.

“We should call a Doctor” someone was saying “I'm sure the eye has some trained personnel in case someone injures themselves at a show or something.”

“It's three in the morning, they're probably not available.” Another voice said, an older sounding one. Merritt, he realized and the other one was Jack.

He opened his eyes and everyone was on him with worried looks.

“I'm fine, you don't need to call a Doctor.”

“Are you sure? 'Cos you were out for like 20 minutes...” Lula said, offering a mug of chamomile tea. “It's gone cold, but...”

“No, it's okay, I like it like this, thank you. It's just... these damn dreams, they're draining me.”

And so Danny explained about what he'd been dreaming, because even if usually he was a pretty private person, this had obviously gotten out of hand. And maybe they would had an idea of how to deal with it, fix it, fix him. Merritt suggested hypnosis and although he was generally against, Danny finally accepted, because he was getting a bit desperate for a good night's sleep.

The next day they were ready to find the root of all this, just Danny and Merritt in the room. Atlas wasn't an easy person to hypnotise, because he didn't like relinquishing control to anyone, and fought against it with every part of his being. Fortunately, Merritt was good, one of the best and so he managed to put him under in a relatively short time.

With some carefully chosen questions about his nightmares and what started (the incident in Macau, drowning there was always drowning) he started connecting dots and forming a theory. He asked some more questions and then the important one.

“Has anything like this ever happened to you?”

“No”

“Are you sure?”

“No.” It was strange, even off putting to see Danny so docile, so obedient, but he needed to be to fix whatever had broke when he saved Dylan.
“Tell me about it. Tell me about when you drowned, Danny. It's there, in the back of your mind. Maybe you repressed it, maybe you forgot it. You were probably a kid and you drowned. Tell me about it.”

There was a change in his breathing and his eyes, and Merritt knew he'd found something.

“Where are you?”

“The Hamptons. It's a big beach, I'm here with my family, it's the first time we've come. There's a lot of waves but they say it's okay if I go in. That there would be some warning if it's too dangerous.”

“You go in despite the waves, to the water.”

“Yes, but they are dragging me, and pulling me away from the shore. I'm screaming for someone to help me, to get me, but nobody's coming. I try to get to shore but the waves pull me under, throw me in every direction and no one's coming. It's so cold and I can't breathe and I know they're seeing me but nobody's coming and I can't... I can't breathe.”

“It's okay, it's over. What's the next thing you remember?”

“Waking up in the sand, puking water, the life guard was standing over me, telling me to take deep breaths. She... and this doctor, they were very nice to me, gave me a towel and told me it was fine now, they had to call my parents because they hadn't even noticed I was gone. They told me to suck it up and stop making a scene.” His voice broke a little and his eyes were bright, a couple of tears falling down on his cheeks.

“Jesus....”

Merritt ended the trance and Danny looked confused, wiped the tears from his face not understanding how they got there.

“What did you find out?”

“You drowned as a kid. What do you remember about a trip to the Hamptons?”

“Not much. I know we went there, I was like ten or eleven... but I don't....”

“The current pulled you in and the life guards had to drag you out. Your parents told you to stop making a scene.”

Danny didn't remember it, but it did sound strangely familiar, specially the second part. He remembered being crushed because he'd almost died and his parents didn't want to hear his whining.

“I don't know if it's the drowning or your asshole parent's reaction that traumatized you, but you suppressed it all these years. Dylan almost drowning must have un-suppressed some of it, made you remember. You should probably...”

“Can you re-suppress it?” Danny asked, suddenly remembering more clearly. The waves, hurting him, his screams and how no one came.

“You should probably deal with it, you know. There might be another incident like this one and we'd be back to the start.” Merritt said. It was understandable that the kid wanted to forget, but it was probably not the healthiest choice.

“I'm not asking you if you should. I'm asking if you can.”
With time, Danny had forgotten a lot of his past, let go of a lot of hurt. He would rather it stayed that way.

“I can. But Danny...” He usually called him Atlas, but this was too personal for that. “You know you have us, to talk about things. We would never do something like that because we care, ok? Even me.”

Danny smiled.

“That's...nice and I'm grateful for all of this, Merritt, I really am, but I can't... If I'm at that beach again, if I see... “don't me a scene”, “you're embarrassing us”... I just... please...”

“Sure, kid. But can I tell the others? They're really worried, you should have seen Jack's face when you passed out, I've never seen him like that, I think they deserve to know what happened. Don't worry, I'll tell them not to tell you anything about it, so it will remain buried on the darkest corners of your mind.”

“Thanks again.”

“You're welcome. And if you want to talk shitty parents or shitty family in general, you know where I'm at.”

“Yeah.”

Merritt erased what had surfaced of the Hamptons incident and Danny went back to sleep again. He told Jack and Lula and they were quite shocked, Lula nearly crying. They were much softer with Danny's little weirdnesses after that. Maybe this was one of the reasons why Danny needed control so bad: deep down he felt no one was going to help him even if he needed it, so he needed to be able to know every detail of everything, so he could get himself out of even the most impossible situation. He nearly died because no one came to help (no one cared that he was in the danger in the first place) and that couldn't happen again.

Merritt smiled more often at him, sometimes sided with him, afterwards. He carried a little piece of Daniel Atlas most people didn't have, not even the showman himself. It had helped him understand him better, read him in a clearer way. See him as more than just a dick.
Ever since he woke up that morning, Danny had been feeling unwell. It wasn't much, just some faint pain in his belly, but it wouldn't leave him alone which was bullshit because that day they had a really big show. He'd slept really badly and woke up feeling not refreshed, but even more tired than when he went to bed. Bad news, because he was supposed to deliver flawlessly that night and a big part of the show was his responsibility.

As it should be. Jack and Lula had gotten better in their tricks, and Danny feared that someday they'd surpass him, get too good and not need him anymore on their shows. And he couldn't go back to the streets after the eye, couldn't be let go. So he needed to be essential for the show, for the eye, for the horsemen, he needed to be indispensable and irreplaceable to avoid anyone wanting to kick him out. He wasn't a likable person, and he'd already made too many mistakes. He needed to be perfect and he was feeling far from that.

He took some pain pills and he rehearsed his parts. Every little detail was planned and thought out, every moment of every trick was perfectly controlled. Danny drank some coffee, unable to stomach anything solid and hoped that a long nice shower would make him feel better. He'd grown out his hair again, and it was a mess – and there was no room for messes in his life, much less that day. The hot water was wonderful on his skin and after getting out he felt a new man, smelling like the sea, hair perfect.

If only that annoying pain would go away, leave him alone. What had started as a mild discomfort was starting to become a more serious annoyance, and anything that touched his stomach made it hurt even more. Well, no matter what it was, it would have to wait until after the show. They were performing in front of 5000 people in Seattle and it needed to go without a hitch. There would be policemen too, probably, and even if they had the support of the Eye everything could go to hell in a second. He needed to be in his best shape so he took some energy drinks and some more pain pills and got ready to go.

The others noticed that Danny was different, more quiet, less demanding than other times, but chalked it up to Danny being weird as usual. A new wave of awkward and arrogant for everyone's enjoyment. Jack thought it was a bit too strange, though. He wasn't just quiet, he was more pale, too. Could he really be freaking out that much about a show? He was an expert, this kind of thing was like instinctive to him. It made no sense.

“You okay, man? You're looking a little pale there.”

And this harmless concerned comment did nothing but exacerbate Danny's paranoia even more. Jack was asking because he wanted his place in the show, he wanted to have more lines, he wanted to take over. He was looking for any crack in him – well, he wasn't going to find any. J. Daniel Atlas never faltered, especially not when he had a job to do.

They got to Seattle and things seemed to be getting better. Danny had taken a stronger analgesic (and
this amount of pain medication was probably bad, but he'd deal with that tomorrow, like with everything else) and was feeling more up to the job than he'd been the whole day. As long as nothing touched his midsection, he would be fine. Lula smiled at him, and Jack winked and he felt stupid. Of course they didn't want to kick him out, he was probably just imagining things. The amount of overthinking he did was going to get him in trouble.

“Hello, Seattle!”

As soon as the lights hit them Danny knew he'd been wrong. He wasn't better, not at all. He felt too hot and too cold, the stage was bouncing all around him, and the pain had become sharper and infinitely more severe. But he was already on stage, he couldn't back down now. He couldn't let down all that audience, and he couldn't disappoint the audience. The show must go on.

It was extremely difficult. Danny had to make sure that he could maintain the increasing pain in his stomach under control, that the trick was done properly, that no one noticed something was wrong... But he managed. He wanted to cry, or scream in pain, all he wanted to do was double over himself, and cry out that he couldn't bear it anymore.... But no. He could wait, he could deliver. He was the great J Daniel Atlas he was in control of his own body, enough at least to finish a show. Until he wasn't.

They were doing the final trick, Danny barely holding himself together, when a specially sharp pain crossed his abdomen and he doubled over and nearly fell. There were tears and his eyes and no matter how much he tried to will himself, he couldn't do it, couldn't continue. His mind wouldn't answer anymore, there was only pain, shearing blinding pain, and his legs were wobbly and he was on his knees but he didn't care anymore, because all he wanted was this nightmare to end, for the pain to end.

There was a hand on him, someone supporting his weight, saying his name but he couldn't say anything, do anything anymore, he'd given up... He just wanted to be left alone with his pain and go to sleep as soon as possible.

The others had noticed something was off with their fellow horseman, but didn't think it was this bad. Lula thought that maybe he had a bad nightmare, one of those very vivid ones, that leave you the rest of the day (sometimes for several days) a bit shaken up. She knew that he had nightmares, because they'd slept in rooms next to each other in several hotels, but didn't know him well enough to ask. It was too personal, and they never talked about anything personal. She wanted to ask, though. He seemed troubled.

Jack had imagined that he was probably just exhausted. Danny was the one that worked the most of them, sometimes in several projects at the same time, and at some point it had to catch up to him. Everyone had their limits. With this new show, Danny had been planning, preparing, rehearsing, performing, coordinating logistics, resources, materials, locations..... While he and Lula just had some fun, learned a few tricks and practiced the old ones. Maybe they have told him to loosen up, but it was so comfortable getting everything done...

Merritt had imagined that it was Seattle that had made Danny paler and quieter that day. It was impossible to know for certain, but Merritt had noticed that the boy never spoke about his family, which probably meant he had a bad relationship with them. Maybe a estranged father was from Seattle or a druggie sibling and he a lot of memories had been brought back, leaving him with a restless night and an empty feeling on his stomach. Maybe after the show Merritt would invite the boy to some whiskey, let him vent a little.

But as they raced towards their fallen partner, the horsemen realised they'd all been wrong.
Lula put her hand on his face and noticed how hot it was. Danny wasn't just sad or shaken up. He was sick.

“He's burning up!” She said, looking at the others slightly panicked.

“What's wrong, Danny? What hurts?”

Danny managed to point at his stomach and then doubled over again, this time the tears falling freely down his cheeks.

“We have to get him off the stage now” Merritt said, taking charge. “You two take him, I'll take care of the audience. And call an ambulance!”

While Merritt apologised to the audience, assured them that this was not part of the show and told them that it was over, Jack and Lula took a nearly limp Danny backstage, where they lay him down and where joined by Dylan.

“What happened?”

“We don't know, he seemed fine, and then he just... We have to, we have to call an ambulance, where's my phone?”

Jack was losing it and he knew it, but he just couldn't see this, couldn't see his friend in so much pain, he didn't know what to do, he should have seen it.

“I've already called, they're on their way, we get a special eye-approved medical service so no fake identities needed, they said they'll be here in about five-seven minutes.” Dylan said, trying to keep everybody calm while gently squeezing the sick boy's hand.

“And what are we supposed to do for five to seven minutes? Just stay here, not knowing anything, watching him like that? No!” Lula said, and got out to the stage.

“Are there any doctors in the audience?” A lot of people had already left, but some were just getting ready to leave. “We've called an ambulance, but we could use some assistance while it arrives.”

Two young women jumped down and joined Lula, who took them backstage. Only one was a doctor, but her friend came with her in case they needed help.

“Here.”

“Who...?”

“She's a doctor.”

“Yeah, hi, Julie Kane, intensivist. What seems to be the problem?”

Dylan let the woman approach, albeit reluctantly. He didn't want anyone causing poor Danny more pain.

“He has a fever and he seems to be experiencing some pain in his stomach.”

The doctor checked his vitals and his eyes.

“I'm going to have to do a examination, ok? I'm going to have to open your shirt and feel your abdomen for a bit, so it will probably hurt, but I'll try to finish as quickly as possible, okay handsome?”
The other horsemen watched, impotent, as the doctor did her work and Danny's face contorted in pain even more.

“Abdominal rigidity, this is bad. And he's been standing and doing magic tricks, I mean, one thing is dedication and another is being downright suicidal, my god. Ok, when the ambulance comes here you tell them that he needs immediate surgery, ok? And if they take him to general ask for Dr. Cassidy, she's a friend of a mine, she's the best. Do any of you know when the pain started?”

The horsemen nodded, feeling horrible. Danny was in really bad shape and they had hardly noticed and done nothing.

The ambulance came a couple of minutes later, and Dr. Kane told the medics all she knew, to make things easier. Dylan rode in the ambulance with Danny, while the rest followed them in another car. It was a long horrible night. Danny was in surgery for three hours and then was moved to the ICU. They were told a lot of big words about what happened “peritonitis”, “abcess”, “sepsis”, but the only thing that stuck with them was that Danny was in a very delicate condition and that it could have been fatal.

“He should recover fully, the surgery went very well, but it will take some time to recover. His condition remains very grave but there's room to be hopeful.”

They all breathed, relieved.

During the next days, Dylan stayed there, almost constantly, bringing food and books and cards and just providing company. Lula brought her favourite music and some nice paintings and cards, to brighten the room. She tried to smile as much as possible, to compensate for the pain and the fear. Jack was in and out several times a day, never really knowing what to say, what to do. Merritt was around in the medical facility, talking to doctors and nurses, making sure everything was the best it could be.

Someday, they would have to ask Danny why he'd hidden his pain, why he hadn't said anything and risked his life to perform. But that was another day.

In that moment, they just wanted to cuddle with him, tell him jokes and make sure he was all right, physically, emotionally, in general. That they weren't going anywhere.

They wanted to make sure that he knew that The Horsemen were extremely lucky to sill have one J Daniel Atlas with them, and that they never ever ever wanted to lose him.
Lula didn’t know Daniel very well. He was a very private person, and she hadn’t known him long enough to pry, even if she was incredibly curious. She knew a lot about Jack because they had spent entire nights together, just talking, sharing stories and eating pop corn long after the movie had finished. Jack was open like a book, at least to her, and she knew him better than a lot of people from her life before the horsemen.

She knew things about Merritt, too. She (and the rest of them) had learnt about his brother and the horrors of the Mini McKinneys act thanks to Macau, and they'd needed to factor the twin into their strategies, so they were told many things. Besides, she had gone out partying more than once with the mentalist, and drunken escapades make people bond, no matter who they are. And Dylan had taught her things about the Eye and the horsemen. The might not be really close, but they knew each other.

But Daniel remained a mystery for Lula beyond work and magic that was. Sure, she knew things she'd seen and heard of him because they were in the same team but she didn't know many things about him outside the magic world. What music did he like? Did he even like music? When the hell was his birthday? Why did he always seem so sad at the end of the day? She didn't know any of the answers to these questions and the rest of the team only told her that he liked to be in control and that he had a big ego.

Well, yeah, but so did they. And Daniel was the first and only one who jumped to the water to retrieve Dylan when he'd been in that safe which Lula thought was quite heroic. Anyways, despite some bad comments from other people about him, Lula wanted to know her fellow horseman better, and didn't know how. And when she got the chance, oh, how she wished, he'd remained a mystery.

Lula couldn't understand how everything had gone to shit so easily, but it had, and they had a whole team of SWAT members with all their weapons and special skills on their heels in the middle of a show, so they had needed to escape, divide themselves and run from the authorities that were hunting them. Sure, they could probably escape from wherever they took them, but Lula had a feeling that this branch of law enforcement wouldn’t be as nice as the others. They seemed to be incredibly aggressive towards them, maybe personal reasons were involved.

Whatever the case, Lula had ended up in an alleyway that seemed safe and secluded enough, and had decided to stay there for a while, until things calmed down. And then she heard a voice and tensed immediately.

“Who’s there?” It was barely above a whisper, but enough to let her recognise the voice.

“Atlas?”

“Lula!”

She went towards the voice, and saw the end of his legs and feet behind a dumpster in the end of the
alley. He wasn't sitting on the floor, and...

“Oh my god, you've been shot!”

There was a gunshot wound on his left side, above the navel but under the lungs (fortunately) that
was bleeding profusely and painting everything red: Danny's white shirt, the wall behind him, even
on the floor a puddle was starting to be formed.

“Oh my god, oh my god.... Think, Lula, think, what do they do in movies in situations like these?
Stop the bleeding, apply some pressure.”

She took a scarf she'd been using for a trick, knelt beside her teammate and applied some pressure on
the wound, hoping it would stop bleeding so much. She bandaged his whole stomach, tightly,
watching in horror as the yellow scarf became crimson too quickly. This was bad, very, very bad.
Daniel was already too pale, his breathing and pulse too slow.

“I have to get you to a hospital.”

A blood stained hand stopped her as she took out her phone.

“No” Danny said, with the little strength he could muster. “If anyone comes those cops will know
we're here and shoot. They wanted to kill us, Lula, you saw them. Next shot will be on the head. We...we need to wait, until they're not around here. Please, Lula... they'll finish me off, they'll kill
you. In here, we're safe.”

“But you're bleeding out!”

“The bullet went straight through, and your... your bandaging can hold for ten minutes.” It was
painful for Danny to speak, but he needed to get the message through. "It's painful but I don't think
it's fatal. If we get out, or call someone in too soon they'll kill us both, they had orders to kill us, you
saw them... And a guy with a gunshot wound doesn't go unnoticed, even one as sneaky as me, I
can't go out and hope they won't see me. But you could try to get out, find the others....”

“I'm not leaving you here alone!” Lula nearly yelled. “And I still think we should get you some
help...”

“Give it ten minutes for them to leave.”

“Eight.”

“Nine.”

“All right, fine, we'll wait. But if you pass out, or have a seizure or anything, I'm calling an
ambulance and I don't care if I have to stop the bullets with my hands, all right? And don't fight me
on this, don't use up the little energy you have on that, will you?”

She sat next to him, with her back to the wall, waiting for the wretched nine minutes to pass, looking
at her pale friend, who seemed so much more vulnerable and small than usual.

“I don't like this, I don't like this! You could be bleeding internally or something while I'm just here,
waiting... Are you cold? Do you feel sick?”

“Calm down, Lula. I'll be fine, it just hurts like hell. Didn't know you cared that much anyways.”

“Of course I do, you idiot! You're...” and what word could she use to describe him? “awesome.”
“Am I?” Danny said, but it was harder to focused on her voice, to keep his eyes open. The pain was becoming a bit too much.

“Yeah, under some layers of meanness, arrogance and coldness in general, you kind of are. No, no, no, don't you go sleeping on me, I told you what would happen, right?”

Lula thought of those medical dramas that were her secret guilty pleasure. What did the heroine doctors do when the handsome man was so badly wounded? Keep him awake, entertained. Make him talk, tell a story. But it had to be something that really interested Daniel to maintain him awake and in a speaking mood. Flatter his ego, call him smart, he won't resist that.

“So, you're like super intelligent, right?” She started. “Did you ever go to Harvard or some of those fancy schools?”

Danny half smiled and looked at her.

“Yale. And I had a full scholarship too, didn't have to pay a dollar.”

“Wow, Yale. And what did you study there?”

“Physics. Is really handy for the tricks, too... Knowing how speed and gravity work gives you a better control...of your...of your surroundings...”

She was losing him and she couldn't lose him. They still had seven minutes left.

“But it's really hard to get in there.”

“I almost didn't... because... I didn't have recommendation letters... didn't know people... but they were impressed with my exams... so...”

Lula was at her edge, he was too pale, too weak, she needed to do something.

“I'm going to call someone, I can't...” Again, a blood stained hand stopped her.

“Lula, I've been shot before, if something was wrong... and couldn't wait I'd know it and tell you to call Dylan.... And your bandaging was really tight, it's holding up, don't worry.”

“You've been shot before?” It was hard to believe that soft spoken Daniel, their eternal and dear Buffy, could have found himself in another situation before the horsemen where he was shot. “I presume this was not in Yale?”

Danny scoffed and then grimaced. He'd planned to stay there, behind the dumpster alone, trying not to think about the hole in his side and waiting out the minutes, and Lula's appearance had been most welcome. She seemed genuinely concerned for him and worried that he was hurt, which felt nice, if he was honest, and he was bringing a bit of humour to that nightmare of the day.

“You know that now you have to tell me, right?” She continued.

“I lived in a bad neighborhood. There was a shooting, you know, the police, rival gangs... One of the gang leaders even sent me flowers to the hospital.”

“I don't believe you.”

“Believe it. It was horrible, you know, not just the bullet and the pain, but how much money it cost my mother to keep me there. Anyways, that was the first time.”
“First time?” Lula’s eyes widened almost comically and Danny smiled. He usually didn’t talk about these things, but he was in pain, and still afraid that those men would appear and finish him off, not knowing where the others were... This was a good distraction.

“Second time I was already a magician, in a contest... One of the tricks involved me shooting my assistant with a fake gun, you know, with blanks? Another guy changed my blanks for real rounds to get me out of the competition and out of the circuit in general..... But I felt something was off when I took the gun before the show, so before shooting Henley I decided to shoot myself once to make sure everything was okay... And well, I shot myself.”

“You shot yourself.”

“Henley nearly had a heart attack or something.”

“Wow. So this will be you third gunshot scar.”

“Yes.”

Lula was curious to know where the other two were. Maybe one day she would “accidentally” walking in on him after showering.

Only two minutes left. The bandages started to leak blood and Danny’s eyes were a bit more unfocused, but there were still still two minutes.

“Danny.. Can I call you Danny?”

“Sure.”

“When's your birthday? I feel like it probably already passed, and I didn't say happy birthday or got you anything.”

“Is the 22nd of February”

“That's next week!”

“When is yours, Lula?”

“In may, the ninth.”

“I'll remember.”

“Sure you will.” How could he, when he was barely conscious?

And so when the time was up and Lula called everyone: the eye, Dylan, Jack and Merritt, she called an ambulance, she called everyone she could think of. Her fellow horsemen distracted their pursuers while she rode in the ambulance with a now unconscious Danny, holding his hand the whole time.

When he woke up, safe and protected in his own private hospital room, she was there too, and she grinned. He had to stay in bed for longer than he'd like, to avoid more damage, but everyone kept telling how lucky he'd been that bleeding had been stopped when it was, of how close he'd been to bleeding out. He never told anyone, but he'd kept Lula's bloodstained scarf with him, as a weird souvenir.

The next week, on his birthday, he got a box with three small teddy bears: one was a magician (obviously), another seemed to be a gang member and the last one a physics professor. (He wouldn't
admit it to anyone, but sometimes, when he had a nightmare, he took one of them and slept hugging it, to chase the bad dreams away). The next may Lula received a box with the complete box set of House MD, ER, and even a cancelled show she used to love called Medical investigation. She didn't know how Danny had found out, but it was very thoughtful.

He wasn't so much of a mystery anymore. Lula knew that under the cold, hardened façade there someone caring, someone appreciative, a sweet man with lots of stories to tell. And one day, she'd end up seeing all his scars. One day.
When Danny was a kid he wasn't especially strong or muscly, but he knew how to defend himself, because he had a way of getting out of dangerous situations by sneaking out or using tricks. Bullies, cops, nobody ever posed a problem for him because he could outsmart them and avoid all sorts of trouble, maybe even corner them, expose their secrets if they particularly got on his nerves. So people knew better than to go against him, even though he was a thin, lanky kid.

Sadly, not everyone had Danny's skill set and many nerdy boys and girls from around were still harassed on the streets and at the school. Danny generally didn't care too much (he had enough problems of his own to care about everyone else's) but when a bunch of older guys went after his lab partner, a sweet bright boy called Darnell, he knew he had to something.

He put on a mask to minimize the amount of retaliation against him, thought out some tricks, studied the routine of those bullies and put his plan into place. He cornered them in an alley and scared them half to death with a bunch of tricks and props. It wasn't much, but they stopped bothering Darnell and the rest of them, just in case. Nobody wanted to run into that magician boy twice.

It happened five or six times in the next two years, before Danny was transferred. He didn't always act against injustice, but when the victim was helpless for some reason, or someone he knew and appreciated, then there was a chance that magician boy would come and save you from big meanies.

He was a heroic figure in the neighborhood for a while, an inspiration for some who saw as one of the few good things in an otherwise horrible place. But he was also a nuisance and occasionally a big problem for the local criminals, who'd lost their reputation and place in a gang after being bested by a child in a mask. Some of them even went to jail after magician boy exposed them.

One of them was Jay Delacroix, who had sworn that even if he had to wait 20 years, he would finish off that boy with his own hands, make him pay for what he'd done. He did some small but well paid jobs to earn to some money and when he had enough, he dedicated himself to locating the boy and getting his sweet revenge. Apparently magician boy had become a famous magician.

Jay didn't care. The kid was going to die and it wasn't going to be a pretty death, no merciful shot in the head. He would beat him up with his own hands, kick him, punch him, break limbs and organs until he choked on his won blood. This boy made him look like a joke, him who was supposed to lead the gang, that magician had brought shame to his name and his family. He'd made him lose the best years of his life, rotting in prison, when he should have been succeeding, surrounded by money and respect.

He managed to find the kid and had to restrain himself. He didn't want to go there when there was someone else, someone who could stop him, side with the boy and ruin everything. Besides, he didn't want to have any witnesses, so he needed those other four to leave. This was personal, it had to be just magician boy and him. And then, one day, the dark haired older one was away and the hat one and the other two were out partying. Daniel was finally alone.
Jay had studied the house, sabotaged its securities, found and created ways in and out. The boy wouldn't know anything until it was already too late. But he would know what hit him, oh, he would know for the remainder of his sad little life. In minutes, Jay was already there, ready for the kill.

“Who's there?” Danny had a bad feeling.

There was a voice. A voice he hadn't heard in a very long time.

“You probably don't remember me, but I thought of you every day. Today is the day you die... magician boy.”

No more talking, no more pleasantries. Danny tried to escape or find a weapon before the other man got him but couldn't. The man tackled him and threw him to the ground, and when Danny hit his head everything went blurry and started moving.

Jay was punching him in the face, kicking him in the ribs, broke one of his arms and Danny could only cry out in pain, too dizzy to move, pinned down and unable to move, letting himself be punched, be kicked, as pain exploded in different parts of his body. There was a manic smile in Jay's face as he continued, and continued, and continued, now stained with magician boy's blood.

Danny was resigned to dying there, at the hands of a small crook he turned over to the police when he was just a kid. It was sad, really. He wished he could have said goodbye to the guys, and to Henley. He wished he'd made things better, but most of all he wished he could have a better death. On stage, in the middle of a big trick. And not beaten to a bloody pulp in his house floor. He could taste blood and wished he would simply pass out already.

“Oh, this feels good!”

Jay was so engrossed in his own happiness that he didn't hear the door open and was nearly powerless when strong arms took him away and subdued him with a few careful words and actions. Just like that, he was hypnotized to give himself up to the police and never speak to them or approach them.

While Merritt was working his magic on the guy, Jack and Lula where next to Danny on the floor, seeing how bad was the damage. They put him on his side, so he wouldn't choke on blood and looked at him with concern.

“It'll be okay now, we've got you, you're going to be fine.” But their voices were already too far.

Jack and Lula were freaking out and Merritt nearly dropped his phone while calling Dylan. They'd been already a bit too drunk when they got home to find some random stranger beating the shit out of Danny while their friend lay uncharacteristically still on the floor, his face a bloody mess. Of course they stopped the guy immediately, Merritt hypnotized him and Jack called an ambulance, but they were still in shock.

They took Danny to the hospital and Jack rode with him in the ambulance, not caring about anything but Danny. He looked horrible, and every time the medics took off something they only revealed more injuries. That guy, whoever he was, had really done a number on him. Jack wondered who it might be and why was he so angry with Danny... he was an irritating guy but nothing justified this kind of violence. Jack wanted to cry when they finally got to the hospital and his friend was taken. He was still a bit drunk, and all his emotions were amplified.

“He's gonna be okay, right?”

Lula and Merritt joined him after a while, and Dylan was on his way from Toronto. Jack cried a bit,
the image of all that blood on the floor and Danny's limp head on the ambulance chasing him. It had been his idea to go out and stay a while longer. That man had probably been waiting for a moment in which Danny was alone, and he'd given it to him.

“I'm sure he will.”

“Well, at least that dude, a Mr. Delacroix, has confessed crimes worth at least twenty more years in prison, so he won't be able to come hurt us again. We were lucky I could suggest him so easily and he had so many skeletons on his closet.”

They had to wait for four excruciating hours until a doctor finally let them in Danny's room.

“He has a mild concussion, a double fracture in his left arm, three broken ribs, and extensive trauma in the face, chest and abdomen. Nothing too severe, but he'll have to take it easy and rest for at least a couple of months. I hope they caught the guy.”

“He was caught yeah, thank you, doctor.”

“I'll be back in a couple of hours.”

Danny was awake, but looked a bit out of it. Probably the pain killers. His left arm was plastered and in a sling, his whole midsection bandaged. His face was a mess, full of bruises, butterfly bandages and cuts. One of his eyes was deeply red, and in a couple of days it would probably be swollen shut.

“You feelin' better, champ?” Merritt asked, immediately wondering where the nickname had come from. Maybe he had a soft spot for that kid despite everything they'd said to each other.

Danny attempted a smile, but couldn't quite manage. His face just hurt so much.

“Thank you for coming, guys. You saved my life.”

There was a commotion outside of the rooms and two people approached, a man and a woman.

“See! I told you we were too late!” The woman was saying, while the man just waved at Danny.

“Darnell?” Couldn't be! No contact from anyone in years and suddenly two people from his old neighborhood showed up in the same day. “Let them in.” But unlike the other one, this he was happy to see.

“Hey, we just came to warn you, Jay is out and after you, wonderboy.” They laughed softly at the irony of the situation.

“Yeah, you're about six hours too late.”

Then obviously came the moment of introductions, when the horsemen learned that Darnell (and his sister Sasha) were childhood friends and that even if they hadn't seen each other in over ten years, they'd come to warn him, hoping they would get to him before Jay. They also told them about his “magician boy” time and how he helped those in need with tricks.

“Our Atlas, a kid vigilante... amazing.” Merritt didn't believe his ears.

“But how did you know it was me? I wore a full face mask! You could only see my neck and hands!” He'd always imagined that magician boy had been a shadow, a mysterious presence. Now apparently everyone had known it was him.

“Yeah, that was our first clue. There weren't a lot of white kids in our neighborhood, now, were
they?" Darnell mentioned ironically. Everybody had known that magician boy was the jewish boy with the blue eyes. Everyone. “And magician boy only saved people you were friends with, wonderboy. You didn't need to be a genius to figure it out.”

Sasha smiled.

“And when magician boy was hit, then the next day you had a bruise. I mean, it could have been your dad too…”

“You also knew about that?” His father hadn't been the kindest, but he'd thought he'd hidden that pretty decently. His whole childhood had been a lie, apparently. He thought himself smooth and apparently had been everything but.

“Oh my god, you guys need to tell us eeeeverything about teenage Danny!” Lula said, smiling.

Danny was still too hurt and a bit groggy from the painkillers, so they let him rest and went to the cafeteria where siblings told the horsemen about their childhood with barely anything to eat, about the amount of hope magician boy had brought to all of them, how happy they'd been to see him again, as a famous guy, when the horsemen started.

None of them had known, of course. They had imagined a childhood in the upper east side, with a butler that helped him in tricks. Danny never mentioned anything about living off scholarships and stealing food, never ever talked about his family. But they remembered him, back in his first home, how a kid had decided he was better than all of those thugs with their guns and bats and had bested them. How he had challenged all the horrors and defeated them. (For the most part)

Sure, he had received his fair share of bruises because of it, even after so many years, but he had also inspired many others. As he lay on his hospital bed, half of him bandaged and still knocked out from painkillers, the Horsemen felt proud to have a boy like that with them. They would stay with him, watch over him, make sure he stayed in bed and didn't open any wounds until he was whole again.

Magician boy would be back again, and this time, he wouldn't be alone.
The Shrike safe incident

Chapter Notes

Helloo requested Danny being put in the safe instead of Dylan in the second movie, so here it is! Requests still open :)

Danny was drowning.

The level of the water was raising and although he'd figured a way of opening the safe, it worked with something he didn't have. Some sort of pin, or key, something Shrike normally had with him (except that one time when he didn't) but that Danny obviously lacked. He tried, tried to make some sort of device with parts of the things he had in his pockets, but nothing was working and the level of the water was rising too quickly.

Danny's head hurt and he wanted to cry. The water was rising and rising, flooding everything. It was quite clear this was useless and that nothing short of a miracle was going to save him. He was unable to save himself, and he was going to die in a small, confined space. He'd always had a small touch of claustrophobia (on top of the rest of his mental issues) which made his mind work a bit slowly. It was too late, anyways. The water was already in his mouth level and he was cold, oh so very cold.

He kept fighting with the heavy metal safe, trying to unscrew something, trying to open it somehow, but nothing was working and his hands were shaking too much for him to be able to do anything of use. He threw his head back, hitting the metal and let a couple of tears go down. He didn't want to go down like this, he had just wanted to figure out who was behind everything, and how they could get themselves out of this mess as easily as possible.

Danny understood now that it had been too dangerous to go alone, that no matter how smart you are you can always get clubbed in the head and pass out, in which case all of your wits are useless. He never should have gone to follow clues alone, he'd just wanted to impress everyone figuring everything alone... He'd been too greedy, and now he was going to die because of it. Maybe he deserved it. At least no one else was getting hurt because of him, just him. The flooding continued, steadily, more water, less air.

The water was up to his eyes now, and Danny knew that it wouldn't be long now until he run out of air. He took a long breath and tried to work some of his oldest tricks on the lock, but nothing was working. He tried and tried, with increasing desperation. There's was only water in the safe now, no air. Every time he instinctively opened his mouth to take air, water came in. He hit the metal walls around him, but was getting weaker and weaker.

Soon, his eyes closed and he said goodbye to the world, wishing he'd had more time, wishing he'd been able to do more...

....

“Where's Atlas?” Dylan said when he found the others, with a very bad feeling.
“He said that he needed to check something and that he would meet us here half hour ago, but there's no sign of him and his phone has no signal.” Jack said, He was getting a bit worried, if he was honest. What if Walter and his men had taken him hostage to force them to do what they wanted? “Do you know anything, Dylan?”

“I might.”

In a matter of minutes they were in a harbour, and Dylan had jumped next to reach a metal safe in the bottom of the water. Shit, shit, shit. Danny was probably in there without the means of getting out. He had come all the way to Macau to protect the horsemen and he had failed them. There was a chance that Daniel was already dead and... No. He couldn't think like that.

He had the way of opening the safe and that would only focus on that. Open the safe and take the boy out as soon as possible. The water made everything difficult and he had to be very precise to be able to open the safe. The gravity of the situation made everything complicated but after two misses he managed to open it and saw Danny. He didn't look good, but Dylan didn't have time to dwell on it.

He had to get Danny up and in dry land to start CPR. That boy was not dying if he had a say in it. He got out quite quickly considering the dead weight he was carrying, and soon he was on the cement floor, trying to revive a lifeless while the rest of the horsemen surrounded him. It didn't look good, Dylan was doing the compressions and the mouth to mouth but there was no movement, no breathing. Maybe he'd been too late, maybe there was nothing they could do.

Lula was on brink of tears, Jack already actively crying and Merritt praying to a god he didn't believe existed, but all of them were still hanging on to hope, holding their breaths to see some movement, to get their friend back from that watery death. Danny had many faults and he'd made mistakes, sure, but he didn't deserve to go so soon, when he was still so young.

Dylan kept at it, unable to face the fact that he had lost one of his horsemen, no, Daniel was going to be okay, he had to be okay, he had so much to live for...And suddenly there was movement, and a soft noise, and there was water coming out of Danny's mouth, and he abruptly opened his eyes and threw up a bunch of water. They put him on his side, where he coughed and threw up even more water and then saw everyone around him. His team, looking at him with happy and relieved expressions.

“You okay?” Jack said, wiping the tears from his face. “We almost lost you, man. Don't do that ever again, okay?”

Danny half smiled, trying to catch his breath. The rest of them coddled him a bit with hugs and hot drinks and asking him if he was okay every ten minutes, but it was a pleasant feeling. Despite his ego, his bad decisions, despite him in general, he still had a team that cared about him and appreciated him, someone to miss him when he was gone. Silver lining, right?

Although he had to admit, it became difficult for him to go swimming after that experience, but at least, he hadn't died in a safe in the waters of Macau. Life had given him a second chance and he planned on using it.
Lula hadn't meant to see him, she really hadn't. She and Jack had a flirty, semi sexual semi romantic, fully wonderful thing going on, where they had no boundaries with each other, and had more than once showered together. It was a lovely feeling, their nakedness, the cocoa scented shower gel, kisses under the hot water.... So that afternoon, when she heard the water running, she just went there, opened the door, without giving it much thought.

Sure, it was locked, but Jack often locked things so she'd have to pick the lock like he'd taught her. He liked teaching her, and she liked being taught. And it was obviously him in the shower, Merritt wasn't still back from another late night and Atlas was probably being a geek somewhere, studying tricks with Dylan or memorising old Eye texts. Whatever, she was going to have fun in the shower with her boy and get some eye candy.

Only the flavour of the candy wasn't exactly what she was expecting.

Danny was stepping out of the shower after a late long night reading, feeling dead to the world, wondering where he had left his towel (no sleep for nearly forty hours made his super aware mind work painfully slowly) when he noticed something else in the room that shouldn't have been there. A pair of eyes connected to a body that made a person in front of him, unabashedly looking at his naked body.

Lula had stopped working for a moment. One could say she'd short circuit-ed, that her brain had stopped functioning properly. She could only watch in awe, endless white skin, marred by all sorts of scars: long diagonal ones, cigarette burns, older looking gashes... All types, mostly in his chest and arms (not that her eyes hadn't ventured a bit further down, 'cos they had too). And something in the back of her head told her that she should stop watching but she just simply couldn't tear her eyes away.

"Lula!"

Danny turned around, trying to protect his most intimate parts, but that only gave Lula a perfect view of his butt and scar covered back and shoulders, so he didn't really fix the problem.

"Wow."

"What are you doing here? Go!" Danny said, confused and uncomfortable.

Lula blinked, realised what she'd been doing and covered her eyes. Too little, too late, girl.

"Sorry, I thought you were Jack!"

And she backed away and left the bathroom, still a bit shocked by what she had seen. She drew two conclusions of her mistaken intrusion, one that Danny was deceptively hot under that nerdish façade he wore and two that someone had hurt him, a lot, for a long time, extensively. She was torn.
between wanting to see more of him and wanting to know more of what had happened to him. But it was going to be difficult, because even if they were closer now, they still weren't the biggest of friends. And asking some of their multiple scars was kind of a sensitive issue. So Lula was hoping that they would leave the issue alone.

No such luck.

“What.... what has happened between you two?” Of course Merritt would notice it, and wouldn't leave it alone.

“What.” Danny said very quickly, while Lula just blushed.

“Hum, denial? This is getting interesting.”

Jack threw Lula a strange look, and suddenly she felt guilty and spit everything out.

“I walked in the bathroom when he was walking out of the shower and saw him naked, that's it, that's all, nothing else happened.”

“Nothing else? Are you quite sure of that, Lula?” Merritt said, with one of his characteristic smirks.

“I may have stared for a bit...a while... but nothing happened, I just saw things I wasn't supposed to see.”

And she wasn't going to say anything else, Jack and Merritt could interpret it the way they wanted, but that was exactly what had happened. She'd seen things that were supposed to be hidden, and not just body parts. The incident was kind of forgotten because they got a new mission. A welcome distraction, although Lula never forgot the look of those criss cross lines in her friend's shoulders and arms and chest.

With time, she'd imagined a thousand scenarios that could have caused them. The most realistic one was that he'd been involved in a car accident when he was relatively young. Maybe the car had been a totaled mess, and he'd been hurt in many places, with glass shards from the windows in embedding themselves in him due to the speed and force of the collision. There were like thousands of car crashes every year in the country, statistically it was possible that one of them had been a victim. Although that didn't explain the variety of scar type, like the cigarette burns.

Another theory she had was that when he started doing magic, he was a bit clumsy, and because he was “the great J Daniel Atlas” he would attempt even the most complicated things, mess up, and then get hurt in the process. But how would he hurt his back doing tricks, places he couldn't reach? Besides, it was difficult to imagine Atlas being clumsy. He was too put together for that.

And the last one and most fantastic one involved Daniel being a sad little orphan who lived in a Dickens-esque horrible orphan, ruled by women and men who inflicted punishments on the kids to keep them in line and prevent kids talking about their horrible living conditions, for fear of more punishments. Depending on the offense, the punishment varied, and Danny was a very rebellious kid. He probably escaped when he was relatively young, and lived in the streets earning money for food doing magic tricks.

One day, after the mission she found him in a bar, sitting in a little table alone, drinking. Which was unusual, because Daniel almost never drank alcohol. (Unlike Merritt, who was a sponge, or Jack who wasn't a heavy drinker but loved getting tipsy and becoming loud).

“Special occasion?”
“I'm just happy it went down smoothly, you know? No one's in jail, no one's hurt... It's a good day. You want something?”

“Yeah, sure.”

She sat in front of him, ordered a drink and got a hard long look at her partner. He looked tired and kind of sad, which contradicted his previous statement of being happy.

“Anything on your mind?”

Daniel was silent, looking at his drink.

“You know I can keep a secret. I never told anyone about your scars.”

He looked at her with a mix of anger and apprehension, and even more of that sadness that she sometimes felt in him. Well, if he didn't want to tell her why he was bummed that was okay but there was no way she wasn't use this occasion to pry some info on his elusive and mysterious friend.

“Just to eliminate, car accident, trick mishaps, terrible orphanage, any of these options get close?”

Daniel thought about it a little, and looked at Lula. It had been many years, maybe it would be liberating to tell someone. Have someone to go to and speak after a nightmare, or in a bad day. He'd never even told Henley, and they worked together for a long time. And Lula was trustworthy, she'd kept his secret like she said, didn't even tell Jack, and she was much closer to Jack than him. Perhaps it was the alcohol talking, but for once he wanted someone to know his story.

“No cars, I am too good to have mishaps and you know it and I wish I'd been an orphan.”

Lula had considered that possibility too, because of the extended time span of the scars, but had deemed it too sad.

“Bad dad?”

“That's an understatement.” And here it came, the avalanche of truth he'd be holding inside for so long. “You see, I was an obnoxious kid, always felt smarter than everyone else, even adults, and wanted things to be done my own way. My father had been in the military when he was younger, made it to commander before injuring himself. So, he found himself at home, with nothing to do and a kid who didn't follow his orders. And my father didn't tolerate disobedience.”

“So he started hurting you.”

“Everyone had followed his orders all his life, had respected him, but me. A kid. A weirdo who didn't deserve his last name. So he tried to scare me into respect and into leaving magic to lead a respectable life. It only made me more rebellious and only made him angrier. Since he didn't have the army anymore, schooling me became his favourite past time.”

“That's horrible. And you didn't... I don't know, tell anyone?”

“Everyone loved him in our neighborhood, and apart from some weird kids nobody liked me. They always sided with him, said I probably deserved it, that if I obeyed him more he wouldn't have to punish me. And for a long time, I believed it too. If I wanted to not be hurt I simply had to obey him. But I never could.”

“What about your mom? Did she die?”
“She had mental problems. She spent the last ten years of her life in a facility and killed herself after a psychotic break in which he nearly killed me, when I was visiting. That was one of dad's favourite excuses, you know, I'm just doing this because I don't want you to end up like your mother, batshit crazy, dead at 35, with nothing in your life. But he was wrong, she... she had many things, she was smart, she was caring... She tried to help me go live with his sister, you know, because of how my dad was, but she was just a crazy lady and my dad was a commander. There was nothing to do there, her and my word were worthless against his. And my dad wouldn't let go of the last person he had power over, the last person he could hurt.”

“Wow.”

“I don't even know why I'm telling you all this, we hardly know each other...”

“Well, the alcohol helps. And I'd already seen the scars, so half the story was told. That probably helped, too. Don't worry, I won't tell a soul. But if you need to speak, you know where I am, and you know that I don't judge. I would've been one of those few weird kids that sided with you.” Danny smiled, and this time the smile reached his eyes. That was one of the great things of Lula: she was great for jokes and fun, but she knew when to be serious too, and was easy to talk to, about anything. “Is he still alive?”

“My dad? No, he drank himself to death a few years ago.”

There was a moment of silence, Lula finished her drink, trying to digest everything, and then asked trying to change the subject to something nicer:

“What was your mom's name?”

“Jane. She was an artist, she painted. They committed her when I was like eight, but most of what I remember of her was how much she taught me. She was really talented, you know?”

“So, that's where you get it, huh?”

“Flattery will get you nowhere, Miss May.”

“Oh, I still have a last one. How do you do it? 'Cos I never see you work out or exercise but you got a great body, my friend.”

“Shut up!”

And just like that, Lula and Danny became each other confidantes, secret holders, for important and trivial things. When Danny had a nightmare about his dad coming back, he knew he could go to her and Lula would comfort him in a nice, affectionate way and she felt she'd earned a friend forever.

Apparently, barging in the bathrooms of boys just after they showered had only advantages.
The worthless/stupid incident

Chapter Notes

Peachbulle and Liz asked for suicidal Danny and here it is. I could make a second part if you wish, I have many things to say but this was already too long.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

J Daniel Atlas struggled.

He had struggled his whole life, but lately it's been harder to keep everything in check, everything under wraps. He wished he was stronger, he really did, but wasn't. His mind was an overworked machine and it was always working against him.

He was trying to forget (and partially succeeding) many things: all of his failures, the looks of disappointment, the hatred, the bad looks, the insults, the wounds that have already scarred but still hurt, and his own constant voice telling his horrible things. His troubled past, his ever-changing present. He had better days, of course, he had better years even, its peak with the first Horsemen shows, but he'd been going inevitably downhill for a while.

It started coming back when Henley left. He couldn't help but think that he was possibly partly to blame for her departure. He hadn't been able to respond to her affection, hadn't been able to be anything but be cold and overcritical and he drove her away. Now they all lost her because of him, him and his lack of competence, him being so unpleasant people turned down once in a lifetime opportunities like those. Guilt, failure, self-loathing, back with him again.

Macau and their second act should have improved things, but it only made them worse. He nearly had Dylan killed and he gave the bad guys an advantage because of his stupid ego, because he'd thought himself better than the others, because he thought he could fix things alone, get ahead. Stupid boy, should have known better. Should have known that he wasn't better than the others, than he simply wasn't as good as the others.

Worthless, that's what you are. A petulant little boy who thinks himself better than he can ever dream to be. Never forget it, never forget that you are nothing, stupid boy. Worse than useless, a burden to everyone around you. Worthless.

There was a drink in his hands. He didn't usually drink alcohol, but sometimes he felt it was the only way to get some relief. To let himself go, even if only for a little while. Think a little bit less. But this time it wasn't helping, it was only making that voice in his head louder and clearer.

No one would miss you if you left, and you know that. They would probably be glad you're gone and replace you with someone nicer, less sharp, less boring and controlling. A smarter magician, who could actually play with others, more humble, more pleasant, someone worthwhile. They'd be happy to see you gone, and happy that they don't have to kick you out themselves.

You would be doing them a favour, doing something selfless for once. No more arrogant little jerk, no more smug asshole, no more self important dick. They could have a team where all four of them were worthwhile people, a team much better than anything with him on it. And then, all of his failures, all of his ticks and strangeness wouldn't matter anymore, because he'd be gone. He wouldn't
hurt Dylan, he wouldn't hurt Henley, wouldn't hurt any of them.

Worthless boy. Stupid and useless, everyone hates you, you are just a nuisance, people who applaud you do it because they don't really know you, you're fooling yourself if you think you have friends, if you think you have anyone. Everyone has walked in on you and with good reason. Everyone deserves better than you.

He paid the bartender, struggling to keep the tears at bay, a heavy lump in his throat. Weak, on top on everything.

You don't have redeeming qualities, boy. You're nothing but scum.

When he got to the apartment where they were staying everyone was sleeping, so he didn't have to pretend, didn't have to hide the stray tears that had been falling all the way since the bar. He got to his bedroom, locked the door and threw himself on the bed. Unable the face another sleepless night alone with his thoughts, he looked at the sleeping pills bottle, and thought about how it could do more than just put him to sleep.

It will be the best way, Daniel decided. Won't leave a big mess to clean, organs or fluids all sprawled about, no, he would just go out softly, his system too depressed and slowed down to be compatible with life. The voices will stop, his head will shut up and everyone will be finally rid of his toxic presence. He'd be free and the others happy without him.

Be brave for once in your life boy, do what it's right.

He stopped counting the pills after number fourteen.

—

"Where's Danny?" Jack asked, having some late breakfast on their apartment kitchen. They had a fight the previous day (another one) and he said some really unpleasant things that he wanted to take back. He had meant them at the time, but now he was seeing that they were quite unfair. And when he went through the fight, he remembered that Daniel hadn't fought back too much, just took it, which seemed off.

"His room, I guess." Lula said. "Feel bad for yesterday?"

"Yeah, I was too harsh, wasn't I?"

"A bit."

They had been living together for a few months, and Jack had lived alone for a long time, so he wasn't used to being with people all the time. When he was angry or frustrated he took it out on Danny, because he was the one that was speaking all the time and because Lula was too nice, and Merritt messed with his head. It was easy being angry with Atlas, telling him mean things. Since they'd known each other, he'd heard people call him all the synonyms for arrogant and dick in the dictionary (and of course, the classic arrogant dick) and nothing seemed to affect the magician. But now he realised that he'd never told him that it was just frustration, that he didn't really think all those things. Ugh.

"It was harsh, especially taking into account how sad he's been lately." Merritt said, joining the conversation. "He tries to hide it, but he's been pretty bummed out these last weeks, don't know why."

"Thank you, as if I wasn't feeling bad enough already!" Jack bellowed. "It's weird that he hasn't
"He's there." Merritt said. "I heard him come in after midnight."

"It's been almost eleven hours, then. It's not like him. I'm going to call him, get him out, get this weight off my chest."

The rest just nodded and watched expectantly. Danny didn't answer or open the door, which was also very odd. Lula didn't know why, but she had a bad feeling about this.

"I don't hear anything. You sure he's there?" Jack said, his expression growing more concerned.

"Nobody has gone out since ol' Danny walked in there."

"Pick his lock." Lula said, dead serious, hoping she was wrong.

"He's going to kill me!"

"Please, I have a bad feeling."

Unfortunately, Lula's hunch was correct and something was terribly wrong. They opened the door and there he was, clear as day Daniel Atlas sprawled on his bed on a very weird position, still wearing yesterday's clothes, pale as the sheets under him and unmoving.

"He's still sleeping...?" Jack asked, sensing something wrong when he saw his friend. "Danny, buddy, it's time to wake up."

But there was no reaction. That's when Lula noticed a piece of paper on the floor and a near empty bottle of pills, and feared the worst. Merritt was behind her, watching her pick up the note and shaking his head, unable to accept what he was seeing.

"Lula." Jack asked with a shaky voice. "What does the paper say?"

"It says "you're better off without me" " Her voice was breaking too. " "I'm sorry about everything and I wish you the best. Goodbye. J Daniel Atlas. It's a suicide note."

They were all frozen in their place for a second until Merritt reacted.

"Jack, can you see if he's breathing? Does he have a pulse?"

The younger boy was barely holding himself together, but knelt next Daniel's still form and checked for signs of life.

"He's breathing but it's really shallow and slow. It doesn't sound good. I -I don't think he has a lot of time."

Merritt immediately called the ambulance, told them to hurry the hell up (added some of his magic through the phone too) while the other two moved Daniel to a couch where the medics would have easy access and tried to digest what had happened. While they were peacefully sleeping their friend and partner had tried to kill himself, after deciding that he was a burden and that everyone would be better without him.

"It's my fault." Jack said, tears in his eyes. "I should have said that I didn't mean what I said... It's just... he looks so strong... I didn't... Should have known...."

Lula comforted him.
“There's never only one cause for these things, Jack, it's always an accumulation of bad things. And none of us saw it, realised how bad it was, offered help...”

“Placing blame isn't gonna help him.” Merritt sentenced, fidgeting with his hands. “Now what's important is that he recovers. Retrieve the bottle to show it to the medics, will you? We have to strong for him now, no falling apart, ok? He needs us.”

The ambulance came quickly, even if the wait felt eternal for the horsemen. Merritt had also called Dylan, trying to be if use, who was away and would probably meet them at the hospital. In the meantime, Jack was trying not to cry and Lula was counting the seconds until that damn ambulance arrived. When it did, Jack rode with him, trying to steady his voice to tell the medics what had happened.

He couldn't shake off the feeling that this had been partly his fault, that Danny was laying lifeless in a stretcher with an oxygen mask because of something he'd done. It was easy to pick on Daniel, to make jokes at his expense, everyone had called him arrogant once or twice, sometimes stronger words. It was an easy outlet for anger and frustrations. He simply hadn't realised the effect it could have, as Danny often looked like an unmoving column, no feelings, only professional matters interested him. They should have been nicer, should have told him how much he meant, more often, made him feel appreciated. Now, perhaps, they would never get the chance. Jack felt he was trapped in a nightmare, unable to wake up.

In another car not far behind the ambulance, Merritt was driving like a madman trying not to think about Atlas' pale face when they found him. He should have said something, done something. Reading people was his thing, even those more difficult and closed up like Danny. Should have seen the warning signs, should have reached out. He'll get better, he told himself, he's a big kid who can handle himself. Well, shit. Now the kid could die, one of the very few friends he had and all that he'd told him was that he was a dick, an arrogant and a control freak. It wouldn't have hurt to say something nice once or twice, but noooo. He kept driving. The important thing was to be there for him now. If it wasn't already too late.

Lula was clutching the note as if her life depended on it, a heavy lump in her throat. There were many lines crossed out in the paper, until he finally decided what to say, and Lula read them all. “I'm sorry you had to put with me”, “Please forgive me”, “I wish I had been better, done better.” and then, in big capitals, WORTHLESS STUPID BOY. Was this really what Danny thought of himself? Danny was smart, dedicated, brave... Why?

They got to hospital and when they took Danny Jack started crying for real, unable to deal with all that. Lula and Merritt arrived shortly after and she took the crying boy in her arms after making sure nothing even worse had happened on their way. Now they just had to wait.

Dylan arrived some minutes later, still hoping this was some kind of joke or test, to see how fast he could arrive. No such luck. Danny was half dead by his own hand, and Dylan, who had spent so much time with him teaching him about the eye and about all the Shrike tricks, he'd seen nothing. He'd felt that Danny was a bit blue but that was normal, right? Very intelligent people tended to be more depressive. But not THIS depressive for god's sake. Lula let go of the note for a moment to show it to him and Dylan wanted to punch a wall. Worthless and stupid was exactly the opposite of what Danny was... How long had he been hurting and pretending he was okay? How long did he have those thoughts? He'd failed him, thoroughly failed Danny when he needed him the most.

The doctor told them that he was in a coma, that it could go either way. Too much of the pills content had already made it to his bloodstream by the time they'd found him and had damaged several organs. Now it would be up to Danny and how much fight he had left in him to make it through.
That night, in a overcrowded hospital room, no one slept.

Jack had a headache from crying so much, but still, more tears kept coming. Merritt was reading everything there was about getting people out of comas, searching his contacts for any help. Lula was in a chair next to the bed, holding Danny's cold hand and softly singing a song. Dylan was hoping for magic, for a trick that would make all this pain go away.

For the first time in a very long time, magic failed him.

Chapter End Notes

Lula is singing "Not while I'm around" Hope you've enjoyed!
There's only the two of them at home, Dylan and Danny, both in the living room of their makeshift home for the next couple of months while they lay low before their next act. Their all living together now, the four horsemen and Dylan and while it was sometimes a bit much, it helped them know each other much better. They discovered that Lula loved curry, that Jack drooled into his bed or that Merritt knew over 70 drinking games. Little things sometimes, other times more important intimate things. It was good because it helped them work, know which activities suited each of them, and how to motivate and work with their partners.

Of course, not everything was pleasant. Jack was quite messy, which got on Danny's nerves. And Atlas himself got on the nerves of most of them trying to control everything of every day and just simply trying to give orders were he really had no place to do so. He kept saying that he simply knew better. And of course Dylan, being the dad he was, spent his weeks advising the others to eat healthy and waiting for their return when they went out partying. Worrying and cleaning, mostly. Although Danny was good help with the cleaning too, because he didn't like seeing things dirty. It was a useful skill.

That night Dylan was working on some blueprints in the living room with only a small light and some metres behind him, asleep in the couch with a books in his chest was Danny, who probably didn't mean to fall asleep there. Dylan knew that the kid didn't get much sleep, so he didn't say anything, decided to just let him sleep, rest as much as he could. Only Danny wasn't resting - he's trapped in a terribly vivid nightmare.

They are all dead. Jack, Lula, Merritt, Dylan, Henley, all of them dead because of him. Because he's too weak, too easy to figure out. It's his bullshit personality that has killed them, no matter who has actually pulled the trigger. He's the leak, the weakest link, the failure in the machine. There won't be Horsemen anymore because of him.

He's hands are dripping with blood, and he knows it's theirs. He wishes he was dead too, wishes he'd been killed alongside his friends but no, he deserves to see this, deserves to know what he's done. They wouldn't have died if they hadn't known you. Idiot Atlas, always thinking himself better, actually being the worst. You're not worth this group, you never were.

Their blood is on your hands.

You killed them. They're dead.

And so Danny screamed, he screamed so loud that he awakened himself and fell of the couch.

Dylan had registered the noises that Danny had been making, and wondered if he should intervene. It was never pleasant to be caught in a bad dream but he woke him up at this hour Danny probably wouldn't go back to sleep, so he'd have to go through the day on a couple of hours of sleep on a couch... Maybe the bad dream would resolve by itself and the kid could have some more time of the sleep he so badly needed. Maybe this was why he slept so little and so far apart, Dylan considered, 'cos he had bad dreams. Unlike Jack, who do with thinking a bit more before he acted, Danny could...
totally do with thinking a bit less.

Then there was a scream, Dylan dropped his pen, his ruler and nearly jumped in his chair, before his 4am mind figured what had made that noise, and thud that followed shortly. It was Danny, and apparently his bad dream had had a terrifying end.

Danny didn't know where he was but the images from his dream lingered in his mind, and he suddenly didn't know if it had been real or not, why did he have such a weight in his chest, and why was the whole world around him spinning so much. There wasn't any air left in the room he felt afraid, so very afraid.

Dylan got closer to Danny to see if he was okay, if he'd hurt himself in the fall and saw immediately that something was wrong. His eyes were panicked and slightly out of focus, his breathing too quick and shallow.

"Danny? Are you okay?"

But Danny couldn't hear anything, because he was trapped in his own world of horror, he couldn't breathe, couldn't breathe and the world kept spinning and he was afraid, he didn't know exactly of what, OF EVERYTHING, and it was dark and.... Someone took his hands. He focused on that, dark eyes calling his name.

Dylan had taken Daniel shaking hands on his own, hoping the contact would provide some comfort for the clearly distressed boy, and spoke soothingly.

"Danny, it's Dylan, you need to calm down, look around you. We are in the apartment, ok? Just you and me and we are okay. I'm okay, you are okay, just focus on my voice, okay? Focus on the present. Take deep breaths and listen to my voice. It's fine, Danny, whatever it was, it's over now."

It took a while for Danny's breathing to go back to anything that resembled normalcy. But after some time it did, and Danny blushed a bit.

"I'm sorry... What a scene, I mean, that was.... I'm sorry, I shouldn't have, I-I.."

"Danny, what have I been saying the last fifteen minutes? It's okay."

Danny just nodded and tried to get up, but his legs were still a bit wobbly, so he just stayed on the floor, head bowed down, trying to compose himself.

"You wanna talk about it?" Danny shook his head, as Dylan knew he would, but that didn't stop him. "Sometimes talking it through helps have less bad dreams. I know from experience."

Danny's head shot up and suddenly Dylan was staring into blue pools.

"Do you dream about the safe? About drowning?"

"I used to, but not so much anymore. I dream more about about my father, and the night he disappeared. You see, the incident in Macau had a happy ending, so it's not so traumatic. You saved me."

"I was the one who put you there. If I hadn't been so vain, so easily manipulable... and this time it was a test and it was okay, but next time I could really put you guys in danger."

"Was that what your dream was about?" Dylan asked. Normally Danny wasn't so forthcoming about himself, so he had to use this opportunity. "You're afraid you'll hurt us?"
Danny's voice, usually so chipper, broke a little, his eyes watering.

"You were all dead in my dream, even Henley. And it was all my fault. I was too weak, not good enough, I put everything in danger, and I -"

"Hey." Dylan interrupted. "Stop. We all make mistakes and the eye fooled each and every one of us. You made a mistake but you learned your lesson, there was no harm done. I don't blame you. I'm sure the others don't either."

"Well, maybe you should." Danny said, lowering his eyes again. Great, another night with almost no sleep and this time he managed to look like an idiot in front of Dylan. He hated it.

"You can't beat yourself up over every mistake you make, Danny. It's not healthy."

"So?"

"So stop doing it!"

There was a moment of silence. Dylan understood that he wasn't going to change Atlas' stubborn mind in a night, and decided to do something more productive.

"What are you doing?" Danny asked, getting up after finally feeling his limbs completely back with him again.

"I'm making us some hot milk with cocoa. We're going to drink them, we're going to share peaceful memories and then we're going to our own rooms, to get some sleep."

"But-"

"No buts." Dylan said, determined. Maybe he couldn't fix all of Danny's long standing psychological issues in one night, but he could do this small thing. "And no alarms at 6 am either, we're sleeping as much as we need. Deal?"

"Ok, deal."

The microwave dinged and he took out their mugs of milk with cocoa. Dylan told Danny about Sundays in the pier with his parents and the sound of the waves. Danny told Dylan after the first Lionel Shrike tape he got, and how he watched it a thousand times in his tiny apartment. It was nice, calming, even sweet.

Dylan decided to check on him more often, to see if he still had nightmares. He was a work in progress, that boy, just like they were a work in progress family. And sometimes, when they couldn't sleep, they would have another cup of milk and cocoa, and talk about peaceful things. And this tiny bit of company brought more comfort than anything else.
Chapter 9

Daniel had many tricks. Many ways to manage, to not be overwhelmed by what surrounds him. He controlled his surroundings, and that way he avoided any situation that could make him look vulnerable, that would show his weaker points. He was much more comfortable with people thinking his weaknesses were just his ego and his need for control. No need for anyone to know about the rest, all the rest. Because there was a lot of rest.

He managed to get his problem with loud noises and people screaming under control, but still there were many other things he couldn't handle, even if he worked every day to manage. Because he was the great J Daniel Atlas, and his head wasn't going to prevent him from doing absolutely anything. The others heard him complain about things and knew there were some specific things he didn't tolerate, but didn't mind all that much. Just Danny being weird.

One of those he didn't tolerate was people smoking, he didn't allow cigarette smoke near him or in closed spaces where he was. Often Merritt had to go out in the cold night just to get a smoke, which had ended in leaving the habit altogether (not that smoked before, but this helped say goodbye to the cigarettes forever). But of course, there were situations in which it couldn't be helped.

And this happened to be one of those occasions. They were impersonating a music band in Dresden to get into the backstage of a particularly security tight place, when they crossed paths with the chief of security, who was a big dick who didn't remember green lighting this band and enjoyed throwing the smoke of his cigarettes in the smug faces of the performers. It gave him joy, bothering all sorts of stars and faces they put.

So, yeah, as luck would have it, Mr. Security man had fun while interrogating them smoking into Danny's face, who seemed to be the one that it annoyed the most and Danny knew he couldn't react too violently because they could alert more security and eventually they'd find out who they really were and that they weren't supposed to be there. He wanted to get away, but he happened to be the only one of them who spoke enough german, which the security man understood more than english.

“You did well, Danny boy. For a moment there I thought you were going to explode and ruin everything.” Merritt said, smirking like an idiot.

Danny could only cough, trying to recover his breath. Damn smoke, damn man and damn mission.

“That dude was a douche.” Jack said, changing his clothes into those of a security guard for the next bit of their plan. “You ok, man?”

“Fine.” Danny said between coughs. “Let's get what we need and get out.”

But everyone could see that the incident with the security guy had affected him. Danny hated surprises and they hadn't taken into account that security guy. They were already late and he could still smell the smoke, as if he was still getting it. He coughed and coughed and felt no relief. Bullshit.

When they were going to the meeting point to get together with Dylan, he felt that things were starting to go even worse. The cough were not stopping and he started to feel a bit light headed. He should have known, he should have prepared himself but he hadn't because how could he know that he'd have smoke on his face? And now he could do nothing about it, damn.

“Oh, come on, don't be such a drama queen. That tiny bit of smoke cannot have affected you that
much, it was nothing. Millions of people smoke every day and they or the people around them don't make half as much noise as you do.” Merritt said, because he'd been a smoker for many years and didn't understand this sudden hatred, and Daniel was behaving like a weakling.

“Don't be so harsh, Merritt, we got what we wanted, a few coughs are nothing compared with having to put up with your snoring.” Jack said and Merritt made an indignant face.

And then the wheezing started and Danny knew he was in real trouble. He searched his pockets for the umpteenth time, looking for something that he knew wasn't there. Shit shit shit. No matter how much he tried to control it, he knew that he couldn't control anything about this, ah, how he wished.

“Hey, you okay, Danny?” Lula asked. “I think he's having problems to breathe.”

“It can't be from the smoke, there was hardly any. It's probably just a panic attack, or something. Just take deep breaths and think of calm things, boy.”

Only it wasn't that easy. Danny partly wished that this was a panic attack because that he could solve without any medication. It would take a while, yeah, and it would be a bit embarrassing dealing with the others afterwards but he knew what to do, how to get out. It wouldn't be the first time he'd overcome it by himself, and probably not the last.

“Danny? Do you need us to leave or something?”

Danny took Jack's sleeve with all the strength he could muster, trying to say what he should have said a long ago, but now he couldn't. He tried to speak but he couldn't draw enough breath and all that got out was a horrible sounding wheeze and yet another cough.

“Hey, when you have a panic attack, aren't you supposed hyperventilate? Because I don't think Danny's ventilating at all.”

That didn't sound like a panic attack, nor did those coughs. Danny was getting pale, and weirder even his lips were becoming blue.

“Shit! Danny, do you have asthma?” Danny faintly nodded, while trying to get some air. This was the worst attack he'd had since he was a kid, and it was draining him. “Ok, we need an inhaler, or oxygen or something, do you have anything with you?”

Danny shook his head. It had been years since he stopped taking his inhaler with him, and part of him was hoping that he had grown out of the illness. No such luck, evidently. Today was absolutely his lucky day.

“Ok, internet, tell me where is the nearest hospital or medical centre or anything.” Danny made a gesture with his hand, but Lula dismissed it. Who cared about being recognized? “We're going, Danny, your lips are blue and you look like a ghost, I don't accept nos. Ok, there's a walk in clinic two blocks from here, think you can make it?”

Danny nodded in between coughs and wheezes. The walk there was painfully slow and difficult, almost agonising. The other three horsemen practically carried Danny, taking his weight, practically overlooking the fact that they shouldn't be drawing attention to themselves. It didn't matter anymore: if they had to be arrested, then they would be, but not before Danny could breathe again.

The people in the clinic were quite nice, made no fun of their broken german or of their extravagant outfits. One of the nurses looked like she recognised them, but she didn't say anything. They had been really lucky that this happened in Germany, because if it had been in any place of the US they would probably be surrounded by fans and police forces.
The doctor spoke English with a very thick accent and told them that Danny was past inhalers and to wait there for a moment. She brought an oxygen tank with a mask and Danny feel like he could finally breathe. While Danny was trying to recover his breathing rhythm, Dylan arrived looking flustered.

“What happened? I was waiting for you and I got a text from Merritt only with this address and then I find out it's a clinic...What the hell happened to Danny?”

“Apparently, he has asthma. Did you know anything? Cos we didn't and just thought he was freaking out.” Lula said, still feeling a bit guilty.

“I didn't.” Dylan said. It was weird because he'd studied the four (and then five) magicians before recruiting them for the eye, checking closely the medical records in case they had any ailments that would make some tricks dangerous, and hadn't seen anything about Danny having asthma, despite working closely with him for years now.

Danny had simply wanted to be this invulnerable, unapproachable, wanted to be this column of a magician god. But lately, he felt like he messed up everything. Even the smallest of things, just some smoke on his face, almost ruined a whole operation. He wanted to be flawless to make up for all his quirks and limitations and every day he felt he could manage less and less.

That night, after returning to the hotel and managing the plans for the future, Dylan to Danny who was almost obsessively going through some schematics.

“You probably should get some rest.” Dylan said. “After what happened today.”

“I'm sorry, I put everything in danger, I... I just... I hadn't had any problems with it since I was a kid, I didn't want to be seen as weak, I...”

“Don't beat yourself up about it. We all have things we would rather not share. But this was pretty scary for the others, maybe you could make an exception with them and me? We're not going to think less of you, Danny, we've seen how you work, your talent... And we'd rather not end up in the hospital again, all right?”

“Yeah, sure, thanks.”

“None of us are perfect, but we don't have to be. Everyone else cares about you and has accepted you. You should do it too.”

And so Dylan left, leaving on the table four inhalers, each one bought (or stolen) by a concerned horseman.

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed! You can send your ideas here in the comments or through a message to my tumblr: claracivry.
I live for your feedback! Kudos and comments make this author happy! :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!