someday i know that it'll all turn out

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someday i know that it'll all turn out

by ShanleenKinnJaskey

Summary

Chad and Ryan are trying to hide their relationship until they graduate and make it out of New Mexico, so naturally everyone finds out about it.

(In which Kelsi and Taylor are the world's best wingmen, Gabriella is a fan girl, Troy is oblivious, Zeke is in love, and Sharpay just wants her brother to be happy and kiss the boy already.)

A.k.a. Five times someone catches Chad and Ryan out on their relationship and one time they were already out.

Notes

Title is from "Haven't Met You Yet" by Michael Bublé.

See the end of the work for more notes.

stick to the stuff you know
if you wanna be cool
follow one simple rule
don't mess with the flow, no no
stick to the status quo

::
::
::

: take your best shot, just hit it
i've got what it takes playin' my game
so you better spin that pitch you're gonna throw me
i'll show you how I swing
:

arc one: Gabriella + Taylor
(i don't dance)

The first time that anyone catches them out on their relationship is about a month in, when they're at a particularly sensitive patch and still feeling the whole situation out.

You see, Chad has always been pretty straightforward about his emotions, his feelings in a certain situation, and never has it been said that Ryan doesn't have a flair for the dramatic. Singing out their feelings on the baseball field, where they both play during the summer, seems to work.

Watching Ryan dancing in between plays and dancing his way to home after hitting the home run that pushes his team ahead of Chad's brings a grin to Chad's face as he remembers why he and Ryan are risking being outed with this relationship. There's something irresistible about Ryan, something that draws Chad in as Ryan spins effortlessly around at the plate.

God, he sounds like one of those sappy dime-novels that his Aunt Denise keeps trying to pawn off on him and his sister.

(He's not sure how to feel about that.)

"Dancing can be easy," Ryan says, a knowing smile gracing his lips, and Chad swallows in anticipation.

Then shirts are shed and hands begin to wander (strict nothing below the waist rule is in place, but lips travel above the waist). It's far better than the quick pecks and kisses traded off before- now that they are far more comfortable it makes for a lot more fun.
Chad starts to lose himself in this, making out with his boyfriend, and he's feeling loose and warm and happy until-

"By the holy name of Patti Lapone, we're going to be late for Gabriella's party," Ryan says, scrambling to grab his shirt, and if the smile on Chad's face is a sappy one neither of them mention it as they button up their shirts.

Then Ryan stands up and Chad realizes that in the fumble for shirts they put on each other's. He chuckles as Ryan looks over at him and raises an appreciative eyebrow. "Not a bad look on you, sweetheart," he says, and Chad can feel the fabric of the polo tighten over his chest as he moves. Ryan's a bit skinnier than he is, lithe and agile where Chad is muscular and toned, and so therefore his clothing will have to stretch a bit on Chad.

"You too," Chad replies, because there is something nice about his boyfriend wearing his clothes.

"You think anyone will notice?" Ryan asks even as he heads for the door of the lounge.

"Nah," Chad says, and makes a playful grab for Ryan's hat. He places it on his own head. "Not unless I do this," he says, and gives Ryan a wink as the boy spins around to face him. For a moment Ryan looks furious—though it's hard to look intimidating when he has massively tousled hair from his hat and making out—but then his expression turns fond and he nods.

"Not half-bad, Danforth," he says, tone just the slightest bit cheeky. Chad expects him to then lean in and snatch his hat back, but to his surprise Ryan grabs Chad's hat from its spot hanging off of his ball bag and pulls it down onto his own head. "There," he says, striking a small pose, "How does that look?"

"Wonderful," Chad says, and he means it.

After talking to Ryan and Chad the girls head away to get drinks, but once there take a detour so they can talk.

"They're together," Taylor says matter-of-factly, a smug smile crossing her face.

"I know," Gabriella replies, grinning as takes a sip of her soda, "They were wearing each other's clothes."

"And after all that innuendo on the field? If nothing's going on between them then I'm the Doctor."

Gabriella giggles. "They're just so sweet together. Like did you see Chad when he put a hand on Ryan's shoulder when talking? They're so comfortable together."

Taylor nods. "I just wish they would actually tell us about it instead of making us figure it out on our own."

Gabriella frowns. "Oh, I hope they don't feel like they have to hide because we'll judge them."

"Me too. I think they're good guys- they deserve to be happy."

"Me too, Tay. Me too."
anything it takes to climb the ladder of success
work our tails off everyday
 gotta bump the competition
 blow them all away

:

arc two: Kelsi
(bop to the top)

Kelsi and Ryan are hanging out in Ryan's bedroom, working on their plans for the play, when he leans in to tell her something and she suddenly scoots away as if he's diseased.

"Whoa," she says, "I know you're trying to hide that you're gay but I'm not willing to be your beard."

He nearly chokes on air at that, and he's pretty sure that he can blame the shock of Kelsi's statement for the startled confession that follows. "No need to worry about me using you as my beard," he says, the words shocked out of him, "I'm not the cheating type."

She grins, and he realizes that he's accidentally let slip the truth. "Who's the lucky man?" She asks, nonchalantly flipping to the next page in her notebook even as she listens to Ryan's answer.

_Forgive me for this_, he thinks, and says, "Chad. Chad- that's who I'm dating. He's my boyfriend."

She shrugs. "Not quite what I expected, but not bad."

"Hey!" He protests, ready to jump to his boyfriend’s defense, but he notices the teasing smile on her face and stops.

"You are conniving," Ryan says, and he manages to make it sound like the highest compliment.

"I can be," she admits, tone playful, and for a moment he can do naught but stare at her before she winks at him. "And don't worry, I won't tell anyone about your secret."

He lets out a breath of relief that he hadn't realized he'd been holding. "I knew someone who wore that amount of hats would be able to keep a secret well," he says.

"Oh," she says, raising an eyebrow, "Are you insinuating something about yourself there?"

"Maybe," he says with a wink, and then asks, "So, the musical?" in the same nonchalant tone she used earlier when she asked who he was dating.

She grins and nudges her glasses back up her nose. "You can work on the choreography of A Night to Remember, the group version. I still need to work out the kinks of Sharpay's version."

He nods and they return to peaceful, semi-quiet work as Céline Dion plays in the background.

Then, a few minutes later when he's fully concentrated on arranging the choreography for the number (of course he and Kelsi will get to be the main couple, because the two of them have slaved
over this thing and they honestly deserve it), she says: "Oh, and I'm a lesbian."

Ryan's jaw drops and he looks up from his notebook to find her smiling serenely at him. "What?" She asks, tone completely innocent, but her eyes flicker with mischief.

"Did you just-?" Ryan asks, wondering if she seriously just did that, one-upped him like that, 'cause seriously-

"Yep," she replies, popping the 'p' with a satisfying sound.

"You are feisty," he says, astounded, and she shrugs.

"Hats are great for hiding secrets, remember?" She asks, and there's a mischievous glint in her eyes.

"Oh, you," he says, and smiles with such affection that he's surprised he doesn't go into a sap overload.

:i:

it's time to show how
to be a superhero
just like a showdown
keep the pedal to metal, go
:i:

arc three: Troy
(boys are back)

Ryan's feeling quite proud of the musical so far. The choreography he's designed is meshing well with Kelsi's music (even if Sharpay's requests *cough* demands *cough* keep interrupting) and as he directs Gabriella and Troy into their moves during their duet he can't help but feel a bit like a proud father. This play is his child, his baby, and so far it's been acing every test.

Then Chad walks out in what looks like a clown costume and Ryan can't help but burst out laughing.

"Who-" he tries to asks in between helpless laughter, ",Put you-" more laughter, ",In that?"

Chad gives him a petulant look, crossing his arms frustratedly over his chest, and says, "Taylor. She thought you'd like it." The complete lack of belief in Chad's tone lifts Ryan's spirits a bit- his boyfriend knows him well.

Ryan snaps back into director mode, laughter at his boyfriend fading away. He snaps his fingers. 

"Well, this just won't do. We need to go get you changed." He snaps again and points backstage. 

"Come along, then. We have some major revamping to do."

Then he struts off the stage and through the setpieces, smirking as he knows that Chad is probably staring at his ass.
Ryan is one of the gayest not-gay people Troy knows. You know, he fits every stereotype—he loves show tunes, wears hats everyday and rhinestones sometimes, and dances his way everywhere. He's in theatre and can be as much of a diva as his sister.

But...he's not gay, right? He's dating Kelsi and plays baseball, and he hangs out with the guys sometimes. He goes to basketball games and cheers them on, just like the rest of the fans.

So, Ryan's not gay.

It's just that for one of the gayest not-gay people Troy knows, this looks really gay.

Chad and Ryan are pressed up against a wall and against each other, Ryan unbuttoning Chad's shirt even as Chad kisses his neck and—okay, that's enough. Troy backs up a few steps away from the door so that he's not watching because dude, creepy.

It's nothing different than what he and Gabriella have done, but it strikes Troy anyway. He's not homophobic or anything—he hopes he's not, at least—but it's still startling. Maybe it's because he never thought of Chad being gay, or the type to be making out with Ryan Evans. Ryan Evans—maybe it's the Evans part that startles Troy. After the huge fiasco with Sharpay this summer, Troy assumed that neither him or his friends would go anywhere near dating an Evans.

Well, maybe Ryan's not as crazy as Sharpay. Hey, Troy's best friend apparently has an interest in Ryan so he can't be all that bad...right? Troy's willing to give him the benefit of the doubt for now. Innocent until proven guilty, right?

Well, he came for a reason. Troy walks back up to the entrance to the dressing room and knocks on the open door. Chad and Ryan freeze, lean away from each other, and look at him. There eyes are wide, like deer caught in the headlights of a car, and they look guilty as fuck.

"Hey, man," Troy says as he fidgets with his script pages, "I wanted to talk about the choreography for Gabriella and I's duet but if it's a bad time..." He purposely doesn't look directly at Ryan, who's readjust his hat as Chad tries to discreetly button up his shirt.

"No, of course not," Ryan says, and fuck, is that a hickey on his neck? "What can I help with?"

"Well, um," don't look at the hickies, don't look at the hickies, "We wanted to talk about the actual climbing of the balcony."

"Sounds good to me," Ryan says, then presses a quick peck to Chad's cheek and grabs his notebook as he breezes out the door. "I'll meet you onstage."

Troy is left behind with Chad, who is looking anywhere but at him. "So..." Troy starts, "You're making out with Ryan Evans?"

Chad scratches the back of his neck, expression apprehensive. "Dating Ryan Evans," he corrects, tone uncharacteristically quiet, and Troy nods.

"Okay then, man," he says, "As long as he doesn't turn into a psychotic controlling diva like Sharpay I think you're fine."

Chad's jaw drops. "So you have no problems with me dating a man?"
Troy shrugs. "You like who you like, man." He pauses, then adds: "As long as you don't start going after Gabi, though."

Chad barks out a startled laugh. "Nah, man, she's not really my type."

"What's your type, then? Decidedly more blond and athletic?"

Chad grins and crosses his arms over his chest, leaning back against the wall. "Decidedly more...male. But yeah, athletic, dramatic, and...actually wicked smart and funny. You should see the commentary he runs during movies. It's biting, man."

"Well, I better go before he bites my head off for not showing up on time," Troy says, and turns to go before remembering: "And congrats, man. I'm glad you found someone."

"Thanks, man. He just makes me really happy, you know?"

Troy nods. "I know the feeling."

: 

*it's the night of our nightmares*

*it's the night of our dreams*

*it's too late to back out of this*

*been waiting all our lives for this*

:

arc four: Zeke

(a night to remember)

"So Kelsi and I are going to Prom as friends," Ryan says when they're curled somewhat awkwardly but still comfortably in the back of Chad's car after quite the spectacular make out session, and Chad knew it was coming but it still manages to hurt. He's not really the romantic gestures kind of guy- that's more Ryan's area, with his taste for drama and all lending itself quite well- but Prom is something different. It's something special, and it does kind of hurt somewhere deep down to know that he won't be going with his boyfriend.

He swallows. "Yeah- Taylor's boyfriend is going to be out-of-state that weekend and so she asked me. She knows all about...us."

"Well, that's not a surprise. I think she and Gabriella figured it out last year after the baseball game, honestly. We weren't exactly subtle about it."

Chad smiles fondly at his boyfriend. "You're never subtle, Ry."

Ryan lets out a mock gasp, clutching his chest melodramatically. "I *can* be subtle," he protests, indignant.
"Of course you can," Chad placates, leaning over and gently pressing a kiss to Ryan's cheek.

Ryan gives him the look. "No distracting me, sweetheart. I'm trying to make a point."

Chad shrugs. "I'm not trying distract you, Ry. Just-" he interrupts himself by kissing Ryan again, "-Kissing my boyfriend."

"A noble endeavor," Ryan concedes, then catches Chad's lips himself and they're gone in a haze of love and hormones.

The night of prom the friends all arrange to meet up at the Evanses' house as they have the largest area to get ready. Ryan and Sharpay invite their dates (Kelsi and Zeke), Ryan doesn't feel right without inviting Chad and Taylor, and Sharpay had sucked it up and invites Troy and Gabriella because hey, it'd be rude to leave them out.

So it comes to the girls all up in Sharpay's room, finalizing makeup and hairdos, and Ryan putting the finishing touches on his outfit while the rest of the boys wait awkwardly in the living room.

"So," Zeke says, fingers busy toying with the pink sash Sharpay had insisted he wear under his suit jacket, "Are you all ready for this?"

Troy nods. "Gabi's been waiting for this for months."

Chad joins in, mouth a bit dry over the fact that this is Prom, and he's going with his best girl friend instead of his boyfriend: "Yeah, Taylor's been bouncing off the walls with excitement lately."

"Yeah," Troy says, "Ever since they went dress shopping, Gabi's been-"

Troy stops, transfixed by something, and Chad turns to see the girls descending the staircase, and Chad can say that they are objectively beautiful. From Sharpay's short, dark pink dress to Gabi's flowy light blue one to Kelsi's off-white princess skirt gown to Taylor's structured, purple and black-and-white checked dress they're all really beautiful.

"You look beautiful," he says as Taylor nears him, and he's not lying. Taylor is beautiful just as all of the rest of the girls, and Chad can say that without feeling like a traitor. It's an objective statement, not a pickup line or flirting.

Taylor smiles. "Thanks, Chad."

"So, we ready to leave?" Troy asks, Gabriella's arm through his. He looks somewhere between excited and constipated, as does Zeke, who is about to take Sharpay Evans to Prom so he actually does have a veritable reason for looking like that.

"Just one problem," Chad says, hating to be the party pooper but c'mon, he's going to notice the fact that his boyfriend's still not here yet. "Ryan's still upstairs." He realizes that, by the way everyone's giving him looks or avoiding looking at him except Zeke, most of his friends have some idea of what's going on.

"By Elphaba's high F," Sharpay swears, "Someone needs to go get my brother." She points at Chad. "Danforth- you brought it up. You can go get him." She manages to make it sound like it's just the logical conclusion, and he knows that she knows the truth as to why he was the one to bring it up. He nods to her and heads up the stairs two at a time.
As he heads upstairs he thinks about Sharpay. It's very hard to get a handle on the diva- she's ready to crush the competition, has no qualms about breaking up happy couples if she wants something, and used to treat Ryan like he was her own personal servant, and yet she's changed, for what it's worth. She's still ruthless, but she's let Ryan go. Sure, she's still fiercely protective of him but she's also treating him a bit more like a partner and a bit less like an underling.

Chad knows that the twins' dream is to act on Broadway (he doesn't exactly get it himself, but if Ryan is happy he's happy. When they all go to New York- Ryan to Juilliard, fingers crossed, and Chad to his basketball scholarship at NYU- Chad knows he'll try to make it to ask many of Ryan's performances as possible just like Ryan will try to make it to his games) and Sharpay seems willing to both work with Kelsi and try to crush her at the same time. It's an admirable personality that she's got going on there, even if Chad can't determine if it's a good one.

Ryan's door is open, but Chad knocks on it before entering anyway. "Ry?" He calls, "It's almost time to go."

"Come on in, I'll be just a moment," Ryan says, and Chad enters the room to find Ryan at his mirror adjusting his hat and straightening his suit. Chad can't help but notice the sparkling black tie that Ryan's wearing and can't help but smile because that's just so Ryan.

"You look so beautiful tonight," Chad says softly, and it's different than when he said it to Taylor a moment ago. Right now Ryan looks absolutely stunning, and his words are as loving as they are true.

"Thank you," Ryan says, and turns slightly even as he tilts his hat a tad farther. His lips quirk up into a cheeky smile. "You look quite handsome yourself."

"Thanks," Chad replies, and he smiles because he knows that Ryan means it.

Ryan straightens his tie one last time before turning around to face Chad head on. For a moment, just a moment, Chad faces his boyfriend's bright-eyed gaze and wants all of this to be done with. He just wants to call Prom off, stay home, and spend the evening at Ryan's house like they'd normally spend a Saturday night, but the urge passes as quickly as it came. This is Prom night, and they owe it to their friends, their dates, and their wallets, if not themselves, to go.

"Have fun tonight," Ryan says, and leans in to press a gentle, quick kiss to Chad's cheek. Then he leaves, and Chad is left to follow behind him.

It all feels so wrong not walking down with Ryan, but he knows that's how it has to be. He just has to remind himself: only until graduation.

"Here's a drink," he says, holding out Taylor's cup, "To thank you for an awesome evening."

Taylor rolls her eyes and grabs his wrist, ignoring the drinks. "Here," she says, "I have something I think you'll like." Then she drags him out of the gym door to a single wolf-whistle from some unknowing Wildcat. They both ignore him, Chad thinking- well, Chad thinking that rumors like whatever that Wildcat will be spreading tomorrow are exactly the kind he and Ryan wanted to encourage with tonight's dates.

"Here," she says, and shoves him lightly out of the side door by the guidance counselors' offices and he finds himself on the gravel trail leading up to the soccer fields. His first reaction is to look around, and he's shocked to find Ryan standing out here, tan tux pristine and black bowler hat still perched
jauntily atop his head.

"Hey," Ryan says, smiling that soft, fond smile of his, and he doesn't seem too disappointed by the turn of events. "Looks like the girls set us up."

Chad takes a moment to look back at Taylor, shocked, and finds her gazing at him with a smile on her face. "Have fun," she says softly, then heads back in. His heart swells with how much he loves her in this moment- not in a romantic way, but in a thank god for your beautiful heart kind of way- before turning to face his boyfriend.

"So," he says quietly, "Fancy meeting you here."

"Yeah," Ryan replies, voice taking on the same soft, near reverent tone as Chad's. There is something about this place, this moment, that makes him want to keep it untouched. It feels almost like regular voices would ruin this, so to speak softly is to respect the moment. "I didn't think we'd get this. Prom night, the two of us? I didn't..." His voice trails off, his words replaced by a fragile smile.

"Props to Kelsi and Taylor for being such good friends," Chad says, and Ryan nods.

"I wonder how their night is going now," Ryan says, and as much as Chad appreciates Ryan's concern he wants to be, well, a bit selfish now. Taylor and Kelsi have clearly given their permission to ditch them and the Prom and have some time together, and he hopes it doesn't make him a jerk if he says he wants to take that opportunity they've given him.

He ends up not having to say anything, though, as the music filtering out into the night changes and Ryan smiles. "May I have this dance?" Ryan says, stretching out a hand in offering and bowing slightly over it like a gentleman in one of those historical chick flics Chad's little sister watches. Like everything else Ryan does it's incredibly endearing and Chad's heart melts a bit despite realizing that in heteronormative terms he's the chick.

"Of course, Ry," he says, and takes his boyfriend's hand. The music trickles out through the doorway, faint but unmistakable as a slow song, and as Chad lines his body up with Ryan's it feels like something special. It doesn't matter that their Prom dance is taking place outside of the gym in the cool evening air, that they're dancing over gravel instead of wood, or that their light comes from the moon instead of a disco ball.

This isn't Senior Prom, a gym crammed with fifty seniors and their respective dates- this is Chad and Ryan, their worlds narrowed down to here, now, and the points of contact where they touch (Chad's hands at Ryan's waist, Ryan's arms resting loosely about Chad's neck, foreheads resting against each others', and breaths intermingled).

This is Ryan and Chad, hopelessly in love.

Zeke jogs to the guidance door, searching for some fresh air after spending the past hour being swung around by Sharpay (not that he'd complain- the girl's focus and passion are just some of the many things he admires about her). Still, as much as he loves spending times with her Sharpay Evans is not a force that can be handled for too long at once if you want to maintain your sanity.

He reaches the exit and is about to run out when he spots Ryan and, with that head of hair, that must be... Chad?...dancing beyond the open door. Holy shit, they're gay. And together, by the looks of it. If anyone found out they'd both be torn apart socially. Theatre kids can assumed gay, but to be confirmed would wreck Ryan in a town like this, and Chad... well that would just fuck up his life on
so many levels. Zeke knows that while Chad's dad is okay with gay people his mom is incredibly homophobic and that would ruin Chad's relationship with his mom.

But then for a moment Zeke can't focus on wondering about the repercussions- instead he catches onto the close swaying that Ryan and Chad are doing, bodies pressed up against each other and movements as natural as if they've done this a million times before, he feels like he's intruding on an intimate moment. He only has a somewhat angled view of their faces, but what he can see is of two loving, content expressions.

Then it strikes him: *I don't want to ruin this for them.*

He turns around and heads back in, content to let them be. They deserve it- they're both great guys. And besides, he has a round of dancing with Sharpay to get back to.

(Oh, and it looks like Chad can *definitely* dance after all.

Just turns out he can do *both* kinds.)

:*

*i want the world, nothing less*

*all the glam and the press*

*only giving me the best reviews*

*i want it all*

:* 

*arc five: Mrs. Darbus*

*(i want it all)*

Ryan walks away from the stage, still looking down at his camera and laughing over Tiara trying to steal Sharpay's solo. If there's one thing that Ryan knows about his sister, it's that she will tolerate no one, and that means *no one*, trying to steal her spotlight. She made her best effort to destroy Gabriella's summer over it, and Ryan's still not sure how much of her attempts to get Troy were an attempt to get revenge and how much were actually because of some misguided crush.

"Ry," a familiar voice says, and Ryan turns to find Chad standing there, already dressed in his leather jacket for the "Boys Are Back" number, which is planned to go after Gabi and Troy's duet but before Sharpay's and Ryan's number.

"Yeah?" He asks, raising an eyebrow. He's not exactly sure why Chad's stopping him, especially because Chad knows he has to change into the outfit he's set to wear for the first half of his and Sharpay's number.

(He is going to *rock* that leather jacket and pink scarf, even if he has to call on all the combined powers of Neil Patrick Harris and Barabara Streisand to do it.)
"I just want to wish you luck," Chad says, and adds, after a moment's pause: "Not that you'll need it, honestly. You're going to kick ass."

Ryan smiles. "Thanks. It means a lot." And it does, truthfully, more than the curious sophomore onlookers will ever know.

Chad grins back at him. "So, go break a leg, man." He sounds like he's talking to a friend, but Ryan knows that tone too well, that smile too well, to think that it's that casual in nature.

"You too, Chad," he says, and smirks as he teases, "And you will need it. You don't dance, remember?"

Chad rolls his eyes, and his lips twitch into a fond smile. "I dance now, trust me. No need to worry there."

"Good," Ryan says, and touches his fingers to the edge of his hat as if tipping it to Chad. "Well, Chad, I need to go change, so..."

Chad startles a bit, and maybe he did forget (to be nice, Ryan will say "let it slip his mind" instead) that Ryan has a number coming up in just four minutes. "Right. Well, don't want to hold you back. Get to it!"

Ryan smiles and nods, then turns and heads off to the dressing room.

Mrs. Darbus is announcing the next stops on the journeys of her pupils and, as always, basking in their achievements, when she spots it.

Right when Ryan, one of her protégés, steps back into the crowd of seniors after finding out that he's getting the second scholarship to Julliard, his eyes are tearing up. That in itself isn't too strange as the Evans twins are prone to a bit of melodrama from time to time, but what does catch her eye is who else notices. As Ryan enters the crowd Mr. Danforth catches his hand in a quick squeeze, flashing him a quick smile that has Ryan smiling even as Troy steps forward to give his speech.

Interesting- she wishes she'd noticed earlier on, though. She could have done interesting things with that dynamic onstage.

:)

there's nothing we can't do

just wanna be with you (only you)

no matter where life takes us

nothing can break us apart

:

Epilogue: Coach Bolton
Kelsi, Chad, and Ryan arrive at their ten-year high school reunion and when Chad and Ryan walk in arm-in-arm, a former NCAA player (now P.E. teacher) and the choreographer of the newest Tony-award-winning musical, no one is really surprised.

To the couple's shock, they pass through the group of their former classmates and find that no one throws a fit about their engagement. There are the expected congratulations and sentiments shared, but it just seems like their relationship is last year's news.

"See," Sharpay says as she walks up to them, smile smug and jeweled headband sparkling as usual, "Told you no one would be surprised. You two are sickeningly in love, even after ten years."

Taylor, who joins the conversation, nods to Chad. "You should listen to your future sister-in-law. She's right."

"I always am," Sharpay affirms, sounding pleased.

"So, when's the wedding planned for?" Taylor asks, excited.

"June of next year," Ryan says, "It's going to be in New-"

"Wait," Coach Bolton interrupts, seeming confused by the rings and hand holding, "You two are together?"

"Oops, guess we missed one," Gabriella mutters to Taylor, then shrugs. "Well, you can't get everyone."

Chad nods. "We got engaged last year."

Ryan smiles, remembering it. Chad had showed up to the cast dress rehearsal for *Charmed*, a musical mash up of Cinderella and The Goose Girl, and as Ryan had descended the stairs to model how their "Cinderfella" needed to dance, Chad had been standing at the bottom instead of Jem, the actor playing Prince Charming. He'd given a heartfelt speech that had Ryan shedding real tears and the chorus girls cooing.

(Then that night Kelsi, Chad, and he had celebrated by acting 21 again, getting spectacularly drunk, and playing a frankly epic game of Cards Against Humanity, but that's not the point.)

"He proposed," he says, and there are the obligatory aws from the girls.

"Well, congratulations," Coach says, and he seems genuine. "Glad one of my stars ended up in a happy relationship."

Chad nearly frowns at the reminder of Gabriella and Troy's messy breakup junior year of college, but instead he just nods. "I'm happy too," he says, and rubs his thumb against Ryan's in a comfortable gesture of affection.

"So am I," Ryan says, and smiles.
that's the way we do it

let's get to it

time to show the world

we're all in this together

End Notes

See, I CAN do happy endings! *throws confetti*

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