### Cafe Claussen

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<td>Pitch Black, Jack Frost, Jamie Bennett, Sophie Bennett, Pippa (Rise of the Guardians), Pitch Black (Rise Of The Guardians), Jack Frost (Rise of the Guardians), Katherine (Guardians of Childhood), Mary (Jack's Sister), Sanderson Mansnoozie, Various Characters, Toothiana, E. Aster Bunnymund, Seraphina Pitchiner, Kozmotis Pitchiner, Jackson Overland Frost, The Man in the Moon (Rise of the Guardians)</td>
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### Summary

Jack's got major parental issues, is juggling taking care of his sister Mary and trying to stay halfway sane through the chaos.
Then, one day trying to temporarily run from his problems he meets Pitch. Plot ensues.
Note: I've with-held multiple tags for the sake of not spoiling too much and...that's alot of freaking tags - especially to the first climax of this story. Seriously, I feel like I'm spoiling a lot just letting 'mental breakdown' and 'major character death' be in the tags.

I am not responsible for your feels, nor am I an abuse victim.

Notes
See the end of the work for notes.
Jackson Overland Frost, also known as 'Jack Frost' amongst his friends, was your average kid. He had a happy-go-lucky smile with a bonus sense of enthusiastic fun that no one seemed to be able to snuff out of him. The worst of news couldn't bring him down, scraps and bumps were just minor nicks.

He was a hero amongst the younger kids in town, where-ever he went there just seemed to be joy following him. Jack would use whatever money he could find around the house and buy the other kids gifts and candy from the local store. He'd go out of his way to make the other kids in town happy for no real reward. Every parent in the small town of Burgess knew Jack, usually by the children telling them about what good deed he did today.

'He started a snowball fight, it was awesome!' was the usual tale, as snow was Jack's 'element'.

At thirteen, during winter break, with a smile on his face, he pointed out to a group of younger children. "You see my hair? It's white. It gives me the advantage in the snow." He chuckled. "No one can ever beat me come winter."

And it was true, every snowball fight with Jack would end one of two ways - you'd have to leave or you'd have to give up.

But even with such public misbehavior, not a single woman, man or child in the town of Burgess could find wrong with him.

His smiles were bright, joyous and whiter than snow, they brought a glow into the room. His plucky, happy attitude neigh indestructible. Even when someone could not help to but to cry or get mad, Jack could still make them smile.

There was no one that could hold a grudge against him either; him and his family were the talk of the town. They were 'well put together' some parents said, motioning to their own rebellious children. Jack seemed like the dream child of every parent's life and so, in turn, did their family.

The Frosts, despite all their town-wide popularity, never held any events at their own home. For good reason; The house itself was like a mask, perfect, clean and hiding all the darkness underneath. The public persona was that the Frost family was perfect in every way, inside the home was where the truth became clear.

The home was unstable and less than peaceful. That only grew worse when Jack's little sister, Mary, was born

Jack's parents, Katherine and Will, held their title of 'picturesque' but when the outside eyes looked away they morphed into something awful.
Since around Jack's ninth year of age, Will had a crippling addiction to alcohol that spanned for years. At first, it hadn't seemed so bad. A shot here for relaxation, a drink with some friends at the workplace at the bar. Then, a little more. Then some more. Than he drank more then the average person.

And it was okay because he was a 'happy' drunk, so it didn't seem like a problem to ten year old Jack. Then Will spiraled out of control when Jack was twelve.

He would have unpredictable, sudden mood swings that would seem to only be stable at one extreme or the other. He would be either too lazy to do anything or too busy screaming at his wife and children to do anything else.

Katherine would cry, grab the often crying children and lock both herself and them into a room in the back of the house. Will would come then, after his inebriation lifted, crawling to the door with tears running down his reddened face. He'd beg, sometimes for over an hour, for Katherine to forgive him. "I'll be a better man." , "I'll quit." , "No, never again I promise." .

He'd swear to never let another drop of alcohol pass through his lips.

And then he'd follow through...for a time. He would go back to being so great, so perfect as he was before Jack reached twelve. In jest, he even made up a nickname for Mary, 'little snowflake'.

It was nice...for a time.

At first, all seemed well. Jack calmed down, as did Mary and Katherine warmed back up to Will. They all hoped they could go back to what life was like before the drinking started.

Then Will relapsed for the first time, after three weeks off the bottle. Worst still, coming home from school Jack walked in to find Will. He was drunk off his ass, nude and throwing glass bottles at Katherine, screaming and calling her a whore.

The cycle repeated itself. Katherine ran to the back room, crying with both her children and kissing them on the head, telling them it would be fine. Will would come groveling after.

"I'm so sorry- I'm so sorry...".,"Forgive me...".

And he was forgiven.

He said he'd never do it again and it was fine...until he did it again.

And again.

And again.

And it became a repeating cycle and motion. He would make the same promise every other week. Terrify Katherine and the kids, they would hide in the back room until he was sober enough to apologize.

Jack thought it was weird when it got to the point when he couldn't cry anymore, after he reached thirteen. It had become a part of life he had to deal with now, he figured.

Sometimes, Katherine tried to hold her ground against him. They would argue and Jack would carry Mary to the back room - the 'Safety Room', as he'd come to call it. When he wasn't overwhelmed by his increasing school work, he would sit next to Mary and read her stories and books. He would
become her distraction from the unpredictable and volatile emotions of their parents.

Soon it became a comforting level of normal to sit in the room and read to his younger sister. It became normal to hide from the fighting again. This time, though, they were hiding from both Katherine and William.

Jack knew that someday soon though, Katherine would do something serious about it.

He was right; she started drinking along with William in the second half of Jack's thirteenth year. He didn't know why she started drinking but, after seeing what it did he couldn't blame her.

One day he'd found them drunk on the couch as they watched dumb and uninspired comedies on television. They laughed loud and obnoxious as he passed, both making fun of his 'gay hair'. He had to make dinner for Mary that night and couldn't finish his homework or go out and make other kids happy like he loved to.

But, at the end of the day, they didn't fight. Jack found a sad solace in knowing that being drunk with William meant you didn't need to be sober and against him.

The Frost house calmed down. Katherine lying around in a mountain of beer bottles, cuddling her impaired husband was the new normal. Jack delegated himself to being Mary's guardian and he didn't mind it.

But it also meant he didn't have time for most relationships anymore; he found that as he got older he needed more time for himself. He joined a school program in hopes for a scholarship. With required Honor's classes came extra responsibilities.

The younger kids that had grown up with Jack Frost were now watching their warm friend grow ice cold to them. No time to joke around or play like they did before high school; no time for candy or ice cream or pizza. No smiles, just work.

Jack traded his friendliness and extra time for partial peace of mind at home.

It didn't last long.

His father became belligerent again. He began banging the walls with his fists and leaving holes in them for the smallest of reasons. Even his drunk mother who had worked wonders in taming and reeling his anger back in, could not soothe Will's ire.

The fights started to become more and more explosive. Will would work himself up into a frenzy over nothing, he'd pick up and throw furniture, yelling and screaming. Sometimes for hours.

Jack, too well versed in Will's brutish anger for surprise, adapted before it occurred the fifth time. With a straight face, empty of any shocked emotion, he would pick his sister up and comfort her. He took her into the back room, book-bag in the other hand, and work on his work there while soothing her and protecting her. Sometimes, at the cost of his safety, he would even bring toys for her to play with so she didn't have to focus on the fighting.

It became second nature to walk around the minefield that was his parent's presence. He would keep her favorite toys and dolls in either the safety room or his own, bring some snacks along with. With a school provided laptop in his book-bag, he would also study when the fights were longer than expected. This was almost always, since the fights were getting longer, little by little everyday.

Another normal for Jack that he did nothing about, too used to being walked on to care...until he was sixteen. Mary was seven now and it was a Thursday when Jack swore he could smell another fight
break out. He rose from the momentary rest he allowed himself, gathering his things and then leaving his safe room upstairs to get Mary. But Mary was already there with a blank look on her face, walking past him to the room to go play with her dolls.

She had become used to it.

The entire world had turned upside down to him, when he realized he pitied her, for her situation. Then he noticed; he saw himself in Mary. He pitied himself for being stuck in the broken household.

He grabbed the younger child up into his arms and held her tight, trying to make sure she didn't see tears coming from his eyes. He made her something delicious for dinner after their parents passed out. Made her laugh and smile until she begged him to stop. Then when she fell asleep he made a promise to himself. To get Mary out of this house, even if he gets hurt doing it.

'No one should have to live like this,' he decided, 'not this young, not Mary. She shouldn't have the whole 'abusive parents' thing down pat yet.' Jack whimpered, covering his eyes and mouth as he sneaked through the hall. He put Mary in her bed and grabbed his own things, rushing back upstairs.

He buckled down on Mary and their lives, after that night he tried to keep a balance between everything. His school life, his parents and protection Mary - and himself. Sleeping right, eating right, not overworking himself to death. It was easier said then done but if there was anything Jack knew he was capable of, it was adapting.

There came a day when he thought of running away and leaving Mary behind, escaping somehow. Maybe calling the cops during one of the fights but then he thought of what could happen. He wasn't legally old enough to get custody of Mary.

After that, he decided to better budget his time. He shortened his studying time and dedicated more to 'De-stressing' his life. Grades slipped as a consequence, from straight A's to mixed A's and B's. Then it came down to solid B-minuses that he kept under careful control. He also shortened his sleeping time, set his clock to wake him earlier. From eight hours of sleep to six, so he could get Mary to school on time.

Jack started to lose weight; and not just a little but enough to make some of his clothing loose. Most of it, pants. He was also more tired, more often.

He ignored it, suffered though it, to make things better for Mary.

Even when he felt like he just couldn't do anymore and began sleeping at lunch breaks at school to get more rest, he kept on taking care of Mary.

While stretched to his limit, his parents continued to zig-zag emotionally. Some days they were angry, drunk and lazy, not even having the strength to throw bottles at him. Other days they cleaned up their act and showed the world the 'perfection' that the Frosts were known for. No one of any standing even suspected that they were drunks. Rumors happened, they always did, but nothing ever came of them.

When they would appear, masks and facades handled as always, Jack would try to rebuild friendships he'd broken off. Yet, as he absorbed himself in Mary he'd retracted from his friends. Pippa, Caleb, Monty, every one of his friends had grown up while he had stayed behind.

It upset him, knowing that the world had aged around him while he was, for all intents and purposes, stuck raising a child that wasn't his. He pulled a face, but kept up appearances. If anyone asked him what was wrong he would turn up his charisma to escape from giving full, truthful explanations.
'I was just thinking about something else...' 'Just a little tired is all, are you alright?'. He was always changing the subject even though a part of him wanted someone to know: 'No. No. I'm not alright. I need help. My father needs help. My entire family needs help.'

Something needed to happen to change his at home life, something that wasn't the police or child service.

The former would ruin his family's reputation. He wasn't completely separated from media - things like this were the type of things the media loved. He didn't want Mary to have to go through that and he didn't have the physical energy to deal with it.

The latter would tear he and Mary apart. He couldn't keep legal custody, with no job of his own and no other living relatives that he both trusted and knew for certain were close by.

But he couldn't force anything to happen, not with how old he was now and his lack of funds, time and energy. So he did what he could, which was protect Mary and keep her happy and safe.

Luckily, as he found out at a barbeque held by one of his father's friends at work, not everything went bad. All other friends through the past years had out grown his personality type or he didn't enjoy their company. All except Jamie Bennett who, Jack expected, hadn't grown up much himself.

At first sight, Jamie was just a local kid with nothing much going on besides his youth and baby-face. But Jack had known him since they were both in grade school and, like most people, Jamie had much more going on under the surface.

Jamie was the cute friend who could white-knuckle people through problems without realizing it. He was supportive, almost to a fault. Also reasonable, especially compared to many of the other children in the neighborhood. He only spoke when he had a solid grasp of the subject matter and he was often polite in large gatherings.

This was except when someone got under his skin, in which case he was witty and ruthless in his jabs. Jack knew not to challenge Jamie to a game of 'The Dozens' after a passing teen girl called him 'stupid' and, fifteen minutes later, was running down the block crying. Jack thanked himself for being friends with Jamie, being an enemy was not the best position to be in.

The best trait he had, Jack knew, was how vicious and equal Jamie was in regards to his loyalties. There were people Jamie had decried in public and sometimes to their faces, for their wrong doings. Then he would turn around and defend them at his own personal expense because he respected them.

Jack knew Jamie for seven years, they shared the same toys, schools and now distant friends. The two shared a profound amount of personal space with the other and Jack felt a level of attraction that he was 'unsure' of.

Seeing Jamie in this light, seeing how attracted he was to him, made him re-check his relationships. First with girls. It didn't take too long before he realized that his sexuality doesn't align with the usual. Or whatever the 'usual' around him was.

He didn't get the same floaty, high feeling spending time around girls that he got when joking around or play fighting with Jamie. Other guys his age were all about girls, breasts, short dates and even shorter 'relationships'. He was busy raising a kid or wondering, about what might happen if he tried to have a little bit more of a social life.

With Jamie as the main focus of the more 'romantic' thoughts.
He caught himself wondering about Jamie, wondering about what it might be like to have sex with him. Jamie, he thinks, might've caught him too considering that it wasn't long after that Jamie began pushing women on him.

Most of them wanted something, not necessarily something from Jack but just something. It didn't matter though. Jack's own natural charisma pulled in girls that were more then happy to fuck his brains out, if he would let them. But he never did, he didn't like girls, even if he tried he couldn't find the 'sexy' in them. One girl went as far to rub her hand against his crouch in the school hallway, he still couldn't.

Jack left them at an 'Okay, nice to meet you, see you later maybe?'.

It didn't last long. He and Jamie were alone one day, in that quick shuffle between classes when Jamie actually was the first one to initiate things between them, pulling Jack aside and near interrogating him about things rather straight forwardly.

Luckily, when Jack thought he'd had enough of girls touching on him like he didn't have any level of embarrassment or shame...

He and Jamie were alone one day, in that quick shuffle between classes. Jamie was the first one to initiate things between them, pulling Jack aside and interrogating him about the past few weeks.

"Jack," Jamie had a way of holding someone's attention when he was serious and a different way if he was joking. Now, he was using the previous way; stern voice, back straight, formal and impersonal. "You've been giving me weird looks.'

"Well, Jamie..." Jack poked his tongue out in jest. A nudging in his heart told him he was caught yet he tried his best to keep going, he didn't want to risk being left alone. "You are weird looking."

"That's not what I mean Jack. You know that-"

"No I honestly don't." Denial.

"You've been staring at me." "Well," Jack shrugged, running out of defenses to come up with on such a short notice. "You are weird looking, don't get me wrong." Jamie grunted in impatience and pushed him up against the door of the classroom, Jack tried to push him off but to no avail. Jamie was the strong teen in town and Jack was one of the thinnest.

Jack hated how much Jamie wore thin clothing, because he could feel Jamie's chest through his shirt. The other man was getting muscles and developing along...if Jack's hands were right.

Jamie's eyes held a focused seriousness that Jack wasn't sure he felt comfortable with, since it was toward him. "Jack. You can't hide this anymore. If you want it, you have to ask for it." Jamie's hand cupped the side of Jack's face. "Now, do you want it?"

Having months of private fantasies and wishes, only to have the possibility that they could all come true thrust into his face, Jack could only say, "Yes."

He wasn't given a moment to recant before Jamie was working him over. His warmer mouth pressed against him and moving slower then Jack thought anyone could. Jamie's tongue poked at his own and everything around him just felt like him.

Jamie's scent, Jamie's taste and of his warmth and love and protectiveness. He felt like he was just
basking in it.

He would think he'd fell hard for Jamie but, with this kiss he just dive bombed. It was too soon when Jamie pulled away with a face Jack couldn't see any emotion on and left. Just left, not even bothering to say 'See you later'.

Jamie abandoned Jack, left him love-struck and alone in the center of the empty classroom. Jamie never said a word to him all that day but he got the vibe that Jamie wasn't impressed with him. Whatever Jack's kiss could reveal about, whatever he had up for offer wasn't enough and he was unworthy of anything else.

As awkward as awkward could hope to be, Jack did his best to keep his friend type relationship with Jamie alive. During their time together, that grew shorter with every passing day, Jack felt as if he was wasting his time. The empty minutes he spent with Jamie could be better spent improving his grades or caring for Mary.

After weeks of waiting for a miracle to come along and fix anything, Jack gave up. Nothing more could be gained from their relationship, nothing of value anyway. He came to see that he'd lost his best friend for want of romance. So he ceased all interaction with Jamie that wasn't their walking to class together, most of which was spent silently.

The only person he spent time with, for a majority of his waking hours, was Mary.

He reasoned that it was his fault that Jamie pushed him away and that there was a reason he had no real friends anymore. He had to take care of Mary. That was his only goal until he hit eighteen. Mary's comfort, Mary's happiness, just Mary.

But having no social life, and not wanting one, gave him less patience with people. Without meaning to, Jack ended up releasing stress onto his friends. His speech became crass and brazen and people's feelings were less a thing and more a problem. Soon, he found that even people he hadn't considered his friends were avoiding him.

But, the more crass and outspoken he became the more people began to somewhat distance themselves – as if sensing the change and not wanting to be part of it. None of them felt any differently about Jack, he was still the awesome neighbor kid with the 'cool' nickname but they couldn't help but pull away, almost fearfully wondering what changed him.

In the middle of the year, when he was seventeen, he had at last gone back to 'normal'. Life wasn't about wanting for the next bout of abuse any more, abuse was more like Monday. It came around and no matter how much you hated it you still had to accept it.

Now, life was about Mary and protecting her from the abuse and protecting his mother from his father's temper tantrums. He looked on the good side of things instead, trying to reduce his stress. His father's poor health habits were at last catching up to him, limiting his behavior.

Occasionally, he would have to intervene in a fight between his mother and father, sometimes take a few hits both sides. It was fine. He could endure this much.

He didn't want any friends or girlfriends or boyfriends, everything that wasn't his little sister was moot and took backseat to everything else. Every now and again he'd leave the house, after putting Mary in a safe place, and clear his head.

And a majority of clearing his head was assuring himself that he was doing the right thing...for Mary.

He was technically her father now.
He was fine with that.

He kept on.
It wasn't often when the hands of fate dealt Jack an all together bad hand. Today, however, was one of those days where every time he was sure it wouldn't get worse it would get worse, as if on cue. Every time something went wrong, he'd think, 'Why me? Aren't my parents enough as a punishment?' After noon though, he didn't bother with thinking it any more. The day was just a downward spiral.

The day began on a bad note overall, though he would be lying if it wasn't a bittersweet one. His alarm clock, a plastic snowman that would glow blue and sing different, randomly picked Christmas songs, had broken. Upon finding out, he wanted to cry a little. Aside from hope and Mary, the alarm clock seemed to be the only thing that white-knuckled alongside him all his life, night and day. He was upset, he was also amazed. The clock was years old, it made him nostalgic to think of back when he first got it: as a present from his distant uncle North over ten years ago.

He remembered when they lived in a smaller house, just a few blocks away from their house now, and his parents could hear the noise it made and they despised it. Every morning hearing either Jingle Bells, We Wish You a Merry Christmas or some other out of season and over used holiday song. It had even soldiered through being used as a weapon, when his parents were fighting. He was confident his mother was on the verge of breaking it before they moved; now, in his own separated room on a different floor, the clock was only able to be heard by him.

Scrambling, realizing that if his clock was down he – and by extension Mary – could be late for school, he gathered together random pieces of clothing (a navy blue and red t-shirt and a loose-fitting pair of jeans) and dressed while running. Shortly after, he slipped down a few stairs trying to jump into his pants.

Getting his shit together and successfully not bursting out into cursing, pained screaming from the tweaking of his ankle, he went downstairs and enjoyed the good part of his clock breaking; he didn't wake up too late.

He and Mary got to enjoy a nice, calm, quiet breakfast. Nothing was said besides sweet good mornings and a little fat chewing, he didn't have enough time to make himself as good of a breakfast as he wanted to since they had to rush to get ready for school. Mary ended up being late. Jack felt guilty about that, but since he got to walk her to school he didn't see any major problems with it.

The rest of the day however, was a test of his patience.
Jack was late for school, something he wouldn't care about normally but breakfast at the school was free, even if it was terrible. He couldn't get it after being so late. Plus, his lack of time and rush to the door made him forget about making himself lunch and school lunch (brought with pilfered money from his parent's unguarded funds) made him feel queasy and light-headed. However, he felt he had special appearances to maintain and suffered through it with a smile.

The jewel in the horrid crown today that far exceeded anything else he suffered was receiving back a test he couldn't remember taking and being told that he had failed. Since he was in high school, the '101 Class for life ruining decisions' as it were (or, as he overheard the teachers say as he headed home one day and with the increasing amount of pregnant girls in his class he couldn't disagree), he was given a choice.

He could ignore the test, let his History go from a grade B to a grade C...and then just hand his father a metal chair and draw a bull's-eye on the back of his head.

Or, do a retake.

The decision basically made for him he gladly accepted the retake; not realizing the one major problem with the choice until he was walking home. The test would have to be signed by his parents.

'Great,' Jack whispered, pout settling on his lips as his contemplated his options, 'More trash for the pile.'

He unceremoniously shoved the paper into his backpack, making a silent prayer to whoever could hear his thoughts; 'Please let it be a "Peace Week".'

A 'Peace Week' was when his parents would calm sobriety before tumbling back into their normal state of drunken foolishness the following week. During this time, Jack was confident he could come home with any bad news at all and not receive a beating or get yelled at...it was just a matter of finding the time.

Again today was, unfortunately, a poor hand of cards for Jack.

After picking up Mary from school and returning home, all hope for a 'Peace Week' was lost as soon as he walked through the front door. Though it wasn't unusual for the scent to linger around, the repugnant odor of alcohol was heavy in the air. Mary covered up her face and ran into her room while Jack looked at the current situation.

Currently, in the center of the room his parents stumbled around in an inebriated daze, unaware of his presence and embroiled in an argument Jack couldn't make heads or tails of. He was shocked they could stand, but at the same time he wasn't. His father retained his job and kept them in this house with the levels of insane intoxication he went through and he's seen his mother trick people into thinking they were 'just being silly' when they knocked on the door and she answered, smelling like beer and prompting questions. They were just damn good at not getting caught.

From around the corner, where the living room turned into a hallway that lead to Mary and his parent's room, Mary gazed at him.

Jack escorted Mary to her room, not even wanting to comment on the scene.

"Jack," Mary pleaded, holding his hand, "Please don't go to them."

Jack smiled, admiring how perspective she'd become at such a young age. 'Good, keep that skill, it'll do you well munchkin.' It wasn't the first time Mary had begged him not to face their parents but it also wasn't the first time he'd just pat her on the head, assure her he would be fine and continue
anyway whilst hiding that he was frightened. It helped support that perfect 'brave, strong, big brother' ideal that he wanted Mary to see him as, hoping it would help give her a bit more happiness.

Not looking back to see Mary's puppy-eyed 'Don't go' gaze he walked into the living room, he accepted whatever fate could be and took the paper out of his bag. Whatever argument was between them when their two children walked in was quelled by a joke from Katherine and Jack was glad, it soothed the locking tension in his shoulders a little to know he wasn't breaking into an already bad situation.

"So Mom," He summoned up all his confidence, held his shoulders back and kept the air of 'Perfect son', trying his best to master the balance that was in the room. One wrong move and he'd be in another screaming contest with his father.

"Yes sweetums?" While drunk, Katherine's voice was chipper and, the more Jack heard it the funnier he thought it was.

She sounded like a young man playing with dolls and trying his best to copy his mother's voice, and not a mother herself. It dipped low in some places, came out slurred in others. He would laugh about it, maybe tell a joke about it and see where it ended up, if it wasn't for the constant background drone of William's ever-present and downing gaze.

Even worse, Jack couldn't keep his eyes off of William – he was both terrified that he could start a fight and entranced by how frightening Will could be without even lifting a finger. He kept a constant watch on him, keeping the man in the corner of his vision at all times, ready to pounce should things get bad. Of course, when William reached for the remote, Jack was ready to dash like the road runner.

"I need you to sign something for school." He approached the subject as carefully as he could, not bringing up grades or anything troubling, just making sure his parents knew it needed to be signed. If he played his cards right, he knew his mom would sign it without bothering to read it.

It was an eternity, reaching out and passing Mom the marked test, watching her expression change from drunk and relaxed to tense and back in the blink of an eye. Jack sees it now: Katherine isn't nearly as dopey as she seems, she's also just trying to survive in this situation.

"Alright, I'll sign it." She looked around in a desperate rush to find something to write with and finding nothing, made a huge mistake.

Katherine places the paper on the table in broad view for all to see, close enough that when William turns his head and becomes curious Jack knows that he is screwed. Katherine doesn't even try to undo the mishap and only braces herself for impact when William begin his tirades. If both of them had been quicker, Jack thinks that perhaps they wouldn't masterminded a way out but it's too late, William absorbed the contents of the paper.

His faces twisted up, seeming affronted with what he's holding. "What the hell is this?"

Jack keeps himself grounded, calming himself before the storm can catch him. "I just failed a test, it was only a few points." He tries to cut his failings as much as he can, hoping he can just whittle this down until William decides it isn't worth moving for. "If one of you signs it then I can take it again and pass it this time."

Katherine steps in, equally as frightened of a fight as Jack is. "I'm sure he can pass it now dear, I mean, this seems like a simple enough subject, he can study it and ace it right?" Jack begins to see that perhaps Katherine's voice is chipper and revolting levels of happy for a reason. This was a
"Right!" He tries to join in, tap into a well of senseless happiness inside himself. Better to be fake than to be beaten.

"Well, why didn't you study and pass it the first time?"

"I had a lot of other tests along that one, I was overloaded a little." He chooses his words very carefully, trying to make it sound impossible for him to have passed. "I got some really good marks on all the others, Math, Biology, honors classes for writing, art..." William seems momentarily impressed with the list and Jack allows himself hope that they can avoid a fight. He also doesn't bring up all the other work he's had to do: cleaning the house of beer bottles, taking care of Mary including making her breakfast and lunch, basically playing Dad.

"Biology," Katherine's eyes light up with a twinkle that Jack knows is honest and real, because she used to love the subject herself. "Good work there sport," She ruffles his hair and beams at him. "I know how hard that can be, but you take right after me."

"You never had a problem with grades before." His father's eyes narrow, Jack notices how ignorant he is of everything Katherine is saying or doing and more hope fades away. "What's changed?"

'There's always a chance to turn this around, you can defuse this...' Jack tells himself, biting his lips before speaking. "I just have a little more responsibility with Mary."

"Her school isn't any more than a five-minute walk from where yours is." Jack believes that is the most astute observation Will has ever made while drunk; he also believes that it's his undoing.

"I just," He takes a breath, losing confidence. Katherine steps back, too well versed in these sorts of arguments to be surprised at the way William steps up to Jack, just so he can stare down at him. "I also get her ready in the morning and cook her breakfast too, before you guys wake up." The way Will glares at Jack grows more and more tense and Jack feels as if he is shrinking in his father's shadow.

He wants to slink away and hide but before he can amend or try to stop the fight, his father's hands are already around his throat. At that moment, Jack mind clears of all thought and he tries to scream, his hands come up around his fathers and scratch at them.

William shakes Jack, not caring that the young man is already desperate for air as is. "You were out with some random bitch-" He throws Jack's body to the ground, knocking the rest of what little air he had out of his body.

Jack tries to fill his lungs but panic is overriding and controlling him; he can't relax and he needs bigger and bigger gasps of air to calm down. William hovers over him while Katherine stands a short distance away, taking no action besides placing her hand over her mouth and watching the scene play out in front of her.

"You were out with some random bitch-"

"Dad, I have no idea what you're talking about." Jack pants, trying to breath in a little deeper and gathering only enough to pull himself up to half height, with the support of the living room wall. He doesn't know why he claims that; the truth of the matter is there were plenty of random girls, that Jamie pushed on him and none that he showed interest in. There was a perfectly sensible explanation of 'my friend used to push girls on me', but still, he knew his father would twist it around into some admittance of guilt.
"Honey," Katherine does her best to work with Jack, to work off of what he's saying. "That's a little absurd don't you think? If Jack had a girlfriend he'd tell us, right hon?"

Jack nods and looks up at William, asking him with his eyes. 'We still doing this?'

"I don't trust this little fuck up half as far as I can throw 'em."

Katherine gave Jack a look of apology and pity, 'There's nothing more I can do here'.

"So who was it?" He snarls and his face twists when he looks at Jack, as if he's watching something disgusting come to life in front of him. Jack groans and braces himself for a beating that will leave him in pain for the next few days, if not a whole week. "Was it that disgusting little slut next door? Hmm? Pippa, right? It was her wasn't it?"

"Dad," He doesn't know why he still tries, his words fall on deaf ears. Halfway through calling out to his father, his voice just gives up and William grabs him, picks him up by his shoulders.

"Honey please!" Katherine overestimates how far she can intervene, as William swings Jack towards to his father, his voice just gives up and William grabs him, picks him up by his shoulders.

"Honey please!" Katherine overestimates how far she can intervene, as William swings Jack towards her like the young man is a weapon, trying to avoid getting hit she slips and slides back, narrowly avoiding hitting her head against the nearby television.

"You little fuck up." William hurls him to the ground again, Jack feels his breath leave him once more but doesn't despair. He's already given up hope for a peaceful resolution at this point anyway. "We don't need you running around fucking random whor-"

"We don't need your drinking either." Jack groans, still wanting to rebel even as his body aches and screams for surrender.

There was a silence that brought the fear back into Jack's heart after he realizes that he said that aloud, for all to hear.

"What did you just say to me?" Will knelt next to him, a crazed look of ire dancing in his eyes with an alarming and tight smile on his lips. Jack curled up into a ball of pain, regret and exhaustion, not just with his physical body but with his entire situation. Will doesn't allow him that much of an escape, he grabs Jack by his hair and makes sure that they lock eyes when he repeats his question. "What did you just say to me?"

Jack, thinking himself too stubborn to give up hope that he could still turn this situation around, searches his father's face for mercy, but there was nothing to be found. 'Two feet deep in the grave.' He opened his mouth again, "I said that we didn't need your drinking either." he says it without a hint of regret or hesitation, letting everything he's feeling be known.

Will just smiles at him, releasing his hair and looking down at Jack as if he were a predator looking at a small woodland animal. A feeling of both pity and amusement. "That's cute you know." A sense of insanity lurked in those words that left his mouth with a hint of laughter. William stands to full height while Jack refuses to look up. "You know what Jackson?"

'Jackson.' His full name, Jack knew he was about to receive a beating he wouldn't soon forget. He takes in as much breath as he can and prepares himself.

There isn't enough time, not that he could ever cancel out the pain with mere preparation alone.

A hard, strong kick hit him square in the stomach. Knocked the sense out of him and he unclenched his limbs, only for another to make him regret moving. "If you don't, fucking like it-" William punctuated his words with another rough kick, this time leaving Jack retching on the floor.
Katherine stayed frozen in place, only twiddling her fingers and trying her damnedest to avoid eye contact. When Jack tried to find her eyes, she intentionally turned around, wordlessly rejecting him.

"Than you can get the fuck out of my house."

Jack started to tear up as Katherine abandoned the room and William backed away, doing what Jack could only describe as admiring his handiwork.

Jack felt his face heat up and wetness on his cheeks as he curled into a ball once more and tried to hold everything in, but it was pointless. It spilled out and he cried for a solid five minutes. He always imagined mom being the last bastion he could go to and now look where he was while she hid herself to avoid being involved.

He bit his lip to hide a particularly loud squeak before William, not one to miss a good opportunity, intervened.

"The fuck are you crying for?"

Jack didn't respond as he summoned what little was left of his strength to cling to the wall and stand. As he reached full height, still leaning, everything went into a dull gray and began to spin – he tripped and fell again. William laughed.

He tried again, this time making his way to the door with William following right behind.

"So," William put his hand on Jack's shoulder and grinned at him, as if proud to see his son suffer. "Where do you think you're going?"

Jack gasped and a shock went through his body as he sped up. William laughed until Jack was grasping at the door handle to his room and yanking it open. "Where ever I fucking want."

At the end of his tether, he slammed the door behind him and retreated to the safety of his room where he collapsed on the bed, an upset ball of tears and pain.

Two full hours pass, made up of Jack resting, thinking and mulling over his own predicament. He never felt more ready to leave then he did now but he wasn't prepared to go. No degree, no stable job, no source of income, only seventeen with no one to really turn to for assistance. How could he just up and leave?

Plus, he sure as hell was not about to just leave Mary behind; Will was too frightening and far too threatening. After all, if he left who would Will beat? Katherine? He already beat her. The only remaining target for his belligerence would be Mary. The only real solution he could see would be getting legal custody of Mary but...he couldn't until he was at least eighteen.

"Jaaaack!" Mary calls on him from the bottom of the steps and the only thought that comes to his mind is that Will just isn't finished and started hitting Mary.

He stumbles more than once but appears in the door of his room looking down at Mary, who just smiles at him. "I finished all my school work."

Hoping the distance and lack of light in the stairwell hiding his sorrow shrouded face, he cheers for her and encourages her, paying no mind to his over-reactive heart.

She doesn't come upstairs, instead her steps head back in the direction of her room and he exhales thankfully, not wanting Mary to see him like he was now; red puffy eyes and heart-broken.
'I need to leave,' Jack thinks but collapses onto the bed in tiredness before an idea pops into his head: Leave...but not forever. Just for today to get his head straightened out and come back with a brighter outlook. Before he can disappoint himself with his own thoughts of how wrong it could do he starts to prepare.

Picking up the rest of his money and flipping up his bright blue featureless hoodie, he felt an alien strength in him. He felt like he was fighting back in a way by just leaving without a single word, by just silently disobeying. Even if he was going to return, it was good to do something just because he wanted to do it, not because he felt pressured to. It felt like freedom.

Leaping through the window and landing with a sudden feeling of discomfort through his ankle, a reminder of this morning, Jack feels as if he's some type of revolutionary ready to take on the world, reclaiming his freedom. He knows it's over-the-top somewhat but the fantasy of somehow being a lone rebel sounds fun and he indulges in it. Just to help it along he pulls his hood up and grins as he does it, fantasizing in his head of nearby onlookers thinking of how mysterious he is.

Anytime before he would need a damn good excuse and even than, his parents would sometimes deny him. Now he was just taking it upon himself to leave...he felt like a badass.

It's not too long before he's in the 'main' part of town, which surprises Jack because he remembers the town being so much bigger and harder to navigate from when he was a child. He can just barely remember traveling around town with his parents, his strongest memory being of the candy shop to his left...that was replaced with an empty parking lot. Nearby gifts surround a telephone pole and there's a moment where he feels just a little too human for comfort.

'I wonder what happened.'

To stop any more morbid thoughts he searches for the nearest place to take a moment and think quietly in, his feet carry him to a café right across the street. It's a cozy, tiny place that feels both welcoming and old, reminiscent of old black and white cartoons. The outside even has the signature red and white overhang, the name of the diner drawn across it, 'Cafe Claussen'.

The old timey feel of it dispels a lingering worry for Mary's safety and without a moment's wait he walks through the door, abruptly in the mood for coffee.

The pre-2000's feel is consistent. There's not the slightest hint of a television or a screen with the minor exception of teenagers, some of which his classmates, toying with their phones over school books. A few looked up at his entry, gave him a mixed look and kept on working. Jack would've gladly reciprocated but he'd long-since burned his bridges with a lack of contact. Talking with them would be too awkward, especially knowing that most would bring up the past. All he wanted to do, at best, was chew the fat.

Not that he was complaining, if there was any group of people he couldn't stand that didn't give birth to him it'd be his school mates.

Trying to find a free seat that won't put him next to some random person he doesn't want to speak to is like finding a needle in a haystack. Every seat has either an old friend or someone who he's certain will be a new enemy...except for one. A person he'd never seen before, wearing gray gloves by the looks of it, sits alone and holds the only non-electric hand-held device in the store; a hardcover copy of a strange blue and gold book.

'Intellectual...meaning introvert and therefore, quiet.' Jack grins and makes his way to that seat making sure to ask politely before trying anything. "Is this seat taken?" The response he gets is the one he hoped for. Complete indifference and a total lack of words. Taking that for a yes he sits
down, makes it obvious he's holding and playing around with the menu, and waits.

After a few minutes, it's clear no one is coming and there's no waiter or service in sight. Even the front desk is empty. Even more time and he's worrying about Mary's safety – what if his parents found out and now were tormenting her instead? The few parts of his mind that are still rational are yelling for some sort of distraction, picking at the menu's leather bindings won't do anymore.

So, in desperation, he tries his best to get his fellow occupant's attention, gently brushing his foot up against his leg.

His book slams shut and he finds himself looking into the eye of possibly the strangest and most intriguing thing he's ever found: a man with grayish, silvery skin. His hands, come to find, are not gloves but just normal hands that seem to have been dusted over with a light coating of dusky silver paint. The man all in all was strange and yet mildly attractive, thanks to his strangeness.

His face was thin and long, villainous even. He had black, unruly hair that rose from his head in jagged spikes, it didn't even look like hair but sheenless obsidian. He had a pronounced nose, like one a child would give a 'bad person' if you asked them to describe one, veering on the edge of beak-like but not yet there. Underneath that, thin and yet defined lips. His wardrobe is all black, right down to what Jack saw from his shoes while entering the window-side booth.

The most defining and shocking characteristic though, was his strong and near cat-like golden eyes. Even in the bright afternoon light by the window sill, they glowed like twin suns. It's the one part of him that doesn't make Jack feel as if he's looking into the face of a future murderer, given the antagonized glare he's being given.

"So," His voice bellies the haughty rage contained in his eyes, which Jack finds more enchanting the more he looks at them. "why have you come to me?"

"You say that like we've met before." Jack notes, now interested. "But I've pretty sure I'd remember you, with a face like that."

"So you've come to mock." Strangely enough, his face molds into one of relaxation and peace. "Do hurry, some of us have urgent business to attend to." His voice is deep and carries the lightest touch of an accent that comes from across the Atlantic, with a hint of over-dramatic sass. Jack guesses British.

"Like reading?" The man scoffs and Jack smiles, amending himself as soon as he can while staying polite. "Relax, I wasn't insulting you. You really do have a very interesting face, honest."

And just like that, he's on the defensive again. "And I suppose you mean putrid when you say interesting?"

"No, I mean interesting..." Jack rolls his finger around on his café menu, keeping his hands busy as he makes conversation. "I'm curious, I guess you could say."

"It's Argyria. You know my story now." He begins to pick up his book but Jack intervenes, putting his finger on its cover. The man stops, makes eye contact with Jack behind his hood.

The younger man gives the fabric a light pluck and let's it fall from his head, revealing his short, snow-white locks of hair.

"It's not Albinism." Jack smiles, trying to keep the conversation going without seeming too desperate. Black eyebrows raise and he feels a small lifting in his heart. Now he wants to talk, to mingle with the man. Now there was someone interesting who didn't have the air of someone either
stupid or hateful.

"Alright then..." He says quietly, his hand raised onto the table and towards Jack, insistent.

Jack takes it. "Jackson Overland Frost," He holds his hand up for pause. "Yes, I know."

"Krosmotis Black Pitchiner and trust me I know a little too well." Pitch gives the hand a hearty shake before it disappears again back to the other side of the table.

"So I assume you're either new in town, visiting or just a homebody, Krosmotis?" Jack gives him a glance of interest, he really is weird to look at but at the same time he can't help but think that he's just plain attractive. He can easily imagine the other man being a bit of a player before the Argyria struck him.

"I'm enough of the third that the first and second are true enough." He threads his fingers together and rests his head on them, seeming to be as interested in the conversation as the one who started it.

"And just 'Pitch', please."

"Home all day? Hmm...can't really blame you. Not a lot going on in these neck of the woods...except for you maybe."

Pitch gives him a look that awakens butterflies in lower stomach. Trying not to seem too childish and remain unfettered by the fact that Pitch is clearly older than him, he returns the gaze with as much intensity as possible. The near invisible smile on Pitch's gray lips is shared for a half second before he gets a nearby barista's attention.

"So I'm what's 'going on'?" Pitch asks, his smile showing off a row of bright white teeth while he loads his coffee down with sugar.

"Yes, for me at least." Jack leans back in his chair. He gets more relaxed as some of the high schoolers begin pouring out of the café, most done with cheating on their schoolwork and others just bored and heading elsewhere. He doesn't miss them but instead grows more interested in the man seated across from him.

"Good to know I could alleviate your boredom," There's a tad bit of apprehension in his tone and Jack bites his tongue.

"I didn't mean to offend, I do mean it. You're very interesting compared to...well..." Jack points over his shoulder at a teenage girl, still typing on her phone. "That."

"Believe it or not." Pitch coaxes him closer with a wiggle of his finger. "She's been trying for the past fifteen minutes to spell 'self-righteous' and failed every time."

"Well..." Jack sighs comically. "The shining hope of humanity was so bright...then she happened."

Pitch's chuckle, low and melodious, brightens Jack's day just a little more. It felt good to get out and meet interesting people, he takes a note to remind himself to get out more often as he accepts the sugar from Pitch.

"Thank you by the way for the coffee."

"Least I could do, since you're now what's happening in my neck of the woods...dark as they've been lately." Jack beams at him, a dash of sympathy in his gaze.

"Are they just dark or are they..." A pause for dramatic effect. "Pitch Black?"
Pitch rolls his eyes but the smile tells Jack that he's brought just a little night-light to his woods, if nothing else. "They're close enough. The dreary boredom of this town though, not quite the greatest feature."

It's a weird feeling, when that hurts him. He wasn't expecting the sudden shock of pain in his chest when Pitch complains again about the town, as if the other man had been a long-time friend of his and just walked away. Still, the only other thing he can think to say is, "Well, why not leave?"

"A close friend, work. History." Pitch takes a short sip of his coffee, unguarded now. "Every now again there's always something interesting wandering about."

"Like a shadowy figure with gray skin casually slipping coffee in a forties style café?"

"No...more like a young boy with hair the color of fresh snow walking into a café and talking to said shadowy figure."

"So I'm interesting now?"

"Maybe...I haven't decided just yet," Pitch winks at Jack over his cup.

"Oh good, maybe I can get a little closer to you, make life a little more interesting around here."

"Like close friends?"

"Not too close, you seem a little dangerous Pitchiner."

"Really? I'd say I'm rather welcoming..."

"Oh?" Jack's eyebrows raise and he bites his lip momentarily, hoping that what he's about to say doesn't come out wrong but wanting to say it anyway. "Because you look like one of those fantasy film type bad guys that young boys like me should stay away from." The low, sweeping tone of his voice makes it sound so sexual but he didn't mean for it to come out like that.

Judging by how far Pitch's left eyebrow raises and the slight biting of his lower lip Jack would say he took it wrong...and right. Running the entire past five minutes of conversation through his head he sees how flirtatious he's been.

'You're a lonely teenager and he's hot, it's bound to happen.' he thinks, excusing his action and just letting the conversation go where it goes.

"Considering what you've just said, either of us staying away from the other might just be a problem for us both, Frost."

"I would hope so." Jack finds himself a tad breathless, wishing to think more about his words but not able to stop their tumble from his lips.

"The feeling is mutual."

It's so little but it means so much, while they share a heated gaze and very slowly the touch becomes an embrace between their palms. Jack can't remember touching someone like this, not someone who was both so hot in both the figurative and literal sense. Pitch's palm feels like a burn over his skin that isn't unwanted but more tentative than most other sensations. Too soon and all at once Pitch pulls his hand back and in equal understanding of how public their personal contact is, Jack does as well.

It doesn't mean that either of them don't want a little more though.
They both decide they've said enough and let the quiet take over while avoiding eye contact.

Jack can't decide whether he wants to run out of the café screaming or try to get Pitch to take him home, *Take you home and do what jackass? You're a virgin. He's probably married or something, as hot as he is.*

All's quiet until Pitch glances at his watch with Jack peering over the table at him but still trying to avoid being 'seen' as it were. The way the man sucks his teeth and sighs gives him pause and he's curious...

"What's wrong?"

"It's almost half past five. I've missed an appointment as it were...unimportant though."

Pitch shrugs, unconcerned but Jack drops down from his cloud nine and back to reality. He must have been gone from home for over an hour. His worries flare up with a vengeance, barraging him with thoughts of his little sister's safety and images of her hurt or worse. He stands up, so quick that he hits his knee on the table.

Pitch looks up at him, alarmed and making the first acknowledgment of his existence since the end of their flirtatious back and forth.

"I'm sorry for the noise." Jack apologizes, making sure everything is steady while not having the resilience against his instincts to calm down.

"It's fine, you need to go right?" Pitch closes his book and checks over Jack, making sure he hasn't spilled any coffee on himself or anything.

"Yes, I'm sorry -"

"I'll pay for the coffee, you just get going."

"Really? Wow, thank you, that's so...nice of you!"

"No problem...but do me a favor."

"Yes?"

"Answer me this; Will I see you again?"

Jack slows down a tad, grinning as he puts his hood back on. "I don't know...I haven't decided yet. You still seem like a bad guy I should stay away from..."

"Even though I'm paying for your coffee?" Pitch chuckles, "That's cold...Jack Frost." He shoos the younger man away.

Jack leaves the café in a rush, worried but more energized and happy than he's been in years.

Chapter End Notes

Song 'A Little Drop of Poison' by Tom Waits.

Thanks for all the support and whispers guys, the more I get reviews and views the
more updates and stuff you guys get - since that stuff motivates me.

Thanks again :)

Chapter Summary

Come high-water and hellfire, Jackson Overland Frost is still the world's best older brother!

Chapter Notes

"Thank you so much!" Jack got up and waved farewell quickly in what he hoped would be seen as politely. He felt so much better now that he got out and got to actually see people that weren't either sitting next to him in class, droning on to him about school lessons or screaming at him for nothing. With no little haste he ran home as fast as he could, this time deciding to enter through the front door rather then try to struggle back up into his room's window. In the back of his mind, he realized he didn't get the stranger's name...but then he remembered that not everyone on the Earth had silver poisoning running through their bodies and turning their skin dark gray – he'd be easy to spot if Jack really wanted to see him again.

Satisfied with that conclusion he braced him for the worse, pushed the door open and returned back to his 'normal' life, leaving his indecent social graces, coffee fueled hatred for other teens his age and strangely charismatic gray skinned men behind.

Jack wasn't expecting complete peace and tranquility when he came home, he knew his parents and their problems better then to expect that and he wasn't stupid enough to believe in sudden miracles, but he didn't expect it to look like such an absolute war zone, as if a violent and powerful tornado with claws had had a temper tantrum in his living room Tasmanian-Devil style.

The furniture was tossed, lobbed and scattered across the room, a great majority of the couch pieces had what appeared to be knife holes with cotton pulling and dripping out of them like blood and flesh on an open wound. The T.V. had been knocked onto it's side – luckily not broken but probably not without trying—with the cable box thrown to the floor and broken up into different, shattered black pieces from the protective casing that dotted the floor along with jagged, sharp pieces of a different, non-plastic nature. Squinting he could make out the green glass of a broken beer bottle that reflected the sunlight coming through the open door with a soaking wet orange label that said 'Hellfire' on it.

'No surprises there really...'

The living room table had been flipped over and clearly thrown about with a part of the wood that made the base of the table stable missing, making it an unwise decision to place anything on it. The said part of wood was lying on the floor, unused and randomly breaking the destructive composition of the room. Jack walked up to it, closing the door behind him as he walked in lest his neighbors see and open Pandora's box, and made sure it wasn't used as a blunt object to harm anyone in the house.

More particularly, to make sure there was no blood marks that signaled that father had gone beyond what Jack thought capable of. Thankfully, he found none...so things were still relatively 'normal'.
After surveying the damage he cautiously peered around the house. It was past seven o'clock and he couldn't find his mother, father or his little sister. It was worrying. If anything the damned silence was making it a million times worse.

He traveled down a hallway he almost forgot existed, careful to make sure not to step on anything that would make an excessive level of noise and peered into the three rooms that made up his parents' room, his little sister's room and the 'Safety Room'...

First he checked his Mother and Father's room, a place he really never entered into before. He expected to find things lazily placed about and thrown around the room, making an entire mess with trash and garbage gathering on the floor and compacting, solidifying under its own weight until the trash literally became a new floor...the scent being capable of choking the breath out of a person to the point where one could possibly need a gas mask if they weren't used to be the scent, otherwise it'd be unhealthy just to stand in that room, much less inhabit it...

However, he was at a loss for words at the sight of the inside. It was impeccable with each and every last thing because neatly placed and put away in its respectful section of the room, the floor was remarkably unmarked and almost shined in the near-night/late dawn light that radiated through the nearby window giving just enough light to see.

With his mind once again blown he pulled out of the room as stealthily as he humanly could and made his way towards Mary's room, sincerely hoping nothing had happened to her and that he was going insane over nothing.

He peeked around the corner to his little sister's room and felt a little sick to his stomach. It had been so long since he had been in here last, kissing her on the forehead as a goodnight sign before withdrawing away, closing the door behind him...only to hear her whimpers of sadness from her and turning around, opening the door 'just a crack' to let the light come in before wishing her goodnight again. His heart ached but fortuitously he couldn't find any signs of a struggle or a fight here nor any sign of Mary being in there...time to move on.

With a calming exhale he tip-toed down to the last door of the three, the 'Safety Room'. The room that he actually spent the more time with his sister and mother in then all the other rooms combined. Faint memories of having to huddle up and lock the doors to try and pretend like their father wasn't just a short walk away, hurling slurred obscenities to his wife and kids as he took out his anger on the surrounding environment...

The surface of the door still had imprints of his father's hands on them, banging on the door while daring them to come out, screaming for them to, demanding that they leave the room before he would slowly sink down onto his knees like a defeated man and beg for benignity from his horror-struck family once again. In this moment of thoughtfulness, Jack pressed his finger into one of the marks where his father's hands once were, as if he could somehow help his father like touching the mark would somehow just make it disappear or evaporate into air...but that certainly didn't happen.

With the tips of his fingers he pushed the door open carefully and it gave a complaining shriek as it opened up, revealing the 'Safety Room' which, to the unknowing eye seemed to be a completely normal guest room to the house. Perfectly clean, crisp, unused sheets with a variety of comfortable pillows in various different shapes and sizes with the rest of the room having a comfortable feel to it, a natural blend of blues and whites along with two full walk in closets and an unused desktop in the corner on a desk – 'Obviously.'.

Normal people would've thought it probably looked nice.

Jack hated it. He knew this room too well for his liking.
Disregarding his feelings of discomfort he focused on seeing if any violence had occurred in the room – but unlike the other rooms which had a wide variety of color, even in the dark, this room practically shined with blue and white. Any blood, dirt or signs of violence would stick out and there was nothing but peace and quiet.

Then, out of nowhere there was a loud slamming like wood on wall, the loud screeching of metal parts from being moved too fast and too suddenly with atrociously, loud shrieking cries and Jack hit the floor in a confused flurry of limbs with fists hitting him on the chest and a high pitched voice screaming deafeningly at him, enraged. The dim light that the room has previous glowered with wasn't helping him at all here, he couldn't see the face of whoever was hitting him!

But after a little while, right before he could respond in kind, he could feel their size and physical strength through their punches and their youth through their voice...and instead of trying to fight back he just laid there silently while Mary sat on top of him, hitting him, crying with heavy sniffles and screaming near unintelligible words that he could only understand parts of. He gladly let her hit him as he felt guilty in a way for whatever had occurred, despite not knowing what happened while he was away.

Eventually, the youngest frost calmed down and climbed off of Jack's body and helped him get up. The elder felt terrible despite doing nothing but laying there and not feeling any real physical pain from his sister's punches.

"I'm sorry Mary..." He knelt down and hugged her, holding her close to him and trying his best not to cry and get upset by extension. He needed to be strong for her right now, just like he usually was...he inwardly cursed himself. 'This is what happens when you run from the problem,' he distressingly reminded himself 'Today was a moment of weakness on your own part, you don't have anyone to blame but yourself. Don't let it happen again or things might just succeed in getting worse.' "I ran away. It was my fault."

Mary didn't seem to have a response for that and instead clung to him tighter, her sniffles starting up again as she opened her mouth to speak. "Dad left. He was upset...he came back...drunk...then he and mommy started fighting again and-" she started crying again, louder then last time and Jack's eyes widened as he looked at her, disturbed from her outburst of emotions. "Daddy said that he was glad you were gone and called you a buncha bad names and said you shouldn't ever come back..."

"It's alright...come here little snowflake..." He pulled her up safely into his arms and rocked her gently, trying to stop her tears. "I'm so sorry you had to deal with that all alone...it was my fault. Big brother is gonna try harder in the future alright?"

"Why doesn't daddy love us?" She sobbed into Jack's ear and the older of the two bit his lip, trying to suppress his own oncoming emotions. He hated it when she cried like this, as if with every tear that fell down her cheeks another part of his heart was breaking for her, for them. A selfish part of him wanted to go back to that time to before he really began to care for her, to before he could turn a blind eye to all of the abuse he and his mother were going through by merely shrugging it off. Now he had his little sister, sensitizing him to the real nature of it again...and it was hell to deal with. "What did we do wrong that was so bad?"

"We didn't do anything wrong Mary. Dad just..." Jack's voice unintentionally trailed off there, unable to find an answer that would be befitting. 'Needs help', 'Is really angry?', 'Needs to stop going out and getting wasted?' seemed to all be correct and applicable answers, but not the answers Mary needed to hear right now in her life and so he tried his best to cover it up with another question. "Where's mom?"

"She went to go get garbage bags and stuff to clean up." She pushed past her emotions and Jack
couldn't help but grin at her proudly. "Her English was getting better and better with each passing day. She didn't make any food or anything...she just left. She's been gone for a while now."

"Hmmm...hey Snowflake-'" Jack bit the inside of his cheek for a moment, only now realizing he was calling her by an old nickname Will used to use and instead just danced with her in his arms for a bit, smiling at her. "You've been doing great as of late. Big brother is going to find a way to reward you for something..." Then he remembered he had an unused ten dollar bill sitting in his front pocket with more hidden away in his room. "Thank you gray guy!" "How about we order some pizza?"

She immediately became her chipper, happy self again. "With pepperoni?!"

"And extra cheese." He tickled her and rubbed his nose up against her own before placing her back onto solid ground.

She cheered as her older brother put her down and then greedily grabbed his hand up as they went back into the ruined living room to pick up and reassemble the dismantled house phone – battery and all – and call the local pizza place.

Jack wasn't dumb enough to let the pizza guy see the inside of the house and instead met him outside and gathered the pizza from there. He may have not liked how his parents treated them but he doubted foster care would be much better nor would it keep him in touch with his little sister. Things always got messy when you involved outside powers and laws...He hoped that he would be able to continue playing father figure for her while still being able to have a bit of breathing space for himself until either his father either got sober or until she didn't need him anymore.

He walked back inside and placed the pizza on top of the now un-turned over television – it was almost too big for him to turn back onto it's bottom but he struggled through it and got to cleaning up as best as he could within a nominal amount of time so that he could get his sister fed in an at least moderately clean environment.

First off was the less than difficult task of sweeping the floor clear of all the glass and hard plastic so that Mary wouldn't hurt her feet. Then placing as much of the furniture back in place as he possibly could and testing the cable box to make sure it worked and was fully functional – miraculously it was. Jack was thankful for the little things and set Mary up in the living room, watching Spongebob reruns while eating her pizza and waiting for her brother to come join her.

Unfortunately, Jack refused to rest so easy and tried his best to tidy absolutely everything up while Mary watched from the couch as he ran himself up and down the stairs and throughout the house, cleaning up to the best of his ability before sitting next to his little sister once more and trying to relax again, enjoying the rebroadcasts of his second favorite show in the world, eating his third favorite food in the world and enjoyed the fleeting moment of peace, away from the drunken brawls of his parents and the long and convoluted schoolwork that was more time consuming then difficult. Jack knew he had to eventually return to these things but for now he enjoyed this moment, when he could feel like he was actually a son rather then a full blown father figure...

Three full Spongebob episodes and six of out of a total ten slices of pizza later, Mary was dozing off with her head lying against his arm and struggling weakly to stay awake and conscious for as long as possible. Jack couldn't help but pet her head delicately and smile at her as she finally gave in and drowsed off into a world of sleep. After that Jack cautiously picked her up and put her into her own room, under the covers of her own bed before retreating back into the living room, putting away the
rest of the pizza away in the kitchen and deciding it was time for him to go do schoolwork before heading off to bed himself.

And then he remembered the testing paper that he needed to have signed. A brief look confirmed that it certainly wasn't in the immediate area but he didn't have the energy or drive to get up and actually do an intense search for it – he didn't even complete the rest of his school work for today. He really couldn't do much besides just pick himself up and head to bed and just as he was about to do that, the front door swung open to reveal a thoroughly pissed off Katherine.

Jack opened his mouth to speak but was too slow, she was already on him with eyes like a hawks, staring him down viciously and mercilessly. "Why would you just leave like that? Do you have any idea how worried I was? How upset and scared me and your father were when we couldn't find you upstairs?"

"Mom I-"

"Don't even! Do you have any idea what you put me and your father through?!"

Jack sucked his teeth and took in a sharp intake of breath, too exhausted and emotionally drained already to deal with her screaming and yelling at him over his leaving. He agreed, it was stupid of him to leave so soon and without a word to her but her screaming wasn't helping him at all. "I'm sorry." It was all he could really struggle out before he pushed himself off the couch and tried to head to his own room...only for his mother to walk right in front of him and get in his face.

"Jackson don't you dare try to walk away from me. You scared the living hell straight out of us!"

Jack really couldn't take anymore for today. Maybe tomorrow but not right now...and he blurted out the first thing that came to his mind as a result. "I saw the beer bottle on the floor. So I can already tell you that's a lie for at least one of you. By the way, did you notice that I cleaned up the living room? Turned the television back straight up? Swept the floors? Fed Mary with food I brought with my own savings? Put her to bed? Did you see any of that or even try to see things from MY perspective before you started screaming at me?" It was all said in a shocking amount of deadpan that would've even surprised Jack, if it wasn't for the fact that he was far too fatigued to try and be astonished by his own words.

Katherine opened her mouth to speak but instead retreated and took a breath before talking. "None of that justifies you leaving Mary in this house all alone."

"Funny you should say that, because when I left here Mary was with you and dad but when I got back she was all alone, hiding in the closet in the safe room, paralyzed with fear until she knew it was me." Jack stepped past her, as if he was paying her no mind – and he wasn't. He didn't have any more left to give for today. "You can be hypocritical, spiteful and mix up your priorities all you want tomorrow. Right now I need sleep." With that he headed upstairs into his own room and locked the door behind him, leaving a stunned and ashamed Katherine to deal with her own emotions while he collapsed into bed and dreamed of a world where he didn't have so much weight on his shoulders.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Hellfire is the name of one of my favorite Disney songs of all time. My absolute favorite is 'Pink Elephants on Parade' then, 'Be a Man', then 'I'm Odd', 'Be Our Guest', after is 'Be Prepared', 'Hellfire' and lastly is 'Painting the Roses Red'.
Just got to near where the first climax is in the story in outlining...Gonna be a fun, heartbreaking, soul shattering time :).
**History Repeating**

Chapter Summary

Mary stop being all adorable cutie cute cuteness! :(  

History Repeating - The Propeller Heads & Shirley Bassey.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

"Jackson don't you dare try to walk away from me. You scared the living hell straight out of us!"

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Unfortunately, like all good things his dreaming came to a screeching halt and he awoke in bed, luckily around his usual time of when the alarm clock would wake him. Despite still being an exhausted mess with his hair sticking up every other way he pushed himself up from his bed, shed his clothing and rummaged through his drawers to find something he could actually wear outside – distinctly trying to avoid seeing a reflection of himself in the nearby glass window.

Eventually he found a light gray t-shirt, black jacket with a hood, some dark blue jeans that clung to his upper thighs – making it clear how thin he was but without making him look as if he was approaching an unhealthy state of weight loss – and some navy blue sneakers.

Jack smirked to himself depressingly. 'Isn't stress supposed to make you gain weight?' He tiptoed back downstairs to happily find that the floor was clear of all signs of a fight or conflict. If his father got back that night, he must have went straight to bed without a second thought... which was good for the frost son in his own opinion.
He tiptoed down the hallway and into Mary's room to find her still sleeping. Had it not been for school, he would've gladly let her sleep. But sadly, it was a school day and he had to pick her up and place her on her feet – the quickest way he knew to wake her up.

"Good morning Mary." He whispered re-assuredly before getting out some of her clothes – a long sleeved blue and gray shirt with a design he didn't really care much for on the front and light blue jeans from the near by dresser and placing them right next to her on the bed. "You can wear whichever sneakers you want. I'll go make us a quick breakfast alright?"

"M'kay." Mary mumbled stuffily while rubbing her tired eyes and turning to her clothing while her brother politely retreated from the room, closing the door as softly as he could behind him.

It wasn't long before he had a plate of sunny-side up eggs and lightly buttered, golden toast with a light layer of honey on them specifically for her and a single piece of toast in his own mouth while he cleaned up the kitchen and tried to make sure his hair was something presentable to humanity – easier said then done with his dislike of mirrors due to his own lack of free weight or time to eat healthily.

He didn't let himself think of those matters and instead made sure everything is ready for Mary, double checking over her books and making sure everything was intact, making sure she looked presentable and decent and brushing down her hair gently before sitting her in the still-not-as-clean as he would've liked living room and allowing her to eat before he double checked himself – getting all his books and things together as quickly as he could and swallowing down the meager amount of food he would allow himself to indulge in at this time...then dodging into his room and grabbing another ten dollars for future use should he need it.

"Alright you ready Mary?" He said, giving her a smile and hug as she dumped her plate into the sink. The nod he received in response was happy and ecstatic despite this being their normal mornig grind. "Alright then, let's get moving." He took her hand into his and they walked out of the door, gently closing it behind them so they wouldn't wake their parents.

It wasn't long before Jack had to allow his younger sister to leave his sight and into the primary school. He gave her a hug, a kiss on the forehead and a normal "Okay, I'll pick you up from here at around 3:10. Be good, work hard and focus" before she left.

This happened almost every day but it was still a little sad to her go, even when he knew the school was a safe place for her. He chalked it up to him being something of her guardian before he picked himself up and began the five to seven minute walk from there to his high school, walking past multiple eateries and shops on the way and actually wanting to go in and get something for himself after barely getting anything to eat but he didn't want to be wasteful.

Instead he focused on getting to school and trying his hardest to study and as he waited an intersection's light to change he felt as if that wasn't going to last long.

"Oh hello there Jack." A shady, gray and abnormally dark looking person slid into his perspective vision and he turned to find his old friend from Cafe Claussen standing there with an obvious smirk. He almost jumped from seeing him.

"Oh hey! Good to see you again..." Jack smiled and looked over him quickly. He was wearing a simple black shirt and matching pants, carrying a small case in a single hand. The clothing fit him well, looked surprisingly expensive and worked along with his skin and body shape rather well. He could clearly see the outlines of sinewy, interesting muscles through the fabric.

"Same to you. I suppose you go to the local high school?" Another bright smile of straight white
teeth that clashed with the rest of his skin had him wondering how Pitch got his Argyria in the first place.

"Trust me when I say I wouldn't be anywhere near a school if I didn't...but what are you doing here?"

"I live a bit of a ways past here, really behind the town and closer to where there are actual woods and rivers."

"Oh cool..." Jack tried to thank him again for the fact that he could buy pizza for his little sister the other night, but the light had changed and everyone nearby them was walking – pushing them forward and nearly separating them. Even with his friend's less then normal skin color he wasn't able to find him through the fast moving group of teenagers pushing him by and before he knew it he was pushed right outside the campus losing sight of him. 'Damn it...'

"Well that was close. Nearly lost you." The voice spoke normally and the distance between them was normal but it just sounded teasing in nature.

"You're genetically predetermined to try and be scary aren't you?"

"No...but did I get you?"

"No." Jack whirled around and stuck his tongue out at his acquaintance "but I want to thank you Mister...?" He mimicked the hand gesture from the Cafe with delighted face as he noticed how Pitch beamed – he remembered.

"Kozmotis Pitchiner." The light bow that he gave Jack was unexpected and graceful. "But please do call me Pitch. Much easier on the pronunciation." He reached out, placing his hand in Jack and shaking it eagerly.

"Jackson Overland Frost." He shook back with a polite smile that was returned in kind and at that moment he wished he didn't have to go to school – even though that was a normal thought for him during certain days this one stuck out much more then the other wishes...and then he noticed that Pitch was giving him a weird look with a raised eyebrow as if wordlessly saying 'What are you doing?'. Then he noticed he was still holding his hand and quickly let go with an apologetic smile. "Sorry, my brain's elsewhere."

"Well I certainly hope you find it before someone else does. You know how people around here are. You know she never got it right and just settled for 'self-riheous'?"

"You're kidding." A light chuckle mixed with a hint of slight disbelief in his voice.

"I really wish I was and that's the worst part." Pitch smiled right along with him and for just a half second, Jack thought 'This is right. This is what not faking feels like.' before he realized that the bell was ringing in the background and he had to get going to make it to class.

"Well...that's kinda my call."

"I understand. Try to get your brain back in your head before the teacher calls on you. Always nice to not get embarrassed in front of the class." Pitch joked and Jack's smile widened even more.

"Alright. Guess I'll see you around?"

"At the Cafe?" His voice was soft and lightly melodic, carrying with it a feeling of hopefulness.
"Is that a date?" It was meant as a joke despite Jack's self-admittance of finding the man before him rather attractive.

But Pitch seemed to either joke right along with him or take it somewhat seriously, as his smile became something...strangely different and his voice deepened very slightly. "Only if you want it to be."

Jack felt like the conversation had somehow reached a strange turning point in terms of what they were talking about. He defensively hid his nervous awkwardness and chuckled it off instead of actually addressing it, waving as he walked backwards into the school, Pitch watching him happily and answering with his own little wave until the younger dipped inside the building and disappeared out of sight.

"Too cute really...much too cute." Pitch whispered as he walked away from the high school with a happiness in his slightly imposing stride that he lacked before seeing the young man but didn't notice.

But a pair of observant eyes only a few feet away, hidden behind a nearby tree with a photo-capable phone in hand didn't and quickly took a picture of the gray skinned man.

"I'll remember that."

Previously, Jack had trouble focusing on schoolwork due to home problems and his hard work taking care of Mary and trying to deal with his parents' inability to be...'parents'. Today, however, was a different story altogether. Today he was completely and utterly infatuated with his new found 'friend' that had just a mere hour before been jocular about being a bit more then friends or perhaps he was indeed serious and the distinct possibility was indeed there.

If he was in any other place, Jack knew he'd be trying to shake himself from the illusion that this man was actually interested in him but he was in his easiest class – art appreciation – which bored him but he wanted the credits. Questions like 'What does he do for a living?' and 'How old is he?' popped up into his head and the young, lovestruck high-schooler decided he needed to know the answers the next time he saw him. He wanted to know more about him, especially since even with gray skin he wasn't anywhere near bad looking if anything he was the opposite: the gray skin put incredible shadows on his skin that made him look even more attractive and beautiful.

Jack wasn't sure whether it was just him that seemed to think so but a part of him hoped it was true because it made the connection between them feel more real and personal, something he enjoyed despite him only learning his name today.

His pencil scribbled out little scrawls and notes of questions he wanted to ask, things he wished to inquire deeper into but didn't dare question now for fear of pushing him away before things got remotely serious. Then it all hit home: Jack had never been in a really, serious, long-lasting relationship before.

He had been in a few relationships that never went beyond a single date and maybe a make out session, extending for no longer then a week before he had to stand the girl up due to at home responsibilities or they left him for someone who actually had time for someone else. He was a seventeen year old virgin alongside that, even if he was as beloved in the town as he really was, he didn't suspect many people would have the patience to deal with him. Especially not someone who was quite literally tall, dark and handsome.

Plus Pitch was a man. He wondered how he parent's would react to him bringing a man home – if
his father reacted to him getting a bad grade on a test by pummeling him into the ground, he wasn't quite sure if he would actually live with telling him: 'Hey yeah, this is Kozmotis Pitchiner. I met him at a cafe downtown and fell in love at first insult. He's got gray skin from probably eating or somehow ingesting silver, he's at least three years older then me and I'm still illegal. I also let him potentially poison me in the cafe! Gets better though, I have NO idea what he does for a living, he claims he lives in the woods far away from any human interaction and nearly all the interaction we've had was generally just insulting other people!'

He figured he'd get to 'cafe' before getting himself killed. He sighed as his brain and logic caught up to his fantasies and crushed them underfoot. 'He's probably with some lucky girl who is enjoying his attention', 'He's way too far above your league', 'He doesn't want some broken up kid that has to play daddy all the time to some little brat', 'You're too young', 'You're too skinny', 'You're never gonna get him'.

With a deep breath he exhaled and impatiently tapped his foot on the ground before running his hands though his hair, stress mounting up from his own thoughts crushing him and his hopes.

"Hey Jack?" Jack glanced up to see Jamie Bennett looking at him curiously and the entire classroom empty and forgotten, even the teacher was gone.

"Oh, sorry! Ummm...darn it..." He quickly gathered up his things and left before he could get reprimanded and hurried off to his next class before he could be late – but of course he was and received strange looks from his friend and the fellow students before he slipped into his seat and attempted to focus once more only to slip back into 'fantasy vs logic' mode again about Pitch – wondering more and more about his likes and dislikes as he absentmindedly scribbled circles into his notebook, not paying any attention in any of his classes.

This process repeated until he was finally out of school, gathering his list of due homework for today and heading out to go collect Mary and take her home with the name ‘Kozmotis Pitchiner’ burned deeply into the back of his mind.

Chapter End Notes

Not much to say besides....I want Pizza from the last chapter. Like seriously.
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Both he and Mary had finally reached the end of their rather uncheerful walk home – the main reason it was somber being because it was a walk back home, a walk back to the place that was riddled with parental arguments, screaming, instability and violent was famished for food since he forgot that he had money in his pocket to buy lunch with and spent the entire time during his lunch break daydreaming about the man that a part of him still refused to believe he could have.

It was a little upsetting how hard it was hitting him but he decided he'd just push past it like everything else and instead focused on walking ahead of his sister to open the door – just to make sure there was nothing going on she wasn't supposed to see and swung the door wide open to see his parents seated on a brand new – but identical – couch, their heads turned towards him in surprise.

They both looked awake, alert, looked as if they actually took their times trying to look their best today and...surprisingly looked not drunk. Mary shuffled up behind him and stared with wide eyes, even she could see the difference in their appearances.

"Oh hey there little Snowflake!" Will showed off a mouth filled with bright white teeth as he
approached the younger Frost, who at first almost hid from him before allowing herself to be swept up into her father's arms with a grin.

"Daddy!" She gripped onto his shirt and laughed happily while Katherine got up and hugged Jack, her scent was that of perfume and shower gel instead of the normal alcohol that he would usually smell...

it all became obvious.

It was the return of the peaceful, clean, sober week.

"Hey pumpkin, how was school?" Will said, putting his child on the ground and kneeling to get on her smile.

"It was really nice! I drew a picture of the American flag today and the teacher said I did super extra good!" Mary smiled wide, showing off all of her baby teeth while Jack unlatched himself from his mother...seeing the whole scene left a bitter taste in his mouth. Did Mary think that Will was actually different? Maybe she thought that her father and drunken Will were two individual entities – if that was the case Jack both profoundly pitied and greatly envied her lack of ability to see reality for what it really was.

"Jack sweetie, when you finish your homework me and your father have something we need to talk about with you." Katherine's voice was so lighthearted and cheerful compared to that of what it was in the days before that it almost struck the teen frost as a shock.

"Alright, I'll finish soon."

"Take yer time sport, there's no rush." Will called after him while he picked up Mary again and spun her around, making her scream and laugh happily before putting her back down and ruffling her hair.

'Yes, Dad. I know you probably either can't tell or don't care but there is a rush...' He knew his parents were on a timer of at most seven to eight days before they sunk back into their drinking habits – three or four if withdrawal symptoms really begin hitting them hard with headaches and overall bodily aches and pains. He sealed himself away in his room to finish his work as soon as he could – or he could lie about it and go back down in twenty minutes just to get it over with.

Jack didn't rush through his schoolwork but he did use his laptop to cheat his way out of a good ninety percent of his work – he knew most of it anyway so he decided it was fine to cheat just a little bit...for all of his work.

He was done in about thirty five minutes and then spent the next ten lounging about his room and strongly considering his options. 'Go down now, later or never at all...' He figured now would be the best option, just to get it out of the way and not prolong the torture. He forced himself off of his bed and down the steps – every step he went down felt like a step closer to some strange world that he wasn't ever sure how to deal with. No matter how many 'safe' weeks happened he could never get over how dramatic and different the change was. The two might as well have been completely contrasting human beings in comparison to their drunk selves.

Needless to say, there was a certain level of terror involved as well, Jack's lack of time spent around them made him wary and unsure. He didn't know what buttons he could and couldn't push with them or what would trigger an argument or an outburst from them. He felt himself walk in on pins and needles, whether because he had been sitting on his feet the entire time while doing his homework or...
out of sheer fear he was unsure.

One thing was for certain: they were waiting for him. His father sitting up in a brand new chair perhaps pretending to actually be interested in whatever it was on T.V. That Jack couldn't be bothered to notice with his nerves stung so tensely. His mother, previously lying on the couch was also getting up from her position, looking up at him with eyes he couldn't read.

'This is gonna be fun.' Jack mentally joked before putting on his best fake smile and striding in on the balls of his heels, giving the illusion that he was much more hyped up to talk with them then he usually was. "I'm done with my work, what was it you wanted to talk about?"

"Come, sit." Katherine pet the seat right next to her and welcomed him into it. "We need to talk to you about a couple things that have happened recently."

"My...history grade?" Jack played dumb and prepared to act as surprised and upset as he possibly could for the upcoming news – something that really wasn't really 'news' at all so much as telling him the obvious – before he sat down next to his mother, putting on his best possible perplexed face.

"No...no...it's about..."

"It's about my drinking." His father cut in – something that Jack wasn't expecting at all. Never before in the past nine years had he actually come forward about it while not actually drunk and arguing in support of his drinking. Even now his voice carried with it a confidence and a boldness about it that spoke of something different – like an actual change.

Jack wanted, so badly, to actually believe in him.

"First off I want to say...I'm sorry." His father leaned over in his chair, arms resting on his knees with his hands crossed into a cradle for his chin. "These past years I've...I've mistreated you, Mary and your mother and nothing will ever change that, I'm ashamed of the things I've said and done but I can't take them back – you already know that."

Jack nodded slowly, not fully understanding this sudden change of words. Usually he would just say that he would try harder next time – say a few apologies and be good for a few days but never anything quite of this seriousness and magnitude. Nothing that ever brought such a heavy silence over the room or cast such a large shadow and demanded such overwhelming attention from both him and his mother.

"I realize that I have completely dumped my responsibilities as a father onto you, especially when it comes to little Snowflake..." The sadness in his father's eyes was visible and pulling. It yanked distressingly on Jack's heartstrings and he found himself desperately wanting to cry and vent about the past couple of years, where it had been getting harder and harder for him. He swallowed it back down and chose that he would save it as something to scream about to the walls of his own room, lest he cause a bigger scene to erupt. "That's nothing any father should ever do to their child, or a burden that you should be allowed to bear. I can't even begin to tell you how..." His voice wavered with a whimper, as if the words were painfully caught in his throat, before he took an inhale and re-composed himself. "How upset I am at myself for my actions, my dependency, everything I've ever done to you or your mother...I'm so...so sorry."

Jack swallowed and stopped making eye contact, instead looking at his own folding and unfolding hands with increasing amounts of possibly positive uncertainty with his father's words. He never heard him really apologize like this – never completely sober, never with such sadness in his voice and never directly to him. 'This may really be it...he might just really stop this time..' He could see tears brimming in his father's light hazelnut brown eyes that glowed with the want of change and
There were no words for how much Jack wanted to believe in him, wanted to believe he could change- but there were also no words for how much emotional, physical and mental suffering that he had gone through for the past nine years. Living in a household where overhearing a previously loving and welcoming couple scream obscenities and heartless insults at each other, death threats and the throwing of furniture were simply dismissed as normal Sunday morning rituals. Where the peaceful and ever satisfactory sound of silence was the greatest delight both he and his little sister could hope for when they were not caught in a sober week, unless it was a 'calm before the storm' silence – in which case it was as if they were walking on mine-covered battlefields. He bit his lip painfully hard and ceased that train of thought – he had to be strong and steadfast until he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Will had stopped.

"I promise you, that that will never happen again. I will do everything in my power to stop myself from letting another drop of alcohol pass my lips. This – whole thing is just...it can't keep going. I'm going to stop myself – I have to. Or it is going to kill me." Whether he was talking to Jack or himself, no one in the room was entirely sure. But his mother beamed happily and hugged Will tightly, as if trying to show him how proud and happy she was of him.

"Jack, we got you something that you really should've gotten earlier." His mother dipped her hand into her pocket and pulled out a flat blue and white rectangle, passing it into his hand with a wide grin.

He examined it, running his fingers over its surface before mentally berating himself 'It's a phone you dumbass...' He smiled as he turned it over and looked at the design on the back. A large snowflake with stripes on both sides, above and beneath it. "Thanks so much..." Jack really had no idea who he was going to call or what the capabilities of the phone were but he was sure that it'd be useful to have one on the go now.

"We entered the phone's number into the school, so if we need to call you or you need to call us they already know. Also signed that test paper, be sure to pass it this time okay?" Jack nodded and turned around to run back up to his room.

"And try and get all your grades a little higher. You're smarter then what they show, I know it..." His father yelled after him and something inside his heart beamed.

He didn't even think his father knew about his grades.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Alternate title is Cliche Bromide.

A little bit of a spoiler too I guess.
"I promise you, that that will never happen again. I will do everything in my power to stop myself from letting another drop of alcohol pass my lips. This – whole thing is just...it can't keep going. I'm going to stop myself – I have to. Or it is going to kill me." Whether he was talking to Jack or himself, no one in the room was entirely sure. But his mother beamed happily and hugged Will tightly, as if trying to show him how proud and happy she was of him.

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It was the first time in a long time that Jack found himself waking up early in the morning and forcing himself to leave the ever beautiful and cottony comfort of his bed only to be softly told to go back to sleep as his father readied his little sister for school downstairs, doing everything from double checking with her books to lightly brushing her hair down while she giggled jubilantly and told him about her many new friends at school from entering the new year.

Jack felt a part of his heart ache for two different reasons. The first reason was because he was happy and enthralled to see his father actually sober for once in such a long time and doing something for them that they needed—finally playing the part of a parent. The second reason was because he knew that if Will really did decide to pick up the slack and actually be father to Mary, he wouldn't be able to anymore. Jack knew that after he stopped being the 'father' of Mary he wouldn't be able to spend nearly as much time with her and their current time spent together, things that Jack had up to now seen as their own little private time that included walks back and forth to school and getting ready in the morning would be taken from him.

'A necessary evil I guess...’ Jack thought wistfully and quickly tip-toed back upstairs from his looking place so he could get ready for his own day – for once not having to rush as much as he did before. He even spent a little more time double checking over his backpack – making sure he had everything, including his new phone, he needed before he went into the bathroom downstairs and looked at himself in the mirror.
Still too thin for his height and age but with Will taking a much more active role Jack was sure he'd fill out eventually. With a hint of a grin on his lips he examined himself in the mirror a little closer, he didn't like how thin he was but he really loved how lithe he looked. 'Can't gain too much weight...'

Jack thought with impressing Pitch with his appearance at the forefront of his mind.

Then it hit him.

He didn't have to be with Mary all around the clock if Will was with her.

Meaning he had time for himself...and Pitch.

With a mischievous grin he thought of the man of his affections before almost painfully yanking himself out of that train of thought – he'd be late for school if he allowed it to go any further. Instead he focused on getting downstairs and getting some breakfast, planning to fix himself something nice, filling and quick instead of just grabbing whatever he could get his hands on. But he found his plate fully prepared for him upon coming downstairs, a small stack of pancakes with maple syrup dripped on them that resembled a smiley face and few pieces of bacon along with a note that was done in near-sun bright-orange colored crayon.

'Me and Daddy made this together! - Love Mary! :)'

Jack bit his lip and mentally read it in her voice a few times before licking his lips and biting down in order to stop the tears from coming out, he didn't know why he was crying but he felt it was so undeniably adorable...he promptly sat down and got to work.

–

He was heading to school alone, without the need to go to the local grade school to drop off Mary, this was something new and almost alarming for him. He realized how pathetic it was but Mary had become such an important part of his morning regime that he actually felt uncomfortable and unsafe walking down the street alone. Her presence was a calming assurance for some reason.

He tried to swallow it down but his fear was really getting the best of him – he looked down, didn't quite wear the same smile and only when he approached the near empty Cafe Claussen and saw an unforgettable face inside did he perk up and dash into the place, noting that he had at least a good twenty minutes to spare before class.

"Pitch!" A wide, confident grin along with a happy stride as he approached his friend/cafe acquaintance/flirtation-ship partner/mental boyfriend.

Pitch looked up from his book and only after seeing Jack did he allow a grin to come through. "Well, hello Jack...shouldn't you be headed off to school?" He checked his rather expensive looking watch with a flick of the wrist and Jack noticed: the Argyria really was covering him from head to toe but bright silver looked gorgeous on him.

Jack admired Pitch's current outfit. A simple black suit with a white tie and again that shining, beautiful silver watch with basic reading glasses.

"I got time." He dismissed Pitch's worries with a wave and sat across from him, showing off his gleaming smile while unceremoniously dumping his backpack into the seat next to him.

"At least fifty minutes worth here. I usually leave around thirty minutes after the bell rings – gets so scarily quiet around then."

"So you do come here often." Jack said, half teasing and half joking.
Pitch smiled, caught slightly off guard and took off his glasses, folding them into his book as a placeholder before pushing it aside and centering purely on Jack. "You look radiant this morning. Something exciting happen?"

He wasn't sure how Pitch knew that but he didn't ask – he already knew he looked different with a full stomach and actual time to prepare himself before leaving the house. "Yeah..." Jack stopped himself from speaking about the 'exciting news'. Fathers with crippling alcoholic issues that they are only currently attempting to try and get over after eight years of family abuse wasn't something the average man found attractive...to his knowledge. "Just got a little more time on my hands as of late." Jack decided he didn't want to get end their conversation there and kept going – he didn't need to but he just wanted to hear Pitch keep on talking to him. "So what's up with you?"

"Nothing really, I'm not the type with much action going on. The most news you'll get out of someone like me is that I'm interested in a new book." Pitch rested his arm on the table and used it to cradle his head, as if holding it.

Jack bit his tongue and quietly weighed his options: actually let the matter rest because he couldn't quite find another option of conversation aside from option two or...flirt like he had never flirted before.

The latter option always was the best one.

"You should spend a little more time with me then. I'm sure I can find some excitement for you." Jack grinned naughtily with his hand lying casually on the center of the table, drawing invisible hearts with his fingertips while hoping that Pitch would actually keep up the teases he did back at the front of the campus.

Jack didn't know what he would do if he didn't.

At first Pitch seemed shocked to hear Jack say such things but then he smirked and leaned forward a bit more with an equally playful smile dancing on his own lips. His voice sounded husky and deep and as Jack listened to him he swore he felt his heart skip a beat. "Well, entertain me Frost. What have you got in mind?"

Jack's lips formed an 'O' as he processed that statement. Pitch just returned his flirt. Meaning he was interested...right? Jack figured he didn't have enough relationship experience to tell...but decided that if Pitch really wasn't interested, he'd tell him. After he was done gaping like a fish he tried his best to focus on Pitch again and be as alluring as possible – but it was clear that Pitch had seen his weakness and interrupted him before it began.

"Oh Jack..." His voice was hinging on a moan and sounded almost as if he was really making love to Jack right at that moment. "Don't tell me you thought I was joking the other day..." The tips of his own light, dexterous fingers brushed against the back of Jack's hand and he looked him directly in his sky blue eyes. "I wasn't...this isn't mere play."

Jack took a sharp breath and nearly moved his hand, the contact feeling like static electricity dancing on his skin. He looked up to retort and ended up staring back at Pitch, the single look stealing the air out of his lungs and the thoughts from his brain, his mind only briefly accounting that he had possibly the most beautiful, sexually intimidating and attractive eyes Jack had ever seen before his mental thoughts shut down with the exception of the most basic systems.

Pitch grinned and continued with his butterfly touches, leaving a light trail of goosebumps on Jack's palm. "I wonder if you're simply all talk Jack Frost. I wonder if you really know what you're saying and doing to me when you throw me such...teasing looks." Pitch took this opportunity to absorb
everything...Jack's light panting that was almost undetectable by anyone who wasn't sitting directly across from him, the way his pulse seemed to jump under skilled fingertips, the needy expression and parting of his pink and kissable lips...'Much too cute' was quickly becoming an understatement. "I refuse to be teased for too long without having a little fun for myself. I promise you Jack, I will have every part of you to myself if you intend to keep doing this and you will enjoy it." Only then did the older lover pull his hand back "...every last moment of it." Then he pulled his left hand to his mouth and gently kissed the tip of his index finger before gently pushing it towards Jack's lips, which puckered ever so slightly forward waiting for the indirect kiss...

He wanted everything Pitch had to give him. He wanted to feel him, touch him, every sensation he could get. He was desperate for it and he'd take anything he could get his hands on – even something as simple and as childish as this...he was wanting for too long, thinking about it too much, spending too much precious time believing that Pitch was like some pie-in-the-sky dream he could never have and feeling too saddened and upset to really chase after.

Finally he was going to get it and as he felt the heat of Pitch's fingertips near his mouth he felt as if his mind went partially blank and he flew away, only to crash down distressingly to Earth as Pitch pulled his hand back sharply and turned towards the luckily less-than-attentive waitress with a grin that spoke of inner laughter and delight with a hint of wicked cruelty.

"Excuse me." Pitch said, his voice now all business with none of the naughty playfulness that it had before. "Can I get some bubble tea over here for my friend? Preferably ice made."

Jack snapped out of it from the pure shock of what Pitch did and slowly put both of his hands in his palms, embarrassed and upset by his own actions – or the specific lack of intentional ones. Without realizing it he allowed himself to be like putty in Pitch's hands for those moments, completely wide eyed and slack jawed and easily lead on by the nose. "...You're a horrible man."

"And you're eventually going to like that." Pitch said casually as Toothiana – Jack tried not to focus on how implausibly stupid that name sounded when said aloud was or how befitting the name was considering the horrendous shades of teal, blue and green she donned herself with – flitted over to the table and delivered him a strangely colored, icy concoction that he assumed was bubble tea.

Jack waited until the server leaved before speaking. "So you're going to just not give me anything? How delightful."

"Oh no, I just won't give you enough." Pitch spoke dismissively with an invisible grin that Jack had rapidly learned to see through the attempt to stay straight faced and serious."...or maybe I'll give you everything you've ever wanted if you'd be patient enough..."

"Patience isn't one of my better qualities I'm afraid." Jack nervously poked the slushy tea with the bright pink silly straw that came with it in embarrassment – 'keep it noted to never tip Toothiana ever'.

"Then that makes us at party of two, doesn't it Jack?" Pitch said slowly pointing to the silly straw with a smirk before looking at Toothiana, once again not paying attention, with disapproval.

"Then maybe you should hurry up before I lose interest hm?" Jack grinned haughtily before sipping gently on his bubbly tea and thoughtfully noted to get more for himself then next time he came.

"Let's not play that game little one. You don't control the conversation." Pitch informed him, voice dangerously low once again and Jack felt a small rush of sexual adrenaline go through him as he realized just what position he was in...there was something intoxicating about their back and forth quips and flirts that he just couldn't get over.
"Oh please, don't bore me with warnings. I'm not the type to learn much from them anyway." Jack chuckled quietly and tried to hide and stop his bubbling smile – he was grinning to the point where his face was actually beginning to hurt.

"Obviously not...you're the type that needs to learn from rough, hard, fast experience." Pitch's voice was akin to a low rumble of seduction and he looked Jack in the eye again as he stealthily licked his lips – just a flash of soft pink against his grayish skin was dashing enough for Jack to notice and let out a small gasp of surprise that unintentionally escaped him as a pleading moan for more. "You need it, not even for the experience but so that someone can show you the greatest pleasure you could possibly feel..." He moved closer with his eyes never parting Jack's pupils – the pools of icy blue now blown to at least double their size as he imagined and fantasized about Pitch with every word he spoke and every faint touch. "Slowly and carefully pleasing you, making you plead for it with every breath until they ultimately give it to you, tortuously well until your arcing from the bed, melting, hot, breathless, screaming their name..." Jack was now crossing his legs under the table and linking his fingers together, his face beet red but his eyes unable to look away...Pitch leaned in under their noses were just barely touching. "You need..."

Jack took a deep breath at the light contact, back arcing from the want.

"To get to school or you'll be late." Pitch backed away just as quickly as he closed in, his voice now switching from its seductive tone to a very concerned one that didn't fit the mood at all. "You've got about five minutes if I'm guessing correctly..." He peered at his watch and nodded without even giving Jack the slightest glance.

"...Pitch...you're a HORRIBLE, terrible person!' Jack mentally yelled at the aching between his legs and the dizzying feeling, resembling a knotted rope that needed to be released, in the pit of his stomach.

"Bathroom is right past the fourth table against that well." Pitch pointed behind him with one hand while opening his book with the other, disregarding the whispered curses that came spilling from Jack's mouth as he passed – a bit too loudly to be polite – bent over, trying his best to hide his erection from the now giggling Toothiana who had witnessed the whole exchange.

Jack came very close to collapsing against one of the stall walls in the bathroom, his pants feeling too tight to walk around safely in and his body far too hot for normal. He took deep, even breaths, trying to will it down but he couldn't – not enough to get to school on time...

He bit his lip and unzipped his pants, letting them pool around his ankles and looked down at his tented black boxers with an upset face. He couldn't even remember the last time he actually did this – he had done it before, he knew that for certain but...he couldn't as of late, not enough time to focus on himself or even relieve himself of stress...

He heaved an upset sigh and gripped his leaking erection in his hand, with his opposite hand running up his chest, leaving behind trails of raised skin as he thought of Pitch and his promises of what he would do...taking his time to make Jack scream.

Thinking of Pitch's hips rolling into his own, their erections grinding together and his own breath hitching at the thought of the heated contact, their flesh melting against each other had him rolling his hips into his hand and leaning forward, now using his hand to brace himself against the opposite wall. The fantasized versions of what Pitch could do to him that he thought of during school were not helping him hold back any.

"Piiitch..." Jack was veering on drooling as he thrust into his palm over and over again, tip leaking pure white essence while he could just barely stop himself from releasing too much noise as to alert
anyone that could be in another stall.

'Slowly and carefully pleasing you, making you plead for it with every breath...' Pitch standing over him, controlling him, pleasing him only enough to keep him excited, never enough to actually let him reach his peak, Jack groaned deeply and added a light twist to his strokes, right up near the base. He caught himself just in time to push himself back up against the wall and use his free hand to quickly shove his mouth full of shirt to no one would hear him...he was in heaven and he wouldn't last long. 'until they finally give it to you, tortuously well until your arcing from the bed, melting, hot, panting, screaming their n.' Jack couldn't finish that thought, his mind completely blank and gone as he screamed silently into the cloth, most of the noise being drowned out and the rest sounding muffled. He came hard, seeing stars and white bliss behind his eye lids, gripping himself tightly while he rocked into his hand, not stopping until he could see again with his white seed emptied into his hand.

His body felt warm and strangely lighter in the afterglow but he didn't want to actually do anything, he felt too tired and spent. All he wanted to do was go home and crawl under the covers where it was nice and warm and not school work filled...but he tore himself away from the quite, post self-copulatory comfort of the bathroom stall and washed his hands rapidly and thoroughly before stomping out to see a still smiling Pitch and embarrassed looking Toothiana, almost hiding behind the counter.

"How was it?" Pitch's voice sounded more interested then he probably wanted it to be but Jack shoved it off and answered it as if it was a normal question.

"Good...Remember to tell me how yours will be." A snide smirk thrown towards Pitch got an intrigued look back and Jack slid towards him – briefly running his hand against Pitch's shoulder in a seductive way, slower then what was publicly acceptable considering the words that just left his mouth - before moving away and gathering up his belongings. "You're paying." He pointed to the half finished Bubble Tea in his stride and moved towards the door. "I'm holding you to every last word Pitch, I hope you realize that."

"That's nice." Pitch spoke offhandedly as if he was saying 'Please, I can do much better then that.' while he ignored Jack's statement. "Hurry up and run to school my little bravado loving child, before your teachers begin to question where you are." He was teasing, joking and perhaps being slightly discourteously condescending all in once – Jack's brow furrowed in a bit of inward anger.

"I'm not a child Pitch...and if you treat me like one don't expect for me to give you too much attention." Jack grinned in response and left the cafe in a seductive stride, a little too much shake in his hips considering he was in public but he knew exactly where Pitch's eyes were just then and failed to care until he reached the front of his school, luckily right on time to get swept up in a massive wave of flooding teenagers in a non-voluntary rush to get to their classes. 'So wait...this means that it's kind of serious right?' He thought as he struggled to move out of the stream of classmates and towards his first class. 'You don't usually masturbate to a specific person you know, with them knowing about it and standing like ten feet away without it being serious right?' Jack wished he had more relationship experience to help him deal with these kinds of things...

On the opening gates of the high school campus, an unseen observer of Jack and Pitch's romantic meeting scrolled through the numerous photos she had taken of the two. The quality was remarkable and she was confident that no one – not even Jack and Pitch could deny the truth of these photos. It was almost aggravating how people just walked by the cafe without a second thought – not paying attention to the two rather popular men inside who were obviously having an intimate moment.

It didn't matter though.
She had proof.

And she was going to use it.

Chapter End Notes

Finally got the gender of our mystery person! :3

Fun fact: This is the first chapter where I think I didn't feel it with a.nn.nnngst, and the first one where I can say its titled by a really 'feel good' and 'loving' song, even though I'm not a big fan of it. The chapter after this one is the precursor to our ANGST CLIMAX...our first angst climax anyway so...

Be Prepared!
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Jack struggled through school to focus on his work, a mixture of happy post-orgasm enfeeblement and confirmed relationship based excitement coursing through him for a majority of his busy day running through his classes and somewhat completing his work. He was fortunate enough this time to be paying enough attention to class to know when it ended and leave without totally embarrassing himself in front of his school mates – not that he really cared that much about what they thought of him.

During lunch he picked at his food, more and more questions about his mysterious lover poking about in his brain. He wanted to know more about him and spend more time with him to get to know him better, it was strange for him. He really didn't care much about his classmates unless he was trying to keep up appearances with them but he was willing to bend over backwards to please this man who he didn't even know much about...

He poked the over-expensive lunch again with a pout and thought more of Pitch until he was yanked out of his thoughts by a familiar voice.

"Hey Jack!" Jamie's wide smile appeared in view and the white haired boy nearly jumps out of his seat in surprise and shock, completely forgetting he was still even in school.

"Oh hey Jamie...long time no see?" Jack put on a good face for his friend, the incurring awkwardness of their relationship didn't stop with Pitch walking into his life – if anything it got worse since he had something more serious and current with him rather then Jamie.
Jamie pouted and gave Jack a sideways look of confusion before he leaned in a bit closer, whispering though the loud cacophony of the lunch room. "We walked into history class and into the cafeteria together, standing right next to each other and you didn't see me?"

Jack swallowed and looked away, feeling a little bit guilty from his lack of attention, even as he tried to stay more focused in school while also thinking of Pitch he still couldn't pay attention to his surroundings with enough alertness to even recognize his only real friend in school. "Sorry."

"What's been up as of late with you?" Jamie asked curiously, nervously rubbing his hands together while he asked the question while the young Frost took a moment to see that Jamie wasted no time in getting to the root of things.

"Nothing man-"

"Don't bullshit me." His voice was dangerously low and he looked at Jack with a heated glance. "I've known you since grade school, you've never acted like this." He spoke low and quiet with a level of anger that carried a hint of concern. Jamie was honestly worried about him...why didn't it feel like a generally good level of concerned though?

"It's really nothing Jamie." Jack mirrored Jamie's upset expression and decided he was going to lead the conversation away from himself. "I'm fine, but are you okay? You seem like your a little off dude..."

The way Jamie's eyes narrowed in his direction and examined his face gave him a clear indication: he wasn't falling for it. He stared at Jack and opened his mouth just a sliver before closing it again and just continuing to look. The other just grinned absent-mindedly for a moment before looking back down at his unfinished food that had all of a sudden become much more interesting than the surrounding area.

"Whatever." Jamie suddenly shot up out of his seat and left as quickly as he came, striding out of the lunch room without taking a single look back to see Jack's shocked expression.

'What...just happened?' Jack asked himself as he got up to dump his unfinished lunch away, now uninterested in it and trying to replay the entire conversation again in his head but finding nothing that would bring up that much anger in Jamie that he would walk away from the conversation like that...

Jack kept an eye out for Jamie as he walked to his next group of classes but couldn't find him until his last class of the day: Biology. He tried to get his friend's attention and he was absolutely sure Jamie noticed him trying but the auburn haired man refused to reciprocate. Even after the class when Jack tried to get a hold of his friend after class, looking around for him as many students evacuated the school like it was a burning building, he couldn't find him.

'Maybe I can get a hold of him some other time...' He silently hoped and left the campus, still wondering what exactly was going on while he walked back from school, hands in his pockets and hood covering his head until he noticed that he was approaching Cafe Claussen. He practically ran up to the building, pulling off his hood and entering the place with a smile on his face, scanning the crowd of teenagers for a unique but familiar face that he always enjoyed seeing.

Nothing.

No one in the cafe was even wearing gray.

'Great. I guess I'll see him later then.' Jack thought to himself as he begrudgingly left, putting his
hood back up and trudging home feeling more then a little upset and confused.

For the next few days, until Friday, Jack lived in a blissful but strange sort of peace. On one hand, his father wasn't drinking, he could actually finish his work in a minimal amount of time with little struggle and he completed his history test with a perfect grade second time round. He actually felt like he was putting on a tiny bit of weight after finishing the left over pizza one night and sitting down to do something that he hadn't done correctly or without being bothered in so long that he almost forgot how: he sat on his bed, opened up his laptop, queued up some of his favorite show: Legends of the Hidden Temple on YouTube and he relaxed. Not a temporary 'Okay...just calm down Frost' but multiple hours of nothing but him and his interests. It was absolute bliss, he even got him and Mary some Party Cake flavored ice cream in a silent celebration for their ability to unwind.

But on the other hand Jamie wasn't talking to him and despite making five trips to Cafe Claussen – two going to school and another after feeling a little antsy at home and wanting to just double check – he hadn't found hind nor tail of Pitch. Even after asking Toothiana about his possible whereabouts her only answer was 'I'm sorry, but I really don't know jack about him'. Whether she was taunting him, joking or just didn't know his name and actually meant that as what it was Jack didn't know but he was absolutely sure he wasn't ever going to tip her. Ever.

It was Friday night at around 8:30 when Jack pouted and lay on his bed, rather upset and angry from feeling rejected with his lack of contact with Pitch that he decided to check one last time. He was sure that a few of days with no contact really didn't mean the absolute end to their relationship but this was the first one that Jack thought he could really take seriously and it was a flimsy one at that. They hadn't even kissed yet – he thought it was more flirting to pass the time then any actual emotional connection. He wanted something deeper then that with Pitch, he realized. He wanted to know more about him, kiss him, touch him -

Before he could even finish that thought he was out the door, giving the excuse that he was off to see his study partner about some additional schoolwork before the weekend. Luckily with his age he could go out this late at night without being overly questioned about it and practically ran to the cafe with some little last light of hope gleaming in his eyes that maybe Pitch would be there, sitting there in a dark but classy or at least good looking attire in a booth alone, book held close to face with eyes moving merrily and slowly across the pages with familiar reading glasses donning his face...

It was a five minute full blown run across not-so-crowded streets to reach the cafe and almost collapse through the door. 'Need more exercise...' Jack thought before looking about at the few, sparse faces in the place with not a single hint of gray amongst them. 'Thought so...of course he wouldn't be here. Probably got sick of me.' He reasoned before leaving as quickly as he came. He knew he was probably overreacting to the lack of seeing him but part of him still hurt inside – he always that the Pitch would be there when he really wanted to see him, like he was put there specifically for him. He knew it was a selfish thought but at the same time he wanted to see Pitch so badly that he felt like he could be selfish, just this once.

He went back home, disappointed and lied to his parents – saying his study partner wasn't home before he crawled upstairs and returned to bed, discarding his sweatshirt in favor of partial nudity before falling into the bed in exhaustion. The run had taken more out of him then he thought it would...

He curled up underneath the comfortable sheets and tried to get him mind off of Pitch for now. He thought of numerous things like 'He's too old for you anyway', 'He's probably got a girlfriend', 'He's too busy for a child like you', as if trying to reason his existence and their relationship away before he drifted off to a dreamless sleep.
Fun fact: This is the first chapter where the title is one of my favorite video game songs.

This is also the smallest chapter in forever. No apologies. Next one is about 6k words long and will be released on Saturday. One after that is even longer. Those two make our climax too :D

Also just reached chapter 24 in outlining. Wooooo, finally got to the chapter that inspired all of this insanity.

Please review, comment, laugh, smile, dance and love :)

Chapter End Notes
It was Friday night at around 8:30 when Jack pouted and lay on his bed, rather upset and angry from feeling rejected with his lack of contact with Pitch that he decided to check one last time. He was sure that a few of days with no contact really didn't mean the absolute end to their relationship but this was the first one that Jack thought he could really take seriously and it was a flimsy one at that. They hadn't even kissed yet – he thought it was more flirting to pass the time then any actual emotional connection. He wanted something deeper then that with Pitch, he realized. He wanted to know more about him, kiss him, touch him -

Before he could even finish that thought he was out the door, giving the excuse that he was off to see his study partner about some additional schoolwork before the weekend. Luckily with his age he could go out this late at night without being overly questioned about it and practically ran to the cafe with some little last light of hope gleaming in his eyes that maybe Pitch would be there, sitting there in a dark but classy or at least good looking attire in a booth alone, book held close to face with eyes moving merrily and slowly across the pages with familiar reading glasses donning his face...

It was a five minute full blown run across not-so-crowded streets to reach the cafe and almost collapse through the door. 'Need more exercise...' Jack thought before looking about at the few, sparse faces in the place with not a single hint of gray amongst them. Thought so...of course he wouldn't be here. Probably got sick of me.' He reasoned before leaving as quickly as he came. He knew he was probably overreacting to the lack of seeing him but part of him still hurt inside – he always that the Pitch would be there when he really wanted to see him, like he was put there specifically for him. He knew it was a selfish thought but at the same time he wanted to see Pitch so badly that he felt like he could be selfish, just this once.

He went back home, disappointed and lied to his parents – saying his study partner wasn't home before he crawled upstairs and returned to bed, discarding his sweatshirt in favor of partial nudity before falling into the bed in exhaustion. The run had taken more out of him then he thought it would...

He curled up underneath the comfortable sheets and tried to get him mind off of Pitch for now. He thought of numerous things like 'He's too old for you anyway', 'He's probably got a girlfriend', 'He's too busy for a child like you', as if trying to reason his existence and their relationship away before he drifted off to a dreamless sleep.

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Despite his popular and much beloved snow and ice based nickname, Jack loved the heat and warmth with the kind heat of his body after a good night's sleep being his absolute favorite type. It was beautiful, warm and welcoming wrapped in a soft cocoon of blankets that caressed his skin with nothing to bother or exhaust him especially after what occurred last night. He lay there enjoying the
ball of warmth that he was wrapped in, what his body heat while sleeping had blessed him with. He didn't want to leave but he wasn't exhausted enough to go back to sleep either with the sun peeking through the open window opposite his bed and the fact that over time it was actually cooling down.

'All good things...' He sighed and coiled up just a little bit more, grabbing his legs and pulling them closer to his body. He wanted to grab this second in time and preserve it as a memory of silent, early morning peace and relaxation. It just all seemed so...perfect.

He grudgingly withdrew from the blanket cocoon to welcome the too-bright-for-human-eyes morning light of his window before immediately retreating back inside with a hiss. 'Five more minutes...' He mumbled and whimpered, rubbing his eyes.

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After forcefully prying himself from his bed with heavy emotional reluctance and needing the metaphysical equivalent of a crowbar to even pry and push one leg beyond the covers and onto the floor, Jack dressed himself in a different sweatshirt – a bright blue one with patterns of frost at the shoulders and around the single large pocket towards the front that he stored his phone in – and some brown pants with a few tears at the edges.

The pants made it clear to him just how thin he was for his age, almost scarily so. It looked as if he was walking on twigs and he momentarily decided that he would probably need to change before heading to school...then remembered yesterday was Friday and he finished all of his work for the weekend yesterday. '....Oh...Oh hell yeah!' He grinned and completely forgot about his lack of weight and instead charged downstairs, looking for a quick breakfast to chow down before he raced back upstairs and began doing literally nothing that was required of him for two whole days.

He looked left and right and confirmed that Will had left the home...and that Mary and Katherine were still dozing away in their respective rooms. Curiosity begged the question of where his father was...history told him the answer that he refused to believe 'out drinking.' Jack shook his head as he gathered enough ingredients for a quick sandwich. 'No...he's been doing great lately. He wouldn't. So much progress...' Jack considered making something for his father to show him how proud he was of his progress, trying to brainstorm up something that would be re-encouraging and positive while not being too childish or annoyingly over-optimistic. With a turkey sandwich in hand he retreated back to his room to begin work, moving in a happy manner – that wasn't something that was required of him. It wasn't 'work' per se and he enjoyed that.

He was at his laptop screen, typing away different things he wanted to tell his father. How happy he was, how excited for the future he was, more and more positive emotions that spilled out of him and he just couldn't feel like he could contain them. He was worried he'd end up sounding too idealistic for his father even if he was trying not to.

He kept on typing anyway, letting every thought that came into his head spill out onto the screen happily before he pulled back and admired his work...'It's...I hate it...it's too...' Jack couldn't even place what he didn't like about it but he knew he didn't like it at all. It sounded like a five year old wrote it and had the grammar to match – he sucked his teeth and in his irritation turned off the computer before getting up, thinking of something else to do for the weekend.

Pitch probably wasn't at the cafe, Jack knew that much. Thought he admitted he was kind of dragging himself down for no reason he didn't think Pitch would be there and decided not to go.

'Would be a waste of time.' He rationalized with a breath before he began idle stretching to pass the time now too annoyed with his own lack of ability in writing to enjoy his laptop for the weekend, too awake to head back to sleep and feeling too alone and isolated from the rest of his 'social circle'
And with that thought came Pitch again, invading his mind like a parasite that he couldn't get rid of but wasn't sure if he wanted to. 'What are we even?...' Jack thought before ceasing his stretching and falling back into bed, letting gravity take him down. 'Is running into each other in the cafe just...a date? Or does it have more rules to it then that?' Half of him actually wanted to run outside now, run to the safety of the familiar cafe where his 'flirtationship' partner could be found – but the rest of him doubted that he would even be there. 'Doesn't matter...will probably see him on weekdays after.'

He decided to go downstairs and spend time with Mary, watching T.V. while waiting for their father to come back home...hopefully not intoxicated out of his mind.

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It had been three and a half days and Jack knew that within the core of himself, he saw it all coming. With his father's temporary disappearance before the time allotted that he'd get to work and the incredible bliss he had been feeling without the responsibility of Mary's well-being being on his shoulders, he had to admit that he wasn't expecting much. He knew that was a bad thing, not to expect the best, but all want to actually hope for better had been beaten out of him with the past half a decade of drunken brawling, arguments and facades to make people think they weren't half as fucked up as they actually were.

So three and a half days of sobriety was actually something that Jack personally and piteously felt warranted a few impressed claps from his side of the room, watching through the living room window alongside Mary. Both expectantly awaiting their father who walked up onto the porch – more like climbed really but Jack decided to keep things at least moderately positive – and crawled into the room with a beer bottle in hand, reeking of alcohol and inebriation before collapsing into a pool of his own revolting, stinking vomit in the opposite corner of the room.

'Why am I not screaming, annoyed, loud, or even moderately surprised?' He thought mentally as he walked over and kicked the door closed, wondering in the back of his mind if his someone saw his father pathetically crawl his way back home from wherever he retrieved his alcohol from. He picked up the upset Mary, who already had tears in her eyes from seeing William like this, and took her back up to his room.

Downstairs he could hear his mother's slow gasps for breath that signaled she was trying to prevent herself from crying. 'Did you honestly think this was going to last?' A silent, unspoken question that Jack asked both himself and his mother. '...no but we hoped so.' He answered himself before biting down on his lip to avoid crying – too much emotion at once hitting him. He put Mary down on the floor and she looked up at him with her large, light brown, eyes that twinkled brightly with tears, begging him the silent question. 'Why!?' Jack wished he could give her a decent answer but at this point, he didn't even know if there even was one. 'Maybe this is just how things are supposed to be.' He didn't want to believe that – he didn't want to think that this was just bad luck or something, he wanted to think his father just didn't have the capability to get past it and wasn't meant to by some cosmic power. He shook his head down at her miserably and sat down on his bed instead. Mary walked away and left to go play with her toys, still sniffling.

For a few brief Moments he tried to trick himself into thinking that 'maybe it was destiny' and grinning happily at the feeling of self-deception and admired the emotional after-effects. Thinking that you just couldn't change something felt lot better then thinking that you failed or that someone else failed. Jack noticed that it removed guilt and blame from his father's shoulders and made the entire family seem like a group of martyrs for an unknown cause. 'Better to think that way for now...'
Jack turned on his computer, ignoring the messages that came up about his letter – about how it auto saved before shutting down.

He deleted it.

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It was about 9:30, when Jack genuinely saw that he didn't have a problem with the alcohol at all. He really didn't. It wasn't even about the drinking – it was about the violence and lack of responsibility it put into his personality, the lack of care or restraint he had when enraged and the irritability it caused. To Jack alcohol was like just about anything else, good on its own and in its own way but bad when its too much or too relied on.

And when Will began relying on the alcohol and taking too much of it, he became angry for reasons that both he and his family didn't know – or at least for reasons that the former didn't want to admit to the latter. Didn't really matter to Jack. 'Same result.' He thought as he heard the expected argument of his mother and father downstairs.

'Why Will? You were doing so good!'

'So?'

'So?! Can't you see that what you're doing is tearing our family apart?'

'It's been getting 'ripped part' for what? Nine years?-' The pause told him that his father had a bottle in his hand right now and was taking a sizable swig of it...but the silence stretched on. It was terrifyingly, bone-chillingly quiet to the point where even Mary looked up in fearful awe and then looked at Jack, frightened.

And it just kept getting tenser and tenser with Jack sitting up in his bed, ears trying to hear some sort of sound and Mary mouthing to him 'Go look'. He really didn't want to but he knew he didn't quite have a choice in the matter...when Will was like this Mary's safety became the primary concern.

As promptly and quietly as he could he tip-toed towards the door and made his way down the steps. For once he was glad he was so close to anorexic weight, it made his steps lighter and much less detectable on the hardwood staircase. He peeked around the corner to see what was going on and just stared in a stupor, reasoning what happened from the scene in front of him.

From the looks of it Katherine literally snatched the bottle right out of his hands, while he was still drinking it. The beer spilled on the floor and onto him but Will stayed still out of pure shock from the brazen and rather ballsy action taken by his usually sub-servant, if only by force, wife. He almost looked funny like this, mouth still open and hand still in a position to hold a bottle, even so the sheer amount of anger that had only been temporarily held down by the astonishing movement made it much less of a joke and more of a terrifying sight.

Even Katherine was shocked, mouth ever so slightly agape from her own actions. Her eyes flashing from the bottle, to Will's ruined shirt, to Will's face and back again as if she was replaying the entire scene over and over again in her head, attempting to beat it into her head that 'Yeah. I just did that. That just happened.'

Jack just stared, waiting for some type of response from his father. Any movement or twitch could set him off at this point and the elder Frost child didn't want to miss it when it did, not because he wanted to see his mother get hit or any witness any misfortune come upon her, but he felt like he had to be there for her and see for himself how far back Will had fallen. Further more allowing him to see
let him see whether or not he would need to intervene, just like last time.

He stared until his eyes burned and screeched in protest of his constant staring, only to blink once and keep on looking...and then nearly jump when one of them moved.

Katherine stepped back very slowly holding her hands up in defense of herself, already knowing the danger of her drunken husband and his violence. Her mouth opened to speak and try futilely to justify her actions as if her words would calm the raging beast that was William Frost but all that came out were mashed up jumbles of words that no one in the room – or staring into it for that matter – were capable of understanding.

William had a look in his eyes like he almost pitied her but it was shockingly strange for pity, more like a feeling of empathizing with her for her stupid actions before punishing her. An alien smirk donned his lips and he rubbed his hands together before licking his lips and letting out a small sigh. Terrifyingly casual and tranquil before he rose from his seat and slowly walked towards her, giving her slow shakes of his head in disagreement with her while raising his hand.

"Wait honey...here you can have it back." Katherine held the bottle out in surrender with a kind face, trying to somehow undo the damage she caused.

"So both you and Jack now huh?" William spoke sharply and professionally, his tone chastising and free of the inebriated slur that he carried on his voice just Moments ago. "Neither of you want to deal with my drinking?"

"Sweetie..." Katherine bit her lip, as if searching for what to say to that. Jack knew the honest answer would've been 'Yes, you need to stop' but the answer that would let her get out of this without a new knot in her head was the one she was searching for. "I just...me and Jack want you to be as happy as possible and this..." She gestured to the bottle with a careful hand that almost trembled in fear. "This...it isn't making you happy."

"How the hell would you know?"

Katherine let out a shaky sigh, Jack knew she was on the verge of tears but he felt like he couldn't move in to help her. He knew his presence would just exasperate the situation. "I...just...just look at yourself!" She practically screamed through the massive flood of tears before bringing up her free hand to run over her face, attempting to remove all of the sorrowfulness from her face. "You...you don't even really smile happily any more. You don't spend time with the children...you hurt me and Jack-"

"And the later of those two affect me how?" William asked with a forced 'happy' smile on his lips. Jack's eyes widened and he mentally screamed in protest and shock from what that half-question half-statement implied.

"It's not just th-"

William snatched the bottle out of her hands with a knowing grin that she wouldn't stop him before he chugged down what remained of rest of the bottle, Katherine watching him sadly – unknowingly just as upset as the young man watching from the doorway of his room. He could see her visibly tense, preparing her body for a painful blow from William's hand that came with more ferocity then what Jack even thought possible.

William pulled his hand back, as far back as he could and back-slapped Katherine so hard that Mary squealed in panic from upstairs, as if feeling the impact of hardened open palm upon cheek herself and Jack nearly fell over upon hearing it. Katherine fell to the floor, grabbing her face and screaming
in response from the impact, more from the astonishment of the hit then the actual resulting pain.

For the past nine years, William had been abusive, rude, evil and sometimes shockingly manipulative to his family. He’d drink, hit them, scream at them, blame them for everything. However, Jack knew his father always had a certain level of decency. He never ever did four things: 1. Hit Mary. 2. Be jobless 3. Draw blood if he became violent. 4. Hit anyone in a place that would be visible to the public. Even William had his decency Jack realized...but now...

With that last one, that last unspoken rule against William's violence being broken, he didn't even know who he was looking at anymore. There wasn't a limit to what William could possibly be doing or plan to do to them – at least not for Jack at this point - it was like a chained up inhumane brute had finally been let loose upon the household. Jack knew one thing though.

He wasn't going to just sit there and watch William pummel his mother like that. He moved directly after the sound of his open palm against her face hit his ears, dashing in front of his fallen mother to defend her and forming a human blockade between her and Will.

"And of course you'd move in." Will spoke with a sense of spite in his voice.

"Yes. Of course I'd move in. I'm the only man in this house that actually gives a damn about Katherine." Seeing his mother just suddenly get hit like that made him not give a damn about his own personal safety or the entire 'keeping the family together' hopes anymore. He didn't care about anything having to do with Will in that moment – he loved his father. He really did. But Jack had enough.

"Of course you are."

"Get out." Deadpanned speech as Jack realized his position. William had always been rougher on him then his mother in fights, he could only imagine what he would possibly do to him.

"Excuse me?"

"I said get out." A bit more force behind it then before – but Jack knew he really only had one thing to back it up with.

"It's my house."

"And you need to leave."

"Or what?"

"Or..." Jack produced the phone from the front of his shirt and dialed three numbers quickly, placing his finger over the 'call' button and then displaying it to William. "I'm calling the police."

The other two people in the room looked at Jack like he was the one who slapped his mother into next week. Jack knew he was messing around with some dangerous forces here but at this point he didn't care. William wasn't trying to get better – he was only getting worse and worse as time went on and he was tired of being forced to just deal with it as it came. He was tired of having to play father to Mary, as much as he enjoyed it it wasn't his job nor something he had the ability or capacity to do efficiently. He was tired of being a punching bag whenever William decided to get mad over the littlest of things – or better yet from nothing at all. He was sick of it.

But they were the ones who were staring at him like he was a madman. "You're joking." William said, his voice tinged with the slightest bit of disbelief mixed with a moderate amount of fear.
"I'd prefer not to." Jack said in total open honesty. He didn't want to do this but things weren't changing for good on their own. "But you don't give a fuck about any of that and you're getting worse. Mom hasn't done a damn thing to you. None of us have. We never did. But you hit us anyway. We're sick of it. I want you gone."

"Then do it." William dared him, hand balling up into a fist.

"Oh no." Jack shook his head with a grimace that betrayed the tense situation and his own upset emotions that things actually had so quickly escalated to this level. "I've already made my play. The whole thing hinges on you now. Hit me or anyone else in this house and we call the cops, go get out and go relax a little and come back to talk and we can all just go back to some semblance of normal." If Jack had time to think that last part of his speech over again, he'd almost laugh from the comedy of it. *Normal.* Like they ever were normal since William's drinking habits went from happy to violently enraged. He didn't even know what normal *was.*

"..." The way his father stared at him, Jack knew which on the ones he was about to choose.

Needless to say, the hard impact of William's fist to the right side of his face knocked him over but his fingers pressed into the call button.

'911 What's your emergency?' Jack collapsed backwards onto his now screaming mother's body while his father rained hard blows onto his stomach and chest, forcing him to cough loudly and retch in pain and agony. He hoped he wouldn't have to actually tell them what the emergency was.

"Fucking brat." William screamed, his voice ripping and tearing apart from his own dumbfounding ire as he stomped on Jack's lower stomach, making the young frost's body jerk upwards and coil up around the point of impact in pain while his face distorted and his vision grew blurry. The world seemed to be going dark around him and whether it was death or just mere unconsciousness he didn't know but the last thing he could acutely remember was the sound of sirens speeding straight up the street.

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He awoke to the face of his mother and the rainbow of different emotions that her face showed...well the right side of her face in any case. The left side of her face was purple and swollen, her eye on that side being near unable to open – all he could see was a small slit of her pupil. Jack felt a tugging in his abdomen, alongside the excruciating ache of his lower stomach and the want to vomit or crawl out of his skin from the sheer painful sensation of it alone but the sight of Katherine's face made him feel as if maybe he got it the best out of the both of them.

He tried to speak but all that came out was a choking sound of agonizing pain that caused a frown to come to his mother's lips, whether out of displeasure from what Jack did by calling the police or out of pity from his pain Jack couldn't tell nor did he want to...he just wanted to go back to sleep. With an open mouthed sigh he pushed himself up, trying not to push his weight onto mother physically – he already knew he did that enough emotionally or mentally with the phone call.

"I-" Despite his best attempts to speak words were hard to form, sending painful shivers up and down his abdomen and chest and before Jack knew it he was about to collapse again, the world spinning and shifting around him and underneath his very feet while everything seemed to be going dark all at once. He steadied himself, leaning on the couch for support as he slumped down and tried to calm his queasy stomach before speaking again, swallowing down acidic bile that sorely burned in his throat and made him want to eat something to dismiss the pain – but he didn't want to exasperate whatever internal injury was currently harming him down there. "I need to go rest."
"...Just go." His mother spoke expressionlessly while she stared intensely at the ground, paying her struggling son no mind while rubbing her hands together, licking her dry, cracked lips to smoothness again and biting away any skin out of sheer nervousness. Her mind was lost in thought, Jack knew and chose not to bother her with questions of his father and what was about to happen in their lives...

Jack nodded at what he could have considered permission to leave and slowly, tortuously made his way across the room and up the steps – having to crawl up and into his bed, nearly wanting to vomit all over the floor before letting sleep take him...it reminded him of his father...'No...of William.' he silently thought before wrapping the blankets around himself as best he could and letting himself doze off to someplace far away, where he didn't have to see how what he did affected his life.

He awoke, in the early morning of Saturday with much less pain in his lower stomach – although there was a harsh, sharp throbbing that was still there whenever he did...anything. But he could ignore it, this wasn't the first time he had to deal with physical pain. He decided he had slept long enough...he needed to see the consequences of what he did and try to deal with it.

He got up and out of bed, pushing himself from the bed and looking downstairs to the doorway that lead out – he could see the lights of the living room beaming through the crack between the door and the floor.

Mom was still up.

With careful, slow steps her made his way back downstairs – his stomach growling for food but Jack not being keen on actually eating anything. He was nervous and tense again. For all he knew his father came back, hungry for blood against him...

'I need to see...'

He pushed the door open and heard his mother move from wherever she was and back up to the farther leg of the couch, pointing knowingly to the free space on the opposite side. Jack could already tell he was in for an earful, her movements were too sharp and sudden for them not to be.

He walked over with his hands in his pockets and his eyes pointed to the floor – he didn't even want to look at her face right now. Her anger would piss him off from his own feelings of entrapment and her injury would make him feel guilty...

"Jack." She spoke quietly and softly as the young male Frost took his seat, body pointing towards the lifeless television on the other side of the room with hands holding one another as he leaned forward – sitting down in this position with his injuries hurt him in places he didn't even know existed. He wanted to scream and scratch at the thin layer of skin that separated him from the bruised and battered muscles of his abdomen but he couldn't find the heart to do so nor the power to move under his mother's increasingly judgmental gaze.

"Yes Mom?"

"Why?"

"He hit you-"

"And that's different because?" She was getting louder now...

Jack could play the intimidation and volume game too – no matter how much his chest complained. His face was starting to complain as well, aching if he made any type of expression other then a blank poker face..."Mom humor me for a second. When was the last time he hit us in a place where other people could clearly see it. Your face isn't exactly something you can hide normally without
"getting weird looks Mom. Maybe in other places in the world but not here."

"Alright?" She spoke as if it was something obvious, something normal and nonchalant. "But how does that justify anything you did? Do you even have any idea?"

"Mom. He hits you. That's a given. But today...today he hit you, like actually with an intent to harm you in a different way. There's a difference-"

"You didn't have to get involved!" She yelled, raising herself out of her seat in anger. "It wasn't even any of your goddamn business!"

"So you would've preferred it if I just stayed out of it and watched him brutalize you? Beat you bloody probably?" Jack rubbed the bridge of his nose as his voice grew from stressed out to just plain pissed. He could never understand his mother's logic or way of thinking when it came to his father and his actions. He thought she would understand the logic behind his decisions – he thought that maybe she would finally maybe wake up and realize that she didn't have to deal with William's b-s any longer. 'But apparently I'm wrong about that.'

"Jack can't you think ahead just a little bit? You know if they keep him we don't have any income, any stability or anything. They saw your face Jack. Mine too." Katherine took a deep breath and turned away from Jack. "And let's just assume they don't keep your father in. Just think of how angry he'll be with us then when he comes back!"

"Then don't let him come back here!" Jack yelled, grasping his forehead as the beginnings of a headache spiked through his skull like an icy bullet that shattered to pieces right in the dead center of his brain. "Press charges, get a lawyer using all that money he wasn't spending on us from that over-comfortable job that lets him come in drunk and wasted half the time! Hell, let's go move in with one of our relatives Mom! Uncle North constantly calls and says he would love it if we visited and as fucked up as our family is-" Katherine tried to open her mouth to speak but Jack pointed at her. "-And don't even TRY to say we're not, because I can just as easily push you into the bathroom and make you look in a fucking mirror to prove it – we have almost too much family that we can rely on."

"It's not that simple Jack-"

"Then enlighten me for once without just getting angry and asking me if 'I know what I did!'" He mocked her, faking her voice in ire. "I did the only thing I could her-"

"You're an idiot you know that?" Katherine glared him down, a look only a mother could give her son. "You don't have the slightest idea of how the world works or what to do in it. You're a stupid, annoying, whiny little child Jack. You're immature and too fast to act, you don't even realize what you've done half the time." Jack took a deep breath and bit his lip. Katherine's insults weren't like his fathers – they were rare and carried more weight because she really was the only person who lived under about the same conditions as Jack. She was the person who would and rightfully should sympathize with him at times like this...it stung to hear her say these things. "I swear...sometimes I'm ashamed I even had a son like you." He hid his face in his hands and let his head droop down, trying to hide his feelings. It didn't take much for his mother to break him down. "You're a failure kid, honestly..."

Jack took in a deep breath and spoke clearly and loudly, trying to hold back the breaking of his voice. He was trying so hard these past years to just keep it together, to just relax and hold it all in..."Well..." His voice broke and he got up, trying to hide his upset face from his onlooking, enraged mother.

"maybe I wouldn't be if my parents raised me." He checked his pockets for his phone – safely tucked
away right in the front pouch of his icy sweatshirt and headed to his room, unseen tears streaming down his cheeks as climbed the steps and left the living room and his mother alone with a slam of the door. If his mother had the heart to chase after him she certainly didn't have the energy.

And she probably didn't understand either. He shoved his aching face into one of the pillows and cried, unable to stifle the tears as they poured from his eyes. He didn't want to be here, there wasn't a single person old enough or logical enough to understand or even try to. There wasn't someone he could actually run to to help him or heal him, or try to make him better.

His mind screamed to him. 'Pitch.'

Jack got up and looked to his window – already opening and beckoning to him. He practically jumped through the small square. All doubt removed from his mind. Pitch would be there.

He had to be.

Jack needed his stability, his snark and sarcastic charm, his attractive face, his unique looks – someone who could understand him, someone who BONDED with him rather then sat him down on the opposite end of a couch to yell at him.

He dashed to the cafe and even as his limbs complained and his face ached in the late night coldness that was slowly breaking through to the early Sunday morning...

He kept on.

Chapter End Notes

NOTE: This is a special two part chapter that I originally had planned to have put into two parts – but I figured I shouldn't torture you like that.

Love me.

Song is Agent Orange by Necro.

Funfact: This is the first chapter that the song really somewhat matches up with the character's in-story behavior.
And she probably didn't understand either. He shoved his aching face into one of the pillows and cried, unable to stifle the tears as they poured from his eyes. He didn't want to be here, there wasn't a single person old enough or logical enough to understand or even try to. There wasn't someone he could actually run to to help him or heal him, or try to make him better.

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He kept on.

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He was breathing hard and shallow by the time the usual unintentional meeting place of him and Pitch at last appeared in sight. His chest heaved with effort and struggle, pain almost becoming the bane of his run with only the thought of once again meeting Pitch being his drive forward. With a wild smile of success and victory he pushed through the front double doors of the cafe - still open and still serving.

'24/7' Jack celebrated and scanned the few people that were there. No gray skin or charming familiar face, just a bunch of people who sat away from each other or were flirting with one another. A blonde young girl in a booth alone, who looked at him with curious eyes before looking back down as tapping away on her phone, suddenly uninterested. A couple behind them kissing each others' time away. Another man just blankly staring out the window behind them...nothing and no one of interest...

His heart sunk to his pained stomach before he got entered a booth in the darker and more well hidden part of the cafe...he may not see Pitch again but he'll be damned if he just heads home now. He couldn't bear to be in the same house with that woman, suffocating under her gaze, in her sight, with her stinging, painful words that sliced and cut at him until all that was left was the remaining ribbons of what she saw as a 'failure kid'. With a viciously powerful shake of his head he pushed those thoughts away and try to focus on something else...

Anything else.

"Ey you." A distinct accent coming from the waiter of the cafe echoed through the room and straight to Jack's ears.
'Australian.' Jack mentally whispered before looking up at the waiter who stood above him, impatient and suspecting of him – obviously with a short temper for him.

"You here to buy something or loiter about?" He asked, his notepad at the ready with the blue pen in his hand tapping impatiently. Jack wondered why the man was so aggressive to try and get him out, was it because he looked so beat up? He only had a bruised cheek, old looking hoodie sweatshirt and sitting in the back part of the cafe with his hands hidden – 'Oh...' The waiter probably thought he was a criminal or armed robbery waiting to happen.

"I'm here to-" He checked his pockets and then mentally cursed. He forgot to bring money with him just in case Pitch wasn't here! "loiter I guess..." he whispered, his voice low and heavy.

"Then do it elsewhere. Maybe you can do that in the daytime with Toothiana but not on my shift.”

"Alright just let me catch my bearings and I'll be out of your way-" Jack said, trying to stall for a little more time away from home.

"Nope. Not here mate. You can collect your bearings on the sidewalk." The pen impatiently pointed towards the door and the server stepped away. "You've got fifteen seconds to go before I throw you out m'self. Resist and I'll just call the cops."

'Of course...' Jack quietly whispered under his breath, considering pressing the issue of needing to stay and stall for more time...but he didn't feel as if he could even physically argue with him anymore. He forced himself out of the seat and as slowly as he could without incurring the server's wrath, he walked to the door...

And stopped in front of it as it opened to reveal a familiar face, donned in a simple navy blue collar turtlenecked sweater, snug black pants with a gold buckled belt...and he seemed just about as surprised to see him.

Pitch looked at Jack as if he had turned into a ghost – Jack already knew he was inspecting his face, generally the large purplish bruise on his cheek caused by his father's fist and lowered his head in shame and sadness, not wanting to see his disturbed face. A gray hand grasped his chin and pulled his head up by force and Jack relented – not having the strength to fight back against Pitch's touch, something he profoundly wanted at this moment but not like this...

"Pitch, you don't usually loaf about 'ere. The kid didn't have the cash to pa-"

"And so kicking him out at eleven thirty at night was an intelligent decision?" Pitch's eyes rapidly went from concerned and pointed towards Jack to powerful re-filled chromatic lasers focused on the rather taken aback employee who didn't bother to answer: he must have known how wrong it was to not consider the possibility that maybe Jack needed help and wasn't trying to rob the business.

"Honestly Bunnymund. Your selfishness is revolting." From the corner of his eye Jack could see Bunnymund – oh Christ he hoped that was a silent joke from Pitch because that name was too funny to actually be real with his exhaustion being the only thing stopping him from saying anything about it – visibly twitch. Pitch's hand went from powerfully grasping his chin to gently caressing his face for a brief second before letting his hand fall away. "I'll order for him, later. Give us a half hour or so and I'll pay you double for whatever we order. In the mean time do try to be a bit more open minded." Jack pushed himself up against the hand before it fell away from his face...

He wanted more contact and unknowingly whimpered in complaint at the loss of it. Pitch must have heard because he then placed a hand on Jack's shoulder and lead him to the same booth in the back that the young injured man was sitting in not forty seconds ago. Pitch let Jack go in first before going in himself, sitting on the same side of the booth for once, with the younger of the two being unlucky
enough to have to either look at Pitch or reveal the beaten side of his face.

He chose the former and looked directly at Pitch's eyes. They were filled with a sorrowfulness he couldn't ever hope to read or predict, something pitying but at the same time emotionally unhinged on a deeper level then what Jack could ever hope to read. He wanted to look away, wanted to turn his face and act like nothing happened but the way the older man was looking at him made him feel cared for in a way that he hadn't felt before.

And tears began streaking his face before Pitch turned and embraced him, his cautious, soft and affectionate hands slowly taking their time to wipe away and clear the tears from his eyes. The more contact he got, the more he wanted and he pressed his body closer to his sympathizer's until mere tear wiping became a full on embrace that Jack didn't want to end. Feeling the warmth of Pitch beyond the thin articles of clothing calmed him down and it wasn't long before he found himself ceasing his tears and just enjoying the feeling of hugging the man he came to view as his last human being that could truly ever understand him.

"Would it be wrong to ask what you would like to drink or eat?" The older whispered with a smile that Jack could hear in his melodic voice.

"...No...not at all...but we probably shouldn't stay like this forever." A slight joke that ended with him rested himself just a little more into Pitch's body, as if saying 'we shouldn't...but I really want to.'

"Yeah my waist is cramping up from the angle..."

For some reason he couldn't understand Jack tiredly chuckled at that while he pulled away, smiling with thanks to his...'What are you even?...I don't even know anymore... 'He thought, taking an inhale before speaking again. "Umm...can I get some coffee cake or something just to help settle my stomach for a second?"

"Is that all you want? They serve ice cream, pie, cake...be a little imaginative for your own sake."

"But...you're paying for me." Jack's voice came out quieter and more unsure about himself then he wanted it to. He wanted to convey some force as if him getting something was an impossibility.

"And I have more then enough in my back pocket right now to buy you everything on the menu at triple the price. Stop worrying and treat yourself." Pitch's voice carried with it force, a driving want for Jack to order something for himself. Something inside of Jack told him that if he didn't order something nice for himself, Pitch would and would almost force him to eat it.

"...Can I have some vanilla ice cream?" He whispered faintly, folding his arms on the table and then hiding his head in it, already knowing what was going to happen...and not caring as much as he previously would.

"Bunnymund!" He raised his hand. "Two extra large vanilla ice cream bowls. Bring all the syrup toppings."

"I don't like toppings." Jack groaned, his stomach aching for some type of substance now despite his strong resolve not to eat anything earlier today. It wasn't that he really didn't want any, he just wanted to preoccupy his mouth to stop him from trying to eat the table before him – supporting legs and all.

"They aren't for you." Pitch said in a 'matter of fact' type of way before turning to Jack and giving him a light and playful grin, trying to convey that he meant no harm. "You can have some if you want and..." Pitch raised a single finger as a sign to wait before he turned back to the counter, yelling additional orders. "Warm the caramel first!"
"...Can I have some?" Jack turned to Pitch, head still laid down on the table with the bruised portion of his face shown completely to Pitch.

The pity returned to his comforter's eyes as he saw the injury and Jack immediately looked away again, hiding his face from his sight.

"Please don't do this." Jack whispered. "I don't want to talk about it. It's not a nice story, as you can imagine and I'm too tired and hungry to even-"

"I never said you had to talk about it." He reassured the younger man with a kind caress, the light and delicate touches of fingers on the back of his neck that sluggishly moved upwards before his fingers softly scraped against his scalp upwards in the tangled in the mess of white hair that Pitch wordlessly admitted he found beautiful and mesmerizing, something like untouched, perfect, settled snowfall.

"I really don't have to?" His voice resembled Mary's at that moment, especially when their parents were fighting. Small and meek, questioning nervously and not wanting to get into any trouble for anything, wanting just to merely ask and receive.

"I'd like it if we could. I know you must think I'm weird for wanting to or...caring really...but I really want to understand you better." Jack tensed potently, like a shiver had gone up his spine, before he relaxed immensely, shoulders drooping down a little bit and his breathing relaxing more.

"Why do you really care?"

"I already told you Jackson, this isn't novelty."

"We're a thing now?" Jack ignored the fact that Pitch just used his full name, he didn't know any better about what that name meant to him.

"Not unless you want to be." He restfully reassured him and kneaded his scalp with careful, deft fingers to unwind him.

"So yes we're a thing...and if you keep doing that I really will fall asleep." Jack grinned and turned to look back up at Pitch, no longer having that much concern about his cheek as he did before.

"My apologies...and here comes our ice cream." Pitch smiled and showed off a mouth of surprisingly jagged but healthy, strong and white looking teeth as the ice cream was deposited onto their tables along with a large amount of small squeeze bottles of ice cream toppings –'strawberry', 'chocolate' – and a small plate of streaming dark beige colored liquid.

'Caramel'. Jack smiled and reached over, dipping his fingers into the liquid with a mischievous grin and Pitch opened his mouth to complain but Jack spoke before he could.

"Well we need to do something to commemorate the event don't we?" Devilish, speedy digits spread the warm confection over Pitch's moist lips with one finger and then over his own with another. He saw the look in his lover's eyes change into one of want...and Jack puckered his lips, taking his time to finish just to watch his opposite's mouth water.

The moment he dropped his palm from his mouth Pitch lunged in, pressed their sticky mouths together with more passion than Jack believed himself capable of physically handling. Hands on Jack's lower back and on the back of his head pushed them together and the young Frost opened his mouth to gasp...then everything just became incredible.

Pitch's tongue ventured into his mouth and the strong, sweet taste of caramel invaded his mouth. Jack
swore in a huff of breath before his partner took the more dominant way of force and licked at his tongue, coaxing him to come play by rubbing up against him.

'Mmmm...damn it...it's on.' Jack thought mentally, accepting Pitch’s love and embrace as both an act of passion and an unspoken challenge. Before he knew it his tongue was wrapped around Pitch's own skilled organ and he began allowing his hands to venture, feel and touch the skin of his lover. They both felt back on the seat of their booth, practically laying on it and the loud moans didn't go unnoticed, drawing the eyes and attention of the other cafe goers. The taste of caramel on the tongue only helping to heighten their arousal before they at last had to part, panting for breath and staring into each others eyes with limitless deprivation and minimal restraint.

"Ahem." Bunnymund said, back turned to the overheating couple, obviously too embarrassed to stop them or even face them.

Jack's face went bright red and he looked away from Pitch with a mortified look on his face. Pitch didn't seem to be bothered to give a damn.

"We really shouldn't've done that..." The younger lover's voice was down to a whisper as he grabbed some of the bottled caramel and spread it on his own ice cream, now suddenly hungry for some in spite of himself.

"Oh please, he's lucky I didn't have sex with you right here in the cafe." Pitch shrugged and grabbed the bottled strawberry and hot caramel to pour over his own treat.

Jack just simpered in response and ate his frozen treat delightfully, almost bouncing about in his seat with an unusual mixture of desire, hunger, pleasure and fulfilled happiness running through his veins. He and Pitch were a 'thing'. An 'item'. They were something now! He wasn't even sure what the real difference was but just to hear that it was a mutual attraction was enough to send him onto cloud nine.

He grinned and ate another spoonful before giggling clamorously to himself.

"Happy I see."

"Yeah, been a while since I had food. Didn't think my stomach could handle it." Jack wished he could take that back as soon as he said it.

"Why what happened?" His voice was lined with concern.

"Nothing...I am kinda hungry for something else though..." Jack thought of a good, fun, quick way to switch the subject as rapidly as he possibly could.

"And what would that be?"

"Meat." He gave Pitch a knowing look out of the corner of his eye before licking his lips, taking his time with every little movement to keep his onlooker on the edge of his seat. He could see just how extreme the reaction was from the way his knuckles turned white while he gripped at the chair to the point of leaving marks and dents in the seats. Jack let the melting white cream drip down his chin – only a little drop of it before he licked the very tip of the spoon – from the sound of Pitch's intense exhalles and soft, almost undetectable pleas for more he already knew where his mind was headed so Jack figured he'd indulge him a little. "Pitch..." He said the word with a moan carried in the same breath, running his free hand down the length of his body, lingering teasingly on his nipples and hips until Pitch mouthed to him.

"No more..." The gray gentleman bit down hard on his lip while his nails clawed the upholstery of
the seat.

"Ooooh...but I wanna play more." He let out faint pants for more and more of the imagined touch and embrace of his lover, his hips ever so slightly shifting forward.

"Unless you want a different type of ride from the backseat of my car you'll stop that." He hissed quickly, almost hiding his face in embarrassment from the other cafe-goers, despite all of them being far out of earshot from him.

"That actually sounds tempting." Jack grinned in complete honesty and lowered one of his hands down to his pants, feigning as if he was getting off to his new boyfriend with gentle moans and rolls of his hips.

"You need to learn to how to behave in public..." Neither of them pulled attention to the fact that the older of the two just banged his knee up against the table while crossing his limbs.

"Ummm...I remember the last time we were here together. You flirted with me until I had to go give myself a rather happy ending."

"Really? Not how I remembered it." Jack just smirked and stared as Pitch gave him a mock surprise with a naughty grin of knowing.

"Doesn't matter..." Jack grinned triumphantly, leaning over and running the very tip of his tongue up against Pitch's lower lip. Pitch responded in kind with a gentle peck before Jack slowly leaned back to escape the range of his kiss while winking.

Pitch didn't want to give up, especially when teased...Jack grinned as he leaned up closer against the younger man and took the bait – quick as lightning one of Jack's hands grabbed a rather nice and sizable handful of the older man's ass. He let out a quick pant that resembled a desperate whine of burning pleasure before moving back, surrendering.

Jack was surprised by the sheer intensity of his need and gave the now blushing boyfriend an impish smirk...'*Oh I'll remember that...’*

—

Bunnymund threatened both Pitch and Jack with police and a painfully slow death (respectively) and eventually the two lovebirds calmed it down.

They were randomly chewing the fat when Pitch brought up his cheek again.

'Damn it.' Jack whispered under his breath, certain that his lover would hear but not quite caring. He knew that neither of them would want to talk about this...he didn't want Pitch to know about something so personal and disturbing...

"I know you don't want to talk about it..." Pitch anxiously rubbed the back of the neck while he read Jack's mind like an open book. "But I don't suppose you just fell down some stairs."

"Please Pitch..." Jack whined, hiding the injury again with his hands.

"Jack, at least listen to what I have to say first before you try to wriggle your way out of this." His voice was intentionally less emotional then what it was before – part of Jack could recognize that he wasn't happy to have to talk with Jack about this but he felt it was necessary...like when a parent sat you down to talk about their alcohol ad-
'NO. You're with Pitch right now. He likes you. You two are actually something now. Forget about William.' He strained and yanked those thoughts back and centered on his other, giving him a nod to continue.

"Alright, I know that however you obtained that..." He sucked his teeth and looked away, as if annoyed by something before he looked back at the young Frost, his golden irises meeting icy blue twin snowflakes...and pausing to gaze into them for a moment, as if hypnotized. 'Beautiful...

"Blemish for lack of a better word, you don't want to talk about it and I know what we just met but...I really want to understand what happened to you, so I can help stop it." Jack's lips curled into a frown for a half second before they straightened. Pitch had no idea what he was getting into. "I know it must be hard to talk about but it just worries me when I see someone I love with any marks of harm on them."

"Don't worry about it."

"That's not going to stop me from worrying about it and about you."

"Pleas-"

"Jack." The seriousness of the tone prompted an answer that begged for a question – it wasn't something the teen could just wriggle his way out of like an escape artist...it wasn't something he wanted or had to answer with a truthful statement. "I know that you're obviously having troubles at home-"

"You know?!!" Jack questioned before thinking about what time it was, when the fight occurred and then replaying the evening in his head – crime news was sparse in this area so he figured that if his father, the popular family man that he was, was discovered beating his wife and kids...everyone would know about it. It had been around what? Ten o'clock? Jack bet the police could've even went off and gotten donuts to come back home and see the man they just arrested on the evening news. "How?!!" He needed to know if his family was safe, if his father really was going to prison, what was happening- the headache began in his head again, this time feeling as if his brain was boiling over inside of his skull.

"Jack, calm down." Pitch calmly grabbed him and brought him into a careful hug, sensing his inner turmoil from the looks in his eyes alone. Jack seemed to visibly relax as soon as he got closer to Pitch, even with Bunnymund practically standing directly over them with hawk-like eyes that dared them to go further. "It was just an educated guess is all, I really don't know what's going on in your life." He felt the stress completely melt off of Jack's shoulders and the pressure of his body fully relaxing into his own – he enjoyed that, but didn't vocalize it. "But that's why you need to let me in, you need to help me see so that way I can help you out of it."

"Why?" His voice was muffled by Pitch's shirt but was just clear enough to hear – especially with the wetness of tears soaking through the cloth. "Why do you care?"

"Because I care about you." He whispered with more happiness in his voice then what Jack could see as believable and began trying to wriggle out of his grasp. "Yes, I know how weird you think it is, I agree. I haven't even taken you out on a real date...but I do really care about you – I don't get intimate with people I don't like."

Jack's emotions were coming in ebbs and flows to the point of exhaustion. The ice cream and sweets helped, as did the sexual tension and need...in fact he was sure he stayed awake this long purely for the latter. He wanted to talk about his issues at home, about his family, but he didn't want to get his father into more trouble...but at the same time he came here for Pitch's emotional support. 'What am I even doing here? It's what – 12:30 at night? I should be heading home...'
"If need be, I will buy you as much ice cream as you can eat for the next five years to know."

'…' Snowflake eyes glanced at the emptied bowls of ice cream and then back at the door. Did he really want to be home *that* badly? With his mother's screeching and yelling and constant berating? The answer was simple and quick: No.

And while talking about it wasn't easy, he knew it was what he needed, what he wanted. He came here with a resolve to talk to Pitch anyway – and maybe for a few other things too but that was another story entirely.

"Get me another extra large vanilla sundae with hot caramel and you're on."

He raised his hand in the air once again. "Bunnymund!"

—

He ate the frozen delight with the bounciness in his personality returning faster then what he thought it would, Pitch often dipping his fingers into the warm caramel that pooled on the side of the sweet treat and consume it with slow and deliberate licks that were both so he could enjoy the taste of what he was eating and tease Jack.

Worked like a charm and Jack's legs were crossed just as his were not fifteen minutes ago and still did now. Just the thought of all the misbehaved, naughty things Jack seemed to be able to talk about doing, allured to what he was actually capable of. It teased him to know what dirty thoughts plagued to the younger man's mind, how much he wanted Pitch to be inside of him, doing unspeakable things to his more then willing body until he was begging for mercy...and the older of the two would more then gladly oblige. He wanted to wrap his hands around that slender waist, let his fingers wander beyond the rem of those pants to tease the skin hidden for so long by such restrictive garments, pull him out of here with a seductive smirk, and take him to the backseat of his car in the nearby parking lot...'And drive it rough, straight into hi...no...the car...drive Jack home, in my car...after?...no. Jack's hurt. Need to find out why...' Pitch steeled himself against getting the boy's body knelt and bent over with legs spread before him by 2 am.

"Jack. I know you think this silence will help you but..."

"Was your entire point of buying me whatever I wanted and kissing me when you saw me just to get me to speak?" Jack spoke in a clipped, impatient tone.

"Don't you *dare* try that on me." Pitch growled with a snarl that made Jack bit his lip to prevent the gasp that left him, fearful of seeing the older man's anger. "Don't try to demonize me for this. I want you to speak because I care about you."

"Kosmotis." Jack grinned and took another spoonful of ice cream before speaking, already seeing the tightening of his boyfriend's jaw increase. "I just got it. *Cosmos.*" An obvious right turn to the conversation made in a desperate attempt to avoid speaking.

All previous mention of emotional rousing was gone and replaced with mirth and laughter. "You *really* only just now get it?" Pitch knew that Jack was switching emotions and topics so quickly just to calm himself down. Wouldn't be the first time he witnessed something like this.

"Yeah..."

"I suppose you never quite found your brain from the other day hmm?" A light chuckle let Jack think for a moment that he wasn't actually considering talking about his family and home – it seemed too personal, too soon...but he could tell that he was actually distressed and concerned for his well being,
for his physical safety.

"No...I suppose I didn't. But I also suppose that no matter how much I try to stall you I'm going to have to talk about it anyway..." Jack said, voice suddenly low and exhausted.

"No. But Jack, I don't want you to feel like I'm pressuring you to tell me everything." He placed a reassuring hand on the teen's shoulders and gave him the gentlest smile he possibly could. "You don't have to immediately let out all of your emotions now - in fact I'd say that you probably shouldn't. Things like whatever could cause this." He looked directly at the bruised face with a look of displeasure and personal offense, as if he was the one with the swollen cheek."...they take time."

Jack didn't respond for a long time, instead staring down at the melting remnants of his ice cream. He didn't want to tell but he wanted someone to know. He wanted to feel like there was someone out there who...understood.

"Alright. I'll tell you...but you have to promise me two things."

"Yes. Anything." A warm grin of care and happiness made Jack almost smile as well.

"You have to promise me that you won't tell anyone else." Pitch nodded and continued listening, extremely attentively considering the time and setting. "and that you won't...you know...judge me or my family for it."

"Of course Jack. I know better then to decide – with all due respect to you love – on someone in any way from a single story or opinion."

'He called me 'love'. ' Jack thought before turning to Pitch and pressing a chaste peck on his lips, the faint smell and taste of caramel and vanilla making him want more and only his hardened will stopping him from taking anymore. "Alright..."

"Take your time." He spoke softly.

Jack took a calm and relaxed inhale through his nose as if mediating...and then allowed his emotions out, starting very slowly and antagonizing over every individual word as he spoke..."My father...is a drunk...he used to be a lot better then he is now." Another breather, another pause."He was a happy drunk, believe it or not...when I was a kid I thought that it wasn't so bad but then he...he just kept on getting worse." He looked to Pitch, searching for a reason to stop – it hurt to speak. "Just...perpetually worse and worse...and then my mom gave birth to my little sister Mary."

He felt a shift in the seat and whirled round to see Pitch covering his mouth with his hand. He searched his face for a look of anger or disgust but all he could see was actual shock before he pulled his gray hand away from his mouth and turned to Jack with unsettled eyes. "I'm sorry...I'm fine, go ahead."

"Well...although he would keep on promising he would whenever he seemed sober...he just never quit even though he got angrier and angrier with anything and anyone." He licked his lips and stared into space for a moment, remembering all the times he and his mother were stuck in that guest room – the safe room – waiting with hearts full of fear for him to stop, because he came back to the present with a jolt and sighed. "We would have to hide from him sometimes..." He said before mentally correcting himself, 'All the time.' "It would get so bad...but mom didn't want to leave...and you know how outside sources are...even if mom could care for us-"

"Foster care and child services wouldn't be able to keep you and Mary together." Pitch finished with more deadpan in his voice then he actually meant to have.
"Yeah..." He swiftly rubbed his hands together to get his mind off of leaving the cafe as soon as possible, keeping his hands free stopped him from pushing Pitch out of the way to leave. "Then after Mary was around three or so he would..." A hard swallow before he breathed in some life-giving air to feed his lungs and help him continue. "He would fight with mom. Physically. Not so much a serious punch or kick...but some pushing around...some bruises. None on her face. None in a visible spot." Jack wiped his eyes, feeling the beginnings of tears form at the corners of his eyes. "But today he hit her. He actually...with real force, hit her so...I threatened to call the police. He...he punched me in the face right as I pressed the button and called them. Then he just..." He sniffled and bit his lip, there something like a physical pain in his chest from just talking and he leaned closer to Pitch, wordlessly begging for contact that the older man gladly gave.

"You need not tell me anymore then what you think you can handle." He whispered quietly, letting Jack rest his head on the area in between his shoulder and neck. His breath was cold from his dessert, causing goosebumps on the exposed skin that it touched while he crawled up his neck, secretly stealing his breath and nearly making him twitch. "I love you...I don't want to hurt you. I'm not going to tell anyone else about this." Pitch looked around for any watchers or eavesdroppers. No one in sight except for a blonde girl that was sitting a ways away, still playing with her phone.

Jack took ample sniffles, trying not to cry even as tears slowly made their way down his face. "He just...beat me until I just...I just went unconscious and then the police came. I came to and then my mom...she yells at me. I went to help her, stop dad from hitting her and she yells at me like I did something wrong..." His voice wavered and fluttered about as he broke down, crying into his open palms while Pitch embraced him, holding him as close as he possibly could.

Inwardly, he cried with him. He knew what it was like to have to take care of a child under such a condition with a parent not picking up their weight when they should...Pitch shook his head and gently kissed Jack's hair repeatedly, admiring how deceptively soft it was even while it looked so spiky, not unlike icicles. "You didn't do anything wrong..."

"My mother fucking hates me, my father's a drunk, my little sister just can't live like this." Jack shook his head, whimpering into his beloved with shaky shoulders."...my mom tells me I'm an idiot because now they might keep him and there'll be no one to pay the bills and tells me it's all my fault." He knew he was just unloading like a dump truck here, he knew that there was no sense to anything he was saying and that he sounded like a hysterical lunatic...but this is what he needed. Above him he could feel and hear the snarl in his partner's throat and tried to stifle his sounds and tears, believing to be pushing his boyfriend away already and unable to handle it anymore. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't."

"It's fine. Really." Pitch kissed him again but moved further back this time, kissing the base of Jack's neck before continuing to rub calming circles on his back.

"It's just...my family could be ripped apart by this...and it'll be my fault..." His nails scratched the sides of his head, it felt like his brain was going to explode with the boiling just becoming too much. It was too hot, his body felt too heated and not in the way Pitch would normally make it feel.

"It's not your fault." He noticed the obvious signs of panic and did all that he could to calm Jack down, gentle rubbing and whispering – but it wasn't helping visually. "Stop saying that...you don't deserve any of the blame for what happened."

"Then whose fault is it?" Jack didn't look up from his palms and the memory of Mary giving him a look that begged for the answer of a similar question burned in his eyes behind the lids. He remembered not getting an appropriate answer when he tried to reply to her there either.

"Not yours, obviously. I mean...you're only what? 18?"
"I'm 17."

"Close enough. It's not your fault. You shouldn't have to place all that weight on your shoulders to begin with. If anything you're the most blameless person in your situation right next to your sister."

Jack suddenly looked up towards his companion as if forgetting that he told his listener about his little sister before remembering that he did just that not five minutes ago. Then he gazed at him for a long time, forgetting that they were even in a cafe...

'He actually cares...' Jack felt part of himself break down as his face approached Pitch's own – their lips meeting in a soft graze that the young wanted to save in his memory for an eternity. There was a sense of security and beautifully simple safety – a sense of 'I'll always be there for you. Always.'

This kiss just felt so much different, so contrasting to the other one with caramel - it was more intimate, more personal. There was just a part about it that sent Jack's heart aflutter and made his stomach do back-flips before changing places with his liver. Pitch's thumb brushed against the very tip of his chin before a single finger ran down his exposed neck, here one moment and gone the next like a ghostly touch he would always remember, leaving a trail of fiery hot skin and goosebumps behind.

And then suddenly there was nothing to press his mouth against – Pitch had pulled back and was staring at him like he was a science project gone horribly wrong and so the younger man licked up lips, turning towards his half melted dessert with an unreadable look.

"I..." The sound came out as a pant from the aghast mouth of his grayish lover. Jack didn't want to look at him, as if the slightest meeting of their eyes again would make him combust in flames on the spot or shatter into pieces like glass. The moment just felt too delicate and important for him to ruin it with a mere gaze. "It's almost three in the morning Jack." An unmistakable attempt to change the subject and pull any and all attention away from the elephant in the room but Jack let it slide and nodded in agreement without looking at him.

"Yeah...we should probably get home."

"'We?'" Pitch grinned at Jack before smoothly gliding out of the seat, like a dark shadow. "Getting a little ahead of ourselves I see."

"We almost had sex in a cafe booth, I think I can make that mistake without being a 'little ahead' of myself." Jack said in a matter-of-fact type way as he pushed himself out of the booth, only for his vision to swim lightly and collapse into Pitch's arms.

"Are you alright?" A worried hand checked his temperature and he chuckled lightly.

"Just tired. I'm fine...just take me home..."

"Alright...and where would that be?"

"You got a car?"

"Yes..."

"About three minutes...I'll show you the way." Jack finally righted himself and got up fully without the help of Pitch – sugar could only energize the human body to such a point, sleep was eventually needed...and Jack was so happy that today was Sunday and his bed would be right there, waiting for him in his room.

—
Jack couldn't see and didn't care what model or color of car Pitch drove. All he could tell was that it was new, pretty, shiny, black on the outside because why stop the streak when your just going so well after all...and had a wide open backseat. The seats were nice and comfortable but as he climbed into the car, he remembered...

"Unless you want a different type of ride from the backseat of my car you'll stop that." The voice echoed through his mind and he couldn't help but wish to have the energy required to flirt seductively with the man who was currently climbing into the driver's seat...but he did have enough energy to make a move.

"Pitch, what is this?" Jack pointed randomly to part of the seat without really specifying anything and his lover took the bait once more, turning around and leaning over into the back of the car from his own seat only to be pulled mouth to mouth to Jack, who took the other man out of his seat as he relaxed into the back seat, their lips moving against each other as they fell.

Pitch didn't hesitate and moved into the seat with a risque smirk against Jack's lips as he moved closer, hovering over the teen and dominating the kiss, taking his time to play around in the warm and accommodatingly wet cavern. 'Not too cute. Not at all...something much more.' He thought as he climbed on top of the smaller lover, wanting to take him over completely with his presence, his body and his touch.

Jack moaned into Pitch's mouth before turning away from an inner mixture of nervousness and tiredness. Pitch took the opportunity to swoop down and kiss a trail down his neck, taking his precious time while he headed straight to the protruding collar bone located there. His rolled his hips into Jack's and his exhausted partner discharged a moan of such passion and want that it made Pitch think that just maybe, he was dreaming or on the verge of fucking a living angel.

"Jack...please I need to mark you." The voice was all business and enough to make the fatigued teen sit up in his seat, the back of his mind noting only briefly that Pitch's crotch was right above his on the verge of grinding down and driving him insane with mere friction and pressure alone.

"Don't..." Every nerve on his body wanted Pitch to mark him, like he was his territory, his possession, his item. Only his to mark and kiss and touch and love and drive half crazed with need when the time came, Jack almost ground his hips upward at the thought. He wanted it so bad...but what would his mother and perhaps his father say about that when he got home? What would it make them think and do?

Not anything good, that's for damn sure.

"Why not?"

"Parents don't know I'm gay and...you know..." It almost shocked him to say that before he reflected on the massive amount of girls that Jamie forced upon him – none of them were ugly, rude or unattractive in any way that he could see, he just didn't have any interest in them but he did have an interest for Jamie, and upon recognizing that he was gay he was surprisingly okay with it compared to how he heard some parents would react.

"Ah...true...but can't you hide it?"

"I don't want to hide it. There's no point if I hide it." Jack whispered sleepily, so comfortable with Pitch's body right above him. "If I get one I want to show it off."

"Oh...oh that's just...'Hot as fucking hell.' Pitch thought obscenely picturing Jack wearing an open collared shirt, showing off all the passionate love bites and bruises that were applied by his older
lover's mouth and hands... part of him considered what stains he would make in the tapestry of his car if he and Jack just threw all caution, decency, patience and care to the wind and fucked him against the car door until he couldn't feel his lower half anymore...

It'd be worth it.

So fucking worth it.

But it was around 3:30 am.

And Jack's parents were abusive enough as it is without him being out late at night having sex with gray skinned men in the back of black cars that they'd never seen before.

'Damn it.' Pitch whispered before dismounting Jack. They both groaned lightly and the older of the two took the steering wheel. "Don't fall asleep, I need you to direct me."

"Alright, first we get to my place-" Jack yawned and rolled over to his side. "Then we get into my house, completely ignore my mom and dad's existence, tear off our clothing as we make out up my steps before we snog and fuck each other's brains out on my bed."

Jack's lack of tact when it came to talking about sex...was doing nothing good for Pitch's crotch area right now."...Jack. Please. " If you don't stop this, I will fuck you straight into the upholstery of the car."

"Alright...fine." He resigned to tiredly leading Pitch to his place while he lazily moved and collapsed into the front passenger's seat with a pout that the other found to be the most adorable thing he's ever seen.

As he dozed off on the way there, Pitch grinned mischievously and pushed a small piece of crumpled up paper into the younger man's back-pocket.

–

Despite being a mysterious black car, driving around at about 3:30 am with a half asleep – perhaps fully—teenager in the front seat with a massive bruise on his face and no seat belt on, Pitch found that no one bothered them. 'Thank god for lazy police.' He rationally praised before he at last saw the house that Jack had described as his.

He couldn't believe drunks actually lived here – it was a massive light blue and white house with a beautiful front porch, a well taken care of garden on front complete with lawn gnomes and children's toys scattered about haphazardly.

"They can look really convincing." He said aloud, reading Pitch's mind like a book within a matter of seconds.

"As I can see..." If it wasn't for the fact that he knew better then to judge from appearances, he would be in a state of complete disbelief.

"Thanks for driving me." Jack leaned over and checked the windows into the living room, seeing a lack of his mother's, father's or Mary's face he swooped up and stole a quick peck from his new boyfriend's cheek before opening the opposite car door. "And thanks for everything else too." He stepped out of the car and closed it behind him, walking round the car to enter his room as quickly as he could.

'...You have no idea how welcome you are.' Pitch mumbled, touching the spot where Jack kissed him...
as if it was a sanctified point of his very being. Carefully and cautiously, with profound reverence and love. Before yanking and tearing his hands away and demanding them to stay on the steering wheel so he could drive himself home...and get rid of the damn problem that Jack had caused.

–

The young blonde scrolled through the massive amount of pictures she took of the beloved new couple in the cafe. Jack and Pitch. Kissing and touching, delicious little wisecracks and flirting were recorded on her phone as video. Enough to make a soft-core gay porno out of.

She almost wanted to.

Almost.

But she had a much better plan for these...

'Now...onto other things...' A knowing grin plastered on her lips.

She got up and left, leaving an idle twenty on the table and pocketing her phone as she went, singing a little song as she left.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Another term for goosebumps is skin erection.

And yes that is COMPLETELY true.

Song is Kiss from a Rose by Seal
"Thanks for driving me." Jack leaned over and checked the windows into the living room, seeing a lack of his mother's, father's or Mary's face he swooped up and stole a quick peck from his new boyfriend's cheek before opening the opposite car door. "And thanks for everything else too." He stepped out of the car and closed it behind him, walking round the car to enter his room as quickly as he could.

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It was 3:30 in the morning when he returned home, the early Sunday sun only just now beginning to shine a little light through the darkness that the nighttime of Saturday brought with it. Jack thought it was hysterically ironic that just as the light began peeping through the darkness, he left the only person he knew he loved and understood behind.

He proceeded in discarding that thought in favor of getting his tired fingers to remember how to operate a doorknob and near collapsing against the door in weariness before remembering that the only difference between the way he was moving now and the way his father moved when he was drunk was a couple beer bottles. After that he somehow found the energy, through a strange mixture of physical strength or pure emotional hatred alone, to push the door open and enter the house.

No sign of William.

'So...is he gone?...for good?' Jack thought, hyped up on the adrenaline – or the fear, at this point in his life the two were indistinguishable from one another—before searching around the house for more clues as to where Will was, examining every crack and detail of the living room for evidence of something. 'He may have been a wife beating, heartless destructive asshole that doesn't make me care for his safety as a human being any less.' Jack looked down the hallway and instead sought to look for Mary before another burst of fear hit him...
What if child services came while he was out? Or if they were coming right now? Was Mary even still here?! He swore under his breath and shoved the door of Mary's room wide open, heart blasting in his ears from sheer fear alone. All that was going through his mind was Mary – 'What if she's gone?'; 'Is she okay?'; 'What if dad came back and-' He swallowed painfully, his throat now feeling tight and dry as he examined the room.

Nothing out of place...

And Mary was asleep in bed, safe wrapped in numerous blankets with her long, straight auburn hair splayed in every direction on her pillow. Her face contorted lightly in the displeasure of slowly being woken up by her brother's sudden outburst of sound before she relaxed once more, rolling onto her other side with a happy smile on her face.

Jack permitted himself to relax and touched the heated area of the upper left part of chest where his heart was located, as if willing it to cease its rampant panicking and return to normal before it exploded in his chest. 'She's fine...' He told himself quietly as he tip toed back out and shut the door as serenely and delicately as possible, careful not to make a sound lest he wake her.

He walked back down the hallway, his nerves settling down before he realized that he hadn't seen Katherine...he walked into the living room once again to find her sitting there. 'Did she walk right past me while I was checking on Mary?'

"You have a habit of just randomly leaving." She stated calmly, hands folded as she relaxed, reclined on her chair and looking immensely imposing despite the swollen side of her face and her normally sub-servant attitude with Will. "So I'm guessing Will's blood really does run through your veins huh?"

'Was that supposed to be an insult or a realization that you're fucking and married to a living train wreck of a man?' Jack thought with a hiss under his breath before he walked onto the middle of the living room, considering multiple options. 'Apologizing? Saying what I just thought out loud? Asking where Dad is? Heading to bed?'. Despite his vast amount of inner want to say that second one, that last one sounded like the best course of action at this point. He turned on his heel and heading up the steps to his room, completely ignoring her for the sake of keeping his sanity intact for today.

"And ignoring me. Because screw the person who brought you into this world right?!!" The last world emphasized in a screaming tone the ended with one of the couch cushions being hurled in his general direction, missing only by a few milliseconds as the teen slammed the door behind him – his own anger at his less then currently reasonable mother making him forget that just a few moments ago he was trying to be as quiet as possible to stop his little sister from waking up.

His head hit the pillow face first before he could even reflect on it.

–

He awoke in a less then favorable position, luckily not with a knife in his stomach like he thought his mother would attempt due to that last outburst but instead with his stomach painfully twisting in soreness and the after pain that signaled that his body was healing itself.

Jack figured that since his lower stomach hadn't exploded in his body - he hoped - and he wasn't dead yet, the blows his father dealt must not have caused any severe internal damage...physically. He achingly swung his legs over the side of his bed before he crawling right back up into it. It hurt worse when he moved.

It was bad enough his mother was angry downstairs – non-soreness dulled bodily pain was too much
to deal with right now. In an effort to reduce the pain he decided he'd lay face upwards...He felt something in his back pocket crumple against the sheets and in his curiosity he reached into his jeans and pulled out a piece of crisp, white notebook paper with some letters and numbers elegantly written on it in script.

'You should save this number into your phone and call me later, since we're kind of a 'thing' now.

Love, Pitch.‘ His number followed.

Jack stared for a while, wondering when the actual fuck Pitch put something in his back pocket – he never felt the older man's hands even go near his ass after the cafe and he was sure there was nothing in his pockets except his phone...

He shrugged it away in favor of his wonder to find out whether or not he could actually reach Pitch. He pulled out his cellphone – never more glad until now that he had it – from the front pouch of his shirt and rapidly dialed the number.

It rung...

and rung...

Nothing for so long that Jack found himself growing increasingly woozy from holding his breath in wait until at last a familiar rhythmic and melodic voice that soothed and calmed his nerves came through the line, sounding just as curious as he was.

'Hello?'

"Pitch?"

A short pause before Jack felt he could sense the smile through the phone and hear it from his excited and delighted words. 'Jack!'

"You're so lucky my chest was sore, otherwise I might not have found it." He thought it was obvious what 'it' was.

'Good morning to you too... wait, why would your chest be sore?' The question came out as both perplexed and concerned and Jack remembered that he never told Pitch the real extensive details of where and how Will had hit him, how much damage and bruising he caused beyond his cheek, the real ferocity of the beating.

"I ran into a telephone pole on the way to the cafe last night...it was dark after all." 'Obviously a bullshit lie.' "It left a couple bruises but I'll be fine." He nervously toyed around with the hem of his shirt, pulling it taut around the neck area to preoccupy his hands. "And good morning to you. Sorry."

'It's fine. I wanted to hear your voice anyway...'

Jack's heart felt as if it skipped a beat in his chest and fainted down to the pit of his belly with glee and admiration. Pitch actually wanted to hear his voice? His voice in particular? The thought of his beau – 'I can call him that now right? He is technically providing for me every time we go out...so he's my boyfriend now...yes. My beau.' the man who belonged to no one else in the world no matter how much more intelligent, beautiful, taller, thinner, prettier then he was – wanted to hear his voice. Why did he want to just giggle like a young school girl with a little baby crush at the thought?

"Umm...same here I guess..."

'OH! I just remembered something...' Jack was somewhat dumbfounded, the sound of Pitch recalling
something sounded remotely akin to him feeling actual pleasure...he'd remember that one. 'Your father?'

He automatically finished that in his head 'What happened to your father?'. "...Good question." He let himself drop to the sheets beneath him, refusing to stay upright any more since it made his chest ache. "My mom probably knows but she's being..."

'Less then agreeable?' Pitch finished for him with an exhale of sympathy.

"Yeah..." Jack let his voice trail off and a disquieting muteness took over the room and the phone call. "So how is your day going?" He wanted to hear Pitch's voice more – it helped to ease the rising feelings of uneasiness and light depression that would overcome him when he wasn't either completely focused on Mary, enjoying the benefits of a sober week or doing school work.

'It's going rather peacefully but then again I haven't left my house yet so I wouldn't hold my breath.' The sentence ended in a chuckle that Jack couldn't help but join in on. He loved Pitch's dark and anti-social sense of humor, something he couldn't help but really get behind and believe in...

"Things generally do go downhill when other people get involved, especially the people around here." He made sure that the roll of his eyes was clearly vocalized only to realize how cynical that really sounded a brief moment later, unsure and unable to tell of where that sudden burst of pessimism came from.

'Yes indeed...I don't think that girl will ever spell self-righteous right.' If Pitch noticed, he didn't call any attention to it and for that Jack inwardly thanked him, however his last remark had basically ended the conversation and the young man remembered that he had to think up a new one so it wouldn't get awkward and he wouldn't have to hang up.

"Hey Pitch...I was wondering about something." Jack had a new plan now, his boredom now seeping through his lack of ability to think of a new topic and giving way to his own unfulfilled and unfulfillable, hungry and less than controllable teenage libido that raged inside of himself since he was fourteen.

'Yes?'

"When you gave me your number...did you cop a feel?" His voice was abruptly flirtatious and teasing as he came through the phone.

'No...should I have?'

"I was hoping you would...I wanted you to touch me, feel me..." Jack let out a light exhale into the phone before biting his lip – an unusual concoction of embarrassed, happy and stimulated from his own less then respectable thoughts of what he wanted Pitch to do to him bubbled up in the pit of his stomach and made its way through him.

'Oh...my apologies. Next time I'll be sure to take my time and get a good handful hm?'

"Please..." Jack purred with a roll of his hips, making his voice despairing and needy. "I need you to..." He breathlessly whispered while he ran a hand down his body, abruptly feeling too warm in his skin to do anything besides beg. "I just...need you to touch me – anywhere..." He swore none to gently while rationality finally gave way to lust and his hands moved underneath the cotton hem of his pants.

'You need me don't you? You need my hands to run across your skin...trace every part of you and commit it all to memory, make you moan things aloud that you'd be ashamed about later...' Jack
would've been upset any other time but he was already too far gone to make himself stop and too deeply drowned in pleasure to want to. He wrapped his fingers around himself none too gently and began palming himself, giving himself full lengthy strokes that had him lightly panting – embarrassment from Pitch probably hearing and reasoning what was going on from the obscene noises alone being only barely prevalent in the back of his mind.

All that mattered now was the feeling. The long, near painfully drawn out and sinfully pleasurable feeling of his erection working into and out of his hand as he everything just melted around him was simply too much...

'My my...rather eager...' And Pitch's elegant and undeniably hot voice did not aid his subconsciously enforced attempt to stay sane through the hazy, mind-blowing feeling of melting in his own skin. He weakly writhed against the bed sheets and sped up his strokes, the few threads of his sanity he had left slipping out of his grasp as he let himself relent to the pleasure. Short gasps left him in bursts and his eyes clenched shut – wanting this to never ever end.

The mental image of Pitch's enticing smirk and the piercing gaze of his golden glowing eyes, carefully taking in each and every last detail of his body, every reaction and noise he made. He swore he could feel those dexterous hands now, making their way down laggardly...taking their time to touch him perfectly and drive him mad and force him to beg for more and more while they drove him over the edge at such a slow pace that he thought he might melt into nothing before he finally got his incredible, body shaking release. 'Come for me Jack...' It was merely a hushed whisper but it was all the additional stimulation he needed – he came hard into his palm with a muffled yell, biting into his pillow as he rocked into his hand with explosions like fireworks appearing behind his tightly closed eyes. Then at last, after what Jack felt like what couldn't be more then a moment, he collapsed back down to Earth and some semblance of actual thought returned to his head...and he groaned.

Mild post-sexual climax exhaustion was catching up quick – more then likely it wasn't that late in the day, certainly not a full twelve hours. He managed to stay awake after though, if by mere adrenaline alone from letting Pitch listen. For a good five minutes post-orgasm trying his best to breathe deeply and relax himself...and heard a faint panting coming through the phone.

'...Oh...oh god that's...wow...' Jack thought and swore after realizing what exactly just happened. He and Pitch both masturbated. Technically together.

Can that be considered a first time? Jack wasn't even sure...

'Whew...that was rather nice.' Pitch's voice was slightly higher then what it was pre-orgasm (Jack just assumed he was finished) and sounded rather relaxed and pleased.

'I suppose I did good..' Jack squirmed a bit – taking the phone up in his hand that wasn't covered in his own essence and unable to stop the satisfied smile that painted his lips. "Oh Pitch...you certainly seem to enjoy misbehaving along with me..."

'Calm yourself and reign it back in, Frost. If you actually think that you lead me around-'

"Oh please big boy." He spoke so it was obviously less of a flirt and more of a tease, not realizing that it was all the same to the more then enthralled lover through the phone. "You love it when I lead." Jack added a sexy purr to his words and the long silence that came after had him wondering what he did wrong, what he said to have turned Pitch off...until Pitch's voice, heavy and husky with want responded back.

'Jack Frost...I will ride you until your sore, begging and pleading on your hands and knees in front of me for more of my cock, slamming into you so hard that your fucking seeing stars. Do not toy
He took an inhale of much needed oxygen – he wanted Pitch to fulfill that promise and do just that – ride him til he's sore and imploring that he can take even more dick into himself, try and make his lover ride him until he broke... It wasn't unpleasant at all to feel like this – in fact he liked it. He surmised that he relished being flirty and misbehaved over the phone with his boyfriend, either that or the after glow was just dulling everything down until it didn't matter anymore.

But then the thought of it actually happening – him being touched and teased...that pushed the after glow away and gave into a powerful want for it to occur. He didn't want just his imagination...he wanted something tangible...he wanted Pitch. "Pitch...I want you to do that. C-...can you do that?"

He didn't know why he was suddenly so nervous, all he knew was that he felt like he really did honestly need Pitch inside of him...as soon as possible.

'Jack...I can do things to you that you'll be both mortified and delighted to think and speak of.'

"I hope you realize that I'm going to hold you to that...big boy..."

'If you call me that agai-'

"In anycase-" Jack intentionally cut Pitch off – part of him knowing that he wouldn't try to cut him back off in an attempt to make his threat. "I suppose I already told you that my parents don't know I'm gay."

'Actually no, that's a surprise... 'The flirty teen grew a bit worried, he sounded rather concerned again. 'That's not what...made your father...?'

'Ohhh.' He realized, Pitch thought that his father was upset because he was gay. 'Pitch...if my dad knew I was gay I don't think I could face him without being beaten bloody.' In reality he wasn't sure how his father would react if he actually publicly came out out the closet about not being all that interested in girls so much as other men. But he didn't need to know how he would react to know that he wouldn't be leaving the same room within subsequent minutes without either the jaws of life or two big matching purple bruises on either side of his face.

Or being carried out on a stretcher with multiple medics around him.

'Not risking it.' When Jack got right down to things, William just didn't need to know. It wasn't his business and even more-so it didn't really matter in the grand scheme of things, particularly with how their family currently was rifted apart. The last thing he needed to do was tear it apart further by telling his dad 'Oh hey yeah Dad, did I mention I prefer other guys? I even publicly made out with another guy and loved it. He's also older then me and God do I want his dick!'

Yeah, again something that he wouldn't even be able to get the entire way through before his left eye received a free enlargement treatment curiosity of his father's fist.

But it did make him wonder...

"Pitch did you catch the morning news?"

'Yes, why?'

"Anything about a guy named William Frost?"

'Who?'
"That's my father's name..."

'Ah...no not that I remember. I could have missed it though...'

"Alright...thanks anyway." So it wasn't on the news and he couldn't hear his father's voice. Nothing new. 'Whoever thought up the saying 'no news is good news' is a moron.' Jack let out a small sigh. "Pitch I want to see you..."

'The feeling is mutual. I can assure you...'

"I miss you."

'I miss you too...'

"I don't wanna hang up..." He half whimpered, half pleaded with himself – he needed to go check and see if his father had returned or at least talk to his mother and try to smooth things over. She seemed twice as angry as usual – probably due to his sudden leaving...'Maybe I really am becoming like my father...'

'Me either...but I actually have to now.' His voice was unpleasant and unsettling – as if someone he despised was approaching him right at that moment.

"O-oh..." That was upsetting...Jack pouted but tried to sound as optimistic and happy as possible. "I'll talk to you later then?"

The only answer he got in response was a long gap of silence – dead air.

P

"Mansnoozie, get out of my office." Pitch squeezed the bridge in-between his eyes and let out a groan of aggravation and exhaustion – just mere moments ago he had been filled with energy but that could have been the post-orgasm bliss just canceling his tiredness out...he assumed it was just the tiny, fat man's presence.

The tiny, widely shaped blonde shook his head rapidly and pointed at him violently, threateningly with far too much shaking in his index finger to mean something polite.

"Whatever it is I can assure you I don't give a fuck." He shrugged and turned away, whirling around in his spinning office chair without a care in the world and a dismissive hand raised while the other fiddled with a blue fountain ink pen.

He nearly forgot how much Mansnoozie didn't like being told no. He came to the front of Pitch's desk and grabbed the back of the chair before yanking it down with a wide and poisonously mischievous grin on his face. The tall, darker skinned man fell entirely over himself and went down with the chair, collapsing on the floor in what the shorter of the two men would consider a melodramatic flailing of his long limbs with his right foot nearly missing the golden dressed man's head.

Pitch allowed himself to lay on the floor for a few moments, his mind delighting in wondering how people got through life without viciously stabbing others to death on a daily basis and then mentally asked himself. 'You do realize you work with people who do that?' With no little emotional effort he looked up to see Mansnoozie's golden suit donned body and immediately looked away – how he actually got his work done with something as distracting and annoying like that on was something Pitch would never understand.
"Alright I'll humor you. To what do I owe the light-bulb cosplayer on this fine afternoon?" He said through gritted teeth as he attempted to untangle himself from the chair – unhooking his left leg from it and thanking the heavens it wasn't broken.

Before attempting to say anything Mansnoozie gave him the bird – Pitch responded in kind with a smirk and finally got himself up into a position to get up. Despite their bickering, they were on the same wavelength – complete opposites in every physically imaginable way but mentally always equal and personality wise, even if Mansnoozie hid it for business' sake, he was just as anti-human, rude and snark-filled as Pitch was and stayed like that since they met in high school.

The golden haired man handed him a black and white form with a knowing smile before closing his eyes peacefully, knowing already what Pitch was going to say.

"You're kidding me Sanderson..." He read out the list of numerous books aloud before angrily and unceremoniously balling up the paper, throwing it in the waste bin and looking to his high-school friend for some kind of relief from the upcoming burden.

He received a look of 'Yeah, I know. But you've gotta do it anyway.'

Pitch pouted in his general direction, trying to pull at Mansnoozie's heartstrings.

No avail.

"Honestly.." Pitch put his chair back upright and sat in it, continuing to spin around in it mindlessly.

"...I have no idea why you make me hold your stuff for you."

Sanderson shrugged before moving next to him – almost pushing the revolving chair away as he walked towards the calendar. The taller of the two already knew what he was trying to say, even fore Sanderson's finger touched the date of September, 27.

"I'll be fine, I've been this entire time haven't I?" He leaned back in his chair and spun his pen around in his finger tips, trying not to reminisce or think of that day anymore.

The shorter man looked towards him with a face of 'Really?' before he pulled out his phone and began typing a message that he none-to-gently shoved into Pitch's face.

'That's a lie. You and I both know that.' Pitch read before smiling and nodding ever so lightly – acknowledging it but not wanting to believe it, despite already knowing better. Mansnoozie was one of the few that actually knew what was going on – and what happened on that particular day. He was the only one left around him when he crashed like that...and the only one who really knew what was going on in his head, so of course he would know that he was lying about his emotional state...it was his job...

Mansnoozie was his psychologist after all.

The smaller man tapped out some more sentences on his phone before showing Pitch again.

'Just remember, I'm here if you need me.'

The gray skinned man smiled and nodded. "I know Sanderson.."

'I know it's not currently my business to pry, but...new partner?' He was obviously referring to the phone call.

"Did you hear all of that?"
"Yes and the masturbation."

"You really have no idea how to beat around the bush."

'No, but you seem to be beating your bush rather pleasantly from what I heard.' Pitch's happy grin nearly split in entire face in two upon reading that line. 'Male or female?'

"Male."

'Ooh god he's not legal is he?'

"What makes you say that?" The tone of voice, one of joking and mirth, already answered the question for him.

'I know you'd be in his bed right now if he was.'

"There's not a lot keeping me from running to his bed right now as a matter of fact." Pitch said, leaning back in his chair and smiling, head now elsewhere as he thought over all the pleasingly unrighteous promises he made to the young man – he refused to think of Jack as a young 'teen' after the things he'd seen from him anyway.

'And what IS stopping you? Besides you know, breaking the law?' Sanderson looked at him with a look of pure disbelief.

"I have actual self control, I know you don't know that and I really don't have much of it but it exists, much to my own chagrin." He frowned without realizing it, turning around the pen in his hand before sighing.

'That's not answering my question.'

"Maybe I don't want to answer your question." Pitch poked his tongue out at the shorter man, inwardly remembering his promise not to tell anyone about Jack's less then normal at home life. "Maybe I can't hmm?"

'So wait...you're not screwing him and you're not bragging about it.' Pitch nodded. 'So...he's different from the past four? Myself included?' He pouted and nodded sadly, teasing again. 'So wait you're actually seriously with him?' Another nod, this time accompanied by an ear to ear grin. 'Holy...wow I didn't think you could. Congrats. You have an actual relationship with someone.' Sanderson beamed greatly and shook his phone almost too excitedly for Pitch to read it.

"If I was anyone else then I would seriously be offended right now, but I'm me so...I guess its a good thing." The mood soured for him and he tapped his lips lightly with his pen before pulling it away from his mouth and turning to read over some documents and papers without needing too. It was an estimated five years before he would be able to build any real personal relationships but it had only been three...He didn't want to think about what happened and the aftermath of it all. 'Focus on Jack for right now...'

'Can I get a name for our little miracle of God or is that a secret too?'

"I suppose I can tell you...but I'd appreciate it if you didn't go prying any further then this. Promise you won't – with the exception of what I tell you and I'll tell you about him." Pitch bargained, knowing that Sanderson wouldn't betray his trust in such a way by telling if he would actually tell him something.

The blonde nodded almost too fast for the older to see.
"His name's Jackson Overland Frost – He's 17. Tall, thin, bright-skinned, white haired...peppy little high-school pretty boy – beautiful, shiny pearly whites included."

'Everything you've just told me explains the previous four excluding myself and the white-hair. What makes this one different?'

"Well he's got a brain in his skull for one thing. I looked him up in his high-school's directory, incredibly talented with an immense amount of mental potential, and again bright teeth. This is Pennsylvania. That's rare."

'It's Pennsylvania, not Britain. That's not the miracle you think it is.' Sanderson held his phone aloft with a wide, knowing grin.

"Raaaaaaacist." Pitch sang before continuing, the comedy of it not lost on him though. "As the teachers have told me tons of girls just fawn over him, but he doesn't have a girlfriend – when he's asked about it he'll change the subject or just say he's focusing on his studies or can't find the right girl—" He paused for a moment to chuckle. "Obviously bullshit." He and Sanderson both mouthed in unison before he continued. "His white hair is actually natural...and he is a walking conglomerate of ice based puns."

'Got a written list?'

"I'm working on it honestly. White hair shaped like icicles, born on the Winter Solstice, incredible in snow-fights so I've been told, loves ice cream and the winter. The whole nine yards." Pitch listed them all off from memory alone.

'Jack Frost."

"That's what everyone calls him."

'Just like everyone calls me the Sandman and you Pitch Black?'

"Yes, with the exception that he actually enjoys his nickname. Really who even calls me that anymore? I mean seriously..."

'Pitch. I need you to listen to me here man."

"Listen to what? The tapping of those little keys of yours?" Pitch dismissed him with a wave of his hand, both of them registering that the aggressiveness behind the insulting statement was self-defensive as Sanderson was approaching the original topic of conversation. "Piss off."

The golden haired man stared at him for a long while and Pitch stared back before flashing an apologetic smile, catching himself. Sanderson nodded as an 'it's fine, I know you didn't mean it.' response before getting to work typing something else down on his phone – whatever it was it took a good portion of time. Pitch had a good idea of what it was as well...

He was a psychologist as well.

'Go outside that day. Spoil yourself. Laugh a lot. Buy yourself something nice and for the love of God please just buy some wine for you and Jack and so have a good time. I know what happened, I saw the video, I heard the reports, I know all of it. All of it and trust me when I say that you deserve it man, regardless of what you think you could have possibly done. None of us would've seen that coming and at most, only one half drunk dumb-ass can take the blame for what happened. You know that.'
Pitch rolled his eyes and turned his chair away from reading that, trying to use the tip of his pen to dig the dirt out of underneath his fingernails instead while frowning. 'I swear they were clean before he left the house...'

Sanderson left him alone after that, instead choosing to turn and walk out of Pitch's office with an angered frown aimed at both himself and Pitch's less than peaceful past. He didn't like it when he couldn't make progress while someone else did without realizing it, although he appreciated the way this Jack boy was making Pitch smile and be more patient overall as of late.

'Just don't break his heart.' Sanderson thought as he closed the door behind him, waiting patiently for that single moment he knew would happen. It took five, exhaustively quiet minutes before he could hear Pitch's sniffles and the sound of whimpers coming through the door and only then allowed himself to cry along with him – the only time he knew Pitch would never feel pitied and pathetic. I'm sorry Pitch...

I really am.'

Chapter End Notes

Song used is: Soon it Will be Cold Enough to Build Fires by Emancipator.

Today is the last day of my four day vacation, then its the end of the year rush with tons of tests and crap.

Good news though, at time of uploading I'm 80 percent finished with chapter 17 and 60 percent finished with the outline for chapter 28.

Keep reading, laughing, playing and reviewing!

Love,

Angelblaze
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For the next few days and stretching until Wednesday Jack came to the amazing and sudden discovery after publicly making out with a man he just knew and barely knew and practically teasing him with the promise of cheap, good and rough sex despite the fact that he was an under aged gay virgin, that he was an unquestioning and unbelievably willing slut for Pitch. He was certain that should anyone ever discover what was exchanged through the phone during those days, they would instantly have him placed into Sex Addicts Anonymous for some intense and much needed therapy.

On a funnier note, he found himself not giving a shit even quicker, particularly when Pitch's voice purred to him seductively through the phone and made him thrust into his hands, touch his needy, innocent body in places that he would've dared never do a mere two weeks ago and scream into his pillow to be fucked as hard and as rough of anyone could ever possibly give to him. 'Imagine that.'

The strangest thing occurred on Wednesday though, as he lay in bed with the phone pressed into his hands – with no real want to masturbate. He wanted Pitch inside of him, that much was certain, but the want to have an orgasm and beg was quelled by a feeling he couldn't quite recognize. He dismissed it as being tender or perhaps he just wanted Pitch so much that his body knew that masturbation wouldn't satisfy anything until it finally got him...

The former made it sound queerly romantic, as if he actually needed Pitch...so he decided he'd go with that one.

Needless to say that the conversation began to get astonishingly casual in comparison – despite that fact that nearly all conversation that occurred before hand on the phone was obviously on the opposite end of friendly, polite and casual to begin with – and Jack found himself chuckling and laughing with his older boyfriend rather then flirting as if he was actually legal and able to give legal consent and letting out sounds that would make prostitutes' faces flush from the sheer indecency of it all.

'I hope I never. Ever. See that girl again...' Pitch groaned through the phone and Jack grinned, knowing he was talking about their 'self-righteous' girl again.

"Surprisingly enough I can't find the heart to give a shit." He grinned and lightly ran his fingers
against his laptop, considering using it but then deciding against it – he had been having software problems with it anyway.

'Me either personally...but I wanted to ask you something.' He sounded almost distressingly tense.

Jack admitted to himself that he didn't know Pitch inside and out and he wasn't sure he ever would, but he did at least come to know a lot of what his tastes and tendencies were and how he talked...and he knew that he only asked for something from Jack when it would require him to do emotional work on his part.

Whatever this was, it was important...and that peeked Jack's interest enough to have him shift his weight on the bed and smile. "Yeah, sure what is it?"

'I know its abrupt and I know-‘ There was a dense breath and fragile pause in between words that worried the younger caller but he made no words to question it. 'I know you don't know me very well but you know I just kind of I-I want you to spend some more time with me...over at my house. I mean...' Another silence and Jack decided to welcome himself back into the conversation.

"Someone's a little nervous...what's the matter Pitch? Cat got your tongue?" An obvious swell of bravado.

'Ugh...no.' He could sense the uneasiness in the older man's voice but silenced himself still, wanting to hear of whatever Pitch had in mind. '...I hate that saying...it's just like I...supposedly your high-school isn't open this Friday because of Act 80 I believe and I just figured that maybe we could get together for the weekend is all...'

"I love how when your nervous you lapse into sounding like a sixteen year old."

'Spare me."

"Don't intend to."

'Just...ugh- Can you?'

"I can but..." Jack let his voice trail off and thought of his recent home troubles – most of which not being recent so much as embers that became troublesome, time consuming and freedom restricting flames. With so much going on and so little information being fed to him by his mother, particularly in the last few days, he felt pressured with the need to be cautious and guard Mary and himself from the home front. He couldn't just run off again. Every time he did he could feel the drawn-out, overstressed buckling emotional structure of the house that was already crumbling apart, generally when his mother was involved. He could feel her just beginning to break down whether it was due to worry, fear or anger he wasn't quite sure but he knew he couldn't just sit by and watch it all happen.

He needed to support her and keep Mary safe.

Why did it feel like someone had doubled the burden on his shoulders with little to no care about how much he could really carry? He ran an empty hand through his icicle hair and let a muteness stretch between them while he considered his answer, already knowing that he had to say no and refuse the more then welcome proposal – even Jack didn't know how long he wanted to run into Pitch's arms and embrace him and have his beau sweep him off his feet and into his house, into his bedroom and then take his agonizingly sweet time to please him in ways he had previous imagined but never fully capture with just his hand and the sound of his lover's voice. All he knew is that he wanted to almost too much for it to be merely a normal relationship...ignoring the fact that he had never been in a real relationship before. "Things...aren't going too well at home right now." he
finished with a miffed grimace that he knew Pitch couldn't see but could hear.

'Worse then normal?'

"Yeah..."

'Did your father...has he been imprisoned?'

"Good question." Jack licked his lips, only now feeling as if they were dry and then swallowing while his throat followed suit. "I don't know anything about the legal system really...it always annoyed me. But he hasn't been back in a couple days so yeah...I think he's gone."

'It was Sunday right?'

"Yeah..." Jack was almost too busy thinking to hear him, too busy off in space and considering what to do now that William was now evidently gone and out of his life.

'Did your mother press charges?'

"Probably not." He wasn't aware that that mattered much with his facial injury.

'Then no, he's most likely not in prison."

"I haven't seen him in a couple days is all. It's not so much I want him in prison, I just don't want him hitting me or mom again in front of Mary." Jack answered absent-mindedly but was shocked out of his mental adventuring from the uncomfortable silence that stretched between them, unsure of what he said wrong this time to have Pitch shut up so abruptly.

'Honestly...' His voice came out in a heavy huff of breath that almost made the younger male jump from the bed in surprise. "Do you really listen to yourself sometimes I mean really listen Frost?" Pitch sounded oddly agitated with what he just said and the young teen had no idea as to why. All he did was say what was really true.

"What'd I say?"

'Wha- Oh...just...' Another exhale before he took a breath inward to calm himself, Jack was shocked. He never heard Pitch so distressed over something. 'Jack that...what you just said implies that you don't care that he's beating you as long as he isn't doing it in front of your little sister.'

The white-haired youth thought about that for a moment and came to a simple and confident conclusion. "Yes Pitch, that's what I meant. I don't care if he hits me, as long as Mary isn't watching."

'Jack that's...disgustingly unhealthy. Don't you realize what that means at all if you really and honestly think that that's a perfectly normal thing to say?'

The frost teen bit his lip and sat up in bed at last, crossing his legs Indian style and thinking hard about it. What exactly did he say that was so wrong and so unbelievably shocking that even Pitch – who had previously been right along with him while calling the people that lived around the entire area a bunch of idiots and even had the crassness and uncaring needed to make out with a popular and well known seventeen year old in public without a care in the world for who saw – be shocked and disgusted?

"I don't...see why you're so upset." Jack concluded before frowning to himself. He really didn't know what was so wrong with that...
'Jack you've lost all sense of self safety or self preservation haven't you?' Pitch's voice sounded increasingly concerned and irritated – he couldn't help it though, hearing Jack say such a thing just shook him to his core when he listened. 'It's fine to want to keep your mother and sister safe but there's no reason to become a martyr...Jack really I mean you...'

"Look I know but...I-I just...I need-"

'You need to spend a day with me.'

"What?" Now that was something that he wasn't expecting at all, Pitch's voice wasn't even insistent on him coming to his house. It was demanding and not the 'take no for an answer' type voice, similar to the one he used in the cafe to get Jack to buy himself some ice cream.

'Tomorrow morning, at ten AM your to meet me in front of Cafe Claussen and come to my house.' He explained attentively and carefully as if he was explaining it to a child, Jack would've felt offended if he was asking anything else at any different place or time. 'You aren't spoiled enough, its not healthy.'

"Ummm...first off I can't. I-"

'I SAID meet me in front of Claussen and we're driving to my place. That's final Frost, end of discussion.'

"E-excuse me?! I could swear that I have something called free will." Jack almost yelled through the phone, remembering how back at the cafe he practically forced him to eat the ice cream – he didn't really want to eat from fear of his stomach just like he didn't really want to stay here and see if his father was going to come back without a court date or come back at all but he wasn't about to let Pitch just force him around...outside of bed. He was his own man when it came to decisions like this, he at least liked to think. "Further more isn't not being a spoiled brat a good thing?"

'Jack, first off free will is a theory – NOT confirmed fact – and yes, being a spoiled brat is NOT a good thing. But not knowing how to treat yourself is far worse. I thought that maybe back at the cafe...that just clears up everything...it all fits now. Jack...you need to come over to my house.'

"Pitch I...you just." Jack sighed and grabbed his forehead, for once not feeling a headache in his head, but the voice on the phone was beginning to get to him. "...I can treat myself but I need to help my little sister-"

'Jack, your mother is there for that. You need to relax, you need someone to help you for a change, feed you, worry about you-'

'Pitch that's not your job?” He wasn't sure why he sounded like he was questioning Pitch's logic but he knew his stance on going was quickly wavering away.

'Then whose is it Frost?' Pitch's voice rumbled with a hot anger that almost frightened Jack. 'It's bad enough that your asking me to leave you alone in a home with an abusive man that has already put his hands on you and not tell the police but now your not even letting me try to take care of you?! Some of us have a very strong sense of justice Jack!' Jack bit his lip and ran his hand over his mouth before licking his lips, they felt so dry again. He wasn't considering that Pitch wanted to tell anyone about what was going on, all the while gritting his teeth about it and probably coming close to calling the police and explaining it all anyway.

He let out an exhale through his teeth and ran his fingers up his face until he reach his hair line, pulling his hand before further to sweep over his hair while he mentally chastised himself. It was
stupid not to consider that maybe Pitch really gave a fuck about him – even dumber to ignore the fact that he even said such. "I'm sorry." He found himself only able to mumble that before taking a deep breath to prevent tears from coming out of his eyes. "I...I shouldv-"

'It's fine...but I mean...I know you think that you're doing something good, denying yourself simple pleasures in favor of helping your sister and yes – that is good on a base level. But not in such excess Jack. I felt you, you realize that right?' Pitch's voice had calmed down to an apologetic and grief-stricken tone.

"I don't understand what you mean by that..."

'Jack...I could feel how thin you were. That's why you wear sweat shirts and baggy clothing right? You want to hide how thin you are – from other people and yourself. When's the last time you made yourself a decent meal? I don't mean take out or something you made for Mary and you but an actual dinner or breakfast plate you made for yourself.' Pitch asked, his voice showing that he already knew the answer: Jack didn't know.

And he really didn't. In fact, he couldn't remember the last time he made himself something substantial. "When my father is sober I splurge a little..." He tried to make a defense and he could almost feel Pitch's refusal of such an answer through the phone. "And eat a little more..."

'And how often is he sober? Honestly Jack- You're coming over to my house tomorrow and that's final...I-...you need to be spoiled at least once. I won't ask you to stay the whole weekend, but at least a single day. For your own sake, please.'

"...Okay." Jack resigned and fell back onto the bed, sprawling out to cover the entire area and relax himself. He was going to ask what the inside of Pitch's house looked like and what exactly it was like but he decided against it, no longer wanting to start anymore arguments...he was too emotionally tired for it. 'He's right...I need at least one day to fully relax and get out of the house without having to worry about Mary, especially after what happened with William.'

'So Jack around... 10 ?'

"Give me until 11 and I promise you I'll be there."

'Got an excuse ready for your parents? I don't think they'd be particularly happy to hear your visiting your boyfriend's house in the woods with no one else around.'

"I'll just tell my mom I'm with my study partners or something...she won't question it too much." Jack rolled over onto his side and held the phone a little closer to his ear, queasiness bubbling up in the pit of his stomach as he contemplated what he wanted to say. He wasn't sure when he could say this in a relationship – he never had any experience before but...'here goes nothing..." 'Pitch..."

'Hm?'

"I...I just want to say that the past couple of days that I've known you has been...absolutely incredible." He didn't intend for that to leave his mouth but it felt right to say so he didn't try to rectify it. "I don't...I don't want it to stop. You make me really happy for some reason and I just, I feel like I have to tell you that." He felt tears begin to brim and overflow in his eyes and he blinked them away with his voice wavering and cracking near the end of his words.

'Jack, what is it? Is something the matter?' Pitch sounded worried again and Jack slowly curled up into a ball, biting his lip like mad trying to stop himself from crying.

"I just wanted to say that I really appreciate everything you've done for me..." Jack sniffled noisily
and wiped his nose with his sleeve, partially not understanding why he was crying to begin with but too far gone to care. "And that I love you." He felt terrified, too bared and too open – but it was something that he felt needed to be said.

‘...’

A long silence stretched between them and Jack felt himself almost break – these periods of nothing being said were too common and scary for him to feel safe and comfortable right after just bearing himself. It hurt.

"P-Pitch?"

’...I...’ His voice sounded uncertain and uneven, despite his previous confidence and insistence for Jack to come over to his house. ‘I can’t accept that.’

"What do you mean you can’t accept that?" Jack asked, appalled and astonished by Pitch’s sudden silence only to realize that the other man had completely hung up the phone.

—

Pitch ran his fingers through his hair and let out a heavy huff of air as he hung up the phone, sweat pooling at his temple and his whole body near-shaking from just hearing those words come from the phone, from Jack's mouth. Did he know what those words even met? Did he know what ‘love’ implied and what it really meant? Did they even put the same amount of weight into that simple four letter word?

After Jack's indirect admittance of having a lack of self-preservation, he didn't think so but at the same time – he was smart, young and honest and even then the boy had never been in a real relationship before, as far as what he was told. Did he even know what love was at its core or what he was implying?

He took a drawn-out look at the phone in hesitation, wondering if he should call him back. It was obvious that hanging up was the worst possible decision he could make at that moment, with Jack's parental issues and possible lack of self concern...but he didn't feel comfortable trying to call back – too many memories stemmed from that single phrase too much...sadness and too many emotional let downs. He placed the phone back on its charger and took a few moments to recompose himself, trying to either forget or deal with what just happened while he thought of what Jack might say when and if they met in front of Claussen tomorrow. He wasn't even sure Jack would still come with his sudden refusal of the other man's feelings – Pitch refused to acknowledge Jack as a mere teenager – and sincerely hoped this wouldn't mean that Jack would assume he didn't.

He knew that merely assuming that Jack would merely glance over it was a foolish excuse to not call him but he felt too off center, too emotionally disturbed by the phrase and its usage to actually pick up the phone and make an attempt to make amends.

He knew he fucked up. Big time in fact. And he hated it.

Who was he to put his comfort before Jack’s – the child just admitted his emotions and he just spurned them. The first thing Jack would probably think was that Pitch was just like his father or something of the sort... ‘Fuck. Fuck.’ That last thought was almost too hard to take, he swore he might break down - memories of September not leaving him. So much so fast...

He swore he might drown or break under all the pressure that squeezed a decision out of him.

'Implode, explode or calm down – one of the three.' He remembered reading that on Mansnoozie's
It happened in September as well. *Goddamnit* he hated this month.

He ran his hands through his hair again and took even, steady, slow breaths just like Sanderson taught him to whenever he felt like this – the last thing he needed was to hyperventilate or have a panic attack right now.

He needed to *think*.

But when Jack said it he could hear that very same voice telling him that just mere moments before – he grabbed the sides of his head and bit his lips so hard he could feel blood slowly dripping from them. *'I love you'* was echoing in his ears, playing over and over right alongside his pounding pulse and he felt something akin to physical pain in his chest and throat. He found himself unable to breathe and incapable of moving – his mind screamed to him: *it was his fault. He should have seen it all coming, all of it! It was his job to take care of -*

He tumbled forward, just barely catching the rim of the small waste bin he kept by his desk before he violently began emptying the breakfast he had earlier, the apple from mere moments before Jack called and any and all of the remaining significant contents of his stomach. Hot tears he had no control over spilling were making their way down his face from both the emotional breakdown and the painfully long period of being incapable of breathing. His hands balled, one gripping the edge of the wastebasket with white knuckles and the other clenching the fabric of the light beige carpet.

He was only just able to catch his breath in between waves of dry heaving, vomit, and gut wrenching sickness that continued on for at least fifteen minutes before he at last could fully breathe and wipe his face and hands clean with nearby paper towels that he kept there just for the occasion should something like this happen.

*'Calling Mansnoozie after this would probably be the best plan of action, however with what I just did to Jack I don't think what I consider to be the best plan of action is actually a wise decision...'* Pitch thought before biting his lip, he didn't actually believe what he just told himself. He *knew* that he was supposed to call Sanderson whenever...*this particular month* began having such an effect on him. The last time he didn't it didn't end well for any of the involved. Including the two doctors he bit and the security guard he punched in the face.

He ignored Sanderson's number which lie safely and easily reachable within the first left hand drawer of his desk and instead threw away the puke-stained paper towels in his hand and slowly relaxed himself, running his hand down his face and wiping off the few appearing and cooling beads of sweat from his forehead and doing his best to separate himself from his taste-buds for now with the acidic tang of vomit still lingering in his mouth. He allowed himself to sit down and get back to work, looking at papers of patients and examining their possible conditions – then chuckled from the irony of it. He was capable of helping others with their mental problems despite not knowing the cure for his own...

*'Maybe that's it.' Pitch concluded and swung his legs upward and rested them on the desk, using the power from his lower legs and the pressure on the desk to spin his chair back and forth in a slow, rhythmic moment while he let his thoughts take over. *'Maybe that's my punishment, my purgatory. I'm stuck like this without knowing a cure.'* He let out a sigh and thought of Jack – whose emotional and mental problems he was able to read to him like a letter not ten minutes before he broke down and laughed, out loud this time, before thinking more about him. *'He doesn't deserve someone like me...all I've got is a well paying job and a degree that says I showed up to class. He deserves someone who can actually tell him...those words.'* He shook his head despairingly and pressed the blunt half of his pen to the center of his temple with a small groan of dissatisfaction. *'And he thinks...*
he's in love. He's never been in a relationship before, how could he know? How could a child so young know what love means?'

He thought and considered before biting his lips painfully hard once more, the coppery tang of his own blood mixing with the acrid taste of his regurgitated vomit and making him wretch and wipe his mouth off again. 'I have to...' He didn't want to, but he felt it was right. At least for Jack. He didn't want to hurt him. He didn't want to end up crashing again and having to make someone so young, someone like Jack who already had enough trouble keeping the three people in his own personal family from falling apart, pick up the pieces and put him back together again.

'I have to dump Jack after he leaves my house tomorrow. It's the only way.' He sure as hell didn't want to, as a matter of fact he didn't think it was even right.

But he didn't want Jack to have to solve him like a complicated thousand-piece puzzle like Mansnoozie did – he wasn't sure he was even put back together right the first time. He felt more like a few pieces that made up his heart, whatever he could consider a soul and a few pieces of his brain – the parts that allowed him to reason correctly so he could feel secure about anything in his life – were forever lost.

'Maybe...' He thought of what happened a year ago. Maybe he could get it right this time with the knife. Or the sleeping pills. Right some near-forgotten wrongs for the sake of September and the one he should have protected. Spill a few worthless liters of blood to help sanctify the rest and bring a little bit of rest to the dearly beloved and departed...he just had to make sure Mansnoozie didn't stop him this time. Or the cops...

'But what if Jack finds out?' He was leaving Jack so he wouldn't get emotionally hurt by Pitch's breakdown. The last thing he wanted was for the young icicle-haired teen to find out his boyfriend had actually committed a s-

A sharp, silence shattering ringing followed by a familiar little tune that signaled someone had sent him a text pierced the eerie stillness and peaceful but dark calmness of the room.

'Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream...Make him the cutest that I've ever seen'

He stared down at his Blackberry like it was an entirely different creature, considering whether or not he should be answering Sanderson's text or not, considering where his mind was.

If he didn't answer, he'd arouse the older man's suspicion and he was sure that Sanderson was already watching him like a hawk. If he did, he might say something that got Sandy's attention.

He decided to go with the last mentioned choice and play it cool.

Kozmotis: 'Hey.'

Sanderson: 'Just checking up on you. Everything alright?'

Kozmotis: 'Of course Sandy. Everything alright with you?'

Sanderson: 'Considering my line of work? It's all...moderately okay.'

Kozmotis: 'Oh "moderately okay". Sanderson, I've known you long enough to know that's never a good thing...let me guess, the "reformed" criminal you were working on went berserk.' Pitch smiled and made sure that Sanderson understood what he was saying, putting emphasis on where it was needed and acting as normal as possible.
Sanderson: *Nope. He did one better. He full blown escaped, ran out of the office, ran into the street screaming something about facades and chocolate bars before falling to the ground and smashing his skull apart on the pavement."

Kozmotis: *What'd he do?*

Sanderson: *Ex-serial pedophile with guilt issues from – as I've been told – not touching children."

Pitch grimaced, frowned and shook his head slowly. How Sandy kept it all together and sane as a criminal psychologist he would never know. He envied his ability to keep himself completely together under just about any circumstances.

Kozmotis: *He deserved it then...*

Sanderson: *Gets better – I need you here.*

Pitch read that sentence and formulated a reply before reading it again and absorbing it.

Kozmotis: *Sanderson, seriously I deal with people's dreams, nightmares and subconscious – not criminals. Why would you need me?*

Sanderson: *I need someone who is more attractive and charismatic then me and more generalized when it comes to the behavior of 'normal' human beings. You're my best shot.*

Kozmotis: *That doesn't quite answer my question.* Pitch knew that the whole 'more attractive and charismatic' thing was just to butter him up and he grinned as he sent off the message. *Not gonna work this time friend.*

Sanderson: *His daughter saw him run out screaming and is currently on the verge of having a panic attack or snapping. Obviously one of his victims and a really heavy case of what could possibly be Stockholm syndrome I need you here now.*

Kozmotis: *Sanderson I can't do that right now - 'He promptly brainstormed up a simple lie to get him out of it. He loved working with children but it was September and nononono Don't go there! I'm busy with a patient right now."

At that moment the door burst wide open, revealing a thoroughly pissed off looking Sanderson and Pitch put all the pieces together. He must have either heard the retching, been told about his outburst of pent up emotion by a nearby passerby or perhaps just a lucky gut feeling and then in a test he put him in a position where he would either have to run out and help Sanderson, proving that he really was okay or at least getting better in some way, or lie and stay here – proving that he needed more help then he realized.

The younger, gray skinned man leaned back into his chair and leisurely applauded Sanderson's masterminded, underhanded plan while the golden man approached the desk with a face that read of nothing but madness and wrath.

"Don't look at me like that, we both know I'm not alright at all."

He typed something out on his phone that Pitch couldn't see and didn't care about, feeling ballsier and less preoccupied with anything the 'Sandman' would do at this point. *Kosmotis we both know you'd be the FIRST one out there the moment a child got involved. What the hell is wrong with you?*

"You were THERE." And then he hit ire, his voice raised to screaming and his body raising from his seat so quickly and with so much force that the lounging chair fell back and slammed against the wall. "You already know what the hell is wrong with me!"
Sandy was trying to type something out but Pitch was already in his face.

"I'm a cold blooded murderer. I killed a child. No amount of therapy and reasoning will fix what happened two years ago. I don't care how you reason it- if it wasn't for me she'd still be HERE."

Sandy pushed his phone into Pitch's face, tears twinkling like dispirited stars in his eyes. 'It wasn't your fucking FAULT. You're having survivor's guilt Pitch! If anything you should be given an award for what happened that day and how far you went just to...I know people who wouldn't have done half of that – I should know, you know what I do! Just because you two were there, at that particular place in time.'

Pitch stopped reading after that instead he stomped away, tearing his coat from the nearby coat rack and left in a huff, shoving his way past Mansnoozie none to lightly and yelling as he walked past. "I'm taking the next three weeks off. Don't call me, I might remotely consider calling you." His tone was fresh, snark-filled and sharp like the fangs of a cobra as he past – he briefly wondered whether this was him actually returning normal or if he just was so immensely enraged that he went round full circle back to sane.

Didn't matter tom him because before he knew it he was in his car and gone, not looking back.

Chapter End Notes

ALRIGHT

I NEED YOUR HELP AND ADVISE GUYS.

I'm considering writing a rather explicit incest/rape scene (It's not involving Jack, don't worry.) but I don't think you guys would like that very much, so I was wondering if I should just upload it as a separate fic, put it in an a bonus chapter or just put it in (no pun intended).

Pm me with any questions or concerns involving said scene, including your opinion of what I should do - I know multiple things about it already, 1. It will occur. 2. It won't involve Jack and 3. It explains some stuff, which technically makes it plot. 4, its not gonna happen until the second half of the story so we're okay for now.

Lemme know what you think :D

Have a nice weekend!

Angelblaze
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Didn't matter because before he knew it he was in his car and gone, not looking back.  

After Pitch's abrupt cut off with minimal explanation as to why he couldn't accept the other man's feelings about him, Jack decided he needed to think. Before bed he took a warm bath and relaxed the tension in numerous places on his body.  

Made him wonder when the last time was that he actually took a little time for himself and breathed easy for a bit. Katherine and William were gone for now. The former being on a rant still about Jack's midnight meeting up with Pitch that she only knew was him running out somewhere and strangely enough didn't seem too concerned as to where exactly he went and left to 'get some air' after returning to his room to 'have a conversation with him that didn't end in him leaving for no reason.' as she claimed, which Jack thought was a joke. He sat there for a full hour and was told he was the scourge of the Earth essentially – a conversation required two people to be talking.  

The latter just didn't come home period.  

Mary was lying safe in her bed, sleeping peacefully and harmlessly wrapped in numerous blankets with a smile on her face as she rested. Whether she knew about how long William could be gone and how long he was gone was something he couldn't find the heart to actually wake her up to ask her. He let her sleep before going back upstairs and retreating to the comfort of his own bed to stare at his phone.  

'Why can't he accept that I...I love him?' The young man stared at the piece of technology with a bewildered face as if it was the one who had rejected him in such a way. 'Does that mean that this really is novelty? Or...he just wants me for my body?' Just thinking about it made him head and his heart weep painfully. He didn't think he could go see Pitch after school now – with such a tension between them. He loved Pitch. He really did and he was absolutely sure of that. He loved his company, his smile, his way of laughter, his attitude, his personality, he loved everything he knew about him but...
Pitch must not have loved him.

He flipped the phone over repeatedly in his hands and let out a small sigh before sitting upright and deleting the other man's number from the history of the phone.

'Besides...the last time I fell in love was-' He shook his head to cleared his thoughts of Jamie before rolling over to his side and yanking the blankets over himself.

He was done for today and completely spent on all levels. He decided he'd just do the rest of whatever was required of him tomorrow and for now; he returned to the one place he felt wouldn't be awkward, exhausting and confusing.

Underneath his sheets.

–

The next day, Thursday, came much sooner then he would've liked it too. He could even remember when he closed his eyes and relaxed – it felt like only a few brief minutes ago that he had decided to actually rest even though the window across from his bed told of a very different story. He untangled himself from his less then cooperative sheets and rose from the bedding with messy hair and a less then happy look on his face.

He couldn't sleep anymore – his body was too awake. But his mind didn't want to wake up or get shaken out of it's slumber, his skull felt like it was full of cotton. In the distance he swore he could hear a ringing sound and turned to see his phone lighting up like an aspiring Christmas tree. He could faintly make out Pitch's name and number on the screen.

He swore he deleted that.

He grabbed the phone before it dropped the call from lack of answer and debated with himself on whether or not he would actually talk to Pitch. 'Things are too awkward and weird right now...’ He wanted to discard the phone and then he thought of his old friend Jamie, who he could never really figure out his footing with. At that moment something inside of him screamed to him 'You really want that to happen again?’ he pressed the 'talk' button without even fully realizing.

'Jack, it's Pitch. Are you alright?’ His tone was rushed and hurried with a hint of light fear lined along the edges of his words. Was he actually fearing for Jack's safety?

'No idea why he would actually bother.’ Jack thought before putting the phone next to his mouth in a relaxed motion. "Yeah I'm fine." His voice was rife with the sound of sleepy rest and post-wake up exhaustion.

'Jack...were you sleeping just now?’

"Yeah." He resisted the powerful urge to add 'what of it?’ to the end of that reply – it was too fresh and rude sounding even if he did feel the want to be just that.

'Jack...I'm not rushing you or anything but we agreed to meet in front of Claussen at eleven AM at the latest...’

"Yeah?’

'It's veering on eleven-thirty right now.'
Leaned against the driver door of his car and paying no attention to anyone else in humanity besides for the person he was talking to over his cellphone, Pitch really was distressed about Jack right about now. His previous patterns of behavior painted a different story then the one he was being told right now, he would’ve guessed that he would be here by now if not twenty minutes to a half an hour early. He thought Jack had more of a spring in his step when he was with him, more happiness and strangely seductive level of fun and excitement then what he was demonstrating right now - this pointed to the opposite...had he been angered by his inability to - no. Pitch dragged himself away from that and thought of Jack and the time he wished to spend with him...he wanted to make it beautiful for him...

Plus he wouldn't want his last day on Earth to be spent alone in a big house all by himself. He wanted to spend his time spoiling Jack, treating him like much better then anyone else he ever met and would ever meet would. He would message him from head to toe, paying special attention to all those points where he knew Jack was stressed and tensed up at before kissing him there ever so gently. He'd make him dinner, something delicious that he would like and so much of it as he liked. They'd watch some awful, beyond-redeemable movie together so they could laugh at just how bad it was, like 'Showgirls' or 'The Room' before he would take him upstairs, laughing and smiling the entire way into his bedroom...

And they'd do nothing besides kiss and touch until they fell asleep.

Pitch wanted Jack to feel loved and cared for beyond anything else in the world – wanted him to feel as if time was slipping away from him and the rest of the world just didn't exist anymore. All it would be was Jack and him, kissing and loving one another passionately. He would whisper little tidbits of affection, sweet nothings into his younger lover's ear...

At the sound of the familiar voice's response he had to reel his imagination back in.

'Oh I'm sorry I just woke up.'

"I can tell." He grinned and allowed himself to relax ever so slightly. Jack was fine, just sleepier then normal.

'Gimmie a half hour and I'll be there...' Pitch could tell something was on his mind and really wanted to push the subject, see if he could find out what was wrong or what was upsetting him. He didn't want Jack to be sad – especially not today. He wanted him to be the happiest person on Earth. At the same time, the last time he was forceful Jack didn't like it...

"Alright...I'll be waiting." He responded with a smile on his face, hoping Jack could tell he was actually rather delighted. "No rush." He opened the front door of his car and got inside, still holding the cellphone to his ear in case Jack needed to tell him something else...instead he got silence for a short amount of time before he could hear what sounded like the ruffling of sheets, then the opening and slamming of drawers. Part of him couldn't help but wonder what his lover looked like underneath those clothes, aside from 'too thin'.

Cottony, erogenous, luminous skin that practically begged to be touched and caressed by his hands and his hands alone – no one else would ever be allowed to gaze at what lie underneath the blocking clothing. Pink, near-touched nipples that he would squeeze ever so slightly just to watch Jack's beautiful, awe inspiring form arc off the bed from the sensation and pants accompanied by desperate pleas for more and more to leave his lips...

'Wait...wait...what was I thinking about before that?' Pitch frowned, disgruntled and glared down at his now suddenly too-tight trousers...perhaps he could will it away..
'Pitch I have no idea how to put this decently, so I'm just going to say it alright?'

"Okay..." Pitch paid half attention to that, still trying to think of the ugliest, saggiest, most disgusting human being he could think of.

'I want you to fuck me into your mattress okay?' Jack's voice was in a near whisper and had it not been for the fact that he was the one who caused his problem, Pitch would be angered. Now he just found it incredibly hot. 'Like...make due on all those promises you made me. I want you to nearly tear me half tonight alright?'

'Oh Christ Frost...' Pitch thought and leaned back in his chair, shutting his eyes tight out of light annoyance – his body refused to calm down at all and these godforsakenly tight pants were constricting as fuck.

--

Jack was certain that that last statement was completely unnecessary but he didn't care while he shimmied into some tight jeans, he didn't even know he owned jeans that would be taut on his currently diminutive frame, and grinned like a nutcase in the bathroom mirror. Even while he was too thin for his age he still looked damn good – at least in his own opinion. He wasn't too sure if Pitch wouldn't complain but that was fine too. He made his mind up that he was going to ask Pitch today...or tonight if he actually loved him. If the answer was no Jack decided that he could enjoy the thrill of forcing Pitch to watch his tightly clothed ass make its way out of his door. If the answer was yes then he could enjoy tearing him right out of these pants.

"I need to get something to eat." He spoke into the phone with an awkward smile.

'Get something light...I'm feeding you today alright?'

"Okay...I'm heading to the living room and I don't know if my parents are home or what so...no naughty stuff alright?" He said the last part of that sentence with a wide light blush dusting his cheeks, remembering what he said mere moments ago.

'They still don't know?' He sounded more disappointed that he couldn't flirt. Jack chuckled lightly and his embarrassment subsided.

"No and I'd prefer if it was kept that way."

In all honestly, he was upset that Pitch just couldn't accept' his affections. 'I bared myself...' There were few human beings that he was completely honest to. Out of all the people and neighbors he knew and kept up appearances with there were only three people he never lied to and that was Jamie, Mary and Pitch – and the first two of those three was arguable. Jamie and him weren't even on the right footing with each other since the kiss and he would keep the truth from Mary to keep her safe and not break her heart about what was going on with father.

But Pitch, he knew just about everything. He knew about the abuse, the alcohol and he kept it all secret even while he wanted to tell...

Who else in the world could he trust as much as that? Not his own mother and father – that was for damn sure. He left the bathroom with a sour pout on his face and looked at Mary now seated at the living room table and eating a bowl of cereal, watching Spongebob again.

'One day I'm probably gonna have to tell her.'

He quickly grabbed a granola bar from the kitchen and hastily munched on it with a smile.
'One day doesn't have to be today.'

If it kept her happy, whatever she was thinking about William's overwhelming alcohol addiction, then Jack was fine with it. He leaned up against a counter in the kitchen and enjoyed the small breakfast he allowed himself – trying to enjoy and relax for a little while more only to have the front door swing open a reveal Katherine.

Normally, this wouldn't have exasperated him so much if he didn't see the male figure walking right behind her.

"Pitch." He whispered quietly into the phone, part of his heart quivering in absolute fear from the eye contact alone. "If I'm not there or haven't called you again by 1 o'clock...call the police."

'Why? What's happening?!' Pitch was panicking over the phone, loudly before he remembered what Jack said moments ago and hushed himself down. 'Jack come on, what's going on?'

"Dad's home." Jack prayed his father couldn't hear that as he found himself near unable to speak while he looked into his father's eyes and hung up the phone. The look he was being given wasn't human. It looked like hate, hell and death all rolled up into one malicious stare – not once during the past decade had he looked at him like that before. Even worse, the teen could tell from this distance that he wasn't drunk. He was just plain pissed. He swallowed thickly and stealthily shoved the phone into the front pocket of his shirt before making it look like he was just straightening himself out, pushing his sweatshirt up ever so lightly to make the pocket look like it was just large rather then holding something. He took easy breaths to calm himself down as William made his way into the living room.

Katherine's long, chestnut brown hair was standing on end and there was a stiffness in her walk as if she was a gazelle walking around a giant and quickly waking lion. As if any light noise or sound could anger him further and wake him up, unleash a hell she never knew before today. Neither of those expressions were too far from the truth.

Mary mirrored her mother's in-elasticity in how she got up with her now empty plate of cereal and strode into the kitchen, fear-filled tear-brimmed eyes looking to Jack's for support and answer of what was about to happen.

Jack truly wished in his absolute heart of hearts that he could give his sweet little sister an answer that didn't involve having to teach her the definition of a 'triple homicide' and what it meant to them.

William's walk was heavy, imposing, fear-inflicting and leaning on stomping as he came in, slamming the door behind him before walking to the front of the living room table, eyes once flashing to the television, before he sat down on the nearby couch and calmly bridged his fingers.

Three sets of eyes were all attentively focused on him at this point and they all were paralyzed in fear. The focus of attention took a long, hard breath that he exhaled slowly through his nose before he leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and looked at Jack again – the receiver of the gaze couldn't help but physically tense up before his gaze shifted downwards to Mary, who gripped onto her older brother's leg and hid her face behind him, cowering in fear.

A burst of bravery – or perhaps the lack of self-preservation that Pitch had pointed out to him – made his hands move quickly to ever so lightly place a reassuring hand on the back of Mary's head, deliberate fingers smoothing down her hair to help he relax.

William didn't look amused at all and he looked to Katherine – who took a step back and breathed a little deeper while she seemed to break out into a cold sweat.
He opened his mouth and everyone listened. "Mary. Go to your room for right now."

Mary looked up at Jack and sniffled into his jeans before the white haired teen mouthed to her 'Go.' she nodded in understanding and skittered away into her room faster then anyone else thought humanly possible.

A tense silence stretched on before William spoke again. "Jack, stand next to your mother."

He took a huff of air and walked next to Katherine, not taking his time to fulfill the order since he saw no escape from William's wrath. The moment he got over there he could feel his mother next to him begin to shake with implicit fright and before he could give her a reassuring word, her hand gripped his left shoulder so hard that Jack wanted to grunt from the pain her nails pressing into his flesh – he was almost angered until he felt the shaking extend to her hand. Then he could tell it wasn't on purpose...

Katherine was scared for her life.

"Both of you." The sound of his father's voice went echoing off the walls of the home and they both looked to him expectantly, fearfully, terrified. Katherine squeezed his shoulder harder and without realizing it she drew light crescent shaped pricks of blood from his shoulder. Neither of them even cared. "You both need to get out." Katherine’s breathing sped up, probably in fear that if she left she wouldn't be getting back in and in the same type of bravery that made him move to help Mary, Jack gripped her hand reassuringly without looking at her. Her grip let up just a faction. "For today...you have to leave because if you don't leave – at least just for today—I'm not sure what I will do." Jack wasn't sure if that was a threat or William claiming not to have any self control regarding his possible actions.

In the grand scheme of things it didn't matter since both him and Katherine prepared to leave. His mother was in Mary's room getting her dressed to come with her, deciding they would have a surprise sleepover with a neighbor that kept inviting them over and Jack nodding and exiting the house – he had been ready to go for about five years now anyway. The moment the lukewarm September winds hit his skin he felt more free then he ever had in his life. He practically ran down the block, only stopping once he hit the edge of the first sidewalk to make sure the female members of his family got out alright and then, after seeing a slightly scared and confused Katherine leave the home accompanied by a smiling and cheerful Mary who still yet didn't seem to understand what was going on he yelled to them.

"I'm heading to my study partner's place okay?" Katherine only gave him a quick nod in response before she grabbed Mary by the hand and speedily strode in the opposite direction. After a quick yank of his phone from his front pocket he redialed Pitch's number and held the phone to his ear, listening to it ring for just a few moments before an exasperated and anxious voice answered him.

'Jack – for the love of...ugh. Don't frighten me like that. I was about to drive to your house just to check up on you and make sure you were okay.'

"I'm still breathing for now. My father...told us to basically leave the house and not come back until tomorrow or the day after that or whenever."

'Did he hit you?' He whispered it as if it was a forbidden thing to ask and before the teen could remember that Pitch was more then likely in public and remembering his promise not to tell anyone about William's mistreatment. He wordlessly thanked him.

"No but...if looks could kill." Jack let the sentence finish itself as he crossed another street, growing ever closer to his destination.
'That's to be expected...I can see you from here...' Despite not being able to see Pitch he could feel his gaze on his lower body and resisted the urge to just shiver and moan underneath the obvious attention '. Nice jeans.' His voice came out as a purr, something Jack thought was accidental considering the almost over-the-top clearing of his voice that came afterward.

"Knew you'd like em." He grinned as he walked onto the block where Cafe Claussen was located and searched for a familiar face, ready to hop into his car and ride away with him.

'And then maybe ride him, who knows?'

Chapter End Notes

Pre-Warning: Chapter 13 will be smaller than this one.

But then chapter 14 will be fluffy fluffy fluffiness, over 7k or so words worth.

FLUFFY FLUFFY GOODNESS.

Chapter 13 release date approximation: 6/7.
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Now, he would more then happily ride his boyfriend to kingdom come and back if he could do one of two things: 'confirm that he was indeed the apple of the older man's eye and not just an underaged fucktoy for his pleasure, although he severely doubted it' and 'find the goddamn bastard'. He scanned the sparse but still existent crowd of various pedestrians – mostly teenagers blabbing on their phones about how happy they were that they weren't in class and how useless school was with some adults strewn in with a majority of them looking either busy, bored or unhappy. A few of them seemed to be an apathetic combination of the three.

But he couldn't find Pitch – and he was sure the man hadn't walked past him. He would've noticed the tall, slender, gray skinned male standing high or making long strides amongst the crowd especially when dressed all in black. He looked for at least fifteen minutes and still found not a hint of familiar gray skin or golden eyes.

He put the phone back to his ear and could hear the faintest sound of laughter and humor in the other caller's voice. 'So how's that whole finding me thing doing?'

"Oh right you can see me...so wait you've been watching me look like an idiot for the past ten minutes?"

'Well...no.'

"Oh good."

'I've been watching you look like an idiot for the past seventeen or so minutes.' The sentence was ended with a deep chuckle that made Jack's insides do back-flips – he loved how dark and possessive his beau could sound.

"Pitch just tell me where you are so we can go." The younger lover let out a groan of displeasure – he wanted to call Pitch an absolute jerk for what he just did but that fucking voice was reducing him
and his resistances to nothing.

'Why? I'm personally having fun here. Besides...we could play a game if you want. Make bets even...' He could hear Pitch's sneer-like smirk and let out a huff of breath, thinking of what to do that wouldn't involve playing into his older lover's hands. He really did love Pitch but he didn't want to refuse a challenge or lose – for him it was just too fun to compete and win to simply ignore it.

'Might as well.' Jack thought before taking a deep breath and responding. "Alright. What have you got in mind?"

'Hmm...you find me in the next two minutes and I'll do whatever you say for a full half hour. If you don't find me I win and you have to be completely mine for just as long.' He sounded so smug and confident, as if he was invisible and couldn't ever be found...the teen checked the inside of the cafe from the sidewalk, eyebrows raised when he didn't find him – Pitch said he'd be waiting outside the cafe...

"Does that time start now?" He asked as he looked around the faces of the crowd once more, leaning up against the wall of the cafe and looking over the people again, scanning faces to find him. Where could that bastard have possibly gone to?

'It starts twenty seconds ago...'

"Cheater..." He grinned wildly, loving the challenge that Pitch was throwing his way before he began seriously thinking it through. "Mind giving me a hint?"

There was a long pause in-between the question and the answer that made Jack think he might not get an answer at all before he heard Pitch's voice once more.

'I'm outside the Cafe and I can see you. That should be all the hint you need.'

He sucked his teeth in mild exasperation and scanned the crowd one last time for the sight of a gray face before looking across the street – literally nothing. Not even the usual giggling gaggle of annoying teenage girls talking about MTV on their cellphones.

'Outside...can see me...' He looked around again and realized he was forgetting on simple thing: the parked cars. 'Oh God I'm a dumb-ass.' He thought before he gazed over the line and saw that there could be at least five different cars Pitch could be in – and he couldn't remember what he really looked like from the night he drove him home. 'Damn it.'

'Twenty seconds left...looks like your mine tonight Frost...oh the things we're going to do together...I can just imagine.' The low note that he ended on made Jack almost want to lose the challenge – almost. He gazed over the cars and tried to remember – what type of car did Pitch drive? They were all different colors and models. A navy blue truck, a hot red convertible, a black – 'Yup found him.'

'Five...four...thr-' Pitch cut himself off when he looked up to see Jack, leaning into his car through the front driver door window with a seductive smirk and looking not unlike a streetwalker working a deal with such a look.

"I win."

"Indeed...will you be gentle with me?" He mockingly showed Jack a jestingly worried pout before laughing again.

"No." Jack said plainly before thrusting himself through the window, pressing his lips against the open, mocking ones that had no time to react before he began tortuously sucking and licking on them
in revenge. Pitch let a small sound escape his throat and enter his lover's mouth – not caring who saw
or heard and not wanting it to stop, ever.

It was way too damn good and seemed to almost set his body alight for more of Jack, wanting to tear
the clothing off of his body right here and now in front of everyone – more to show absolute love to
him, show him off and tell the world 'look at this gorgeous, beautiful, smart, sweet little thing I've
got' then to embarrass him.

But Pitch found himself soon kissing air as Jack pulled away, stylishly sliding across the front of the
car and moving to the seat opposite the driver's. He swore to himself that he would not grimace from
the lack of contact and instead focused on starting the car once more while Jack excitedly fastened
himself into the shotgun seat.

"Alright, all buckled in?" Pitch said, pulling out of the parking spot before Jack could even answer –
he too was excited to get Jack to his house and fulfill his part of the bet. He briefly wondered what
Jack would do with the half hour of time...he had the car go at at a slow, leisurely pace and decided
to make conversation, wanting to hear more of Jack's voice. "How have you been as of late aside
from the whole parental issue part?"

Jack was almost too preoccupied with examining the car and how damn gorgeous, shiny and new it
looked to respond. Everything had that 'new car' smell and feel to it – Jack could remember from
back when William brought them the new family ca- He shook his head and answered, unwilling to
let himself think of his family right now. "Good. My grades have been picking up and I think I
 gained a little bit of weight..." He swiped his finger down the car door, admiring how sleek and cool
it looked.

"Liking the car?" He grinned as Jack nodded next to him and continued. "Nissan, Gt-R 2013."

"I promise you Pitch, one day I will know the science behind what you just said and actually give a
damn about it." He declared as if it was his last and final proclamation on the Earth, jokingly
regarding the sarcastic, non-caring tone before continuing to look around the car as if he lost
something.

"It's the model." He let out a small huff of breath as he turned the corner, beginning to enter the more
heavily wooded and more rural parts of the town. "While your looking around the car you might as
well look for your brain, you seem to keep on losing it."

"I bet you have it stashed in here somewhere." Jack pointed his tongue out at Pitch before realizing
he was driving and stopped, knowing its rip his attention away from the vehicle. Then a hush took
over the car as he thought it over – he wanted to ask his boyfriend about his feelings for him...but
how could he lead the conversation in that direction without it becoming too tense or graceless? "I'd
trust you with it..." he whispered, almost as an afterthought as he figured trust would be a good place
to start.

"You seem to be that type of person. Unbelievably trusting..."

"Really?" His eyebrows raised in a surprise and disbelief. He thought that would be much harder
then it actually was.

Pitch made a sucking noise with his teeth and tongue then shook his head slightly and deliberately as
he continued to drive. "Why do you trust me?"

"What do you mean 'Why?'" The white-haired co-occupant of the car had originally met to lead the
conversation but so far it seemed Pitch was doing a much better job at it then he was and he decided
"You've barely known me for a week for one thing..." He said, one hand coming off the steering wheel to lightly scratch at the base of his neck before placing it back. "And yet you climb into my car and come away with me like you've known me for years, and if memory serves you allowed me to put unknown liquid substances into your coffee when we first met."

Jack thought about it for a minute and then chuckled under his breath – Pitch was had a fantastic point going for him there. He was strangely unsuspecting of strangers, perhaps it was just Pitch though and the uncanny appearance that he had with his gray skin and gold eyes that drew him to the older man and in turn, got his trust. But overall, he was still breathing wasn't he? He was happier from trusting strangers...even more so then when he trusted his own familia- nononono. "And the problem with that is?" He quickly replied, not thinking as he tried to empty his head.

"You don't know me from Adam, would be the main problem with that." Pitch mentally reminded himself to stop spending time around Sanderson and all his Christianity referencing hilarity. "Didn't your parents tell you never to run off with strangers?" There was a tense minute of muteness between them that gave him the short amount of time needed to wish he could take it back – he could see from the corner of his eye how Jack's entire physical position changed and grew defensive. It would've been much better if he just reminded him about his simple lack of self-preservation.

"My parents told me I was better off dead while they got shitfaced on beer and didn't feed me." Complete and total deadpan as it left his voice and from what the driver could gather, no emotion showing in his face or eyes either. He could tell though – it hurt somewhere.

"...My apologies...that was...way out of bounds for me." He admitted, he knew Jack's parents were abusive. 'Fucking moron...' he insulted himself without speaking and only just barely resisted the urge to dig his nails into the steering wheel in self-hating aggression. 'Why do I always hurt the things I love when I'm trying to be nice...' He bit his lip and gently shook his head again, emptying out his own brain and forgetting what he just thought, his want to forget what just happened between them unknowingly not being completely exclusive to himself.

"It's fine." Pitch could tell from the tone that it was not fine at all, not in the slightest. On the edges of his words were heavy emotion and need for comfort and love and to be touched and held and told that everything was going to be okay and that he was loved...or Pitch was just imagining things. "I've learned to deal with it...it's just another 'Modern day tragedy' I guess...like the opposite of a modern day miracle."

And that was enough to bitch-slap him directly out of his thoughts about what he could possibly do to Jack once they got home and straight back into the present. He paused for a lengthy, quiet moment. His eyes flashing in-between pure, unbelievable shock and then heavyhearted sorrow.

"Your reaction to it is a tragedy within itself...being OK with being abused..." He whispered the words under his breath and keep driving, now wanting more then ever to take his time with Jack, feed him, laugh with him, play with him and kiss him as passionately and carefully as possible. 'I can't...say that I love you...but I've got to show you how much I do. I do love you Jack, I love you...so much it hurts. But...I just can't fucking say it...damn it...' Memories of September had him nearly screaming for some type of relief – but he forced himself past it. 'Jack's here. Jack's going to be fine. Jack won't leave you...' He mentally repeated that mantra before letting out a heavy exhale of minor success.

"I never said I was OK with it." Hearing Jack's voice calmed him down ever so slightly but with the
touches and hints of despair lingering in every syllable he just couldn't feel one-hundred percent relieved from either his memories of September or his worries for Jack. "...I'm just dealing with it..."

"I see...we're almost there so hold tight..." There was no reason to tell him to 'hold tight' but he felt like he had to reassure him in some way until they got there. Jack was merely gazing out the window, at best admiring the passing foliage that zoomed past the window as Pitch sped up and at worst just mindlessly looking at things with a convert frown almost completely hidden on his face.

'If today's going to be my last day on Earth I'm going to spend it making you grin Jack Frost.' He thought, slowly coming to a stop outside of his home and hiding his grin as he heard the aforementioned teen let out a long whistle in astonishment. 'And then I will spend it teaching you what love really means to me. You can count on it.'

Chapter End Notes

Good news and bad news!

Bad news is; usually around the time I'm done with all my classes, I get lazy and don't wanna write anything anymore!

Good news; I'm almost done with all my classes! More time to write :D...

wait....wait....

waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaait...

NVM. Enjoy the new chapter! :D
And that was enough to bitch-slap him directly out of his thoughts about what he could possibly do to Jack once they got home and straight back into the present. He paused for a long, quiet moment. His eyes flashing in-between pure, unbelievable shock and then heavyhearted sorrowfulness. "Your reaction to it is a tragedy within itself...being OK with being abused..." He whispered the words under his breath and keep driving, now wanting more then ever to take his time with Jack, feed him, laugh with him, play with him and kiss him as passionately and carefully as possible. 'I can't...say that I love you...but I've got to show you how much I do. I do love you Jack. I love you...so much it hurts. But...I just can't fucking say it...damn it all!' Memories of September had him nearly screaming for some type of relief – but he forced himself past it. 'Jack's here. Jack's going to be fine. Jack won't leave you...' He mentally repeated that mantra before letting out a heavy exhale of minor success.

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Jack knew Pitch was either loaded or flashing cash at least half the time but this blew everything before now entirely out of the water. This could barely be called a house. It seemed to be a mansion in all senses of the word. Three stories high and a dark, roasted chestnut like color on the outside along with what appeared to be a river running through the bottom of the house, running along the small, flat stone path that lead to the main driveway. A chimney sitting on top confidently assured him that there was indeed a fireplace inside the home – something he was getting some very indecent ideas about right around now. Light brown stairs lead up to an open porch with what looked like almost-ripe upside down tomato plants hanging from the ceiling.

"Pitch your house is-" He turned to see a distinct lack of Pitch in the driver seat and looked around expectantly, on the lookout for any hint of gray that he could find amongst the green, fresh, life-filled foliage of the surrounding area. Then he spotted him already at the front door of the house, appearing
to be fumbling about with his keys and trying to unlock the door.

Jack made sure to catch up with him before he was left behind, his mind racing over what the inside could possibly look like as he ran up behind Pitch just as he opened the door and swung it wide open to reveal -

Books.

Tons and tons of books piled here and there and everywhere else, on the furniture, on the floor, randomly dropped with a pile of at least twenty books resting in the middle of the living room in front of the extinguished fireplace. All of them basically had a reiteration of the same titles: 'Criminal Psychology and You', 'Inside the Minds of the World's Twenty Greatest Criminals', 'Criminal Psychology for Idiots'. The more and more he read and scanned the books, the more and more he got the distinct impression that maybe, just maybe Pitch's job was involved with Criminal Psychology.

'Just a guess.'

He turned to Pitch with a questioning look on his face, a single hand raising to point at the volumes of criminal pattern behavior literature in question and received the most apologetic and emotionally upset face he thought his boyfriend could make with crying before the older man dropped onto one knee next to Jack and grasped his pointing hand. "I am...unbelievably sorry." He shook his head and lightly kissed Jack's palm with a look of apology that sliced and ravaged the younger man's heartstrings to pieces. "My friend is into this stuff as a career and he's forcing me to hold onto these books but I didn't think he'd actually drop them off at my house like this...please bare with me for a little bit?"

The younger man found himself capable of only nodding in response, charmed and mesmerized by how sweet-hearted Pitch could be. He watched the older man practically tear off his full body jacket and discard it onto a nearby coat rack to reveal – surprise – a form-fitting, sexy black outfit. Black satin, button up and loose fitting shirt that moved with the moves of his body and some tight black jeans that made his ass look like the gateway to heaven.

'Wait...wait...what?' Jack squinted and tried to find out where that last thought came from before he watched Pitch almost scurry about the living room, picking up at least twenty books in under a minute and placing them upstairs in a room that he couldn't see – all the while unable to look away from how nice his behind looked in those pants – 'I mean...damn.'

It took at approximately three minutes before the living room was straightened up again and Jack found himself able to really judge it before smiling. Pitch had some incredible taste – a rouge red reclining chair next to a few similarly colored couches, calming colors for the wall and a massive – at least 65 inch – plasma screen television sitting across from the rest of the furniture, with limestone green four foot tall pillars on either side that held vases filled with brightly colored – but not too eye drawing – flowers and on top of the impressive television was a triumvirate of three incredulously bad-ass looking samurai swords, obviously for decoration. A dark chromatic brown table sat in the middle of it all, more then likely serving as a table considering the coasters on the counter...

The place looked so nice that Jack felt nervous to actually be in it. He was fearful that the mere act of stepping inside could destroy something. He wanted Pitch to come in and make him feel more welcome and relaxed – he didn't want to sit down just yet.

He stayed standing, staring at different parts of the walls and admiring the additional decor that lined the fireplace – the safety gate had intricate patterns of flower petals in its design that Jack could view from his place by the open door - and the enticingly, saccharine scent of perhaps a sort of strawberry-like fragrance that floated about the air of Pitch's home. His legs started hurting after a while and he
looked around for Pitch, finally seeing him come from downstairs in a huff looking moderately displeased until he locked eyes with Jack.

"What's the matter Frost? Suddenly too awe-stricken to unwind?" He teased with a grin and slowly walked over to the paralyzed high-school student with a seductive smile, leaning over him and nearly drowning him in his presence. "You know what I said before, young man. This isn't novelty. You can calm down." He leaned down and pressed a soft-lipped kiss to the temple of the younger lover's forehead before reaching past him and shutting the door none-too gently.

"Umm w-where do I sit?" He didn't want that stammer to appear but he didn't have the necessary power to stop it from rearing its ugly head.

"Anywhere you want. On the sofa, on the couch...my lap later on if you're feeling a little hands on if you don't mind me saying." Achromatic arms embraced his figure and held him close, feeling their skin brush together in all the right places that their restricting and much unneeded clothing would ever allow.

"Okay..." Jack couldn't even summon up his usual level of self-confident bravado and act like he was capable of handling what was going on with a casual smile – it really felt like he was picked up by his date and taken out to some fancy hotel or restaurant of some sort. "Umm s-so what do we do?"

"Anything you want...you won't have to worry about whether Pitch really loved you or not and allowed this contact, queerly more innocent and more passionate then what he thought it could ever be since he realized that he really found Pitch attractive. He wanted more and looped his own arms around Pitch's body and tried to get closer – to no avail. The taller lover was resisting being drawn in and instead giving him kisses that only brushed against his lips, never gave him the full contact he so despairingly craved. "Please." He mumbled in-between kisses as a plead for more but it was never granted, instead his lover's lips left his wanting more as he backed away and stepped out of the kiss – Jack's arms letting go without really meaning to.

"Let me know when you want to use that half hour, Frost." Jack was just about to open his mouth and say he was using it now, but the older cut him off. "But not now. Right now you need to get something into your stomach. Anything you'd prefer?" He began walking out of the comfortable room and into another – where Jack could see a large table garnished with what looked to him like expensive china and tableware.

"Ummm...ice cream?" 'Dining room.' The younger thought before sitting down in the large red recliner with a secret smile on his mouth and grabbing the nearby remote up with a greedy hand, partial formality giving way to an ability to actually be more comfortable. He never did well when he was around at others people's houses, it always felt like the slightest fuck-up would earn their hatred. Plus he was in someone else's personal space.

He was wordlessly thankful that he and Pitch had an unusual relationship that made everything seem more natural and smooth-flowing.

"No ice cream before dinner!" Pitch yelled from what Jack guessed to be the kitchen pasted the dining room. He was almost upset before he thought about what he really wanted... 'Meat.' he thought
before letting out a small giggle that his boyfriend probably wouldn't hear and decided on something else.

"Spaghetti and meatballs!"

He could hear the sound of Pitch snickering away from that last part but he just shook his head and turned the television on, thankful that he could actually relax here...there was no tension that a fight would suddenly break out like when his father was drunk. No tension that he was running on borrowed time like when it was sober week or...as of late with William's less then agreeable attitude. No worries that his mother was busy downstairs, despising him for what he did and frightened for her very life.

Just...him and Pitch...and with one look at the cable menu guide and the rather impressive amount of channels it became him, Pitch and old Legends of the Hidden Temple re-runs.

Life was good.

–

After half a show was up Pitch came striding in with a massive smile gracing his usually stoic face, seeing Jack looking completely comfortable and unwound with a smile on his face. That was how he always wanted to see him, not like that time in the cafe were they were lucky to even bump into one another and half of his face has been a huge purple bruise.

No, he wanted to see Jack smile for today – he wasn't planning to see tomorrow.

"Legends of the Hidden Temple Jack?" He asked with a sharp bite of snark and self-pleasing reassurance that didn't go unnoticed. "This came on television before I was your age..." He rested the pure white porcelain bowl and silverware onto the living room table and watched Jack slowly slide closer to it with his eyes never leaving the television – almost terrifying but too hilarious for him to actually be scared.

"My little sister likes Spongebob so...whatever." Whatever that was supposed to argue against or prove Jack wasn't even sure and so he let it drop and didn't bring it up again. Every pore on his body just felt more attentive and it made him feel nervous and frightened just a little bit more then it normally would when he was over at another person's house...why?

Pitch looked down at the teen again before thinking of resting himself, just sitting somewhere and admiring how Jack relaxed but at the same time he had an urge to run his fingers through that pure white mound of icicle-like hair...'Decisions, decisions...'

"Thanks Pitch..." Jack smiled and began consuming his food hungrily and Pitch felt a weight come off of his shoulders. He at least had an actually appetite to eat, even if he couldn't at times.

"No problem Jack..." He made up his mind and careful ran his gray fingers through the hair, front to back before resting there then working his way to the middle again. He could visibly see Jack's eyes avert from the screen to the plate and then to him before the younger man grinned nervously as if unsure. "Your hair is very...ice like..." He whispered, sensing the confusion in his lover's body language and look. "It intrigues me...and it feels good underneath my fingers."

"Your hand's really soft and warm..." Jack bit his lip afterwards before continuing to scarf down his food, feeling a bit off but not nervous from the sudden contact. He wasn't sure why Pitch was being so...slow all of a sudden. They were all but ready to fuck each others brains out in the cafe. Did everything just feel so personal now since he was in his house, eating his food, watching his TV,
that he made with his hands – those soft, kind, pleasurably warm hands that threatened mere days ago to do things to him he would never say aloud? 'Yeah let's go with that.' Strangely enough, he didn't feel like shying away. He wanted to press himself in a little more to his hand and enjoy the contact of their skin – anything he could get really.

None of the previous heavy sexual tension and lust was there – it was a strange sense of want that went beyond just wanting to have sex with Pitch like he did when he was masturbating. It expanded into a want to actually be with him...but at the same time did he not previously reject his want for love? What was he even really talking about there? 'Idiot' He thought depressingly to himself. He took a deep breath and shoved more spaghetti in his mouth, trying to delay the eventual talk that they would have because damnit every problem in his life had to be solved by talking.

"I'm glad you like it..." Pitch sat next to him, crossing his legs and turning towards his lover in wait – wanting to get his hands on him and please him mercilessly until he was on his hands and knees pleading for anything he could possibly be given – 'No.' He kept his hands to himself and decided to wait.

Now was not the time of lust. It was the time for passionate loving and caring and showing Jack what love really meant and what heavy weight it held to him not just riding the living fuck out of him. Though that last part does most certainly sound fun...

"Alright..." Jack set the bowl down on the table and wiped his mouth with his hands before turning to Pitch. "Look, we need to talk – I need to ask you something so...I guess that half hour starts now. So yeah...turn this off." His voice came out as both demanding and shaking, as if terrified that his beau would actually deny him again. But the older man excepted and quickly turned off the television before looking at Jack with raised eyebrows signaling his own curiosity. "Okay..." Jack ran his hands through his hair – thankful that any and all spaghetti sauce he had on his hands and face was basically gone by now and wouldn’t show up in his hair.

Still nothing past his obvious increasing want to know more.

'Well what were you expecting? Him to just confess his love to you and apologize spontaneously?" He chastised himself before he puckered his lips and pressed them against Pitch's with less force behind them he normally would have. Skillful lips moved against his so abnormally naturally that he let out a queer moan of excitement and pressed harder, the opposite pair returning in kind. 'Damn that's good..' He pushed away then, still seated on the other man's lap but not kissing him. "Pitch..." 'Oh damn what should I say? What...what exactly!?' He chose the first thing that came to mind."Make love to me." '......Goddamit Frost!' Jack ran his tongue against lower lip in fright and his body suddenly had a spasm of movement – shocked at how quick Pitch was.

Familiar arms wrapped around him, at first he was nervous but after a few brief moments it just made him feel safe, loved and protected... Lips connected with his mouth at a different angle then his own and moved so well against his that he wanted it to never end. Pitch pulled him in even closer until he could almost feel skin through the clothes – feel how he was built and how fit he was and damn everything just kept getting better and better for him. He let out a small, pleading cry for more against the other mouth and felt a small breath enter his own mouth in response.

He felt a wet tongue poke at his lips as if asking for entrance. 'Yes!' He opened his mouth and immediately wrapped his own tongue around Pitch's again, groaning and wanting at the incredibly indecent sounds of slurping and licking coming from their connected mouths. It was incredible having him inside of his mouth like this, it just seemed so intimate and passionate – he was greedy
for more of the contact.

But how would he lead this up to asking Pitch if he loved him or not?

Pitch's mouth 'despairingly' separated from his lips and then latched onto his neck with sucks and licks that had his mind reeling 'never mind'. He leaned himself back and raised his head, giving his lover full access to his neck and moaning at every bit of contact he was getting. He felt a caring and sweet warmth spread all over him – his beau's all encompassing bodily warmth...it reminded him of the blanket cocoon. He smiled happily and whispered something that Pitch could barely hear. "I want to do this to you..."

Pitch's mouth never once left his neck as he said "Mmf...later." and burrowed his head into the crook of Jack's neck, the vulnerable and sensitive area right behind the ear and felt his younger lover's toes curl at his sides. 'Fucking gorgeous...' He pulled him back up and onto his lap, pushing their lips together again with bruising force and mumbling praises in between desperate gasps for more. "Glorious..." Only to move down again and leave his younger lover wanting him – though not for long.

Jack swore he never felt better, more turned on or more vulnerable in his life when Pitch's tongue ran against the jugular of his neck. The sheer feeling of it gave him goosebumps all over and forced his mouth open to spill needy praises. "Pitch, oh...please!" He tried to bit down on his lip and stop it but he couldn't – and decided to just go with it.

He wasn't expecting Pitch pull away from the intimate moment – worrying him as to what he had done wrong and nearly apologizing, only to watch his lover to reach forward, grasp the bottom of his shirt and come close to tearing it off of him like some wild, uncontrollable, lustful beast...not that he minded as he was savagely pushed down onto the couch and his chest ravished violently with licks and sucks that moved lower and lower with every shiver and wave of pleasure that he rode.

"Yes. More...more please..." He begged and tried to get closer in some way physically – tried to move in and get more contact as a reward, only to be pushed back down and ravished more with abruptly greedy hands that ran over his nipples with an open palm once...twice...before squeezing the hard nub in between the long, careful fingers. Jack covered his mouth with both his palms, keeping the wanton moans from spilling out from his lips.

"That won't do." That was all the warning Jack got in advance of his hands being rudely yanked from his mouth and forced aside while Pitch's half grinning mouth lowered onto his erected left nipple, already hard and sensitive from abuse, and sucked on it with a playful tongue teasing it all the meanwhile.

Jack lost control of his hands and they found the mess of sheeny, messy, black hair and needfully gripped into the locks of it – beseeching for him not to stop ever, even if the world was ending in fire around them. "Please." He couldn't think of any other words to say – thinking itself was difficult. He had to struggle to remember what to do. Something about asking Pitch – 'ah. Yes. The love thing...oh God with a mouth like this I'm not sure if I care.'

He knew he had to eventually ask the dreaded question of Pitch's intentions regarding their relationship but – not right now. He was too pleasure submerged, too horny and way too turned on to care about any of that. The raging, unstoppable teenage hormones running rampant in him needed to be pleased after about three to four years of emotional and physical anguish.

At the end of that thought Pitch – with no small amount of self control and immensely powerful emotional restraint – unlatched from his nipple and grinned down at him, now sitting up straight and tall. "There..."
"Nonono..." Jack mumbled and rose again, wrapping his arms around him once more and kissing his cheek – almost blushing from the way his lips met Pitch's face. Just a few minutes ago things were so much more passionate but now it all felt inexplicably more innocent. "I need more – it hasn't been a half hour yet has it?"

"No...no it hasn't." His voice abruptly became full of warning and caution, lower and more frightening then it had been previously. "But if I get a taste of any more of your skin, I'm not quite sure what I will do." And that was the truth, Pitch had no idea where this would lead, he didn't emotionally want to fuck Jack into his bedsheat but his body had other plans and was quickly moving to get his mind in agreement.

The white haired shirtless teen just pressed up against him further, kissing his lower chin and trailing down leaving light butterfly kisses in his wake – and erected skin bumps. Pitch clearly liked what he was doing. "I don't care." He indistinctly whispered before moving onto Pitch's neck and testing the waters with a chaste, nervous lick. "Just want you to love me."

"I could love you without being inside of you an-" Pitch let out a grunt of resistance towards the sensations climbing up and down his neck – the last thing he needed while trying to make sure he didn't rip Jack's virginity from him and make him plead for more cock inside of his beautifully lithe little body was the younger boy's smaller tongue moving up against his skin like a kitten's. 'Much too adorable is still befitting...'

He reached up and ran his hands through his smaller lover's beautiful white hair, still unable to rip himself away. "Jack stop." Not intimidating enough for him to move away – unintentional. He felt the curious organ glide its way against his collarbone before two soft, little, sweet lips pressed a kiss to his skin. "Please."

"Not until you tell me you love me." He said, defying Pitch again and moving his hands underneath the shirt to feel up his older lover's chest with a happy, misbehaved, impish grin that spoke of nothing but mischief.

'Ooh...oh is that what this is about?' Pitch cursed himself – he knew this would come back to eventually bite him in the ass but not this soon and not in this setting. He just expected Jack to not like him as much anymore and even though it was before he decided that he'd be leaving this world, he thought that it would help the younger just get over him after he discovered it. What was he supposed to do in this position?

He loved Jack. That much was absolutely certain. He wanted to keep him around for as long as he possibly could before September – No matter how much he tried to forget that it always bore into him and destroyed him inside - tore them apart. He was sure that Jack wouldn't want to see the emotional wreck he would become in a few days probably left a blubbering mess only to recompose on the first of October like a real nutcase – suddenly broken and destroyed then miraculously fixed as good as new like magic.

Jack didn't need to see that. Jack didn't deserve any of that.

But at the same time what did he know about September? About the atrocity that he committed this month that he seemed to have gotten away with Scott-free while a child lie dead? Probably nothing.

'So why should he suffer for it?' Pitch reasoned with what was left of his mind, the last remnant of his brain not dedicating to resisting the urge of thrusting into Jack until he was split in two. 'Why should I let his last memory of me be me rejecting him again?' He decided with a small frown and let out a real moan as he felt careful, amateur fingers undo the buttons of his shirt with shaky movements and half-unintentionally brush against his skin repeatedly. Jack's hands were softer then his own – he was
They felt like expertly woven silk gloves against his chest, the shakiness of the younger's hands as they repeatedly slipped off the buttons of his shirt only making him grin. "Ahh Jack...too cute. You know that?"

"What's...too cute?" The younger pouted as the button slipped from his anxious, unfocused hands again. He was way too excited just to remove a shirt.

"You...'Now comes the hard part.' Pitch took in a small breath through his nose that he let out covertly without sighing and kissed Jack's forehead, trying to reduce the restlessness that was speedily bubbling up in the pit of his stomach. These words were so hard to pronounce for him...damn September. "Jack this isn't novelty..." He moved down, putting a peck on the tip of Jack's nose and grinning before Eskimo kissing him, trying to summon the bravery through this loving contact with Jack. "I really...I really do-" 'Fuck!' He took a deep breath and leaned his head to the side, brushing his lips up against his lover's, trying to bring up every ounce of emotional strength that he possibly could before blurtiting it out – none to gracefully. "I love you."

He was thankful that Jack responded so briskly and with such a heavy amount of affection and craving, otherwise he might not have been able to continue existing. Younger lips smashed up against his with force that made Pitch almost want to submit. Almost. The sound that came from Jack's muffled mouth after Pitch laid him back out on the sofa to be romantically ravaged again was a giggle and moan that sent the older's mind reeling and the quickly learning hands of the white-haired teen found their way intertwined with the black mess of Pitch's hair again while the rest of his body arced off the chair with pleasure.

They kept on.

The evening winded down and the new, loving couple found themselves comfortably intertwined in a large, fluffy off purple blanket in the large red chair downstairs. Jack seated on Pitch's lap and Pitch lying back in the chair, seemingly enjoying Jack's presence while watching some comedy special together that neither of them really found so much amusing on its own but became much more entertaining when combined with their cynical, rude and off-color comments about the clear lack of intelligence shown on the show. Especially when they seemed to unwittingly misspell their own show title.

Jack looked to the nearby window and saw the familiar darkness of night encroaching and briefly wondered where exactly he would sleep tonight, knowing the only reason he was curious about such a question was because he was hoping it was with Pitch, in his bed.

Definitely not because sexual reasons.

He was just wondering where he was sleeping tonight.

He checked his phone for the exact time. '11:26 pm'. He felt tired, even with his want to stay up and keep on watching bad comedies with Pitch...but his body's protests would eventually catch up to him and he didn't want to fall asleep sitting in Pitch's lap right now – not in such a restrictive place. Maybe in a bed but not a chair like this.

"Pitch I'm tired." He half-whined, half-confessed as a yawn made its way up his throat and through his mouth. "Take me to bed."

"I'm your boyfriend, not your slave." To anyone else that would have sounded more offensive then what it was meant to, but Jack knew it was more of a joke then any actual insult. He took the time to place a tiny kiss on his cheek and chuckled at the movement that signaled Pitch really was going to
take him to bed. The older man picked up the younger teen and the rather massive amount of blanket
that they were both wrapped in and retreated up the steps to his own room, Jack taking the time to
press himself closer to his boyfriend in relaxation and relief – Pitch really did love him.

In retrospect he had no idea why he needed to hear it though. Pitch was willing to let him stay at his
house, eat his food, comfort him, listen to him, hold him, touch him and keep dark secrets for him
that he hadn't told anyone else. Hearing it like he had previously wanted to even though he knew it
was true had indeed calmed him and given him a sense of satisfaction and security but really...Pitch's
actions really did speak louder then his words even with that gorgeous deep beautiful voice...

"I don't have a guest bedroom..." Pitch spoke aloud without realizing in a voice that alerted Jack out
of his daydreaming and put him back in the real world.

"Oh..." They were standing in a beautiful, wide open room on the second floor. It was obviously a
bedroom, obviously Pitch's bedroom – he just hadn't expected it to be so grandiose. First off was the
rather surprisingly big King sized canopy bed in the room, its blankets of a striking red and black
against dark, attractively, well carved and well taken care of wood. The top blanket over it almost
seemed to be made of lace but flowed like silk as Pitch walked towards it and opened it up, laying
him down on it as if he was a fragile package that would break at the slightest hard impact.

Secondly was the fact that it had an incredible balcony that he could just see through the white see-
through cloth draped double doors – it was a marvelous night out tonight and- "Waaaaaait!" Jack got
up with surprising speed considering his previous exhaustion. "Are those stars? I could never see
them in the city..." He peered through the curtains to see the night sky and could just feel Pitch's
presence right by his side looking with him. "There are so many here..." He whispered,
dumbfounded by the sheer amount of them and the awe-striking sight of the bright moon above
them.

"Yes that's mainly why I got this place..." He felt Pitch's hand trail up his back, leaving a trail of
goosebumps that were generally hard to ignore and set parts of him alight with memories of earlier
that day. "Always so tranquil and quiet here, out at night." His voice was calming and low and Jack
felt so...calm.

"It's nice here." Jack couldn't help but smile a little wider and turn his eyes downward, just noticing
the telescope near the edge of the balcony. "You stargaze?"

"No." It was a short and simple answer that left Jack curious – maybe that telescope there was also
something he was holding for a friend? But, upon closer inspection it looked far too short in stature
and too simple and almost toy-like to be an adult's. It had to belong to a child of some sort. Was Pitch
a father?

"Someone you know then?" Jack asked, poking around to get more information.

"Someone I..." Pitch's brow furrowed downwards and an almost angered frown garnished his face
before he turned back to normal with sorrow still heavy in his eyes. "Someone I used to know yes. A
young...friend of mine from back when I was around your age."

"Couldn't be a kid of his then...maybe a neighbor's child.' He settled for that answer, seeing Pitch's
distressed and hurting eyes making him not wish to pry anymore into his past. "It really is beautiful
out..."

"We can go out if you want..." His voice sounded so distant and gone, as if he was no longer 'here'
with Jack. Part of the younger lover wanted to find out what was wrong and comfort whatever pain
he was having but at the same time unlike Pitch, he really didn't have much to go off of – a facial
bruise told a completely different and much easier to figure out story then a single item and a sad look.

"No." He nearly whispered it, depressed from his self-refusal to allow himself to go but he didn't want to pressure Pitch with anything more. He felt like that place and that specific item was something forbidden now until his beau told him otherwise. "Let's just head to bed..." He while wasn't sure what he meant by that, previous circumstances made it clear that they wanted to have sex but with the conversation just exchanged Jack didn't want to do it right now. Maybe later he would feel horny enough to want for Pitch to rip the virginity from him but not after such an unusually emotional moment.

"Alright..." Pitch no longer seemed to have the heart to either and instead, placed a tender kiss on Jack's neck the younger turned around to see him leaving the room.

"Wait- where are you...?" He let the sentence finish himself.

"I'm sorry but I can't Jack -" Pitch let out an emotionally exhausted sigh before turning back around and giving Jack the most apologetic look he ever received, his golden eyes downcast and upset while his hands nervously shifted from by his side to behind his back. "I just...not tonight – I know I promised and you asked but...not tonight."

"We don't have to do it right now...I just want you stay with me." His voice came out higher then he wished it to, anxious and awkward while Pitch walked back into the room with a nod and lie down on the bed, letting his high-school lover cuddle up beside him and spread the blanket he was carried up with cover them both.

Jack went out like a light, except with the fact that there were lights that made more noise then when his little sleeping lover's snoring – he actually had to make sure Jack wasn't faking, but no Jack was actually completely silent when he was sleeping.

He was also, unfortunately increasingly cute and heartrendingly adorable when he was like this and Pitch couldn't help but run the back of his hands against the resting, calm and peacefully gentle face in awe and love.

Never before today had he found himself capable of telling another human being that he actually loved them, even the few to whom he actually wanted to say it to were barred from hearing it – September's grasp on his life was shockingly powerful...and Jack was fixing it, fixing him and making him feel actually O.K. as compared to how he felt on those very first few days after the murder he might as well have played a major part in-

And he was gone, pushing himself up and out of the bed and rushing to the bathroom already knowing it was futile to try and hold down wave after wave of acidic bile. He almost slammed the door to the bathroom behind him and came down crashing in front of the toilet, letting his entire stomach go while image after image appeared in his head.

Happy smiles, congratulations, clear skies, beautiful day, Claussen, cotton candy – then pain, ground rumbling, building shaking, screaming, blood oh dear god why so much?! Why on him?! Tears drizzled down his face and he let his stomach just go and empty, no longer resisting the need to get everything he ate out as he tried to ride it out – both emotionally and mentally.

By the time it had ended he was making dry, painful retching sounds over the toilet and had nothing more to give. His face crumpled up and he gripped his nose with disgust – he abhorred the scent of vomit but he was glad he didn't eat any of the dinner he cooked for Jack. Red foods like spaghetti sauce and vomiting never did good for his mental state. He took a moment to focus before he finally
shut the door the bathroom behind him and washed his face clean, trying to make himself relax and unwind just a little more.

'Jack is right in the other room...you have to calm down. Don't worry him any more then you already probably have.' His stomach gave another weak lurch forward as he remember the sound of another child's scream but it had no more to give and he only hiccuped in response. Ignoring to revolting taste of stomach fluids in his mouth he gazed into the mirror, whispering to himself. "You're suffering from survivor's guilt. You've done nothing wrong Kosmotis..."

His mind refused to believe that and he rejected it inwardly, even as he pleaded to himself in the mirror to stop torturing himself with this one deed that he knew logically was not something that made him guilty of that young child's death but oh god the blood was everywhere, screaming, crying, she's dead, it's your fault! You were supposed to protect her. Pitch couldn't stop the hot tears that rolled down his cheeks. "I was standing right there...why...I shouldn't be allowed..." He took deep, even breaths and tried to reel himself back in. "I'm so sorry...I'm so sorry..." I should die, she's gone it's all my fault, stupid, stupid STUPID, you should have seen it coming, it was your job, weren't you the greatest?! Man of Steel?! "No...no I couldn't do anything- Oh god I'm so sorry..."

Before Pitch could even grab a hold of himself he dropped to his knees and then to the floor, bawling into his hands and crying for forgiveness from a being that had already left this Earth. He couldn't count how many remorseful, self-hatred filled, self-disgusted tears he had already shed over the past two years but he knew he could never cry enough for her as no amount of tears would bring her back. No amount of tears would put life back into her body and let her be able to smile again...nothing could put her back onto his balcony and stargaze like she loved to...He sniffled and let himself lay there, unwilling to get up or put the effort into his body to cease his tears, even after he had none left to give he still lay there on the tile floor of his bathroom, staring at the chestnut wood of the sink's cabinet and pitying himself and his actions before at last getting up and onto his hands and knees, using the edge of the sink to pull himself upwards.

He kept his ears sharp for any sign of Jack's movement before he began brushing his teeth and straightening himself out, making sure he didn't puke all over himself like a child and despite finding no evidence to the contrary he felt a need to change his clothing. 'Fuck it I'll do it tomorrow.' Pitch thought to himself, not wanting to think about anything anymore as he enjoyed the taste of mint replacing that of regurgitated brunch.

He spit the remainder of used toothpaste into the sink and started the faucet, splashing water onto his face and swishing his mouth out – wakening himself up but also ceasing the shock and depression. He didn't bother to look up at the mirror and try chanting to himself to calm down again, already knowing it wouldn't work even if he did. Instead he weakly walked out of the bathroom, feeling his way around the hallways because – as pathetic as it sounds and why he was just as excited to get back to his house as Jack was, he because he was barely here as of late. September usually came with the need to stay out of the house.

He had spent more time getting casual, rough, no-strings attached, no emotions needed or wanted, 'probably will never meet you again and thank the almighty for it' fucks at other men's houses after a quick visit to the local bar.

He made sure to be as quiet as possible as he pushed his exhausted body back onto the bed, ignoring the fact that he smelt of sweat and struggle – though he was sure that the scent of vomit he was sure was completely gone and that was enough for him – and collapsed in bed next to Jack.

He was spent.
Feels and fluff~
Feels and fluff!
Who doesn't love?
Feels and fluff!

:D

Good news: I'm finished with all my school work for this year until the next grade
soooo
Who is ready for quicker chapter writing and slower character releases since stuff gets
really plot heavy and wordy later on?

I am!

Thanks for reading all!
Love,
Angelblaze
Runnin'

Chapter Summary

Song is Runnin' (Philippians RMX Instrumental) by The Pharcyde.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

He spit the remainder of used toothpaste into the sink and started the faucet, splashing water onto his face and swishing his mouth out – waking himself up but also ceasing the shock and depression. He didn't bother to look up at the mirror and try chanting to himself to calm down again, already knowing it wouldn't work even if he did. Instead he weakly walked out of the bathroom, feeling his way around the hallways because – as pathetic as it sounds – he was just as excited to get back to his house as Jack was because he was barely here as of late.

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Jack completely forgot that he didn't live here for a few moments. He thought he'd get up and brush his teeth after grabbing his clothes from the nearby drawers and rush out to school without a care in the world. He completely forgot about his Friday off, family, their troubles, their issues, his father. Was that the effect Pitch had on him? Make him forget his troubles, zap them away with a wave of the hand and a kiss of the cheek like they just didn't exist anymore? Like they faded away in the ether and if someone asked him whether or not he was actually Jack Frost from the abusive Frost family, he'd be confused as to what they were even speaking about?

If so, it was absolutely amazing and he didn't dare ask for Pitch to stop. He enjoyed this lack of emotional weight and carelessness – that being said he didn't like his currently embarrassingly confused position relative to Pitch right now.

He had actually completely forgotten this wasn't his house and was actually looking through Pitch's drawers for some of his own clothing and became implausibly befuddled as to why it was all black or overall dark clothing – where were all of his light colored outfits and loose fitting sweatshirts? Who replaced his clothing with the emo-goth version of things you'd find at Old Navy?!

"Ahem" A familiar voice came from behind him and he remembered the entirety of yesterday along with the basic fact that this wasn't his home and he probably should not be picking through Pitch's things – the room didn't even resemble his.
He stood there, embarrassed with his right hand coincidentally coming very close to touching the crouch part of a pair of Pitch's boxers and feeling the curious bore of laser-like golden eyes burning a hole through the center of his back. 'So what...do I just put them back in and walk away?...' Jack stood there bewildered for a couple of moments and then decided that that indeed was the best course of action. He shoved the underwear back in the drawers and then turned to Pitch, nodding for no real reason, before heading downstairs.

"Okay you know what?" Pitch said determinedly as he swung his leg over the side of the leg and got up. "Normally I'd be wondering what you were doing..." He could hear Jack's steps stopped and could hear a snickering – even Jack knew that was weird - "but for the sake of it's Friday and I want to relax today I think I'm going to let it slide." He nearly yelled, with his ears barely picking up the embarrassed laughter of his little lover downstairs that brought a large smile to his face. *What a way to wake up, finding your boyfriend stealing your underwear...* He thoughtfully remarked, running a hand against the slightly achy part of his body where his shoulder and neck met – he must have fallen asleep while caressing Jack's face after his little outburst and slept on it wrong. He decided he could deal with it and stood up from the bed, going to check on Jack who was now standing in the middle of the living room with a blanked out face. *Great, now he's going mental.* He joked before descending down the steps with the sound of his approaching footsteps pulling Jack from his reverie.

"Oh-" Jack whispered before turning to Pitch. "Ummm...good morning?" He asked curiously.

"Well...yes it is but you're being weird..." Pitch remarked before walking up to Jack and gently pressing a kiss to his sweet little forehead, even when he was obviously confused out of his mind he was *impossible* to not touch. "Anything wrong?"

"It's just...I'm sorry. I shouldn't have going through your things I thought I was home again and-"

"Oh don't bother! Its fine." Another soft peck – he almost wanted Jack to stay confused just so he could steal more of this delicious contact, the taste of Jack's naturally sweet skin on his lips and all the beautiful feelings he could give it. It was good to know he just wasn't lucid after waking up...

"I was wondering though..." Jack mumbled quietly, slowly lifting his head while Pitch's lips made their way down to his own.

"Hmmm darling?" He whispered sweetly, pressing a kiss to Jack's left cheek and then his right with a wide smile of rapidly approaching satisfaction on his lips.

"Can I spend today with you too?" He whispered, pressing his mouth to the side of Pitch's own and let out a small sound of happiness from the interaction. The truth of the matter was that he wanted to spend everyday here – despite the embarrassing thing that had just occurred upstairs between them. This place really was so soothing and nice, such an opposing change from his own home and Pitch was so sweet and charismatic and charming and such a damn good kisser...he puckered his lips just to let his lover seal the gap between them for a few fleeting and peaceful moments – he'd never get tired of those lips moving against his...

And just as it started it sorrowfully ended leaving Jack looking up at Pitch with a silent plea dancing in his eyes for more. "Of course you can, it's not like I have much to do anyway..." Arms wrapped around his waist and Pitch gave him more sweet pecks, trailing down from his lips and to his neck that he *still* wished to mark as his own territory but did not for the sake of Jack's return home.

"Mn...well..." kiss..."You have me if that's any-" lick..."Ohh...c-consolation." He purred and let Pitch lead him even more, letting that more experienced tongue dive deep into his mouth and coax his own out to play before they began dancing with each other, one wrapping around the other and slipping past. Jack let out an obscene moan and the older decided enough was enough. He pulled out of the
kiss and grabbed Jack's hand, leading the willing boy back to the sofa they made out in the previous night.

"Jack...its only ten am...we shouldn't really." He teased as he sat Jack next to him and lead him downwards pick onto the cushions of the chair and underneath him. Pitch hovered above him, examining the just awoken teen with a smile. "You haven't even brushed your teeth and eaten breakfast yet..."

"Just a little?" The young man jokingly begged. "I promise I'll be good after this sir, I really do."

He wasn't even predicting how Pitch would react to that – nor the seductively rough and sensual kiss he would get afterward. The older man's face frowned for a half second before he grinned again and swooped in like a hawk capturing its prey. Their lips meshed together so perfectly well that Jack felt as if he might need a little more then just a make-out session to hold him over.

And Pitch was more then happy to silently oblige, teeth nibbling at the white haired boy's lower lip and coaxing his mouth open once more for another ravaging kiss that has his tongue almost teasing the back of Jack's throat alongside a knowing hand running through his hair and calming him. The noise he let escape from him wasn't even intentional – at the point he was barely sure what was up and what was down...

Then he it was like he was dropped from near-atmosphere exiting heights as Pitch pulled away with a small chuckle. "I'm going to make us breakfast alright?"

"No...get back here and finish what you started." Jack weakly argued, barely able to do that with the breath still stolen away from his lungs.

"Later, trust me." The truth of the matter that Pitch just loved teasing the poor boy, he loved seeing those eyes double in size and then glaze over from the enjoyment of being kissed and seeing him just hand over control. He'd never say so though as then Jack might actually try to stop it and he just wouldn't have that..."For now, Pancakes and bacon."

The deafening, maddened groan of anger and sexual frustration that Jack released was possibly the greatest victory Pitch got that morning.

--

Jack forgot how long it was since he had actually eaten bacon. He thought back maybe five years ago when his mother was in a particularly nice mood and William wasn't around to harass them – he didn't delve too deep into that train of thought before he returned to the present. Too long. One day was already too long.

He shoved another piece in his mouth and smiled, knowing he looked like a moron in front of Pitch who had mysteriously chosen not to eat anything this morning – upon questioning he just said he was feeling too queasy for right now.

The older man actually wasn't stomach-sick, in fact it was taking up all his willpower not to go make himself something right now but he didn't want to end up freaking out like he did last night around Jack and end up puking half digested cereal. He settled for watching Jack eat happily – trying to make himself look as un-envious as possible.

"This is really good." Jack said with a smile, believing that all he was doing was complimenting his chef and all Pitch could think of was how much he wanted to steal from his plate or go make his own – unfortunately for him the young guest's description of his own cooking was not something that
assisted him much in this matter. "You should have some."

"I should." Pitch replied, rubbing his hands together and remembering why he specifically did not make himself breakfast while taking careful steps not to begin letting his mind plunder into the details – not wishing to remember the cause. "But I won't. Hurry and fill your stomach..."

"Mkay." Jack said with a mouth-filled smile in-between large pancake bites that had Pitch sarcastically wondering if the high-school student had ever seen food before in his life.

"What should we do today?" He off-handedly to distract himself from Jack's more then attention grabbing chewing for his hungry stomach. "Or...what should I do to you?" A much more seductive then needed tone of voice that promised something exciting for later.

Jack swallowed and licked his lips, more out of suddenly being brought to attention by Pitch's voice then the syrup on his lips.

"Don't worry, just finish your food...I have to go get something from upstairs anyway..." Pitch got up hastily and headed upstairs while Jack swallowed down what was left of his food – finishing and pushing the plate away so he could sit on the couch thinking about what his boyfriend could possibly be planning to do to him. He had to admit it was exciting to think about what could possibly be coming to him.

'Morning sex.' He concluded. That would be nice, having his virginity finally taken from him after the too-personal moment last night ruined any and all of the mood they could have possibly had...but another part of him didn't want morning sex...ice blue eyes slid over to the fireplace in knowing and wanting.

The sound of Pitch's resounding footsteps made him almost jump from the couch and onto the floor – he entered a state of bravado and tried to play it cool as the gray skinned man came back downstairs with a smirk that Jack couldn't read before grabbing the finished plate and utensils and walked away, leaving Jack to wonder once more.

'When would Pitch actually initiate? I mean, I know I'm not exactly legal tinder but...' The teen thought, twiddling his fingers and trying to calm himself down so he could be as sexually alluring and charismatic as possible instead of just being his awkward nervous self – he already knew it wouldn't work out that easy, as if calming down was going to make him the most irresistible lay in the world but he wanted to at least try to seduce Pitch a little...

More footsteps that grew louder as his beau approached and his heart jumped into his throat again, something he couldn't hope to physically stop.

"Jack, lay down against the sofa and close your eyes." He didn't even have time to see where exactly in the room Pitch was or what he was doing before he all-too-quickly followed the command, obeying every word calmly despite the jumpiness and tied up chains of nervousness he felt inside of his stomach and throat. "Ahh...you really are eager for me aren't you?" Jack swallowed and squeezed his eyes closed just a little more, the voice was getting to him and it was being difficult to not feel as jumpy as he currently was. "So obedient and patient for your surprises..." He swore he could almost feel Pitch's shadow looming over him, startlingly powerful, teasingly confident and sexually imposing.

Another light swallow before he thought of something to try and say but he couldn't come up with everything, his mind freezing in place as a warming breath ghosted over his slightly revealed neck before melting inside and letting out a small pant of surprise and enjoyment.
"Good Jack..." A familiar palm embraced the side of his face and he pushed into it, mouth opening ever so slightly – the warmth and acquainted feeling of Pitch's hands on body feeling multiplied upon itself from his lack of still remaining senses. "Yes...so good Jack – very good. Keep that up." The older lover whispered sweet nothings into his ear and purred quietly in that tempting voice that made the high-schooler's skin and pulse rise. "Stay down." His orders were so clear, so absolute but at the same time, there was no threatening force behind them that Jack could sense – it was intoxicating. "Open your mouth."

Young, pink lips opened wide and Pitch pulled a small bottle of whipped cream behind his neck with a mischievous smile. "Keep your eyes closed for me...you're doing incredible." Another hand, brushed its way through the snow-white hair and made Jack want to open his eyes so bad – stare into the beloved's twin golden ones and purr half muffled words into his mouth while they kissed. He hoped he wouldn't go without contact soon...

A sudden strange noise, like someone spraying shaving foam and an even stranger feeling on his tongue that soon covered his mouth, made him curious – but he refused to more or close his mouth. Instead he focused on trying to figure out what it was that was filling up inside of him and think of what Pitch could possibly be doing...

It tasted sweet and airy – the sound before tipping him off right before Pitch really began having his fun. 'Whipped cream?' His found himself unable to complain – though not particularly a huge fan of the foamy white ice cream topping he couldn't help but admire Pitch's sense of taste...

Especially when a familiar tongue delved into this mouth and began to let him taste and play with the sweet cream, the muscle poked and teased at his own until he responded and then it was almost like a dance the way their tongues moved together in an almost eerie unison – Jack responding to Pitch's tongue so well that the older could swear he must've practiced when he wasn't looking.

The teen couldn't possibly get enough of him – he pushed to tongue rough and hurried against the elder's and got his own tongue wrapped up in a knot, along with hearing the faint muffle of a needy, heady moan from his boyfriend. The pure knowing that this was something he had brought forth from him, something he made Pitch feel, made his head spin – though that could have been lack of oxygen.

He pulled his head back for his own physical safety, he wouldn't let his lips leave those other ones for any other reason, and Pitch seemed to get it while he pulled himself back and admired the melting puddle he turned Jack into – noticing the deep breaths and the ever so slight and tiny mess of white cream dripping from his lips reminding him of all the dirty little things he and Jack could do together later on. "Beautiful."

Jack forced his eyes to slit open and gazed to Pitch. "Hmm?"

"Beautiful, you." He grinned happily and ran a hand down the younger man's cheek, enjoying the feeling of the alabaster, smooth, unblemished skin beneath his palm. The bruise had cleared up, luckily...otherwise Pitch wasn't sure what he would do to Jack's father. "You did so good for me, letting me taste you like that."

"Umm..." He ran his tongue over his lips, suddenly feeling that he had to lick them only to realize after hitting a state of halfway there clarity that it was because Pitch's mouth had just been there, smearing itself up against his. He licked them again before speaking. "Thanks?" Still not fully lucid, not fully back down from the space that Pitch pushed him into to be capable of full, logical communication. "I...I liked it..."

"I can tell..." Pitch got up with a grin to put the whipped cream back in the kitchen and tried to hold
back the tiny chuckle that threatened to leave him upon hearing Jack's sigh – he obviously wanted more but the man he wanted it from was too wanting to tease, having too much fun giving the young teen boners that he'd have to will down, to really care. Watching those blank white cheeks flush with embarrassment and need, see the blowing of his pupils during those long kisses that sent his mind wandering straight into the gutter and studying each and every last reaction and movement that he made...

Pitch had to admit that just maybe he liked it a little too much. He realized as he placed the whipped cream back in the refrigerator that he had to play this exceedingly cautiously – and mentally berated himself for only seeing the strange, socially unacceptability of their relationship NOW rather then before. Their age difference and Jack's virginity along with their lack of what could be considered 'normal' childhoods – the gray skinned man refused to revisit his and instead focus on Jack's for that moment – could easily be seen as an abuse of his power as a mental doctor, people could say that he was just planting thoughts into the young boy's head and seducing him.

That wouldn't be good for anyone, especially not him.

The smart and self-preservation thing to do would be to cut ties, at least until Jack was 18, and then continue on from there but he felt as if he was in the conflicted teen's life for a reason – to serve a purpose as strange as it sounded. He couldn't see why but he no longer had the heart to end his own life, if only for Jack's sake. He gently closed the refrigerator door and rubbed his hands together before running them across his figure, pushing down the clothing and trying to figure out why in the first place he felt this need to save Jack.

Yes, he was a doctor and yes, September – he shuddered and took a large breath, telling himself that it was just a random month and nothing significant happened before he continued his train of thought – did leave him with a want to help children and make up for...what happened. But it was something deeper...something that left him with more of an indent, something discreet he must've noticed or been told...

A sudden ring of a cell phone yanked him from his thoughts just as he believed himself to be nearing an answer. 'Jack's cell.' He rushed off to the living room and abandoned that for the moment, instead curious as to who was calling Jack...

And judging by the wide open pupils that had previously been glazed over from the sheer pleasure of thinking about sex and the foreplay that they were just during that ended up leading to nothing, he figured it wasn't anything that could be relatively good news. "Who?" He mumbled quietly and Jack looked at him and let out a sigh.

"Good morning Mom." Jack said, intentionally too loud so that Pitch knew who he was speaking too, blue eyes met gray before they rolled back up into his skull in annoyance. The other smiled from the opposite side of the room before sitting down on the nearby sofa, one hand cradling his head as he listened into the conversation. "Yes I'm fine, I spent the night with..." Jack seemed to think for a moment and Pitch opened his mouth to help him out, only to be cut off by a good enough cover.

"My study partner."

"...Not bad I guess." Pitch sent him a thumbs up and kept on trying to somehow read Jack's face so he could read their conversation.

"No I'm fine...yes I ate...no it was not poisoned, you can relax..." Jack rolled his eyes again and smiled at Pitch, who chuckled quietly in response. Both of his parents may have been abusive but Katherine seemed to at least moderately care about her son's immediate physical safety. "Yes I'm sure it wasn't poisoned Mom, I know him he's really...trustworthy."
Jack's eyes flashed to him in nervousness as he searched for that last word... 'trustworthy'. The psychologist smiled and crossed his arms, leaning back into the sofa further and trying to relax a little more as he absorbed that. Sure, Jack was a very trusting person, they both agreed on that during the drive here but he could only wonder how many people he trusted that he actually talked about with his parents that freely. Couldn't be that many... "Wait... wait wait what?" And suddenly Jack seemed upset, shaken even. "Why!?" His voice was near scream and Pitch rose from the couch, shining gold eyes narrowed in his direction begging the question of 'what happened?' Jack saw and rephrased the question. "Why would you head back home?"

And now Pitch was absolutely lost. His mother left home? Did this have to do with his father? Were things really so bad there that they had to abandon his home and leave it to his drunk and self-destructive father? He tried to hide his horrified expression behind a mask of stoic apathy but found himself incapable of continuing it for very long before he looked to Jack again – seeing his usually happy or at least calm face twist into own of sadness and abrupt worry.

"Mom Dad said- No I know that Mom I was kind of THERE, no. No. No. For God's sak- NO. Look mom I know you- would you stop doing that?!

"Stop it!" He yelled loudly in defiance after that and then looked away from Pitch shamefully – as if dishonored by his outburst. "Stop blaming me for you." Pure shock and terror in his face, out of nowhere – like nothing the older had ever seen, then an emotionally blank face that overtook everything before blue eyes broke down and tears drew from the corners of his permafrost pupils.

Warm hands gently hovered over his cheeks to wipe away all of the teardrops and Jack sniffled as he continued to listen over the phone, looking to Pitch for answer and resolution. He could just barely catch the word 'failure' coming through the phone and he glanced at Jack with open eyes that spoke of nothing but compassion and love as if he could counteract all of the spiteful words he knew were coming through the small speaker.

"Whatever you want." Probably the wrong one in this situation but after hearing about how much the young male had given up and sacrificed and seeing that bruise on the side of his face, he figured that maybe Jack needed to do something involving his parents problems for himself. The white-haired boy looked at him confused before he clarified. "Talk." He whispered.

"Mom?" The word came out with a huff of breath and Pitch gave him an encouraging shoulder rub and a quiet kiss on the cheek, smiling and trying to help him along as best he could. "Oh so snowflake is there with you?"

'Snowflake? Really? Is your uncle named Santa Claus?' Pitch jokingly wondered but didn't let the
smirk appear on his face.

"Okay look, I don't care what either of you do because its quite clea- shut up-" Jack hissed angrily and his free hand balled into a fist, this was clearly not their first confrontation. "- And for once listen instead of being ignorant like you normally are." Definitely not. "I don't care what you or William do at this point because really, you've both proven that neither of you listen to reason or even care about anything besides your alcohol." Burn. "But I'm coming home anyway. Why? Because I have actual family there and I'm not talking about you guys. Feel free to let William pummel you into a coma because really, as it stands, that's what's about to happen no matter how much I try to intervene." Wait...did Jack intervene in a fight BEFORE he saw the bruise on his cheek? Pitch's mind reeled and stared at Jack, questioning. "Just make sure none of the blood splatters on her and also, I may be a failure but when it comes down to it I'm the only one in the house that is lucid for more than nine hours a day so you can kiss my ass. Good bye Mom – yes I think your a complete failure as well. Good morning." He hung up the phone with a beep and frowned to Pitch, who gave him a close and compassionate hug that reduced Jack to tears...

"Jack I..." He felt a warm wetness begin to coat his shoulder and felt the shuddering of the younger body as he tried to hold back his upset emotions. "I'm so sorry...but can you really go back? I know its not the best question to ask but you need to know that I'm here for you and you can stay here for however long you like-"

"No!" He practically yelled before muffling himself with the cloth of Pitch's shoulder, trying to get some air into his lungs.

"Jack, don't worry I can provide for both of us-" He attempted to comfort Jack, feeling the young boy practically shaking in the seat with an overwhelming myriad of different emotions.

"I have to go home..." Jack whispered, eyes wide open and pupils darting to different areas around the room as if looking for an answer for action written against the walls.

"Jac-"

"Please." He begged and crooned into Pitch's ear before the older one pushed him away, ever so slightly.

"What is wrong?"

"I...need to go home Pitch my father..." He wasn't calmed down so much as accepting his fate and Pitch nodded, the having to go home was obvious but he still had no idea what was going on and Jack didn't seem to be capable of telling him the full story right now about his current family situation.

"Alright." Just because Jack couldn't tell him doesn't mean he wouldn't continue to take care of him and care for him. "Take a shower or something before we leave though, I know its technically your home-" Pitch lied, he really doubted that 'home' was a place Jack was really welcome. "But you want to be presentable."

Jack looked at him as if he was insane but the stern look that Pitch gave him in return had him stomping upstairs. "It's the door at the left end of the hallway." The rather unneeded slamming of the bathroom was actually shocking, if only momentarily.

As the water turned on upstairs and the faint sound and hurried personal grooming continued – Jack's nervousness probably pushed aside for his urgent need to get to the house – Pitch tried to brainstorm a way to keep him here. He didn't want for Jack to have to leave, he didn't want to send him off to
He collapsed into the nearby sofa and brainstormed, thinking of every excuse and reason that could possibly keep the young boy here, 'Car is out of gas' He'd walk. 'I don't feel safe about you going back there' he'd probably argue. 'I want you to stay here with me' though that was true he needed to leave, that much was certain. He could read the disparity in the ice blue eyes.

Sooner then he thought Jack came stomping back downstairs, same clothing on and quickly drying his hair with a white towel, his hands tearing at his hair through the piece of cloth as if there was a spider crawling in it but Pitch knew that Jack was just upset about the wasted time.

'Not much I can do...' He bit his lip to muffle the angered grunt that would have left him if he had kept his mouth open – he didn't want to hold him up, whatever had him going back must have been deathly important, but he didn't want to let him just run back to his abusive parents' house either. "I'm sorry."

Jack paused his aggravated hair drying and looked at Pitch, confused before his lips pursed and formed an 'O', as if catching onto his boyfriend's plan. "It's...it really is fine. I understand I guess."

He ran a anxious hand through his hair – he really needed to go now. "But I have to go back now. I...I can't promise that everything will be okay but, you know...I can't stay here. I'd love to...really..."

Jack's eyes seemed to be focused on a point a million miles away, the last of his words coming out like dreamy mumbles through light sleep before he seemed to jump back into the present. "Please drive me back home."

"Of course I will." Pitch got up, regrettably, and headed for the door with Jack walking right behind him before he turned around and spoke jerkily. "But you must promise me one thing."

The younger man nearly jumped back from surprise before he was able to form a response. "Sure, what is it?"

"Don't you dare let that man lay another abusive finger on you without retaliation! Do you understand?" Pitch asked, eyes carrying a world of anger inside of them along with a twinkle of what could've been tears – Jack could barely tell from how he was holding himself. The high-schooler nodded, not understanding what Pitch was exactly him to do when and if William hurt him again but he suspected that Pitch was actually expecting him to fight back.

After the conversation on the phone and the last few days...he'd probably punch William even if he DIDN'T initiate the fight.

Pitch smiled and opened the door for him, allowing him to leave the house and enter into the car first.

As if realizing that he was actually leaving, Jack felt a wave of misery come over him as he buckled himself into the front driver's seat. The past day and a half had been absolutely blissful with not a real worry in the world – the single exception being the 'love' problem that had easily and deliciously resolved both the afternoon he came over and this morning – it had been a totally peaceful bastion for his emotional comfort that hid him from his parent's depression inflicting influence.

And now he was literally, of his own will, leaving it and heading back home before he was even called for...He wasn't sure this time if after experiencing so much happiness and delight if he could be able to keep on...

But he needed to, he knew that much. Katherine taking Mary back to William this soon in time would not end well if he just left them alone, the way his stomach lurched forward upon hearing his mother's voice confess that she and her eight year old daughter had, after a single night, gone back to
William even after he told them to stay away for a **couple days at least**, was still hurting him. How could Katherine be so **stupid**? It boggled Jack's mind...how could she have literally NO care for Mary's safety...

Or maybe she had the same problem Pitch said he had – no real sense of self preservation. Either way, he had to get home as soon as possible...

He had to keep on.

**Chapter End Notes**

Yeah, sorry for making you wait a week. It's summertime and I'm getting realllllly lazy for some reason.

Fun fact: Burgess is (questionably) canonically located in Pennsylvania, the same state I live.

Bonus fun fact: This was originally supposed to be the ending song during the 'first outline' for the story before I decided I wanted to really dedicate myself to it and bring both Mary and Jamie into the story. In this chapter originally Jack was going to run away from his abusive parents with Pitch by moving back to Germany.

Feel free to steal that story basis if you'd like :)


Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

Chapter Summary

Survival instinct is always a very nice thing to have.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Pitch smiled and opened the door for him, allowing him to leave the house and enter into the car first.

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–

He forced himself to swallow down his ever-increasing anxiety and at least try to relax and restrain himself from yelling at Pitch to stop the car, turn back around and never bring up his life back at 'home' again. But then he thought of Mary whose smile and gaze and happiness were his only real drives that kept him going after the drinking went from carefree to violent.

If he left with Pitch he'd abandon her with his drunk father and perhaps veering on mentally unstable mother. She deserved better then that – she may have been only eight years old but she lived in that house with their parents too, almost seeming to fully understand their predicament. Mary would make him grin and laugh and have fun even in the midst of William's worst drunken rage and Jack refused to repay her steadfast commitment to her happiness by abandoning her, he knew he was better then that.

He had to go be with her and keep her safe, especially from their father.
"So." Pitch spoke, as if sense his deep thinking and trying to at least help him a little bit. Jack smiled appreciatively at him for it. "How are you this afternoon?"

"I'm good... thanks." He spoke quietly, not really meaning to put so little power or volume in his voice and trying to make up for it by sitting up in his seat a little straighter. He couldn't help but be a little worried for whatever was happening back at his home while they were driving there but at least Pitch was helping, distracting him from the troubling thoughts and visions of his own overly worried mind...at least he hoped he was just overly worried.

"Sleep well?" The older man turned the steering wheel and made a smooth turn while Jack began to admire the scenery passing by him as the grasses, bushes and large trees that surrounded his boyfriend's home sped by, moderately visible as they drove back home and the amount of green in his immediate line of sight decreasing at a steady rate as if it was a count down to their arrival.

"Yes, thanks..." Jack's mind was far, far away at this point and so Pitch decided he'd need to try something a little more distracting...

"Hey Jack, I'm curious... when's your birthday?"

More attempts at distraction, more thanks... more need to resist his worry and relax his mind. 'Every thing is fine. You're going to get home and Mary will be fine..." "December 21, 1996." He spoke quietly and rubbed his hand up and down his thigh, very slowly as he could see houses in the distance. At least fifteen more minutes...

"That's... winter solstice isn't it?" Pitch knew the way to Jack's house but was considering taking a wrong turn and saying he forgot – he didn't want him to go back so quickly. He couldn't stand the thought of just sending him back without any security or safety, back into a home with an emotional child abuser and a physical one.

"Yeah, around that time."

"You're just full of winter jokes aren't you?"

"You have no idea..." He tried to just go off on a rant or something, something to distract himself a little more. "You don't know the half of it. My favourite food is ice cream, my second favorite food is white fluffy cotton candy, you already know the whole Jack Frost thing-"

"And let me guess, your favorite movie of all time is Frosty the Snowman." Pitch joked happily, smiling at last since Jack was now talking instead of being worrisome.

"Nope. Antz... turn left on the corner here. Third house down."

Pitch already knew the way but he didn't bother to tell Jack that, if it kept him speaking. As he turned the corner, he stared at the familiar house for a little more then what he should have and Jack picked up on it. "I'm sorry I really shouldn't be shocked...it's just its a beautiful house..."

"Dad can be drunk and work well at the same time." There was less emotion in that sentence, mostly because it wasn't about praise, so much as it was about telling the truth. "You'd be surprised how many parent teacher conferences he's been completely smashed at with my teachers being none the wiser."

To anyone else those would sound like compliments...he was thankful Pitch was not anyone else and could give him a sad nod as they pulled up.

"Well here's my stop..." Jack mumbled softly, wanting nothing more then to dive back into the car and leave this place far, far behind him as if it was just a terrible dream.
"Yeah..." Pitch couldn't say too much, fearing that he'd say that wrong words and instead pulled his hand up and gently caressed the beautiful, messy albescent hair on Jack's head. The teen smiled and pushed himself just a little bit closer – nothing too serious should they be seen but more intimate and open then before. "Visit me again soon?"

"Of course!" Jack almost yelled excitedly at the prospect of a 'next time'. Him back at Pitch's house...all the things they could possibly waste the day away doing...

Pitch pulled his hand away at long last and Jack slowly reached for the door and let himself out, not wanting to take forever so that he could go be with Mary but not wanting to leave so quickly either...

But the moment his foot touched the concrete he could feel it...something horrible was about to happen. It was like he could feel it in the air, in the ether, it was striking and horrendous and it was like his gut or his soul even was calling for a different action rather then just 'step inside and hope everything is O.K'. Because it wasn't.

Jack licked his lips, breathing suddenly becoming a difficult task for his lungs to accomplish. It was like all of his survival instincts had at once returned – despite Pitch saying he had no real sense of safety for himself it was like he could feel the danger inside that house...He looked over to Pitch who glanced back him, bewildered and curious. Merely approaching the home felt like it was going to suck all the air and life from his body...his hands shook and his feet refused to move forward...

"Jack...what is it-" Pitch was cut off when Jack's trembling hands grasped his arm as if the younger man was falling off of a cliff and he was the only means to survival...and currently in Jack's mind that was the perfect truth.

"S-something's wrong." Jack couldn't calm himself down for some reason, it was like he knew something was going to happen if he walked in there alone. It wasn't fear, it was like a resounding knowing deep inside himself...'If I go in there alone I'll die.' was the beginning and the end of it. "I-I don't know what or why but I just feel like you, you need to come in or something."

Pitch would not abandon the opportunity to not only come into Jack's house but to also get a good look at his father and possibly make an assessment, he was a doctor technically. Not a specialist in medicine but he could make basic deductions about his father's level of health and fitness. Maybe he could tell if he was going to die of liver failure or alcohol poisoning soon.

That'd actually be nice.

He nodded and opened the door on his side before motioning to Jack's hand and back up at him. Jack had to literally tear his hand away from his beau's body and hold it at his side with his opposite arm in order to just let go and give him enough space to leave the car. At the slamming of the driver's side door came a promised safety that struck a chord inside of him that ensured a sense of 'safety' or protection. All of his inner sensors went from full on danger mode to normal at the sheer hearing of a single sound.

There was one thing that Jack knew for certain and that was that his parents wouldn't attack if another person, outside the family, was in the house.

"Your parents don't know who I even am really..." It was just idle talk with no real point behind it while Pitch rounded the front of the car and stepped onto the side walk, giving Jack the lightest touch on the shoulder to calm him down. Beneath his hands he could feel the way Jack's tense body went a little lax and that was enough to compose them both back to a 'normal' state for now.

"Yes...and that's probably the best thing." Jack lowered his voice even though they hadn't even
entered the house yet, he feel comfortable now walking into the house with Pitch at his side...it felt like he could actually make it. "My parents will act really polite and non-violent when you're around...what time is it?"

"Around..." Pitch pulled back his sleeve checked his silver watch again and Jack let out a small groan that he was almost certain the older man picked up on – he had to admit that he really liked it when Pitch showed a little gaudy style like that... "About 3 o'clock. Pre-midnight of course."

"Perfect." Jack said, letting a deep breath escape him as they finally stepped up onto the porch and straightened themselves out ever so slightly with Jack pulling his shirt down and flattening it out a little more and Pitch straightening the sleeves of the black long coat he decided to put on before leaving the house – Jack only just noticing how it looked and realizing just how mysterious he seemed with it on – making sure they didn't look like total pig-pens before Jack built up the bravery to knock on the door.

The sheer speed at which Katherine swung the door open was a world record breaker, both Jack and Pitch were sure about that. But the way she went from looking like a completely terrified mess to an entirely calm and perfectly normal woman had the psychologist in Pitch worried for her mental safety and health.

"O-oh Jack you..you brought a guest." Katherine showed them both a wide smile, Pitch could tell it wasn't actually happiness...it was forced formality at best and sheer honesty with little feeling or care in it at its worse. Perhaps it was his skin color that set her off – he forgot about that sometimes...but then she leaned in, just a little bit closer to Jack and mouthed something that Pitch could just barely make out as a 'thank you' before hastily pulling away and yelling. "Honey, we have a guest." There was far too much suppressed delight in that, too much relief, for it to not have been a miracle – at least for her – that Jack had asked Pitch to come into the house with him.

That sent his mind reeling... despite claiming he wouldn't judge Jack's family he thought that Katherine was an abuser who didn't care for him...he hadn't considered that maybe, just maybe, Jack's mother wasn't nearly as bad as she sounded over the phone.

"Come in! Come in!" She said happily, stepping out of the way and opening the door wide for them to enter. Jack smiled up at Pitch before going in and the older, though mesmerized by the sheer wonder of Katherine's personality and what he thought was mere alcohol abuse now becoming something far more complex and difficult to handle then before.

The living room was nothing short of immaculate, a large television, a beautiful couch with numerous large pillows and a long table nearby most likely used for eating...he didn't understand how Jack's parents could possibly be as terrible as they had been described to him...

Did Jack lie to him?

"I was just about to start cooking dinner!" Pitch silently confessed that Katherine had all the charm and charisma of a television personality with a perfect smile to boot. She did seem to be the tiniest bit obnoxious, although she was wearing an extremely bright yellow blouse and skinny jeans so that could just be his hatred of bright colors shining through again. "I insist you stay, Mister...?" She turned to Pitch with her white smile on full blast.

And wait...she was drunk half the time? After a moment of shock he smiled and gave her the slightest of bows. "Kozmotis Pitchiner, but do please call me Pitch." He raised his hand in greeting and showed her his best possible smile as she took his hand. "Delighted to make your acquaintance, Miss Katherine." Jack stared as his boyfriend went from completely stoic to completely prince-like, purring every word and giving the woman in front of him all of his attention with mannerisms and
being almost scarily polite with the faintest touch of a British accent on his tongue. He was certain that if Pitch turned his charm on any harder he'd be covered in bitches by the end of the day...Then he saw Pitch's smile. Jack would bet money on it. "Jack talks so highly of you." And now he was entirely bullshitting. "It's a joy to finally get to see you in person."

The blush that covered Katherine's cheeks almost had her entire face going to the color of tickle me pink. "W-well, it's nice to finally meet a friend of Jack's."

'If she touches my man like this anymore we're gonna have a fight.' Jack resolved mentally before deciding it was time to speak up and make his claim known – not revealing their sexual attachment but at least saying enough to make Katherine stop ogling over him like she was a hardcore teen male pop star's fan-girl. "Yeah Pitch is my study partner for college example courses and pre-college study." Complete lies. He didn't care. He wanted his mother to stop touching his lover like he was actually available.

"Oh well..." She sounded disappointed, like someone had shot her down from the sky – really mom! He's not even within ten years of your age! - and let his hand go with a grin. "Well please do stay for dinner at least, we'd really enjoy the company."

Jack couldn't focus on them anymore and instead was the first one – and he hoped the last one – to see a very angry and violent looking William Frost standing in the hallway that lead to their parent's bedrooms.

It had felt like it was so long since yesterday, so long since he had gazed into his father's eyes and seen that alarmingly unmistakable glint of murderous intent and the promise of pain and punishment shining in his brown eyes. In truth it really was just yesterday and the way it hit him full blast came as a surprise – maybe this was something he had to learn to deal with. In the background he could just barely hear Pitch's commonplaces, sounding almost flirtatious in nature, as he looked back at William.

He wasn't sure why...but William's eyes shined with something other then spite and hatred this time...something that he couldn't recognize but didn't like a single bit. It took the air from his lungs and his survival instinct activated again...he had to get both him and Pitch out of this room.

Looking up at his secret lover he could tell from the slight tightening of his jaw, the slight pause in between words and the flash of golden pupils going from the doorway and back to Katherine's face that he clearly saw William standing there, glaring at him.

"I really would hate to intrude but if you insist, I'm yours for the evening milady." He bowed again and he could almost see Katherine mentally stopping herself from squealing – the way that last sentence was worded did not help anything, he could almost see William's face of anger twist and change into one of obvious violence, like something out of a demonic possession film. Pitch saw it too and pursed his lips.

"Yeah, we have to go upstairs now though." The rough way Jack gripped Pitch's arm and nudged him forward towards the entrance staircase to his own room clearly broadcasting his anger and need to escape from the room – William's gaze becoming uncomfortably violent and making both Pitch and him shift about in an anxious daze. "Studying."

"Alright, I'll call you two back down when dinner's ready." Katherine sounded like she was on cloud nine from Pitch's attention and nearly swooned before she walked into the kitchen to begin dinner preparations. She too had seen William's hard gaze...but she knew better unlike Jack and Pitch. The two parents knew William didn't have the sheer balls needed to attack the three of them. She was safe until Pitch left and perhaps until the day after – William would need to head to work tonight,
something she loved and hated about his sporadic hours at his job. He would need to leave suddenly and often at times and that's when she would be truly happy...

She grinned and decided today she'd make chicken stir fry from scratch.

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Chapter End Notes

Fun Fact: Antz is the first movie ever created by Dreamworks, who did the animation and creation of the movie Rise of the Guardians.
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"I'm yours for the evening milady?" Jack quoted with a half-offended, half-joking hint of mirth lining his voice, that particular sentence somehow annoying him despite already knowing what Pitch was actually doing. He went up the steps two at a time, not realizing.

"First rule of getting past other people's parents Jack: Get the Mom to like you and Dad usually follows suit." Pitch followed him calmly, knowing he had upset Jack and trying to be as charming as he possibly could now to Jack – already knowing he couldn't lay it on too thick after the display he put on downstairs. "But with your father..." He allowed Jack to take that sentence wherever he pleased, hoping that his point would make itself evident.

"You just don't know." Jack said, moderately disconnected from the conversation, too deep in thought to actively continue as they at last reached the top of the stairs and he instinctively moved to flick the light on. His eyes looked to be far away, as if looking into a place that was so distinct that it caught his attention and kept it and yet so distant that he couldn't make it out.

William's bloody gaze clearly had its mesmerizing results. He felt stiff and frightened, like he couldn't move...or more like the slightest movement might kill him. He shook himself from his thoughts and back onto Pitch, who had placed his hand on the worried young man's shoulder and gave him a caring smile – he too could feel William's unrelenting anger and hatred.

"I'm sorry." The older man mumbled and swooped in close, giving Jack the warmest hug he could possibly give a human being with his face resting in the gentle curve line of his neck and breathing
evenly. Jack, reasonably baffled by such an apology, hugged him back.

"Why are you sorry?" His voice was quiet and low, as if someone was listening in on their conversation and trying to hear them...and with his father's previous behavior downstairs he didn't doubt that the man was outside of his door right now, glaring maddeningly hard at the two and a half inch thick door as if he could kill the occupants of the room with his very gaze.

"Because you're here...and she's here..." Pitch bit his lip as waves of sickness and grief came close to overtaking him, eyes focused and unblinking as he stared in shock at the familiar looking figure standing directly behind Jack. He slowly pulled away with what he believed to have been Jack's permission after his white-haired lover's arms began to drop to his sides.

"She? Katherine?" Jack asked curiously, now shoving his hands into his pockets at his sides and trying to shrug off the effects of the deathly gaze he was given downstairs.

"No. Her." He fully got up from his bent over position of hugging Jack and pointed behind him where a bewildered and spellbound Mary stared up at Pitch with her jaw nearly dropping to the floor and her eyes wide with what appeared to be absolute fear and horror – Pitch knew exactly what was on her mind, it was the very same thought that was on every child's mind when they met him.

"Oh!" Jack said in shock and turned to his sister, now standing next to a slowly leaning in Pitch who drew ever closer to Mary with a completely stoic face and expression – the younger didn't even notice. "Mary, what are you doing here?" He was just about to reach out and hug her himself before he noticed that his boyfriend was nearly face-to-face with the paralyzed young child. Her eyes were blown with fear, he opened his mouth to beg for answer but Mary interrupted him.

The little girl shrieked in pure fear and terror, immediately jumping onto the bed and covering herself in Jack's sheets and giving off powerful trembles. Pitch smiled wide and approached the bed and stalked about it, bent over ever so slightly with his hands reaching out to the mound in the center of the bed. Jack was still looking on in half confusion and considering intervening before Pitch sung quietly. "Hush, hush, hush...here comes the Bogeyman..." Then the young lover grinned wide and let out a small giggle from the sight playing out before him – he hadn't thought that maybe Pitch actually did look like the Bogeyman to younger kids...or that he actually had a playful side that worked off of that. He had to stop himself from pulling out his phone and taking pictures – it was just too cute...

And then from the sheets he heard a far too loud to be real snore come from underneath the blanket – both Pitch and Jack looked up at one another and smiled before looking back at the blanket, the gray skinned of the two moved in ever closer. "Don't let him come close to you..." Jack had to admit that Pitch's voice did carry with it a slight hint of ghostly terror...and that made this scene all the more awesome. He saw Mary through the sheet, clamping both her hands over her mouth...Pitch opened his arms wide and sang on, his voice a little bit deeper... "he'll catch you if he can..."

Upon seeing the black and gray figure ever still approaching Mary jumped out of the bed and directly into Jack's arms, muffling her screams on Jack's sweat shirt and receiving a large, comforting hug in response. "It's alright I'm here Mary, the Bogeyman won't get you. I promise." He joked and gently pet back her long auburn brown hair with a soft and caring hand.

Pitch smiled widely at the little girl who had dashed into Jack's arms – so familiar. Was that it? Was that the feeling of needing to protect that he was so worried about and felt blossom up inside of him? Because he could feel Jack's little sister? A strange feeling indeed... His mind rushed along, thinking of everything and examining her as she spoke miles a minute to Jack. 'She doesn't have the accent or the black hair but everything about her...' He felt like something went aflutter in his chest as he realized that maybe this was his chance to make things right, for the sake of September.
"Big brother it's the Bogeyman!" She jumped up and down fearfully, pushing on her older sibling with haste as if guiding him to the door and switching her gaze from him and to the dark figure that gazed back at her. "We've gotta run!"

"Mary..." Jack smiled and knelt down next to her. "Pitch I think it's time we stopped playing."

"Awwww...but I was having such fun playing with little Mary..." Pitch looked at Mary with a smile before whispering again "Boo." With a loud whimper she shoved herself back into her brother's embrace and tries to get him to move again.

"He's scary Jack! Make him stop!" She cried, on the verge of tears. Jack smiled and held her again, giving Pitch a look of reprimand before the older lover nodded in surrender and walked back around the bed at a normal pace, trying his best to not seem as 'scary' as he was before.

"It's alright Mary, that's not the Bogeyman." Mary looked at him with a face of relief and Jack decided that maybe he could play a little more, after all it wasn't fair that Pitch got all the fun..."...I think." Her expression went from comforted to fearful again and she looked back to where Pitch was just a few moments ago only to find an empty space then seeing a flash of black before turning to look on her opposite side, where Pitch roared at her and she shrieked again in shock and fright.

"Pitch." Jack spoke firmly, holding a now teary-eyed Mary and feeling ever so slightly guilty for her upset attitude – he knew both Pitch and himself had crossed the line with those last few scares...

Pitch could sense that he really struck a nerve in the fathering part of Jack's brain, now seeing for the first time that his beloved really had spent almost a decade raising Mary as a parent rather then a brother: most of the children he had counseled at his job that had older brother's usually would keep on scaring their younger siblings until an adult forced them to cease, but Jack stopped there and showed firmness. Pitch reluctantly agreed that he underestimated the level of fright he was causing Mary and bowed remorsefully. "My apologies...and my apologies to you too little Mary."

Mary wasn't convinced within the slightest, although her fear had died down ever so slightly she still cowered in the face of Pitch's overwhelming height and unique, alarming appearance. She never saw anyone with gray skin before in her entire short life until now. "Jack I'm scared..." She mumbled quietly, still trying to move Jack away as she saw Pitch as still yet a danger to her safety, all the stories and myths of the Bogeyman becoming frighteningly true to her.

"It's fine" Jack ran another hand through Mary's hair to calm her down, it worked semi-effectively and she stopped shaking if only a little bit.

"Is he really not the Bogeyman?" She asked him with still-watery eyes flashing in between the non-moving figure of Pitch and her brother's face.

"He's not most of the time" Jack said jokingly before chastising himself for lack of restraint, he knew should show a little if he was going to ask for Pitch to have some – even when the other man was older then him the very least he could do was set a standard of behavior for him to follow.

"Is he not the Bogeyman now?" She asked with her fear slowly stilling itself down and Jack smiled, he was sure she was braver then most but she was calming down much quicker then he expected. He considered that maybe that's what living what a real terror was like and the effect it had – the fictional ones just stopped being so chilling, even when they looked to be so real.

"I'm pretty sure he's not right now." He said comfortingly, planting a tiny kiss on Mary's forehead and ruffling her hair before carefully testing his little sister's bravery, releasing his hold on her and not holding her any more.
"I'm still scared of him..." She seemed to be telling the truth, she was still upset and shaking but she wasn't forcing herself into Jack's arms now and that was a good sign. From the edge of his peripheral vision he could see Pitch smiling, trying to seem friendlier then he originally let on.

"He's a normal person. His skin's just gray..." He tried to reassure her but she still now was not convinced and inside himself Jack felt moderately guilty – what if Pitch and her couldn't get along now that they had scared her so much? He hadn't planned on them meeting, that was indeed true, but he didn't want to set Mary up as seeing Pitch as her enemy or a fearful figure. He wanted them to get along...he gazed over to the looming figure with questioning eyes that asked for help. He received a nod in response.

"He looks weird..." Mary commented before looking at Pitch, who was now kneeling down as well before her, trying to look as non-threatening as possible.

He spoke softly and carefully chose his words, Jack thought he sounded like a voice you'd hear reading a children's book aloud. "If it helps you feel any better, my name is Pitch. I'm sorry for frightening you Mary." He bowed his head again before showing another grin and Mary looked at Jack with nervous eyes, the older sibling pointed to Pitch while looking at Mary and whispered a quick and reassuring 'go ahead.'

Mary left the sanctuary of her brother's proximity and entered Pitch's instead, looking over him curiously and deciding what to make of him. "Your skin." It seemed like she was walking on pins and needles still, trying not to offend Pitch or – in her mind at least – provoke the bogeyman. "...it's gray...if you're a normal person how come its all gray and creepy looking?"

A small chuckle left his mouth and he couldn't stop himself from showing a less forcefully characteristic smile and instead showing one much more honest and open. "It's because I took some very bad medicine is all." Nearby Jack could notice the difference, it seemed to be less about charming people into liking him and more about feeling 'happy'...he liked this facial expression better.

"Mary." Jack didn't think he was needed but decided he needed to be involved just a little bit more to help Mary relax more around his boyfriend – for all he knew they may be spending more time together in the future... "Pitch is fine. You know I wouldn't bring anyone into this house that would hurt you..."

"He still looks weird...I don't like him..." That last half of the sentence Mary knew was entirely true, she knew in her heart of hearts that Jack wouldn't bring anyone in that he knew would possibly harm her. She trusted her big brother and it showed in her eyes – Jack felt relieved at the sight of more light in her eyes and allowed himself a little relaxation for that moment.

"Milady Mary," Despite it not being his name being called, Jack turned to look at Pitch curiously. "If you could listen to me for a moment." Mary's ears seemed to perk up and she appeared to be paying attention. Pitch opened his mouth and sang again, ever gently. "Who lives in a pineapple under the sea?"

'Ooh Pitch you remembered...' Jack mentally cheered for his awkwardness in Pitch's house – glad that his useless rambling was actually doing something productive for them now.

Mary perked up happily and bafflingly quick, placing her hands behind her back and sang sweetly in her higher pitched voice. "Spongebob Squarepants..."

"See?" Pitch clapped his hands together in a short celebration of his success. "We both like the same things. We can get along just fine, I do believe."
"Oh really?" Her eyes playfully narrowed and the gray-skinned man took a moment to mentally chuckle, he could remember that same frolicsome look on Jack's face in the café before the caramel kiss that somewhat 'confirmed' their relationship. They were indeed brother and sister.

"Why yes, I'm sure." He confirmed, as if accepting the silent upcoming challenge to prove it – despite not knowing what the young Frost girl had in mind.

"Hmmm..." She thought, crossing her arms with a pout on her lips as she thought of an acceptable challenge to give the Bogeyman like figure standing before her. "Then...what's your favorite episode of Spongebob?"

"Hmmm..." He jokingly mirrored Mary expression with another pout and noticed her ever so slight smile that signaled she was no longer truly afraid of him. He felt as if a ton of pressure had left him, not knowing the pressure was even there in the first place but recognizing it as the ever-powerful hold of September and its evils. "Can I whisper it to you?" He asked with his voice increasingly positive and delightfully happy, for once he felt as if maybe September never happened and he was fine. Everything in his life was fine. September never occurred and left him scarred and unable to say those three little words – he forced himself to focus on the young girl standing before him.

Mary took a good look at him, wondering if she should go near – she wasn't afraid of Pitch but that didn't mean she was completely trusting of strangers. She looked to Jack who gave her another reassuring smile before she turned back to the awaiting older man. "Okay.." She approached him and turned her head so that he could whisper to her.

Jack couldn't make out his voice or what he was saying, but he could see the pleased and delighted smile on Mary's face and that was enough for him. Mary immediately came back to Jack and kept her voice very small and quick. "I take it back I like him." Her face beamed with a smile and Jack shook his head, unable to stop being so mesmerized by how Pitch charmed both his female family members in mere moments.

"Oh, now you like him." He jestingly rolled his eyes and got up from his knelt position, stretching just a little bit.

"Yup." A short concise answer from the young girl that didn't require additional explanation.

"Such a turncoat!" He mumbled, now approaching the bed and dropping himself on it exhaustively.

"Always."Mary ran back over to Pitch and gave him a caring hug that almost shocked the kneeling psychologist. "I'm sorry for being scared of you ."

"It's fine little one. Jack just simply can't understand the profound emotional connections of us Spongebob lovers." He said with a hint of up-stuck sarcasm in his voice before hugging Mary back and smiling. It felt like pounds and pounds of weight were finally shrugging their way off of his tired back and shoulders – like he was at last being freed from a heavy burden and allowed to at last cease carrying it all.

"Yeah. He's just mad because his favorite show isn't on T.V. Any more." Jack would have normally come up with something much better to say in response to Mary, but he was shocked she seemed to know the definition of 'profound'.

After a few brief moments Jack at last responded. "You know what? I'm sorry, it's quite clear that the Legend Lover is no longer needed amongst the Spongebob-ites. I'll go. I'm sorry." He laughed playfully before Pitch ruffled Mary's hair and at last discarded his coat to hang on the side of Jack's bed.
And the light hit his chest perfectly. At Pitch's house his lights weren't nearly as strong as the fluorescent blubs that were in this room and Jack could take note of the sinewy muscles on his chest and shortly after the sharpness of his own nails – now abruptly wondering how crazed he could drive Pitch without having to undress him after Mary ran off to keep on playing with her toys, either bored of her new Spongebob loving friend already or having an important imaginary playtime to get back to. Jack, knowing Mary, knew it was probably the later.

Pitch only bothered to speak his mind when Mary was out of earshot and Jack sat down opposite him at the foot of the bed. "But really Jack, now I understand a little better..." He kept his voice hushed so that the young child playing in the corner didn't hear them – it wasn't a subject that she needed to her right now.

Jack sighed, eyes focused on Mary's figure as she paraded a unicorn doll around in the air, moving it like it was flying. Her imagination always made Jack smile happily but the current topic made everything seem too dark and upsetting to actually enjoy. He could only faintly hear Pitch in the background and upon running the words again through his head he responded without really thinking. He understood Jack's life a little better now that he had visited the home and got the full 'Frost' experience, huge thanks to his father. "Don't worry about it."

An annoyed clicking of the older man's teeth resounded through the room and Mary looked over curiously for a half second, wondering what the two other occupants were speaking about. Pitch just smiled to her comfortingly and she decided that it must not have been anything of any real importance. "That's not going to stop me from worrying about it." He kept his voice lower in order to keep from gaining the younger Frost sibling's attention once again.

"Then just keep higher authorities out of it..." Jack said, interlocking and unlocking his fingers as he thought about Mary's future, Mary's safety...and how he was practically making it suicide bomb on itself with his insistence to keep police out of their lives. 'Stupid...' he thought, insulting himself once again and taking a breath to hold his emotions down.

"Jack, when are you turning 18 again?" The question was emergent and shocking, disturbing the previously calm pool of the room as Jack followed his train of thought and moved further towards the center of the bed, now lying next to Pitch who had already made himself rather comfortable as if he was in his own house.

"December 21." He told him again and ran his hands through his hair, not wanting to think so hard about the distance between then and now.

"Three months or so..." Pitch thought aloud, rubbing his own hands together in order to keep his hands busy and looking up at Jack's blank white ceiling like it had an enthralling and entertaining story to tell him.

"I know..." Jack absent-mindedly responded, licking his lips with his throat dying either out of sheer fear or just the terrifying realization that he would be in this house, with a man at least twice his weight and 1.5x his height, who wanted to kill him and had little in the way to stop him. He know that his father's senses of what was right and wrong and any possible sense of emotional connection were probably dulled and severed from years and years of consistent, repetitive alcohol abuse.

"Can you handle 90 more days of him?" He knew that what he just said was possibly the gravest thing to say and the worst possible way to say it but he also knew that just pretending like everything was okay would not help Jack or his current state of living. He needed to actually be honest about this and talk about things how they were, not how he wanted them to be. At most, he was upset about the lack of hope for Jack with his father in this house. He wished he could hope a little more for Jack but in a fight, the comparison between William and Jack's size and strength...William would
Jack took Pitch's lack of hope for him rather well, as if already knowing what he was thinking – the real truth of the matter being that this had been his life since the day he turned 8. "I think 'survive' would be the better word for what I might need to hope for." He crossed his legs and stretched his upper body, letting out a small sigh as he spoke. Pitch had to hold himself back to stop himself from screaming to his boyfriend and ask him what he was so O.K. With that.

"True..." All he could say, too appalled and depressed to say more.

Jack thought about the question though, wondering whether or not he was really expected to answer that...he decided that it would be the best course of option. "And...no. I don't think I can now." That was the truth. He didn't think he could take ninety entire days in the same house as William...judging from how fast he had to leave downstairs, making up such a completely bogus excuse to leave he'd say he could barely stand nine minutes with him.

Pitch nodded slowly in agreement, beginning to absorb the gravity of this situation and seeing it all clearly now: Jack's calling of the police must have made the entire thing much worse then what it was – he wasn't used to the murderous stares that his father was giving off now unlike how he said he was before. This level of animosity coming from his father was something new and fresh, an entirely new concept from what he was like before. "Me either, with all due respect to you. When we walked in he looked like he was quite literally on the verge of slaughtering your mother – no exaggeration."

"Not much I can do about it." Jack uncrossed his legs and tried not to let his real fear show, tried to keep up a certain self-confident level of bravado. But not because Pitch and Mary were here, watching him but because he needed to – he needed to convince himself that he wasn't afraid or scared, otherwise he wouldn't be able to take it. He needed to lie to himself and make it all much less then it actually was. "It's already bad that I left her alone when I met you...and today and yesterday."

Pitch looks over at Jack, surprised by his sudden change of attitude from scared to confident – obviously over compensating with blustering himself up, it wasn't an uncommon tactic but he didn't except Jack to switch to it so quickly. While the teen may not have been used to this level of violence or abhorrence in the air, he was used to finding ways to deal with it. It was slightly depressing...why couldn't he just depend on him a little more. He wondered if he could...just ever so slightly push Jack further towards him and away from this home that seemed to not care about him at all. "Couldn't you bring her with you to my house? I know your parents aren't the most attentive so you could've just lied..."

Jack looked at him as if he turned into a dragon and tried to unwind himself and his increasing amount of shock before speaking. "You...would've been okay with that?" Why would Pitch actually want to take care of him and Mary?

"Of course!" He said as if Jack was forcing him to say what was already obvious, the slightest hint of anger mixed with surprise and concern. Did Jack really not know that Pitch was more then willing to let Mary spend time with them? "She's practically already your daughter to begin with-

Jack tries to think for a moment, absorbing that quietly and thinking about what just occurred in front of him...he knew how to handle kids and seemed a little bit happier while he was comforting Mary, he'd never seen him that playful around anyone else and he was basically saying that Mary was his daughter? Was his boyfriend thinking that they could some sort of weird pseudo-family ? "Pitch...are you actually-

He was cut off by the yelling of a recognizable voice, calling out to them from the bottom of the
steps. "Dinner's almost ready boys!" Katherine's voice quiets the conversation of a brief moment of
time before Jack sees Pitch's face twist in deep annoyance and abhorrence of her choice of words.

"I'm 23." He let out an annoyed click of his tongue and sat up very slightly, stretching his fingers and
bridging them. "I'm pretty sure 'boy' is kind of an insult at my age."

Jack grinned happily and pushed himself into his lover's side with a small impish sneer. "Oh really?
You didn't seem to mind over the pho-"

A snort in response before Pitch pulled Jack ever closer, one arm now resting on the young man's
opposite shoulder, his words and tone betraying his current moments and way of embracing his
younger boyfriend. "Don't even."

Jack let out a joking chuckle before deciding to press on the previous issue. "I mean..." He bit his
tongue for a minute, trying to think of multiple reasons and logical responses that wouldn't result in
him inadvertently insulting him. "Why would you be okay about bringing Mary over?" It was the
best one he was capable of thinking of in such short notice.

Pitch's answer was so quick that Jack didn't believe he wasn't telling the truth; it was like his heart
was spilling from his mouth. "I don't like the thought of a child suffering alone in this house..." The
young Frost closed his eyes slowly, thinking of what Pitch meant by that before shaking his head at
himself and slamming his actions of leaving Mary alone in this house with William before just
handing her over to Katherine on a silver platter just so he could spend time with Pitch – he might as
well been the one abusing her.

He let out a mournful sigh before running a single hand through his hair and leaning out against the
headboard of his bed, making a soft 'thunk' on contact. "Sorry...it was wrong of me to leave her with
Katherine so I could spend time with you."

The golden eyed gaze he was given made Jack feel as if he should try to apologize for that apology.
The way Pitch's eyes looked so downcast and depressed when he looked over, like he was
personally upset or angry made the white-haired teen feel as if he was doing something wrong.
"Don't be. I wouldn't be half as dedicated to her if I was in the same position..." The truth of the
matter was that he was silently angry at himself, for making Jack think he had something to make
amends for. He swallowed as quietly as he could, holding down bile without realizing as he
continued to speak, remembering times when he would see a popular white-haired teen boy walking
a little brown haired girl to school.

He continued, ruffling his nose to stop himself from sniffling – that'd be far too much of a give-away
and the very last thing he wanted to do was break down in front of his younger boyfriend and his
little sister, even if she was almost exactly like – NO. "You think there are people who don't notice
how you bend over backwards for her? You think me seeing you in the Cafe was the first time I ever
saw you?" He questioned Jack while looking away from him, not wanting for the younger man to
see his eyes as he knew he was on the verge of tears – the emotions just seeing Jack could pull out
from him while he sat next to him, touching him as he thought about September would destroy him
under any other circumstances. "Be a bit more reasonable. This is a small town. I've run into you
multiple times, been right next to you sometimes even – we just never 'met' until Claussen and I
never even knew you were being abused." Pitch thanked his voice for not cracking or breaking to
reveal how depressed he really was from this...

"So you saw me taking her from school-" Jack's pushing on the issue, caused only by his own shock
that Pitch had actually seen him before, wasn't doing Pitch any favors...it was becoming harder to
hold back the torrents of emotion that were flowing inside of him. Jack was too much like him...it
hurt too much to hear him speak these things.
"I saw many things Jack." He made sure to put a sharp emphasis on 'many' before going on. "Most if not it all became clear after I got to talk to you... and finding out more about the home you live in now is actually near terrifying." Matter-of-factly voice and a strange humor mixed with a wave of ironic displeasure made him chuckle and sigh in pause between sentences."I know you talked about it back in Claussen but to really be here...You keep it together so well...the pure atmosphere alone would've killed me back when I was your age." Pitch brushes his hand through his hair, struggling to keep it together and held inside – September, blood splatters, candy NO. "It's incredible." He focused on talking and did all he could to swallow those thoughts back down, put them back into the emotionally dark abyss they crawled out of. "...You just looked like a young kid taking care of his little sister."

He could hear the faint sounds of sniffling and whimpers as a pre-warning to what was coming next – Jack's arms wrapping around him while he pressed the rest of his body up against Pitch's back, tears staining the soft shirt as the younger boy cried.

Pitch inhaled with unfocused anger, seeing himself as the main cause of Jack's current outburst of emotion – not seeing it as anything that could possibly be positive or happy. 'You keep on fucking up.' He chastised himself – it'd probably be best to just rip himself out from the younger man's life now before he wrecked it any more then he already did. "What is it? What did I-"

Jack's embrace tightened almost painfully so before tear kissed lips pressed themselves to his cheeks and the tickle of wet eyelashes made him smile a very difficult to see smile. A quick whisper, like a passing breeze moved past his ear before more kisses followed. "I never thought anyone noticed or cared is all..."

"Jack..." Pitch felt relived that for once he seemed to be caused Jack happiness rather then merely destroying the young lover's feelings. He turned his body around and gently pecked him on the forehead, trying to show as much affection as he could with the eight year old child in the room. "You really have been carrying this all alone..." He wasn't sure whether he was saying it in realization of Jack's plight or actually talking to his significant other but it didn't matter to either of them.

Jack was smiling. "Out of everyone to notice..."

Pitch playfully rolled his eyes, pleased to see that familiar sense of joy afflicting his voice. "Oh please you say that like I'm not observant..."

"I just find it strange..." Jack mumbled quietly, now shifting his body so he could hand Pitch further – neither of them paying attention to the young auburn haired Frost girl on the other side of the room giggling about the scene playing out before her. "I wasn't...I mean I didn't notice you before..."

"Really?" He chuckled and raised a single hand, burying it in the airy locks of snow white hair. "Gray skin not enough of a signal to draw me out of the crowd?" A slight eyebrow raise before another joking smile.

"No that's not what I mean-"

Another loud and identifiable yell pulled them apart. "Dinner's ready!"

The high-school attending lover considered finished that statement and letting his heart be known again but at the same time...he didn't want to make Katherine and William wait...and he was afraid of what would happen if he bared himself to Pitch again. They were on enough of a tight rope to begin with. "Time to go..." Jack pushes away, too quickly and hastily for a 'normal' departure from an embracing – it seemed more like a hasty and desperate escape to Pitch – and wipes his eyes clear
before heading downstairs wordlessly. Pitch gets up and walks behind him in a confused stupor – wasn't Jack just happy and pleased moments ago? He tries to move towards the steps but he feels a tug on his right hand and looks down to see a very serious looking Mary Frost.

"If I find out you made my brother sad, I will be hiding under your bed Mister. Bogeyman!" She points up at him accusingly with a fire in her eyes that brings a well of bright emotions through Pitch.

"Understood." Pitch smiles and bows respectfully before his eyes widen in realization and he kneels to the young girl, face marred with concern. Mary knew about their relation status - she had just witnessed everything. What if she went off blabbing about this to her friends at school, or her parents? Nothing good. Pitch was certain. "Mary, you must not tell your parents of anything me and Jack-

"Not a word. These lips are sealed." She makes a zipper-like movement with her hand over her mouth before showing Pitch a toothy and confident grin, another thing she obviously inherited from her older brother.

A gray hand rests itself on top of her hand thankfully before carefully messing up her hair. "Thank you milady Mary – your mother and father would be less then agreeable to our...relationship." His eyes narrow beyond his ability to control as he looks back towards the door.

"What? What's a ree-late-shun-ship? I didn't see nothin'." Mary beams knowingly and Pitch nods, realizing that Mary is much more observant and quick on the take then what she must give on; it's admirable and it reminds him once again of September – he feels a splitting, alarming headache about to approach and he gets up, taking Mary's little hand as they both head downstairs to dinner. 'Don't think about it...what happened two years ago is in the past.' He mumbles over and over to himself as he and Mary leave Jack's room...

And the moment he enters the living room he wishes that he could immediately grab onto back Jack and Mary run right back upstairs – possibly call the police if need be and from the look that William was giving him from the dining room if he didn't do something soon, need would certainly be.

Chapter End Notes

I drew you guys something special too - it was just a short doodle while I was thinking up some more idea for the chapter and stuff...

http://angelblaze2012.tumblr.com/image/54320770525

Enjoy an image of our dearest little Mary.
Modern Family

Chapter Summary

Pitch precariously places his perfectly picked out pimping pants on his lower body appendages.

Hilarity and William vs Pitch ensues.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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Pitch was much more then willing to admit that William's eyes before preached and screamed 'bloody murder' from his mere stare in their general direction, as if he hated their very souls on sight and planned on doing unspeakable things to him and his own son – and Pitch thought that as someone who actually had a lot of life problems that it was okay if William was turning his rage against him. He had gray-skin, he literally came out of nowhere and might as well have just ignored the brown haired father as he came into the house and made himself at home in his son's bedroom...
Even turning his rage against Jack would be heavily expected. It would make moderate sense that William would see his son's action of calling the police as an act of subversiveness and strike out at him physically – even after coming back to the house. It wasn't uncommon for a parent to feel as if their own kin was betraying them in such a way – even if it was something meant for the benefit of the family.

The last thing he expected was for him to turn the entire situation on its head and take it out on almost too friendly, happy, non-abusive seeming Katherine. Even if her welcoming and warm personality at first seemed almost a little too polite for a married woman, he didn't foresee William actually hitting her even with Jack's previous story that pointed to William actually being capable of doing the contrary.

At least, that's what he believed happened with the fresh bruise staining Katherine's previously unflawed face, standing out like a sore thumb against her usually light cream colored skin and with the half angry and half satisfied smirk now resting ever peacefully on the Frost father's lips he couldn't quite find any other explanation.

If that was not enough he took half a second to look to his side and find an extremely ire-filled Jack Frost, glaring at his father who simply stayed seated in his navy blue recliner and looked back – his eyes dancing with glee at the new injury he just caused while his son's normally peaceful or mischievous untouched-ice blue irises seethed with hatred. Pitch realized, there was no fright or mention of fear staining him anymore, just pure dislike and contempt for the ever delighted, surprisingly sober man.

Behind him he felt movement and looked down to see Mary, whimpering and grabbing onto his leg as she stood behind him with her little fingers gripping tightly into the material of his pants and worrying him greatly. Every movement and gesture of her body giving off two emotions, fear and anxiousness. But Pitch wasn't sure whether she was terrified of her father...

Or of what might happen next.

Pitch couldn't blame her – the tension of the room was strung so high that the slightest movement could result in a fight that he didn't doubt would turn physically harmful...if not deadly given William's alcohol usage and Jack's already emotionally distressed personality.

For the first time, as a psychologist who was expected to try and guess what people were feeling and resolve their issues he really had no idea what he was supposed to be doing now. He felt out of place and awkward, not like someone who was actually in another person's house about to eat another person's food but rather more like he shouldn't be here, witnessing this and absorbing it all.

He could see why Jack was having trouble choosing between protecting Mary or running to him – even if this place wasn't usually this bad it would still be an absolute hellhole and after a moment of gazing at the faces of the family surrounding him it began to actually infuriate him to his core. His boyfriend, who deserved the best life could give him lived in a place like this, dealt with a family like this, day after day after day. He never told anyone except for Pitch about this before. Jack didn't – intentionally—run to a mental help specialist, he didn't ask to be taken away or given to another family, he didn't even call the police for his own protection – that had been for his abusive, blaming, victimizing mother who continued to abuse him after.

He wasn't able to stop himself when he let out a groan of disgust and leered as he gazed again at William who seemed to almost grow even happier, more jubilant upon seeing the sneer of repulsion that marred Pitch's face. As if daring him to do something about it, daring him to make a move and just try to stop him.
At the moment when the black haired man felt he was finally about to break and launch himself at William in ire, Katherine spoke aloud in an ash-gray monotone voice that was devoid of even the slightest hint or speck of colored emotion. "The food is getting cold."

It was like she flipped a switch in Jack and Mary, who let down their guard and walked into the living room in an almost inhuman fashion – their steps seemed so lifeless, heavy and regretful. So un-childlike. Lacking the type of happiness, mirth and adolescent glee that Pitch would expect the child to feel and be filled with at Mary's age or at least show a faint flash of at Jack's.

His younger lover turned to him before sitting down at the sofa, gesturing to the seat next to him with a cock of his head. "You coming?"

It was atrociously foul, all of it. It brought the acrid taste of stomach acid back to his mouth and he had to withstand the wild urge to retch and heave dry vomit, tumble into the bathroom and empty himself whatever scraps of food his stomach could refuse. He held it down calmly and strode into the living room, every step reminding himself not to kick William as he passed by – nearly failing as he stood for a half-second longer then he should have in front of his chair.

He ignored the look of challenge that the abusive father gave and continued to walk, seeing that starting a fight – no matter how justifiable and beautifully righteous it would feel to shove his foot in William's ass – would make him no better then the abuser, making a horrible sight and (arguably) unrequested drama and worry for the children and the wife of the family.

This however, did not mean Pitch would back down from such a challenge which he made sure was shown as he grabbed his plate, which was originally positioned so that he'd be sitting opposite the room from William and moved in between Katherine and Jack, making Mary the furthest from the often aggravated man.

'William Frost...I believe this challenge will be one you lose. You can count on it.' He thought with a grin before glancing with an almost-seductive gaze at the now blushing Katherine, laying it on thick with a charming smile that spoke of nothing but sweet care and appreciation, now feeling more sorry for her upon realizing – 'I should've realized this when Jack first told me damn it' – that although Katherine had a choice to be here, a choice to leave this place and run away she was obviously terrified of what William could possibly do to her if she ever did. "I don't suppose we pray before eating."

"Ummm...no William isn't...um- religious." Her tone spoke volumes, if the fact that she specifically said 'William isn't religious' and not 'We aren't religious' wasn't enough to go on. She plausibly was of some type of spiritual denomination of belief but William wasn't letting her follow it.

These words changed everything for him – Katherine wasn't likely abusive so much as she was probably crying for help from her son, who was consistently showing that he was stronger then her by taking beatings for her and standing up both for her and against her. He knew Jack couldn't keep living in the same house as his father, he wasn't emotionally or mentally strong enough yet even though he was stronger then Katherine...but he hadn't considered that maybe Jack's mother wasn't strong enough to live in the same house as his father – he thought the two would be more of an abusing couple rather then what they actually seemed to be.

He silently considered that maybe that was why she had yelled at her son over the phone. Maybe she was more enraged with herself for being unable to do anything against William, including stay away for an extended period of time, and was just trying to vent with the easy cop out of using her son who she believed could take the abuse as a type of bucket for her emotions.

She more then likely hadn't considered that Jack was laggardly beginning to overflow.
He pitied her. Especially as William's eyes hardened behind her, likely planning further physical and emotional abuse of his spouse and children who he knew believed were almost waiting for further punishment like a criminal getting ready for a losing trial – reluctant and unwilling but having no choice in the matter and no hope to change things.

A hand none to gently shoved its way past his arm, hitting him just hard enough to get his attention. He looked up quickly to see Jack motioning to his plate while he disguised his attention-getting shrug as a reach for the remote. The older gray-skinned man didn't need further explanation 'Eat and stop looking around' was an obvious enough choice of what to do – he just wish that he hadn't made that promise to Jack to keep it all secret and closed in, brushed under the rug.

He had seen what places like this could do to a person, how they affected them mentally and how emotionally scared and ruined they were afterward – it was never pretty picking the pieces from abusive parents. PTSD, nightmares and...

He quickly shoved a fork of chicken pieces into his mouth and tried to focus – Mary had long since grabbed the television remote away from her older brother and changed the channel to Spongebob.

"Look look, !" She giggled with excitement as she sat back down at the table and grabbed a forkful of her own food as a familiar figure appeared – a poorly drawn imitation of Spongebob, Doodlebob was yapping gibberish that he couldn't understand...this was the very same episode he told Mary that he liked...and he really did enjoy this episode.

Just not right now. Not with William's soulless seeming pupils burrowing a burning hole into the side of his skull as if he was digging a tunnel with his stare alone. Pitch felt half obligated to look back while the other half of him felt obligated to find a very nice, painfully drawn-out way to kill the man without feeling any guilt about it after the fact. Something worth the jail-time and potential death sentence. Jack nudged him once more and whispered very quietly. 'General rule of thumb, Mary gets the remote because she's more T.V. savvy then the rest of us.'

'Got it.' He whispered hastily before continuing to finish his food and keeping himself alert to any movement coming from William's side of the room – he didn't doubt that something as innocent and careful as a nudge could set him off.

"So, Pitchiner was it?" The voice was the first time he ever heard William speak...and he realized faintly that he was talking to him.

Every cell in his body screamed for him to tell William to fuck off and go die in the deepest, darkest, most soul sucking and frightfully inescapable hole mankind and mother nature could possibly ever join forces to dig. But he reeled himself back in and decided that it'd be best if he responded peacefully...and mastermind a plan to kill him after he finished eating. Much easier to think of tortuously slow mutilation and the steps on rebuilding a bronze bull on a full stomach. "Indeed. Nice to meet you." He had to force the following out of the very bottom of his throat as he was subconsciously swallowing down the words and refusing to speak them – especially to this man. "My apologies for not saying hi to you earlier." 'Apologies my ass you fucking piece of loser scum' he couldn't resist the wild want to say that but he decided it'd be best to manifest it into a wide, self-satisfied grin – just what he did.

He swore he could feel the entire opposite side of the room shift onto its side from the pure force of William's anger...and Pitch just kept on smiling. He refused to stop and be distressed and maddened because of the Frost father's lack of decency and self-control...and the other side of the room just kept on getting worse and worse...

He completed then and there that just being happy around William could tick him off...and oh god he
made a mistake letting his rage show. Pitch refocused his attention on being as sweet and charming and heart-warming as he possibly ever could in his life.

"The food is delicious Katherine!" He glanced to her and smiled with a closed mouth. It wasn't a lie that Katherine was a wonderful chef – he was just being slightly over dramatic about it...not enough to raise Katherine's suspicion luckily enough. "I'm inclined to come and visit you more often just for your cooking."

The beaming rose colored blush on the older woman's face made her almost glow with embarrassment and delight – 'She must not get many compliments living in this house.' - before she responded with a light smile. "Thank you Pitch, I'm so glad you enjoy it." She absorbed the praise like a hungering plant absorbed water – it was like he had turned on a light in her and satisfied her on an emotional level. Pitch couldn't decide whether the fact that a mere simple compliment about her cooking could put her on the moon was just plain depressing or a horror story within itself.

"So Pitch -" William's voice spoke volumes of aggravation and haste – he realized now that Pitch was just naturally more charming and sweet then him, even through what could've been his mind sickened with constant inebriation he could see that. "Where are you from?"

'No reason to lie, I'm winning this.' He thought confidently and glanced over at William who appeared more threatening and terrifying in stature as he leaned a few sparse but important inches closer, leaning over in his chair with interest. 'Relax.' He showed William a wide fox's grin.

"Germany, born and raised."

"Oh..." William leaned back into his chair with his hands crossed and a non-friendly look on his face, as if he found something important, powerful and useful to attack and assault him with. "And wait – how old are you again?"

"Twenty-three." He answered quickly without lying or thinking about whether or not he should lie to the now pleased gentleman leaning back in his chair, obviously brainstorming some kind of heinous plot. He didn't look unlike a super-villain planning some form of unspeakable and dastardly evil...

Before he could stop it the thought of William having some type of evil mustache to twirl around his fingers while he cackled manically, standing near two ugly looking henchman that were busy tying a helpless Jack to train tracks and – he let out a loud laugh that was almost unbecoming of him before he could stop it from making its way out.

Luckily Jack had chuckled too after a half second..he was appreciative he hadn't been the only person to laugh, it absolved him from the need to provide any revealing explanation. He made sure to make a mental note to thank his young, deserving boyfriend later.

Another forkful and only a couple more to go, he could feel William's murderous ire almost take on a physical form, almost like that of a devil or a demon of some sort – and it was easy for Pitch and Jack, to see why.

Jack was laughing with him. Katherine was smiling. Mary seemed to actually trust him more then William – no surprise there. And most importantly, Pitch had done that – it wasn't thanks to anyone but him that they were all grinning and feeling happiness. Pitch demanded their attention with his level of personal magnetism, his tenderhearted voice and care for them even with his skin condition. The rest of the Frost family ceased to pay much attention to the 'father's displeasure or anger...

William felt like he was slipping away from his place, like this place would soon no longer belong to him and he couldn't control them with fear and threats like he was so used to doing – and to Pitch that was a damn good thing.
"So how long have you been here?" William's fingers bridged and he used them as a pillow for his chin as he tried to star Pitch down, get him to give in and concede.

Both barely noticed Jack watching and listening, wide eyed and smiling. He never thought Pitch would actually try to stand up to his father face to face like this, much less succeed so perfectly well and answer every question. Not only that but to smile while doing it – he never thought that his usually anti-humanity, sarcasm-loving boyfriend was capable of pulling off the 'kill em with kindness' strategy with such gut-busting skill.

And he was really learning things about Pitch! He never would've guessed he was an immigrant from Germany, unless that was a lie which he strongly doubted, his English was so perfect and without any heavy accent or tone to speak of – with the exception of a faint note of English twang to his words. Jack had to look away and make sure he wasn't drooling or staring before shoveling more food into his mouth to shut himself up and stop from looking too interested.

"I've only been here for the past five years or so, mainly came here to pursue my passion with a close friend of mine." He already knew what the overly argumentative 'father''s next question would be and he was almost shining with pleasure from the answer he could give.

"So what exactly is this...passion that drove you to America, Pitchiner," Pitch almost opened his mouth to answer before William kept going, a wide grin now etched on his face. "Aside from my son I mean."

Both he and Jack nearly jumped from their seats, hearts pounding in disbelief from what they both just heard leave the other man's mouth – neither of them thinking that Will even knew about their relationship, how could he? Who could have possibly tipped him off...or was it a guest? A test? A trick to try and get Pitch to confess something that he didn't have to?...

The older man calmly and speedily explained. "No, thank you. I'm a psychologist." Pitch didn't think that he could ever found out, not even if he had followed them or had someone else do it there was no possible way that the alcoholic was attentive enough, smart enough or cunning enough to ever possibly catch them both in the act...but that was the main question. Had he and Jack been stealthy enough in guarding their relationship? Were they too open and too far out in the public eye?...

He briefly recalled the make out session in the cafe and felt the need to face-palm himself in self-punishment – far too open considering that would be breaking at least two different laws even while Jack was willing. But William couldn't possibly have seen them there?...Right? It was an impossibility...or so Pitch liked to hope.

"My apologies." An obvious lie – he didn't give a single flying fuck about what he just said but Pitch silently prayed that he didn't know that it was the honest truth. "I've obviously made you uncomfortable..." He intentionally cooed to Pitch as if sarcastically degrading him, insulting him and inwardly laughing over his victory.

In an unexpected huff of breath Katherine suddenly got up in the middle of both of them – all eyes averted to her and for a brief moment Pitch hoped that maybe she had reached her breaking point with her husband, that she might actually put her foot down and end this madness or take her children and leave. But instead she picked up her own plate and headed into the kitchen to discard it.

'So much for that.' A heavy mental sigh before Pitch moved his attention back to the abusive husband that was now smiling from ear-to-ear, whether or not he was actually catching onto the lovers' secret relationship remaining to be seen. "My own fault, really. I often work with young children, help them get over their fears." The complete truth – he specialized in helping kids get over serious fears and decoding the messages hidden inside their nightmares and dreams. "It just...disgusts
me that someone would put me in the position of harming the very people I help." Also completely true. He remembered a time when a less than appreciative mother had called him a pedophile and a disgusting human being based purely on the fact that he was in a room alone with her child for fifteen minutes talking about her son's fear of large crowds - he made sure the woman received a hefty bill and never stepped foot near his office again.

"I'm sure...in any case Doctor-" Pitch wasn't sure whether or not he should take offense to that, sure he was using the title but every word that left William's lips sounded like an affront to his own humanity...and a plea to launch a fist directly to his jaw. "How did you and Jack meet?"

"Cafe." True. "I was studying." And there was the first falsehood he told during this entire conversation and damn did it feel good.

"So was he, we found out we were studying for the exact same thing and decided we'd team up for it."

"So your going for your degree but you're already a psychologist..." William looked at him in a knowing smile, thinking he had him in a lie...

"I'm going back for a Master's soon." A smooth and quick reparation that made the smile fade from William's lips and re-emerge on his own quicker than he thought was possible.

"Well then, you should be set Jack." He glanced over to the young male Frost and Pitch could only mentally pray that he wouldn't blurt out something stupid.

'This is a fight between us, leave my Jack out of it!' He failed to recognize that he thought 'my' and instead got up with his finished plate, stepped smoothly over William's outstretched legs that had almost tripped him up and made him fall. He could sense the feeling of spite irradiating from behind and couldn't stop the chuckle that left him...

His win. 1-0.

Pitch steps back into the living room with a victorious aura about him, every part of him practically screaming 'hate me then eat me' to the infuriated man sitting down in the recliner. The passing sight of his short nails digging into the wooden arm rests and crawling their way up in hate – he certainly had a flair for the dramatic; 'He still can't stand shoulder to shoulder to me.' Pitch grinned as he once again dodged William's feet and took his place back next to Jack, giving him a pleased gaze as the young teen finished the rest of his dinner. A nimble glance round the room confirmed that both Katherine and Mary had cleared out – he wasn't even sure when the young daughter finished her dinner. He was slightly worried that maybe she had left from fear since he was no longer in the living room despite his leaving being only a short few minutes at worst.

Pitch signed and resigned himself to watching Jack with attentive golden eyes that traced ever movement. He knew that some people who were not like him, not as enchanted by their partners as he was to his, would frown upon it but he enjoyed watching Jack eat – especially the intricate movements of his beautiful, untouched pink lips that he could just barely mentally record for later usage. The thought of his young lover's amateur, virgin mouth embarrassingly, uneasily wrapping around some other type of meat was enthralling and captivating...

He made sure to break eye contact with the boy sooner rather than later – he'd already attracted too much attention from William before hand, he didn't need any more...but then again with the smoking holes that his gaze was putting in the back of his head he was certain that he couldn't quite get much more of his attention.
Instead he turned to face the father with a charming beam and caring eyes. "Well then William, if you have any more questions now – I believe – would be the correct and perfect time to ask them." He was bordering on too far, too outright rude but at this point in their little challenge it was almost like a thrill or a burst of adrenaline to insult him, see how far he could push, annoy and patronize.

He swore that he could see William reeling himself back in, trying to get a solid hold of himself before he asked anything. Pitch mentally laughed at him, as loud and as hard as he possibly ever could without letting it slip out of his lips. 'He doesn't know when to quit.'

"So, Pitch...I was wondering what exactly is your specialization in psychology?" He was trying to sound as sophisticated as he could ever be but Pitch could tell that he was far out of his depth when it came to any specific branch of psychological science.

He'd entertain him. "I work in Clinical Psychology, its the most...emotional perhaps of the numerous different branches." The extended explanation was not something that he had to say so much as it just made him feel so much more intelligent then the abusive drunk sitting across the room from him. It was empowering to wave his status and logical intelligence over the other man's head.

Almost too quick to react, William stormed up and out of his chair walking towards Pitch at a stormy pace. Jack opened his mouth to warn Pitch but his boyfriend has already gotten up, a charming smile still plastered on his face as the other approached at an impersonal and brutal speed until at last they were face to face.

Jack could clearly see the difference between the two of them like this. Pitch clearly didn't weigh as much as William did – beer clearly not helping his physique – and he was taller by at least six or seven inches, but William was surprisingly more built then fat and in the end probably had more muscle for hurting as opposed to Pitch's lean, sinewy body.

Only after did he notice the tension becoming too much for him to quell if it went on any further, not that he was too successful in calming William down when they didn't have male guests that completely outdid him in every way. The teen got up with both his own and Mary's plate in hand and stepped in-between the two, turning to Pitch with a deceptive smile that didn't trick either of the two older men into believing he had no alternate motive. "Pitch. I think I'm gonna go finish up this week's work...you coming?" Jack turned and made his way to the kitchen, being sure to dump his plates.

He didn't catch it when Pitch walked right past William, both of them parting with these words to one another.

'Drunk.'

'Faggot.'

—

When Pitch and Jack met by the door of his room and William stormed out of the house, slamming the door all too loudly behind him to signal his leaving – as if it was supposed to be some sort of depressing moment for anyone inside the house. Unbeknownst to the raging alcoholic the four remaining people inside were happy as all hell to have him finally gone from the house again.

"Nice conversation Pitch." Jack nudged him more then little gently and headed up the stairs in front of him with an air of anger and well-focused ire dripping off of his being.

Pitch thought for a moment if he did something wrong downstairs that would have angered Jack –
but he couldn't think of anything even as he reached the final step on into his room. Sure, he had arguably initiated a non-physical fight with William but it thankfully stopped before it had gotten any worse. Was it the fact that he had been a little too sweet to Jack's mother that was angering him? He didn't seem to have a problem before...

"If you have a death wish for the both of us," Jack crossed his arms and leaned against the headboard of the bed in a position that screamed of condescension. "I would have really appreciated it if you ran it through with me first." The haze he threw Pitch's way had the older man realizing now that it wasn't something other then the fight that had him angry – he ticked off William, who was already abusive and Jack had to live with him. Jack even brought him here – his father would blame him for Pitch's appearance and take it out on him and perhaps even Mary.

'Oh God...' Pitch grabbed the side of his head in panic and ran his fingers through his head as he saw the err of his ways. He might as well have put a target on Jack and his little sister's back and told William to stab, slice and brutalize away. 'Again...again I fucking ruined everything.' Of course he would, he figured. He always ruined things in September and now he might as well be escorting another child to their death because 'why the fuck not?'

The front part of his skull felt as if it was on fire, panic over taking him and making the room feel wobbly and unstable as he tried to think his way through it all. "Mother of Christ..." He swore under his breath and grabbed the foot of Jack's bed, trying to steady himself to not fall over as his vision swam and bile rose again.

"Pitch!" Jack quickly moved to his side and ran a soft, sweet hand through his black locks that calmed him over the next few minutes – sweat ceased to bead on his skin and the room calmed, the pungent taste of stomach acids reaching and aching his throat with their acidic liquids but never quite coming close to forcing him to vomit up the dinner Katherine made for him. It was a total relief when he found himself standing upright again, one hand still resting on the foot of the bed more to keep himself from collapsing onto it in relaxation rather then as a pillar to keep himself standing.

And they stayed like that for awhile with Jack's fingers combing their way through his hair – the younger man admiring how the black jungle that sat atop Pitch's head tangled around his fingers but still felt like silk on the palm of his hands – and Pitch himself just enjoying the love and care he was receiving after such a brutal battle had occurred downstairs.

He chastised himself lightly even as the comfort went on, why wasn't he smart enough to pay attention to that one basic fact?! He might as well have left Jack in a cage with a vicious man eating lion. Before he could even finish that thought he had to endure riding another wave of nausea, another flashback of September and another forced swallow of stomach acid and near-regurgitated chicken stir fry.

And Jack was still there, growing ever closer and whispering sweet little comforts into his ear as if sensing his need for relaxation and companionship in this weakened moment, despite Pitch's mistake. The light warmth of his hands now messaging their way across his scalp as the sight of Jack's face growing ever closer, lips looking so entirely kissable but his breath was tarnished by the scent of vomit – he was sure. He stayed away for that specific reason.

"Jack..." He said his name desperately, as if it was his life blood and reason of living, because right now as images of that one bloody day in September played out in his mind again he couldn't help but cling hopelessly to some one, some thing that he knew for certain was actually there and assured him that it wasn't two years ago today, he was in the present. He could relax. "You and Mary need to get out of this house and away from that man." He wasn't sure he could even hold back anymore waves of vomit as he tried to rise again and the world spun dangerously around him, warning him to stay
low.

"For right now let's make sure you are okay alright?" Jack said with a concerned voice and pulled on Pitch's sleeve with a careful, guiding hand. "Come lie down. It'll help." Reassuring, gentle, he wasn't in the crumbling remains anymore...he was with Jack.

As he cautiously lowering himself down onto the bed September's images relented and gave away to a feeling of comfort that had him wanting to hold and embrace Jack right here, in his own bed. 'Oh the places we could go...' he joked lightly as he fully relaxed on the bed with Jack's pacifying hand trailing up and down the column of his spine, unknowingly unwinding tensions all across his older boyfriend's body with this mere touch.

"Are you alright? Well...no...you're paler then...well you're paler then what's normal for you...but are you at least feeling better?" Obviously anxious and concerned – Pitch found himself grinning up at Jack in a state of post trouble bliss. Jack cared, he pushed aside his own anger just to help him...

"Much better..." He emitted a noise that sounded strangely of sex and want, his one of his hands reaching up to cup Jack's cheek and he closed his eyes as he felt the younger man's skin beneath it. Soft and warm to the touch. Jack smiled happily and he could feel pressure against his open palm, his lover leaning in appreciatively to his touch.

He could not say that he loved Jack. But he did. It was just becoming more and more evident to him as he was drawn into the younger man's world and life, becoming closer to him then anyone he had been with before in recent years. Jack made September...feel less scary, less like a reminder of all of his screw ups and perhaps more like a mere month on the calendar. An important date but nothing to panic over..."Jack..." He whispered quietly, opening his eyes again and seeing large blue ones that seemed to be dilated – mirroring his own emotions. "You can't..." He shook his head quietly and allowed his hand to drop from the high-schooler's face and onto his own, trying to quell the wave of emotion that came over him. "You can't stay here Jack..." The words came out like a mumble but the truth was much louder. "I know its obvious and it doesn't need to be said but..."

"I know..." Jack ran his fingers down from Pitch's scalp, slowly running them against the back of neck with his gaze towards Pitch but not focusing on him. Instead he was thinking of plans and ideas to leave this house and run away somehow..."But I've got nothing...no ideas..."

The older man thought for a second, enjoying the feeling against him and then let out an exhale of warm breath that signaled him switching from 'Loving' mode to 'Thinking' mode."...I've got a few."

His eyes came to focus on his older lover again, ears alert and body almost tense with attention. "I'm all ears."

"Family membe-"

"All in Russia, Germany or Alaska." Jack cut him off like the information was something he had committed to memory and reminded himself of everyday, almost robotic in the tone of voice with which he said it...Pitch realized this couldn't be the first time he thought of a full-blown absolute escape.

"Child services?"

"Like I said, no outside powers." Another almost mechanical response and Pitch couldn't help but give him a wide eyed look of disbelief before pointing the door leading downstairs and giving a look of 'Really?!'. Jack responded with a mouthed 'Yes. Really.' The gray skinned man had to hand it to Jack – he was devoted to keeping this family together, or at least the non-abusive part of the family
together.

Jack kept speaking though, as if it wasn't enough. "I'd much rather have a chance of keeping this family together."

"Why? You aren't the one ripping it apart!" He bit his tongue after reaching the end of that sentence, too much anger that was supposed to be directed at William came out there. He shook his head and ran a hand over his face in self-disgust, he didn't want to become Katherine and just unload all of his emotions of Jack just because he was emotionally strong.

"That." He pointed to Pitch with an unemotional expression. He tried to make it sound otherwise but to Pitch it sounded like he was being chastised – he decided to just lie there and take it, figuring that he deserved it after that last statement. "Is why I care. I'm not the one ripping it apart...William is. I never wanted anything to be like this."

A few seconds of damned silence that had them both thinking of what to say next before Pitch decided to be the bold one. "I'm sorry." It was loaded with more suppressed emotions then he could manage at one time and he pushed himself up carefully, kissing Jack with the sweetest of intentions...

Jack's arms wrapped around him and Pitch could feel his hands and fingers moving and touching the shirt as if trying to break through the cloth. Their lips melted against one another and upon breaking apart Pitch decided that he wouldn't have anymore of this.

He knew what people would do upon finding out...they'd hate him for it. They'd call him rude, disgusting, vulgar things like 'pedophile' and 'pervert', they would spit at him in hatred but...he would be damned to the profoundest parts of hell before he sat by and watched this all play out just because it was three months before Jack turned 18.

"Jack...come live with me." Pitch said, rising up and holding Jack close to him in an innocent embrace. He could remember their less then decent meeting in the cafe where it had been about lust...this was about love. This was his definition of love...

Taking a risk and being there for him to try and make his other's life as happy as possible.

He could feel Jack hug him tighter, more clingy then usual and let out shallow breaths – he was trying not to cry...he clearly knew the risks too. "Pitch..." He felt like his chest ached physically as his mind ran through everything that could possibly happen. 'Jail, loss of license, my father could come after him'. "We can't...there's too much. You can't..."

"Watch me." He whispered, kissing the side of Jack's neck and admiring how his younger lover moved his head to the side let out a gentle pant of warm breath.

"M-my..." He gasped as he felt Pitch's tongue begin licking the more sensitive parts of his neck, setting parts of him alight that he could thankfully hide...for a little while. "My parents would n...yes...not let it happen." He gasped and his hands, merely touching before, became his nails slowly scrapping down the unfortunately still clothed back.

Pitch ceased his administrations and smiled widely at Jack, admiring the little pout on his lips from his neck being abandoned. "Of course they won't...but you need a lot of studying time and besides, Mary needs to go out and get fresh air, visit friends, keep a nice social life..." A knowing grin..."You're just following all the responsibilities of a big brother while studying for College...that may or may not be you getting a degree in psychology, honestly I'm not sure that part of the plan matters that much."
Jack gazed at him for a moment, admiring the brilliance of his plan and wondering why the hell he didn't think of that before. It was the perfect plan. He got to spend time with both Mary and Pitch, he got time away from home and it wouldn't arouse too much suspicion from anyone.

"Of course though Jack," Pitch's grin turned into an ear to ear smile. "You also need your alone time as well...going out and eating pizza and perhaps an expensive restaurant with a...quote off quote 'friend'?”

"Oh yes! I have...such a busy schedule that I'll only have time to do my homework and sleep before I ran back out the door!" He chuckled and bounced on the bed in excitement, Pitch had to stop himself from getting excited at the sight of him – Jack was on the line between incredibly cute and undeniably sexy in a partly faux-innocent *acting seductive in a school uniform* type of way. "And honestly, Mary has been asking me to take her to the arcade and mom needs a break I'm sure so I'll just have to take her...but I don't have a car...I'll just call my 'study partner'." He laughed loudly and hugged Pitch with wide open arms and whispered to him. "Thank you...so much."

"Jack...you aren't even capable of understanding how welcome you are." Pitch whispered quietly, enjoying this delicate moment as it was...he noted his foolishness. How could he even think of killing himself when Jack obviously needed him? When he was so required in his beloved life?

He'd live on. Just for Jack and his little sister.

No one else.

Chapter End Notes

Funfact: The next chapter eventually brings an end to SOME of your angst, but only that caused by lack of sex...and it is really gonna seem out of place.

Fun fact 2: I'm itching to write a fanfic based on a what-if if Jack took the offer in Antarctica...and this chapter marks the about halfway point in the story.

Fun fact 3: Pitch's episode choice or should I say 'Doodlebob' is actually an inside joke...and HEAVILY relates to the second half of the fic...that we are about to enter.

--

Modern Family is a comedic drama television show, for those of you wondering what the title reference was.
Jack gazed at him for a moment, admiring the brilliance of his plan and wondering why the hell he didn't think of that before. It was the perfect plan. He got to spend time with both Mary and Pitch, he got time away from home and it wouldn't arouse too much suspicion from anyone.

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"Jack...you aren't even capable of understanding how welcome you are."

3 hours later...

Pitch was lucky enough to have to leave before his mother or father raised any questions – or before the latter came back in a drunken, hazy state of easily irritated anger. The less then beloved father had not yet returned from whatever bar he stomped off to after Pitch won their immature but entertaining battle.

But he was bored...and still moderately turned off after Pitch left. He didn't have per-say a hard, raging, leaking boner that needed his immediate attention but he was in a mood for a difficult 'problem' that Pitch refused for the second time in their relationship to solve...and so he decided that he'd finish himself...

But this time, unlike last time, he had a computer with a fully working internet in the room to help him with his 'problem'. He figured there was no real reason to actually masturbate if he didn't have anything to really go on – even the last time he got off it was with Pitch's voice purring seductively from the opposite side of town through a phone...

Within five minutes he found something that he actually got excited about on sight...

Oral sex porn...between two guys. He blushed frantically before he started watching it, not knowing quite what to expect but trying his very hardest – no pun intended – to at least give it a shot. Worse case scenario was that he didn't like it and it killed his want to actually get off to Pitch, which would actually be relieving...He pressed the play button on the video and the explosion of dirty words and noises coming through his all-too loud speakers made him jump and as quickly as he could, quiet down the less then decent sounds.

After making sure that his mother and sister hadn't become curious of his actions he began the video again, this time with his eyes pointed to the screen in lust and need – the mere sight of the sexual
interaction being enough to turn him on.

'Mmmh...come on...' The moan that left his speaker had him thinking of Pitch, how massive his cock really was, what he could be doing to him or what they could do to each other. He took a deep breath and unzipped his tightening pants before collapsing back onto his bedspread – eyes barely able to stay glued onto the screen as they rolled back into his head. He hissed through locked teeth and gazed at the screen in lust – the sight of one of the attractive actors dropping onto his hands and knees and immediately working the other man's erection with his mouth, swirling teasingly around it with his tongue before kissing the tip and then taking the whole erection into his mouth. It looked so big, so hard to take down but at the same time Jack couldn't help but wonder how it would feel for Pitch's manhood to enter into his own mouth. Would it be heavy and hard, make him mouth feel so unbelievably full and stuffed that he wouldn't be able to take in any more beyond his tip?

The receiver almost grabbed painfully hard onto the sides of his lover's head and purred wonderfully from the feeling. It intrigued a little part of Jack of how rough the other one was and how they both seemed to almost scream from the roughness, but Jack also saw a faint bit of...care. Like an amount of almost immeasurable trust had built up between them, like the hurt was just part of the sex and one could really...trust the other. Would Pitch be like that? Rough and dominating with a touch of emotion? Could he trust Pitch to that level?

Part of him hoped so as his hands lifted up his shirt and moved south, eyes half fluttering closed as they reached their destination – Jack's fingers caught his nipple and made him roll his hips upward, this is what he knew Pitch would do. He would tease and touch him everywhere first, take his time and make his boyfriend beg to be pounded into by his erected cock. And Jack wouldn't have it any other way. He twisted his nipples lightly, letting out a purr as they hardened and the more submissive partner of the two playing on the screen let out a muffled moan, his eyes glanced towards them and his hands itched to grab his own erect member as he saw the rather large cock almost entirely disappear into the other man's mouth. He'd never be able to take Pitch down that easy – he'd have to swirl his tongue around the tip and slowly bring him a finish and-

He drove himself into his own palm, his thoughts of the moaning of the dominant partner inserting itself into his own sexual fantasy – becoming Pitch's panting and needy calls for more and more of Jack's warm, delicate mouth.

His mouth wouldn't be able to fit it all. It was too big he decided he'd just lick and suckle on the tip like a lollipop, making sure his teeth didn't hurt him as he palmed the parts his older boyfriend's hardened, erected shaft that his untrained mouth couldn't reach – the thought that Pitch's tip might leak out just a bit of pre-cum onto his lips was so incredibly dirty and plain perverted of him to think such a thing...and that made him let out a moan that he couldn't help but let escape from his throat as he kept on rocking into his palm, white sticky cum leaking from his tip and slicking up the palm of his hand before he came hard. He saw nothing but white and his body raised off of the bed from the feeling of lightning flashing through his eyelids and he swore he could almost feel the Earth shake beneath him and he wasn't here anymore...

Then the next second he was back on Earth, the porn video already finished as the alert sound on his computer clearly signaled...
He looked up to see his computer freezing and crashing...

'Fucking virus' Jack swore under his breath and got up to try and fix the damned thing but his hands were sticky with his own bodily fluids and he didn't want to wipe them on his sheets – he didn't want his mother to eventually find out when and if she got the urge to clean up the house. Instead, he got up and slammed the laptop shut. As quick and as quiet as a mouse he slipped downstairs into the bathroom and cleaned himself up, washing his hands first before anything else and then after ensuring they were clean he splashed his face with some water to help him stay awake. He figured whatever virus was on his computer wouldn't come out easy, even though he really didn't care much for it since it was a school computer that was horribly faulty and easily breakable to begin with which allowed him to he blame the crash on anything.

He swore under his breath that he would never let Pitch find out about what just happened though, it was far too embarrassing and it made him feel just a little too turned on from thinking about how Pitch's cock might taste when he had it in his mouth – he had no experience with blow-jobs to begin with although the prospect did excite him...

He resigned himself to his room, setting up the computer so that it would do a system restore to a couple random days ago – he didn't care what day at this point with post-sexual excitement adrenaline leaving his veins and the encroaching time of midnight growing ever closer with each passing second. In passing he clicked off the light and let the entire room be overtaken by a dark stillness that was almost eerie in comparison to how it was earlier.

He got off the bed, putting his phone on the charger to make sure he could use it later if and when the time came before returning to his bed... then he slammed the bright blue screened laptop shut with an aggravated grunt of displeasure before almost pushing it off the bed and sliding back under the covers in exhaustion and letting himself drift off to a world of sleep.


Chapter End Notes

Funfact: This chapter is a gift to a friend of mine, to you and is also a MAJOR plot affecting point in the story.

This is a 'bonus' chapter technically (not the rape/incest one) but it also comes back with some shockingly awesome results. Trust me, you're gonna either love this or hate this cop ou-

I mean...

Emerging character development
He swore under his breath that he would never let Pitch find out about what just happened though, it was far too embarrassing and it made him feel just a little too turned on from thinking about how Pitch's cock might taste when he had it in his mouth – he had no experience with blow-jobs to begin with although the prospect did excite him...

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–

He woke up with a slight crick in the back of his neck, irritating but nothing to try and take medication for or anything like that. He figured he had laid on it wrong and sat up, moving his hand to gently message the back of his head in a circular motion and replaying last night in his head with a grin faintly touching his lips.

Pitch, snark battle, Pitch won, brainstorming up an incredibly obvious but immensely amazing plan, Pitch leaving before his father came home and then masturbation.

Not a bad way to spend a night with your boyfriend if he did say himself. Pushing his way out of the comfort of his bed and taking a spill onto the floor, he grinned at the fact that it was Saturday. Still no school for quite some time and with Pitch's plan being such a grand idea he decided that maybe today would be the first day he and Mary spent wholly with Pitch.

However, there were multiple steps he would have to take to make sure something like this didn't backfire onto him. He had to suppress Katherine's suspicion and keep it next to non-existent – she was really the only major worry that he could see trying to ruin their relationship. And William wouldn't give a fuck about me even if Pitch was potentially dangerous.' Jack stopped himself from going on a rage – William was absolutely disgusting last night, he was actually terrible all the time but tonight he seemed to want to break a previously established record of his.

Especially considering the fact that this was one of the rare times he was sober and therefore supposed to be bearable. But it was obvious to Jack that William was intentionally going out of his way to anger his son in the quickest and most efficient way possible: hitting Katherine. He didn't like what Katherine would do sometimes, some of the scarring and painful things she would say would hurt him to the point of tears but that was only because he saw them as being closer. He didn't want
to see her hurt. The anger that arose in him was only quelled by the passivity that his mother was showing, wordlessly telling him to quell his ire and save it for another day...

He wouldn't have been able to had it not been that Pitch had come to stand behind him, reassuring him through his presence alone and, from the quick glance he stole at him, quickly realizing just how atrocious the situation was.

But perhaps Pitch was right. Perhaps now it was time that he just stopped trying to hide it and went to the police but what proof could he possibly have to imprison his father and what could Katherine do in the end, to at least keep him away? He couldn't see William abiding by any form of a restraining order.

With a depressed sigh he strode over to his drawers and selected his clothing for the day, the excitement of the plan now fully overtaken by the lack of hope for the overall situation. He picked his phone up from the charger and shoved it into the pockets of one of the still unworn but now selected articles of clothing. Even if he could live til 18 in this house, what about Mary? He'd have to support her and her needs – and she certainly couldn't leave Katherine and William without gaining a large amount of negative attention. He chose a pair of tight dark jeans, a gray t-shirt and a black over-jacket – a faint part of him chuckling at how he was now almost emulating how Pitch dressed – dark and gray and black with an almost emo-vibe to it.

For now he just had to stick to the plan of just spending as much time out of the house as possible...it was bound to be fun after all – like tons and tons of dates plus one little child tagging along. He stalked his way downstairs, noticing the lack of a drunk father on the couch or a worried/drunken comfort mother walking around in slow circles in the living room. With a relieved grin he slipped into the bathroom to take a quick shower and hopefully wash away his troubles before they came drunkenly stumbling through the front door.

Jack did love the cold, but the warmth of a quick shower was something he could almost die for – especially when he was stressed out. He unceremoniously shrugged off his wrinkled bedclothes and left them abandoned in the middle of the tiled floor before placing his new clothing near the sink and starting his shower.

He let his mind wonder places and eventually found himself thinking about Pitch and their plan just a little more in depth. What if eventually Katherine found out? What if too much time together drew the questioning eyes of their neighbors – and they noticed the mutual lack of a female companion or 'friend'? Pitch never set any hard rules or any step by step plan so much as 'lie to your parents and then let's spend time together', so did he have a plan that he was carrying out independently or were they just dangerously and nonchalantly playing it all by ear? Or was he expecting Jack to come up with something more then just a simple lie of 'spending tons of time out because of school, social life and Mary' and if so, what exactly was he expecting?

With a disgruntled huff of breath he checked the temperature of the water before he just moved himself in to stand underneath the spray. The feeling of warm droplets hitting his naked skin felt almost foreign but like a blessing, quickly washing his worries away at least for the time being. He made sure to run his fingers through his hair and moderately try to shampoo and condition it but it was a halfhearted effort – his hair really didn't need much care to begin with, thank goodness. He smiled when the memory of Pitch's fingertips moving against his scalp came back full force...he wanted to feel that again but his own fingers were too small and soft in comparison.

Pitch's hands were gentle and smooth but their weren't so much soft...'I miss him already...' Jack thought, pointing the spray downwards on his head and letting the soap and shampoo go running down the length of his body. He was not paying any attention to how the droplets fell anymore, he
was thinking about Pitch and their 'relationship'.

It was 'official', they were a 'thing', they had *something* going on but Jack still didn't know what to exactly call it or why it really even existed. He wasn't *looking* for a partner although his rampaging hormones had inspired him to get one previously, a desire he had to suppress with the an iron fist and Mary's constant presence, and Pitch probably wasn't really looking for him either...

And yet over the past few days they had seemed to grow so close...Pitch was the only one he even let into himself, learning about his parent's abuse, the growing burden of his little sister and the entire mess of emotional drama that consumed and boiled around them for the past literal *decade.*

Did Pitch feel the same way about him? Did Pitch feel like in some way he was letting Jack see a side of himself that no one else did? Jack didn't notice anything but...had Pitch shared anything truly intimate and close to him that Jack had missed?...He doubted it and slowly turned the shower off, standing there for a moment more to think about his older lover's plan and what was really at risk...

'Is that it?' Jack wondered, letting his head rest against the shower wall as water dripped from his body and recently turned off faucet. 'Is this...entire thing of him handling my problem how he's *letting me in?*' He knew that there was no way that anyone in their right mind would put their life at stake so heavily with so much to lose just because they liked someone...'Pitch don't...don't *f** yourself up for me...*' He felt moderately guilty – what if something happened? What if Pitch got arrested and charged for touching and kissing him? What if he got sent to prison and lost everyth-

He nearly slipped and fell over when his cellphone rung loudly, the sound reverberating and multiplying within the tile walls of the room. He left the shower, stepping out of it and quickly reaching into his clothing to pull out his ringing phone, a familiar number glowing brightly on the screen. 'Speak of the Devil...' Jack mumbled before answering. "Hey, I was just thinking about you."

He didn't mean to let his voice sound so devoid of positive emotion but he couldn't quite translate his current feelings and transcribe them into his voice.

Pitch certainly picked up on it quick. 'Really? You sound rather upset all things considered...did I do *something wrong?*' Obviously concerned and alerted by Jack's vocal stoicism.

"Yes you idiot you're basically putting your life at risk for me of all people, *f**ing quit it.*' Jack wanted to say but he held it down, not quite wanting to tackle that beast right now. He chose to wait until the two could meet face to face – maybe Monday before he went to school they could meet up or something. "No, I'm just...confused about the plan." Technically, that wasn't a downright lie it was just not telling the *exact* truth.

'What do you mean? What's to be confused about?'

"It's just...where do we meet? When? What should I tell my parents? And Mary, what about her? I mean..." He tried to look for words that would describe their exact situation but nothing came to mind except for one word. "This is insane..." He let out a sigh and looked at his selected clothing without focusing.

'How so?'

"Pitch!" He felt almost enraged – how could Pitch just be so casual and carefree about something like their *illegal* relationship? "This plan has no *structure* to it. It's barely a plan-"

'Oh!' Pitch seemed to realize what he was talking about and Jack felt a strange sort of relaxation come over him. Maybe how they could actually talk and brainstorm something that would *make sense* rather then just throw something together...then something unexpected happened...he chuckled.
Jack wished he could turn his anger into something he could physically hit Pitch with. 'Jack we aren't stealing the crown jewels here, we're hiding our relationship from two drunks. By going out and spending time together like friends do. Honestly...'

"Pitch still you know..." He moved his head to the left so that he could keep the phone near his ear while he got dressed into his new choice of clothing. "I mean, how are we supposed to organize? Me and Mary just can't run out everyday and embark on some grand adventure with you without turning a few heads after people notice we're running out every day someplace." The truth was more that he didn't want people's suspicion turning to Pitch. He originally just wanted he and Mary to live happily and if not him then just Mary, and that had required so much responsibility and sacrifice...And now he wanted to be happy with Pitch and let Mary live a happy life.

How much more obligation would he have to burden on his already near-overloaded shoulders to find his own happiness with Pitch? How much more could he take before he finally broke and stopped caring like his father did, throwing caution to the wind and letting himself fall into dangerous habits just to dull out the fact that he couldn't take anymore.

'Jack honestly, I know I said we're not stealing the crown jewels but you don't think I don't have a nice little plan for this?' He could feel Pitch's grin come through the phone and he didn't want to have any of it right now.

"Pitch this...us..." He knew he wanted to wait until Monday but he couldn't bear to hear Pitch be so unconcerned about a decision that could potentially ruin his life. "It's dangerous for the both of us but..." He paused and walked over to the door, opening it slightly and making sure no one was overhearing their conversation.

Not a single soul. He closed the door behind him and turned around, leaning his nude back up against the smooth, painted wooden surface. "We...are not something that society views as O.K. Pitch, you already know that. Why are you acting like this..." He shook his head lightly and almost felt pricks of tears in his eyes. "Like you don't have anything to lose?"

'Like you don't have anything to lose?' Pitch could sense the wild rainbow variety of emotions that loaded that last sentence and it hit him hard, square in the chest and he couldn't do anything to prevent it. With a sigh of non-physical pain he rose from his recliner and walked over one of the large living room windows and opened the curtains wide.

It was raining, not hard enough to stop them from going out but enough so that they'd need an umbrella...he faintly thought about Jack's words and how he should respond, how much his response would reveal. Jack was younger then him but he certainly wasn't any less intelligent, in fact Pitch would put the younger man's mind against and above his own for a good variety of things...

So he wanted to word it carefully so that Jack wouldn't read too hard into it and see the pattern and discover...September. He ran his finger carefully down one of the windows, admiring the patterns of the raindrops and thinking to himself...

'Pitch.'

Jack was getting antsy and nervous..."Give me a moment..." He wondered if maybe he was thinking too hard and should just respond honestly – he had no real reason to lie from what he believed and if anything the truth would be more convincing. But could he reveal the truth, could he rip back the blanket that how covered September for so long? Something only he, Sandman and those who witnessed it knew?
"Jack...the reason I'm doing this is because..."

'I want you to know the truth.' No. 'I want you to be happy.' 'True, but no. 'I want to be closer to you.' True, no again...

"Is because in this world...I...I don't even think you know." Pitch let his hand glide back through his locks of hair as he tried to reel in his rambling. Of course Jack didn't know, how could he? "I...lost a lot to this world-" And I've taken far too much from it. "And you are really the only thing I have left to lose." His voice was quivering, wavering with emotions he couldn't filter out and erase. He felt weaker, frightened, smaller, less the imposing, scary figure that young children sometimes saw him as and more the young man who had discovered that he had done something horrific, back in September.

But this time there was no retching or bile...just a faint pain in the upper right side of his chest that signaled he could indeed remember that day like it had just occurred mere moments ago – the visions were there, vividly flashing but the feelings attached to them had grown weaker as of late...was it because of Jack?

The silence that took over their call was lengthy and understandable – he didn't see a reason why something like what he just said, said in such a way, needed some abysmally long conversation to follow. Silence was fine. He could work with silence.

–

Jack stood there for a few minutes, thinking about what Pitch just said and crying quietly without realizing that he let even a single tear fall. It sounded so passionate and Pitch's voice, he never heard it so sad and truthful sounding, even if what he just said was possibly the most cliche things he ever heard he knew it was unquestionable truth.

He tried to hold the phone in-between the side of his head and his shoulder again but since he needed to put on his shirt that wouldn't work until he put the phone down...he refused to put this phone down until he could think of something to say that would actually be a good response. Even if it took forever. "Pitch I just..." How...do I even try to top that or respond to it? "I just think that maybe this...what we are, this whole...'love' thing..."

'Jack, are you really going to sit on the opposite end of this call and question love? Because dear – with no offense to you, I personally don't and strongly advise against it.'

Jack licked his lips and scratched the back of his head, unable to really think of anything more to say. This was it wasn't it? They were actually going to break the law, challenge society and risk everything because of love. "What we are...is absolutely insane Pitch and to be honest...I wouldn't have it any other way at this point."

'But of course you wouldn't. Love isn't exactly something that can be rationalized or questioned, only accepted.'

"You're certainly in a poetic mood...being all cheesy." Jack laughed lightly, understanding where Pitch was coming from – Pitch knew the risks and decided it was worth it, no matter what price he might have to pay when it came down to it. He knew and made this decision, it wasn't a choice of no thought. He felt...loved...a strange wave of warmth making its way all throughout his body while he chuckled a little more from the feeling.

'Well you caught me at a good hour. What can I say?'
"Well...you can say that your going to take me out today for our plan and...hold on." He placed the phone down quickly so he could shove on his shirt, only to quickly scramble back to the rectangular device a second later. "Sorry. Yes take me out today."

'Alright, I'm going to take you out today...but it's raining you know.'

"It is?" Jack speedily picked up his jacket in passing before turning to the faucet. Personal grooming should be of the utmost importance if he was going to spend the day with his boyfriend..."Umm...teeth." He put the phone down and got to work while Pitch awkwardly waited on the opposite end of the phone for a few minutes – only to nearly jump at hearing Jack's voice again after so long. "Sorry, morning routine." He made sure his pearly whites were still pearly and white before flicking the light off and leaving the bathroom. Everyone still seemed to be asleep but there was no reason to get careless about him and Pitch now.

He strode up the steps. "Take me to the mall or something then...someplace child friendly – for Mary."

'Alright, anything else?'

"Not that I can-" He stopped mid sentence upon seeing his little sister standing in the middle of his room, still adorned in her nightgown with her hair looking crazed and tossed in every direction. She looked sleepy and confused but didn't directly look at him until he began walking over to her. "Mary what's wrong?" He never saw Mary come up here herself before, without him either already being up here and calling her directly ascending the steps with her.

"I woke up and I wanted to see you." She tiredly rubbed the sleep out of her large brown eyes and Jack could only smile – why was his little sister so adorable and cute? "Mommy left I think, I looked for her and she wasn't in bed..."

"And Dad didn't come back." Jack didn't even realize that he was still holding onto the phone, holding it to his ear and accidentally relaying the entire conversation to Pitch. Mary could see the phone though..

"Who are you talking to?"

"Who- oh right, I'm just talking to Pitch. I think we might be having a day out, wanna go to the mall Mary?" He said happily, embracing her diminutive form and laughing as he felt her spirits rise to the point where she physically almost shook with excitement.

"Yes! Can I come? Please?!"

'Jack put me on speaker.' He almost forgot about his beau's existence for a moment there...and how to turn on speaker until he fumbled with the phone for a good fifteen seconds.

"Alright I think it's o-"

"Hi Mister Pitch!" Mary yelled at the top of her lungs and Jack winced from the proximity of Mary's mouth to his ear. The little girl didn't have size but she did seem to have some serious volume at least.

'...Hi.' By the sound of it, Pitch had gotten a full frontal assault on his earlobe from that one. Jack grinned and held Mary a little tighter – not so much that it would hurt but just enough.

"Too loud Snowflake." He smiled earnestly at her and then turned back to the phone to speak to Pitch. "So are we meeting somewhere, what time, I need to kind of know the specifics..."
'Of course. I don't expect you to get to a place without knowing where it is...' Pitch spoke with a self-satisfied grin on his face while Jack rolled his eyes – it was him trying to use his charisma and snark over the phone but when you couldn't see him it just sounded like he was an egotistical dick-wad. 'It's 10:25 right now. I'll come to you...11 okay?'

"If we aren't there by 11:30, our parents came home and said no." Jack got up in that moment and grasped Mary's hand, leading her down the steps and into her room while continuing to talk to Pitch. He assumed that Pitch meant they were meeting at the cafe at 11. "So are we going to Pia's Mall or someplace else?"

'That'd be fine...' He knew that place, it was close, bustling with activity for a good majority of the day and there was a movie theater nearby. Plenty of time to waste away there.

"I'm sorry if I'm being too insistent." He chose out two articles of clothing for Mary and then grinned at her as he jumped up and down in happiness – when was the last time that they had gone out of the house from their own want and desire to? He couldn't even remember...he intended to make sure he never forgot. "Just...really nice day is all."

'Despite the rain I'm sure...' The faint sound of movement and jostling of the phone rung in Jack's ears – he must've been getting ready too.

"We don't have to go if the rain is bothering you." Jack spoke honestly and he could almost see Mary's bouncing stop and her emotions and heart drop to the floor and shatter to pieces – he really felt sorry about that but it was true, they didn't immediately need to go rushing out of the door right now.

There was a period of uncharacteristic silence in between them that ended with Pitch's playful tone of voice returning and the sound of a car door slamming shut. 'Mary tell Jack he's being stupid."

Mary laughed and jumped up and down, a coy smile on her young face. "You're being stupid big brother!"

'Yes Jack 'you're being stupid big brother'. The quiet rumble of a car engine in the background and the sound of movement, wind and rain rushing past and hitting a car's windshield dead on. Jack reasoned that Pitch was already driving as they spoke.

"Oh so now I'm the bad guy?" Jack smiled, quickly catching on. Even if Pitch didn't want to go he still wanted to entertain Mary at the very least, besides they had both already encouraged the young child's excitement and wanted to get out of the house – it'd be a waste of time and a terrible let down if they just stopped because of a little rain.

'I don't know, Mary is big brother a bad guy now?'

"No, but I have to get dressed now mkay?" She said, smiling and accepting the clothing Jack gave to her as he went to the door. "Bye bye mister Pitch!"

'See you soon!' His voice was very enthusiastic and positive as Jack closed the door behind him and let Mary get dressed without being seen.

"So Pitch, Are we going to get something to eat when we get there or-?" Jack leaned against the door to Mary's room smugly, a faint phantom's grin pulling on his lips that he didn't let show despite the fact the no one could see him.

'Up to you really...I'm almost there anyway.'
Alright, I'll let you go then.” He really didn't want to hang up on Pitch – he enjoyed the sound of his older lover's voice coming through the phone, but it would probably just distract Pitch from driving if he kept on talking especially since he had nothing of much importance to say anyway. "See you soon!” He smiled and hung up before removing himself from the door – what now?

‘Umbrella...’ Jack whispered to himself before remembering that both he and Mary didn't have umbrellas...the last one he remembered seeing was in Katherine and William's room. With a discontented huff of heavy breath he turned to face his parent's room with a passive gaze of malignity aimed toward it – his anger more focused on the man who often inhabited in that room rather then the room itself.

With a less then willing feeling, he swung the door open and strode reluctantly into the room. Unlike before, when everything was surprisingly clean and fresh smelling despite the room's inhabitants being so...less then that it was now up to par with how Jack had originally imagined. It was not as hideous as he imagined with layers upon layers of stomach turning, health ruining grime, but it was a pig sty – clothing thrown about haphazardly and without care for where the cloth landed on or in. Beer bottles – at least five or six – lie half emptied in the center of the ruined, alcohol stained bed and then entire room stunk like the back of a fucking barn. Jack held his nose and sighed – he wondered why things like this surprised him, it's not like his parents had made anything alluding to progress with their alcohol usage.

He searched depressingly for the umbrella, closing the door behind him lest Mary walk in and see the room. She didn't need to witness this.

He couldn't even hear the shuffling that had made its way down that hallway numerous times before in the past. Slow, lazy, drunken crawling behind the now closed door – an intoxicated and disgraced Katherine crawling away to hide her shame of Jack seeing the state of the room. It took all her inner-strength to stop herself from bursting into tears – she wasn't sure who Jack would think drank all that beer but it certainly wasn't William.

In a dazed sort of consciousness she hit her head lightly against the door, twice in quick succession and Mary – knowing the signal already by heart – opened the door and let her drunk mother in.

"Thank you..." The alcoholic whispered as she made her way inside, literally on her hands and knees and made her way to Mary's closet before the younger girl approached the small storage space with a frown on her face.

"Mommy...me and Jack are going out for the day...are you gonna be O.K.?”

"Ummm.." She sniffled, tears were coming. It would hurt like hell to stifle them but god be damned if she would let Jack – who clearly didn't even know why his parents both drank – find out about any of the circumstances surrounding it. "No." She answered honestly, leaning herself back against the furthest wall in the closet. "But I'm...I'm gonna be here for you." She said, holding back any significant noise she would've made at that moment before Mary heard Jack slam the closet door from the other room. The young eight year old looked down at the diminutive form of her emotionally and physically weakened and off-set mother before smiling weakly.

"I love you Mommy."

"I love you too baby..." She said, resting her head against the walls and enjoying the cool surface against her overheated skin and almost sighed with relief as Mary took out a pair of shoes she deemed reasonable. 'She doesn't need me all that much anymore...she's growing up to be such a smart young woman...’ And gently closed the door, giving her mother one last look of grief-filled look, not of anger or hate but of a love that wished to somehow save her, before Jack walked in and
she had to shut the door completely, lest he see.

"Alright big brother!" Mary turned to Jack with a happy smile, separating herself from the woman hiding in the closet that was quietly crying. "I'm ready to go!"

"Alright..." Jack smiled and nodded, reaching for his little sister's hand and walking her out to the living room so that he could put her shoes on her comfortably. Before shutting the door he placed the umbrella next to the door frame, happy to see that it had still been where he remembered it.

He closed the door behind him, took hold of the umbrella and Katherine took the moment to sob just a little harder, let out just a little more of that pain.

'Why – God why? It's not fair! He was so fucking young.' She cursed, taking quiet gasps of breath as she turned into a ball, her knees coming up to her chest while she choked back waves of tears, hoping that Jack wouldn't find out the truth...

Uncle North who was so similar to Jack, born with white hair and that naturally toothy, overly confident smile that shone in sunlight, who was Katherine's older brother, who treated her like royalty, who protected her like she was the world's rarest gem, who helped her out throughout all of her life, who payed for her college, who helped her find the man of her dreams...didn't want them over there like Jack thought after he stormed out that night...He wasn't 'calling all the time' for them to come over or 'sending them presents'. That was a ruse by Katherine to help her cope...her brother wasn't sending them presents or calling...

He wasn't even breathing.

He had been dead for the past eleven years.

And she still had yet to get past it.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Alternate title for this chapter; Chapter 8, The Revenge!

Yeah surprise sucker punch to the feels – no remorse. That's how we work in Angelblaze world.

We're only moderately sorry.

Also do try to remember that you're often seeing things from Jack's point of view and are therefore usually limited to his. Hence the surprise.
A Little Wish

Chapter Summary

Are you ready for a chapter that 20 percent MARY, 5 percent Pitch, 3 percent Jack, 7 percent Jamie, 5 percent plot and 60 percent TOO DAMN LONG?!

YES.
YES YOU ARE.

Chapter Notes

Song is a Little Wish from Kingdom Hearts OST.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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He had been dead for the past eleven years.

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–

No longer on the phone with Pitch nor able to find Katherine or her less than welcome husband anywhere inside the home, Jack resolved to make Mary and himself look their very best before heading out.
"Mary did you brush your teeth and wash your face?"

"Ummm...no."

"Go ahead then, bathroom's free." Jack grinned and nudged her over to the lavatory with an encouraging hand – he did want her to get cleaned up, but he needed a moment of privacy to make sure that he was okay considering he was going out with a man that had made him do things that his own school frowned upon at times.

"Alrighty then." Mary responded, confused as to why her brother was so pushy about something as simple as her teeth and face but not questioning it – she was about to go outside for something other then school and running away from daddy when he got too scary. It would be fun! And Mister Pitch was coming too!

Upon hearing the gentle sound of the door's tumblers and the following sound of the faucet spitting out water for Mary, Jack took it upon himself to make sure that he looked presentable. He patted his hair down and straightened his clothing up, making sure that it hung against him in all the right places where he knew Pitch's hands seemed to like to linger and tease. For a moment he wanted to put on some type of sleeveless shirt or something – something that showed skin decently but would be enough to tease him.

The thought of Pitch licking his lips in desire as he gazed towards Jack – that he would be the only driving his beau up the wall with arousal without even realizing it – was something that was so powerfully hot that he almost considered getting one. But then he took a look at his arms and saw how thin and lanky and overall lacking in body fat or muscle he was. He might as well have been nothing but skin and bone...

With a disgruntled pout he focused on the one thing he knew Pitch loved the most, or at least was his main goal...his ass. With speedy feet he strode back into the unbearable smelling room of both his parents and looking into the mirror, turning halfway around so that he could examine himself more thoroughly.

And there was at least one thing to be thankful for! It was heart shaped, the pants didn't feel too restricting on his movement and best part: the curves, roundness and shape of his ass were blessedly shown off to an almost boastful degree. He was almost afraid that he might attract the gaze of guys other then his boyfriend...oh he wondered if Pitch would find that hot – other men looking over in envy at the young lover by his side. Then Pitch would grab him around his waist protectively and possessively as if to say 'This is mine, fuck off!' before they'd keep on walking...Jack was almost floating in an ocean of glee. With a victorious smile he strode back out and into the living room, finding Mary seated on the couch and ready to go.

"O.K. then snowflake. Let's go over the rules before we go out." Jack smiled as he came near her, patting down her hair again and advising her. "No walking off or talking to strangers unless told otherwise specifically by me. Even if they have candy and toys okay?"

"Got it!" Mary said excitedly. The last time she ever remembered getting the speech was years ago when Katherine could be bothered to occasionally take her children to the park for an hour of so of freedom. One would think that she would be more excited to get out of the house and get away from William by using both him and Mary as perfect excuses.

"If they try to give you any toys or cand-" The ringing of his cellphone cut off his sentence again and Jack quickly picked it up, not looking too hard at the screen and not noticing...

'Hello?'
The voice wasn't the deep luxurious voice of his boyfriend, it was someone else. It was familiar, male and it faintly rung in his ears, awaking certain memories inside of his mind. "Jamie?" He asked nervously...how did Jamie get his number?

'Jack?' Jamie asked tentatively to make sure it was indeed his classmate on the opposite end of the phone before laughing just at the smile time that Jack chose to chuckle, entertained. 'So you finally got your hands on a phone.'

"Kinda sorta." Technically he didn't buy it – his mother and father, wherever they were to be found – did. Pitch probably was still making his way to the café, no reason to really hurry up and hang up on Jamie...might as well make some useless conversation. "So...I haven't seen you around in a long time. Where you been?" He runs his hands through Mary's hair and grins. 'She needs a haircut.'

'Around. I actually don't have time to talk right now, I've got a little work to do honestly. I just wanted to make sure this was your number. ' Jamie said quickly, as if he was rushing off to finish something extremely important but at the same time he sounded like he was out of it – like something was just wrong on a basic level.

Jack chalked it up to things between them still being awkward and hard to ascertain at the moment. "O.K. I'll let you go then. Talk to you later?" After a little more then a second of thinking about what he just said he realized that he didn't want to speak with Jamie much any more...and had no want to 'fix' that lack of communication.

'Yeah I might catch you around.' He said no more then that as he sounded like he was actually running at this point, voice panting and gasping for much needed breath with the sound of wind coming through the phone.

"Alright...see you." Jack speedily hung up the phone before things between him and Jamie got any more awkward then what they already were. He didn't enjoy talking to Jamie like he did before and he couldn't pinpoint why the urge to just stay away or just not talk to him was becoming so strong...all he knew is that he should probably listen to it.

He glanced over to Mary who was staring up at him with curious eyes asking 'Who was that', repeated with the gaze. Jack smiled and ruffled her hair – barely remembering the time he spent patting it down. "No one important, Snowflake..." He got up and silently urged her to ask well so he could pat her hair down again and lead them to the door; Pitch was probably sitting in front of the café already. He could faintly hear Mary singing the Spongebob Squarepants theme song under her breath as they approached the door. "Ah, you and Pitch really hit it off huh?" He wasn't speaking to anyone in particular and wasn't expecting a response, it was more an observation that was unintentionally vocalized.

Mary answered anyway. "Mmhmm." A simple, short and sweet answer as Jack pushed the door open and the September winds and rain were reveal to them, definitely not anything that could remotely be considered 'going-out' weather. The older Frost was considering. But then Jack could see a familiar shadowed figure, gazing apathetically at the cement pavement and holding a black umbrella waiting right outside their door, leaning up against a long-familiar glistening black car that seemed to look even shinier in the cloudy blue-grey light provided by the sky and rain.

Mary could tell before he could. "Mr. Pitch!" She shouted over the almost stormy rains and winds that made her hair fly about and into her face. He gazed up in alarm, hearing the young girl's shrill voice and almost mistaking it as a cry for help as he looked up to see a waving Frost girl and responded with a wave of his own before smiling.

Jack waved as well, not expecting Pitch to be waiting right outside their door for them but accepting
it – he'd hate to have to walk Mary all the way to the Café through the storm anyway. He took Mary in hand, feeling her ever-increasing excitement and glee through the touch alone, and escorting her down the steps of their porch and ensuring she wouldn't slip or fall.

"Well hello there milady Mary." Pitch spoke as they approached, kneeling down to her level and lowering his umbrella accordingly with his charming grin on full blast. Mary giggled lightly and responded in kind upon reaching the car with her older brother standing nearby, observing and admiring the entire scene.

"Well hello to you too my good Sir Mister Pitch!" She curtsied and Pitch shook his head with a laugh before moving to open the back door and allowed her to climb in.

"Be sure to buckle your seat-belt Mary." Jack said before stepping a little closer to his boyfriend. "Thanks." A hasty whisper before he resigned himself to the front seat of the car.

"No problem." Pitch responded, knowingly. He moved to his place in the driver's seat and put his own umbrella next to Jack's feet with an apologetic smile. His younger lover returned it in kind and buckled himself in before turning to the window, wanting to hear Itch's voice but really having nothing important or immediate to talk about.

"Be sure that you're all buckled in back there Mary." Pitch has expected Jack to do a second confirmation concerning his little sister's safety but he decided not to push the subject and to just go. The car pulled away from the near-empty home of the Frost family and out into the road; for the first time in a long time Jack and Mary were going out.

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The first thing Jack realized about Pitch's driving habits or perhaps his overall personality, was that he was a very good driver from what the older Frost could tell – but both of the younger people in the car could tell that Pitch was not the world's greatest entertainer. The car radio went completely untouched and soundless during the whole ride with the only thing similar to music that they both heard was the sound of hard rain hitting the face of his car.

Not that either child complained – at least not aloud, Pitch was literally taking time out of his morning and afternoon to take them out for a day or at least an hour. Any time spent out of the house was better then any spent in it and they both silently knew that and we're more then willing to grab any precious second away from that place as they possibly could. Instead for entertainment each child separately and quietly drew patterns in the fogging window and admired the sight of the heavy rain falling here and there and the trees seeming to nearly sway under the powerful might of the wind.

In the driver's seat Pitch was resisting the urge to laugh embarrassingly out of self-deprecation, he knew he should probably talk or at least turn the radio on for some background noise but for some reason he just couldn't. Talking at the current moment seemed to almost be forbidden and really, right now he didn't want to stop putting all his attention on the road lest he get another repeat of September...no. Not with the younger children in the car. He stopped teasing so strongly around the steering wheel and exhaled softly – not even remembering when he began to hold his breath.

At last, before Pitch could choke on his own awkwardness they arrived at Pia Mall without incident and he exhaled again before parking the car close to the entrance. Behind him he heard Mary begin giggling again and Jack turned around and nodded to her, a signal to get out.

'Good to know that some one knows what the hell they should be doing right now.' Pitch said with self-focused mortification. What was he doing aside from just keeping them out of the house? Was
this a date or him babysitting? Were they actually going to get something to eat or what? He sighed and grabbed his umbrella, hiding his confusion and self-dissatisfaction under a happy smile when Jack threw him a concerned and questioning look.

"Alright then, Mary stay close to either me and your brother at all times." That much he knew was something he had to say and got out the car, flipping open his umbrella and smiling again upon seeing Mary exit the car on the same side and run for cover. He had to lean down to make sure she was covered before Jack came over and used his own umbrella to cover them. "Sorry, I'm a giant I'm afraid." He spoke to the younger Frost child over the rain. She grinned up at him. "The Boogeyman needs to be tall or else he won't be scary!" Mary smiled and tugged at Pitch's free hand, pointing wildly towards the mall. "Come on, come on!"

"No running in the parking lot-" Jack scorned but couldn't finish as Pitch let himself get dragged into the mall by the over-excited little girl and found himself dashing to keep up. 'It's great that you guys are getting along but for fuck's sake Pitch...a little backbone and resistance.' Jack closed his umbrella as he reached the inside of the store and found the pair standing a little ways off, Pitch closing his umbrella while Mary began listing off the things she wanted to do today. "We'll get pizza with lots and lots of pepperoni or ummm..." Mary looked around at the nearby stores, rows and rows and rows of things for her to make Pitch buy for her – and if Jack was judging the happy and pleased look on Pitch's face right he would be putty in her hands. She yelled loudly and pointed to a candy shack with an excited smile. "That one! Pitch, I mean Mister Pitch please buy me some-"

And then Jack retracted his words upon seeing how Pitch reacted to even seeing the store, like he was resisting the urge to throw up viciously before he turned to glance down at Mary, switching his look of disgust for one of negotiation. "How about we get some lunch first? Then if you finish your lunch and you still want some candy we'll get some okay?" Pitch said, hiding his want to not go near that store right now under a much less suspicious parental hand.

Jack chose then to approach – Pitch didn't have a problem buying him any sweets before and...he realized he saw Pitch get sick like that before, in his room last night during his visit. He barely paid any attention to that at the time but...what exactly was wrong then and now? Whatever it was, he figured that until he could bring it up in casual conversation it would be best to leave it alone for now. "Yeah Mary, lets get some pizza or burgers first before we pump you full of sugar and you start bouncing off of the walls." He chuckled. "I don't bounce off the walls! I just get happy, like I am now cause I get to spend time with you and Mister Pitch!" She said, hugging Pitch with a wide grin – the older man let out a deep laugh his own and pet her head. "I mean...I'm having so much fun already just being out with you guys, I wish that this could happen more!" She let go and skipped Jack's side with a smile, grabbing his hand and giggling. "Don't worry little Mary, it will. I'm sure." Pitch grins before glancing around – really only avoiding letting his eyes focus on the candy store – and straight-away found the pizza place, his speed definitely fuelled by his desire to get away from anything sweet and sugary at the moment with the familiar feeling of his stomach lurching forward to begin its ascent up his throat and through his mouth.

Instead, he watched Jack and Mary as they instead got in line with the other mall-goers. 'Funny...’ he mentally remarks, refusing to allow his smile to show. He forgot that they were even in a public
place...he approaches the line with his younger boyfriend and little sister...and then stops short after
doing a once over of the queue.

There was an auburn haired young man about Jack's age, almost hidden in beyond the line that
angered directly at him...and this wasn't a type of natural, normal dislike. This was *William*
level glare, if not something beyond. The type of dislike that didn't lead to just violence, it lead to
human torture and pain. He stopped, gazed towards him and glared back – the seriousness in his eyes
betraying his evident facial expression of pleased entertainment.

*I don't know who you are.* He mouthed, not even caring if the boy was paying any attention or
could see and read his lips clearly through the crowd of people. *But I don't care.* He finished with a
powerful, face-twisting sneer that lasted all of a few moments before rejoining the line – Jack's
attention had been diverted from him to Mary somewhere along the line while ordering pizza.

He slid in next to the younger boy and handed the worker his credit card with a toothless beam
before looking at Jack for a half second a looking away. *My treat, everything.* He thought, hoping
that his younger lover would get it just from his half-second gaze alone.

"Ummm...three slices of pepperoni pizza and two bottles of pepsi..." Jack's voice faded out into the
background while Pitch tried to remember if he saw that child before anywhere...was he a client? A
friend's child? Did he even matter? Perhaps it was his Agyria that gained the teen's negative
attention.

One thing was for certain; he knew Pitch – that stare just screamed of a promise for something like
revenge rather then mindless, non-calculated, blind violence. Whoever he was, he felt wronged and
was out to get some type of payback...Pitch's breath hitched...*Maybe he's from a year ago, at the
Belladonna?* He bit his lip and tried to remember before cursing himself, no clear answer came up
that he could actually pin to the young teen without having to second guess himself. Memories from
back then were fuzzy and crude...it had been so long ago since he last stepped inside the
Belladonna...he could faintly remember his first time there, uneasy, frightened, lonely...but searching
for some type of escap-

A tug at his hand had him just about jumping through the ceiling with startled fright. He looked
down to see Mary with her gentle brown eyes wide and brimming with curiosity. "Mister Pitch?"
Her light-hearted, high pitched, youthful voice called out in worry and inquisitiveness for her newest
friend and he smiled warmly at her.

"I'm sorry, my imagination takes me places." He excused himself. *None of them too good or
anything you need to hear about.* He let Jack lead them to a table to eat while he sat down opposite
them, too deep in thought with his mind being too busy doing jumping-jacks – no pun intended – to
remember if he ever met that child before.

Having an angry, belligerent drunk on their tail was fine but someone who might actually have some
trustworthy word or was known to be of good, upstanding moral philosophy? Entirely another. If
this kid knew anything about him and Jack or had anything against him that he'd be willing to send
Jack down for as well...he'd be trouble.

If that alone was true *and* they had met at the Belladonna during a time where Pitch could have given
him all good reason to betray him, stab him in the back and hand him over to the appropriate
authorities? Big trouble, massive trouble, him and Jack would have a vast living, breathing,
*intelligent* problem to deal with.

He bit his teeth to stop himself from sighing and then played it off as if he was licking his lips – not
wanting to worry either Frost with his own trail of thought despite his uncertainty about whether or
not they saw him glaring and mouthing words. This was their day off to get away from worry, not to have to deal with his own version of choler, hostility and resentment, William undoubtedly gave them both more then enough for a lifetime already.

'But who the hell is that child?' Pitch withstood his urges to lean back in his chair and balance – he made a note to try and kill that habit, it wasn't healthy or physically safe for him.

Could he be a friend of William's?...No. Couldn't be. Unless William worked with children and had some sort of control over them – no. That couldn't possibly be the answer...this was something personal.

Who had he hurt to such an extent as to make them glare in such a way?...

"Pitch you're burning a hole through the center of the table." Jack said in a matter-of-factly way, tearing the man from his thoughts, and focused on his pizza while Mary looked at Pitch with ever curious round eyes.

"What'cha thinking about?" She cocked her head carefully to the side in question and Pitch turned his attention to her with a smile.

She may have been a reminder of September but she was such a sweet, young, youthful little thing...so filled with life, passion, hopes, dreams...just like... "Nothing really..." He let his voice trail off and wrinkled his nose before looking again, seeing if the child was still standing there, staring. He only found a few teenagers walking about with their phones out, nothing to be concerned about...he turned back to Mary and Jack. "Done with your pizza?"

"Almost." Mary spoke between almost in-humane mouthfuls that betrayed the size of her tiny mouth.

"Human bites Mary!" Jack said, finishing the crust of his pizza and tossing a tiny remaining piece back onto the diminutive box that sat in the center of the table, completely empty.

"M'kay." A muffled voice from a stuffed mouth that threw everything Jack said to the wind and quickly finished the remainder of the pizza pie slice.

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After abandoning their table and the empty pizza box – Jack slowly realizing that either something was grabbing the older man's attention or Pitch really didn't quite care much for pizza – Mary took them to an arcade, almost literally dragging them to it and saying 'I wanna play! Please please please Mister Pitch!'.

Not that she would even need to ask, Pitch was willing to bend over backwards to get her what she wanted when she wanted it and Jack couldn't help but smile at the sight of the older man almost being...fatherly to his little sister.

It was out of the ordinary for him to entrust someone with Mary's care outside of himself and Katherine – and the latter of which was indeed, quite out of the ordinary. But this seemed like it was befitting and supposed to happen, like Pitch was actually meant to be a father. As he saw Pitch entertaining Mary at a skee-ball lane and resisted the urge to get out his phone and take pictures of the event because dear god was it adorable, he faintly wondered if Pitch had any younger siblings he cared about or for in his life.

'I have so much to learn...' Jack whispered quietly to himself in wonder as he gazed at Pitch helping Mary with her first throw. 'I really know almost nothing about his life and his family but I can't help but trust him with mine...' He stepped just a little closer with a playful grin tugging at his lips.
"Be careful Mary – not too hard or it'll just bounce off." Pitch advised quietly, handing her the ball before she turned to the lane and stared at it with a competitive look of challenge on her face. 'A bit too serious though, for a child...’ He smiled thoughtfully as she took her first throw...and missed by a mile. 'Oh well.'

He knelt down next to her and gazed at her face, missing the flash of white hair in his vision behind her. "Remember...Practice makes perfect. Keep trying." He tried to hand her another ball but it was snatched right from his open palm – he quickly looked up to see his white-haired lover's mischievous grin, throwing the ball up into the air before catching it and then casually rolling straight between them, up the lane and into the highest scoring slot.

"And remember that no matter what Mary, I'm gonna make sure to help you out O.K.?" Jack said, rising from his throw, feeling like a pure bad-ass and ignoring the little voice in the back of his head telling him how 'cliché' that was.

Mary looked up at him in wonder before grabbing up another ball and trying again. He took this precious opportunity that he decided could not simply be wasted to walk off like a bad-ass with a wide grin on his face before noticing the Time Crisis 3 arcade booth sitting mere feet away – then he found himself clamouring over to Pitch and begging for tokens to play.

"Pitch – I didn't even know they made a TC3. Gimmie." He said sharply, making a failed grab for the small brown paper bag that his older lover simply moved out of the way with an unconcerned look on his face.

"Jack honestly, you should let Mary play some more games before you start stealing all the coins."

"Do not 'Jack honestly' me. TC3 is calling my name right now. Hand me over.-" He reached for it again with a snatching motion and nearly fell over himself when he missed.

"No." Pitch said, now keeping the tokens as far away from Jack as possible.

"Pitch, man, please?" Jack whined in need as he leaned forward, stretching his entire body to the brink to get the bag from his hands – frowning inwardly at how stupid he must've looked when Mary giggled aloud at them.

"For the last time no." He spoke sternly and gently shoved the young Frost backwards away from the object of his desires.

Jack let out a 'hmph' and stalked away in ire, lurking in the shadows and staying away from Pitch to the point where the older thought that he may have actually insulted him...

Until the young teen came stalking back again with his signature impish grin on his face, brewing an obvious scheme for his tokens. 'This child...so full of himself and his plans.' Pitch admired his youth and excitement, his love of mischief-making and his obvious bravado – they were the things that made enjoy Jack, they made up his personality, regardless of how annoyed he acted in response to them.

"I know why you won't let me play Time Crisis." He said in a matter of factly way that spoke of his plot loudly and clearly.

"Oh really? Well then do share."

"It's because your scared that I'll beat you." Jack folded his arms and grinned, the sound of Mary's giggling from her at last getting something above a '25' in a single ball playing like music in the background.
"Oh please Frost." Pitch chuckled, making sure to keep the bag away from Jack lest he surprise him. "You and I both know that I can destroy you at...probably anything in here really." He confidently made a sweeping motion over the floor of the arcade, practically inviting Jack to continue.

"Oh? Okay then. I challenge you to a match - no resets or revivals. Highest score wins." Jack knew he could win this – he spent more time playing Time Crisis on a computer emulator then he cared to admit.

"Fine then – Mary, stay here and don't move from this spot. Your brother needs to be taught a lesson." Pitch at last rose from his seat near where the brown haired Frost daughter was standing, scarcely hearing the gray-skinned man's words as she focused on perfecting her skee-ball skills. He came to stand next to Jack and took a quick look at the game, keeping the tokens in his back pocket.

Shoot bad guys.

'EASY enough' He figured. "So Jack, are we putting anything on the line?"

"Like the last challenge which you, by the way, lost?" He chuckled and picked up the fake bright orange gun that was apparently the controller for the game. Pitch grabbed the blue one and turned it around in his hand, admiring the oversized piece of plastic in a childish way – it was nothing like a real gun...despite his shifted focus he could still hear his love in the background, still speaking. "Do you really want to even do this again? I mean, haven't you embarrassed yourself enough already with these bets?"

"May I remind you that you won by three seconds?" Pitch raised his eyebrow at Jack, his own sense of competition rising to meet his. He enjoyed Jack's bravado but not when it was so obviously beyond itself and what the young teen was physically capable of. "And only because I got lazy and didn't pick a better hiding spot."

"Yeah O.K." Jack waves Pitch's excuses away with a wide grin. "Same bet as last time? A full hour?"

"Hmmm...you're on boy, and may I say..." He swooped in close before Jack could react and whispered into his ear with a tantalizing purr of excitement. "You're also mine." He quickly lashed out with his tongue, brushing it delicately against the sensitive shell of the younger man's ear and then reeling himself back to his spot to enjoy the site of Jack's arousal showing obviously through his eyes and face.

Resisting the urge to run his fingers through the wispy, soft strands of snow white hair that seemed to almost be calling his name he took a firm grip on the gun with one hand and handing Jack the appropriate amount of tokens with the other. "Ready when you are, dear." That was both him pre-competition berating Jack and reminding him of their relationship, they made have been in public but that didn't mean he was about to let that stop him from loving him.

After collecting his bearings – the shock of feeling Pitch's tongue work it's way up his earlobe making him want to illicit a loud scream and get it on on the floor of the public arcade that had children running around in it – Jack gladly inserted the tokens and started the game, still confident in his victory.

Until about three minutes in when he and Pitch were neck and neck, the gray-skinned man shooting like a pro and Jack just struggling to keep up – he swore under his breath in aggravation before letting his eyes flash to Pitch's face, not marred with the strain of competition but completely immersed in the game. 'Fuck.'
At last, another annoying and poorly rendered cut-scene came on – they were within one thousand points of each other and for that Jack was grateful. He took a moment of respite, using it to glance over at Mary to ensure she was safe and then looking in the opposite direction...

The game had started but Jack could swear that he saw a familiar face among the group of teenagers that were located across the room, none of them looking at him with the stand-alone exception of his old best-friend.

Jamie.

Standing still right in the middle of the group and staring straight at him with unreadable, dark eyes that Jack wanted to question – he wanted to scream to him but he couldn't find the air in his lungs to. Something was different, something was off, but he couldn't do anything about it...he could only gaze as if mesmerized by a spell or evil power. His mouth opened to try and tell his friend something but he could only gape like a fish as Jamie pointed towards him with a grin, before pointing at Pitch and making a hand sign of some sort, with both his hands pointing towards Pitch with certain fingers extended before walking off as if he had finished planned business.

'What? Where's he going?!' Jack stepped forward to try and stop him before Pitch placed a hand on his shoulder and shook him to get his attention.

"Jack..."

"What?!!" He turned around hastily, not wanting to be interrupted before seeing the screen – it was game over and Pitch had over triple his own points god-dammit.

"I win." A sheepish grin of victory erased the worries of Jamie from his mind – he didn't have time to worry about him.

"I was looking at something else Pitch, do-over!" He explained with the words spilling tactlessly from his lips as he realized his current predicament – it wasn't the fact that he was going to be subjected to whatever Pitch had in mind for an hour that frightened or annoyed him, in fact that was probably the best thing about losing – but rather, it was the fact that he lost.

"No no no little Frost, I've already won." He gestured to the screen with a delighted and pleased look on his face before placing the plastic controller back into its fake holster on the machine, walking away and returning to Mary who was still viciously trying to score a '100'. Jack begrudgingly placed the toy back into it's slot and followed his older lover with a curious look on his face, upset that he failed to keep his attention focused on the game but more concerned with what Pitch was going to do to him...

Would he finally tear away his virginity and make him his? Oh that was an exciting thought to say the least. He licked his lips and before biting down on the bottom one in anticipation, already visualizing Pitch thrusting powerfully into him and making him make noises that he would never make in any other situation...

A light brush of the shoulder had him rising from his thoughts. "Out of the gutter." Pitch whispered before checking his silver watch with a look of interest. "Almost three. My goodness how time flies..." He remarked quietly as Mary looked up at Pitch.

"I'm bored..."

"Mastered your game already?" Slightly snarky with a questioning eyebrow raise but Jack knew there was no intentional stabbing harm behind it.
"No..." Mary clearly wasn't offended by Pitch's accidentally snide sounding comment, although whether or not she had actually sensed it was a question in and of itself. "But I wanna do something else..."

"Well then..." Pitch let out a sound of contemplation, thinking of what else they could do to stay out just a little longer, stay away just a tiny bit more. "If your brother is permitting of it I could take you both to the nearby movie theater for a film before we head home."

"Can we Jack?" Mary tackle hugged Jack's legs and looked up at him with puppy dog eyes, swaying his decision...not that it needed much swaying to begin with.

"Of course!" He surrendered a hopeless fight against Mary's wishes – already weakened by the mere fact that he had no reason to forbid it and found himself whisked away back to the outside, rainy world – sheltered under an umbrella with his boyfriend and their younger female guest who seemed to currently be on a trip that went above cloud nine.

"I wanna go see an action movie," Mary skipped along with them as they made their way back towards the awaiting black Nissan. "And get lots of salty popcorn!" her voice was in an adorable sing-song like tune and they piled back into the car, with Mary giggling and laughing, Pitch seemingly lost in thought with his face taking on all the expression of Kristen Stewart imitating a brick wall and Jack thinking deeply about their current situation.

'So what? Are we parents now? Are we literally raising Mary together?' He leaned against his car door as they began their drive to the theatre. 'So wait, does that make me the mother?' He took a glance at Mary from the corner of his eye, part of him feeling satisfied that she was happy while the rest of him wallowed in confusion and reason. 'So would that make Pitch is my little sister's father? No – ew. That's weird. No...' A shake of his head ended with his eyes focused on the steam clouded car window pane and he traced snowflake patterns with the tips of his fingers. He was just glad to be away from Katherine and William at this point but for how long?

How long could they keep up this charade before people would start having questions and needing answers? Before things went from tentatively stable to worryingly explosive, with so many eyes focused on them at once? Before people would begin interrogating Pitch? Before they were found out.

As if playing out like a movie in his mind he could see Pitch get dragged out of his house by police, arrested for their forbidden relationship – everyone looking at him like he was some damaged toy that needed fixing and everyone glancing at Pitch as if he was some disgusting pedophile. Burn him at the stake, curse his name, he would be the talk of town for touching sweet, little, guiltless Jack Frost who never did anything wrong, who was an unwilling pawn in his game. 'No...' he whispered in fear and terror, his entire body almost shaking with worry.

"Mr. Pitch." Mary called from the opposite seat and raised her hand as if she was in a classroom, earning Jack's attention in record time. "I've got a question."

"Yes Mary?" Pitch responded as they turned a gentle corner, the rain hitting the window pane slightly harder, unrelenting in its failing assault against the stalwart wind-shield and car frame.

"What do you do for a living?" A high pitched innocent, inquisitive voice that begged for answer. "I'm just a little curious is all..."

"Hmmm..." Pitch's eyebrows raised in thought and he wore the slightest of Cheshire cat grins. "How to answer that, because what I do is actually quite complicated..."
"Great!" Jack exclaimed, more wanting to be part of the conversation because of his lack of things to do rather then any need or want to be. He wanted the distraction that the talking and questions would bring rather then the discussion itself. "Now I'm curious..."

"Well, my job is...I'm a psychologist." Pitch shrugged, he was searching for an easier word then that but couldn't come up with much else.

"Sighcoliogeest..." Both Pitch and Jack chuckled lightly at her response, her lack of ability to pronounce it being surprisingly amusing. "What's that?"

"Psychologist Mary," Jack corrected her sweetly, rubbing his hands together in thought and thinking back to the books he saw in Pitch's house. "Psychologists are kind of like doctors, only they make you feel better by listening to your problems." He tried to explain it as simply as he possibly could to her.

A small laugh from the driver's seat and Jack looked to Pitch in the driver's rear view mirror with a raised eyebrow. "Not quite Frost." Pitch teased. "Or at least not quite for me."

"What's different?"

"Hmmm...I'm not that interested in telling you." Jack could faintly gaze at his bemused smile in the side view mirror of the car and smiled lightly. "Maybe you can make it interesting for me."

Jack let a stretch of time come between them, wanting to build up the impedance to say no and reject the offer...but within seconds he couldn't resist any-more, his need to know surpassing his want for competition. He licked his lips thoughtfully and lowered his head, thinking about whether or not he wants to press and try and get more information- then decided 'why not'? Because he knew that it would just lead to more hot, incredible future sex anyway.

He faintly thinks back to the criminal books in Pitch's house – a part of him swears that that's not the correct answer and so he tries to move forward in time, to the living room. To the vicious stares and clash that occurred between his boyfriend and William... but he can't remember most if not all of what was said. 'Damn it.' He swears. "Alright then." He says defiantly against his sense of playful rivalry. "I accept. Your terms or mine?"

"Mine of course." Pitch grins wide and clear in the mirror and certain parts of Jack feel as if he just agreed to a battle he could never win. "You have until the end of the night to guess, or until you guess incorrectly three times...if I win then you must do whatever I say for an hour, the previous bet will be added to this bet – you win this one and that one gets overturned, you lose and it still stands."

"Fair enough." Jack mumbled quietly, rubbing his hands together again and licking his lips, still thinking about those books. "...Forensic Psychology?" Jack didn't want to just assume the normal personalities of people in criminal related professions but Pitch looked dark, broody and emotionally downcast – the type that he would assume took those types of jobs.

From the mirror the slightest of smiles aimed at him before a gentle voice almost teasingly cooed to him. "We're here." Pitch clicked the safety belt from his car seat loose after parking the car directly outside the megaplex before looking back to his icy-haired young lover with the happiness of victory dancing in his eyes. "...and that's one try gone Frost."

"Ooooo big brother's gonna lose." Mary said as if tattling on him before sticking her tongue out at Jack and undoing her own belt with young, wise hands.

"No I won't." He spoke resolutely, proud of his ability to win. He knew he could get it. "I already
know it's something that's involved with criminal interaction in some way from the books at your house." A snide grin before he turned to face his younger sister, who staring at him confused. "How bad people think about other people." Her lips formed an 'O' and she nodded in understanding.

Then he looked to see Pitch in the rear view mirror and the grin melted depressingly at the sight of a wide ear to ear smile gracing his face. "Oh Jack...that's upsetting...you don't remember when I told you that those were my friend's books hmm?"

'Fuck' "No-" He whispered under his breath with a sigh of irritation.

"Because they were. I was forced to hold them for a less then polite 'friend'." Looked to Jack with a knowing smile, knowing that Jack can tell what exact type of person he's talking about before he gets out of the car to help Mary out. "Although...I can tell you that me and him work together if that's any indication." Secretly Pitch needed to bite down on his tongue to stop himself from smiling widely, using the pain to pull himself away from the urge to grin.

"Great..." A small swallow, he realized he was already in over his head and ran his tongue over all of his teeth in thought. "So I have to deduce it Sherlock Holmes style?"

"Well yes." He shrugged lightly, paying Jack no mind at this point. "But I'd much prefer you guess. I have so many marvelous plans." Pitch unbuckled Mary's seat belt with a phantom grin held back by the faintest ache of his own sharp teeth on his tongue.

Mary gazed up at him curiously and he let a small fraction of a smirk show while hoping the young child actually didn't catch that. "Like what?" Mary whispered up to him with her eyes blown wide in a mix of wonder and interest and Pitch relaxed just a fraction, the young girl had no idea what he was implying.

He helped the young girl exit the vehicle with a friendly smile, half caused by the fact that Mary was just so sweet and innocent and the other half being his cheerful confidence in his upcoming win, sitting steady on his lips. "Nothing young little ones like you can know about..." Pitch whispered back with a grin that was tainted with a hint of mischief and cunning.

Mary gawked at him as if he had just told her the secret to life before her face became surprisingly serious – as serious and threatening as a child's face could look when looking at someone like Pitch. She mouthed quietly, almost too fast and faint for the older man to see. 'Adult stuffs'. Pitch bit the organ in his mouth again. Maybe she did know what he was teasing about. He wouldn't try to cover it up and accidentally say something that he shouldn't but would much rather have Mary just think 'adult stuff' and leave it at that.

A tiny, thin finger pointed its way toward him like a command from an ant and he had to hold his hands behind his back to stop him from patting her hair in admiration. "Remember: I'll be under your bed if you make him cry." She threatened protectively for her big brother, mouth formed into a tiny pout that skidded the line of melting Pitch's heart.

'Jack is so lucky to have such a good little sister.' He made sure his umbrella covered the both of them and gently closed the door behind the younger frost. "I remember." A gentle nod before he turned to see a flash of familiar snow-spiked hair at the edge of his vision and skated his tongue across his lips in anticipation – he knew he had said that his area of psychology was Clinical but it didn't seem like Jack had actually remembered that. Delightful. The game was his.

"Something Spongebob related going on that I'm not allowed to be part of?" Jack welcomed himself into the conversation, looking the slightest bit drenched and hurrying under the umbrella for shelter, having unbuckled himself and gotten out the opposite side without his own umbrella to protect him –
it slipped his mind to bring it.

"Not really..." He grabbed Mary's hand with his own free one and began the slow and casual walk towards the inside of the movie theater. "Right Mary?" He gently shook Mary's hand and she giggled knowingly.

"Yeah we weren't sayin' nothin'," Mary poked her petite tongue out at Jack in a tease before looking up at Pitch with admiration. Jack playfully and over-exaggeratedly rolled his eyes and spoke in a nipping tone that held no malice in it.

"Alright, sure. I'll buy that..."

"Any more guesses Frost?"

"Hmmm." Jack bit the inside of his cheek and tried his best to think and reason – he knew it had to do something with **criminals**. He tried to think of all the other possible things that Pitch could possibly do for a living and narrow it down..."...Criminal?"

The grin grew in strength and visibility – Jack knew what Pitch was going to say almost before he did. "Wrong again. Looks like I've got an hour of you to myself."

"But!" Mary shouts, jumping in place before converting to a skip as they approached the entrance. "He still has one guess left!"

"Think he can make it Mary?" A gentle shake of Mary's hand and he received a doubting pout of uncertainty.

"I don't think so..." She whispered, as if it was an impossibility for him to actually win. Her voice sounded almost downcast and upset in it's tone. Pitch realized there that Mary thought her brother infallible and righteous – such a sweet little sister indeed.

"I think he might make it...he's a smart guy." Jack notices the way Pitch's face scrunches before he says that and his lips turn downwards very softly in a frown, but doesn't vocalize anything of it.

"Thank you!" Jack laughs despite himself and pushes open the door for the two of them as they enter the movie theater at last. "At least Pitch is on my side! Not so sure about you though." He punctuated his sentence with a small ruffle of Mary's hair, he was upset but he wasn't upset with his sibling – he was angry because he was **losing**.

"We're here at the movie theater." Jack refuses to make a joke about how Pitch is stating obvious fact, biting back his hatred of falling the competition and instead focusing on searching for what Mary wanted to watch. "I'm not even sure if they're playing what Mary wants to see though..."

"I'm sure we'll find it..." He says without thinking before he notices someone across the theatre's opening area giving him a powerful glare of spite, noticing the familiar sight of his dirty brown hair only after a few moments of staring. 'Jamie!' It was all clear and in the open now. His best friend – or perhaps ex-best friend – appeared to be...**stalking** him. He tried to communicate without speaking, already knowing that through the crowd of people flocking in with them that spoke loudly and clearly over them that Jamie wouldn't hear him. He resorted to smiling brightly and compassionately, like he was beckoning Jamie to come to him – as best as he could anyway.

He saw the look on Jamie's face go from what appeared to be anger to a look of shocking discovery and then to strange sort of saddened care in his eyes, as if he was looking at a kicked puppy. Jack wanted to convey that he wanted to understand him and why he was suddenly so upset by looking at him, but a strong tug on his hand pulled him away and shifted his attention.
"It's over heeeere!" Mary yells and pulls Pitch towards a hanging poster of a charming prince holding a sword, just about to continue thrusting from its sheathe and stab it forward towards the invisible camera, with numerous other characters surrounding him like a confused girl and a bunch of mythical animals that Jack could swear he saw before. Beneath the swordsman large font letter exclaimed the title: Epic.

"Well then that was simple enough. Shall we Frost?"

Jack tried to look back and see Jamie, find him amongst the crowd and rushing faces and people but he couldn't find a thing – Pitch noticed. "Problem Jack?" He was concerned...and they were already outside, enjoying themselves...Jack figured he had no right to ruin such an occasion and licked his lips, quickly making an excuse.

"Popcorn." Jack said before pulling the both of them in the opposite direction in a silent and false but very insistent demand for his movie treat. "And ummm..." He sucked his teeth, accepting the loss if it meant he could preserve the day's happiness. There was no reason to deliver any bad or potentially negative news that would put a weight on anyone's heart for the day – not yet. Not now. Not while Mary was bubbling over with happiness and they were getting their first real day out in so long. He wasted his final guess. "Counseling." It was the best guess it had in any case.

"Wow..." Pitch's lips formed into an 'O' and Jack let out a mental cheer of victory, thinking for a moment that he just killed two birds with one stone.

"I got it?" A cheerful grin.

Pitch took a deep breath inwards before letting a potentially pleased sound out, Jack was much more then just a little naïve. "No I'm just wondering what would be the best way to spend a whole hour...after I finish my work in Clinical Psychology." An obvious stab that also cured both his and Mary's curiosity.

It takes all of Jack's willpower not to shout a curse right then and there from his current terrible luck with Jamie and these god-damn bets before he reached for his cellphone and put it on vibrate – he'd have trouble feeling it but he doubted he'd get any meaningful calls. "Alright then...let's go..."

--

Despite the immense lack of attention to he paid to the animated flick, due to his dislike of theaters and the crowds and the disgustingly loud screens, the movie had been more or less entertaining – at least Pitch hoped so and believed such since the younger Frost waited until they had piled back into his car to fall asleep. Her head now lying peacefully against the car door with her mouth open just slightly, completely at peace. Beside her Jack reluctantly began to follow along, eyes drooping closed before the teen would shake himself back awake and look forwards only to nearly give into sleep and again and repeat the dance with his tired eyes.

As he drove smoothly across the drying pavement, still darkened in its greyish color from the rain but back to its normal level of friction that would allow him to drive without worry, he thought of how at peace and blissful the two children looked together. How often was it that they got out of the house with a place aside from school together? Must not have been that often...

He entered the residential area and felt a shiver of vile emotion overcome him, memories of William's horrendously spiteful and near-murderous gaze still burning painfully bright in his mind. Katherine's bruised cheek that might as well have been public abuse that due to Jack's promise he had to limit himself back from alerting any outside forces about...
And he was actually taking them back there?

He pulled the car over to the side of a quiet street, not a single living or at least visible man, woman or child in sight. He turned off the car engine and relaxed himself for a few moments, allowing the quiet to somehow spread like a long awaited and much needed refreshing breeze to his mind. Going out for a day was fun but Pitch would much rather be at home with a hot cup of tea and Jack curled up by his side, lightly hugging him just like before. With a pant of desperation that begged for the vision in his mind to take a physical form someday he allowed his hand relax from the driver's wheel and let them fall by his sides.

Jack had – probably for at least the past two to three years if one wished to be hopefully and nine if they wanted to be realistic – been bending over backwards to keep the family together and hold them there like super glue, raising Mary, dealing with William and keeping his grades within an acceptable place. But even when Pitch tried to place all his faith and trust in Jack he just couldn't see him being actually capable of keeping both him and Mary entirely safe in such an environment, William was too large and Katherine was far too weak.

It was hard to admit due to his obvious lack of tact but William actually put him in a tight spot between his sense of justice and his loyalty to his love – sure, he loved Jack but more then once he found himself wanting to dial Sandman and beg for some type of potent police intervention to get the Frost children out of that home!

But his loyalty and love would always win out over his own justice and he'd find himself hating himself for it – he didn't know what decision could even be considered the right one. Betray Jack to possibly save Jack or just watch the boy potentially destroy himself in trying to stop the destruction of his family?

He ran his tongue over his lips and took even, deep breaths as memories of September laggardly drove themselves to the forefront of his exhausted mind – the very Earth seemed to shake underneather him and he tumbled over, the being next to him wasn't even existent any more, red splatters and blood oh dear lord so much why?! WHY- He doubled over with both hands clamped tight over his mouth and swallowed painfully hard repeatedly, taking so much of his own still burning hot bile back down that he didn't want to be reminded he even had a stomach. He wore the waves of nausea like a seasoned pro but still couldn't find a way to recompose himself until at last it ceased – two straight minutes of vomiting into his closed mind and having to shove it back without waking the small beings behind him.

Pitch decided that a celebratory brushing of his teeth would be in order after he took Jack and Mary back to his house to sleep – and they would spend the night there. He would be damned before he let them take two steps back into that god forsaken house! 'If I let you go back...' He gazed up into the mirror, looking at the still sleeping faces of the younger two with a half-delighted half-morose grin on his face. 'It would be as if I killed you myself...'

He started the car again and took the heavily wooded route to his own home, feeling happy he could tear them away from their reality for just a little bit longer. But the reality was that he was too emotionally delicate to do anything else – he didn't dare let them run to William, run back to that abuse and instability and unhappiness, he had too much of a heart, too much of a mind for children to actually do something so...cold.

He couldn't see why anyone would even do that in the first place – who on the Earth would actually push Mary and Jack into such a dreadful situation again after they finally found a way out through him? He felt almost righteous at the realization – like he was doing a good work for the two adolescents despite what the law may have had to say about it.
And in truth, the more of thought about it the more reasonable the answer seemed. He was doing something good, he assured himself. He was the good person here...even with his past and the murder he committed. This was something good.

And even if he had to put anything and everything at risk he gladly would just to protect them a tad bit more...

September would rage on inside of him, probably forever...he just had to keep on.

–

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Literally the longest chapter in the series so far, counting the next 4-5 chapters coming up after this one.

Fun fact 2: Epic is a William Joyce work as well.

Fun fact 3: Update was slow because reaching climax (no pun intended) and I want to make it good (again, no pun intended).
Bartholomew

Chapter Summary

Jack's computer virus puts the letter back on his computer.

William finding it ensues.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*He couldn't see why anyone would even do that in the first place – who on the Earth would actually push Mary and Jack into such a dreadful situation again after they finally found a way out through him? He felt almost righteous at the realization – like he was doing a good work for the two adolescents despite what the law may have had to say about it.*

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*And even if he had to put anything and everything at risk he gladly would just to protect them a tad bit more...*

*September would rage on inside of him, probably forever...he just had to keep on.*

—

If it wasn't for the one in a million chance that Katherine was actually drunk enough not to care or be afraid but still partly lucid enough to notice his approach to the front of the house, William would've kicked the front door of the Frost home down in his exceptionally fiery rage. This was a normal, daily occurrence in the house to the point where Katherine would've wondered why she was sometimes afraid when William came in in a mood like this, storming around the house like someone kicked his puppy to death.

Instead of putting up some great fuss she noticed how William ignored her presence and immediately stormed and roared his way upstairs, calling Jack's name repeatedly and combined it with a few random expletives haphazardly sown together to create a sentence that frankly made no sense, even to her own drunken mind. She wasn't his target tonight, she could rest easy...and so she did. She stretched out of the couch and allowed herself to sleep off her intoxication while her husband proceeded to try and make hell for a person that wasn't even there.

William however, had a much more different plan in mind. "Who the fuck does that little shit think he is?" He mumbled under his breath, striding into the room almost gracefully considering his level of intoxication. Jack brought some man into this house that flirted with his wife – *his*, she belonged to *him*, no one else – and let the ass-hole fucking upstage him. Just a quick glance told him that Jack wasn't around and that only served to stoke the bright red hot coals of his anger once more, he grit his teeth and glanced around. The buzz from the alcohol was draining out of him and he knew in the back of his mind that wouldn't be able to get more in time to stop his rage towards Jack even as he investigated the boy's living space.
He wanted a good reason to actually pummel the boy to death – he didn't need one, but it would prevent any sense of 'excessiveness' on his part coming from Katherine, not that she mattered at the moment. He threw Jack's items aside, looking over and under everything he owned until he came across something that he knew would have some incriminating evidence on it.

Jack's laptop.

He threw himself down onto Jack's bed with a grin, already knowing that something had to be on here, something of some importance and significance that would justify at least a damn good gut punch.

He booted it up and it automatically began a system restore – William wasn't stupid when it came to technology, especially when he was sober and he leaned back, already knowing that something was certainly on the small laptop that he could use to harm his son with. He sucked his teeth with impatience after just a few moments, realizing that it would take a long while before the computer would ever fully load and be ready for use so he placed it on the other edge of the bed.

"Fucker." He whispered with his very breath lined with hatred, malice and a barely controlled want to cause major physical harm, as if Pitch was still standing near him within range to hear and see everything William was doing. "Who the fuck does that littl-" William hissed and took a deep breath, it wasn't healthy to get this angry with no one anyone to take it out on. When Jack got home from where ever the fuck he was with 'Pitch' – then...

The sound of the computer finally starting up shook from his thoughts like a chiming bell and returned him to reality. He quickly snatched up the computer, turning off anything that came up on the screen that didn't look incriminating off – left only with a browser history to look though...

Until an alert that a document had been auto saved titled 'For Dad'. Something akin to a wave of blazing anger mixed with offense went striking through him before he even clicked on the small icon. Jack was hiding something from him, something that William knew would undoubtedly be offensive and rude towards him...

He would kill the little brat – he would. He opened the file and grit his teeth, mentally reading it.

Dear Dad,

I'm not putting any forethought into any of this so please bear with me, I'm rambling. But its only because I'm happy and proud of you. I can't believe that you actually stopped drinking this time, like for real. There's been so many times where you would say that you'd stop but come the next day you'd be wasted on the couch...me and Mary were usually so upset then, I'd have to keep Mary upstairs and away from you just to stop her from crying some days. Mom would get depressed too and sometimes wouldn't talk or feed us for days, but then I'd usually make Mary something to eat so its okay!

When you are sober, your the greatest Dad in the world. Other times not so much. But I'm not putting you down because of that; I know the William Frost that came before the drinking and I know you now during it – whatever hold that alcohol has on you its gotta be something extremely strong since I've never known you to be a man that needed to rely on something.

I just wanted to say I'm so happy that you're finally getting back on track with your life and that your gonna be my father again. I love you Dad.
William found himself running his hands through his hair, bent over the side of the bed in horror of the revelation he just discovered. When was Jack going to give this to him? When was the last time he was sober?...He couldn't even remember for the life of him.

When did Jack even get old enough to cook for him and Mary? Wasn't he still around that magic age of thirteen? Still obsessing over television superheroes like Batman and Superman and playing with action figures, thinking of his little sister as more of an annoyance rather then another human being – like all young boys did at that age?

Still shocked but stricken enough with surprise to be pulled rudely from the haze of drunken numbness William stumbled downstairs and shook Katherine awake, the older woman being less then pleased with her forced awakening but not allowing herself to complain aloud about it due to the potential of William's anger being unleashed on her again.

"Kat! Wake up, damn..."

"What is it?!" She spoke hastily, pushing herself up on the armrest of the couch to help herself up and somehow escape from what she mistook as William being upset towards her.

"How old is Jack?"

"He's...he's seventeen." The widening of William's eyes was not lost on her and she let out a noise of questioning. "What's wrong?" Her husband grabbed the sides of his head and shook like mad, biting down on his bottom lip like the world was ending around him.

"Kat...I'm...I'm sorry I've got- damn it." He got up and immediately strode into both his and Katherine's bed room – a plethora of beer, wine and other miscellaneous alcoholic drinks awaiting him, glancing at them he realized it was almost like his crime was staring him in the face and judging him. He tried thinking back again – he still thought Jack was thirteen, he didn't have any memories of Jack's last birthday or the one before that. Wasn't sixteen supposed to be a big deal?! Why did it seem like he could remember it being just another day on the calendar?

Behind him Katherine was cautiously coming up the hall, drunkenness giving way to that 'normal' layer of fear that she routinely protectively covered herself in when William was present inside the home.

"Will, sweetie, what's wrong?" Her voice was light and sprayed with worry and care as she approached him, practically stepping on pins and needles. She wasn't prepared emotionally or physically when William suddenly turned to her, arms raised – she thought he was attacking her in anger. She flinched away powerfully by holding her arms up defensively as the rest of her body turned away, hoping to somehow dodge, deflect, block or otherwise just not get hurt by him again. She was terrified of the pain and the contact of his fist or open palm against her despite it growing so familiar within the past nine years.

So when it never happened she glanced up at her husband nervously, fearfully standing and practically shaking in her fright only to see not the face of an enraged William, but the sight of a man who was broken wholly and entirely. The way his auburn eyes went wide as he looked her over and how he lightly shook his head in denial, lowering his arms back down to his sides guiltily, like he had committed a grand crime – the truth was that he did and was only just realizing it.

"S-sweetie?" Katherine called again, approaching William with her fear waning in that he was planning to harm her – something was wrong with Will, something he was dealing with himself and not blaming or hurting her for. As she approached him she could see something running down William's cheek and reached out instinctively, having had to help Mary end her tears in earlier years
and as of late let Mary help her to cease her own had made her wise on when someone was grief stricken.

"Sweetie?" William repeated as Katherine took his chin into her hand and forced him – because Will did not wish to under any circumstances do this, to enter into this domain so shortly after waking up from the decade long cripplingly strong emotional coma of beer and hatred – gaze into her eyes as he spoke. "Don't...just don't. Please Kat." He begged her quietly, his voice breaking as he pleaded with the woman in front of him.

"Will..." She could see her husband reaching his emotional limits and ended her sentence early – nothing more needed to be said. 'Welcome back home milove.'

They both lost track of time, lying together on the couch with Katherine resting horizontally with her back pressed up against the couch armrest located closest to the window and William half lying on her lap and half sitting on the floor in a sort of cheerless, post revelation sobriety that made Katherine question whether Will was actually still even sane despite the occasional short but meaningful back and forth dialogue between them that she supposed was a signal that he was still attached to reality in some way.

"I just...I can't even remember..." He took a deep breath inwards and the loving wife could hear his shaky intake of breath. She ran her fingers through his brown hair in response, wishing she could just remove the sadness from his very being but both of them knew it was impossible. All they could do now was try and reverse the damage, if it was still early enough to do so. "Did we...did we hold him a sixteenth birthday party?"

"Not really. He didn't want one." That was a partial truth – one William currently needed to hear. She tried to say it as cautiously as she could without making William feel any worse for the wear. The real truth was that Jack didn't want one – he still had bruises and sore places from the last time William had hit him and was in no real mood to spend any time around either of them.

"We should hold him a birthday party..." He whispered quietly, obviously not speaking to Katherine but rather now absorbed in his own little world, for once in such a long time he could see the damage he did and was doing to his own life, body, wife, even to his own children. He needed to thank Jack even though he was upset with himself as a man that his son who he was naturally supposed to teach and guide as a father, had to show him the way. His letter woke him up to the horrors he was doing as he neglected his life in exchange for the bottom of a bottle. Greater embarrassment still, Jack had brought his new-found friend, Pitch who had showed him without realizing what a man who didn't need to rely on anything was like while he drunkenly went ahead with his ego and pride, trying to prove he was the greater man without realizing that two 'real men' have no need to fight.

He loathed himself for having only seen this now, after such long periods of mistreatment and disgusting behavior on his part. He didn't even know how Katherine could look at him, with such unbreakable admiration and care shining in her eyes like stars, after he dared to put his hand on her with violent intent – regardless of how intoxicated he was. He glanced up at her with blank but puffy eyes that signaled that only recently had his tears ceased to fall. She looked back at him and then her grin appeared and widened almost instantaneously with her fingers quickly finding her way to the back of his head and rubbing with loving care.

He couldn't fathom why she was still here..."You deserve better." He said quietly as he turned his face away from her in shame and self hatred, unable to even look in her general direction and finding himself unworthy of glancing towards her. "I still can't believe I did what...what I did. I'm sorry..."

He finished the sentence quicker then he believed he should have and chastised himself for it. He
thought he sounded too insincere, too rushed to be considered a full apology – he truly was sorry but he didn't feel like he could ever express how apologetic he really was and ever be believed as if the hole he dug himself into was too profoundly deep and too overflowing with his sins to ever be climbed out of.

Above him he heard Katherine let out a sound that didn't hold an emotion he could read. He wanted to look up at her and try and gauge whether or not he was believed but the pressure of having to face her was too great. He resigned himself to staring at the lifeless television across the room while Katherine spoke to him in a mild, mothering voice.

"It takes a great man to admit he's wrong. You did good..." She cooed sweetly to him, the sweet and cool pressure of her fingers on his neck relaxing him feebly.

"But I could do better." He spoke once again to no one but himself and seemed to curl up into a ball, arms wrapped around his knees and feeling weak – defenseless against the onslaught of the past ten years' acts. Too much crushing down on him like a wave, all at once from every angle. The soul cutting silence made it worse – Katherine's voice seemed to become his life line without him recognizing it. "Where's Jack?" An important question to ask that both enlightened him to the location of his son, who he felt he needed to see and speak to as soon as possible, and kept his wife's melodious voice coming.

"He and Pitch went out for the day, Mary went with them." She tried to forget her lack of self control in the consumption of William's alcohol and instead focused all of her attention on her husband right now, knowing that he needed her. "I could call him if you'd like...he's got his cellphone I believe." William wanted to open his mouth but his emotions just rose beyond his ability to speak for the moment – wondering what he was going to say and how he should say it. What could possibly ever really say? Would some few simple words be enough to heal the undoubtedly painful, aching hurt that was more then likely seething deep inside of Jack for a full decade of abuse, neglect and overall mistreatment? Could words ever be enough to accomplish anything between them and if not what could he possibly do to actually try and apologize to his son, if anything could 'fix' what went wrong? He nodded softly and speedily despite being completely unsure of his ability to keep himself composed. Would Jack pick up even? Or had both him and Katherine's consistent abuse at last driven him and Mary away from them forever in a way that a simple sorry couldn't fix?

Another shuddering breath left his nostrils and he found himself on the verge of breaking down again from the increasing press of emotional strain. He didn't want to lose his kids like this – any other way aside from death including having Child Protective Services take them away from him forever. He looked up at the ceiling as Katherine dialed Jack's number on the phone, he wasn't looking at her but the tell-tale repetitive beeping of the device served to tell him of her actions.

A few minutes went by while William tried to think of any possible way he could open his mouth and actually say words to his son. What could he possibly ever say to him after this? After this realization and after these past years? *I'm sorry*?

"He isn't picking up –"Katherine bit her lip and tried to do damage control with that, knowing that anything that could make William believe that his son was fully cutting ties with him was not good for anyone at the moment. "Well its late and he did spend the night with Pitch before. His phone could just not be charged too."

"Sure." Will said, already knowing that that couldn't possibly be the case. If so they would be far too lucky, or perhaps unlucky, for normal and Jack's phone would be almost mystical in its miraculously bad timing.
"Will, its fine." Katherine insisted, running her slender fingers through his hair once again and feeling William's emotions practically dripping off of him – he didn't want or perhaps feel worthy of – her physical touch. But she knew she had to provide it within some capacity, the last thing she wanted was William to feel alone like she did twelve years ago.

"No, Kat its not." Will thrust his hands over his face and shook his head in disagreement and disbelief. "I put my hands on you. Why are you even still-"

"With you?" His wife finished sweetly for him, a smile never leaving her lips. "Because I love you and...I want to fix everything. Leaving...just – it would feel like I abandoned my family Will." She removed her hand from his head and slunk down onto the floor next to her husband, now sitting in a way that mirrored his now balled up position.

"If I'm hurting you then what type of family am I?" He looked at her, sincerely questioning why she was even still in this house, talking to him after the crimes he committed against her. "What type of father am I if I hurt my own children?"

"You're a father that just made a few mistakes, Will." She wrapped her arm around his shoulder and tried to get a hug from him but Will wouldn't have it. He pushed his way out of the contact and got up, almost stumbling away as he reached the hallway that lead up to their alcohol filled room.

"I...I'm sorry." He says quietly, shaking his head in refusal and apologetic dismissal of their conversation with tears twinkling in his eyes. "I can't live like this – but I don't think I can live knowing what I did, what I kept on doing all these years I...I'm sorry Katherine."

"No Will-" She gets up and jogs to his side, arms open as she comes to embrace him with caring arms that accept his breaking emotional form with patience and love. "I know the feeling, we can get past this together, you don't have to keep drinking your problems away-"

"I wouldn't dare drink anything alcoholic again." At times during his normal drunk moments of agitation his voice would carry the slightest hint of fury and hatred but now, his speaking now, carried with it a symphony of negative emotion. He didn't even want to think about getting drunk again lest he actually cause even more harm to his family.

"But this..." He pulls away from her embrace and keeps her at an arms length as he speaks – wanting her to understand every word her says, because he wants her to know that he means everything from the bottom of his heart. "I can't stay here." He shakes his head and sees Katherine for the first time begin to cry along with him, wetness running down her cheeks as he continues. "I caused too much damage here..." He throws glances at the nearby walls as if the 'damages' were visible holes and wreckage of the family home...to him it felt as if they really were. "It feels like...I'm suffocating in here - I just can't be here, with you."

"No, no William please listen-"

"Katherine...I love you." For whispers quietly and gazes into Katherine's watery eyes, taking heavy breaths to hold back the waves of feelings pummeling his defenses down. "You are...there are no words to describe the hell I put you through and it was rough and I'm not going to leave you without helping you with the kids and saying my apologies and my goodbyes but, this household this place..." He glances around again, unconsciously biting down on his lip hoping temporary pain would prevent any more breakage on his part. "I can't be here anymore. I've done more then enough here." He sniffles lightly and lowers his head, refusing to let Katherine see him hit his threshold once again. "I can't stay here knowing you-"
"Then let's go out." She speaks suddenly with a wide, delighted smile on her face that betrays her still falling tears. "Let's go some place fancy and gaudy and forget things for the night."

"But the kids-"

"Mary's with Jack, she'll be fine." She nods and hugs William once more. "They know how to take care of themselves..."

"They shouldn't have to." His shoulders droop disconsolately as he speaks, not accepting that as a form of comfort but choosing to gladly escape the house for at least a short time and try and forget. Try and forget all the pain and sadness and suffering he caused his family inside these walls, all the anger and rage that he caused and was the primary creator of. "Katherine..." He holds her this time, smiling down at her with a grin that yanks, pulls and tugs at the heartstrings. "Let's go out then, so I can treat like you woman you deserve to be treated as."

Chapter End Notes

Happy BlackIce week, double chapters as celebration - one today and another on August 2nd :D
Thanks for all the love and support!

Fun fact: Ironically, this chapter and the next one lacks Pitch and Jack.

HAHA.
Ex Lover's Lover

Chapter Summary

Jamie hasn't BECOME obsessed with Jack....

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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Note: This chapter takes place directly after Chapter 20 on the same Sunday Night, while 20B took place simultaneously with 20.

The young, sweet hearted, honest and caring smaller sibling of the Benette house, Sophie Benette, lie strewn across the dusty brown sofa that had often served as her mattress in times of laziness or at very worst, heavy crisis. When her brother's fits of rage and anger and screams of pain, hurt and out of control want became too much for her to stay in the vicinity of and she needed to get away, she'd move from her room upstairs and down here.

For the past few days she had a small mission for herself, for her brother's sake...stalk Jack and Pitch. Always hidden in the background and always unseen, dismissed as some abysmal blond who was too busy with her social networking to pay attention to her surrounding environment she could easily blend in with the crowd while following Jack and Pitch. She grinned, feeling a little bit like a secret agent on a mission – it was exciting and dangerous and had a strange level of fun fantasy to it.

She remembered the first time she really saw them together, before she began taking them seriously, back when they seemed to 'first meet' at the cafe, taking a picture of the two sitting together out of a need for a picture of Jack – since Jamie's needs demanded it. She had been in earshot when they started speaking as well and it was all the more laughable when Jack and Pitch actually began ranting about the lack of awareness and intelligence held by the teens surrounding them. Especially while Sophie had spent a good ten minutes trying to capture the perfect shot of Jack's head – making
herself much more then visible.

Unknowingly to the two lovebirds, she was always there, watching them with attentive eyes and a camera phone that would take pictures whenever possible of the two's increasingly passionate level of physical contact. In the cafe and near the high school, all the time, just blending in with the crowd of 'idiots' and snapping pictures for Jamie who in return, carried her burden.

And was currently right across from her, pacing around back and forth across the living room silently ranting and screaming in pure hate filled anger at the gray, shadowy and suspicious looking entity that had taken its place right next to Jack Frost – this 'Pitch' person. "What type of fucking name IS THAT EVEN?" He was nearly pulling his hair out in his madness and had it not been for the fact that Sophie hated to see him like this while the appropriate day for him to take her place once more was approaching them at a speeding pace she would've found it almost comical.

Now it was just sad.

"Just fucking tell me!" He yells to Sophie, glaring at her phone with the blazing anger of someone hell-bent on getting revenge burning in his irises.

"Well, they made out at the cafe. Very touchy..." She refuse to look directly at him, already knowing the hurt he would feel and how much it would show through to her and cut her to pieces inside. "They couldn't even keep their hands off of each other...then they went out to what I guess was his car." She was absolutely confident that the sound that Jamie made after hearing that was not within what anyone alive would consider to be 'human' limits. It bounced off the walls in the silent living room like the screeching of hundreds of bats and she winced painfully in response, wanting to reach for her ears and cover them from the attack when it had already happened.

After that Jamie just stood there, shaking his head in shock and disgust at this new found information. They could've done anything in that car – No. Not they. Pitch could've done anything he liked to Jack in that car, with or without – probably without – his permission. Just the thought of that gray, walking talking sludge ball laying a single hand on what should rightfully and was already and always his just brought vomit to his mouth. His hands balled at his sides until he was in actual physical pain from the pressure of his own hand. How dare he even touch Jack? Even lay a single finger on him or look at him? He belonged to HIM– not some silver eating weirdo with a dumbass nam-

He exhaled quietly, allowing the stress to melt and drip off of him like water off a duck's back, and walked to the nearby steps that lead up to the second floor of the house. There was always a secret place he could hide away from the world in and completely absorb himself in all his wants and needs...

"I'm going to my shrine, don't bother me." He spoke blankly to the obedient girl who sunk back into the couch and stayed there in heavy thought and consideration of today's events...

Yes, Jamie acted as her protector when the time came but...this wasn't healthy for him. For anyone. With this thought still present at the forefront of her mind she called back out to her brother before he reached the top of the steps. "Should I keep a sharp eye on them?"

"Yes." There was more silent anger in that then Jamie meant to put there, but he couldn't help but allow some of it to leak out. "Report anything and everything back to me." Those were his last words before he slammed shut the door that gave entrance into his room and then moved to the closet, to his shrine and his safe place with a look of pure inner harmony overcoming him. He couldn't be upset when he was here...
But he could think, in fact he could consider things much more logically and rationalize much better sitting here then going any place else in the entire world. As he gazed at his personal place he decided he'd have Frost – that much was certain. He spent far too much time in his life carrying the burdens of other people, having to be – he elicited a cry of terror and horror from the sheer thoughts of what was to happen in the nearby future, what would undoubtedly occur before bit down on his lower lip and stopped himself short, he couldn't allow himself to think of that outside of when it was actually happening. The thought only strengthened him in his resolve...he wanted to stop receiving and start taking.

Why not start with the most gorgeous boy in town?

The one everyone loved and adored – at least from a safe distance. Jack probably thought that maybe people didn't like him anymore...fact of the matter was that Jamie took the opportunity to push them away at any given time after catching onto the fact that Jack was gay. Pippa and the others girls? Not a problem. Any man who he thought would even touch Jack was however, but they didn't last too long before Jamie came knocking at their door with a friendly smile and upon beginning a conversation would make it clear that Jack was his.

"And therein lies the problem..." Pitch was obviously from out of town, not located from the neighbourhood and probably lived somewhere outside of the hustle and bustle of what could loosely be described as the 'city' of Burgess. Jamie didn't have the chance to get to him and threaten him off beforehand, before anything near feelings manifested on either side. Now?

Jack was probably slowly becoming the unwitting pawn of this older man, doing everything he wanted just to receive a little bit of what he could consider love and appreciation. 'He must be love-starved...poor thing.' Jamie thought quietly with an exhale. He would gamble again Pitch manipulating him into doing all sort of unsavory, disgusting things that would leave his Jack with all sorts of emotional scarring later on in life.

He shook his head depressingly – he had to get Jack away from Pitch even if it matter dragging him away. He didn't doubt that it would take struggle and effort to yank the young Frost away either – all that really mattered after he got a hold of Jack would be Pitch and what he would plan.

Whatever it was it wouldn't be any distinct measure of good.

"Don't worry Jack..." He whispered to his shrine, built and dedicated to his beloved with hundreds of pictures and snippets and items of his. A lost jacket of Jack's lay strewn across the table that served as a place of quiet worship while a few locks of hair were used as careful decoration. Against the sides of said table were large number of increasingly massive folders, books and boxes – all of them with hundreds of thousands of pictures of Jack all hailing from wherever he could steal them, snatch them from, have Sophie take in secret or otherwise obtain. The entire closet where the shrine was located smelled of incense and the faint hint of musk that heat often gave such closed in places.

This was his perfect resting place. He felt so at peace here...but he needed to get Jack away from this Pitch person before anything else happened between them...

"I'll save you."

---

Song is Ex Lover's Lover by Voltaire

Chapter End Notes
he always was.

Song is Ex-Lover's Lover by Voltaire.
Just

Chapter Summary

Every great relationship has a ground zero argument.
No, I'm not sorry.
Song is Just by Radiohead, I don't own it - just like any of the other songs.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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- 

When the warm morning sun touched Jack's dried and tired lips Pitch couldn't help but think he looked absolutely ravishing – the way it seemed to make his face glitter and glow in the sunlight in such a beautifully artistic way, how his breathing seemed to make the light shaft from the nearby window come alive and dance across his chest...

He tore his eyes away with much regret in his movement since he didn't want to look away and face reality, it was always crushing to feel the realistic world break through and tear from him his fantasy when he would much rather just keep looking and fantasizing about Jack. With not much else to do but wait until the children awakened he glanced towards his watch. The Frost children had slept over here last night and he wished for nothing more then to keep them here, away from the raging beast that undoubtedly still plagued their home with his venomous and toxic presence.

With quiet, careful steps he seemed to glide his way down the hallway and into a room. Its much smaller then his own room with just enough living space for a young child to reside in. With a hushed but large gulp of breath he refused to even allow himself to dwell on that fact as he cautiously pushed the door open just a tiny bit more to gaze inside and see Mary, wrapped up and tucked neatly
into a superman-themed blanket.

Oh the memories...they no longer ached him so painfully when everything seemed to be so...precious and redeeming. Instead of sharp, piercing stabs and slices to the heart they were now merely a dulling graze that left behind an alien and almost euphoric feeling of peace. He wasn't used to September being so...blissful.

Mary turned around with a frown settling on her sweet and youthful face, the sun disturbing and rousing her from her relaxing and peaceful dreams undoubtedly. He decided to standby, right outside the door in case of she awoke confused and scared – she was in a peace that she could not possibly ever recognize after all.

But oh the resemblance was not normal or within human limits. He wanted to rush in and hug her, try to speak to her and proclaim th-

'NO.' He forced himself to stay still as the sheets continued to ruffle and Mary joined the world of the waking and conscious. He gazed through the crack between the door and its frame with a smile – the young girl rubbed her eyes and looked around in shock, but not fear. It was more a sense of amazement as her surroundings.

"Superman..." She glanced around the room in surprise, still rubbing the sleep from her youthful eyes. Pitch chose that precise moment to walk in and make his presence known.

"Good morning milady Mary." He spoke with a gentle quiet in his voice and respectfully bowed like a servant to a master – and really who would argue that he was indeed wrapped around Mary's pinkie finger and willing to do whatever he could for the little girl and her wants, her safety?

"Mister?...Pitch?" She squinted and yawned, stretching her body out as she did so and Pitch chuckled and nodded.

"Yes Mary?" He was enjoying just the minor act of saying her name, speaking to her, having conversations with her – he felt as if maybe September never happened and he could move on just a little bit...

She yawned again and wiped her eyes, surprise giving way to childish grogginess before she pulled the blankets back over herself and slipped back into bed. "A little more..." She whispered quietly from beneath the safety of the sheet and Pitch shook his head in mirth at her actions before deciding to go check up on Jack.

He turned and moved as quietly as a mouse through the hallway and he glanced back to his own bed where his lover sat up, awake and stretching his own waking limbs. Pitch stepped into the ever brightening room with a grin. "Good morning sunshine." His voice was low, quiet and peaceful as Jack glanced over to him with half lidded eyes – both he and Mary were clearly not morning people.

"Meh." Jack huffed in response and extended his arms forward, ahead of him while the tiny sounds of muscles loosening up and breaking through their tiredness sounded through his ears and his ears alone.

The older man leaned against the door frame with a grin playing and tugging at his lips. Why did Jack just look like he was made to be waking up from a good night's sleep in his bed? He allowed his perverted side a few precious moments of watching the tired teenager fully pull himself from the bedspread before getting to their first and most important matter of the day. "I suppose now would be a good time to ask what you'd like for breakfast?"
"Mmmm..." Jack considered as he shook a particularly clingy cover off of his bare foot and glanced around the room, quickly realizing he was sleeping in Pitch's bed...again. "I'm...basically okay with anythi-" He placed a single hand over his mouth as replayed the entirety of last night in his head and then he was on Pitch like a hound. "Where's Mary?!"

Pitch nearly jumped as Jack made his way round the bed with a level of urgency and concern that surprised him. His entire way of moving and his whole demeanor changed in the blink of an eye, his eyes seemed to sharpen and focus while he fully stood up as if every nerve ending of his body had already shaken off the sense-dulling drug of sleep. From surprise alone it took him a few moments to answer. "She's in the other room down the hall." He pointed the room's direction and stepped out of the way as Jack seemed to almost storm his way through.

Surely Jack didn't believe that he would *harm* Mary? He wouldn't even hurt a hair on the little girl's head even if Jack wasn't so protective of her...then he remembered that Jack didn't know about September or what he went through...he probably never would. Maybe without the knowledge of what occurred his protectiveness had been mistranslated as something else, especially when Jack's bad history with 'father' figures – if he was to extremely far with such a stretch and call William that. He bit his lower lip and followed Jack, hoping that maybe it was just his parental instincts activating.

He stood outside the room and watched as Jack shook Mary back awake and made sure she was okay, asking her questions he couldn't quite hear and running his hands down her long hair, straightening it more and more with every pass.

"Sorry." Jack said, already knowing that his lover was stalking behind him as he carefully looked over his sister again – he wasn't used to not knowing where Mary was, especially when they were in a place that Jack had only visited once in the past before. He bit his lip and let out a tiny sigh before giving his younger sister a kiss on the forehead and a ruffling of her hair. "Just...got a little worried about Mary."

"It's fine..." He allowed himself a moment of relaxation while Jack silently tried to stomp out his sense of over-protectiveness for right now. It lead to a serene moment of quiet for the entire three person group – it wasn't unwelcome considering the circumstances, being out in the middle of what some could consider the woods in this early hour of morning. "So..." Pitch hesitantly cut the moment short for the sake of questioning Jack again. "Anything's good?"

It took Jack a few moments to fully understand what Pitch was saying. "Yeah...Mary what do you want for breakfast?"

"Ummm..." The child was still yet wiping her eyes. "Pancakes?"

"Pancakes it is then."

As things usually went with Pitch's cooking, the pancakes were absolutely divine and Mary even wanted seconds, which the complimented chef gladly provided with a great smile on his face that had Jack questioning the other man's sanity.

"Thanks for letting us stay the night." Jack said in an almost shameful tone of voice, one of his fingers slowly drawing invisible circles on the surface of the living room table. He hadn't meant to fall asleep in Pitch's car, of all places, and burden him with having to move both him and Mary inside of his house and provide beds for them. In fact, Pitch didn't even have to do that much – he could've just not taken them out to begin with.
Needless to say that Jack was extremely grateful...but couldn't show it because Mary was in the room. "Yeah, thanks!" Mary yelled to Pitch who was currently fussing about in the kitchen with the loud running water from the sink coming close to muffling the sound.

"It's no problem!" The oldest of three spoke with a high level of jocularity that was as clear as a bright morning day. Jack looked at Mary nervously and then looked back at the kitchen – why was Pitch in such a good mood? He hadn't remembered the man to be particularly broody or upset most of the time, in fact emotionally speaking Pitch was rather stoic a good majority of the time but still...this was a bit much. It was just a tiny bit too sudden and startling of a change.

The sound of the kitchen sink spitting out water died off abruptly and Pitch came striding out of the opposite room, rolling down his slightly wet sleeves and entering the room with a delighted bounce in his step that he didn't sense and paid no mind to. Jack opened his mouth to speak about the mysterious personality change but refused to allow words to come out into the open, instead leaving them abandoned in his throat as Pitch took his relaxed position on the couch and threw Jack a glance that he couldn't recognize before turning on the television.

He assumed it was one of pleasure considering that Pitch just seemed to be having a good day today for some alien reason. He didn't question it, figuring that it was either none of his business or would just make for un-needed conversation. His boyfriend was happy he was here with his little sister was all.

He wanted to be closer to Pitch for now – the entirety of yesterday's last fleeting hours had been spent seated in an uncomfortable movie theater seats with his ass growing increasingly sore and numb from the lack of softness. He distracted himself from both the movie and the annoying feeling of his now sleeping bottom half becoming a tangle of prickles with the over-buttered popcorn that didn't even last half the film, which he paid no attention to as he proceeded to fall asleep from sheer boredom only to wake up and make the less then energetic stroll next to Mary, following Pitch, back to the car and proceed to fall asleep again in his seat.

He decided that he needed to take many more days out if just that was enough to put him to sleep – he couldn't find it in him to complain though. It was a damn good night's sleep, the best he'd had in ages and most of all he woke up to Pitch smiling his ass off at him in the door way and knowing from questioning Mary that he was not the only one getting a good rest.

Jack felt at that moment as he sat precariously close to Pitch, with the other man's head almost lying on his lap, that he should thank him again for his unbelievable, unending kindness towards himself and his little sister. Pitch had no real obligation to be doing this, at least not one that Jack could visibly see aside from his romantic interest and even then he felt as if even if he didn't know Pitch he'd still be receiving his help.

He reached forward nervously to touch him, maybe run his fingers through his hair and show some type of loving physical contact but he pulled his hand back for a reason unbeknownst to him. He felt as if he just couldn't lay a single hand on Pitch right now, like he was giving off some luminous light that he couldn't dare ever hope to be near...why did he feel suddenly not worthy of him? Like something would happen if he touched him?

Pushing past this looming fear of contact and feeling of unworthiness, he clenched his fist tight and tried again, almost thrusting his hand into Pitch's raven hair and grazing his fingers against his scalp. He could hear him release a sound of pleasure and then felt the increased weight of his head against his lap – Pitch coming down and relaxing himself on Jack's right leg with a mona-lisa smile.

It felt right for him to be doing this, but wrong in a way that he couldn't find it in him to really begin to care for.
"Pitch..." he whispered his name quietly and looked down, just as well-rested golden eyes looked up to face him as well. They locked and Jack couldn't yank himself away or stop himself, the moment seemed too overwhelming and just too perfect. Being away from the horrible treatment of his parents and being actually...ok for a long period of time for the first time in much too long a while...

They kissed. Jack moving down so that his lips just barely brushed against Pitch's own, only to be drawn deeper in as his horizontal lover pulled him in deeper and made it more passionate then he meant it to be. Lips meshing together and they both felt something just snap – something bordering on the supernatural and mystic, half in need and half in lust. All they knew was that they needed each other, in that moment...

Pitch rose from his seat and wrapped his arms around Jack's form, pulling him in and meshing their already bruised lips back together. Jack felt almost like he was being consumed inside by Pitch in some way, like his beau was taking something from him that he didn't before but it was okay to give it up to him and it was a beautiful feeling to do just that.

A familiar tongue poked at his lips for entrance that he gingerly gave with an obscenely loud and needy moan – he needed more of this? When was the last time their lips touched like this – he couldn't even remember all he knew was that it needed to happen more often, more and more needed to happen between right now between them – no clothing, panting, begging, pleasure, Pitch-...

Wait...

Where was Mary?!

He yanked himself away from the kiss, pushing Pitch away from him with almost aggressive levels of emotion and glanced at a wide eyed Mary, staring at them in complete shock and Jack bit down on his lip so hard he drew blood...

Mary knew. Fucking DAMNIT' Mary knew about their relationship and seen them do such adult things – he was glad he was conscious enough to realize she was here. In a panic he got up, feeling as if his head was about to burst from embarrassment and stress – how was he going to explain that to her? Explain the complexity of what he and Pitch had, their plan, their ideas.

Pitch rose behind him, mouth opening in knowing before Jack whirled around and stopped him in a flash, breath heaving in and out of his chest.

"Pitch we need to leave, my parents are probably wondering where I am." Bullshit. He didn't want to leave, he just didn't want to continue facing both Mary and Pitch after what just happened – it was like she caught him committing a crime that he enjoyed, guilt welling up inside of him from allowing her to view such a thing. She was too young. He felt overwhelmed with his irresponsibility of letting Mary see what they were really like...

"Wait- Jack don't-" Cut off again from Jack walking past him to collect his own shoes, left thoughtfully by the doorway. He never even remembered taking them off and throwing them there and upon seeing how neat they looked he figured Pitch must've removed them for him...more embarrassment that he couldn't shake off.

"I'm sorry, thanks so much." Feigned thanks, too sweet-sounding and overly gentle to be actually genuine. Pitch could tell and took a deep breath before grasping the bridge of his nose in annoyance and anger, any sense of a good mood was gone now. "Mary we're leaving." His voice was sped up and serious as Mary shook off her shock and walked towards him, throwing Pitch an almost pleading look out of the corner of her eye...
And that was all the older lover needed. Pitch grasped Jack's wrist and pulled him back, pulling him out of the room with a near-excessive amount of force while Mary looked on fearfully, standing near the door and wondering what to do as they stepped into the room that served as the path between the bedroom and kitchen. Jack repeatedly tried to shrug him off, escape the hold of Pitch but he couldn't – and could only tug backwards as roughly as he was physically capable of as his boyfriend dragged him back into the house against his will.

Pitch reached the middle of the room and made sure that he stood in the narrow opening between Jack and the exit.

Upon reaching what Pitch thought was significant enough distance he released Jack's arm – and the other swatted it backwards in spite from being grabbed so tightly and carefully stared at him with eyes that seemed to glare and beg for an answer to the force used. He considered apologizing for the sudden burst of physical power but decided apologies could wait for right now, now was the time for important discussion...

"Jack, for a moment could you calm down?" A true question that got a scoff returned in a less than polite answer – Jack clearly didn't appreciate the grasp. The infuriated Frost glanced over his wrist and hissed at Pitch, who tried to send an apologetic look but could never meet his face, Jack was refusing to face him.

"Figures you're no better." He whispered in rage as he caressed the possibly bruised wrist joint and glowered again, this time with a look of immense emotional hurt and powerfully obvious dissatisfaction. "Asshole." A quick mumble before he looked away again, up and around everywhere in the room before standing on his tip-toes, looking behind Pitch to check and see if Mary was okay.

She was holding onto the doorknob, mouth turned downward as she locked eyes with her brother. 'What do I do?' Pitch exerting violence over Jack could only remind the duo of one person – William. This wasn't a song and dance that they were unused to, though the surprise of the gray-skinned and previously rather generous man becoming violent upon their want to leave did blind-side them. It didn't matter; William had moments exactly like this one and just like in those random and difficult segments of time, Jack's entire position and actions were about securing Mary's safety.

He licked his lips and tried to think of a plan to get Mary out of here O.K...even if Mary could get away from Pitch and get that door open, they were still technically in the middle of nowhere with a car that neither of them could drive. Calling for help? Could he pull out his phone in time?

He lowered himself back to the ground and instead glanced at Pitch. "So what? You just yank me over here to stare at me?"

"Defensive. Great." A small sigh as Pitch leaned against one side of the entrance and rubbed his hands together. "Fine then. I'll work with that. Let's start it this way since you want to be the tough guy." Pitch couldn't locate the source of his anger but he blamed it more on Jack's actions, or more specifically the lack of tangible explanation behind them. "Why are you running off to run straight back into your abusive father's house?"

Jack laughed bitterly, in a nearly involuntary manner. "You just dragged me, rather violently mind you, into a room with you that I clearly didn't want to go to. Don't fucking lecture me about abuse and my actions." His voice grew in volume and then he toned himself back – getting Pitch upset would not work for him...he looked up to Pitch and yet all he could see was William...he took a breath in before releasing it through his nose.

He had to get away from this man.
"Jack I only dragged you back because you were making an impulsive decision, you weren’t thinking, just like you aren’t now.” He tried to explain and drain the emotion and anger out of his voice but they still seeped in and upon reaching the end of his sentence Jack seemed heavily offended by his words.

"And so trying to suck my face off in front of my little sister wasn’t an impulsive decision?” Jack said, eyes opening wide as he struggled to keep his hands by his side and not strike out at the man standing before him – he wasn’t sure at this point whether he was looking at Kosmotis Pitchiner or William Frost.

And now it was Pitch's turn to laugh in a stiff way, looking away to the side and mumbling something that Frost could just make out as foreign sounding and weird, before turning back to "Don't try to turn that back on m-

"Then don't try and say that you grabbed me because I wanted to leave."

"Leave and go where Jack?!" A chuckle hidden underneath the quickly emerging frustration of Jack's continued defensiveness but they both knew Pitch had a point: they were quite a ways away from the town and Pitch had the only way of transportation back.

In a stormy rage Jack let out an aggravated sigh and seethed with ire – this was a path they already traveled. "Does it matter? It's my choice. We already TALKED about you trying to limit my freedom when you told me I should 'do something for myself.'"

"It's your choice indeed – to take Mary back to your insane father just like your drunk mother." He venomously hissed, already knowing that that might have been pushing it too far but needing to make his point known and clear.

Jack's jaw dropped and he stared at Pitch in shock – did he really just actually play that card against him? Comparing him to his mother like an insult?! "Don't you fucking dare talk about Katherine – you don't know my mother! You don't know what she's been through or what she's going through!" Jack's eyes were dripping with tears already. He really did love and appreciate Katherine for everything she did, because everything she did was all she really could do. "She's trying just as hard as I am to try and keep my family together-"

"What FAMILY?" Pitch finally full blown screamed at Jack and could see him flinch from volume alone, shrinking back and away from the taller, larger man in a fearful way that emotionally emboldened him.

"What family Frost?! You and your sister are all you've really got here – why else do you cling to me? In fact, I asked you this once let me ask you it again." A slight sneer mixed with apprehensive knowing of already knowing the answer. "How many times has Katherine intervened in William beating you?" His face was set like stone as Jack heard the question and all anger gave way to realization and the beginnings of melancholy, stepping backwards as Pitch continuously stalked forward, slightly bent so that he and Jack were always face-to-face. He stood ever looming and made the younger feel smaller and so much more pathetic in comparison. "Answer me Jack!" His voice practically boomed in the younger man's ears and Jack's hands flew up to them to try and calm himself down.

"Shut up-"

"ANSWER the question!" He yelled again and saw Jack flinch once more before timidly and protectively curling up on himself, trying to keep himself away from the older as he answered.
"Not once..." His voice was breaking from the strain and he sniffled quietly, now standing near the entrance to the kitchen with every nerve in his body strangely incapable of calming down. Just moments ago they were in bliss and now suddenly they were fighting against one another – although it was closer to him defending himself as Pitch launched knives and daggers straight at his jugular.

"Precisely!" Pitch stood at his full height, as if admiring his work of making Jack secede in the battle to him, seeing that surrender bringing a sense of victory to him. "You can't just make stupid choices like that – taking Mary into such dangerous places."

The elder Frost realized at that moment what was going on and his eyes widened. "So this is about Mary-"

"Of course, its always been about Mary. Her safety, her security. I have to take care of her after all..." He spoke almost righteously, beaming with pride and happiness as he spoke her name. Too happily for Jack's sake.

"Pitch." He spat in disgust, pulling himself up to his own full height and staring the other man squarely in the eye. "She's not your fucking daughter. She's my sister. What decisions I make for her are MY DECISIONS, even if they just happened to involve you." Then, like he just absorbed the entirety of the argument he glared at Pitch again with renewed strength in his anger. "In fact, what happened to us? Weren't we a couple before Mary, before you knew about my parents and her? Why are you so fucking focused on my little sister?" A hint of disgust translated quite well between them and Pitch's face twisted unpleasantly as he ran that sentence again through his mind.

"Wait...wait wait..." He shook his head repeatedly, staring at the ground next to his feet with his lips parted and his breath heavy in the air. "Are you suggesting I'm a pedophile!"

"No." He pushed past the stunned Pitch and made his way towards his little sister, whose teary eyes mirrored his own. "But I am saying that I'm not letting you see my little sister anymore. Come on, we'll walk home-"

"NO Frost." A profound grunt of annoyance and Jack had only milliseconds to turn around and see Pitch's hand, tearing him away from the younger sibling and slamming him up against the nearby wall. Mary let out a shriek and was ignored by an enraged Pitchiner. "You are not taking my daughter ANYWHERE NEAR THAT MAN." He spoke with imposing force while Jack squirmed uncomfortably, once again trying to free himself from the grip of his ire-filled beau.

The pure feeling of two Septembers raging through his system – he lost her ONCE, he refused to have to live through such bullshit AGAIN. He refused to just watch her die. No, the world wouldn't take her from him again, not again. Never again. He couldn't exist if he had to watch happiness slip from his fingertips once more because of a stupid decision – even if he had to threaten Jack to do it.

"She's...not...your...DAUGHTER." Jack yelled, thrusting his legs out to try and kick Pitch away and falling that, raising his hand to try and strike out at him- perhaps punch him in the face or neck but he was stopped by a more than capable palm and his hand was painfully pushed against the wall. Jack emitted a grunt of hurting, aching from his wrist from this repeated abuse.

"You will not strike me, much less leave this house-" A slight bump against his leg forced Pitch to look down and immediately pull away from Jack. Mary had weakly kicked him and was looking up at him with fearful eyes with uneven, terrified breaths leaving her...Pitch rapidly retreated backwards and released the other Frost while they both gazed at him with tear-stained eyes...

He reached behind his back and both children backed up, their terror shining in there eyes along with their fears. Pitch didn't bother with their feelings for now...he pulled a fifty out of his wallet and
handed it over to Jack, who snatched it away after staring at it for an uncomfortably long amount of time. "Get a taxi...go someplace."

The two kids looked at each other before Jack nodded to Mary and turned towards the door, opening it quickly and almost rushing out with Mary at his side before a large hand grabbed him from behind again and forced him to look back up at the now seemingly repentant Pitch. "Don't go back to William." He tried not to let his emotions show, tried to keep them buried and hidden but oh god he didn't want to see something on the news about Jack and Mary being found beaten to death by William- god no no no! "Go anywhere else. Just not back to William for my sake please." He pleaded, hoping that maybe he hadn't fucked things between himself and Jack up to the point where any attempt to beg to him would be ignored.

The young Frost gave him a long look before gazing to the side, no longer paying much attention to him. "I'll consider it."

Pitch tentatively nodded and then trailed his way backwards before nodding again, signaling it was okay to leave before turning his back on the Frost children. He only allowed himself to break down when the telltale opening and slamming of the door had told him that the pair had left his home.

Both Mary and Jack were still on edge, hearts sort of bouncing about in their chests like enraged rabbits as the less than polite taxi driver drove to the front of the house to pick them up. He grumbled something indiscernible about having to transport children around and while the younger let it slide – more from not understanding and therefore not caring then any measure of actual self-control – Jack had to reel himself in and remind himself that they needed to get somewhere else, not start a pointless fight...

On that note, his mind replayed the entirety of what had occurred within the home standing behind him before coming to an incomplete stand still. A strange mixture of conscious and asleep – a total case of emotional shock as they piled into the taxi and began their quiet ride back into the town, still shaking off the effects of the confrontation they had had.

Pitch had never put his hands on him before – never like that. It was a shock and he couldn't believe it...and then he immediately viewed him as hostile. With a pout he let his head fall into his crossed arms while Mary buckled herself into her own seat.

"Burgess High School." He said quickly in a robotic tone, still in a state of disbelief from the touch. Icy blue eyes gazed at the bruised wrist that was numbing itself now with ugly purple splotches drawing even more attention to its usually near-inhumanly bright surface. The high school was the last place he could think of that didn't...involve going home.

Or back to the cafe.

He released a grunt of unhappiness and rubbed his hands together, sniveling as quietly as he could without alerting his already distressed younger sister. She had seen enough of her brother breaking and cracking under pressure, under emotions and feelings and urges, for today. She needed him to be strong and steadfast like he was before he met Pitch...

In a half second for a flash of time he showed weakness as his mind reached the topic of Pitch again and a sneaky but truthful tear slipped through his defenses. He wiped it away before he thought it was seen and continued on in thought, making sure to keep his head down and his downcast face hidden by a halo created by his arms.
It was stupid of him to try and leave with Mary all of a sudden in the first place. His mother didn't call him and he certainly didn't want to go back to his father, not willingly anyway. He would need to be dragged back in a much rougher fashion then how Pitch dragged him- and then he let out an exasperated groan at his own lack of forethought before action. Pitch was right, he was being quick to leap and not looking beforehand...

What if Pitch hadn't MEANT to harm him?!

In which case it was still his fault for the fight and he completely put everything out of proportion, made the entire thing into one messy, unneeded, massive dramatic mess. *Sure,* Pitch may not have done the wisest of things with the grabbing and the way he caught Jack and pulled him back but in the end Jack knew his *reaction* was the key point.

He should have been that strong and steadfast pillar that he was for Mary all of the time – he wished he couldn't show these sparse, spread out moments of weakness in such *critical* moments...he ruined everything between himself and Pitch didn't he? The older man wasn't going to come back to him, not now, not that he ruined everything between them in such a way in front of the girl that Pitch considered his *daughter.*

Then more of the heavy weight of guilt dropped onto his shoulders, more pain that hurt so badly it felt *physical,* more light tears that had to be stopped by the quickly growing soaked cloth of his jacket. Pitch had such a connection with Mary that he called her his *daughter* and judging by the short and sweet times they spent together, talking and learning about one another, it was clear that Mary was beginning to see Pitch as a father figure...

Who was he to claim that he was trying to keep his family together and then turn right around to sever that important connection between Pitch and her, when Mary was already lacking a real father figure in her life? He certainly wasn't anywhere near fathering to Mary in comparison to his older lover since Pitch provided and entertained his sibling in a much different way then whatever Jack could have ever hoped to emulate. He even seemed smarter and more trained on the matter of actually caring for a child.

He ignored the wet, upsetting feeling on his cheeks and repeatedly ran the thumb of his left hand over his right as a sort of self comforting technique. But his mind couldn't help but go south, nothing felt *right.* He was *wrong* to freak out and suddenly begin flailing around, seeing Pitch as a threat to his safety when he was only trying to understand his lover's embarrassment.

*He must be thinking what the fuck I was thinking about there...*' His hands reached for his phone but never fully reached it. He didn't have the face to actually interact with Pitch right now...things needed to settle just a tiny bit– that much he knew. He tried to blink his tears away but more and more fell before he could really do anything about it...he prayed Mary didn't see.

Beside him Mary sat quietly, eyes trembling in worry. Were Mister Pitch and Jack not friends anymore? She thought that maybe they were be bestest buddies forever even when they kissed like mommy and daddy used to. She thought it was sweet and nice – Jack smiled more and seemed happier when he was around him and mister Pitch was so nice and took them out to the arcade and then to the movies...

She frowned and squeezed her eyes shut as tears pricked at the corners, she held them back with trained practice and grace. *I'm tough...I'm a big girl and I don't have to cry.* 'She whispered to herself, a sort of mantra that would help her out in certain situations – specifically the ones that involved the people who she loved getting into loud fights...*Don't stay mad at mister Pitch big brother...*’ she sniffled quietly and wiped her face.
He stayed still for much longer then what was needed as he absorbed the consequences of what he just did and pounded the summary of his current affiliation status with Jack into his mind. It couldn't possibly stay lover or anything remotely close to a loving feeling – now it was something like 'Ex-boyfriend' or 'Potential Abuser'. He didn't doubt that Jack wanted nothing to do with his less then reasonable behavior...

He raised both hands to his face, covering his eyes and mouth from the suffocating emptiness of his home that pressed itself in around him, sucking in closer to him at jagged, harsh edges like he was a vacuum for pain. Morose sobs began to accumulate in his throat that he couldn't release without gagging on – despite being such good company to the misery that loved him so, he still would never be good at handling it.

The longer he sat there in his absorbing sadness, the more depressed he became...All the feelings of what this large, lonely home had felt like before Jack had come...they were coming back with a vengeance and an ever present knowing: Last time it was questionable. This time, beyond everything, this was your fault.

He screamed into his palms with his anguish overwhelming him, too far deep in his unhappiness to be thankful that the surrounding area of his home was empty and filled with nothing but plant life and the occasional doe.

He saw that Jack had his right to be defensive, his right to question Pitch – what he had done was just as, if not more, irresponsibly impulsive as Jack's sudden want to leave the house and return to the hands of his abusers. Mary's look may have pressed him further then he would have normally gone but in the end, no matter what means of an excuse he tried to find within the four and suddenly bare, hollow feeling walls that surrounded him, he was just as at fault as Jack could ever be...if not more so.

He grabbed Jack. And not in a friendly way either. He had forgotten in that moment that even if Jack had bravado and could pull himself away from what seemed to be the sadness of his situation he was still an abused child.

Pitch's tear stained hands balled into fists and he pressed them into his own temple with heavy gasps and hiccups, heaving with thick waves of self focused anger. He raised his hands and brought them down crudely, pummeling his own temple without realizing and whispering to himself over and over again. 'Stupid, stupid, stupid...'

Of course Jack would act like defensive and try to get away, try to escape. He lived in an abusive home - it would be second nature for him to move himself away from what seemed to be the sadness of his situation he was still an abused child.

Pitch knew that he had grabbed him in a violent way without seeing and measuring his physical strength over Jack's, just like his father would have. Worse it was in front of Mary – the person he loved most in the world, right next to Pitch... formerly. He basically had already even said that he would be okay with being abused, both physically and emotionally, in such a matter as long as Mary wasn't there to witness it! With a growl he painfully clawed at his own scalp, digging his nails in to the point of pain before letting out a dense exhale.

Jack must have already begun to hate him. Despise him, loathe him. He licked his lips and let out a whimper that he couldn't hear before turning to the kitchen...maybe...?

Maybe a knife would do him some good? Help him bring just a hint of justice, righteousness to the fallen, to September? Maybe this was the thing he was supposed to do that night, two years ago when September first occurred? Everyone he truly began to love either separated from him or died
anyway – why would that change now? What was he even expecting trying to get close to Jack?

Save him? Save him?

'Please...' The thought at the back of his mind, memories of September and all the things that followed bursting through to his psyche. 'You can't even save yourself half the time. Kosmotis Pitchiner has been with closer brushes with death then what could be comprehended by the human mind. Just let go.' He stared around the room, his breath evening out as he shut off his logic and gave into the feeling, the depression, the fear. Whatever is left of that shell, that husk of a man...he died. That's why you tell everyone to call you Pitch. It's easier to accept that name...there's never been a child associated with it.'

He opened the drawers and cabinets of his kitchen out by one, trying to find something suitable, something undeniably sharp and infallibly lethal, something that would make it so he didn't fuck up this time – the last two times were ruined by his own inability to get it done right. This time, he was sure. He needed to die.

With hands that keened through the storage places of where he would normally place his knives he ripped open the final possible location of his item in question and smiled a bittersweet smile – a butcher's knife. Perfect.

This would ensure that the deed was done correctly this time, after all – third times the charm. He tore it from its place of rest, ripping the shelf straight out of the counter and let silverware spill all about the floor with an ear-splitting cacophonous symphony that he paid no attention to. He got want he wanted.

With not a care in the world he leaned against the same counter and let himself slip down – admiring the moment. This is what he was supposed to be doing, the right way. God clearly didn't want him here and no man could ever find it in himself to stay by his side, not Jack, not Sandman, not any of his one-night lovers...even the young children who attached themselves to him had leeched off of him and left – and the two that had actually added something wondrous and beautiful to his life, the ones that he would cling to and give up his very soul to remain with for just a few seconds longer if need be, were being snatched away from his grasp.

He had nothing to live for...he took the knife and with single sweeping, emotionless movement that betrayed the conflicting feelings tumbling about in his skull he carved a slit into his opposite wrist. With glazing eyes he watched the blood drip down onto the tile floor, an unimpressed smile pressing onto his lips.

He gazed up to the doorway and shook his head with a half-crooked smile. "Hurry up...and let's finish this thing already."

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: Just about all my favorite Radiohead songs are in here so far.
I Wanna Go Back

Chapter Notes

For those of you who asked, PM'd and everything; It's Sunday in this chapter and it'll be Sunday for a couple more chapters.

Our Sundays here in Cafe Claussen land are really freaking long.

Song is I Wanna Go Back by Onra.

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The less then speedy taxi came to a slow stop in from of Burgess's local high school and momentarily shook both Jack and Mary from their deep, emotional reveries of their relationships with and involving Pitch. Jack took the moment to swallow and dig into his pocket, extracting the money that his...beau, gave him. That's what he was right?

"How much?" Jack asked before showing the taxi driver the bill – already knowing better. But apparently even with that little trick this man still wanted to be the raging dickwad of the day to Jack.

"Forty bucks." Normally, due to the facts that Jack was both emotionally concerned with someone else's well being at the moment, that the money provided was not his and that he frankly didn't know or care about the taxi fares around here, he'd just give over the fifty bill. But then the driver began to talk out of his ass about 'Children costing extra' and Jack just wanted to flip him the bird right then
"Just take the fifty and shut up." He quickly finished for him, handing over the bill with a provoked thrust in the man's general direction – he could see the distasteful and arrogant smile on the stranger's face as he took the bill and gave Jack a ten in return. *At least the fucker still knows basic mathematics.* He thought, snatching the ten out of the cab driver's hand and promptly evacuating the vehicle with Mary in tow and secretly flipping the man the bird as he drove off.

After examining his surroundings he raised his arm and put it across his face, biting into the fabric and releasing an angered stream of profanities that were muffled out. The man hadn't even taken them to the correct fucking place, they were still two blocks from the school!

Mary looked up at him concerned and Jack shut his eyes tightly – just stealing a glance at her brought up bad memories of actions done this morning, he frowned slightly before remembering that Mary would be sad if he showed any more signs of discomfort. He smiled wistfully instead and took her by the hand, forcing himself to seem much happier then he felt at the moment.

"Don't worry about me Mary, Pitch and I-" He licked his lips for stall as he tried to find an answer to the insanity that took place earlier and let out a short exhale – believing himself unable to find a really suitable answer and just settled for what he could. "We're just having a little trouble right now...we'll be fine." He suppressed the want to say, 'Bullshit' and instead began the walk towards the high-school with no real tactic or reason behind the action...just walking and thinking about Pitch.

He knew eventually he would have to tell his young sister about the relationship he and Pitch really had but he had no idea how to go about it or where to start. Should he start telling her about it now or tell her to wait until she was older like most parents seemed to do?

Without thinking he turned the corner and came to a rough stop, bumping directly into an old, familiar face despite Mary’s unheard forewarning that was drowned out in the background by all his mental noise.

Rubbing his head, which he had hit rather painfully against the other man's he glanced up, half-bewildered and half-irritated before his expression changed into shock and happiness. He released Mary's hand in that moment to embrace the figure happily and scream his name. "Jamie!"

The other teen chuckled openly and embraced him back, not allowing his hands to dawdle about the younger man's form but admiring it all the same. It seemed to end all too quickly when Jack pulled away and gave Jamie a once over, his features bright and grin upturned. The brunette smirked and raised a joking eyebrow in response. "It hasn't been that long, Jack!"

"It's been long enough!" He wrapped his arms around Jamie's body again, knowing he was being just a little too clingy but the contact was working wonders for his emotions – it comforted him to know that Jamie was here with him even when Pitch wasn't.

Then he flashed back to the arcade where he'd seen Jamie stalking about, watching him and he immediately yanked himself away like Jamie was the fucking plague. Even Mary was shocked at how viciously and despairingly Jack seemed to claw out of Jamie's arms like some sort of desperate animal. Jamie wasn't even clinging to him as hard as Pitch was – it was just a normal and friendly sort of hug.

Jack just felt vulnerable all of a sudden, like something more sinister was lurking about and stepped away from Jamie to take a more defensive position next to Mary. His mind was reeling through endless possibilities, bring up the arcade and demand answer or just play this meeting by ear and pretend that whatever happened at the arcade really didn't happen and try and downplay his rush to
escape from Jamie's general vicinity?

He reminded himself that he lost his best friend from trying to confront his feelings and Pitch who he was currently placing in the same fucking catagor-

"Look Jamie, it's been great seeing you again but I gotta go." Jamie was already an awkward friend – if not a full blown stalker – there was no harm in getting the fuck out now. He speedily grasped his younger sister's hand again and promptly ran off, not even awaiting a response from the other high-schooler who could clearly see through the half-hearted pleasantries. He waved back to Jack nonetheless and watched him as the white hair quickly dissolved into a speck – Jack almost dashing down the street to escape from Jamie and had it not been for the fact that Mary was forced to keep up with how she was holding hands with him, he'd have run faster.

They stopped about two blocks and a corner turn away and Jack could see Jamie cease his waving and walk in the opposite direction without a single care in the world – he silently thanked the fact that Jamie clearly either sensed that something was wrong and decided not to chase after him or just couldn't sense anything and dismissed him as awkward.

Out of the corner of his eye, the cafe struck itself out to him and he could feel a soft pang of hurt ringing in his chest. He should really say something to Mary, do something but it was like getting away from Pitch had weakened him... *I'm head over heels...* He mentally thought, part of him feeling sorrowful for the fight and the rest of him a jumbled mess of feelings and emotions.

"We should get home..." Jack said quietly, almost mournfully. He saw now that after just a little bit of emotional failure he didn't have the bravery to face Pitch or Jamie. Why was it that he kept on screwing things up for himself the moment things didn't work out his way?

"But Mister Pitch asked us not to go back to Dad..." Mary looked up at him with sad brown eyes that spoke of a want to keep the promise they made.

He was half a mind to remind Mary that he never agreed to those terms but at the same time he didn't want to talk about Pitch to Mary, he felt too much like a disorienting mess of pride, failure and sorrowfulness to even venture into that territory vocally. Instead he ignored the question, gently squeezed Mary's hand to remind him that she was *here* with him and began his walk home.

Halfway there his phone vibrated in the back of his pants – it was a call. He picked it up in his free hand without looking, too busy looking out both ways for oncoming traffic. "Hello?"

'Jack!' *Now that* voice was one he currently didn't want to hear right now.

"Hey mom." He feigned surprise and happiness – after hearing her brought up by Pitch in such context he would have to actually think about him while talking to her, his mind wouldn't allow him to do anything else. 'Shit.'

'I was worried there for a tiny bit.' There was a light-heartedness in her voice that didn't serve to help either, after all who else did Jack know that was usually rather broody, shouted at him within recent memory and was uncharacteristically happy this morning?

'Fucking...' His mind was making annoying, irritating, Pitch related connections faster then he could make words. Needless to say, it was beginning to aggravate him.

"We're heading home now, we spent the night at-" Oh *fucking hell* it even hurt to have to say his *name*. He quickly lied to cover his tracks without having to tell Katherine about what had occurred."a friend's house." He could feel another pang in his chest, this time almost twice as painful
as before. He visibly winced.

'Oh good! Well, I was just calling to make sure that you were O.K. and umm...well...' Jack bit his lip and held back his emotions, pulling and yanking them away from the surface as if he was holding a leash around their neck and trying to keep them in line. Katherine saying 'Ummm' was never a good thing and the last thing he needed right now was more distress and unhappiness. 'William says he got your letter?'

'What?...I never sent him a letter...' The young man's face twisted in confusion and he tried to think back and see if he could remember anything about a letter of any sort — but all he got was 'Cafe, Pitch, hug, kiss, we fought, fuck-' before he decided to just couldn't remember...but he didn't want to deal with William's bullshit at the moment. "Ah, yeah okay..." He feigned knowing and crossed the street safely with Mary. "We'll be home in a little while okay?"

'Okay sweetie, be careful.' Despite her voice being the caring and warm mothering voice that usually would relax his tension away, hearing her did little to comfort him. He took that opportunity to hang up the phone without saying what could be considered a proper goodbye — he didn't feel like it and besides, he'd be seeing her soon enough so there was no point.

It struck him that he probably shouldn't head back to the house since William was more then likely currently there. The last time he was in the house and laid eyes on Jack, he looked murderous. 'I might as well just have put a gun in my mouth...' Jack thought mournfully while acknowledging that really, aside from Pitch's place — and really after that fight it might not as well count in his book — where else could he really take Mary?

He exhaled and clenched his eyes shut, coming to a momentary stop at the end of a street, his instinct pulling his hand back slightly holding Mary back and stopping her from crossing without even looking. He needed a moment to fully absorb...everything.

Pitch was right.

Entirely right.

He was dragging Mary back to his parents house where she would more then likely be beaten to death along with him during a particularly gruesome encounter, with his mother looking on like she couldn't physically call the police despite being the only one really capable of doing anything against William.

His only hope for his and Mary's survival was basically gone—wetness pricked at the rims of his eyelids before Mary gave a worrying tug on Jack's hand and woke him up from his depressing thoughts. He glanced down at her and exhaled, feeling a wave of more of that 'lack of self preservation' that Pitch complained about rise up in his stomach.

No.

Just his.

He'd make sure no matter what that she was perfectly fine by the 'end' of all this. He'd last another three months, move, take Mary with him and make sure that she was kept safe and healthy in his care even if he had to make a living selling his own body to ensure it and white-knuckle it through the rest of his life. What type of brother would he be if he didn't make sure his little sister was safe and sound at all times?

"Hey Mary, when we get home you wanna get some more Pizza?" A renewed sense of vitality in his
voice, not exactly happiness but more positive then the dispiriting sense of dread that was hinted at in his voice earlier. The younger noticed and nearly bounced up and down in excitement as she nodded excitedly. "Pepperoni?" More happy nods. "Alright then, let's hurry home!" He grinned and ruffled her hair.

He understood why Pitch was so attached to Mary...and now why he was so angry. 'If William so much as looks at you funny...I think I might kill him.' He thought in a more then simply dark tone of voice as he pulled his hand away and began crossing the street with Mary, happily escorting his little sister back home. William would not harm even a single hair on her head if he had anything to do about it.

The brunette let him go with a whimsical smile, Jack gave away so much more then he intended to in that brief amount of time – Pitch was clearly the main subject on his mind but not in a positive manner or light. There was none of that 'On cloud nine lovey-dovey' romance feeling coming from him. Jamie could see that as Jack was walking around the corner, eyes downcast and all happiness that his figure gave off an obvious farce to keep his younger sibling happy.

To him this meant that either Pitch dumped him or they were having relationship trouble. 'Perfect...' He chuckled and did a one eighty, walking down the block with a light-heartedness in his step. Pitch either already was, or was about to be, gone from Jack's life.

Life was good.

Now Will still fucking hated himself for turning to alcohol for escapism and recreation but now that he was slowly beginning to suffer the after effects of quitting the stuff he could understand why he didn't – and probably couldn't – quit before. Needless to say he felt like absolute shit, he didn't even want to move or think and he knew deep down inside that it was only going to get worse. He was going to go through hell in the upcoming few days and really, thinking about it he felt he didn't deserve anything less.

Through the storming, pounding headache that seemed to make the room spin on one of its corners he could hear footsteps heading down the hallway and into the room. 'Katherine' he mentally reasoned and sprawled out a little more on their bed with a happy grin playing at his lips – he hadn't been paying much attention the last few years.

Kat didn't visibly age. At all. He chuckled despite the aching in his throat as she handed him an ice cold water bottle and sat by his side, fondly running her fingers through his hair. 'You still look as beautiful as when we met...' He mentally said and looked up at her with admiration, reminding himself that she was why he was doing this and why she was here. He wanted to get better for her sake so she had a husband to grow up with, for their children's sake so they had a father to care for them.

It made all the painful aches and nauseousness feel so...bearable. He put the cold water bottle to his head and released an exhale of relief. "So is Jack okay?"

"He's perfectly fine, coming home with Mary right now actually..." Her voice was almost in a singsong as she moved down a pecked him on the forehead, obviously pleased with William's decision despite the hard work of having to remove over fifty bottles of alcoholic drinks from the house and take William's wallet away so he couldn't buy more. Of course on his suggestion...and near begging.

"Ah..that's nice..." He inhaled a breath of air and held down his gags – the room still stunk of
alcohol, trash and rotting garbage. He wrinkled his nose and tried to separate himself from his sense of smell – things like this only served to make him wonder even further how his wife and children were capable of dealing with him. "Next time we go to the supermarket we have to remember to by air freshener..." He turned on his side until he was lying peacefully on Katherine's lap and took slow inhales, the pain still there but subsiding.

"Alright..." She whispered in a quiet and lovingly sweet voice and allowed her sobering husband to fade off into sleep.

–

Unfortunately for the loving and now sobering couple Jack was not quiet when he entered the house, storming in with Mary's hand in one hand and a warm and ready pizza box in the other and singing the Spongebob theme song louder then any living human being with a sense of shame ever should.

William grunted excruciatingly and turned from the noise which was not helping his headache, especially since it seemed to be primarily focusing on killing him today. Katherine got up to stop the younger members of the Frost family before William could ask to her do something about it while her husband grabbed a pillow and wrapped it around his throbbing skull.

"Jack, Mary!" Katherine said hastily but quietly as she walked into the living room and greeted her children with a less then pleased expression.

"Hi Mom!" Mary yelled in an outside voice which seemed to triple from the fact that she already had a naturally loud voice to begin with and Katherine gave her a threatening look that only a mother could give. The younger Frost whimpered and retreated behind Jack, unused to Katherine's spite.

Jack frowned deeply and glanced towards his mother with a questioning look before she looked at him the same way – he almost stepped back but at this point any anger or ire that Katherine's gaze could release upon him was like a light exercise. He mirrored it and resisted the urge to grin when she seemed to be shocked, frightened even. "William...is asleep." She said quietly, giving Jack a once over before continuing. "I assume Pitch brought you that pizza."

"By proxy." He intentionally made his voice louder then normal when starting that sentence before quieting himself down. William never gave a shit about him and his needs, why the fuck should he return the favor? Fear? He didn't feel that when it came to William any more, he just felt a heavy amount of dislike. Love? HA. "Yes, he did."

"Well, okay then. Just making sure." She said warily, eying the both of them. "Just please keep it down, he has a really bad headache right now."

The already emotionally tired Jack didn't feel like arguing or dealing with his 'father' or mother his right now and decided now would be a good time to whisk Mary upstairs to play with her toys while she finished off her pizza.

–

A few hours later...

The gray-skinned man groaned in deep pain and self-hatred as he tried once again to push himself up from the floor – this whole 'suicide' thing was a terrible fucking idea when he already knew he was literally incapable of making that jump no matter how suicidal he was. The human want to live and survive always overcame Kosmotis' want to end his own life. The knife's cut was not deep enough to end his life or really even cause much pain...
Now the angered Sanderson who had found him, blade in hand after attempting suicide once again would more then likely do the job right and in a much more dramatic and agonizingly slow fashion then anything he could probably cook up. Working with serial killers and psychotics had the benefit of inherently being damn good at emulating them it seemed – especially when the shorter man's foot kicked him in the stomach out of the sheer rage of finding him trying to kill himself again and sent him crashing back down to the floor for the fourth time that hour.

Pitch grunted, fell to the floor with his hands wrapping around his aching lower chest to prevent himself from heaving anything up. The tell-tale pressing of keys already told him he was in for an earful...or at least a very violent reading session. He was yanked rather painfully by the roots of his hair while a bright screen was shoved into his face, he had to blink a few times before he could read it correctly. 'I come back to get my books and find you bleeding on the god-damn floor'

"Then obviously the cut wasn't deep enough." He smiles with a darkened sort of mirth dancing in his eyes before Mansnoozie ruthlessly punched him in the back of the head. Pitch hissed and let himself drop to the floor. He feels...happy that he isn't dead yet despite the fact that he wanted to die, conflicting emotions aside. On the base mental level, Pitch knew that he could never really pull up the amount of bravery and inner focused anger to take that much of a jump. He just wanted some form of escape from the trauma and the pain.

He just wished that his friend didn't just run in and pummel the shit out of him without a second thought. He glanced up to another screen he could just barely make out. 'Not. Fucking. Funny.'

He pulled himself up again, letting his body lean against the hard surface of his kitchen counter while he examined his nails in a bored fashion – once Sandy had the patience to actually type out his messages he knew the beating was mostly over. "Honestly Sanderson, we've been through this song and dance before." An almost correcting tone of voice before he rolled his eyes away from the enraged gaze of his friend. "I get upset because its that time of the year again, try to kill myself and then you find me and beat the living hell out of me and I stay upset until October 1st. Then I'm fine for the rest of the year." A shrug signaled just how much he really didn't care about this attempt.

Sanderson took it as a personal insult and quickly tapped away at his phone. Pitch rolled his eyes again and looked forward only to have another phone screen shoved in his face. 'And what happens when I don't come in time?! What happens when you're not scared any more Pitch?'

Pitch thinks about it and throws a nonchalant look at his scared wrist before looking up at Mansnoozie and shrugging. "Then I'd die and a kid gets their soul avenged." That was the beginning and the end of it for him at that point, nothing more need be said.

Sanderson went from looking upset to just wanting to face-palm. Another screen. 'I keep on telling you it's not your fault.'

"Whatever." Slight rage and spite stemmed from his voice – if it was so easy to just remove the blame from his mind and body he would have been done with all this quite a long time ago. Sanderson never had what he had, what he enjoyed and he was a criminal psychologist, how would he know about the inner workings of his mind regarding this matter? How could he understand the bond that he felt? "If it wasn't for me she'd probably still be here."

'Pitch you need to go spend time with Jack or something...you weren't like this when you were around or thinking of Jack. Especially the first time I found out about him.' Sanderson's sigh brought him back to the present and as his golden eyes gazed over the message he gaped in awe and sadness from his actions.

He pushed Jack away – Jack. Brave, sweethearted, loyal, gentle, passionate, loving Jack and then
tried to commit suicide even after he dedicated his life to him...he pinched his lips together and bit back to sobs as he rose from his place. In his mind images of Jack and all the time they spent together danced and teased him in his mind, reminding him of why he was even still here and why he loved Jack so deeply and so greatly...

"I love him." Pitch whispered quietly, running one hand over the other and giving the wall to his right a thousand yard gaze that made Sanderson worry for him until he realized that he was actually talking to him. "I couldn't tell him that, you know?"

A slow nod.

"Just...damn it...I can't..." He shook his head in desperation and ran both his hands through his hair continually as he strode back and forth. "I just have no idea any more of what to do with myself without him." He paced back and forth in his kitchen, entire posture speaking volumes about his worries and regrets from the earlier morning.

'That is often what happens when one loses a loved one.'

"Losing a loved one?" Pitch repeated after him, questioning before answering himself in an almost proud but absolutely enraged matter. "Jack was my fucking everything Sanderson! Not just another 'loved' one..." He calmed down just as quickly as he burned up and slunk back from other man, head shaking viciously before he pulled himself up to full height with a new burst of determination pulsing through him. "And I'll be damned before I lose him!" He pushes his way past the shorter man who immediately smiles and waves to Pitch. Instead of taking the time to feel sorry about himself and do nothing, he was actually taking action and trying to pull his relationships back together...Sanderson allowed himself a tiny applause after Pitch slammed the front door shut from the outside.

And then ripped itself back open as Pitch returned in a rush, quickly dashing upstairs to retrieve the most precious thing in his possession to take with him – almost as an afterthought – before rapidly moving back downstairs.

'And with that, my work here is done.' Sanderson thought as he typed out one last message to Pitch before he left, not quite caring whether he got it or not but still wanting to make sure the taller man was still in a sane state of mind. "Don't drive like a nutcase. I know you are a nutcase but don't drive like one. And wear a seat belt."

Considering the fact that the car took more then three seconds to fully drive off at an insane speed, he'd say he did his part.

Now was the business of collecting those books.
Chapter Notes

Song is Gravity from the anime Wolf's Rain.
Sorry about the lateness, just went back to school....

Sucks man :( 

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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Now was the business of collecting those books.

Pitch parked his car directly outside the Frost residence – taking careful time to fix himself up in the mirror as best he could, sizable bandages he often kept in the glove compartment 'just in case' finally being put to good use on the less then unnoticeable at first glance cut on his wrist. He silently hoped Jack wouldn't see it but didn't hope for much – Jack was young, he certainly wasn't blind.

The rather cloudy sky was rapidly changing from its morning bright morning blue to a strange mixture of burnt orange and miscellaneous intense reds and midnight purple. 'Surely... couldn't have spent that much time getting the shit kicked out of me by Sanderson?' He pinched his lips together in distaste and thought but remembered how terrible he was at guessing the approximate time just as he ran his hands over his face and examined himself in the side car door mirror – a heavy weight left his shoulders.
Not that many bruises on his face aside from a split and bruised lip – he licked at it before leaving the car.

In a concerned haste regarding him and Jack's well being he quickly swept himself up the steps of the porch and knocked impatiently, but lightly, on the door of the home.

It swung open almost immediately to show a rather blithesome and sweet faced Katherine in jeans and a light blue t-shirt, looking more like a teenager then Jack did half the time. "Oh Pitch!" She said happily, opening the door for him to come in. "I guess your visiting Jack again?"

If she noticed that Pitch looked like he just got mugged, he was thankful she didn't make it the topic of conversation. Pitch assumed that it must be her own experiences of being beaten, her own abusive past, that may have desensitized her to seeing others looking battered.

"Um, no." For the first time in a long time he was actually fumbling around his words, trying to think of what to say. "I just came to invite Jack for extra study that one of the college teachers is offering."

He hoped that in her obviously sober state she wouldn't deliberate too hard on what he was saying and mine him for any more information – especially with his current state of appearance.

"Oh okay, give me a second – husband's sleeping in the other room." He wasn't sure whether that was Katherine propositioning him or just some random fact that she thought he needed to know. He prayed it was the latter – as attractive and loving as Katherine seemed he wanted no romantic involvement with her. The housewife quickly left the door half open, striding towards the door that lead to his beloved's room – Pitch watched her carefully while he looked around the living room.

No signs of a struggle or anything would point to William even attempting to hurt Jack. It was a good start but he still wanted to see his white-haired beloved just to be sure.

Sure enough, the young high-schooler came downstairs with his mouth half open as he looked towards Pitch with disbelief. The older man exhaled happily, he appeared to be fine. No broken bones, no blood stains. Nothing.

He had even changed his clothes to something that was much more appropriately 'Jack' – sweatshirt, loose fitting jeans, no real accessories.

Good.

Everything was good.

Nervously Jack approached the older man, slipping on some sandals by his door way as he passed and looking at Pitch tentatively. "Hey, Pitch..." it was a low, quiet voice that was near a whispering tone. "Umm...what?" He gestured to the older man in a hopeful skepticism. He finished the sentence mentally, 'What are you doing here?'

There was so much to talk about, so much he actually wanted to break down and say right now but Katherine's ever-obvious presence broke the mood and enforced a sense of caution – a need to keep on lying about his intentions. It was times like this where he wished he and Jack could go public sooner rather then in three long, tortuously painful months.

He noticed the rather stunningly extended pause he put in between him answering Jack's question while looking directly at him in a less then decent way. In a wanting way. Not good. Katherine was just about to start giving him looks until he gave what he deemed to be a sufficient answer. "Bonus study time." He gave a rapid and flawless delivery on the white lie but didn't spend time dwelling on it, instead Pitch gave Jack the sweetest eyes he could as he approached, trying to relay his emotions
as best he could. 'I want to talk to you', 'I want to make things right', 'I'm sorry'.

"Ummm..." He sent Katherine a questioning gaze before receiving a nod and giving them both a tiny smile. "Sure, let me just get my phone..."

A burden of relief washed over him and his features and he let himself unwind just a tiny bit as Jack seemed to step away, hasty to retrieve his cellphone from his room. "I'll be waiting for you in the car then." He yelled after Jack with a noise of delight hidden in his voice, disregarding the flash of displeasure shown on Katherine's features – if she was honestly irritated by his long pause during answering she would have glared then, not now. 'Well good...hard part's over.'

Pitch tried not to seem more nervous then he actually was – what he was doing now felt like the equivalent of a suicide mission even though he knew Jack and he knew the truth about September...he was still terrified about it.

Though if he took a moment to think when in fact, when was he not? When was he not afraid of looking at the calender just because of that dreaded month when his life might as well have turned to ruins around him? When was he not dancing on emotional pins and needles trying to keep his life straight whenever the time came?

'Never.' He answered himself mentally and realized briefly that the neighboring front seat of the vehicle was actually empty with Jack awkwardly standing outside his window, shifting his weight from foot to foot. He looked up with 'The People's Eyebrow' and got a painful sigh in response.

"Pitch I can't." The young icicle haired teen said with a diminutive shake of his head, arms crossed. "I mean...Mary, you, my parents, my life Pitch." he explained, voice becoming more and more exasperated as he went on and the older lover felt inexplicably guilty though none of the madness was focused on him. "I have to focus on my life for right now okay?" His voice almost sunk down into a whisper. "I feel like everything's...falling apart a little and I need to fix it or else..." He let his voice trail off.

He spent his entire life trying to keep everything from falling apart – trying to keep the police out and the family together. He didn't want it to all be ruined now when it felt more normal and more survivable. The word needed to say such though, lingered on his tongue like an awful taste. Without any significant words to say between them that annoying, all too familiar silence that had disappeared for such a long length of time now returned with a vengeance.

It stretched on and on without a clearly visible end with Jack kind of half-wanting to take it back and hop in the car, but not wanting to go back on his word since he already felt as though he had already gone back on too much and half-wanting for Pitch to kind of drag him in, push him to come with...and unbeknownst to him Pitch actually wanted to do the latter.

But Pitch refused to do that because it was the same exact thing that got them into this fight in the first place and so they just let the silence stretch on for as long as they could, but of them avoiding all types of eye contact and freely letting their skin itch with the bothersome awkwardness that filled the air, neither capable of gathering the boldness required to actually try to do something.

And for some reason...that pissed Jack off on a basic level. What got him here anyway? The unwillingness to explain his relationship to Mary and keep on facing Pitch. The same weakness that was currently making this angering silence.

He took a deep breath. "So yeah." Just those two words took a heavy toll in meta-physical strength
to say and he *prayed* that he was making the right decision...

To go back inside his house and pretend none of this ever happened. "I'm gonna go no-

"Jack, you know that I know what you're going through..." Pitch said without warning, hints of sadness and sympathy sprinkled throughout his statement as he tried to actually translate his emotions correctly – he didn't want to be misunderstood like last time.

"N-No..." The embarrassment and shame was coming back full force and he couldn't find it in him to concede to Pitch. He stayed on the defensive more out of pride then any sense of actually *needing* to defend himself, knowing that Pitch wasn't assaulting or insulting his pride or him in any way, shape or form. "You don't...you never have- and I wish you would stop acting like it."

Pitch shut his eyes tightly and took a noisy inhale of warm breath through his nose. That stung and hurt, not because Jack was resisting his advances to talk but because it was a reminder that everything was *not fine*. He had lived in this relationship, put his all in fooling himself with the lie that Jack was just some how knew his every thought or action – or at the very least knew about September. It was comforting to think that he didn't have to *explain* himself when he didn't want to and so he idealized the young man before him..."...Jack, come here." He reached out the window towards the young man who stepped back, trying his keep himself calm and relaxed.

"Pitch, can you just stop?" His voice raised against his will, a life living with William and trying to defend both him and his mother now clearly oozing through the cracks like blood on a graze – he was just holding all these emotions in from everything from his family to Pitch to himself to Jamie. He didn't *want* to defend himself, it was like caring for Mary and...wanting to be with Pitch. Just second nature for him now. "I just can't..."

It felt like the honest truth. He felt like he was a glutton for getting hurt and harmed by the people around him and now he was just bursting over with it. He didn't think Pitch would come back to him – he didn't think that he would be standing he right now, having this conversation of Pitch trying to urge him into his car so they could actually have a real discussion about early this morning.

Pitch moved himself over to the passenger's seat and reached through the window, fingers just brushing against Jack's skin before the teen stepped back again, lowering his head to stare at the concrete instead of anywhere near Pitch. "Jack I watched you..."

He already knew how weird that sounded, how crazy and dementedly stalker-ish that appeared to really be but he didn't care – Jack would either leave his life now and he'd die inside or he'd know the truth. That was the beginning and the end of it on the older man's side. "Almost every time you walked past the cafe with your little sister, when he headed straight to school."

"Great." He shrugged without meaning to and feigned raised eyebrows, still refusing to make eye contact. "You stalked me. That's great..." Then he squinted in thought and chuckled self-deprecatingly. He didn't see this coming, it was *upsetting* his emotional balance – or at least all the balance he thought he had before today, he wasn't sure whether he wanted to go back inside or go with Pitch and really, he wasn't sure where either path would lead him.

Unsure, exhausted on a level that surpassed his physical tiredness and not able to find his footing...defensiveness just kept on coming, it was his only real option. He had no idea what else to do. "So you literally followed me home from school or-

"Jack, that cafe has been a part of my daily routine for the past year..." A soft, truthful and gentle explanation that Jack just shook his head to, why did it *hurt* to try and keep listening to him?
"It doesn't matter." He raised his hands in surrender – to what he really didn't know – and began stepping back at a quicker pace with light shakes of his head. "Let's just...let's just forget this ever happened okay? I'll stop trying to meet you in the cafe and just tell my parents I didn't need a study partner anymore."

"..." Pitch stares dolefully at him for a time before frowning deeply, grasping at the precious item around his neck thoughtfully as if pleading for strength from some unseen source. "Jack...come with me to the cafe." He say it without opening his eyes and pulls himself back into the car, trying to bite back the painful waves of his own conflicting feelings and raging sadness.

He couldn't look Jack in the eye while he spoke. Something in him that was just barely holding together would break if he gazed into those twin snowflake eyes. What was the chance that telling Jack about September would actually fix things between them?

"Pitch." A plead to stop yanking heart strings and just let him go. He didn't want to be let go but be wanted this to just stop hurting.

"Please?...A few brief moments of your time are all I ask..." He couldn't even put any hint of influence in his voice and could only faintly hear the robotic twang it carried. Letting any feelings out now would just cause them to overflow. He didn't need to overflow on Jack right now – his beloved was already clearly reaching his limit.

"Pitch-"

He looks up at Jack with his immense need and golden star-like eyes that he swears feel like they are full of tears and god damn everything seems to break down at once, all over again just like last time and his voice cracks from the strain of it all. "Please."

He can't even feel his chest anymore, every part of him is burning up with a flame of twisting agony near his heart – he had no idea what to do. He wanted Pitch but oh god facing Pitch-

No. He took a deep breath and tried to summon all his courage and strength from bottom to top – trying to muster the level of bravery that he used to stand against William despite the two being completely different men. He grit his teeth and made a split second decision that had Pitch scrambling to move.

Jack stormily pushed himself inside the front driver's seat, nostrils flaring and taking massive breaths to try and keep the temporary emotional boost going. "Go. Drive. Please." He said as Pitch gathered himself in shock in the neighboring chair. "If you don't go now, I'm not sure I can ever even look at you again so just go."

"As you wish." Pitch buckled himself in and began his drive back to the Cafe.

–

The cheerless and quiet drive is much longer then they both could have predicted – Pitch believes so at least. The heavy, copious amounts of pliable tension is doing neither of them any favors much less making either one of them really want to stay in the car and music isn't playing since despite him actually enjoying playing music while driving he really has nothing that would help the mood – the last thing he wants Jack to hear coming from his stereo right now is some melancholy song about how difficult life is. And there's also the fact that, again, he sucks at estimating time.

Jack though, being the glorious social butterfly that he is does make an attempt at conversation. "So um...Pitch-"
"..." Pitch is too focused on driving to really show him the slightest bit of attention at the moment.

"Your wrist, did...did something happen to it?" Jack speaks, knowing full well that attempted suicide is really the most likely cause but wanting to believe that Pitch was stronger then that – that he could live without him if the need arose and that he wasn't going to kill himself because of their fight. Though judging by the rest of him, the bruises and the split lip it could just as well be that he got into a fight with someone on the way here.

A stressed out sigh signaled to Jack that Pitch wasn't actually deaf or going through some weird listening loss. In reality, he really was just ignoring him – but only because Pitch had no idea how to answer, no idea as to what he could say that would alleviate the mood or give an answer that didn't sound something like 'I got into a fight with a razorblade...on my wrist', as darkly funny and nonsensical as it would've sounded.

He just doesn't know how to respond...and so he doesn't.

He does know though that eventually, with what the dark clouds in the air promised earlier, rain came. Luckily it was gentle as they came to a stop with no reason to get out any umbrellas or hoods yet. As he pulled the keys from the ignition and shoved them in his back pocket, he licked over his lips and questioned himself. 'Are you actually ready to talk about this?'.

And a damn good question it was with the only sane answer he could give being NO. He glanced at Jack through the corner of his eye. 'Just because it was hard didn't mean he wasn't going to try.' Jack at least had a right to know...

He could see the young teen getting antsy and restless, eyes somewhat trembling back and forth in their sockets and his hands rubbing the opposite arms in a cradle. Pitch pulled himself out and helped Jack escape from the rain and into the quiet haven of their original meeting place – where it all sort of...started really.

Jack lets Pitch lead, unsure of everything right now and feeling too wounded, too damaged to try and lead anything right now. The other lover sees this and acts on it, leading the dazed boy by the hand insistently but at the same time gently and carefully. He didn't want him to feel forced in anyway. He sweeps him away to a booth away from the sparse and spread out reposeful people spread about the room – none of them looking like they were from town and all of them seeming to be older and reserved with the few that glanced around on doing so protectively.

Except for Toothiana who was, for no real reason wearing a bright blue and green sequence dress that made her gleam like a turned on light bulb under the fluorescent lights of the cafe – luckily she was dreaming peacefully in the back room, well hidden through the bright red curtains of hid the door between the kitchen and the rest of the cafe.

Pitch predicted that they wouldn't care if he had a hysterical, insane, overemotional crying fit here – therefore tonight's group was perfect.

As was their booth...it was in the perfect position. Right across from the relatively new parking lot that glared him in the face like a rotting wound. It was the same one their met at as well.

'History repeats itself...'He mused and took the window seat opposite Jack – he was looking less and less dazed by the minute with a tiny grin playing at the normally happy features. Pitch hoped that he too could see the deja vu.

They in complete silence for a moment that left Jack's skin itching and Pitch feeling off-balance with no real idea as to why but deciding he was tired of having to seat somewhere and be awkward
around the man who should be his lover.

He raised his hand impatiently and a rather annoyed looking Bunnymund, his mood undoubtedly caused by Toothiana's decision that right now was just the perfect time to sleep, quickly rushed over to fulfill the quiet and concise order of coffees and plenty of sugar packets for the occasion.

As the waiter returned with the order Jack chose to speak now rather then later, his normal personality returning to him with haste. "I suppose that...we talk about it over coffee?"

A pleased nod from Pitch. He was glad Jack understood his intentions – it made everything feel a little bit more natural and normal despite the new water they were treading. He realized that he and Jack had never had an argument before – not one of any significant importance or urgency like this one anyway. Not one that involved storming out of houses to get away from each other...he wasn't sure whether or not this was their relationship progressing forward.

"So..." Jack interrupts Pitch's thinking without noticing and turns to face away from him, preferring to look at the boring cream colored counter of the cafe. "Are you going to tell me why you brought me out here or...?" His self-protective second nature was coming back and really, Jack decided that maybe it'd be best if he just shut his mouth for now since he lacked the control needed to make his tone less volatile.

Pitch failed to be insulted or turned off by it, catching the moderate insincerity in the note of unfriendliness – Jack didn't mean to be like this. Not knowing quite how to respond he simply uses a single finger to trace the outer edge of his coffee cup, enjoying the feeling of steam on his fingertips before picking up at least three sugar packets and violently tearing them open with much more force then what was needed.

Jack wanted to kind of intervene or say something since Pitch seemed to just be ignoring his presence entirely. He held back his want to defend himself from attacks that weren't and probably would never truly be directed at him and tried to insert some level of yearning into his voice without seeming...artificial. "Don't drag me all the way over here and just make me sit here."

He bit his lip in annoyance at his tone of voice; wrong emotion. Still too defensive, too demanding. He tried to start again but all that escaped him were broken, half hearted sentences that went lacking as soon as they were said. Pitch still didn't seem to even give him any attention and instead gently moved the second, untouched coffee in his direction with a push of his finger.

Jack nodded in thanks but said nothing, grabbing coffee creamer – along with probably far too much sugar then what could be considered sane much less healthy – to momentarily entertain his hands. But it could only do so much before they had another unoccupied space of time in which neither said nothing both gazing to their respective sides with Pitch's golden eyes gazing across the street, directly at the empty parking lot with a sense of great anxiety and depression looming over him.

'I miss you so much...'He thought and wrapped both his hands around the heated porcelain mug, the atmosphere feeling as if it was freezing him to death, it made him feel choked, scared and alone in an excruciatingly familiar way that frightened him. 'But I...I've got Jack now. You'd love him...I don't want him to leave me.' Another chill, this time up his spine and almost lifting him from the seat – he used the shock of feeling it and the energy it gave to open his mouth and speak. "Jack."

The teen immediately looked at him attentively but avoided his eyes – he didn't want to look into Pitch's eyes right now. Everything felt too...breakable and easy to destroy. "Yes?" He felt as if just speaking was taxing him and 'them' some how, like it was adding too much 'weight' to their relationship.
Judging by the way Pitch’s jaw tightened he would’ve guessed it was the same thing but then a familiar sensation crawled over his hand and he glanced down to see that his older lover was trying to actually hold hands with him.

"Pitch." A tiny frown that barely showed through and a tone of miffed disapproval. They couldn't possibly actually touch now could they? Was Pitch really that forgiving of him, believing they could get over this here and now?

"I..." Pitch gazed down at their hands and let out a huff of hot air. "I apologize..." He looked back at the window with a look of morose coming over him, gaining Jack's attention. "I need to touch you while I tell you this...I need something to remind me that I’m not..." A deep breath had Jack reeling and upon closer inspection he could see that Pitch was actually blinking away tears. "That I'm just not there anymore."

His expression and entire physical presence changed like he was frightened and paralyzed due to his overwhelming fear, trembling and shaking beneath a threatening power that he had no control over. Jack's concern comes sprouting through his defenses until it shows clearly through his face as he patiently waits for Pitch to right himself - the only time he allows his eyes to wander from the gray man's form is to meaninglessly observe the other less then intriguing or reasonably intrigued cafe-goers.

"It's the first time I've told anyone about this, so umm..." Hearing Pitch's uncertainty and wavering voice actually scared Jack by proxy. Pitch wasn't a man that he knew to indulge in fear and doubt – this was the first time Jack could see him break down from something that didn't at least appear to be related to them and their relationship. "Please have some patience with me." Pitch whispered softly and rested one of his hands on the table while Jack nodded and listened.

A few more deep and empowering breaths, in, out, in, out...relax...and he began.

"Well..." A nervous swallow ended his sentence before it began – and he started over from there. "I suppose I should start from the time I was in my late fifteenth year..." A sort of melancholy Nostalgia shined through the golden eyes Jack found himself gazing in once again, interested and hooked onto every word despite Pitch's tale clearly only just beginning.

"I was young." A wistful sigh and Jack prodded himself as a mental reminder that Pitch wasn't even past twenty five yet. What exactly did he consider young? "In the middle of and in the more generous years of pubescence – luckily I started earlier, it was hell really...I shot up in height but stayed thin and gangly until I finally got some muscle...and even then I stayed sort of paper thin..." A slight frown made Jack grin just a little. I know the feeling. "This was before the gray skin so as you could easily imagine...lots of young women focused their attention on me."

With much more relaxed and calmed movements and actions Jack pointed to himself and then pointed to Pitch, face stained with a layer of confusion. "But I thought..." That you were gay.

Pitch reads his mind and continues onward with a slight grin. "I never said I slept with all of them...I was experimenting around that time and even though didn’t know what I really liked or was looking for...I only slept with a few girls before I realized I was more interested in other men more but, before I could really cement that I found out that one of the girls I was with was, well, pregnant-

"Wait...wait...what?" Jack gasped and gazed around the room in total disbelief of what his ears just heard – unable to fully swallow it. Pitch, a player. Really, who would ever believe that? He wanted to say that he must have been bullshitting him but it felt too early to start another argument, even one like this one that would become undoubtedly comical or at least awkward instead of aggravating.
Much to his surprise as he calmed down – and Pitch stared onwards in a curious gaze trying to gauge his emotions—he felt no real anger come over him, only a sense of having made a strange misconception about his boyfriend.

"Alright then." Pitch's brow furrowed and he started once more, eyes gazing up to the ceiling more then once with shimmers of difficulty shining through them. He was trying very hard to pick his words right now..."I really had no idea how or when it actually happened but the child was apparently mine." He shrugged in apathy and continued. "Fortunately enough for me my parents were wealthy enough so that me and her were quite well off, my mother even got a nanny to care for her while I had school..."

"Umm wait." Jack felt childish and foolish for interfering but Pitch's eyes seemed welcoming and the mood seemed light enough to allow him to ask. "Where was the mother during all this?"

Pitch sucked his teeth and looked away, shoulders slumping very lightly. "She refused to be part of taking care of the child in any way, shape or form after my parents refused to pay for an abortion since I actually wanted the child..."

"I named her Seraphina Pitchiner and..." Pitch looks away as if considering something inside of himself before he blinked rapidly, as if owning back a great many tears. Then suddenly his hand was once again squeezing Jack's painfully, the younger teen winces but doesn't complain about it for his sake. After a short time of more uncomfortable silence he relents his viper-like clutch and sends Jack an apologetic smile.

"And no matter what anyone says, I don't think I was that bad of a parent really." His voice brightens up and his eyes almost glow in pride and happiness – the younger boyfriend tilts his head to the side and continues to gaze at his significant other in interest, entranced by Pitch's story and emotions. He'd never seen him give off such a wide range before, not even during the earlier fight. "For a little while at least...after she turned three and I was in college with a job I still had lots of time for her – I think...I was always taking care of her whenever it was needed. Buying her plenty of gifts and toys. Spoiled her rotten really, and she deserved it. For my eighteenth my parents got private tutors and teachers for her as a gift for me...she spoke very good German before she turned six-"

"And English?" Jack intervened again, brimming with curiosity about this child he never met, amazed in her story and who she was...but something was wrong. Why couldn't he put his finger on it?

"This was far before I moved here, even my English wasn't that good yet..." Pitch absent-mindedly toyed with Jack's fingers using his own before interlocking them. "Can I...Can I move over there? Next to you? Next to the window?"

"Um...sure..." Jack pulled his hand away and Pitch moved over next to him, moving next to the window and directly next to him, before intertwining their fingers once again and hiding their connection hidden under the table.

"She was five when her mother came back into our lives...less then-" Pitch cuts himself off and pouts lightly in regret, not the biggest fan of his next choice of words. "Mentally stable to say the least."

"What was wrong with her?" Part of him thought it was rude to ask questions like that regarding Pitch's past – the one much ruder then the last one. It was as if he was a young child listening to his father read him a storybook, but still he wanted to know more. The was the most information that Pitch had ever revealed to him about himself and so...he was starving for it.

"She stalked me." He practically spat out the words in a venomous and offended tone, eyes
narrowed at the cooling coffee in his hands like it was the face of his mother's child. Jack almost felt sorry for asking until he realized it was more aimed at *her* then at him. "Followed me around in broad daylight even when it was obvious I didn't want anything to do with her. She would keep asking me about Seraphina 'How is my child?' 'Where is my child', 'Who is my child with right now'..." Another bit of less then joyous nostalgia before a razor-sharp intake of breath and frightfully aggressive look from Pitch. His teeth grit until the sounds of light cracking were detectable and his jawline sharpening to a point as he hissed out. "And note: 'My', never 'Our'. Made her intentions clear enough."

"She didn't want anything to do with you, she just wanted the kid." Jack summarized smoothly and almost mirrored Pitch's look of anger. "How could someone just walk out of their child's own life, let someone lay the groundwork for them and then act like they can waltz right back in once the hard work is done?"

He's given a mild nod that bellies the aggressive nature from before and then the story teller continues. "Eventually we just got a restraining order against her but since she never caused us any physical harm and was technically Seraphina's mother – despite literally walking out of her life." His eyes narrowed viciously, clearly it was against his own decision to have the 'mother' back in Seraphina's life. "It didn't hold for very long and the very same day that she somehow found out it expired, she was back to following us again...only this time a little more forceful – not enough to get arrested or keep her away but enough that it became rather..." His face twists and he rubs the back of his neck and glances around as if trying to find the right word just lying around the cafe somewhere. Eventually he was able to pull it out. "'Disquieting' being in the same town as her, and so my parents and I decided that the smartest move would be to move to another place..."

"Here, to Burgess?"

"Yes. Somehow a different town became an entirely different country for safety's sake. Don't ask me how..." He waves his free hand in the air in passive dismissal. "But it doesn't matter...we got here and moved into that green, leafy hide away back behind the town..." He stops and gazes longingly at the parking lot across the street. "and Seraphina loved it, especially the river behind the house. She loved the water, the nature, the occasional young stray deer..."

Jack's heart nearly stopped in his chest. *That's* what was wrong. If Pitch loved Seraphina so much why wasn't she *here*, why did he meet a childless and lonely Pitch sitting alone in this seat...why was he referring to her in *past tense*?! He gripped his hand tightly between two of his own, slowly shaking his head. "Please..." His voice was veering on tears – he swore he didn't want to here the end of it, he didn't want to hear how much the man he loved had lost. "Please stop."

"Please let me finish-" He could just barely see the readied tears now prickling at the stressed and reddened edges of his eyes and he brought his hand up to wipe them away.

"I can't sit here and listen to you while you sound like you're *dying* inside." Younger, smaller hands worked to wipe Pitch's tears away while Jack cried his own – already feeling Pitch's pain, already *knowing* how this was going to end.

"It's a story that needs to be told Jack. You believed that I didn't understand and so...now you have to learn why." The voice wavered and cracked, breaking painfully like someone had stabbed it in some places. It was as if he had suddenly lost vocal cords with certain words.

"But it hurts..." He felt as if through an invisible connection he could feel Pitch's pain, his heart-ached and he didn't want to *know* any of what had happened...but at the very same time he wanted to be there for him like a supporter, like someone he could depend on.
"I know...I know all too well..." Pitch snuggles comfortably into Jack's shoulder and before the snow-haired teen can stop himself his fingers are grazing the edges of the black hair line and holding him protectively as if keeping him safe from the rest of the world. He can feel wetness, heaves and gentle bit-back waves of silent screams.

And then he pulls his arm out, bending it awkwardly to reach down his shirt and capture the item that he had been holding onto all this time...

A golden, shining locket with carvings of stars and moons adorning the edges with a bright sun shining in the center, Jack thought was beautiful...then with a tentative motion Pitch clicked it open, revealing the face of a little innocent girl with a youthful, sweet smile and long black hair.

Unmistakable.

She was Seraphina Pitchiner.

Pitch continues to talk as Jack stares at the photo with mouth half-agape as he sees the resemblance between her and Mary – just change the hair color and you have splitting images. "We were...happy. For the first time in a long time we were happy and safe. I kept on spoiling her, finishing my college work and I just- there were no words to describe how good everything felt. I've heard people complain about their children before but...Seraphina was the sweetest thing ever. Polite, quiet, gentle, smart – she...she was perfect, and the feeling of knowing that I-" Pitch cuts himself off there forcing one hand over his face to hide his face away from Jack. 'Don't over flow...if you over flow you can't reel yourself back.' He took a deep breath – for once the emotions he was holding back weren't the cutting, slicing, aching wounds that September left on him...

He was proud. "The feeling of knowing I fathered that. That she was what I brought into this world – she was something I helped to create and form – it felt like...like I had done something incredible and miraculous every moment I spent with her. I cannot think of a single time where she or I were upset or angry with one another...it was the most wonderful year of my life." Pitch balled his hand up, enclosing it around his mouth in order to try and quell the distressed sounds coming out of it.

Jack ran his fingers through the jet black hair and gently kissed his forehead, tears of his own making their way down his face. He didn't know that Pitch wasn't just being sympathetic when he said he knew what his situation was like.

The fight between them just seemed so fucking stupid now that he was hearing and seeing all of this, seeing Pitch through new eyes with a new sense of understanding.

Pitch leans into his touch and releases a dense, depressed breath that splits the few remaining heartstrings that Jack believes he has left. "And then...it was a day like any other really...I remember every detail so...vividly..." He squints as if staring at an ant in his coffee. "God knows I don't want to but I do."

"It was a Thursday. Very sunny. I had the day off both school and work and so I dedicated that day to Seraphina. She was six, I was twenty-one. She was so happy and carefree all the time but especially that day. It was the first time she ever used English in public too...perfect pronunciation...and to this day I wish she actually got it wrong." Pitch takes a deep breath that he doesn't release without licking his lips and shaking his head first. "I know that sounds strange but...I really do..." He twists his body so he's still sitting but his face is pressed firmly into Jack's chest, his voice coming out as a muffle. "I took her to the local candy shop, that is now the empty lot across the street."

"It happened so fast..." His gray fist slammed down on the table in a furious mixture of choler and
despair. Jack yanked his hand away from his own coffee, in fear that it may be hot as the force of the strike made some of it spill out. "I couldn't even see it coming...All I remember is asking her 'What do you want?'...she told me 'Cotton Candy'." He shakes his head, rubbing his face into Jack's sweatshirt while the younger only gave careful butterfly touches in an attempt to calm him, finding himself capable of doing little else.

"She gave me this wide smile that could block out the sun and then...just a loud screeching of some drunk moron slamming on the brakes-" Another slam that drew the momentary attention of the sparse numbers of cafe-goers, who then promptly grew bored or didn't care. "Then rumbling and then..." He was shaking his head in a sense of nostalgic disbelief, the entire scene playing itself out behind his eyes. "the entire front of the store was gone...lots of screaming." Pitch shivered frightfully. "I only had a few bruises, I didn't even fall over...Seraphina was literally right next to me...but...s- she."

Jack winces as he gasps back his own tears and feels Pitch's own drip through the cloth. He clenches his eyes tightly in sympathetic melancholy and then curls his own body around the shaking one in his arms, cradling him further. "She just...she was gone Jack, just gone, here then...nothing. I didn't even...I didn't fall or anything and the shop was full of kids Jack, but she was the only one, why?"

Pitch's hands dug into his sweatshirt as he futilely tried to muffle his cries while speaking. "What did me or her do? W-why?"

Jack tries to summon up an answer, but can't find a single one inside of himself. He didn't go through what Pitch went through, he didn't have the experiences that the man holding him had. 'I don't even think there's an answer...'He pulls him in closer and shares his tears, trying to whisper reassurances to him through his own gasps and shudders of tears but only saying apologies as if it was his fault. "I'm so sorry...I'm sorry."

The minutes ticked by and for all the couple knew they could've been hours, maybe even days – the passing moments even felt that long. Either way they failed to care about the passing of the time as Jack continued to cradle a broken down and self repairing Pitchiner who rubbed his hands up and down his lover's back in a sort of trance. His eyes fixed to the spot where he was standing when his whole world seemed to fall able before his very eyes – oh if he could only tell Jack.

Neither Bunnymund nor Toothiana ever come out to their knowledge and the silence is deafening and splitting on their ears. Eventually Jack lowers his head and faces his pained lover with apologetic eyes and tries to speak but Pitch simply presses his lips to his, grazing against them like a passing breeze while he releases more and more of his tension.

Jack holding him was doing wonders.

With a burst of bravery that was all his own Pitch continued on in fear, not precisely wanting to continue his speech but feeling as if Jack just needed to know this. "I...that's why I think I know what you're going through." He swallows, his throat full of cotton and a wavy, blurry sense of choking. "The alcohol...by drunk moron I mean drunk moron...the bad parent...the responsibility...I know how it feels."

Jack offers him the sweetest, most compassionate smile that he is capable of ever giving – but it is tainted and crooked ever so slightly by the sadness of the story. He finds himself feeling as if he can barely gaze at him any more – almost unworthy of being blessed by his presence and happiness. "And that's why I love you."

And now he's bewildered – side winded by Pitch's abrupt and surprising words. His breath hitches and he looks up to the sky as if the ceiling has the answers he seeks but he can't move his head too far, Pitch grasps his chin and forces him to look him in the eyes...and then he kisses him
Jack releases an indecent noise that stirs up a completely inappropriate feeling in Pitch's lower stomach and the older can't resist but to ravish him, he deepens the kiss and moves his way up until he's once again equal to Jack. His tongue slides smoothly alongside Jack's – his boyfriend's sweet, smaller, delicate tongue that just tastes like faint sugar and snow.

He doesn't want to keep talking.

He wants to love Jack. He wants to drown himself in an ocean of him and his sweet love if he can, holding him close and never letting him go. But the younger pulls away and shakes his head in a way that politely rejects Pitch.

Then they just sit there holding one another – the tiny, faint night sky glitters of stars that glisten in the window besides them slowly begin to disappear to their eyes as the sky begins to light up in a faint way.

Then the talking begins once again. "You know...You went through it too...but you didn't need money and it wasn't even your child. You didn't have to do this. You could've turned a blind eye..." Pitch wistfully glances as his now room temperature coffee. "You're so dedicated, you're so much more committed – you're a much better father."

There is a moment of quiet introspection from the seat next to him and then Pitch finds his own lips intertwined in a passionate dance with Jack's once more. He almost feels light headed like this, with his love giving him contact that he needs but couldn't ask for...then it ends again. Jack runs his hands down the sides of Pitch's tear stained face and frowning in disagreement, even as his fingertips move down and outline his lips in a teasing way that makes Pitch give an audible gasp.

"Are you kidding me?" He shakes his head in disbelief as he speaks, staring the other man straight in the eye as he talks to him. "I...I could never compare to you!" His voice is full of wonder and love, eyes wet but out of a mixture of joy and sadness he couldn't explain even if he had the vocabulary needed to describe it. ":I mean I...I could never give Mary the life that you gave Seraphina Pitch! You were willing to move, to go to court, move to a whole different country, live an entirely different life in a new place for her – I...I didn't even call the police on my father during his drunken bouts until recently...and even then I really didn't do anything...You were an incredible father with Seraphina. I can tell."

"Jack you don't know tha-"

"Then why are you here?" Jack asked incredulously, pointing to the floor with a smile. "Right across from where Seraphina died? You miss her, you loved her and you did everything you could for her. Even right now you're breaking down for her..."

"Jack I just...I can't believe that.." Pitch removes himself from Jack's hands and distracts his own by tracing the outline of his coffee cup.

"I wish you could." Jack timidly places a single hand behind Pitch's head and moves their lips together – happy when his older lover doesn't resist, then pressing their foreheads together as if leaning on one another. "I wish you could see just how good of a Dad you were...and are."

"Are?"

"You saw how I was with Mary but you didn't notice how I was watching you and Mary?" He chuckled in happiness and sincerity. "You actually care about children Pitch – you strive to entertain and protect them like a guardian..."
"Ridiculous Jack-"

"It's not. You." He took a deep breath and shut his eyes tight, relocating himself to the opposite side of the seat so that he could prepare himself to say this. If it was painful for him he knew it would hurt Pitch to hear it. 'Alright, Pitch...bare with me.' He bit his teeth and ground it out. "You couldn't have done anything to save Seraphina."

The look Pitch gives him is a fierce brew of hate and crying, tears once again specking at the edges of his eyes. "I know, it's hard to believe but...really...how could you have known that car was coming? Out of the sounds of tens of other cars how were you supposed to know which one was about to crash into the candy store? You were rewarding her for being smart Pitch. You were doing the right thing! It was beyond your control."

"Then why doesn't it feel like it?!" He near screamed, pulling himself away towards the window glaring at the empty lot in a melancholy anger Jack find heart-breaking. "Why do I feel like I have this heavy weight on my shoulders, dragging me down? Like it was my fault? Like I might as well have killed her myself?!"

'Is this what you were carrying all this time?' He thinks and gives Pitch another tainted smile. "Stop saying that, its not your fault." Jack exclaimed, reaching forward and wrapping his arms around Pitch "You don't deserve the blame for any of what happened, you shouldn't have to place all that weight on your shoulders to begin with. If anything you're the most blameless person in your situation right next to your daughter."

Pitch squints his eyes in thought as he enters into the welcoming embrace and lets out a self-depreciating chuckle as he remembers: he told Jack the exact same thing."I know I should've applied that to myself but...it's so hard...it's just so hard...even now."

"It's fine..."

Another stretch of silence overtakes the cafe for a measure of time that neither of them could possibly care for – all that matters is that they are together. That Jack is here in Pitch's arms and Pitch is here in his and every thing just feels right and okay and stable.

Pitch tries to pull away and Jack could almost sense something wrong. "Take your time." Jack whispers, sensing the older man's hurry and rush. "I'm not going anywhere." The gray-skinned man exhales happily and embraces him even more, warmer and more lovingly then before with the slightest sound of a song on his breath.

The silence isn't so bad now, it isn't as weighty and painful to carry and listen to with Jack sitting next to him, unwittingly – or perhaps now knowing since learning about the existence and end of Seraphina – calming him down...

But he chooses to end it anyway, preferring the sound of that youthful voice to the sound of nothing at all. "The coffee is cold now..."

"Yeah." Jack gives a simple answer and kisses Pitch on his cheek, neither moving from their caressing position.

"We really should leave, it's gotta be at least 2 am..." He looks out of the window once more, for the first time gazing through it without glancing directly at the candy-store turned parking lot and instead at the sky above it, half-admiring and half-worrying about the on-setting brightness of the moonlit sky.
"Yeah..."

"And we didn't even touch our coffee.." He fingers the edge of the cup with disinterest – he really
had no want or need for coffee... Why did I even buy this?'

"Yeah..."

"And you just keep saying yeah..."

"Yeah..." A hint of mirth.

"Let's get you home, you must be tired..."

"I'm fine. Really."

"Your parents will actually kill me if I bring you any later then this."

"And my house is like, five minutes away by car – which would make you five minutes later then
this." Jack gave him mischievous wink. "Let's just go to your place or something." He tossed Pitch a
less then publicly 'decent' tone of voice and look, uncaring for anyone that was around.

"I never liked driving in the dark." He replied with a look of clearly suspicious and unconvinced
mirth that practically yelled 'Nope, I already know what you're trying to do. No'. After a moment of
clearing his voice he continued. "Don't make me drive through the woods, emotionally exhausted,
and in the dark." They both knew it was more of a plea to not proceed teasing him – and the younger
of the two didn't care within the slightest.

"Please?" He cooed with a wide grin that already gave enough of his intentions away not accounting
his ice blue eyes that were dancing with devilry in the snowflake-like irises.

"I love you, I really do-" Pitch futilely tried his hand at bargaining with the younger man. His
defenses were already dropping and Jack practically zoomed in on him like a hawk.

"Pleeeeeease"

"Saying it longer won't help sweetheart..." He had no idea where the nickname came from and didn't
really question it – too tired from the night's events to really pay any sizable amount of painstaking
attention to his speech.

"Mmmm I like that nickname...call me that again." Jack grinned happily as he saw the last few wall
of resistance begin to crumble down.

"Sweetheart, I'm taking you home-"

"Yay-" Jack began to cheer with delight.

"To your place."

"Boooo." After hearing that Pitch knew that that playful side would be the death of him. He bit back
a grin and tried to keep on resisting..

"Why do you even want to be with me? I look pathetic." Pitch motioned to his tear stained and
exhausted face and Jack just smiled.

"I wanna be with you because I love you..." Jack huddled up closer and snuggled next to him. Pitch
groaned, obviously fatigued, and gave in to the younger man's demands.
No point in fighting. His ass was getting sore from sitting down so long anyway. "...Fine. We'll go to my place. But no funny business tonight, understand?" He slid smoothly out of the seat and began heading for the door with Jack in tow.

"Pitch, in a couple weeks I'll be legal – technically that really doesn't matter – but yeah I'll be legal...You can say 'No fucking your brains out tonight.'" Jack smiled tiredly and slid out of the booth after him, narrowly avoiding knocking over the two abandoned cups of coffee.

"Let's just go" Pitch said, an invisible grin painted on his own lips while he shook his head at the lack of decency in Jack's language.

Chapter End Notes

Funfact: Secret running gag, Pitch isn't anything like he is in RoTG with the exception of his 'We're alike, let's be together' relationship to Jack. He likes children, loves them even, actually tries to escape people who see him, gives Jack good "day" dreams and hides himself in a place away from the world (as compared to his movie counterpart that wanted the whole world to believe in and see him). In fact Jack and Pitch are even more alike then they were in RoTG. Both have less then decent mothers in their lives, both wish to take care of and did great amounts of self sacrifice for a child, both of them are horny about 97 percent of the time – as we'll see in the next chapter.
Half Pain (Bonus)

Chapter Summary

Pitch and Seraphina's final day together...in deeper detail.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She straightened out her dress crispy and cleanly, attentively getting out all the 'crackily' shapes she didn't like before heading to the doorway in haste after grabbing her favorite toy in passing – careful not to be too fast though, her father had often warned her about playing around on or near the steps. She one after another with legs that were still getting used to the height of the steps, still adjusting to the act of ascending and descending them.

After at last reaching the final step and jumping off in a mixture of celebration and playfulness she gave her toy – a brand new new superman toy that she received as a gift after getting another A+ on her tests. With a wide smile and she approached her father, her large, silver moon shining eyes shimmering with excitement. 'I'm ready Dad.' Her father smiled wistfully and inwardly thought to himself about how quickly she seemed to be growing up.

Pitch offered his hand to hers and she took it happily, skipping alongside her father with a dainty leap in every step as they made their way to the car outside. The father couldn't help but chuckle over how tiny her hands seemed in comparison to his.

"All right Seraphina." His voice was like that of a storybook teller to her – like a calming and comforting cloud that she could just rest on forever. Unsurprising since he was always weaving her secret little tales about heroes, monsters and the man on the moon. "You know the rules. Stay near me, don't talk to strangers unless I tell you its okay to, don't walk off with them." He glazed over the rules, running down the list in full but not pressing any points.

Seraphina was a good girl, she'd listen.

He helped her board into the back seat of the vehicle, always letting her go first but surprised when she confidently pulled herself up into the seat. "Daddy, I'm a big girl now!" Her speech was accented with heavy twangs of half-learned German that melted her fathers heart.

"Ok, ok." He feigned surrender and began buckling her in. He wondered if later on in life she would begin rejecting him, denying him, going through what his parents called a 'rebellious phase'. He frowned in aggravation as he pulled away, seeing now that eventually she would have to grow up and get into the world on her own. She'd own her own house, have her own kids and live her own life.

Then he caught a sparkle of her shining gray eyes and chuckled at his own foolishness. It didn't matter how old she was.

She'd always be his little princess.
The drive was quiet and slow, with neither talking much as Seraphina sang along to a little tune playing on the radio and Krozmotis did his very best to focus on the road and not on her surprisingly skilful singing. It sent his mind racing – the thought of seeing her on a stage and watching her perform from the sidelines, cheering her on as people applauded her and her beautiful voice.

A light chuckle before a familiar turn to the local clothing store to get Seraphina her present – it wasn't a special occasion, he just wanted to shower her with gifts today. He had the day off after all, a single day away from school and work. He wanted to spend it giving Seraphina some time with him, away from all the tutors, teachers and school work she seemed to be drowned in despite her superior knowledge of it.

He hoped that she felt okay – he wondered if he wasn't spending *enough* time with her. He pulled the car to a stop outside the local toy store and bit his lip, trying to recount all hours he spent with her this week. He spent a few brief minutes wondering if it was enough, if he was actually enough of a presence in her life to matter.

No matter what answer he reached he knew it wouldn't be satisfactory. With an annoyed groan he unbuckled his seat belt, exited and made his way around the car, promptly releasing a happy and bubbly Seraphina to the sidewalk right next to their destination.

He took her hand in his and suppressed the ear-to-ear grin that threatened to make itself prevalent when she gripped back and began humming a familiar tune – the Superman theme. 'So she knows.' He sighed aloud as he rushed himself, politely walking ahead and opening the door for her.

"Thank you Dad." She said quietly as she past and then quickly huddled back up to him as they entered the store together, hand in hand. He could feel her by his lower leg, shivering and trying to swallow down her fright – public places and large amount of people in the same room were clearly not her forte.

'Damn Alison.' He hissed, thinking of her mother with anger. There had been many a time when the teenage mother would stalk them through crowds and stores, half-stealthily following the young girl and trying her best to snatch her away. In fact, at one time she had almost been successful.

One time too many for Seraphina. A caring and familiar hand lowered down to comfort her and ran through her hair gently like a fading caress. Her shivering didn't subside but her could feel her deathclaw grip on him lessen until she was clinging but instead holding tightly.

'Better.' He thought with a small but bittersweet smile, patting her hair down as they walked through the store, approaching a familiar isle of toys that were lined with familiar famous superheroes of all kinds. Her shivering seemed to calm down as there weren't many kids here with the exception of very young ones of about four and five, most of which either too young to or still awaiting entrance to the local grade school.

Grade school kids were still in – it was noon at Thursday. He silently thanked the fact that Seraphina was young but very mentally sharp with a remarkable ability to quickly get a grasp of new material and hence for her own academic good, effectively home-schooled.

They walked down the aisle knowingly with Seraphina gliding by his side in tow, gazing enchantingly at the toys they passed with mouth half-agape in wonder of the sheer amount of them.

Then they reached their destination and Seraphina had to take a sharp intake in shock and yanked at her father's shirt. He looked down and simply nodded, retrieving the long, white object from the toy rack and chuckling as she reached for it.
"Just a bit little one..." He cooed sweetly and pet her softly on the head, chuckling aloud when she began to pout disagreeably. 'Smart, but certainly impatient.' He took the toy in one hand and held Seraphina's in another, walking out of the aisle with an ever-increasing haste – reaching the checkout in record time with the young daughter practically forcing Pitch to keep up despite her size.

As they reached there Pitch had no time to stop himself from laughing alongside the young female checkout clerk, obviously tickled pink by the scene in front of her. He laughed along with her as he placed the toy down and turned to Seraphina.

"Patience sweetheart!" His voice was free of any anger or spite but rather a sort of warming and welcoming sense of love that brought an ever bigger smile to the little girl's face. "You'll get your toy soon dear."

Seraphina nodded but as the female worker at the checkout began to ring them out she bounced up and down in impatience all the same, pouting and twisting back and forth as every fiber in her body screamed in protest from simply having to stand and wait – father could get things done so much quicker then this lady could!

"I'm so sorry." She finally said, looking down at Seraphina from her place behind the register. "But my machine is broken, I'm gonna need to call someone to fix it okay?"

Seraphina looked at her nervously, as if feeling crowded into the room despite herself and her father being the only ones in this section of the store. She huddled closer to Pitch and looked at him anxiously, wondering what to do before he glanced down with a friendly and reassuring grin. "It's alright, I'm here."

She visibly relaxed and spoke bravely in an accented voice. "Okay, I'll wait."

"Awww, thank you!" The young woman cooed before she walked away into another room, undoubtedly getting another person or another machine to work with.

Pitch chuckled lightly as Seraphina turned to him, finding herself gazing into an expression of happiness mirroring her own. "Good job!" He said, swooping down and hugging her tight.

To anyone else, he was sure, that might not have been such a great occasion – but never once had her seen her interact with another person by speaking to them in such perfect English before. More often then not he'd find he'd have to run over and translate for her.

"Such a smart girl." He commented quietly, returning to his full standing position as they continued to wait on Seraphina's present.

—

Seraphina mumbled quiet, faint words to a song only she could hear as they piled back into the vehicle. Her bright, moonlight sliver eyes watched attentively as her father loaded her special toy into the seat besides him and carefully strapping it in – behest her own special request – before they took off onto the road again.

"You did a very good job back in the store Sera!" Pitch exclaimed, still in wonder of hearing her perfect English.

"Thank you, daddy..." She said in response with her voice sounding half uninterested as she was now gazing out her seat's adjacent window, admiring the city streets as they rushed by her window.

'I need to take her out more...' He thought, slowing down at a stop light and thinking of what to do.
When was the last time they both really had a time on the town together? When they walked around and really got a look at the place that they lived near? Never.

A quick glance around made him feel almost frighteningly aware of how little he really knew about the small town of Burgess. Everything in his vision was either something barely remembered or new to him – foreign. He figured such things happened when you came from a completely different country almost on a whim without any prearranged touring or knowledge of the culture.

Still feeling half-annoyed at his own lack of knowledge about the town he noticed a nearby candy store right around the corner. It was bright and happy with children practically clamoring around it – perfect. Plus, he couldn't remember the last time he and Seraphina actually sat down and ate candy together. "Sera, darling. You want to go buy some candy?"

He delightfully assumed that the high-pitched cheer that came from the back seat was simple, wordless confirmation.

–

He frowned disapprovingly down at Seraphina with the way she clenched his leg, her little nails nearly breaking through the fabric of his clothing and her eyes wide with worry and scared emotions.

"It's alright Sera, I'll be here." He whispered to her as they walked the short distance from the car to the store – multiple kids running past them either exiting or leaving the store with sweet treats in hand. He snickered softly as Seraphina looked at them, stealing glances at the foods that most kids were eating while they passed them both by.

When they got to the door, which was opened for them by a passing and happy looking couple – a young woman, no older then thirty he'd guess, holding a blond haired little girl's hand, her surprisingly unhappy and older looking husband by them and he assumed their brown haired son – Pitch guessed around fifteen – following close behind.

"Thanks." He said quietly to the passing couple and caught a glimpse of a reflection in the door – the young woman who'd opened it smiling and nodding in welcome.

For a half second he was a little shocked – he wasn't expecting the shop to be as big as it was. It only seemed to take up a faction of the corner it was located on but it was sprawling with candy racks and plastic columns here and there, a different type, color and flavor in each place. He glanced down to see Seraphina's mouth agape in stupor as she gazed, mesmerized by the sheer amount of candy that lined the place.

"Well, go ahead." Pitch welcomed her with a grin and she looked up at him with wide, sparkling eyes that seemed fit to burst.

"Really?!!"

"Yup! Really!"

Nervousness shaken off by the prospect of sugar and sweetness she skipped out into some of the aisles made by the rows and columns of shelves and tables that were filled to bursting and lined with sweets of all kinds.

Pitch regretted to say he wasn't a fan of many sweets as he protectively followed Seraphina during her trips up and down the rainbow colored aisles. He just didn't have a taste for them unless he needed the rapid burst of energy the overwhelmingly high amounts of sugar would provide. He sniffled the overly saccharine smelling air and let out a cough, deciding right then and there he
wouldn't get anything...until he saw a table specifically set out for gum.

That he could work with.

He briefly snatched a packet of gum off a nearby shelf, like a child stealing from a cookie jar, and continued standing behind Seraphina like an ever present protector. The raven haired girl continued to skip around though, as if uninterested. Pitch was on the verge of asking her if she really even wanted anything...

Until she found a curious and absurdly bright pink machine that whirred and twirled two large whisks in a bowl, making little wisps of cotton.

After mere seconds of staring at it she ran over to her father, face split in a massive grin as she declared happily, jumping up and down in front of him so full of joy, practically on cloud nine. With tiny, little fingers she pointed over to the machine wildly.

"Daddy, what's that?"

"It's..." He had to squint and think for a moment before laughing in realization. "Ahh- I used to love eating that at your age. It's a cotton candy maker."

"Cotton candy?" She said, thinking queerly. "But...isn't cotton what they make clothes with?" Her voice carried a note of confusion and curiosity.

"Why yes, but this candy is different." He pointed to it with a grin. "This cotton's made out of sugar and syrup – I believe...and guess what?" He leaned in close as if about to tell his young daughter a little surprise.

"What?" Her voice was filled with wonder, eyes flashing in-between both him and the candy machine.

"It does a magic trick when you eat it!" He smiled with his voice lowered to a whisper as he stealthily snatched a piece of the wispy sugar after seeing that no adults were around to catch him."It melts, then disappears!" He handed it to Seraphina who stared at it, examining it as if trying to find out the 'magic trick' from sight alone before putting it in her mouth...

She waited...

And then made a hard face, tongue rolling around in her mouth searching for the missing magic candy and then opening her mouth wide, softly patting around and on her lips with her open palm to try and find it. "It's gone!"

Pitch grinned and nodded.

"So, Seraphina...Do you want some cotton candy?"

"Yes!"

–

The ear-splitting heavy sounds of a high-speed drunk driver car chase rapidly approaching a deadly end made Krosmotis grab his ears and painfully shut his eyes as the rest of his body moved on sheer parental instinct to try and hug Seraphina's head and shield her from the sound.

Too late, too far and *too slow.*
He stumbled back lightly a loud crash sounded through the room, people and their children screamed in waves of terror and fear, the entire place shook as if the very Earth was trying to move itself and consume them all. Everything in its entirety was just blurry and rushing by him in mere moments, everything seemed to move in slow motion as he gazed up and saw the scene before him.

A car – a large, navy blue jeep – had come crashing to a stop, implanting itself within the candy store.

Pitch, quickly realized the situation and got up, his eyes flaring and trying to see through the kicked up smoke and dust that was surrounding him. Debris from the broken and rapidly further breaking building fell down around him as people screamed near and around the car – next to and around were Seraphina had been just sheer moments ago-

'Ooh God no...' His eyes widened in absolute horror as he quickly pushed his way past the surrounding crowd of people and dropped to his knees at the sight of young alabaster skin. He took a breath and bravely he reached forward, hoping, believing, clutching to the familiar tiny hand and specs of black hair that poked its way through the cement debris from underneath the car, blood covered with twisted bone coming through and tear painfully through flesh and tissue.

But it had no pulse.

It couldn't...

The hair was so shiny and bright and so Seraphina but it just...

It couldn't be right?

Right?

He took a deep swallow and tried to calm down – any moment now maybe Seraphina would come through one of the rapidly fading dust clouds that were sparsely spread around, a few bruises maybe but nothing like this. He stared down at the hand and let his eyes flash around the room in misplaced hope – deep down he knew...

The body that lie beneath the car was undoubtedly Seraphina Pitchiner.

But no. Not this early, not this young. Not while she still had her entire life to live ahead of her. He squeezed the hand tightly and looked around the room again as behind him more people began to realize the situation and scream for ambulance, for help, all yelling the same thing.

'Ooh god I think someone's kid-!

'Someone, I think we have a hurt child here!'

In disbelief he shook his head and grasped the lifeless but still warm palm of the young child – doubtlessly his daughter, OBVIOUSLY his daughter...'God please not my daughter...' he whispered repeatedly to himself, squeezing the corpse hand in horror as he silently prayed. 'Please, please please no- NO...'

–

The constant, droning and rather irritatively deafening sound of police sirens wailing in front of the destroyed candy shop become background noise, as did the consistent and perhaps strangely heartfelt efforts of local police and medical workers who came up to Pitch, gently placing a hand on his shoulder and trying to wake him up as he sat there, shocked and shaken beyond what his mind could
comprehend.

Eventually someone along the line just put a shock blanket on him and left him there with only the occasional police force member shuffling along to try and give support – undoubtedly at least one of them had a child of their own and had really tried to send their hearts out to him but...he just couldn't feel anymore.

Blood from the impact had splattered all over him, the dark gray ground beneath his knees, the nearby counter and the cotton candy machine that would still run if not for the deactivated electricity. Earlier it had dripped, wet and hot still after being released.

Now it was as cold as the young hand.

The young father was completely frozen, clenching the inanimate palm of a child that – despite having no evidence to prove the fact – he knew for sure was his little girl, his little Seraphina, underneath the rubble and concrete.

"Hey, come on. We need to move the car and clear the rubble." Another policeman shook his shoulder, trying to pull some type of response from him but his body was like stone. Cold, heavy, hard – soulless.

"Look man, I'm sorry about your kid – I really am." The police officer tried to explain, placing his hands around his belt and trying to give off some essence of authority. "But you need to move. If we get her out of here now-"

"Can you bring her back?" Pitch's voice was hollow and empty, the natural flutter of emotion and care was absent from his tone – he didn't have any care to give to anything now. He didn't even turn to throw a sideways glance at the fledgling officer behind him.

Needless to say a long and horrid silence stretched out as he considered his options of response..."No but!"

"Then shut the fuck up." He hissed venomously, clutching the hand ever tighter in his grip as he slowly came back to himself. He had no patience for the other man.

"Alright then. I'm sorry."

Pitch paid him no mind and cautiously ran his fingers across the delicate little palm for the twelfth time that hour, cautiously marking every line and little fingernail with knowing. Any sharp or notable spark of emotion or feeling in his eyes had died out long ago, dried away along with the tears. There was only a heavy layer of shock and melancholy left behind.

Above him sunny day skies had generally turned into early late-summer to early fall evenings heavy, rain-filled grayish clouds that had yet to spill forth any weather but made great promise to do so.

He wondered briefly in the slowly returning to functioning parts of his brain if the sky was crying for her – if it was just reflecting how he felt.

He wasn't given additional time to wonder as he was hoisted up by multiple police officers – gently but still with a measure of force – and taken away to the ambulance that awaited him. His mind had, at that moment, suddenly located himself and he tried to shake free from them, twisting his body this way and that, screaming all the while.

"No no, she'll be alone! She hates being alone – there's too many people- she'll be scared, please-" Old trails made by previous tears were retreaded by new ones as the police ignored his pleas and
placed him in the ambulance, leaving him there to be strapped down by force if need be.

Thirty minutes later the tears had at last stopped falling, replaced by shuddering sobs as his mind reabsorbed what had occurred, eyes drifting from the candy shop to the white blanket placed over Seraphina's lifeless body to the police cars and back again – his eyes barely able to see from his strapped down position in the medical bed but his panic increasing his already strong senses.

Rain still had yet to fall over the town of Burgess but the sky seemed to grow even blacker and almost frightening to Pitch's reddened, shock-blown golden irises.

"She's dead." He said aloud with his voice thick with regret, anger, hatred and sorrow. "She's gone." He repeated over and over to no one but himself until it felt like his voice was going to break and his throat would explode – the pain and cracking dryness from the tears gradually making speaking a challenging task.

From the need to no longer feel his throat aches a calm and quiet declaration became a hushed and excruciatingly tormenting whisper that made him catch himself multiple times just to stop from breaking out into wild, enraged and horrified tears again.

Then from a whisper to a mental mantra, using tiresome repetition in his mind even as a familiar heated wetness bloomed again at the corner of his eyes and stained the white sheets beneath him. For how long he lie there staring at the dark gray skies and mumbling to himself to accept the horrid reality set before him he couldn't possibly know...

But eventually he was freed as a familiar face showed up...

Or more specifically as a phone screen was shoved in his face. 'Pitch, I'm gonna drive you home alright?'.

The only response he could give was a stricken, anguished sound – that of a pained animal's final scream for help or rescue before death.

The Police offered to let him see the body for himself – he didn't need to see it after they told him it was indeed Seraphina Pitchiner lying cold, unmoving and lifeless beneath the hard rock. He politely told them to go fuck themselves as he walked away from the scene alongside his high-school friend, still half dazed with emotions dulled out like a used up carving knife.

He frankly didn't know why he was so upset with everyone around him except Sandman or why his feelings were continuously getting the better of him now. It was as if he was zipping back and forth on a line of dark emotions ranging from ire to something akin to the onset of depression. Never predictable, never settled.

As he marched by, dark shoes hitting the pavement like he was a soldier marching away from a battlefield, he could again just barely glimpse at the corpse that lie there. It was like another sharp knife to his heart...but he had no tears left to give for the one that lay there – he wanted to cry and shriek but nothing would come out.

He wanted to charge back in there and hold her – promise her that even in death she wouldn't be alone, that Daddy would be there to give her toys and presents like action figures of all her favorite superheroes and a book about the stars in the sky. Then maybe open her bedroom door up 'just a crack' so that it wouldn't get too dark and tell her stories before bed but the police refused to allow him in.
Normally he would've fought, screamed, bitten, stabbed and used every method he could to try and see her...but he felt too hollowed out, too far gone to fight against or for anything.

So he just...walked away. Strode away from the scene and into his best friend's car leaving it – and her – behind. He mentally sent her a heartfelt apology, not wanting for her to be alone or afraid with no one nearby to look after her.

As he strapped himself into the front passenger's seat he couldn't help but feel a well of regret and sorrow bubbling up and overflowing inside of him. Seraphina never asked to come to the candy store, she didn't beg for him to bring her here – he brought her here, to this place and for that she had paid the price.

Without meaning to he took a heavy swallow and his hand clenched the seat in a death grip – abruptly feeling a wave of claustrophobic fright overtake him. His nails pierced the leather and he gave a heavy wretch towards the window – Sanderson turning just in time to watch as Pitch used his breakfast to paint the outside of the car door a new shade of sickened burnt sienna, the color of pancakes mixed with bacon.

Chapter End Notes

Those feels...

Bet they hit you like a car that comes outta nowhere huh?

I'm not sorry.
Teardrop part 1

Chapter Summary

Warming: Intentionally and annoyingly over extended sex scene.

Song is Teardrop by Massive Attack.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Sweetheart, I'm taking you home-”

“Yay-” Jack began to cheer with delight.

“To your place.”

“Boooo.” After hearing that Pitch knew that that playful side would be the death of him. He bit back a grin and tried to keep on resisting..

“Why do you even want to be with me? I look pathetic.” Pitch motioned to his tear stained and exhausted face and Jack just smiled.

“I wanna be with you because I love you...” Jack huddled up closer and snuggled next to him. Pitch groaned, obviously fatigued, and gave in to the younger man's demands.

No point in fighting. His ass was getting sore from sitting down so long anyway. “...Fine. We'll go to my place. But no funny business tonight, understand?” He slid smoothly out of the seat and began heading for the door with Jack in tow.

“Pitch, in a couple weeks I'll be legal – technically that really doesn't matter – but yeah I'll be legal...You can say 'No fucking your brains out tonight.'” Jack smiled tiredly and slid out of the booth after him, narrowly avoiding knocking over the two abandoned cups of coffee.

“Let's just go” Pitch said, an invisible grin painted on his own lips while he shook his head at the lack of decency in Jack's language.

Jack happily piled himself into the car alongside Pitch with a happy and colorful smile half-appearing on his lips. They were still a thing and better yet he could understand Pitch and why he was the way he was. Inside he felt the joy of getting to know someone he loved just a tiny bit better but alongside it was a painful and withering inner mass of cloudy melancholy that he couldn't shake.

He futilely tried to withstand it and keep his happy mood as the primary feeling as he gazed towards the empty and unnaturally frightening parking lot across the street. Previously he paid no mind to it, dismissing it as just another place that was sort of...there.

Now it seemed like a horrible place knowing that somewhere underneath all those little pieces of rubble and cement could be drops of Seraphina's blood staining the ground. A person just like him...
No.

A little girl around Mary's age.

He gripped his own shoulders, suddenly sobered from the thought – his own mortality and that of others striking him like a lightning bolt. He bit his lip and whimpered aloud, half wanting to somehow break out of the car, run into the parking lot and just bring her back in some way.

“Try not to think about it.” Pitch spoke without even glancing in his direction. Jack's eyes averted to him before lowering sadly. “Happens to the best of us.”

He realized now that Pitch was indeed a father – someone who really could take care of Mary should the need call for it and that when he was saying that he understood Jack’s situation, he certainly wasn't kidding.

But he didn’t know how Pitch could deal with it – he barely could, knowing that he just passed by such a place.

Besides him Pitch began to expressionlessly start up the car, more focused on getting everything right then Jack’s increasingly depressed mood. 'Better to make sure we live through the car ride rather then die during it comforting him.' He thought, twisting the key in the engine and paying close attention to the revving of the engine. Faintly he could hear Jack mumble something that he could just barely hear – he wasn’t paying much attention.

“I'm sorry for earlier.” The usually bright voice was down to a heavy, breathy whisper. In-between words he sniffled lightly, tearing up just a little too much as he finally came around to absorbing the whole story he was told. He was happy that he and Pitch were back together but now that he began to remember the fight, their relationship and his and Mary's relationship he just couldn't hold it in anymore.

Pitch didn’t vocally respond and instead began driving to his house while Jack tried to prepare himself for another twenty minutes of total dead silence.

Jack made sure not to trip as he walked up the long-familiar steps the lead to the porch of his beau's house. The sky was brighter then before but was still a deary dark blue – the sparse amount of stars in the sky seeming so few and far between.

He wondered if it was because he knew about Seraphina and Pitch. He unconsciously folded his arms and followed Pitch into the house silently, suddenly not wanting to voice anything and wanting for the whole world in its entirety to just take a moment of solemn silence for the little girl that his beloved had lost.

He took a huff of shocked breath as the lights inside clicked on and lightly stung his eyes from their brightness. He rapidly blinked while watching his lover move about the house – briefly catching the slightest sight of his face.

Complete stone. No emotion, no feeling, no slight hint of sadness or depression and not even that faint sense of sarcastic haughtiness or mature near-stoicism he usually felt from Pitch. There was literally nothing there.

It made him feel out of sorts and awkward – unused to this 'version' or 'facet' of his boyfriend. He resigned himself to the couch and watched Pitch move about the room in an unhurried gait. His keys were thrown unceremoniously onto the couch cushion beside the nervous high-schooler and he hung
his jacket on edge of the opposite chair, where he usually sat.

There was an off-settling robotic and inhumanly methodical feeling in the way he moved – despite the haphazard placement of his belongings – that rung of something empty and devoid of any recognizable feeling.

Jack swallowed anxiously and shifted, unsure if he was going to lie down on the couch and sleep there for the night or head up into Pitch's bedroom and sleep alongside him since ‘funny business’ was never expanded on.

Pitch rubbed his calloused hands together and glanced over the room, golden eyes slowly making their way over the space, observing the passable level of cleanliness in the room and biting the inside of his cheek, trying to focus. Failing that he straightened the sleeves of his shirt to distract himself, to try and separate himself from the current situation.

While Jack had been feeling horrified at fully absorbing and thinking of Seraphina's death and the burden he had to bury, he was holding down such heavy emotion – suppressing himself and hiding everything away from Jack's wondering eyes – from someone telling him that he had actually been a good father.

No one did that before. No one ever told him, aside from Sandman, that it wasn't his fault and not even Sandman claimed Pitch had been a good father to his late daughter. Just hearing it, especially from Jack's mouth – someone who knew what it was like to have to raise a child mostly on one's own – made him feel...like he did everything in his power for Seraphina.

It reminded himself why he loved the young man so much. He wanted to explore him, touch him in every place and tease in all the spots he'd find Jack liked. He yearned to pull every possible hot note, gasp and pant of helplessly strong pleasure from his throat then come to learn and know them all by memory.

He dared an expressionless glance at Jack, who glanced back with his own twin snowflake eyes rubbing his own arms in a self hug as if he was actually cold. Pitch felt like he should open his mouth and ask if that was the case – but he couldn't stop himself.

He stepped forward towards Jack, raising his hands to gently cup the young face that gaped up at him with a loss for words, obviously intimidated by the lack of feeling shown in his eyes.

'I was the one who claimed no sex tonight...but if you'll allow me...' He swooped down and snatched a swift and careful peck from the parted lips, wanting to do infinitely more but not daring to allow himself unless Jack wanted it. He gave Jack a once over, admiring how his face looked in the low light before pulling away – not receiving any proposition or sign of a definitive answer.

“You can sleep in my bed.” He whispered quietly, turning away to walk into the kitchen in spite of his lack of idea of what to do there when he arrived – not planning to be rejected. He decided to double back once Jack went upstairs and sleep on the couch or chair for now. “I'll see you tomorrow.” A slight bit of disappointment rung clearly in his voice without him meaning for it to but he didn't try to cover it back up.

He didn't have the time to. Jack gripped the back of Pitch's shirt like a needy child and pulled – not hard enough to yank Pitch into a fall but enough to make him stop and look back, surprised at the abrupt action.

“I don't want to – uhm...” He had to calm himself down and lower his hand before he could continue, his head and mouth acted as if they were stuffed with cotton. He choked and bit down on
his words, struggling to get them out. “I-I don't want to sleep in your bed...when you aren't there.” He repeatedly licked his lips, savoring and relishing in the familiar, sweetish twinge of coffee that hung against Pitch’s natural soft of gingery taste.

A warming feeling of gentle comfort came over him like a wave and he tried to get closer by pulling Pitch just a little further towards him. “It scares me.” He gave him the most honest answer he could give, it wouldn't be the first time he laid down in his lover's bed but it would be the first time without Pitch.

He didn't want to wake up in Pitch’s house without waking up next to him or in his proximity, the thought alone frightening him. This house belong to Pitch – to be awake without him in the most intimate place in his home...it was an uncomfortable thought.

Jack let's himself drop against the warm and welcoming bedspread and Pitch rounded the foot of the bed to join him – refusing to allow himself the privilege of climbing in directly on top of Jack. 'No need to rush...morning is coming but there are so many more hours to go...' he calmed his nerves as he climbed in alongside his younger lover, tense but trying as hard as he could to seem some semblance of relaxed.

It felt like anything and everything could go wrong here – he could say the wrong thing or start things up between them far too quickly and immediately Jack would be gone and out of his reach forever. Even as he searched those light cerulean and gentle eyes for some type of beginning or signal that he could reach out and touch, he was frightened.

He swallowed and reached out to him, hands trembling with anxiousness as he grazed the very tips of his fingers against soft, alabaster skin. A feeling reminiscent of cotton and silk, delicate and airy, was all he could feel and left phantasmal tingles that he couldn't shake away.

He didn't dare press harder, like Jack's skin would tear to pieces like fine woven silk if he did and instead simply flashed a smile that betrayed how nervous he really was.

Slowly the teen seemed to smile back up at him, eyes slightly nervous and quaking in his skull as he tried to form words – most of them refusing to be spoken and remaining in his voice until he at last caught himself and spoke brokenly. “P-Pitch I...can we do more things?” His hands fumbled around, fiddling with one another as he looked at his beau, hoping that he would know what he was talking about.

His ears perked at hearing the confirmation and Pitch nodded knowingly, now touching just a tad more intimately with most of his attention being paid on trying not to seem like his hands were trembling like he was freezing cold.

Large, grayed hands glided lovingly across the soft skin, caressing and gently rubbing anything they could get against – hungry like wolves but holding themselves back from consuming, feasting and ravishing.

Jack whispered a breathy 'Thank you.' as he raised and moved his body ever closer to his lover's and drank him in – enjoying all the little careful touches here and there, the sort of heated emotion of the moment and all the attention he was receiving. 'Just a few hours ago I was so close to losing you...' He released a self-mortifying purring sound as Pitch's hands glided underneath the fabric of his sweatshirt.

Jack tried to clamp his hands down over his mouth to prevent any other sounds from leaving him –
he thought he was ruining the moment and pushing the other man away but sounding so unprepared. But then he heard something similar to a growl of want and hunger just as one of Pitch's hands came up and softly pushed them away as if to say 'Please don't hide your voice from me.'

Then Jack took in a huff of air and laid back, just allowing himself to feel for now, letting Pitch take over and dominate his body and all the touches he could do. He wanted to feel like he wouldn't leave, like what they had couldn't be taken away or destroyed like it nearly was the previous afternoon.

So did Pitch.

“Jack, your body...” He let his voice trail off for a bit in favor of caressing the tiny pink nubs on Jack's chest and pulling such sweet little gasps and purrs and sounds from him that he had to yank his hands away for a moment so not to rush the moment – he wanted to take his time here, he could ravish himself with the youthful body in front of him later.

Now was different.

This was all for Jack. Every fleeting, teasing touch. Every sudden shudder of breath. Every heated gaze they dared to have between one another – all for him.

Pitch nervously licked his lips and squeezed the hardening nub, brushing right past the edge of himself when Jack let out a moan that doubled as a needy plea for more.

“Who but you could pull such yearnings from me?” Pitch whispered closely as he pressed his lips to the top of Jack's head and tried to get a good look in his eyes to see those beautiful snowflake pupils he so admired but Jack's eyes were closed as he panted, more pleas for more leaving him in-between heated rushes of air.

“So...so beautiful. I could never..even dream..” Pitch slowly removes the sweatshirt and gazes longingly at the revealed chest, a carnal desire to simply ride Jack ragged arise inside of him. Lust hazardously peeking out behind his love.

He pulls himself from the edge of desire – with no little effort – knowing that if he lets himself go he may hurt Jack and their relationship. It's his first time and he wants it to be sweet and sensual, something to be remembered with fond memories, not something to be scared and traumatized about.

'And that's what makes this frightening....' Pitch exhales and runs his hands up and down the unintentionally created soft curves. They remind him so fervently of a woman but undoubtedly his own Jack Frost's body – something he wished to possess and hold. Occasionally he runs his fingers against something harder though, something that reminds him why they are here in the first place.

He runs his fingers against the parts of Jack's chest that seemed to be nothing but skin and bone – and barely that at times. Beautiful smoothness changes into horridly sharp curves, reminding him that Jack was an abused child, not properly fed or raised by his pathetic excuses of what could be sparingly called 'Parents'.

He tries to stop himself from going down such a dark trail of thought. 'If it wasn't for them, you might not have met him.' He tells himself but still can't find it in him to enjoy the fact.

Pushing past it he runs his gentle hands upwards, leaving the pleasurably tortured bright pink buds behind in favor of cupping the youth's face and he finds himself at last gazing into wide, blown pupils that have him coming close to losing control once again.

And then...the eyes seem to awaken and mark themselves with worry. Pitch frowns disapprovingly,
then tries to seem as if he's done nothing. He doesn't want Jack to think that he can't back out if he
doesn't want to – even if it does make him slightly upset.

“P-Pitch...I have to tell you something.” Jack whispers quietly, moving his head opposite and
refusing to let his eyes roll back into his head from the ghost-like contact of his lover's warm breath,
rushing over his right shoulder. “I'm a virgin...you know that...so umm...I guess I'm asking you to be
a little...gentle?”

'Ahhh so that is where his worries lie...he's afraid of the pain.'

“Don't be afraid Jack.” His voice breathed out warm and reassuring words, reflecting his own burst
of positivity. Jack wasn't backing out of this – he just didn't want it to hurt. “I would never
intentionally harm you – I'll take my time.” Pitch assures him quietly, now rubbing small circles into
his hips with the very tips of his fingers, applying phantom touches to the sensitive thighs that twitch
lightly in response.

“It's not that.” Pitch reads his lips and face – watching every little movement that he can...and then he
quickly laughs to himself. Jack was having trouble making words just from

'It was the same here'

and then he

The past decade has been so hard and you...you made it all better. I never....not before this–” Jack
bites down on his lip and refuses to let himself speak, already feeling tears running down his cheek
and Pitch beams knowingly, kissing his lips carefully before pulling his body forward into his with
their skin at last touching.

“If you ever feel uncomfortable or threatened, just say the word and I'll stop.” Pitch advises in a
naturally calm voice – part of him feeling afraid that Jack would take that chance and tell him to stop,
that he might feel afraid or embarrassed again and leave like last time.

The rest of him couldn't help but note how beautifully Jack's body looked in the early morning light
that peeked through the window – a myriad of light, wintery blue against the snow white skin. It
went so perfectly with the half-lidded and misty morning blue eyes.

Like it was just meant to be.

He swept down and snatched away a kiss, a quick peck that ended up deepening as Jack's arms
circled around him and pulled him in, growing increasingly unwilling to let him go. Muffled rushes
of hot breath left his mouth, accompanied by a twisting, wandering tongue and entered Jack's mouth.

They quickly separated, more by Jack's will then Pitch's – the younger man could only hold his
breath for so long. Pitch took this moment to admire the swollen, saliva soaked lips that were
practically pleading for more.

“You look good like this...panting and wanting...” Pitch spoke without realizing and then chuckled
quietly to himself.

No one ever made him feel like Jack did, feel so out of control and pleased to be free of such self-
enforced inhibitions. He felt like he could be just a little bit happier, a little more satisfied and perhaps even a little less stoic and quiet around him, especially now that Jack knew his story.

“Jack, have you ever thought about me?” He wonders aloud, hands gradually moving downwards and making the younger man shiver as if he was in the process of freezing solid despite the tense, tightly strung warmth that was beginning to blossom and overheat in the very pit of his stomach.

He let out a hot breath from the depths of his lungs and swore he could almost see it in the air. “Y-yes....” Jack responded nervously and tried to get a hold on himself. His body was crackling with energy and excitement and the tightness of his pants wasn't helping within the slightest.

“Tell me.” A short and simple order that made Jack gape and let out a strange noise of worried, embarrassed panic. Pitch licked his lips – he clearly remembered the café bathroom stunt they pulled, he knew Jack wasn't entirely innocent.

'So whatever this was, it was something downright unclean wasn't it?' Pitch thinks of all the things he could imagine Jack ever possibly doing with his body...his lips...and then his mouth... and then for the sake of making Jack's first time happen here and now he pulls away from that line of thought. Ending before entry wasn't his plan here.

“Oh don't worry...” Pitch dragged his nails teasingly down Jack's side before his fingers close in and wrap around the hem of his jeans. “I'll be gentle with you, regardless of what dirty little thoughts you've been thinking.” The laugh that left him came out darker then he meant it to and he took a moment to pause and collect himself.

'You're not at the Belladonna. Relax.' He exhaled heavily before pressing a calming kiss to Jack's shoulder to undo any damage his less than relaxing laugh had done. “Relax just a little bit...” He whispered into Jack's ear, trailing the shell with his tongue.

“I...I thought about...” Jack took a moment to bite down on his lip – he didn't want Pitch to know about the fact that he got off to gay blowjob porn while thinking about him. A mixture of fear from thinking about what could possibly go wrong if they tried it now and embarrassment from the thought of Pitch just finding out about it formed an invisible gag in his mouth.

He didn't think it was fair for him to not reveal that much – at least that much – after Pitch had told him about Seraphina and his history but the words of 'Yeah I totally got off to thinking about what your dick would taste like just the other day!' wouldn't willingly escape his throat.

“I can't...” He surrendered to his embarrassment and laid still while he tried to swallow down the sizable amount of disappointment in himself. He wanted to be able to talk to Pitch more openly, like he could share absolutely anything with him. It was that way so far with Pitch to him after all – he wanted to reciprocate.

“I see.” His voice held no condemnation or disapproval for Jack's lack of ability to talk about his sexual fantasies – it was understandable. He carefully fingered and pulled gently the hem of Jack's pants, wondering if now would be the right time to remove them and begin the main event of the early dawn.

He was a virgin. Sure, he was teasing and naughty at times but now that things were just a bit more serious between the both of them, especially now that they were alone, equally excited and in his bed. Jack's normally adorable and overly relied upon mask of heavy, overly self-confident bravado was malfunctioning here – this was more what Jack was like. Nervous, meek, quiet, needy and most
of all sensitive.

The thought of how non-existent the boy's resistance to touch could be, how at the lightest of touches he could drive the little virgin boy absolutely wild. He wondered how much pressure he'd have to place and where he'd have to place it to drive Jack entirely insane with pleasure, have him screaming his name and bucking his hips up – or even better, thrusting them back onto Pitch for more inches, for more heat and passion...

Pitch couldn't help himself and let out another frighteningly deep chuckle, not realizing this time how far and how – Jack actually noticed this time and eyed him for a brief moment before relaxing himself again.

Pitch promised he wouldn't hurt him. He had to place his trust him here.

Besides, wasn't being distrustful of his intentions towards him what ruined their moment the last time? A simple grab turned into a massive fight that nearly destroyed their relationship – no, this time he was going to put more trust in him.

Pitch decided that it was now or never, he placed his thumbs between the soft skin and the fabric and slowly slipped the jeans off the thin figure, revealing full black tented boxers. He licked his lips and held a back an obscene laugh in his throat at his Jack gasped from seeing the all too familiar flash of pink against gray.

He went slowly down, kissing the top of the sharp shape that Jack's erection made underneath the fabric and relishing the audible increase of breath above him – so sensitive and just laid out for him and him alone. He glanced up, hungry for the sight of seeing Jack's face.

He met clouded eyes of shining frost and stared back into them with a grin of a phantom painted on his lips. His golden eyes twinkled with a level of mischief that Jack would usually hold before he descended again, hot mouth enclosing around the head of Jack's still hidden cock.

“Mmhh...” Jack moaned behind sealed lips and shifted. His hands slowly moved up the bedspread, weakly clinging to the comfortable blankets beneath him. He never felt any heat like this – nothing ever supplied or given to him by another person.

Pitch moaned from the taste of Jack's warm, leaking cock through the fabric and wanted to tear the boxers from him and suck him off, rough and hard just to extract more needy reactions from Jack's throat.

He restrained himself and instead slipped the restricted erection through the opening of the fabric, fully admiring it as he rested his hands on Jack's hips. He gave it a hungry glance before wrapping his left hand around the base and relishing in the moment, it was completely untouched by anyone other then himself...till now. Like this he could feel Jack pulsing and surging in his hand with sticky warm pre-cum dripping down the sides, dripping into his hands.

Jack – knowing he was being inspected – took in a dense, uneasy breath and pushed himself deeper into the bed, frightened of what Pitch might think of him or how incredible he would feel once they actually began. Even Jack knew that this, just this was teasing before the 'main event' – it was foreplay.

Pitch began moving, placing his mouth over the leaking head and breathing heated air onto it before kissing it with delicate lips. He made sure to start stroking him in a slow rhythm and enjoy the moment when Jack's eyes widened from the shock of just feeling, when his lips parted in delight. “A-...ahh..."
He gradually increased in speed, watching as a few drops of pre-cum became small pools of it gathering in his palm and becoming a makeshift lube that slicked his strokes.

Beneath him Jack was melting in overwhelming ecstasy, sweat dampened soft palms holding anything they could touch with a death-grip, upper body jerking this way and that trying to get more sensation and touch going between him and his teasing lover but nothing was giving way – Pitch wouldn't give him any purchase to get free.

His eyes shut tight and his teeth grit, breathing going ragged and labored as the knot in his stomach tightened, threatening to snap at any minute like a stretched out rubber-band reaching its limit. Every inhale and exhale became a hiss barely making its way through near-invisible gasps in his teeth, he couldn't take it anymore...

Heat rose higher and Jack knew he was going to come if Pitch kept it up. He glanced down, meeting golden, watching eyes that observed every action and reaction they he took and seemed to almost shimmer with glee, laughing and taunting him. 'Yes, I'm making you feel like this. I'm the one feeling your body with such pleasure.'

Then all at once the wonderful warmth and strokes ceased and Pitch was like a shadow in the early morning room, surreptitiously repositioning himself around Jack in a phantom wave of movement. The young teen at first groaned at the loss of contact but then smiled and let himself sink back into Pitch as he was seated in his lap and the drawn-out, warming strokes continued.

Jack let out a heated pant as he felt as though the world was breaking down around him and all that was left was him and Pitch, melting in enjoyment from each other's bodies. His hands clung to the fabric of Pitch's black shirt and he twisted himself, not enough to slip from his lover's grasp but enough to press warm, loving kisses to his Adam's apple.

The huff of warmth that left his breath, the slight change in his breathing that signaled that Pitch was actually responding to his touch was intoxicating to Jack, addicting even. It made the bunching up feeling in the pit of his stomach even worse and he parted his lips and leaned further into Pitch's body.

Suddenly Jack fell over the edge – his vision clouded and turned white and his body shuddered out a thick, hard release into the gray palm that wrapped around his leaking cock. He tried to move upwards with the stroke but he couldn't since Pitch's free hand was keeping him held entirely in place.

His lungs seemed to empty themselves with a single rush of air and the few breaths he could steal in-between moans and calls of Pitch's name were accompanied by body shaking shudders. His hands clenched and unclenched around the thighs he was rested on and eyes screwed tight as the palm wrapped around his cock milked him empty of everything he had.

And then he was caressed, held by strong, familiar and caring arms that embraced and loved him, brought him back down from his sexual high and made his body rest as aftershocks of pleasure went through him and made his eyes flutter.

Jack lay even more relaxed against Pitch's body and let himself go boneless and limp against the older man while he recovered somewhat – still awake and wanting more but just as equally tired from such a long day of conflicting emotions.

After five minutes...”Pitch...can we um...”

“'My my...’ Pitch remarked, lips brushing over the outer shell of Jack's left ear with heated breaths in-
between words that Jack knew were just more teases to keep him on edge...and it was working. “A little glutton for it now aren't we?”

Normally he'd use his overly self confident charm to get out of this one but remembering the past few hours...what point was there in attempting to seem like someone he just wasn't in front of Pitch in such a passionate moment? He decided that honesty would be the best form of action here.

“Uhh...yeah actually.” A small, tired chuckle hooked to the end of that statement.

“No worries but you're going to have to be a little patient with me.” He smiled with nothing but dirty thoughts in mind while he unhooked his belt with his free, non-cum covered hand. Jack took the opportunity to rub his own ass against the crouch of Pitch’s pants and made increasingly indecent noises at every movement against the hard tent located there.

Meanwhile Pitch groaned and allowed himself the pleasure of being more laggard then normal with his movements, permitting himself to watch Jack be adventurous and play around with his body for a while before he roughly yanked and tugged the extensively restricting article of clothing the rest of the way off and wrapped his hand around his own neglected erection, stroking and slicking himself up with Jack's essence, fingers and all.

On top of him Jack shivered with excitement and wait, his erection already returning and hardening in front of him – he had fantasized about this moment for so agonizingly long and now, now it was finally happening.

Pitch was actually going to be inside of him. He was going to share his body with this man – something he never shared with anyone else, not his friends, not Jamie and not Mary.

He took a breath and felt a hand rub over the swell of his back then laggardly make its way upward, Pitch's hand drawing tiny, invisible circles in the skin that were only visible to his wandering, curious eyes.

Like this, in this position with Jack seated firmly in his lap he could see every breath and movement Jack made – he could tell straightaway whether or not he was comfortable, if he was in any form of physical pain and whether he should ever speed up his movements or slow down and let Jack catch his breath.

Now was just making sure he was ready. Pitch made sure that his fingers were slicked up enough to enter Jack, making sure that he had enough fluid on his palm and erection to minimize any pain that he may feel.

He deemed it enough and glanced at Jack – now all he had to worry about was making sure Jack didn't mistake any passionate grabs or feels for some sort of attack and making sure he held back enough of his dominating side to keep control, keep this moment between them tender.

When a wet finger pressed itself to Jack's entrance he gasped and moved his body forward, more out of pure shock then an actual want to move away. Pitch retracted almost immediately and ran a smooth hand up Jack's back.

“Are you alright?” A voice free of anger or judgment helped the lighten Jack's mood and ease his nerves.

“I'm fine...I think.” He whispered and passively licked his lips, eyes focused completely on the bed as he remained frozen and tense, positioned on all fours. Powering past all his embarrassment and pride he figured that this was the position he was supposed to be in to begin with and leaned forward more, sticking his ass out just a little further.
Pitch took a moderately faint breath and placed his fingers back against the puckered entrance, admiring at the slight way it tensed and squeezed when he brushed against it. “You've never masturbated using your own fingers have you?” It was more a declaration of obvious fact then anything else.

Jack stayed quiet out of his sheer embarrassment about having never done so. In his mind it combined with the knowledge that maybe he should have impaled himself on his own fingers so that this could be easier for Pitch.

“No worries.” As if reading Jack's mind like an open book he comforted him, the finger now pressing lightly with almost unnoticeable force against the muscle. “It'll just take a tad longer is all...” His finger first started in tiny circles, massaging and loosening him up in a way that was almost relaxing and soothing. In-between brushes against the entrance Jack found himself taking breaths and having to force himself to stay grounded and not just float away to wherever his head would take him.

He blinked his eyed rapidly and forced himself to stay lucid, stay grounded in reality rather then dreams – his exhaustion making the thought of sleep increasingly welcoming and Pitch's skilled, experienced hands doing no service in keeping him awake. As he took a breath and tried to bring a single hand up to brush the hair out of his face a single, slender finger at last pushed its way through the ring of relaxed muscle.

Jack shoved himself into the bedspread, eyes shut tight and mouth open wide, moments from telling Pitch to stop. He'd never been entered into before and the shock of how strange and alien it felt got to him. He let out a whimpering whine of embarrassment into the bed as he felt Pitch's finger begin to penetrate him. Against his own will his body tensed from the intrusion, tightened around the digit inside of him – it didn't ache the flesh around it but it was something new, something different.

Pitch smiled and continued, moving his finger around inside the warm cavern, thoughts of practicing the deepest and most depraved of his sexual tendencies with Jack as his partner flooding through his mind as he watched his snow haired lover spasm even further forward into the bed, the intrusion gaining heated friction against him.

“Your clearly tense...” Jack's body wriggled like a worm trapped on a hook as he adjusted to being stretched open. Minutes pass like his own hot breaths until he finds that he doesn't feel it that much – it begins to actually feel like something akin to a warm stroke over his aching cock. His hands urge to lower themselves down his body, glide down over beads of trickling sweat and wrap themselves firmly around his member but he resists and keeps them planted on the bed, instead using them to push himself back up rather then finish himself off again.

He wants to get off with a much different part of Pitch buried inside of him and as a he thinks about how far stretched he would have to be to take him in – wonders thoughtfully of how thick and strong Pitch might be – a second finger pushes itself inside along the first. For the first time since it began Jack felt the beginning of actual pain.

Noticing the hitching of his breath and his face twisting into a visage of discomfort Pitch lowered his face down and left a phantom peck at the base of his spine – the effects were quick and perceptible. Jack's body relaxed, still unused to being entered by something thicker then just a single finger.

Taking great care as to not make his movements harsher then what they needed to be, Pitch pushed his fingers in deeper into the tight heat, up to the first knuckle. Golden eyes swept over the figure lightly as he tensed up more, unused to it....

'He'll adjust in time...' The digits moved again, pulling out and then replacing themselves. Pitch
relaxed himself – hungry eyes staring down at Jack's ass like it was a four course meal, glazing over and enjoying every inch of it, relishing in the way it felt. He shut his eyes abruptly, breaking his gaze and holding back that forbidden side, just a little further before he began repeatedly finger ing the tight opening, pushing in farther and deeper each time.

Kneeling beneath him Jack struggled to get a hold of himself and rest there in an unrestrained position – it all felt so fast and slippery, like time was running through his fingertips and the world was rushing right by him and he couldn't keep up – within just a few weeks he went from single adoptive older brother to dating, adoptive older brother in an extremely illegal relationship.

For a brief instant he let his mind wander past the on and off faint aching of his stretching insides and thought of what else could possibly change for them and between them, after tonight and in the future – then he found he just couldn't think.

Pitch's fingers swirled and moved near and against the untouched prostate and Jack gasped, throwing his head back and breathed out a curse from the surprise of being shaken from his thoughts. Above him Pitch hissed quietly through swearing teeth, the hand that had been comforting Jack's lower back now bring itself up over his own neglected, hardened dick that pulsed with a need to be attended to.

The muscles clenched against the fingers once more as they nearly pulled the whole of the way out before thrusting back in, hitting near that very same spot like a near-bull's eye. Jack cried out again, this time with a clearer voice that sounded through the room like a desperate plea, just as it was.

“Please, Pitch!” He whimpered and then, forgetting all of his recent past embarrassment and fright he shifted so that Pitch could easily enter him – kneeling his body forward onto his elbows and pushing his behind up into the air.

Something in him snapped, ungracefully and almost entirely without warning. Pitch quietly yanked down his pants further and got up on his knees, face displaying nothing but a raw sort of lust to thrust straight in and throw caution completely to the wind. He pulled his fingers out completely, much more shadier part of him that he almost forgot existed savoring the sound of Jack's wanting groan.

He positioned himself, his darkened head pressuring the closed opening – in the silence of the room he could hear Jack actually panting like he was already on the verge of coming being ridden to insanity but a quick check of the location of his hands proved that he wasn't getting himself off, any and all sounds were just from pure anticipation alone.

With a smirk of puckish delectation, his tongue past over his lips as he gazed down and watched himself directly enter the entrance. He let his head roll back as he truly felt Jack's velvety insides wrapped entirely around his head, stretched almost to the limit.

Jack's hands clawed at the bed spread with fingers bent and crooked like eagle's talons. He opened his mouth wide to scream but instead bit into the bed – masking his voice in muffles while pain spiked through his body. 'Just, relax – just relax...' He repeated to himself, half muffled by the sheets. 'It'll get better.'

With his cock's prematurely weeping head fully entrapped in the dry, heated warmth of his younger lover's ass Pitch felt like he'd gone to heaven. With a small groan he pulled himself back just a fraction before letting himself naturally get sucked back in. The suction alone was enough to make him have to commit to his own control. Half-maddened with it he slowly rode and slid into Jack's aching behind, not quite hearing the painful groans with a conscious mind despite noticing that Jack wasn't comfortable – he saw that Jack wasn't at his best right now, he just couldn't find it in him to completely stop because of it.
After what seemed like a torturous eternity of having to just barely fuck him Pitch finally fit a good portion of himself into Jack's body. He threw a curious, naughty gaze to Jack's ass and bit down on his bottom lip, quickly forcing himself to not-notice once again. Jack's body felt like it wanted to completely consume his member – sucking him in like it was actually hungry for him.

And who was he to not *sate* that hunger? He pulled himself back once more only to let Jack suck him straight back in and for the first time he let an actual *moan* escape the depth of his throat- eyes threatening to roll back into his head as if he was moments away from fainting.

'God how long has it been since I had some damn good sex?' He wondered momentarily without really considering or bothering himself with answering the question, because in the end he knew it didn't matter – none of the past mattered right now...

All that mattered right now was Jack's magnificently warming ass practically sucking off his aching dick. In a blind moment of need to thrust haphazardly into the warmth, licking his lips and hissing all the while – taking in the delicious sight of Jack's back rising and falling with timid, quiet and swallow breaths as he kept being pushed back and forth over the line where pain became pleasure.

"P-pitch, fuck-" Jack's voice let him like an indoor yell, a note of agony tinting all signs of ecstasy and he felt Pitch's movement slow momentarily, the older man ceasing himself and realizing once again that not only *his* pleasure mattered here.

'Damn it...' Pitch frowned inwardly and shut his eyes tight – the sight of Jack's body underneath him, free to be tortured with only half-teases and titillation or pleased and satisfied entirely by him was too much for him to bear. 'This isn't the Belladonna...' He instead aimed for Jack's prostate, changing his angle of entry and made sure to be gentler – keeping himself on a tight leash as he moved back in.

The difference was night and day with Jack gasping for breath within a few simple thrusts, every one ending in half-broken sounding of his older lover's name just barely escaping his mouth in-between thrusts. “Pi-pitch, hurry- it's- Pitch, *fuck*.” Any vocalization that left his throat came out in a mixture of different words that seemed to be pulled from other sentences.

And with every yell of his name that he had obscenely cut short with the digging and circling motions of his hips, Pitch felt himself grow closer and closer to his own orgasm – but he forced himself back and restricted himself from thrusting without abandon into Jack and instead wrapped his arms around the kneeling frame and pushed them both back until they were both sitting upwards – Pitch's hardened cock still buried knee-deep in Jack's tight orifice. “Ah, Jack...you're perfect..”

Neither of them would last long like this, Pitch knew and he took the opportunity to suckle delightfully on Jack's neck – wanting to leave behind some type of mark to say 'Yes, this is *mine*, this fine beautiful little thing was claimed by me'. Jack turned his head away and lazily began to help Pitch fuck him, bouncing on his dick trying to get more of it buried inside of him.

"Af-Mmmm, *damn*.” Jack let out a whine after a particularly good bounce with Pitch forcing him down at the same time that he let himself drop.

In a state of foggy pre-orgasmic bliss he leaned his head back to lie over Pitch's opposite shoulder, that familiar knot in his stomach loosening him until he bit down on his lip – behind him he could
hear Pitch began a strangled cry. He parted his lips at once, already knowing that he probably didn't have to give a warning.

His body tightened like a vice around the aching, pulsing member buried inside of him, squeezing Pitch as he screamed and his voice blanked out and turned everything to white. He came, screaming his beloved's name all the while, his white essence smearing itself all over his chest – inside of him during the last few moments of his orgasm he could feel Pitch finally reach his own climax, spilling forth his seed directly into Jack's body.

He felt...dazed...like he couldn't think straight anymore. He let his head drop to the side and closed his eyes for half a second, a blink that lengthened...and then unintentionally evolved into sleep.

Hearing his light snores and frankly having pangs of exhaustion and soreness here and there from so much physical activity – 'No, really this time, when was the last time I had some fucking incredible sex like this?' - Pitch allowed him to rest peacefully on this lap, still filled and holding his erection.

Only after a short moment of letting Jack enter deeper into his sleep did he place him on the side of the bed that closer to the door and then allow himself to rest opposite him, using his own hands as a makeshift pillow on top of his actual one.

'Well...this is probably going to suck for the both of us.' Pitch mentally whispered to himself in a self deprecating smirk that went unseen by the other sleeping occupant of the room. 'But I love you.' He turned himself, carefully as not to wake Jack from his dreaming, and spent the short amount of time left between now and whenever he would wake up to stare at him.

“Good night.” His voice carried with it a lighthearted mirth that he swore Jack dreamily responded to in a joyous smile. “I...” He came to a stop, rolling his tongue around in his mouth like his words were physical matter, living things that were struggling to push past his lips and be spat out rather then said. With a movement that surprised even himself he managed to stop the negativity that threatened to spill from him and into his voice.

“I love you Jack.”

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Chapter End Notes

Yeah for some reason I should probably say that length equals goodness for me and this is something that I say - in retrospect - really have to stop doing. I apologize. Will re-write this in the upcoming days but for now please stick with me....

Note: I believe FF.net is having issues atm. I keep on getting a 503 error. I will upload Teardrop to there when I'm able to access it.
William glances upwards at the nearby clock and then releases a heated but quiet rush of air. '7:20 am'. He reads the clock silently as Katherine casually walks past his half of the bed, getting dressed for the beginning of her day.

*I'm not drunk...and she's in a good mood.* William rubbed his hands together until he could feel them warming up in the frigid, tense darkness of the room. He isn't sure if it's only him being afraid of what could come of his want to speak with her or if they have reached an uncanny sense of pre-knowledge about one another and Katherine is preparing herself.

As he opens his mouth to speak he hopes fervently that its the latter. He hopes that the conversation will lead somewhere without him putting pressure on it or testing her and her patience with it. He’s already done that enough for one lifetime.

“We're going to have to talk about it eventually.” Whether this is more of a declaration to her based on his hope that she could somehow read his mind and tell what the subject would be about or just him telling that to himself he was unsure. Nervously he ran his warmed hands against his upper arms before pushing himself up from the blankets of his bed – no reason to stay lying down during this.

“So what?” Her voice, floaty, heavenly and melodic voice drifted weightlessly through the air – he loved hearing her tone when she was happy.

Katherine's body seizes up before she momentarily takes in a jagged and unstable inhale of breath – a clear signal that gives two messages to her attentive husband. 'Yes, we do need to talk about this' and 'No, I don't want to'.
The mother of two regrets allowing her reactions to show, knowing the signs and signals she was sending were going to be the death of her. Tongue tied and at a loss for words she tries to wriggle her way out of it rather then talk about it or ignore it – talking about it is too hard and pretending ignorance just makes it ache worse. She gazes at him through the bedroom mirror with a plastered on and plainly involuntary smile. “It's fine, I'm dealing with it my own way.”

“For eleven years now?”

She bit back her curse and turned away, no longer wanting to look at her husband. William was too sharp now, no longer blinded and deafened by alcohol consumption and he certainly wasn't stupid – in fact reminiscing back to when they had first met it was his intelligence that drew her to him.

She takes a quick breath and tries to think, tries to find a way to escape and wriggle her way out of this situation.....she can't. “I'm dealing with it, okay?” She insists and does her best to return to a 'normal' state while her body prickles with anxiety, renewed depression, and a want to leave and escape any place he's mentioned. A need to be at the lower end of a large bottle of alcohol to sort of drown it all out.

The alcohol always helped.

“Really?” He questions her already knowing its a lie before she can counter it. But he doesn't push the subject and instead lets it rest. “If you ever feel like talking about it I'm here Kat.” He promises before relaxing himself and drifting off to a world of sleep, unwilling to wake up at such an early hour in the morning to begin with.

Noticing the calm lull of his breath and the lack of any thrown objects – her time of living as an abused woman making her cautious around William even with his recent lack of drunk madness – she quietly exited the room, carefully walking on the very tips of her toes and stealthily dodging the ever familiar creaky plank in the floorboards as not to alert him.

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She practically stormed her way down the street, her walk hasted and her heels hitting the concrete like a proud soldier marching off to an easily winnable skirmish.

She felt like anything but.

She felt like a quitter...
She kept on walking anyway; pain needed to be dulled out and things need to be done, she'd quit later – she wasn't like William during his drunk phases after all, she just did it because it made everything feel a little better. She could quit any time she wanted to….but for right now, she needed a relief.

Katherine came to a short stop and gazed upwards at the sound of a buzzing that made her feel more at home and relaxed then the house she lived in...

Then again, with the amount of time and money she spent here it was a wonder why she didn't just move in. Above her the flicking light sign of 'Open 24 hours a day' flickered like a dying flame light in the night and beside her an advertisement for another new 'flavor' of Budweiser and part of her considered getting it – not that it really even mattered. She drank alcohol for the alcohol.

She needed some of the liquid in her system to drown everything out. At the bottom of a bottle things were quiet, peaceful even. No rapidly soul-absorbing guilt raging in her mind about things, none of the detestable voices of regret screaming and echoing off the wall of her mind making her feel guilty about everything that she did wrong.

With much more physical force then necessary she pushed open the door of the small store and strode in, almost jumping at the sound of an all-too familiar chuckle.

She turned around to the counter and gazed warily. 'Jonathan' She mentally recalled all the times she was in here and almost shook her head in shame – they both knew why she was here and instead of saying 'hello' she gave him an impatient look.

She was hoping this time she could skip the pleasantries.

Instead of the result she hoped for John leaned back in his chair, placing his arms back against it to form a makeshift pillow for his red-haired adorned head. “So...” He spoke slowly and deliberately, making her stand there and wait for him just to finish a simple sentence.

Clearly she wasn't going to get her wish and upon realizing it she shifted her feet and rolled her eyes in annoyance. By the time she returned her gaze back onto John every fiber of every muscle in his face was being used to make a fox like grin that split it in two.

As if trying to anger her he put his feet up on the crumbled up newspaper, crinkled beer can and half filled cigarette tray laden counter and relaxed himself with a sigh that spoke of nothing but arrogance.
“Why...would you-”

Katherine couldn't move away any faster as she walked to the back of the store and extracted a cold one – of no particular brand or label because really, all she wanted to do right now was get smashed - from the near-endless rows of golden alcohol. Then whirled around with impatience and returned to her standing spot, coming extremely close to slamming the bottle of beer onto the counter.

John took a single look at her and grinned, immediately reading the situation from her face and body language alone. He knew her for well over ten years now and she always came crawling to him for her alcohol, her fix at least once a week – her personal record was coming by as much as seven times within five days.

“Well, my my.” He remarked with his own high-quality level of snark on full blast, absent-mindedly twiddling a small pen in-between deft fingers and grinning darkly like he had just been told the dirtiest and most hilarious joke in the world. “Someone's not in a good mood tonight. Your time of the month?” He paused, brows pulling inward towards his nose before raising back up in feigned curiosity. “In fact do you even still get those?”

“Not tonight Johnathan...” She muttered, rolling her eyes again with a knowing that this is when it began. Here came the usual abuse and teasing, taunting that came with the territory of having to deal with a man as self-righteous, stuck up and untrustworthy as John.

“I mean like, your like forty now right?” A fake question, he knew her age.

“John.” She hissed impatiently and glared at him hatefully.

“I'm just saying, you're getting on in age is all~” He spoke in a sing song voice, half laughing as he avoided eye contact in a fake sense of wordless apology.

“Just shut up and ring me out.” She was reaching her limit with him.

“Alright, alright just...” He faked looking for a notepad as he so often did, just to keep her in the store a little longer. “Gimme a second to find my-” He grinned, flashed her a cheeky smile and feigned a hand slip, knocking the bottle off the counter and letting it fall to the ground in an early morning cacophony of shattered glass and spilled beer.
The sound of utter hate that left Katherine's throat was unheard of and unrivalled by anything John ever heard before in his life. She was already stalking to the back of the store when he released his near-crazed hyena like laugh.

If there was anything she hated more then the memory of North breaking down her mental walls it was Johnathan's bullshit.

Doesn't mean she didn't force herself to deal with it to get her fix though.

–

After fifteen uninterrupted minutes of unspoken but passionately repeated death threats and having to make sure she kept her hands away from any sharp objects or Johnathan's face lest she become a murderer, she was back at home. Unsurprisingly twice as pissed off and needy for a release from reality then when she left since staying within the proximity of John usually did that to people who were in their right minds.

She skilfully sneaked her way into Mary's room with a large beer bottle shaped brown paper bag in hand that was rapidly dripping condensed water from the bottom – fresh and cold from the local twenty-four hour grocer's freezer.

Katherine sealed the door shut behind her as she walked in, thankful she could slip into Mary's room without alerting anyone with the abnormal sound of a whining, half-rusted over metal door joint since Mary loved to have her door opened 'just a crack' so she could keep all the bad nightmares away.

As she began to make her way towards the closet, guilty pleasure in hand she left...frightened. As if she was being watched – she glanced towards the door, nothing there...she glanced towards the bed...

And there Mary lay in her bed with her mouth shut in utter silence. Her wide-awake auburn eyes stared with a stoic knowing that far surpassed her age as it trailed over the figure of her mother, who clenched her entire body around the brown bag as if defending it from Mary's gaze as if she was been judged by it.

Katherine's eyes met hers and for a moment a spiral of tormented guilt swirled in the bottom of her heart, aching her in a way she almost never felt before. She knew what she was doing was wrong from the very start but then she had the gall to try and hide her indulgence of it in her daughter's room.
She took a painful, regretful swallow and unhooked herself from the bottle, carrying it normally and opening the closet door.

“Good morning Mommy.”

The door shut and Katherine sat on the ground underneath all of Mary's coats and seated on top of her shoes, responding quietly before allowing herself to sink to the bottom one more time.

“Good morning Mary...”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for this everyone but this could be the last chapter for a little while...meaning until after winter break maybe?

I'm sorry but algebra is a bitch. Plus honor's classes. I need to buckle down and basically finish these bitches - sorry.
Jack groggily awoke to the welcoming hands of overbearingly and painfully bright sunlight shining through the nearby window and directly into his eyes. He then took the precious opportunity to try and cocoon himself into the bed's blankets for some peace and darkness but found that there was a heavy weight on them. It took his brain all of ten seconds to realize that the weight was actually shifting on the bed.

As if there was another person in it...

In a sudden burst of early-morning panic he whirled his head around to see a wide awake Pitch staring right at him, head lain against the opposite pillow, breathing even and steady with a right bushy black eyebrow half raised in curiosity.

It was only then that he realized exactly where he was and what had happened on the glorious night before. Pitch's hot and heavy dick pressing itself deep inside of him, touching and pushing into areas he'd only dream of having pressed against – he let out a happy, tired exhale from the memory with a hint of a stirring flitting around in his lower stomach like wild butterflies.

"Good..." Pitch took a pause and thoughtfully threw a sideways glance towards the window before turning back to Jack, face marred with worry and a hint of strong regret. "Morning. I hope."

"What?" Jack wiped his eyes against his arm – he felt so sleepy like he hadn't gotten any rest at all last night.

"Jack..." Pitch took the time to push himself up against the headboard of the bed. "I'm sorry, first off, it completely skipped my mind until far after the fact – I actually got up about an hour ago and wrote you a doctor's note just in case but..."

"Why would I need a doctor-" Jack tried to move up and onto the headboard but stopped short and let himself rest. Beside him Pitch felt a twinge of guilt after the teen's usually smiling face became marred with waves of discomfort and pain. "Okay ow..."

"I'm sorry, I really am. I – momentarily – forgot that you were a total virgin...should've taken more time." Pitch sucked his teeth in self-caused irritation and rubbed his hands together, hoping that he hadn't kindled any anger or indignation in his lover's heart. "You used and well...frankly I might've widened you in some places unintentionally...but some muscles in your body that weren't used much before probably got over worked last night..."

"I see..."

"And...please don't hate me for this." Pitch half-begged him and Jack looked at him as if he was insane. "It's Monday."
"Oh grea-..." Jack's eyes shut tightly and a single hand made its way up to his face to swipe over his forehead and through his albino locks. He wants to tell Pitch that he's insane for actually thinking that he would hate him for something but after he realizes that he'll be feeling this for at least the next three days, Pitch's train of thought becomes extremely reasonable. "Fuuuck..." He exhaled through lazed lips and blinked hard, trying to blink away his mid-morning fatigue and the pain but both are resistant to his attempts and stay anyway.

Pitch took a deep breath and wonders whether or not he should give Jack the 'Pièce de résistance' of their current schedule situation. As he sees Jack try to move again and sees that his faces of pain grow less and less intense with time he decides to continue. "And...I love you, don't kill me." There's a high amount of mirth in that but he doesn't doubt that Jack might actually hate him for this. "I really do love you."

Jack glances back with a half-embarrassed smile and almost speaks up to say something but Pitch interjects with the biggest and most important piece of information of the morning. "It's eleven A-M, don't hate me." He reminds him, shutting his eyes tightly as he looks away but feeling the heat of Jack's anger coming from the other side of the room. "I'm sorry." He explains without look, hands placed upwards in mock surrender. "I didn't know whether or not I should wake you."

"My sister." The hiss of irritation in his voice isn't just a note – its an entire over-arching melody with a backup chorus of promised violence. Pitch briefly thinks that maybe under all that there's even a skilled quartet of homicidal fury mixed somewhere in there for good measure.

Despite his irritatingly sore ass grabbing up most of his current attention spam and early morning exhaustion limiting the scope of his thoughts, Jack's mind hits the ground running with tens of potential possibilities. 'It's bad enough I left her alone with my parents but it completely slipped my mind that it was Sunday.'

"Jack," Pitch quietly roused him for this thoughts and glanced from at the corners of his eyes – trying his best to withstand the more then merely detectable hint of irritation that seethed right underneath Jack's skin. "I'm sorry, if you'd like I could give you the doctor's note for the next three days off and just drive you where ever you want to go."

For a long time the only answer Pitch ever received was a hushed and tensed silence, Jack's snow colored eyes gazing half a million miles away at things only he could see.

'Mary could be at school by now or-' Jack immediately remembered everything his mother told him yesterday. William was tired, probably drunk and possibly in the process of harming Mary right now for the childish crime of making too much noise. With that taking over the forefront of his mind, all sense of pain joined the chorus of background noise. He pushed himself up from the sheets and – seemingly in a flurry of after thought – removed his clothing from the bed and walked out of the room in powerful stride.

Pitch grabbed his own clothing and followed after Jack, curious as to where he was going – until the bathroom door slammed in his face and he retracted backwards, grabbing his aching nose in surprise.

"Get dressed and start up the car!" Jack yelled from the porcelain room as he cleaned with a randomly grabbed washcloth and redressed himself in a rapid haze of movement, centered now on speed rather then any sort of form or functionality.

His brain naturally let off small triggers of 'Ew, your own dried sperm is on your chest' and 'Pitch's cum is literally dripping out of you' but nothing could overtake the thought that right now, at this point in time, Mary could be hurt...or even worse.
With another boost of speed he pushed the door aside so hard that it slammed against the wall – Pitch's hand snapped towards him with hints of concern flashing in his gold eyes.

Jack, impatient and with a burst of adrenaline powered by sheer worry for Mary's safety, unsuccessfully tried to push past his older lover. As he nearly bumped up against him, Pitch blocking off the small entrance to the stairway, Jack passively cursed him for not being outside starting the car.

Pitch refused to acknowledge the fact that Jack had just insulted him and instead focused on him, forcing him to back away from the steps and instead grabbing him by his wrist, pushing him to the wall.

Icy blue eyes shot up and gazed hateful, spite-loaded daggers at him. Pitch shot him a look of sympathy before speaking plainly. "You have a phone. Just call her school Jack – if she's not there then you can 's zero reason to go running out of the house like an action hero on speed."

Jack didn't even bother cracking a smile at that one and pulled his phone from his clothes, thankful for having Mary's school's number memorized. "Hey, is this Ms. Krane- oh hey, yeah," Within seconds the smile returned to his face and the grip of parental responsibility that usually held down and suppressed every facet of 'Jack' that was naturally...well 'Jack' was relinquished.

'She's fine.' Pitch mentally exhales – for a moment even he was worried for Mary's safety, if only by proxy because of Jack's abruptly systematic and unemotional state of mind when preparing for the day when Mary was the main thing on his mind.

"Alright, thanks – Umm...that's." His smile metamorphosed to an open mouthed gape of deep emotional shock, eyes widening to saucers in his skull. From the sight Pitch feels his own sense of alarm coming to play, parts of his body tensing up from fear of bad news. "I – okay, we'll that's good to know." His voice betrays his expression – he stays composed despite his dazed expression and hangs up the phone, staring at the opposite wall with numerous shifting degrees and levels of confusion battling for supremacy over his facial expression.

"What happened?" Pitch asks with concern underlining the currents of his voice and Jack comes close to leaping to the ceiling with fright since he had, in his moment of intense focus, forgot he was even there.

He struggles to find himself and begin conversation. "Umm...Mary – she-" He frowns again, as if his mind had temporarily ceased to run from the astonishment of this morning. "...Katherine and William drove her to school today."

"Well that's" Pitch rolls his tongue, unsure of what to really think or say about that – the thought of those two actually doing their jobs as parents without police breathing down their neck and forcing them to do so was actually a frightening change from the usual pace. He wanted to question as to why, do some investigating, see what devil in hell came there and threatened them to force such a change...but at the same time he wants to believe in some miraculous and godly change even if its only for Jack's sake."...intriguing." He finishes, knowing that's probably the best word for it.

"Intriguing." Jack reiterates with notes of half-laughing, half-mocking rudeness shifting underneath. "I guess that's one word we can call it." With a gesture he lets his shoulders untense themselves and lowers his defenses and rolls his hands through his hair as he abates that tight knot of taut parental over-protectiveness that sat in the bottom of his stomach ever waiting for the slightest mention of Mary in potential danger.

He instead takes refuge in the thought that Mary was currently in school – the one place he knew she'd always be safe and away from people that could potentially hurt her.
"Good then..." Pitch, now revealing himself to have been slightly worried alongside Jack, rubs the backside of his neck in a similar gesture. "She's alright and we've successfully avoided repeating history."

"We have?" Jack questions and pockets his phone, shoving it in his back pocket until he can actually use it again.

Pitch chuckles and smirks in knowing. "Remember yesterday?"

"Oh...oh." He leans against the wall in surprise and licks his lips, wanting to apologize – he made the same mistake twice. His worry for Mary expanding into a moment of lack of logical thought and nearly resulting in another fight. "I'm sorry..." Ice blue eyes avoid golden ones as shame overtakes any remaining sense of fading panic or calmness that was inside of him.

Jack knew that Pitch was right, in a sense. They had probably narrowly avoided another fight just now – but they still ran the same course; he still didn't keep himself in a calm state of mind and Pitch still had to try and pull him back in. Had it not been for the fact that he had a phone on hand they would probably be in another battle of insults, words cutting deep under the skin with new information that had been shared.

Jack didn't want to put himself above it like he was some type of morally perfect human being; if he felt as if Mary was in danger and Pitch was getting in his way he would have used Seraphina against Pitch beyond a shred of doubt or forethought into the matter, if it meant hurting him enough so that he could get to his sister's side.

A ghostly breath released itself from his nostrils in a heavy huff and he looked Pitch again, confused as to what his next plan of action should be.

"A real shower." Pitch walked by him to access the bathroom and as he strode by he let his hand pass over Jack's head, flaying the strands of hair his fingers found there like a quick caress.

Or to Jack, who shuddered in response, it was a mere promise of what could possibly occur if he was to join Pitch – more pleasure, more lust-filled moments of passion as they seem to connect on a physical level and in a much more spiritual way.

Then he began walking forward in following and nearly doubled over from the tendrils of pain that sprouted outwards from his lower back. 'Nope. No. It was just a caress.' He said with shut eyes and a half choked back, cringing noise.

Through the early morning steam and heat that came from the shower water that rained down on him, Jack tried his best to somehow relax and unwind, for the sheer sake of the man that stood behind him.

Even as he leaned forwards and gave him a good view of his abused entrance. He hoped that Pitch couldn't see the alien shiver that went up his spine and spread itself out to his shaking, lanky limbs that so vividly remembered the touch of his hands against the skin. Even then, he knew that Pitch could see when he jolted upwards the moment their skin met, Pitch intending to run his hand over the welcoming ass and see if he was fine.

He didn't dare look at Pitch to verify – he didn't need to. The familiar dark chuckle that resounded behind him gave it all away and gave way to more sensitivity, more want that he could just barely comprehend.
He ignored the familiar stirring in the pit of his stomach and turned his face up to meet the shower head – reveling in the inexplicably cooling warmth of the water.

"Ah, yes..." Pitch's voice clearly had no intention to sound as sexy or provocative as it did but Jack felt the need to just swirl around and french him until they were on the floor of the shower panting and begging. Jack let out a huff that he could swear was visible even in the lightly heated fog of the room, allowing himself to fall even deeper into that fantasy.

Pitch and him fucking each other on the shower floor while warming water showered them – the heated impact on his back and sides while Pitch's tongue warmed his mouth and explored it, hands much larger then his own grabbing at him – his ass, his nipples and then trailing down with a line of goosebumps to finally fully enclose his weeping co-

"Fucking ow." Jack turn his head back to glare at Pitch and cried in complaint, fingers penetrating and harming already too-sensitive and already harmed tissue.

"Sorry." The tone was plain and unemotional – Pitch had once again disconnected his mind from his body, just like he did while driving. Instead, he was focused on Jack's needy entrance, fingers pushing inside and curling slightly to the right or left, checking every which way and that for something."Ah...Jack I need you to turn towards me and-"

Jack stood up fully and forced himself off from Pitch's fingers, doing a one eighty and having to yank his wet and dripping hair into a sort of bun with a single hand just to glower at him before approaching him.

"I'm sorry but please do endure me for the moment." He whispered into the dampened wet mop that was now Jack's hair, ignoring the sort of watery and strange curliness of his own.

One achromatic hand stayed in place at Jack's face so he could comfort him with gentle cheek rubs. The other trailed lovingly down the back, any skin that fell beneath the territory of his hands immediately perked up, nerves and pores eager to feel and meet his touch. His palm curled around Jack's left cheek and he looked down, Jack staring at his hand and palm with quizzical eyes and light, choking sobs.

Pitch's gaze drifted away and bit his lower lip in a faint sense of shame and defeat. The memory of the suicide attempt only now springing to his mind as he also observed his wrist – reasoning that the bandages must've come off during their intimate moment together last night and were lost among the sheets or on the floor now.

'Pity...I'll have to actually look for them now.' A long, ugly darkened scab marred his wrist now and he had to take the moment to be thankful that he didn't stab as deep as he would've had he actually wanted to die. He shifted his focus to the more important – and better – matter of his fingers wandering around in Jack's insides.

Between the both of them they were both getting increasingly turned on but Pitch refused to give in to his more carnal desires and have sex with him while he was still injured from last night – he could tear or break something important. He gazed down again to make sure Jack wasn't in any sort of pain and unintentionally lingered on his eyes.

Jack was in pain. He noticed the scab and it must've all become increasingly obvious from there – with a loud suck of his teeth he looked away and moved his fingers in deeper, listening but mainly not responding to the hitching of Jack's breath and the pained groan that escaped his throat in favor of making sure that he wasn't profusely bleeding or torn.
After just a few moments of pushing against velvet walls and receiving mixed responses that ranged from little, heated pants to pained moans and pleas to just 'get it over with' to obscene cries for him to continue touching that spot or this spot, Pitch extracted his fingers from him – the water and his own previously spilled essence giving the motion a loud and disgusting squelch-like sound.

"Ewww..." Jack whispered tiredly – more out of needed something to say and clear the strange soundless gap that stretched between them then out of any genuine feeling of repulsion. In a few moments he was relaxing his head against Pitch's chest and raising his head but never bringing himself up to meet his lover's eyes.

There were questions that needed to be answered – many, many questions. Pitch's scab mainly and...yesterday's fight. Jack knew that no matter how much he didn't want to, he couldn't rest without making sure all the water was under their bridge.

"Jack, the water's getting cold..." Pitch's familiarly strong hand trailed alongside lukewarm water that dosed and streamed down Jack's upper back, breaking into petite broken lines of tiny rivers as they hit against the pointed, jutting vertebra of his spine.

"Yeah..." Jack watched with dulled out eyes as Pitch maneuvered around him and ceased the flow of the shower water – keenly examining the dark line across the center of his wrist and not breaking contact until Pitch came back to him, wrapping his arms around him.

"We have to talk don't we?" His voice rang with a truth of him already knowing the answer but not exactly wanting to accept it, a light sigh ending his sentence.

Jack looked up and nodded wordlessly, no more pleased with what had to be done then he was.

Jack lies against the couch downstairs, uninterestedly picking at the few yellow remnants of the surprisingly extravagant breakfast he had been so graciously served. Scrambled eggs, two sizable fluffy pancakes and more bacon then he thought he could finish – luckily for him though, the lack of eggs he was eating helped to make space.

Pitch passed by Jack, placing a cup of orange juice on the coffee table as he passed by in long strides, a dark smile on his face as he moved. He wore another full black suit but this one was much more casual and tight fitting. The pants curled and hugged his behind snugly and Jack couldn't help but admire the way the small amount of loose fabric left rippled as he walked by – like the purple shirt of sex decided to go business casual mixed with 'Sherlock'. "Not a fan of the unborn bird I see?"

Jack glanced up and took a moment to think about Pitch's observation – the thought of him eating someone's unborn child appearing in his mind straightaway and he shook his head strongly with a wave of light nausea coming over him, shoving the plate back on the table and deciding to forget what thoughts just appeared in his head in favor of conversation. "So, yesterday." It wasn't exactly where he wanted to drive the discussion to but still where he knew it needed to go.

"Yesterday..." Pitch took a pause to retrieve his keys and gather his things, reaching over Jack to obtain his jacket, his stretch unintentionally making Jack increasingly aware of the distinct height difference between the two of them. "Indeed."

"Yeah...we have to talk." Jack scratched the back of his head and shut his eyes for a moment – the aching of his ass and his weariness both battling for his attention.

"We should get you to school first." Pitch noted quickly, secretly endeavoring to hold the talk off as long as possible like keeping a lion at bay with a table chair. "I'll drive of cours-"
"We can talk on the way." Jack spoke without really thinking and let out a distressed grunt as he removed himself from the sofa and shuffled towards the door, feet dragging and body half-bent over as if he was the living dead, lower body aching with a remote pain he'd never know before today. "And I'm thinking we're gonna have to use that note."

'Shit.' Pitch inwardly sighed and then grinned lightly, hoping Jack wouldn't realize that he was attempting to put this off. 'That's the thing about having a smart partner – you can't sneak things past them.' He graciously opened the door for Jack and held back the chuckle that threatened to leave him in response to the almost frightening noise of acknowledgment, a heavy gust of breath through the noise mixed with some fragment of 'thanks'.

"Damn I don't even want to walk..." Jack rubbed his ass with a face twisting in pain and Pitch couldn't help but feel a knife of guilt tear at his heart with slashing stabs.

"Lie down on the seat when we get in the car, it'll hurt less. I'll drive slow." He opened the door for him and watched Jack climb in on all fours, then collapse on the seat like he couldn't wait to just go to sleep and let the world turn around him while he rested and healed – Pitch didn't doubt that that was really the case.

As he started up the car and put the keys in the ignition he could hear Jack wriggling and twisting into a comfortable position without moving his lower body, every so often one of his gangly limbs would appear in the rear-view mirror before disappearing. Pitch smiled...waited...and then when he couldn't hear Jack's grunts, annoyed shifting and rushed, pained movement, he began driving at a slow pace – it'd be at least a full forty minutes at this pace...Pitch thought.

'One day I will not be nearly as fucking horrible with time as I actually am.' He thinks as he lets himself relax and pretend – if only for a moment that this is a leisure drive, that he doesn't have to actually talk about them and their relationship for now. This is just them enjoying the peace and serenity of a Monday morning.

"We need to talk." Jack repeats himself, knowing that his words are going to cut through the silence like a knife through butter – he breathes in just a little deeper.

"I suck with these types of things, you start." And like a robot taking and receiving orders Pitch begins to focus on the road and nothing else, even his voice carrying the monotone of something mechanical and non-human – though Jack fervently hopes that his ears are at least in working order.

"Well...first off...I talked to Mary about us, after what happened...you know I kinda – yeah..." An uneasy pause that waits for a response and instead only gets the smooth sound of motors turning and engines working as a reply. He continues regardless. "And you already told her not to tell, she tells me?" The question is awkward and strange when it leaves his mouth – he doesn't want it to sound like he is interrogating Pitch but at the same time, isn't that precisely what he's doing?

"Ah yes, remember when we kissed back at your house? She saw it, I explained it then."

"She saw that?" Its a rhetorical question but its filled with a sort of emotion that begs for response – unwilling to let Pitch actually answer though, he keeps on questioning. "So...your wrist?"

In the rear view mirror above and across from his head Jack can see half of Pitch's face – he can see the muscles in his jaw tense and squeeze together, his black brows furrowing downwards and the splash of bright color – his tongue once again – revealing itself for a half-second to swipe over dried lips.
And that's almost all of the answer he feels like he needs or even wants to know. But he knows better then to just let something as serious as this get pushed under the rug – particularly something as frightening as Pitch attempting suicide.

'But how on Earth do I actually confront him about it?' Jack doesn't want to make Pitch feel...upset or pressured to somehow change or modify his behavior. "Umm...I just want to say that you, I mean we-"

"I understand." Pitch says and leaves it at that.

"Alright..." Jack blinks rapidly, unsure of whether or not he really should take Pitch's word for that – he wants to let things just lie, he wants to believe that the fight just never happened and that scab wasn't there, practically parading in front of his face.

He didn't want to think they had problems or that anything had ever gone wrong between them, that everything in their relationship was really 'OK' and not some faked fragile mask of 'OK' that made them put on fake smiles when need be.

He didn't want to be his parents.

With a rapid shake of his head as if denying the entirety of what the relationship between his parents were, he continued speaking. "How long will the doctor's note get me off?"

"About three days, maybe. Including today – think you'll be okay and ready to head back to school by Thursday?"

Jack anxiously tested himself, intentionally moving his lower body in places were he had previous felt pain and then released a groan of immense displeasure, heavy huffs coming through his nose while Pitch had to glance away from the mirror and focus on the road to cease the guilty feeling in his heart.

As he reclaims his position on the couch with immense hope that Pitch doesn't see the embarrassing wetness nearing the corners of his eye, his tears leaking from the pain alone, he briefly whispers. "Not sure."

"Try your best to relax for now – after we get to the school and you give them your doctor's note I'll take you wherever you want."

"Really?" Jack pushed himself up off the seat by just a few inches – making sure none of his movements agitated his soreness any further.

"Really?" Jack pushed himself up off the seat by just a few inches – making sure none of his movements agitated his soreness any further.

"Yes..." Pitch's voice abruptly went from an emotionless tone to a perplexed and confused one – Jack's voice was so suddenly bright and light-hearted that he couldn't help but hear the slightest hint of Seraphina's enthusiastic, German-accented vocals."Wherever you want." Appearing the end of the sentence and vanishing without a trace, Jack swore he could hear a hint of something...less then positive, but he chose to dismiss it – he already pried enough into Pitch's business for today, at least by his own standards.

He lets himself relax a bit more at hearing the silence return, relishing in the lack of awkwardness he feels with it and then feeling a small wave of somber delight in it. He and the deafening silence that usually seemed to rear its ugly head in his life very so often was slowly converting from an aggravating enemy that appeared between words and conversations into strangely comfortable bedfellows.

Pitch awakens him from his reverie, standing above him and gazing down at his facial features with a
level of intrigue that almost sent shivers down Jack's spine – there was something hidden and forbidden behind it...something incredibly alluring to the younger male. "We're here. It's about lunch time..."

Jack sits up and looks left and right, unsure of when the car even came to a stop before he exits with a groan, appreciatively grabbing the doctor's note of stress from Pitch's hand in passing – whispering a 'thanks' as he moves – and shuffling his way up onto the sidewalk and into the school.

He leaves the place with a major headache currently storming its way through the center of his skull, leaving a line of chaos and pain in its wake. He groans appreciatively to Pitch as the door is pulled open wide for him to enter – instead of crawling in like before he chooses to quickest way possible: literally collapsing into the vehicle and clawing his way deeper within.

"Are you alright?"

"No. Shut the door and take me back to the cafe now..." His speaks with his voice, only slightly veering off impatient monotone into anger. Pitch takes the hint and closes to the door while Jack reminds himself exactly why he hates school so much.

"I don't suppose you had a good time in the...ten minutes you were gone." His tone is sharp and carried a light weight of comedy – obviously poking fun at whatever hellish cacophony of sound Jack had to deal with inside.

"Let's just say there's a reason you keep the stereotypical 'obnoxious cellphone slut' out of schools...and hopefully homes." With a pained sigh he frowns inwardly, he can sense it as Pitch's laugh comes from the front seat – its half-muted, he wants to actually laugh but restrains himself for his lover's sake. "Maybe countries even." He continues with a grin, loving how it seems to make Pitch's smile widen and his face look a few years younger.

"I hear you – I've had to be the victim of more then a few of those myself." Pitch gives a healthy chuckle as he turns the car around and starts again for home.

"During your job sessions?" Jack smiles and gets comfortable on the seat, happy to feel his body relax into the seat and his lower half cease to torture him, if only temporarily.

"Oh of course – most of them having to do with absolutely fucking nothing." There's a distinct hiss in his voice before he hushes himself, making more noise in that sentence then he meant to – he didn't want to aggravate Jack's headache.

"I'm sure...most conversations they have don't." Jack says, feeling himself begin to nod off into a state of sleep – he almost considers telling Pitch to take him elsewhere but decides against it, preferring getting Pitch to buy him a cup of coffee to sleep. Pitch doesn't continue the conversation and all Jack does for the next five minutes is tiredly pick at his nails until he feels the car come to a halt.

He gets up, stretching out the soreness in his upper back but simultaneously giving birth to new pains lower down that make him release a grunt of ire. Pitch gladly opens the door for him and leads him into the cafe, helping Jack shift comfortably into a seat – with much hissing and biting of his own lips in agonizing displeasure.

"I'll be right back, don't go anywhere." Pitch says, doing a light and charismatic bow towards him and smiling as he turns to leave.
"Where could I go and why would I want to move?" Jack yells after him, half thankful that Toothiana only blushes embarrassingly when she realizes what more then likely caused his injuries. "And where are you going?" More seething ire, more caused by the needle-sting like pain making its way up his spine then any spark of anger.

"I'll be right back, I promise." Pitch waves from the other side of the glass window as he enters his car once again.

Jack watches him go wishfully wanting to be in his arms once again despite his injuries during sex last night – and feels a heavy wave of lust wash over him as he remembers the details, eyes glancing over and missing the familiar face that appears at the doorway and not seeing it until he's too late.

And as they enter and he at last notices and the room seems to almost freeze – there's something cold and calculating in his gaze as he approaches that gives the white-haired of the two pause and then the pause gives way to fear...

Jack prays to a God that he doesn't truly believe in, hoping Pitch returns soon.

"Oh hey..." A nervous and equally powerful shiver of terror slinks its way down each individual vertebrae of his spine and he lurches forward uncomfortably as the other man sits into the seat opposite him, the grin on his face promises nothing but negative outcomes.

"Hey Jamie...I didn't see you at school today..."

–

Chapter End Notes

Yeah I'm not dead - I have to say though that functions are a bitch in algebra. I also have to fix up a biology honor's project - luckily its just an essay.
I Hate Everything About You

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“Hey Jamie...I didn't see you at school today....”

The chuckle that leaves Jamie gives Jack such fright that he feels the wild animistic urge to run and flee as if he's being chased by a vicious predator. His survival instincts come ablaze but the slight ache in his lower body seems to know be like chains around his ankles, holding him there.

The only comfort he can allow himself is the knowing that Pitch is nearby or is at least coming back extremely soon. Every nerve ending on his body is screaming at him that something is offbeat and wrong with the 'friend' seated across from him but against his better judgment he decides that a conversation of any sort would be the best possible option.

“How's it going man?” He puts on a facade that he's practiced thoroughly within the past few years – complete calm with something angry and upset bubbling just beneath the surface. Jack pulls hands from the top of the table and into his lap where they clutch each other so tightly that it causes him momentarily physical discomfort. No part of him wants to be near Jamie right now – not even the nostalgic parts that remind him of their childhood together as friends.

“Oh, its good. I missed you too you know...” The smile grows wider and Jack shifts without meaning too. Beneath the table his foot bangs against Jamie's...and something so evil and strange happens that Jack believes it has to be some kind of satanic magical spell.

Jack is so terrified he doesn't even notice that he never one said he missed Jamie.

Jamie's eyes narrow and his gaze becomes more intense, eyes locking onto Jack like a cross-hair on a target and he lets out an obscenely loud purr.

“I-I'm sorry!” Jack quickly sputters out and then his instincts take over rational thought, he pulls his foot back so quickly that it slams into the wooden bottom of his seat with a painfully loud noise. He didn't even know what he was apologizing for but the sheer feeling, the fear of whatever was swimming around in Jamie's head right now, convinced him that he had done something utterly repulsive against his old friend.

“Oh it's fine milove.” Jamie's low, rumbling voice seems to almost try to beckon to the sexual side of Jack. He believes that the goosebumps that appear and prickle all over Jack's skin are the product of a success – but the truth is that Jack's body is reacting out of the sheer amount of disgust and fear he
feels flaring up in him.

At that point it becomes apparent to him that Jamie wants him, he wants to *fuck* or at least have a damn-close make out session in the bathrooms behind them. Possibly something even worse...

Jamie wasn't...actually...going to rape him.....

....was he?

“Umm...Jamie...” Jack's quavering hands return to the top of the table on instinct like this he feels as if he's more protected from Jamie's hands...but fear still burns underneath the surface. He takes the reprieve from talking that his own nervousness has allowed him and dedicates it to cursing his choice of position – in order to reach the door he'd have to pass by Jamie to escape. Jack hides his own lack of bravery and confidence by twiddling his fingers and trying to seem less awkward and frightened then he really is. “You do realize that I-I'm no longer interested in you?” He doesn't dare look up into Jamie's eyes and instead screws his own tight – but he can still *feel* how his old friend's gaze sweeps over him and becomes less sexual and transformed into something much more predatory.

It's as if there's some strange black hole sucking out all the happiness and safe comfort in the room and its located right inside of Jamie. Jack quickly glances around the room, the pounding in his chest is undoubtedly *deafening* and only grows louder as he realizes that Toothiana is gone and it's *lunch time* – the kids from his school or any neighboring school don't come until after three to four.

“You know Jack...” A taunting and daring note in the voice has Jack whirling around deciding that if Jamie attacks him at least he'll see it coming. “I never stopped loving you.”

Jack's breath catches and he looks away – Jamie's tone spoke of an entirely different type of love then anything he wanted or desired ever in his life but to remember *how* he used to want Jamie is enough to embarrass him, knock him off the infinitesimal amount of ground he was able to stand on to face Jamie.

“I held you at arms length and didn't touch after the kiss. Not because I didn't *want* you...no, no....” He lets his voice trail off and quickly sneaks a peek out the window – Pitch is nowhere in sight. With an abbreviated, intimidating chuckle he continues. “No darling, it's because I wanted you to come to me, *crawling*.”

Any sense of romantic intentions from his previous words are erased in Jack's mind – for a brief moment he believed that, just for a second...he actually still loved Jamie. Perhaps not the same type of romance and passion that he and Pitch shared but a love more in and from memory then anything else. He feels a wave of confusion launch itself at him and for a brief time he feels disoriented. 'Do I really love Pitch, or do I love Jamie- or....how Jamie and I used to be?'

“Little one...” The way Jamie hisses his name forces him to look up with shivers of fear slinking their way up and down his spine and without a second thought he retracts, back towards the window as the brown haired stalker gives him an up and down glance. “I could make you *scream*, if you'd like. Scream so loud the whole world could hear.”

Jack doesn't know what to say or how to react – running out of the cafe screaming bloody murder wouldn't do him any good and Jamie was still sitting closer to the entrance. What if he was grabbed mid-dash? How would he escape?

“No...thank you...” Jack's eyes are unfocused as his hands move in undecipherable patterns and
waves in a hopefully attempt to try and magic away this entire conversation. “I would rather, not be screaming at all?” The edge of his notes make the phrase seem more question-like then he was pleased to admit but feeling too awkward and terrified to run away didn't give him time to spend chastising himself for it.

From the corner of his eye he sees Pitch, walking up the block with an unassuming and absent minded smile – ‘perfect timing!’. Jack stalls for time, rubbing one hand over the other and making a plea to God that Jamie will back the hell off after seeing his larger, taller, incredibly timely boyfriend approach. He makes mindless conversation with his mouth running faster then he ever thought possible, the skin of his body prickles with static caused by the sheer friction of Jamie's words against him. There was no doubting it now, no just rubbing it off – Jamie was a creeper.

He continually refocuses his eyes on Pitch, hoping that Jamie actually pays attention and stop making entirely frightening comments on his body and strange sexual promises.

By the time the tall dark figure finally makes it to the door and comes in Jack thinks he could just dash over and jump into his arms for solace and protection – the amount of nervous fear running through his body isn't a thing he's actually been subjected to before but it is similar to that of his father's; it's crippling strong and not a force he wants to reckon with.

Pitch at last re-enters the establishment with a surprise in his hands that Jack knows is not only meant for him but can serve as a life saver to get him out of Jamie's clutches.

He runs over to Pitch, nearly tripping over one of the small seats that sit near the counter of the diner and leaving Jamie stuck and stuttering in the middle of his overly-sexual statement about how the white of Jack's hair would match perfectly with some white splattered onto his face.

Pitch looks down at him with concern in his eyes, large hands gripping around the bouquet of various shades of bluish-white. Jack tries to telegraph his current situation while he grabs the bouquet away with greedy hands and turns back to Jamie – pulling a now increasingly confused Pitch along with his free one. “Oh Jamie, there's someone I'd really like you to meet.”

Needless to say that the current situation became more and more clear to Pitch as he approached (was pulled) towards the sneering and venom gazed young man sitting directly across from where Jack was only just sitting moments ago. “Ah, the corrupter.”

'….I'm not even going to glorify that with any response of 'what the fuckin' hell?'.’ Pitch resolved as Jack pushed himself into the window seat and narrowly avoided slamming his boyfriend's head on the table while forcing him to sit down as well.

“Jamie.” Pitch wanted to vomit as he listen to Jack go on – his voice sounded like that same too-sugary-to-be-real, overly welcoming, near Stepford Wife level of excessively happy and welcoming tone. “This is my boyfriend Pitch.” The overly stressed usage of the word 'boyfriend' lingered on Jack's tongue, not only letting Pitch know exactly what was going on before he entered the room through overly plastic, practiced Ken-doll smiles and murderously happy tones. “Pitch, this is my friend Jamie Benette.”

“That's must be a damn shame…” Jamie said, legs cross underneath the table as he leaned back and slung his arm over the seat. “Getting shagged by someone with a fucked up, lusterless onyx stalagmite for a haircut.”

“...Well, hello there Jamie.” Pitch decided that Jamie must've been the type of person who only acted like a fucking ass-bag because no one shoved a foot up his ass before. He decided he'd leave that to someone with a little bit more weight behind their punches and copied Jack's attitude of entirely and
plainly feigned happiness. “It's nice to meet you. I'm Pitch...I'm a...close friend of Jack's I suppose we should say...”

Jamie couldn't seem to give less fucks. “That's nice? Can we talk about something a tad bit less boring? Perhaps about the rather dull weather we've been having lately?” His lips pursed as he glances down at his nails with a mock expression of surprise.

Pitch's teeth grit inside his mouth and he immediately dropped his sugar-sweet act. “Well we could talk about how you've been stalking the both of us – primarily Jack.”

Jamie's eyes went from bored and inexpressive to a focused wariness, eyes growing increasingly narrow as the brown irises sped back and forth between the two. His voice starts out a shaken, hurried mess. “If your accusing me of stalking...”

“We know you are.” Pitch says, allowing his head to drop to the side and rest against Jack's overly tense shoulder – both an expression of his own exhaustion and to try and loosen his little lover up just a tad.

He sucks his teeth and sneers. “You’ve got a lot of nerve – rubbing up against my boyfriend like that...”

Pitch slowly absorbs that before his eyes drift upward to get a good look at Jack's face, one of appalled shock, then comes back down and settles on Jamie once again. “Well...he's yours?”

“Yes.”

“Well I suppose you should know – he's with me now.” And no one else was the unspoken second statement.

“Oh you two haven't been secretive at all about your relationship...which reminds me.” His self-righteous sneer returns with a fire in his eyes that melts the plastic face right off Jack. The young white-haired high-schooler can tell now; Jamie's changed and the 'Jamie' he's looking at now – the one he has become – isn't his friend. “How old are you again?”

“Old enough to tell you that you should probably stop stalking Jack...” He ended with a dangerous note.

Jamie gaped, verging on response when Jack seemed to wake up from his stupor of shock and insincere hospitality. “Jamie, leave.” He didn't think he sounded half as stern as he really did until he looked at Jamie's face – a shocked, wide eyed stare.

Jamie sat there for a moment, worryingly considering his next action until he sucked his teeth and rose, stomping out of the store and throwing out a meaningless comment of 'whatever!' as he left.

Jack sat there for a moment, rubbing his hands together and taking this moment to both revel and despise the return of the silence – it came too often and everything felt awkward and weird when it came. He chanced a sneaky glance towards Pitch whose eyes slunk to the side, attentively watching Jamie continue to stalk away from the cafe.

'Great...I know his baggage and he knows mine.' Jack thought, attempting to make the best out of a bad situation – the last thing he expected was Jamie to not only know about their relationship but to have the brass balls to try and go up against Pitch with threats and insults and sure, Pitch wasn't a naturally dangerous person to Jack's knowledge, but that didn't change the fact that he had gray skin and was bordering on potentially seven feet tall.
“You know at that stalagmite line I thought I was going to lose the wit race but as it stands I had a little bit more bite in my repertoire...” Pitch sucks his teeth sarcastically and throws Jack a grin. “I could've taught him so much.” It's a change of conversation, a reason to smile despite the weirdness that just occurred...

Jack took it and ran with it while he scratched the back of his neck right below the hairline. “So you're the principal of the Burgess school of creepy, stalkerish assholes?” He wishes he could pull that sentence back into his mouth but he can't – it leaves him in an angered tone and Pitch gazes at him briefly, worried.

“Well...we went over the whole me sitting near the window and conveniently watching you head to and from school everyday.” Pitch says, looking away and unintentionally mirroring Jack's movement when he also scratches the back of his own neck in a movement of obvious nervousness.

'Yeah we need to leave'. Jack sighs aloud and abruptly gets up from his seat. “...Fuck it. Let's just go home.”

—
Chapter Summary

Ever wonder what it was like to live in Jamie's household?

Well. Here you go.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for lateness, I have an honors project in chemistry that's due by next year, it's been drawing me as far away from writing as I can get. Sorry.

Enjoy this chapter.

Pitch decides to not make Jack worry about the task of calling his parents to explain why he wasn't at school today and instead rings them up himself, seating himself on the empty couch downstairs with the serene calmness of a slow evening setting in. His jacket was discarded in places unknown to even him – he never was too good at keeping his house entirely clean.

As the phone rings he double checks the stairway, making sure Jack really is asleep upstairs – he knows that his young lover has no real reason to have to spy on him, at least not a reason he's aware of, but he also knows how annoyingly curious younger people can be.

'Hello?'

Katherine. “Ah, hello there Katherine-” He stops himself for an instant and thinks of a more appeasing thing to say then just immediately jump into the issue. “It's Pitch, just called to say hi and ask how life has been treating you these past few days?”

'Oh, thanks – it's good to hear from you...Life's been..' Under the cheeriness that was always so sickeningly normal for Katherine there was a twinge of a new emotion he hadn't heard from her before – something not so cheery nor friendly. She pauses in-between her words and takes in a stressed intake of breath... 'Good.' A short sigh before continuing in a tone that betrays her statement. 'Life's been good.'

Pitch admitted that he was a bit worried – if only by the proxy of being Jack's lover and therefore worried about what he may soon have to go home to once his parents began giving a shit about where he went and what he did with his free time, which was unlikely to occur but still a very distinct prospect. “Good to hear...how's Mary?” He asks as an afterthought – he didn't think Katherine and William had done anything to Mary but their awkward level of positive parental behavior as of late combined with the fact that Katherine's voice sounds suspiciously frantic and uneasy bring up a level of caution in him he hasn't felt since he discovered his ex-wife tried to kidnap his daughter.
'Oh she's fine, sleeping right now. Went out like a light after dinner...'

“Ah alright that's good to hear.” It didn't sound like a bullshit cover story, at least. He took comfort in the fact that Katherine cared about her children's physical safety despite not appearing to give two shits about the emotional side. “Well...” He decides he's grabbed all the information he can out of Katherine tonight and proceeds to pass out the message he was intending to all along. “I'm sorry to say that Jack couldn't make it to school today – he got a little sick and so I let him stay here.”

He smiles a bit at that last statement, chuckling at the fact that he almost said home and not here.

He considered his place, his house, to be Jack's home... 'as it rightfully should be!' He assured himself and continues to bring his conversation with Katherine to an end – beyond cheerful to hear that there is no hint of suspicion, questioning or doubt in her voice about his actions or about his relationship with Jack.

--

As Pitch considers retiring to his bedroom to sleep out the few remaining hours of the night with his beloved little snowflake (for some reason he decides to pick up the habit of mentally calling him that, thanks due to how befitting it is) he thinks back, almost immediately, to the brown haired nuisance of Jamie.

Jamie Benette.

A future pain in the ass if he ever got to know one.

“Pitch, this is my friend Jamie Benette.” That sentence just reeked of a want for Jamie to back the fuck off – but the arrogant snot didn't seem to take a hint, or just refused to. Either way before he knew it he found himself squeezing his half-filled cup of cold coffee to the point where both of his hands began aching in protest.

Loosening his grip his hands detached themselves from his mug and back onto his phone as he curled up on the couch, quickly becoming a black splotch and stain on the surface of it with as angry glare focused on a segment of wall he chose at random. He quickly dialed the number he knew by heart and bounced in place in a fit of nervous ire as the phone rang....and rang....and rang...

Until it was picked up.

The user on the other side let out an absurdly loud sigh and a loud beeping noise was heard – and Pitch felt all his worries slide away, discarding the phone immediately and letting his eyes glaze over the canvas of the room until he spotted his own coat...

Then he retrieved his phone from the coat pocket and proceeded to send the now awakened Sanderson the message. 'Sorry for calling you so late.'

'No you aren't.'

'You and I both know that I don't call you this late for common chatter – I know the heights of your anger for not getting your sleep Mr. Sandman.'

Sanderson was disquieted but understanding. It wasn't often that someone like Pitch who knew him well enough to phone him in the middle of the night instead of text and wait until morning in an emergency would call this late at night, regardless of what was occurring in their lives, meaning that this was actually a real emergency.
'You know I fucking hate that name Mr. Boogeyman...I don't suppose that this is just for anything though so I won't fall asleep on you for at least the next...seven minutes.'

'Good to see he doesn't hate me.' Pitch mused and released a tiny sigh – he couldn't say he agreed with Sanderson's statement though. He knew it was probably more anger and hate coming through and fueling his current actions rather then any actual sort of professionalism.

'I need you to see if you have info, through law, mental care or psych evaluations for a boy named Jamie Benette.'

'I trust you but you know I can't pull out random people's files without a good reason.'

'I believe he could be physically dangerous to his friends, family and the people around him. I need to know what angle I should be tackling this from.' That was halfway a load of bull – he had no real physical evidence that the boy was of any danger to his family or the people around him, save for Jack, and he knew for sure that was only his over-protectiveness shining through his logical mind.

Still he had to get some type of level of leverage to understand him – something just seemed off about his overall.

'Alright, I'll have the info in a few...god you're lucky I can't be bothered to sleep in a place that isn't my office.'

'One more favor Sanderson – please don't kill me for this.'

'The plea for me to not kill you is already considered a favor. What the fuck do you want?'

Sanderson always knew when he was going to be incredibly unreasonable. 'I need you to send the physical copies of said files to me.'

'I will hang you.'

'Yes. You will. And I'll love you for that.'

–

Jamie huffed as he finally walked back through the door of his own home. The present and ever growing mess of ruined, beat up and half-broken down furniture, the broken and un-fixed or properly cleaned up 20 inch television lying on the floor with its glass face littered around its bent body and the distinct lack of any 'homely' feeling stared him in the face.

He ignored it and made his way to the kitchen, trekking dirt from outside onto an even dirtier dark cream colored carpet.

Which was funny, because he distinctly remembers it once being white. Without a single care in the world he discards the ruined bouquet that Jack so haphazardly discarded in his rush to get out of the cafe after he left – neither of them probably noticing the fact that he just waltzed back across the street from where he came, watched them leave and then returned after noticing the lack of flowers in Jack's hands.

Which seemed like a waste because despite Pitch's obvious lack of tact it really was a very nice gift for someone like Jack, the flowers matched the albino, snowy hair perfectly.

He leaned against the kitchen counter, picking up and taking a bite out of an apple he found nearby and ignored the fact that it was beginning to go bad.
Then suddenly, out of the corner of his eye the briefest flash of bright orange-reddish appeared and disappeared only to reappear once more, wearing the face of a familiar fuckup.

Jamie took a deep breath to brace himself – it never was easy when your dad was a complete fucktard.

“The least you could do is say you got home when you come in.” He grunts crudely and as Jamie listens to him 'speak' he wonders if this was how extraordinarily intelligent cavemen 'spoke' – they made some sort of tangible sense but didn't sound intelligent within the slightest.

“No, the least I could do was hope your ass burned in hell while I was gone.” With the smarmiest of smiles he could conjure he took another bite of his browning apple and watched that familiar flash of choler reappear on his father's face.

“Don't get my hopes up, I'm still stuck with your fucked up little ass until I die.”

“Which I will ensure occurs at the end of a knife that I hold.”

“Careful you little bitch, don't get screwed until you can't walk again.”

“You're my father – how could I get screwed over any harder by li-ugh.” A swift fist made its way across his face and his entire right cheek swelled up with pain from impact. His body fell backwards and he collapsed to the ground with apple still in hand. As he hit the ground by his lower body first he swore under his breath.

He wanted John to punch him so he hit the tiled marble floor of their kitchen head first then he could probably fall unconscious and not have to deal with his existence for at least a good fifteen minutes or so before shambling back to his room for the night, ending up looking like a zombie with a headache that could raise the dead. Aiming a venomous glare towards John he shrugged off the blow as if it was nothing, even as his face banged in an infuriated response to his refusal to cease chewing his apple, he wanted to know if he could possibly get his hands on a knife of some sort.

“See? This is why I ask you to fucking tell me when you come in. I get my hopes up that its going to be someone who isn't a complete fucking waste of space, then I see its you and get all upset.” John's voice was lighthearted and sweet despite his actions – he nearly sang his words as he gazes towards the still bruising face of his young son, rubbing the knuckles of his hand with a poisonously sadistic level of glee.

Jamie pushed himself up from the floor as sneered, half a mind to prod John's insides some more with his words and half a mind to just stomp the fuck out again and leave. The former option had a greater chance of making tomorrow’s day another hell of aches and pains but...

Shit, screw it. You're balls deep in your own fuck ups already. Piss him off. “Who were you expecting? Some woman who actually has the patience to deal with your bullshit?” And there it went – the guise of self-satisfaction that covered John's actions broke to reveal a stare of acidic disdain.

“Thank god Mom left your ass, I fucking forgive her for not taking us with her. We would've slowed her down! If I was her I would've done the same – hailed ass out as soon as fucking possible – wait NO...I wouldn't have even done the massive mistake of marrying your pathetic ass!” Jamie grinned and leaned back as John's brows furrowed down and his face twisted, reddening in hatred and anger that was almost unbecoming of him.

And then Jamie swore he hit heaven as the heavy crackling noise of John gritting and grinding his teeth he his ears – he could've continued here but he backed off, still in the process of brainstorming new material he could use to berate the man.
“The best part of you slithered down your whore of a mother's throat you little shitbag.” John spat as he closed the short distance between him and Jamie in one long, threatening step.

Jamie felt the acid rise in his throat and then hesitated to throw another insult – if he was actually going to start this, he doubted that he'd actually get out of it without having to go upstairs and get his own version of a fix. At the same time, this was the only way he could ever struggle, ever show a measure of hatred that went beyond a simple glare – his offensive words were powerful knives and the only weapon at his disposal, who was he to not use them when the opportunity presented itself?

“Was that before or after you beat her? Raped her? Made her promise she wouldn't leave while you put a knife to her throat?” His brown eyes burrowed their way through the center of his father's skull – if there was any glare that could kill the man, this was it.

And clearly it had an effect. For an instant, John's eyes widened and he stepped back in shock of what he had just heard. Then his hands snaked their way around Jamie's throat like a boa constrictor around prey, blocking his breathing as he screamed. “I didn't fucking rape your mother!”

“You might as...well have!” Jamie screamed back, hot tears streaming their way down his face and traveling well known trails over his cheeks. His unintentionally long nail scratched at his father's hands with near violent intent and he coughed and sputtered for breath. Every gasp was a strained and pained gesture and every moment went by in a flash...

Until John decided he'd inflicted enough pain and dropped him to the floor were he stood, his own tears beginning to peek through the sides of his eyes.

“I didn't rape Selena.” He said quietly, storming out of the kitchen and leaving his son behind, shutting off the light behind him as he left.

“What about me then?” Jamie asked, half-rhetorical and half-broken as he dug his nails into his apple and shrugged himself off the floor.

–

Upstairs Sophie could hear the comforting and familiar sound of her father storming his way upstairs and stopping at the top of the steps for just a second only to turn around and enter his own room. The slamming of the bedroom door behind him was always Sophie's cue that everything was okay now, all the fighting had ceased....temporarily at least.

It was an easy to read pattern – he knew that it was about every two to three days when he'd be bent over his bed like a willing slut and receiving a pounding from the person he hated most in the world. Anyone with a brain could see it and tell en-sight that Jamie was someone's whore and everyone at school played the guessing game as to who was the main cause of it, much to Jamie's expense nonetheless – which only served to anger him even more.

He didn't want to shuffle like someone has shoved a rod up his ass and thoroughly fucked him but that was just what had happened – and continued to happen to this day. Not that his classmates cared much as even when he was minding his own business, standing in line to get lunch at school he could hear his classmates chattering voices flying back and forth in excited whispers.

'Jamie's obviously gay and taking it-

'I wonder who it is!'

'What a whore, dating Jack and fucking someone else'
'You think its Jack?'

'I can't see Jack topping Jamie, Jack's too bitchy'

'Careful! He can hear us...'

Jamie was outraged with hands often balling at his sides and tears held back only by sheer force of will and hate. He couldn't pull his bravery up from the hidden well inside of him – his father made sure to destroy such a thing on a regular basis – and hence couldn't answer or face them, embarrassment sealed his mouth shut and the raw fear of what new hell his father would create if he dared to try some other way to escape reinforced it.

But there was one way he could resist – and that was by not resisting it. John loved the struggle and the thrill of forcing him down onto his hands and knees, pinning him in a painful position to the ground and making him beg for it against his own will.

And so...

Jamie just stopped fighting.

And the rapes got less and less frequent.

Then he would get the urge to fight again on those rare occasions when they did happen and for awhile it actually seemed to work – Jamie would kick him away and force him to actually keep his distance. Sure, he didn't have much hand to hand combat training but he had anger, he had the rage needed to actually do damage to both someone else and himself and not regret a single bit of it.

Things got better.

People stopped talking shit about Jamie behind his back. Their father would leave the house more often – leaving them to their own devices and doing whatever the hell he wanted, which they didn't care for as long as it was a good distance away from them. Their mediocre grades got better, everyone started getting happier and Jamie even got to kiss Jack.

Everything was looking up – sort of. As up as they could look for a family of three with an abusive father figure included.

Then John just ruined it all with a single threat that Sophie figured herself unlucky enough to hear.

'If I don't get you, I take your sister.'

And then he just lost almost all will to physically fight – he'd scream, he'd kick, he'd argue and constantly insist to John that he raped their mother, Selena, but he wouldn't fight anymore. The frequency of the rapes stayed down – only one within the past month but when they happened Sophie had to cling to her pillow and scream into it, pull it over her head and pretend not to hear. Like a little kid being afraid of lightning.

Because Jamie loved her, as his little sister, and was more then willing to throw himself under the bus in order to protect her.

And it was killing her.

She couldn't take anymore of his sacrificial bullshit love that made him into a martyr she didn't feel like she needed – she didn't want to be raped but she didn't want to feel the guilt eating away at her insides whenever she looked at him or heard his voice. She felt she might as well have been the one
raping him and destroying him because Jamie wasn't *fighting*, he wasn't trying to survive anymore, like mom tried. He just let things happen around him and barely reacted – she missed, and still does miss, the Jamie that tried to live and conquer over their father more then she appreciated the heroic Jamie that suffers and lets himself by dominated by circumstance.

So she stayed away unless Jamie specifically needed and searched for her.

Then one day...Sophie saw Jack flirting with a gray skinned weirdo and took a picture – figuring that if anyone needed to know about those two it was Jamie, after that she would catch them around town being none-too-secretive about their relationship but people didn't pry or bother to gossip and no one went to the police regarding the couple thanks to Pitch's weird skin tone and plain lack of interest inflicting a level of bystander effect by anyone smart enough or attentive enough to figure it out.

But after Sophie sent Jamie that first picture the elder brother almost *demanded* she got more of the odd couple and so everywhere she saw them she'd snap a picture and send it to Jamie – it was the least she could do. It alleviated the guilt even when she knew it wasn't healthy for him it just...made it go away just a little bit. It curved the pain she felt.

Was it the savior he needed? No. Definitely not. They both needed someone to save them from John and information about Pitch and Jack and what they were doing was definitel not it but on the other hand it was something Jamie wanted beyond seemingly anything else.

The least Sophie figured she could do was give him that much of a crutch to grasp and cling to if he was going to keep martyring himself.
Wake Up And Smell The Millennium

Chapter Notes

Song is Wake Up And Smell The Millennium - this chapter isn't so much 'happy' so much as 'early morning work', which I kinda get from this song so I thought it'd fit.

Probably doesn't though and I don't suggest listening to it while reading this.

Also, today's the first day of my Christmas break and so we'll temporarily be returning to the one chapter per Friday schedule. So if you aren't getting any gifts this year, this is my gift to you!

Happy Holidays!

Pitch bends over in his home office chair and lets a wave of self-absorbed melancholy drench him as the machine besides him nosily complains and proceeds to print out numerous important papers and notes of information. All the information Sanderson needed him to receive or messages Pitch had specifically requested to be sent to his home for further investigation were sent here by fax, phone or e-mail. It was quickly smashed together using cheap, half-assed equipment and was really the only room in the house he didn't clean all the time...only because of the memories it held and the fact that it was the one room he'd have no reason to randomly throw items around in.

The makeshift but still sufficient office room was built approximately around the time he and Seraphina were beginning to settle out their morning routine. He recollected when he was first using this room – ears peeked open as he worked quietly, just able to hear her practicing her English and math with her at-home tutors...he shudders and can feel a minute but precious part of him break down in a sluggish, torturous but familiar and almost comforting way.

And for once in the past few years it doesn't hurt as much as he would've expected. For that he silently sings praises to Jack's name, his curious nature forcing his ears to perk to listen once again, not for Seraphina's English lessons but for the steady, monotonous and even breathing of Jack Frost in the opposite room. From his chair in the office he could easily see and hear Jack – white messy hair barely peeking out amongst raised blankets...and then he catches himself...

The silence takes over again...and the guilt settles in, forcing him to avert his eyes from the bedroom door to the stairs, remembering distant painful memories that he feels almost honor bound to have – like harrowing, echoing phantom pains on limbs he doesn't miss...but feels compelled to feign desire for.

He stops his mind in his tracks, kicking the door shut without removing himself from his seat. Things had changed drastically over the course of the past few weeks, for all of them...Seraphina included. Feeling the beginnings of mental anguish settling in with frightening speed, he stops his spinning and glares at the fax machine...and all the mountain of paper forming from it.

'Only Sanderson could be this through with his work...' Pitch thinks with a half-happy expression – while he's thankful for Sanderson's incredible work ethic and gusto he can't help but feel his guilt begin to morph into a strange sense of self-judgment that nips at the heels of his morals with relentless conviction.
Jamie – strictly speaking – hasn't quite proved himself to be a physical threat to anyone besides Jack and perhaps Mary by extension, assuming that Jamie would ever dare go that far. Pitch quietly admits that his view is not only skewed but...biased. He is treating a child – who he should and perhaps even legally must help – like a wanted criminal.

Then he feels even worse for only having these feelings now instead of before in the cafe. It was obvious – Jamie wasn't dangerous and that wasn't an attempt to get Jack's attention.

That was a cry for help if he'd ever seen one.

Pitch's golden eyes scan the room around him again, thinking of retrieving the phone and calling Sanderson.

He couldn't take Jamie himself, he had emotional investment in Jack and the young brunette's flirts has hit far too close to home.

But then...

maybe...?

What would be the point of forcing all of Sanderson's work to go to waste? Could he not take the initiative here and do it alone. He realizes in a haze that he was almost feel a small girl's little hands pushing at his back, pushing him forward into the deed.

Like Seraphina wants him to help Jamie on his own. Why get the police involved after-all? It's not like he did it with Jack and look how fine he turned out.

Pitch keeps his ears open and keened for the sound of any movement in the neighboring room, his bedroom. Jack still hasn't roused himself from his sleep and the sun is making its routine crawl into the sky. The clock on the desktop in front of him reads that its only fifteen past six but Pitch feels as if it could be around three, maybe three thirty.

'I need to go back to work eventually...' He thinks tiredly as the machine spits out the last of the paper and allows himself the faintest moment of foolish belief that Seraphina's hands are really there, pushing him forward to help Jamie.

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To say that the 'file' was long would be an understatement and to claim that Jamie Benette was and is a mess would be putting things extremely lightly in Pitch's case. To begin he had no mother to speak of – she'd left while he was very young after repeated calls to the police stating that both herself and her children were being physically and verbally abused by her husband. There was no sign of anything ever being done to help her or the children in the matter aside from divorce papers that were never mutually agreed upon or even signed by her husband and neighbors report of her stomping up the block with two large bags in hand, mascara dripping down her face as she made her way out of the 'home'.

Ever since the day of her leaving there's never been any sign that she's been back.

'Can't say I can really disagree with her choice...' Pitch sighed in bitter nostalgia to the weeks and months he spent searching for happiness in multiple lovers, mind unwillingly flashing back to his own first abusive partner – some brown haired, brown eyed creep with a kink for asphyxiation and the inability, or at least lack of care, for someone's mortality. It grew all the more surprising that he only revealed it after Kozmotis had hesitantly agreed to allow him to adorn him with restraints. Had it not been for a flash of a powerful and inspiring want to live that turned into the strength to tear off
one of the bindings, fight to man off and then run away he would've gladly let him slaughter him.

With another short breath he pressed his hands against his temple, mind wandering in a million different directions at once. One way to Katherine, one back to his own past of jumping bed post to bed post and another of what 'Selena Benette's' life might have been like before she gathered the courage and emotional strength – if not the sheer rage – to leave.

Forcing himself to read onwards he glazed over the file of 'John Benette', Jamie's father. 'The apple never does fall quite that far from the tree...' He had trouble in school when he too was younger, lived in an abusive and horrible home, later on took on alcohol to help drown out the sounds of his problems – once again another thing that sent Kozmotis' mind up gathering memories of his own time spent drunk out of his mind...and to William.

He blinked harshly, growing increasingly uncomfortable with the people he'd become embroiled with. It seemed to all just be the same, disgusting thing left and right. Abusive husband, depressed children, disconnected and beaten wives.

He took a few minutes to separate himself before continuing...

John was probably beating Jamie and his little sister in between drunken, increasingly violent rages – Kozmotis swore that if William appeared in the back of his mind again he would actually become violent himself - for a while until the police made it extremely clear the he was not to do that. Then he just switched to drugs of a more dangerous variety and let himself go until he ended up in the hospital with a pump down his throat.

Hysterically enough to Kozmotis, out all of his illegal activity including hard drug use and alcohol abuse John not only had a seemingly legitimate business but valid license to actually sell alcohol. Though he didn't doubt that eventually he'd come across from information about suspicious drug dealings or something of the sort happening in the area, it was depressing to think that for some reason some one in their right mind gave that man a license to actually legally sell alcohol – so more then likely he was still drinking.

And really, the list just kept going. Fights at school, fights at home, fights at the hospital of all places, stealing, robbery, death threats both for Jamie and from him – come to find out Jamie made a habit of keeping Jack's other friends as far away from him as humanly possible.

The sheer number of physical fights just screamed a massive alert to Pitch and luckily enough as he was sorting through all the information he found something important and incredible that drew his eye...

Jamie's mother's cellphone number.

Now that, that was a real eyebrow raiser. Not only was the years-old phone still active from the looks of the file in his hand but Jamie's mother might actually still be in contact with the abused abusive teen.

He couldn't resist the urge to try and call it, see if Jamie's mother would pick up and pay him some attention and heed his words. Maybe he could get Jamie out of his own situation, save another kid, feel just a tad bit more 'redeemed' and alleviated of some of his guilt?

Considering the risks and rewards...it was too worth it to not take the plunge and try. He gripped his phone tightly in his hand, thoughts of Seraphina and his own lack of ability to protect her from danger outlining even the faintest, half followed through thoughts. He dialed the number so fast he feared he might've gotten it wrong...
It rung...
and rung...
and rung...
Nothing.

'Damn it.' Kozmotis typed in the numbers again and prayed quietly...

It rung...
and rung...

And then it stopped without reminding him that no one picked up...someone had actually picked up and answered the phone. He stared at it in a state of shock before pulling it up to his ear and testing...

"Ms. Benette?" He hoped that if she really was the one on the other end...she wouldn't react negatively to that name. His mind drafted up and threw away more conversation options, words and un-needed pleasantries as his ears perked for a response...

And he hears a shallowness of breath, the faintest sound of a gasp, a pant and a squeal before he realizes that however is on the other end of the line isn't even remotely female.

'So, who the hell am I talking to now?' The voice was arrogant, sneering and snide and brought up an often re-visited feeling of spite in Kozmotis that he not only found unbecoming but sickening – he wasn't used to hating something so simple, so small as someone's mere tone of voice. Even worse was that it was becoming easier to just despise whoever had it or took it on from sheer tone of voice.

"I'm sorry, it's listed here that this Selena's cellphone." Certain notes of his voice edge with anger that he is heavily aware of but can't bring himself to stop releasing. Over the phone he can hear cries of mixed pleasure and pain – whoever is on the opposite end is actually having sex even while they are still holding the phone.

Or at least, they were until 'Selena' left his mouth. There was a long period of pause and then the ear-straining sound of metal and wood creaking, not the squeak of passionate thrusts but someone actually getting off the bed.

"Who...is this?" Now his voice carried the lightest hint of polite intrigue and confusion, any sort of scorn or ignorance that accented his tone was long gone.

Kozmotis considered the wide range of answers he could give, he could be frank and tell him straight up...or he could just not say anything at all. But he chose the greatest answer he believed he could give on such short notice. "I could ask you the same question."

Another brief pause and the ghostly sound of an escaped sigh before speaking a hushed 'Sorry, hun I gotta take this elsewhere.' Then footsteps down a hallway of what sounded like wood but could frankly have been anything from what Kozmotis was hearing. "Look...don't fuck around with me here, if you called for Selena I'm sorry, I can't help you – but if you know where she is I'd appreciate it if you actually helped me here."

'So he doesn't know...pity.' Pitch sit back, thumbing the edge of the desk with distaste. "If you know her and want to know where she is the least you could do is give me your name."

"It's Jonathan Benette. No 'h'."
'Ohh...shit just got a lot more complicated then it needed to be.' He mentally groaned and resisted the urge to blow out a buff of hot air. A light of burning anger was boiling in his stomach – although he fooled himself into believing that it was, instead, just a lack of food combined with exhaustion. "So you're Selena's husband?"

Long pause...no response.

Experience told him all he needed to hear.

"Ex-husband then, I assume." Kozmotis made sure to sound more concerned and sorrowful for him then he ever truly felt – in truth he couldn't help but simply be glad Selena was free of him...then his brain caught up with the fact and put two and two together: he was just busy screwing someone who wasn't his wife. "I just called to ask about anyone who might have seen her around recently, relative business, things of such a nature." He made it sound as if he had shrugged it all off but the sheer fact that Jamie was part of a fractured family that was not only trouble prone but had a father that probably went through a good many female 'friends' on a regular basis...

Jamie probably didn't have too many decent mother figures in his life.

"Relative business?" Jonathan asked, a short sniffle punctuating his question.

"Oh nothing major, a few family members of hers say she hasn't been seen a little while – it could be nothing considering she did have some vacation time from work but some people are getting a little worried, I'm sure you understand."

"I see. So you don't know where she is."

'Oh you drunkards keep surprising me with your sharpness.' He huffed out a chuckle. "Sorry, no. We're just looking around for her – sorry for leading you on."

"It's fine..." Considering the attitude he picked up the phone with, that was saying a lot.

"Well." Pitch began his conversational line for 'politely' hanging up the phone with practiced, smoothly paced ease. "I'm sorry to waste your time Mr. Benette. If you see her around don't hesitate to call me back through this same number."

"Alright..." Jon's voice was downcast and heartless, a sense of sadness and regret tipping the edges of his voice. "Nice speaking to you..."

"You as well, have a nice day-"

"Wait!" He yelled into the phone, voice hastier then any previous word before hand. "If you see her could...could you tell her that Jamie misses her?"

'Ooh lord almighty- Why do I get myself tangled in these situations?" He sighed aloud before once again feeling though familiar soft hands – pushing him forward once more. "Yes of course, do tell Jamie that I'll be sure to keep a watchful eye out for his mother." Before the man could say another word Pitch hung up the phone in record time – only to turn right around and throw the object in another direction.

Looks like he was embroiled into another child's life where, once again, the child wasn't the thing he had to fix...

Damn it.
Pitch had the precious, beautiful opportunity to wake a grumpy and still ass-sore Jack up from a restful night – the first attempt to wake up resulted in a bitch slap that dazed him until he saw that Jack was still resting. Pitch attempted once again and this time Jack opened his eyes, took one quick look around and said aloud 'Nope. Fuck this' then crawled and wormed his way back under the covers, a groundhog that decided 'Nope bitches, its still winter'.

The third time did just happen to be the charm, all it required was a half-still sleeping Jack to put his face above the shield of blankets to receive an ice cold cup of water that had Jack screaming and jumping from the bed on impact.

“Good morning!” Pitch yelled as Jack rose, still yelling but quickly catching on and giving Pitch the stink-eye for rousing him from his rest. “Rise and shine princess we've got a big day ahead of us!” He happily grasped Jack and hugged him in for a tight hug – Jack just growled in response.

“I have no school today and no job – I should not be awake this early in the morning.”

“Oh good! Because it just turned half past noon so you can be bothered to wake the fuck up.” His sugary sweet tone betrayed an underlying acidity in his words and he released Jack, giving him a 'gentle' pat on the head as he moved away, a rapid but smooth fluidity in his movement as he picked up a batch of clothes and dropped them onto Jack's head.

“You have the day off – Mary doesn't.”

Jack's breakfast had never gone down so fast before and he thought that he may have just caused himself internal throat damage because of it but before they were even able to rush out of the door Pitch's phone rang and his face grew marred with that same sense of otherworldly confusion that Jack could only guess was...

“They've decided that they are going to begin raising her now?” Jack said, arms folded and left eyebrow high. For them to pick up and take care of Mary not once but twice was either a 'safe week' that Jack was missing out on or some type of creepy coincidence.

“Yes...” Pitch lowered the phone and placed on the coffee table like it was cursed by an angry spirit, then stared at it with a dumbstruck gaze. “It appears miracles really do happen Jack.”

“Incredible.” Jack noted flatly with a snide smirk and discarded his coat and tossed it in a random direction with no care as to where it landed. “I'm half a mind to go there and see it myself, I'm surprised those...idiots are actually doing something now.” He said, gripping the couch for balance as he quickly ripped the sneakers off his feet.

Pitch considered murmuring a response but then sensed something weird about that statement, paused, thought again about what Jack just said and then gawked at him in shock. There wasn't any
mirth in what Jack had said, he was really insulting his parents...which was something Jack didn’t do unless he was speaking the truth.

Frankly speaking, it was more the fact that for once Jack didn't separate the two – often he had put Katherine on one side and William on the other, not giving any hint that this was an intentional decision. Jack's both calling them 'idiots' brought questions to mind. Was it an intentional choice to separate them? If so, why stop now and if not why was he so angry that he was, without realizing, forcing Katherine into William's boat?

'Pins and needles.' Pitch reminded himself with a careful rub of his neck, reminding himself that he – not Jack – had technically started the day on the wrong foot this time. He not only gotten himself secretly and illegally involved in Jamie's life but he also forcibly woke Jack up, even when he was more then likely still suffering injuries that weren't even his fault.

“Okay...Jack. Do me a favor and sit down for a minute.”

The teen looked at him curiously for a minute before directing his gaze to the sofa instead and shrugging off his suspicions – any sense of adrenaline from having to go get Mary must've quickly fizzled out of his system. “Can I just lay down though? My lower back doesn't wanna be friends with me for the moment.” Pitch nodded and sat near him, body tense and resting on the nearby recliner while Jack exhaled, lazily flopped down on the couch and sighed in rest.

The nearby windows allotted them some light blue early morning light, the paleness accentuated by the fact that early morning winters in Pennsylvania – in Pitch's experience at least – are hardly ever filled with any stand-alone vibrant color. It gave the room a pale and hushed tint as Jack rested on the sofa, hands folded onto his chest and eyes half closed.

“Alright...” Pitch mumbled, hands folded with only two fingers separate from the interlocked bunch pressed to his mouth. He puckered his lips as he thought about what he should say next. He hoped Jack wouldn't catch on to what he was doing, despite it possibly being extremely obvious - “Jack we need to talk.”

A single eye open with the other being rubbed – stuck closed with whatever gunk was left over from his rest last night. “’Bout what?”

“You seem...agitated.”

His eyes close again, his voice comes out like a rapid slur of words thrown together “Pitch – I'm very passionate about my sleep.” Pitch swallowed lightly - Jack's tone didn't give away whether or not that was the truth.

“It's just...” Technically speaking he knew was in no position to attempt to be Jack's therapist considering their relationship and he knew that he could be franker with Jack then most people his age because Jack was smarter and quicker to adapt then most. “You just insulted both your parents but you usually to stick to insulting only William.”

Jack's lips curled into a downwards arc and his eyes flashed open for a brief second before fluttering closed once again. He didn't say anything but instead turned away from Pitch, shoving his face into the crevice where the sofa's cushions formed a soft and cushy vertex with the back and arm.

Pitch frowned and crossed his legs, unsure whether he should be waiting for Jack to respond, apologizing for his earlier crude behavior regarding Mary's safety – although in retrospect he sees that his actions then had been more in anger from his situation regarding Jamie and his father then any sort of animosity towards Jack – or going upstairs and retrieving him a blanket.
Jack wasn't sure when he came to fully understand the subtle complexity of his situation regarding his parents, in fact he was pretty sure that he would never understand what was really going on between him, his mother and father and his little sister. They were all a tangled up mess of different interconnected issues, William's alcohol abuse, his intentional and still continuing want and success in disconnecting both him and Mary from his parents and his mother's way of releasing her own anger not withstanding.

But as he sat on the couch and stared at nothing with even less coming to mind, all he could think was that he just wanted everyone to be ok. He didn't want revenge, he didn't want to lose his parents, he didn't want anyone to have to lose anything from this. He wanted everyone to be happy, as childish and overly simple as it sounded but...the more he thought about it the more he came to see that eventually something was going to happen. There had to be a limit where enough was enough for someone in the equation.

And maybe today that 'something' had happened – Katherine and William were stepping up in their parental roles. Maybe they just snapped and woke up, maybe they decided that it was finally time to be parents.

Or maybe it was his separation – his refusal to speak or have contact with his family as of late that was helping them grow. They didn't need or have Jack to play twenty-four seven dad to Mary anymore and someone had to step up and do it. William must have realized...

“Jack?” Pitch's voice broke him from his daydreaming and he turned around in question. “Are you alright?”

“...Define alright?” It wasn't meant to be a joke, it really wasn't. But Pitch smiled lightly and let loose a small chuckle. Inside, Jack felt a twinge of something akin to anger and frowned disapprovingly, only to smile back after Pitch swallowed his laughter and gave him an apologetic look.

“I'm sorry but...you seem different all of a sudden.”

“I'm tired...” Jack shrugged him off but...he wanted to feel Pitch push at his boundaries and force him to open up just a little more – he wanted someone to crack his armor. He didn't want to have to open up for some over-emotional heart to heart for right now.

“Does it disturb you that your parents are taking care of Mary?”

“What do you mean by 'disturb'?” Jack turns around fully, his sleep already chased away from him thanks to his sudden burst of adrenaline at hearing Mary's name. The dull ache in his lower back however, had lessened in intensity – he felt like he could walk and run freely now.

“Do you feel like you're not needed in Mary's life for right now?”

'Well, look at that, your boyfriend is good at his job.' Jack took a deep breath and-

“Don't answer that if you don't want to.”

Jack closed his mouth and pushed himself up so that his upper body rested against the cushioned arm of the sofa, not directly looking at Pitch but straight ahead at a blank spot on the wall. “Is this how you treat your patients?”

“You're not my patient Jack – we're in a relationship.”

Jack almost excepted that for an answer – then he thought about it a little more...and sucked his teeth allowed with a roll of his eyes. “When's the last time you kissed me then?”
Pitch began to speak, stopped short and rose from his chair. Jack didn't even move his head to glance at him until Pitch was hovering over him, running a hand down his cheek and smiling down at him gently. “I apologize...”

Jack turned his head into the touch and savored it, the feeling of Pitch's skin against his...it was almost foreign to him even if he had touched him merely days prior.

“I haven't been in a relationship as intimate as this one before and...even worse, I've got the type of job where I need to know how people feel instead of just reading them. I know it's stupid Jack but if you need intimacy, you need to ask...” He leaned down and gave Jack a short peck – then gripped the edge of the chair to avoid falling when he got forced down by his shoulders into a deeper kiss that had both him and Jack hungrily licking at each others' lips.

“That- sounds – boring.” Jack declared in between obscenely wet kisses – overjoyed in the way his mouth began to taste faintly of Pitch, the well-known and reassuring peppermint aftertaste lighting sparks in his stomach.

“Then you can-” Pitch almost finished before Jack took the initiative on his open mouth and shoved his tongue instead greedily, his starvation of physical touch and love becoming more and more apparent to him the more he took from Pitch. He meant Pitch half way, his body raised slightly from the sofa and head up to meet him and take everything he could get but the angle was straining his body and he felt as if he was hurting himself.

He released the taller man and let his own body collapse back to the sofa, partly sated, blushing and breathless with a grin plastered on his face that almost hurt to have. “We...don't do that enough.”

“Not nearly.” Pitch exhaled and licked his lips hungrily, looking down at Jack. “Anyway, yeah...if you don't like asking for it you can always initiate. I'm not one to not want sex.” The truth of the matter was that Pitch actually wanted to get whipped off Jack but there were limits to how far he was willing to go in this relationship – fucking like pornstars could wait until after their second, non-sleepover, non-babysitters date.

“I want sex.” Jack said, unable to currently remember calling asking 'boring'. “But, it still hurts a little.”

“We can do other things if you don't want sex in particular.” Pitch shrugged and gazed to the steps – clearly thinking about the currently uninhabited bed.

“I...I kinda just want you to touch me.” Jack thought, halfway rising from the couch before Pitch intercepted him. Two large hands coming up to his inner shoulders and rubbing gently.

“Good.” Pitch lowered himself to Jack’s ear. “Because I want to touch you. Very much so. Oh Jack I just remembered how you were a real virgin until just recently – but even now don't know half of what I can do to you.”

The shiver that Jack felt trail up his spine felt like he was being freed somehow...”Show me.”

“After you.” Pitch happily gestured to the stairs...

Jack was surprised he didn't trip, as quick as he was running.

“You know Jack, there's eager and then there's you right now.” Pitch said, watching from the doorway and bridging his fingers to stretch them. He watched with a level of attention that was
nearly unbecoming of him as Jack shed his clothing from the doorway onwards, in a rushed silence. “Not that I mind.” He was sure that even if he did mind Jack would still be throwing his clothing off.

Jack crawled up and onto the bed, not denying the small part of him that told him he looked like an overexcited five year old on Christmas day trying to scramble and grasp at all his presents. “Okay so ummm, what do I do?”

“What do you want us to do? As I've said isn't necessarily the only thing you could ask for here – I'm all for whatever you want.”

Jack tried – he really did – but the hardening of his cock and stalwart refusal to bring up that he still wanted to give Pitch a blow-job from the porno he watched days ago. The stab of shame that came from it only helped him spit out a quick, “Whatever you want – I want you to do it to me, you promised after all.” as he made his way to the center of the mattress. He was out of sorts but still eager and open to feel – he felt starved from affection and touch. The kiss did nothing to stop that, in fact it only exasperated the condition, he felt like he wanted infinitely more of Pitch.

Pitch openly laughed and made his way to the bed, rapidly rubbing his hands together. “My darling, my love – ah, how long has it been since I've called you that last?” He grins. “It feels good to call you that – I don't call you that nearly enough.”

“No, you don't.” Jack says, resigning himself to laying in the middle of the bed, impatiently waiting. He doesn't want to rush this but he wants it to hurry up and start and it becomes increasingly apparent that Pitch is taking his sweet time.

The gray skinned of the two lovers sits on the side of the bed, raising his hand and beginning to have his fun. “First Jack...close your eyes. It's more fun this way.” Pitch briefly smiles at seemingly nothing as he hears Jack's breath grow heavier – though not to the point of being specifically noticeable.

'Now comes my favorite part...' He chuckles and lets out a heavy exhale. “Jack...oh my snowflake...my darling...” He starts with just a single, soft touch, trailing up Jack's arm, to his thin shoulder until it reaches the shell of Jack's ear. “I don't touch you nearly enough.”

“Not at all.” Jack whispers, turning his head to the sound of Pitch's voice. He feels tense, wrapped up and stretched too tight, like rope ready to snap at any given moment.

Pitch's touches are drawn-out and tempered, he's fully in control of his own libido and doesn't rush a single moment. He rubs his fingers over the skin of Jack's lower stomach, admiring the feminine curves that form on his body and the hairless of his skin.

Pitch briefly wonders why Jack hasn't matured to a state of chest-hair growth, why he hasn't even the slightest bit of white fuzz marring his chest but doesn't wander on it for long, his fingers dancing up to touch hardening nipples. He takes one between his index and thumb, rolling it and twisting it to tease Jack and admiring the muffled huffs of pleasure he can faintly hear Jack catching in his throat.

“Sensitive aren't we?” He prods at Jack's arousal, seducing him with the deep lull of his voice and watching Jack's toes curl while one hand moves down from the center of the chest to the light curve between his lower stomach and his crouch. “Feel free to move – but don't get up...if you feel any pain or you feel uncomfortable, tell me.” Pitch knows Jack's chest probably no longer aches from his father's punches considering that they both had sex the other night and Jack felt no internal pain higher then his waist but decides its best to make sure now.

“Okay....” Jack whispers back hands form tracing circles and letters into the sheets beneath him – he
feels the strange tingle of arousal gathering in his stomach and blissfully exhales. It really wasn't that long since Pitch last touched him, all things considered, but at the same time he craved to have those hands feeling on him again.

He simply attributed it to stress with his parents and maybe the fact that Pitch was the man he gave his virginity to, so he felt more of a need to be near him and be loved by him.

“There's a beauty to this...” Pitch whispers – halfway to himself and halfway to Jack, whether he's only speaking a segment of a thought he wasn't going to finish or beginning a new round of teasing is anyone's guess. Jack doesn't bother with questioning it at as he feels Pitch's hands descend past where the waistband of his pants would be.

“Please don't tease me anymore.” Jack mumbles, one hand moving to cover his eyes so he doesn't open them. There is too much build up, too much wanton lust raging through his body for Pitch to be taking his sweet time with this.

“But I haven't even begun teasing you yet.” Pitch whispers, now seeing that Jack had some level of pubic hair but still seemed rather hairless for his age. He wraps his fingers around Jack's length and smiles as he sees Jack relax, believing he's going to orgasm soon. Despite the partially fathering and doctoring parts of him telling him that it's cruel of him to tease the young boy he can't help but think that Jack had no idea what he agreed to just moments ago.

'No orgasm denial then...no bindings either since you're already at the bed and its be so rude to leave him in this state.' He thoughtfully talks himself through it without making a sound instead enjoying Jack's tiny huffs as he begins moving his hand in a slow, uneven rhythm. 'However, light penetration would actually be O.K...'

Jack draws some air into his lungs before exhaling again. Pitch's pace is still depressingly sluggish but he's giving some form of outlet and promise for future release and even if that's not what he needs at least it's a start.

“Jack, relax yourself.” It's not a flirt this time, its a warning. Jack bites his lip and breathes harder, surprised at how well such a slow pace is getting him off. Then another thought takes hold of his mind and he pleasantly shudders from the thought – 'what if we had sex this slow?'.

“Get on your hands and knees.” Now not a warning, but an affectionate order. As soon as Pitch's hand backs away from his erection Jack gets into the position without delay, a clumsy eagerness in his movements that Pitch found flattering – especially when he realizes from this position he can see not only how stretched Jack is but feel and watch the subtle movements of his body.

He coats his two longest fingers with a generous amount of saliva, his opposite hand making sure Jack doesn't go too long without stimulus. “I'm not going to push too far but if it hurts to a degree of which you can't take anymore, just let me know and I'll stop right-away.”

“Ok.” Jack doesn't feel the need to say that so much as he feels he should be responding more to what Pitch is saying, its more courtesy then requirement.

“Alright.” Pitch's fingers press against Jack's entrance – but they don't go in. Instead he rolls and rubs his fingers over the tiny ring of muscle, coaxing it to open up and relax just a tad. Jack is, for a time, embarrassed and stunned before he realizes how good it feels and instead braces himself on his elbows for sake of ease.

“Nice.” Pitch's voice, surprised and upbeat, sends even more excitement through Jack's body. He doesn't realize why until Pitch's free hand begins traveling up the downward curve of his back and
seating himself in the hair that lies low on the back of his neck.

'He's praising me...' Jack bites his lip nervously, unsure of what to do or feel – for the most part he feels as if Pitch is slowly but surely destroying any sense of self control. Not that he would need to as Jack, for the most part, would gladly lose himself to Pitch if he asked for it.

A slick finger pressed up against his hole and Jack clenched his teeth and braces himself for a much rougher entry then what he received. He doesn't know why he expected this to be rough and taking – Pitch never grew rough with him in bed before.

A quiet corner of his mind whispers that maybe he'd like that – maybe he'd want Pitch to be rough with him, maybe he'd want Pitch to take everything and give almost nothing back until he was a ruined mess on the ground. He forcibly silenced that part of himself, refusing to fuel his imagination anymore and centered his attention on the finger poking against his wall.

Pitch was inside of him again, though not in the way he was last night. Jack felt a shiver travel through him, then masked his face with his open palms as his lover chuckled behind him – clearly sensing Jack's distress.

"Don't worry Jack I've already found it..." He uttered with a relaxed exhale in his voice – Jack briefly wondered what he was even talking about.

Then he felt something prod at a sensitive point in his insides, causing a ripple of pleasure to shoot through him. 'Oh, that.' Jack thought with embarrassment, mouth agape as he watched Pitch's finger retreat from the tight, teased flesh before pushing back in with more force behind it. He went far further then before, making Jack moan aloud for more. Then he tickled the spot with shallow, disarming jabs until Jack was pleading for him to cease his teasing. Until Jack wanted to just fuck and get it over with.

"Please" His voice was ragged from the muffled yelps and pants for more – he was skirting around his release, dancing around it, so close but just not there. He wanted Pitch to push him there and not hold anything back.

"Jack – Jack you look beautiful, covered in your own sweat like this. Like you need it."

"I do!" He yelled without meaning to, a quick thrust in the prostate forcing the volume increase on him.

"Oh...okay then." Pitch laughed and Jack felt something inside of his stomach grow cold despite the growing, near-bursting heat located there. There was mischief and want behind that noise and he didn't want to have to, in this situation, find out why. “Jack, tell me all the naughty, dirty thoughts of us you think about when we're alone.”

The young teen forced his face into the bed sheets and let out a muted sound of aggravation and lust – he was so close to teetering off the edge and getting the release he craved but damn it Pitch's libido needed to be served too out of fairness.

“Come Jack, tell me. I can make you feel absolutely incredible if you'd like.

“Don't hold my orgasm hos-” He bit off the end of his words, Pitch's fingers mercilessly teasing him but not quickening up or pushing in or touching more.

“Patience little snowflake, you'll be able to come soon – sooner if you behave yourself and do as I ask.”
Jack had never wanted to slap the dominance out of someone's personality anymore then he did at that moment. He let out a grunt of anger before opening his mouth. “I...I thought about fucking myself onto you once.”

“Describe it.” Jack doesn't speak, mouth sealed out of embarrassment and shame. Instead, his not-quite-dead bravado comes back into play, he rolls his eyes until he looks as if he’ll faint and sucks his teeth loudly. Then he feels Pitch's fingers begin to pull out.

“Damn it.” Jack knew when he was defeated and reluctantly gave in - he wanted to please Pitch, true, but he also wanted his fantasies to remain just those; unless Pitch was going to fulfill them. "I dreamt that I sat on top of you and rode you raw as all hell.” He whimpered and tried to impale himself further onto the digits inside of himself as he watched it happen. “I bounced on your hard fucking cock until I came screaming bloody fucking murder and clawing furrows all over your chest.” There. Pitch pushing into his prostate with merciless precision and persitence. Jack cried out for even more, feeling his body being pushed a a familiar and much wanted point of stimulation. His hands found purchase on the sheets instead of his face now – cloth balling in his grip as he tried to keep himself from tumbling off the edge.

Pitch's voice had dropped an octave and his breath was harsh and heavy in Jack's left ear - every breath seemed to blow against him in a way that drew even more pleasure into him. “Keep going.”

“I r-remember wanting to suck your cock like it was a lollipop and have you cum all over my face – or in – fuck.” Jack shoved his face back into the sheets and fucked himself onto Pitch's moving fingers, heat and rolling pleasure mixing in his lower stomach. “Oh, my god.” Jack panted as he watched himself hit release – eyes clenching shut at the last second as he came, warm and white.

“Beautiful, that's right, ride it, think about my dick and ride it.” Pitch's voice was following him all through his high point until he finally came back to Earth, stomach still heaving and ass squeezing against fingers that felt too big to fit inside.

He stared ahead as Pitch's fingers and his own, still stiff dick hanging between his legs. “Okay.” He whispered to no one in particular. “I feel better now.”

“Oh that's...surprisingly efficient.”

“I chalk it up to hormones.” He licked his lips, not noticing the wetness on them. “I drooled during it though.”

Pitch looked at him, right from between his legs before exhaling loudly and exiting Jack's body, eyes half rolling back in his skull. “...Jack one day I really will fuck you so hard that you won't walk for years.”

“Wha..?” Jack was glad for the promise but...that was a tiny bit uncalled for.

Pitch just shook his head and chuckled, getting up off the bed and running a smooth, warm palm over the swell of Jack's back. “...Go wash your face darling.”

“Oh....oh....ewww...” Jack's face twisted and he sat up, feeling more wetness drip onto his lips and wanting to wipe it away but not sure whether or not he should risk it – until Pitch came round and licked it away from him. Jack sat completely still, mesmerized as Pitch moved up to lick away the release on his cheek as well – he never paid attention how extremely soft Pitch's tongue felt against his raw skin until now.

Then Pitch's eyes came back into view. “Face, wash, now.”
He shook himself awake and began his journey from the bedroom to the bathroom, still very slightly out of touch with himself – shivers of his previous orgasm still not working their way out of his body. “Alright, just give me a second...

“Then we have to talk.” Pitch proclaimed with a grandiose purr in his voice that drew Jack's attention – ‘talking’ wasn't something they often declared having to do unless it was serious stuff.

“Again?” Jack said before retreating into the bathroom for the morning.

“Yes again, unfortunately.” Pitch answered, relaxing himself by running his own hands over his knees and the rest of his body – restlessness was coming over him. Not all of it was originating from his erection, a good percentage of it was because of this morning. Because of Jamie.

Jamie was, for such a long time, Jack's best friend. It must've been sometime around his mother moving away and leaving him behind that they began to drift, grow separate and split apart, probably before they even knew it was occurring. Guilt stirred in him...he had to tell Jack about his findings regarding Jamie eventually – maybe it would be best now, assuming Jack's lightened mood and tone.

He'd have to tell Jack that Jamie was a ticking time bomb regarding them, that it would be best if they left him alone – but then it returned....the little hands at his back....

Or maybe it could wait. No one had to know for now...right? Jamie needed help, private help. Jack certainly couldn't help the situation, if anything he'd make the situation even worse but destabilizing Jack further.

No...no...

Jamie was a matter to be handled personally. Pitch would ensure that.
As wonderful as it would be to just continually fuck away their problems Pitch decided that if any progress was going to be made in their continuously self-complicating personal lives they needed to have an at length talk about everything that was going on, meaning everything.

Everything ranging from personal issues to the most obvious things had to be discussed and Pitch had to admit that Jack, as much as he wanted to baby him, love him and keep him away from the world, was not a child. He was on a cusp of becoming an adult now and he would need to at least be told about the responsibilities he’d have to accept with Mary if they really were going to move in together since Pitch, as much as he would love to, could not take over the ‘at-home caretaker role’.

Not to mention the entire court cases, disputes and arguments that would undoubtedly arise if Jack went through with it wholeheartedly. Katherine and William were seemingly beginning to make progress in their own personal lives and Pitch couldn't foresee them taking Jack's recuse from their family well.

Jack was still in the bathroom, straightening himself out. Pitch prepared himself for the speech he would possibly have to make to explain why it was an issue and why they needed to talk about everything.

Then, in a moment of clarity he heard the sound of Jack sighing. He mentally redacted that statement.

Not everything needed to be shared immediately, teens needed their privacy – well not all teens, just the ones that were being successful at escaping their abusive family homes. Case-by-case basis on these things, Jack would understand...if Pitch even changed his mind to tell him.

With a delicate post-coital happiness gleaming from his still naked body Jack strolled back into the room, a half-way there smile shining on his face. His right hand was drawing invisible lines up the curves of his body and Pitch felt the weight on his shoulders lifting by the smallest fragment. The world might have demanded his help but he always had Jack, the reminder that yes, he could do good helping children.

Damn good, judging from the post-sexual glow.

"Jack, we still need to talk. As much as I would love admiring your perfect David-like body and sinful smile – and trust me I would absolutely love that – we need to talk about earlier." Pitch gave Jack's body a longing look, Jack may have come but those last few minutes when he spilt out secrets of what he thought about when thinking of Pitch had gotten to him. His own excitement wasn't going away any time soon.

"Oh..." Jack blushed and then, ah, that sinful little cheeky grin came back full force with raised eyebrows. "Can I stay naked?"

"...No, thank you for asking though I'll have a boner until next week. Thank you for the cerulean orbs."

"No problem." Jack chuckled his hand reached out and teased Pitch, gliding down the front of his chest with a burning slowness that made the older of the two doubt his ability to contain himself – he opened his mouth to give a warning but Jack stole it out of his mouth with a kiss. It was lighter then
air and quicker then a flash of lightning – tasting too sweet and ending too soon for the both of them.

But unlike Pitch, Jack was fully sated and hence able to relocate himself to the other side of the bed to retrieve his own clothing before his quickly unhinging lover could pin him to the ground and take what he wanted.

"If you're quite finished trying to get me to do something both of us will horrifically regret, I'd like to actually begin conversing with you now." His voice went from laid-back and pleased to tense and professional, as if in a meeting with one of his patients.

"Why not finish yourself off or-"

"Jack your parents, let's talk about them shall we?" Pitch interjected.

The mood soured and Jack's face fell for a moment before he nodded wordlessly and collected his clothing.

"Alright, I'm sorry for bringing up your parents – first off. But...they seem to be making something akin to progress now so..."

Jack bit his tongue, only to suck on it in an attempt to stop the words from tumbling out of his mouth – but he failed and how and what he really believed and felt came out. "So you're kicking me out?"

He was clearly on the defense, arms raised up to his chest like a physical shield and all without even meaning to be. Pitch didn't allow himself to get riled up. No reason to turn something that wasn't and didn't need to be an argument into a shouting competition. Not again.

"No...no." Pitch shook his head slowly, hands rubbing over the curve of his knees in a sort of self comforting gesture. "But I am glad you said that, I thought that...maybe if your parents were getting better you'd end up leaving me."

Jack's defense shattered and he quickly rounded the bed stopping only until he was at Pitch's side and then placing a gentle peck on his cheek. Pitch brought him close in a warm embrace.

"Pitch, you –" Jack's arms came up around him and his face was scrunched up, head lying against Pitch's shoulder as he tried to hold back the emotions he felt. "I'm sorry but did you think that we were...?"

Temporary? Not serious? Not really a 'thing'? Pitch couldn't pick out the word that would correct embody what he felt because even he had no idea how he felt.

So he said what he knew. "I don't know...I still don't know."

Jack moved himself, coming back from the hug to look in Pitch's eyes and examine him – noticing the mixed confusion writ in his face and almost mirroring it in his tone. "Pitch, I gave you my virginity, my love, I trust you with my little sister – I wouldn't do that if I wasn't serious about us."

Pitch met his eyes with a longing gaze and for a flash Jack felt a soft warmth gathering in his chest before Pitch turned his head and dropped his arms, relinquishing Jack from his grasp. "I know Jack – but still...everyday I actually do think in the back of my head that one day I'm going to lose you or push you away. That one night I'm going to wake up and see a note on the dining room table that you couldn't take being with me anymore and never want to see me again. I've done that with a lot of people after those days." Pitch's face turned empty before a deep frown settled in, numerous dark and deep creases settling into the curvatures of his expression. "Total abandonment...after Seraphina died."
"I understand." Jack nodded and calmed down, relaxing back against Pitch in silence.

Pitch wondered why the quiet after the fights or talks they had seemed to be so naturally there – like there really was nothing to say. Not wanting to break the feather-fragile quiet he just whispered a barely audible "Thank you." and continued holding Jack, letting everything else take over.

There was a point where Pitch decided that if they didn't talk about this now, they would never speak of it – and so the silence was unfortunately shattered by talk of the most uncertain thing in the world, the future. "We need to talk about Mary and the entire custody problem..."

Jack, of like mind to not want the peace of the morning to be ruined by thoughts of problems and issues but at the same time knowing that all good things had to come to an end, quietly nodded and resigned himself to resting on the bed next to Pitch. A small grin danced on his lip as he smiled nervously – unsure of what else to do.

"Umm...first off your parents are actually getting better and fixing themselves." Pitch spoke as if he was referring to seeing a unicorn in the wild, the very thought of Jack's parents stepping up and doing their jobs was so impossible that it was worrying to imagine what they were honestly feeling beneath the facade of being 'O.K.' Is that enough to dispel your worry about Mary to the point where you think you can safely return to living your own life without taking care of her 24/7?"

"Of course not..." Jack muttered, a half-tired rasp in his throat. "I don't trust them to not kill each other when they are sober Pitch – to be honest I'm afraid of what they are doing right now."

"Then let's go see them. No reason we can't and it would help you I think, maybe calm you down a little."

"I'm calm, I just don't trust them. It's like being outside of your home and watching two crocodiles lurking inside – I don't want to actually be around them but they are technically speaking in my house, where my belongings are." Jack rolled off the edge of the bed, intentionally letting himself fall only to catch himself last minute and land on his knees – clattering of his phone hitting the floor being the main thing that worried him.

"Unnecessary and risky." Pitch groaned, suddenly drained of his drive to go and see William and Katherine. They were such fun people to be around after all – their alcoholism not being the least of their problems.

"Actually, if I hadn't of done that I would've completely forgotten about my phone." Jack said, storing the phone in his back-pocket with a wide grin. "Let's get going shall we?"

"Right, right, rush me out the door again why don't you?" Pitch joked with a snide grin and roll of his eyes.

Jamie can clearly see the difference of when Jack is around Pitch and when he isn't – Pitch always came the cafe and kept to himself, only ordered coffee, never went to places like the movies or the mall but now thanks to Jack, Pitch seemed to be on the move more often then not.

It was angering to imagine that Jack was so unbelievably charming he could get the local town freak to have something akin to a moderately healthy social life – the main reason being that Pitch was the six plus foot tall monstrosity that the kids constantly joked about, the other reasons ranging from the fact that Jack should be his and not same disgusting, stone faced, ancient goth mutant to that as long
as Pitch and Jack were in a relationship, Jack didn't need to walk anywhere. Why would he? His boyfriend had a car.

So it was easy to tell that Pitch was head to Jack's house – or taking him someplace special when his noticeable onyx black car came driving by and past Jamie's house, going straight past the cafe and continuing into the residential section of the house.

From the window of his room he pressed his head against the glass and wondered if, by some miracle, they would eventually break up and Jack would be his to love as he saw fit.

Or maybe the plan he'd been thinking about would work, he hoped it would. It was crazy, reckless and beyond question illegal but it would be effective. That much he knew for sure.

The girl behind him is trembling, heart in chest and hands wrapped around her phone – it was just earlier this morning when Jamie had to deal with their father once again. Had it not been for the fact that mom's phone had rung, John would have kept going well into the afternoon.

Jamie's eyes shift from the window to her as he makes his decision, reasoning it to be the best course of action. She releases a nervous peep after she sees the tears lightly sweeping around his eyes – crocodile tears but nonetheless effective. His voice breaks as he speaks. "Sophie..." With a well trained hand he yanks at her heartstrings – she already knows his plan and had already given him a strong 'no'.

But she is submissive, sweet-hearted and willing to help if it'll stop her from feeling the guilt she's been putting up with for years now.

"Jamie I'll help," Sophie relents and decides to go along with Jamie's plan, nodding quietly and not looking his directly in the eyes. Looking at him was too painful – it reminded her that she was the reason he was this hurt, this damaged. Her brother was her martyr that she had no choice but to love and care for. "but don't hurt Jack."

Jamie smiles, forcing his voice to break more as he nodded rapidly. "I won't hurt him, I promise. Thank you Sophie."

"If this doesn't work you have to give him up Jamie, I know you love him but there's a limit you know?"

A swath of anger comes over the younger man and for a moment his illusion falters – he glares at her with utmost hatred, wishing his eyes and looks could kill. "I know." He smiles, the mask of being broken in some way replaced and the boiling pot of rage inside successfully being repressed as Sophie excuses herself to her own room.

He patiently awaits the coming of the next day.

Chapter End Notes

My God Pitch you are just so wibbly-wobbly flimsy-whimsy :p.
Hey guys, a little late on the new chapter, but I had/have finals. Luckily aced most of my work this year and just finished my math so it should be no problem finishing the rest before the due date.

That in mind, I felt like if I was going through finals, someone else out there probably is too and when I think of one of my readers being bored and upset, I get upset. Then when I get upset, I want to talk about all the awesome stuff.

One of the future chapters in CC, is one of those awesome 'stuffs'.

It's not, in anyway, a spoiler but a short preview of what COULD happen if and when I finish writing the rest of the chapter in between then and now (Yeah, I'm a moment writer. I write out allllll the awesome stuff, then the in-between. Sorry.)

And at the same time, I feel like I should do more with my readers - especially since I want to be a world-making storybook writer of sorts, so I put a sneak peek of the chapter up on my tumblr. Check it out if you want :3, follow me too :D

http://angelblaze2012.tumblr.com/

Note: Yes I know my layout is uninspiring, promise to change it soon okay?

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"I'm just scared that I'm going to walk in on a massacre in progress at this point." Jack mumbled, more confident in a distinct lack of moving life in the house then anything else. He despairingly realized that fearing the worst in his life had become second nature – even with Pitch spending so much time near him, helping him along and loving him he couldn't change his naturally cynical behavior when it came to his parents.

Recognizing this at the same time, Pitch decided that it'd be best if he stopped consciously trying to change Jack's opinion of his parents – the young man was already perfect in his eyes so why try to fix him? "If there's anything I'm afraid of personally, its your parents actually changing – for obvious reasons that I've already told you of." He knew that agreeing with his fears in someway without directly confirming them would help or it would at least make Jack feel like he wasn't going completely bat-shit insane.

"I keep telling you not to worry." Jack beamed in the most welcoming way he could and spoke in a calming tone of voice, not realizing the irony that came loaded with that statement. "I'm not gonna leave you because my parents are O.K. I was attracted to you for you Pitch. Getting to stay at your place to get away from my parents was just a bonus."

"My concerns are much deeper then that Jack – I'm not one who can be told not to worry and then
just not worry." Pitch did however, wish that he was like that. Maybe he'd stop feeling so inclined to help people who he perceived were in trouble.

"Maybe I should show you then? Pay you little lip-service?" He teased, intentionally running his the very tips of his fingers against his puckered lips.

"You know that would've been nice about twenty minutes earlier – my boner's already gone."

"If you wanted to fuc-"  

"You were still injured from last time, I didn't want to push it."

"But were your words not, 'But fucking isn't all we could do.'?" There's the lightest edge of humor that ran along a lining of lust that made Pitch think that for once – just this once – he could throw caution to the wind, pull Jack down to the crouch of his pants, hold him by the hair and watch the boy suck him off.

Against his own will to focus on the road, his head filled with flashes of Jack gagging on a hard, thick cock that was far too big for him to deepthroat – but making him just horny enough to try. Hot tears running down his cheeks but not in pain, rather in the difficulty of trying to please. Pitch swallowed hard and chanced a look at Jack, who took the opportunity presented to him and licked his finger, slow and sensual.

Pitch's voice sped up, became quicker and less 'polite'. Embarrassment was a feeling he despised - especially when less then an hour ago he was dying to fuck the same person currently embarrassing him. "No, actually, those were not my words. My words were 'We can do other things if you don't want sex in particular.'" He turns again, this time past a corner store and into the more residential part of the town.

"Am I sensing a hint of... need? Oh, Pitch..." He places his hand on the inside of Pitch's legs, fingertips drifting against his hardening cock before releasing a moan too loud to be real but too sexual to ignore.

In a moment of annoyance – because driving with a boner and with the cause of said boner sitting next to you making the boner in question worse, something he hadn't intended to bring up or even fully thought through slipped out. "You sound like Jamie."

It took ten tense heartbeats for Pitch to see the foolishness of that statement and five more to realize how eerily hush the car had gotten. The awkward silence continued on, even as Pitch slowed down his driving and made a right turn onto Jack's house' street.

Jack's hands were balled up and placed still in his pockets while he stared ahead, face frighteningly blank as they drove up to his home.

"I'm sorry." Pitch explained, urgently wishing to be forgiven for his outburst so this would not become another problem on his plate. "I didn't mean that, I shouldn't have brought that up – horrible planning and bad self-control on my part. Forgive me."

Jack didn't respond but instead undid his seat belt and threw Pitch a familiar glare – the soul-crushingly brutal stare that rang similar to 'Mary's in danger' levels of intensity.

Pitch sighed aloud and propped his arms up and around the steering wheel, leaning his head to rest on them. "I know, I fucked up. I'm sorry. Don't look at me like you're going to murder me, please." His voice cracked lightly and Jack's expression immediately softened into a pout and a faint, momentary glance of pity.
Originally, he said nothing. Then after a few moments, when Pitch turned away because he couldn't help the aching feeling of guilt riddling his chest once again, Jack spoke. "I'm going to go inside now. I'll call you later, is that okay?"

"You don't need my permission to call me Jack..."

"Good afternoon Pitch, drive safe." Jack's sudden formalities stung Pitch's ears more then any insult he'd ever heard in his life – to the point of wincing. But Pitch stayed calm and remained in front of the house to ensure that Jack entered safely to a calm or relatively stable home and only upon Jack opening the front door, saying a few sparse words he couldn't hear and then turning back to Pitch and nodding before entering did he drive off.

Jack believed all comedy linked back, in some way, to relatable pain – so when someone begins to joke around with him he has an unwritten rule that almost nothing is off limits. In his opinion, you could wound and cut how you like with a joke as humor is a double edged sword – it hurts a little and it feels good.

But Jamie was a wound opened too soon in Jack's own opinion – too raw and too recent to be pressed into or pushed, assuming what Pitch said was supposed to be comical. It felt excruciating and forced in a way – but he took the brunt of the blame for that.

'Pitch does have this thing about driving – for good reason.' Jack reminded himself before pulling out of the entire train of thought to focus on the matter at hand – Mary.

She was seated on the sofa, looking no different then when he left. Auburn hair long and free, wearing denim blue overalls and a striped purple and violet undershirt. Her backpack dumped unceremoniously by the walkway that lead to her room and hazelnut eyes observing the front door with pupils that already seemed too big for her own face doubling in size.

"Hey Mary, how was school today?" Jack trudged into the house with the same broad grin he'd wear when Pitch would invite him into his, elated and calmed to see what at least resembled a blissful, healthy Mary bouncing up and down on the couch excitedly at his appearance from the outside world.

As far as it concerned him it had been far too long since their last meeting alone, their last conversation that involved nothing but them. He liked the connection they had post-Pitch and the jealousy that had shown its ugly head from seeing how quickly and how strongly the two bonded without any major interference on his part rapidly grew into an admiration of how felt they just fit together, but at the same time he'd be lying if he said he didn't enjoy getting some spare alone time with her.

The adorable ball of energy that she was, Mary was too concerned with tackling his legs and hugging him to acknowledge the question. "Oh my gosh!" She yelled, running at him high speed only to knock into his legs, causing only minor impact. "I missed you so much – were you and mister Pitch doing something important?"

The taste left Jack's mouth immediately – Mary bringing up Pitch brought back that same inkling of envy in the lower depths of his stomach.

"Umm...yeah." He decided he wouldn't rebuke her love for Pitch at the moment, he was clearly becoming something akin to a father to her and his comment about Jamie was nothing that involved her. He wanted to get lost in her for a while – before Pitch she was all that mattered and inwardly he felt a knife twist in his stomach at noticing how much seemed to change from his temporary separation from the family.
Sure he needed to get away, but perhaps he'd been gone too long?

Only a few days had passed and yet the house felt more welcoming and oddly alien then when he'd first left, like a place he'd seen years ago and forgotten the finer details of until now. It didn't hold the same presence of an abusive, violent cage that he remembered despairingly trying to escape from for years. It felt like he was in a new neighbor's house like he shouldn't touch or break anything – the walls pressed in on him and made him feel antsy, self-conscious.

'Absence makes the heart grow fonder.' Jack thinks before choosing to lose himself in Mary. He scoops her up into his arms and snuggles her, holding her close and enjoying the familiar touch of her soft, long brown hair against his face while she squeezes him with all the might her little form can muster. 'Fonder indeed...'

"So." Jack places her back on the floor, arms tiring after a few silent minutes. "Where's mom and dad?" It feels weird to call them that after so long of calling them 'William and Katherine' but he wants to use language that Mary can understand – he wants her to feel normal and bright and loved.

"They went shopping, I'm waiting til they come back so I can get help with my homework." Mary stated in a grown up, adult voice that Jack found himself cherishing.

"If you need help I can help you." Jack grins, happy to so quickly find a gap in Mary's life that he could place himself in, if William really was going to step up to the fathering role then Jack would gladly accept being there when he couldn't. He'd already spent the past few years doing just that.

"It's weird." Mary pouted, grabbing Jack by the hand and leading him to the couch. "I don't need help thou, Daddy asked if he could help."

'Oh. Okay. That's a shock.' Jack's eyebrows raised but he never made any other indication that the news shocked him. As he plopped down uselessly onto the sofa next to Mary and watched her watch her usual cartoons of Spongebob and reruns, he wondered exactly how much was changing now.

Jamie was acting erratic and insane and now his parents seemed to have gained Jamie's sanity through osmosis as soon as he lost it and Pitch-

'Is a problem to be thought of later.' Jack said as he rose from the couch, throwing Mary a quick and friendly smile then walking to the kitchen to prepare them both something edible. For right now, Mary was back in his life. He could focus his energy and love on her for right now while Pitch worked out whatever inner demons he needed to work out.

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Pitch didn't believe in having 'inner demons', he didn't like the term, he preferred having personal emotional 'issues' that needed to be dealt with. So he figured his own inner demons didn't exist until he stepped back inside his office and discovered they lived and thrived, growing their own miniature hell like a fiery rash right beneath his skin.

Sanderson's information hunt hadn't continued after that faithful stack of papers that enlightened him to a good portion of the troubled life of the Bennett family. Time, however, had caught up with him and he discovered that Sanderson took it upon himself to search for Jamie's mother and her location...

Which resulted in a white pool of newly printed information, a threateningly large heap of white paper awaiting him as he came in despite him not looking to be more embroiled in the Bennett issues but just for something to do.

Against his better judgment, he leaned against the nearest wall and began the process of piling up the
loose pages and organizing them into unsorted stacks. All the while his mind replayed what he said to Jack just before he left, the 'mom' gaze well burned into the back of his mind – meaning Jack still felt friendship or love for Jamie. The brunette hadn't entered 'William' territory, he hadn't become the absolute worst scum on Earth in Jack's life.

Jamie, the potentially dangerous stalker that had probably flirted with Jack at the cafe house while he was gone. Jamie who had continued his flirting after his arrival and only backed down once Jack had asked him to leave. Jamie who had an abusive family and worst of all was so soul-crushingly similar to Jack that Pitch had only realized after becoming embroiled in his life that Jamie too had family problems and immense amounts of emotional and probably mental 'inner demons' of his own to face.

'All it takes is a young boy with a cute face and some family problems and before you know it your at their beck and call, on a little leash for them like a bitch huh?' He mentally denounced himself as he sorted the papers out into different stacks – potential locations, past phone numbers, boyfriends and...current husband and his own background.

'And before I even have time to prepare to face the shitstorm I'm in I come across another.' A sardonic chuckle left his throat, dry and denigrating.

He found himself looking through and reading the information well into the night, having no other alternative of things to do, and made an interesting discovery – this wasn't the first time Selena had run away from an abusive relationship. She had at least four other ex's who either cheated on her, beat her or had additions to substances including heroine or crack cocaine.

At first Pitch thought she was just another unlucky soul until something else reared its ugly head.

Selena's own past.

Multiple arrests on possession of Heroine, public drunkenness, assault, the list went on and on. 'Pot attracts kettle.' Pitch supposed and rubbed his temple, unable to believe how much dirt this family had for him to sift through. It made Katherine and William look like perfectly normal and functional human beings. However after a moment of thought he decided that the definition of 'functional' was not something for him, a grown man who forced himself into the lives of young men who had numerous personal conflicts involving dysfunctional parents to decide.

After an hour had passed Pitch decided it was time for a break and reclined onto the sofa downstairs, randomly channel flipping until he saw a brief flash of a familiar show – Legends of the Hidden Temple.

Then more damnable condemnation pressed in on him and he found himself watching, unsure of whether or not he should dial up Jack or let the matter rest for the next few days. After all, Jack had returned to a, hopefully, safe environment with his parents and as much as Pitch was afraid to lose him due to no longer playing a crucial role in the younger man's life he knew that teens needed their breathing space, away from their lovers.

Still, occasionally his glance would turn to the phone and his heart would sink – in reality, he had harmed Jack by not seeing the fact that Jamie needed help sooner rather then later.

'Perhaps this was the consequence?' Pitch wondered as the television droned on in the background and a light rainless thunder storm occurred outside. Both went unnoticed and discarded, fading into the background as Pitch let himself be taken by a dreamless sleep for the night.
Jack decided he'd have to study up on insomnia and do a compare and contrast on his current lifestyle and the usual signs because by the time 1 A.M. rolled around on his phone's clock he caught himself still awake, staring blankly at his darkened ceiling, grasp his winter blue phone in hand with nothing to do with sleep refusing to visit him and all hope for a restful night lost.

He didn't do much in this house besides live in fear, take care of his sister or surf the web and now that it didn't seem like he needed to do that, after experiencing the comfort of Pitch's home, this house didn't feel like a real home to him. This wasn't to say that his life before Pitch was something he'd be pleased to return to but rather that the house now felt too different, too transformed to make him 'at home'.

"This is pathetic." Jack said aloud to no one in particular as the night continued on, the only other discernible sounds being the sound of his own off-beat breathing and the occasional ruffle of movement beneath the sheets when he could be bothered enough to move.

He couldn't explain it but there was a twisting in his gut, a gnawing lack of motivation to do something as simple as sleep and it only took him a few minutes to realize why. Until only just recently, he didn't have any real responsibilities that stood out to him and now he was coming back to a place with no other real responsibilities.

He'd have school work, people, parents, life to catch up to eventually though, wouldn't he? All that missing schoolwork, all those lost hours of time, all the explaining he'd have to do to his parents once the next day hit - that all had to be done soon now didn't it? He couldn't just push the world away again and focus his entire thoughts and life on Pitch, could he?

'Ohhh Damnit.' Jack thought, now tapping the pointy edge of the phone to his bitten lip. Then there was Pitch, a whole other ball of emotion he'd come to know and now had mixed-feelings about. He didn't feel like he and Pitch were as close as they were just days prior – something had happened and whether or not it was because of Jamie...

'No...no scratch that it's because of Jamie.' Jack yawned and rolled onto his side, clutching the phone close to himself. Jamie complicated their relationship just by being there – Pitch felt more distant somehow. He wasn't sure whether this was a good thing or a bad or something that only he was feeling but there was a wedge between him and Pitch that was made this morning and needed to be fixed.

But at 1 A.M.? He knew Pitch probably didn't get much sleep but calling this early would probably only exacerbate the situation wouldn't it? He curled into a ball and shoved his head under the covers, keeping the phone close in case Pitch was going to be the more mature one of the two.

He'd call Pitch tomorrow and talk, try and smooth things over between them. He didn't like that Jamie wasn't a friend anymore and was forcefully trying to make himself into something else but he didn't like that Pitch had insulted him...

But even with their previous friendship and light relationship...he sure as hell wasn't going to let Jamie tear him away from Pitch. He wasn't even sure he'd allow Mary to do that. But Jamie? Not even in his own dream
It's a wonder to Jack why he doesn't feel that normal ball of fuzzy, warm happiness that comes from cocooning himself up into his sheets and hiding himself away from the world under layers of down, cotton and silk. Instead of hidden, faint shadows of morning light and the happiness of his own stored bodily warmth he awakes with a slight backache and even the beginnings of a headache that only begin to calm once he's tossed and turned and untwisted himself from the caging sheets and turned them over, eventually finding his phone tucked away between the folds of his blanket.

Pitch and their earlier battle comes to mind straightaway and Jack can't stop his fingers or hands in time to consider the early time of day. He doesn't want to wait another minute to begin clearing things up with Pitch, he doesn't want Jamie or anything else to stand in-between him and his 'beau', as he had always mentally noted him.

He calls multiple times but the answering machine answers him and every time the signal noise to leave a message beeps he grows more worried that maybe Pitch has decided that he's done with him and had his fun with the Frost boy, maybe he's moved on to other people who were closer to his age with less 'baggage'. He doesn't leave messages for Pitch to pick up, he just hangs up and tries again, going upset with each re-dial.

He attempts to connect to his boyfriend again, this time unsure of whether to be frustrated or depressed. His mind concocts multiple scenarios of Pitch intentionally ignoring his calls, completely forgetting him and refusing to acknowledge his presence in favor of someone else – someone who he'd say was better.

His stomach turned itself inside out in an upset wave of nervous nausea and he lurched forward, dizzy and unbalanced. He squints his eyes as he realizes he's doubled over and then leans against the bed for support, phone still ringing in his ear.

Then its picked up and his ears perk upwards, listening intently for any sign of Pitch.

'...What happened?' The voice is low, tired and slightly disturbed but through the grogginess of early morning anguish Jack could tell right away; it was Pitch.

"Oh thank God." Jack releases an exhale as he speaks and dives back under the covers, lying on his stomach and kicking his feet in an even rhythm. "I actually got physically sick." It's said in retrospection and abrupt understanding – he had worried himself sick about things that he, himself, had thought up. 'Now I know how you feel...' There was a twinge of sympathy as Jack remembered how Pitch had told him of his troubled thoughts, that Jack would leave him for another person or just leave him in some way.

'Oh, are you alright? What happened?' Pitch voice gains urgency and through the phone Jack can hear the shifting of weight on a familiar sounding bed followed by the pulling and click of a lamp's light switch.
"Oh, I'm fine I'm not in danger or something, if that's what you mean. I just..." Jack blushed from how silly he was sounding, not able to believe it himself. "I think I worried myself sick over you just now, like...literally I was nauseous and everything. Stupid right?"

'Oh you poor thing...' Jack isn't sure from the tone alone whether Pitch is feeling sympathy for his plight or poking fun at him from a higher point of comparison. 'If it relaxes you any I was dreaming of you...'

Jack presses his face into the sheets and whispers sorrowfully. "I woke you up didn't I?"

'Yes something like that, the earliest I usually awake is at about 7:30...'

"My bad...what time is it now?" Jack felt a strange sense of depressed guilt boil up inside of his chest. Pitch had a job, a life, things to do, while he was sitting around moping about how he had nothing to do. He felt as if he was using his boyfriend as an excuse to avoid trying to get more proactive in his own life.

'A too early for human conversation, 6:12 A.M.' Pitch was spent with a drifting accent of fatigue in his voice that was unbecoming of him, his words sounded aggressively sharp at the edges. 'Probably upset because nothing bad's happened...' Jack thought, scratching the back of his head. It made sense; Pitch had personally chauffeured Jack home, fearful for the young man's safety to the point of staying behind to see that he made it inside the house safely and didn't come running back out in terror. For a moment there, Pitch was likely as worried about his safety as much as Jack was worried about the safety of their relationship.

"Damn." Jack feels his body itch in irritation and weariness but luckily it soon leaves and dissipates into the background. He feels awkward and out-of-place, he never remembered, once in his life, not getting any sleep through the night and staying up til six in the morning doing nothing but worrying.

Last night and through to this morning he didn't remember dreaming or sleeping in the slightest and exhaustion wasn't the main thing his body was feeling now, it was a level of fright mixed with a swirl of panic that he couldn't describe. Like knowing somewhere, a train was going to hit someone and not knowing where the train was or who it was going to hit. "Well, I'm sorry for waking you up so early. I just wanted to apologize for my really..." He paused to find a word and his tongue twirled in his mouth, searching for the right one.

Aggressive? No, there was no aggression in his silent rebuttal to Pitch's off-handed comments about Jamie. Defensive? Not really, except perhaps for Jamie's sake. He couldn't think of something that fit that same level of emotion – that sense of 'Don't you dare say that again' that he felt in those brief, passing moments.

Inwardly, Jack was screaming as he attempt to make his way through the rest of his sentence. "Out of place behavior yesterday." By the time the words were able to crawl up his throat to leave his mouth he was wishing to have this entire phone call finally end so he could return to sleep – it felt too awkward bringing up Jamie again, so early in the morning. It was as if he was starting the day off on the wrong foot.

'It's fine, it's clear you still have some feelings for Jamie that I can't interfere with.'

Wow, wait, what?

"No, wait Pitch it's not like that – we, or at least maybe me because Jamie's just acting really fucked up and weird right now, I have no idea what that's abo- it's just I don't have any romantic feelings for
Jamie he's not, like...stable in the head I think." Jack stumbled his way through his rant and face palmed by the end, only to go back and try to redact his words.

'You do realize... There was a tangible level of concern dripping from his tone. 'that I never said the feelings between you two were of the romantic persuasion?'

"Well when you say it like that, it does imply..." Jack sighed aloud and felt a familiar wave of aggravation wash over him. If any equally shared romantic feelings between him and Jamie were in existence, it was unbeknownst to him. He didn't feel the same level of sexual or emotional attraction with Jamie that he felt when he was with Pitch. There was no 'spark' to the flame between them, at least not for him at this time. Maybe, previously, in the past before Jamie began what seemed to be his descent into madness and jealousy, there was something there. But not now.

Now it was more about both the memories of their lost friendship and the queerly off-balance, one-opsidedness of their current 'relationship'. He had a sort of 'friendly' love for Jamie, nothing romantic about it but at the same time he wanted Jamie in his life, he wanted the Jamie he remembered sharing afternoons complaining about stupid things with, the one he remembered having snowball and play fights with.

The one he had in his life now was an obnoxious, overly coquettish pig. "And besides you already say you worry about us as a couple – it's just where you seemed to be heading. I guess. I don't know much about anything any more." Jack's skin itched and crawled with a disgusting tingling sensation running underneath, like thousands of spiders were burrowing into and throughout his flesh, whenever they spoke about Jamie and his attempt at forcing entry into their relationship.

'I've never been all that sure about anything to begin with.' Jack sensed from the far away drifting of his tone that it wasn't an agreement or a declaration – Pitch had turned inward towards himself and looked back in a moment of brief self-retrospection. His words were not a deviation from their original subject but instead a 'I know where you're coming from, I've been there'. 'But I'm sorry for wording it like that, you're completely right. I..lead the conversation a certain way. My apologies.'

"It's fine, I understand..." Jack said, expecting some type of subject change to come from Pitch – but nothing came through except the sound of hazy, even breathing.

He hated when things reached this point, when they were caught up and all apologies were said and they couldn't just jump and latch onto a new subject without it getting slightly more awkward then he could handle.

"W-well I'm gonna let you go okay? I've held you up enough for now I think. You should...try to get some rest or something."

'Too late for that I'm afraid. I'm awake.' More bed shifting and the sound of a light groan worries Jack that perhaps Pitch didn't not get his required hours of sleep due to the disturbance and could doze off at an inconvenient time – say while driving. He knows that it is purely due to his own mothering instincts, re-awakened by being back in the family home with Mary but he can't put his worries to sleep.

"Okay, well take it easy alright?" He didn't want to mother Pitch or nag him, if there was anything he didn't want to be it was a nagging lover, but he wanted to take care of him and with his current mood he couldn't help but think that any negative outcome was an assurance instead of a possibility.

'Do you want me to come pick you up and bring you back home? You have another...two days off, you realize that?'
"But I'm already feeling better..." Jack pouted lightly and got up, deciding that perhaps today he would begin his day early and properly prepare before anyone in the house woke up, thinking that it would somehow give him an edge or advantage over the rest of the world.

Over the phone, Pitch was snickering and heaving out dry laughs and snide comments. 'Ah! What a unique teen you are m'dear, actually pleading to get back to school. Tell me, are things actually that boring there?'

"Yes actually, I mean...it's not that it's boring, it's more that so far there's nothing to be afraid of, or so it seems." Bundle of clothing in hand Jack has already begun filling up the tub and locking the door behind him, not exactly wanting to take a bath but deciding it was less noisy then the shower and therefore wouldn't intrude with his calling Pitch. "Of course, I could be wrong."

'Yes and I'm pretty sure I don't have to tell you this but keep an eye on them.' From the faint rustling and sound of rapid movement he heard, Jack presumed that now Pitch was readying for his own day.

"Yeah, they could probably change at the drop of a hat." Jack groaned, laying against warm porcelain in a filled, warm tub of water. It calmed him more then he expected and he remembered; it had been weeks since his last bath.

'Not because they could change at any moment Jack but because you want to be there when they do change, if they do change, so that they can't hurt Mary.'

"Being there when they do change is no guarantee that I can stop them, Pitch. But you are right." Jack mumbles, inattentively staring over the side of the tub at the bathroom tiles below. Not searching but looking. "I wonder what triggers the change."

'Withdrawal symptoms, probably. Keep in mind that most addicts come to their addiction to get rid of some sort of heavy, painful burden or to just forget how fucked up they think their own lives are. When everything starts to hurt again because they've stopped indulging in their substance or behavior its just basic instinct to run back to what took away their pain in the first place.' Pitch snorted. 'Or at least, what they believe took it away.'

"Withdrawal..." Light, partly attached sympathy floats in his heart for his parents – he didn't know very much about alcohol or its effects on the human body but he could see their pain and suffering both with and without the beer and wine in their systems.

As much hell as they were to be around when they were drunk, it must have been hell for them when they weren't.

And maybe when they were? Jack couldn't tell and didn't bother trying – he wasn't a doctor like Pitch and he certainly couldn't tell what was going through his parents head's at all time.

'The more addicted you are, the harder the withdrawal hits. Then, on the off chance you aren't the emotionally resilient type who can stand pain, you might end up taking more once the withdrawal hits – either out of stupidity or out of panic. Funnily enough, that usually raises your bodies resistance to whatever it is and then you'll need more and more just to maintain your addiction. Vicious cycle that.' Pitch pulled the phone away from his face so he could shimmy his way into some tight black jeans, only to realize that he didn't bring a shirt downstairs. By the time he figured out which one he wanted to wear, he didn't feel like going upstairs. 'Might as well stay down here and brew some coffee.'

"Any way to avoid it?"
'Not anyway I know of, especially if the addict in question thinks they need their addiction.' Pitch laughed in a sense of self pity and stared down at his coffee, giving it a guilty smile. 'In which case the attachment is emotional – they could feel like their life or livelihood is in danger if its taken away from them, they could react violently, they could endanger their own lives and the lives of others…'

"Yeah I'm getting a sense that any attempt to 'help' them along their path to sobriety is a lost cause now."

'By help, what do you mean? Because if you're suggesting a violent takeover of every bar in town, I'm game darling.' Pitch chuckled joyously and then gave a toast on Jack's behalf, not minding the fact that Jack wasn't here and probably wasn't nearly as much of an avid coffee drinker as he was. Nevertheless he smiled happily as he took a small sip and stood by the window, watching the early sun rise and the clouds go by.

"Ah! Sorry, I don't feel like between hunted down by every drunkard in a five mile radius – I've already got my hands full with two." His following laughter was loud and self-pleasing, uncaring of whether or not his parents or sister could hear him. Humor wasn't something they had shared enough of, considering everything else that was assaulting their lives so when he got the chance to laugh along with Pitch, he'd take it. "I'm just worried there won't be any change this time. I'll come home from school and they'll be strewn out on the floor, drunk as balls."

'If they change I'd actually be little more afraid."

"Join the club." Jack chuckled, smile on his face wider then what it normally would've been given the situation. "We're recruiting new members, you get free white-chocolate strawberry shortcake cookies when you do. Seriously speaking, why would the change be bad though?"

'Because Jack, people who reform their current addictions have a habit of forming new ones to deal with the cravings."

"Well, maybe they're different from your patients – not saying they are but even you were surprised when we found out they were taking Mary to school now." Jack stood up and left the bath, set on getting ready for the rest of his morning.

'True Jack but that wasn't 'professional' knowledge. I have experience with addiction, not alcohol but something else.'

There was a moment when he thought he'd misheard but then he pressed the phone closer, blinked a few times and squinted. Hearing Pitch admitting to be, at least at one time, in the same position and place his parents were currently in, threw him for a loop. Ever since the day they'd met and he learned about Pitch's past he had kept a perfect, pristine image of him. Pitch, a hurt man with a broken heart and a lost daughter, was sacred in his mind. Not unlike a shrine or an altar of an ineffable figure, Jack's opinion of Pitch was that he was, in a sense, absolutely incorruptible. Which made this something he couldn't ignore. "You, you were addicted to something?" 'Out of everyone I know, you?'

'Jack, I thought I told you?'

"I'm pretty fucking sure I'd remember you telling me you're an addict.” And that was all the information Pitch needed to know about how Jack felt at the moment. A curse of anger, a withering note of betrayal and a twinge of heart-brokenness.

'A reformed addict, I don't quite indulge anymore. I've pulled myself out of it.' He attempted to douse
the flames before they started, hoping Jack would understand.

"Oh? What got you out then?" Jack said, skeptical and annoyed. It felt like Pitch had just pulled something completely out of nowhere just to blindside him.

'Physical injury and...Sanderson and speaking of whom, here he comes now.' Pitch grimaced at the ugly, hideous 'thing' that was otherwise known as Sanderson's car that was making its way through the long road and towards his home.

He respected his friend but if there was anything he despised it was the overly bright school-bus shade of godawful yellow that he trashed his car with. He remembered actually having to drive to work with him once – he felt embarrassed for his friend instead of just for himself.

"Book guy?"

'Yes, I'm afraid. Tell you what, if he's actually snatching me off someplace I can pick you up and take you with us – maybe you two can finally move past 'book guy' and whatever he calls you when I'm not around...' Jack almost said no, almost, but when he realized that Pitch didn't tell him what his addiction was to begin with, he felt he was obligated to come. His curiosity pushed him along to hurry, get some food together and get dressed. He needed to know what it was that Pitch struggled with in the past – what was it that his beloved hiding place from the rest of the world, the man who he thought he could run to at the slightest hint of trouble and get nothing but love and care from, was addicted to?

Drugs? Alcohol? Pain? Everything was likely to be an addiction for Pitch, a man who lived entirely alone in the woods with no police or public interference, a high paying job and – Jack assumed – access to a number of drugs thanks to his medical background and attachments to other local professionals?

He couldn't stop himself from standing at the door, staring at the window and nervously, anxiously bouncing in place – Pitch was still 'on' the phone but he wasn't saying anything, still shaken by the fact that Jack didn't know and still couldn't tell what his addiction was. 'I suppose I haven't exactly been the most forthcoming about my past – even with Seraphina out in the open...' He headed upstairs to get a loose black or dark purple shirt on before leaving – hoping that whatever Sanderson was about to force him to do was something that involved large amounts of sitting down and doing nothing.

"I'm waiting by the door." He half-sung, pouting and wondering when Pitch could possibly get here. It was more a declaration of 'I'm still waiting for an answer', then any attempt to make conversation.

'Sanderson's being obnoxious.' Pitch mused, voice in a sing song that playfully mocked Jack's own while Sanderson forced him to pile into his own car – something Pitch appreciated. There was many things he would do in life, if the need arose but under no circumstances would he pick Jack up in a moving machine that was brighter then a healthy sunflower.

"Where are we going?" Jack felt like the decision of Pitch's past life was something they couldn't talk about over the phone – he wouldn't have the strength to believe it otherwise.

'If I knew, I'd be telling you. Sanderson's kind of an asshole about these thin- ow. No need to pinch, I'll follow – but we have to pick Jack up first okay?'

"Yeah I'm all dressed up and ready for you, if it helps."

'By now I would usually be making a dirty joke but I have to hang up. I'm not a fan of talking on the
"Yeah I understand. I'll wait for you on the porch."

'I'll be there in twenty minutes tops love.' He sounded stable, unworried and almost entirely care-free but in truth, Pitch was a bit fearful; he didn't realize that he had never told Jack about his addiction (or the young man forgot, either way the information needed to be retold to someone).

He didn't need to wonder why Jack seemed so antsy and nervous, he just found out that his boyfriend of about a month used to have the same problems his abusive parents did. 'Please do try not to worry about me until I get there.' He quickly added as he buckled his seat belt and settled in, watching a familiar golden friend of his scramble his way upwards into his own seat. It was meant only to make Jack calm down and he was confident that Jack wouldn't apply it to what he was saying now but rather the conversation they had earlier.

"See you soon." Pitch sensed the distinct, sharp lack of care and emotion that usually loaded that phrase – Jack's farewells and greetings always carried with them a twinge of sorrow and delight, respectively. This was loaded with nothing but a feeling of patient anxiousness and curiosity.

Looks like they were going to have even more talking to do when the time came...

'Of course milove.' He bade Jack farewell before hanging up the phone and relaxing his nerves, he had a good feeling he had a-lot of explaining to do in the near future...

Sophie stared at her own visage in the mirror, goosebumps appearing up and down her arms and legs. Gazing into her own reflection, it was as if there was some type of twisted creature in her flesh that was controlling her, wearing her like an old suit, forcing her to do the very things she feared most in life, things she'd never do if she was in another other type of position. In a moment of confusion she placed her hand over her cheeks and felt her own skin, trying to see if maybe she'd grown sick or had some disease.

But there was nothing to be found. Nothing to blame the guilt or shame she felt on; what she was doing was her choice, her fault and all her. No outside influences were controlling her beyond her own will - her will to give her brother whatever he wanted to please him.

Saying no to Jamie meant breaking his heart and saying yes to her morals meant having to say no to Jamie – but she couldn't break his heart. Not like this and not with Jack who was at this point, for all intents and purposes, the overseer of all of Jamie's actions.

She was at a dilemma; she could choose to be comfortable with herself, confess the plot to the Frost parents or choose to hopefully help Jamie feel just a little bit better about himself. With little to nothing giving her away she stood up and prepared herself to get ready for school, already knowing that she wouldn't be able to focus on any of the work until after her decision was made and the deed was done.
Pitch was not naive enough to assume that he 'knew' someone simply because he was in a romantic relationship with them. He'd been alive on Earth long enough to know that there were plenty of people out there who could form relationships and keep them stable for years only to have been discovered as a serial killer.

Even knowing that, however, he couldn't help but be confident that he'd soon have a very critical and overly comprehensive Jack – perhaps a more investigative version of 'Mary-mode' Jack – greeting him with questions and curious half-glances. He couldn't grow to have a fear at this occurring; Jack being disquieted by the revelation that Pitch, of all the people in his life, once too had an addiction, was an absolute assurance. He was more frightened that he wouldn't get the chance to explain before Jack jumped the conclusions and assumed things, he wanted to help Jack understand before he judged.

But when he came to a stop and gave the house a long look, only to see Jack staring back at him through shrouded eyes, fear came crawling back into him and he left his own vehicle in record time, tripping over the side-walk as he exited.

"I'll head inside and get him Sanderson, I think I have a bit of explaining to do..." He huffed, picked himself up and prepared to throw himself to the mercy of Jack's overly presumptuous mind.

Sanderson gave him a snide snicker and nodded. Pitch didn't even want to know what the other pulled out of that sentence and instead rapidly made his way up to the steps – as he ascended Jack's face disappeared from view and the curtains closed. He went to knock, more out of respect for tradition then out of announcement of his arrival, but before he could the door swung open wide...and William greeted him with a broad and hospitable grin that brought a familiar level of both nausea and concern to his stomach.

"Well hello there again Pitch." Cheery, bright and delightful like a suburban forties father stereotype, William had a toothy grin, a strangely out of place gray and plaid cardigan and a bounce about him that Pitch couldn't remember seeing on anyone but Katherine. Right besides him stood Jack whose face told an entirely different story of 'What is everyone smoking?' while his hair with playfully mused by his father in a 'I'm proud of you son' manner.

It was so perturbing it caught both him and Jack completely off guard. It was like looking into a 'what could have been' moment, like over the phone they'd accidentally said some type of cosmic phrase and slipped into the twilight zone without realizing. Only after William gave Pitch a curious look of 'What's wrong' did he realize that yes, this was a thing he was baring witness to; William being an inquisitive and present father...so far at least.

"Um, hello William. I came over to pick up Jack and take him to a private session." Pitch said, only expanding on what 'private meeting' meant after William's eyebrows perk ed up in interest. "It's going to be us somewhat interviewing and studying from a professional psychologist, watching and participating in a session or two." He quickly lied. He didn't even know if they were going to
towards the office – Sanderson didn't have the time or reason to tell him and he didn't need to: if it was important enough that Sanderson came to get him instead of faxing or mailing him, he wouldn't be here.

"Oh, really? Jack was just telling me he had the day off from school. Something about stress?" In William's voice was a ghostly whisper of suspicion and doubt, Pitch was more frightened of the fact that it existed rather than being revealed as a liar.

"They gave him the next two days off to come study so he wouldn't get over stressed. His grades are good enough that he was able to get out – at least that's what I think. My teachers did the same to me when I was in high school." He mulled over the small details of the lie and shrugged to add emphasis, secretly pleased to see William's expression turn over into one of belief as he lifted his hand from Jack's head and nodded.

"It's early but I guess its okay since you're building towards your future." William said, looking down at Jack who glanced back up with wide eyed amazement – more appalled to see a sober William then anything. "Make sure you get home at a reasonable time. We need to have a good long talk about some stuff okay kiddo?"

William raised his hand to give Jack another hair rub and before he could make contact Jack visibly twitched away, eyes breaking into fear. Pitch could see the hurt flashing in William's eyes, the regret and self-turned anger that lurked in him.

Guilt, it appeared, did not haunt Pitch alone.

"Well I should probably get going." Jack said, fidgeting and trying his best not to look his father in the eye, knowing that might trigger further awkward 'bonding' time. He quickly stormed off to the door, his father's last words to him being a quiet, unheard 'Have a nice day...'.

Jack stormed outside, counting every step that helped him get further away from the now 'Topsy-turvy' house a blessing in disguise. Pitch was the lying addict and his father, of all people, was now trying to bond with him and become a sober and active parental figure in his life.

Despite not being sure he would be able to spend any time with Pitch in his current state of mind, he made a rapid beeline for the black, sleek and familiar vehicle, not bothering to voice a word of welcome or worry to his older boyfriend who followed behind him, just as bewildered as he.

"All of a sudden he comes downstairs – from my room – and started talking to me like I should know what he's talking about." Jack whispered as he opened the car door wide, shoved himself in and slammed it next to him, no patience for being careful.

Pitch quickly entered the driver's seat, buckling up his seat-belt and throwing another baffled glance Jack's way. "Why?" If there was anything that Pitch couldn't see William as, it was as an involved and caring parent, but if what Jack was saying and what he saw was anything to go by that was exactly what he was trying to become...not that it was working very well thus far.

"I don't know but it freaked me the fuck out." He mumbled as he stared out the window, watching in shock and horror as William waved him goodbye from the opened door, he considered actually waving back but felt like something horrifying would occur if he did. So he watched as the bright, eye-catching yellow car ahead of them began to move and soon after, so did theirs.

"I can tell, your eyes look like saucers." Pitch noted, taking one last rapid glance towards Jack and making sure he was properly buckled in for the ride. "Can't help but be weirded out by that though...has he done it before?"
"The 'attempting to be supportive' stuff? Yeah, but never to the point where you couldn't smell alcohol on him." Jack gazed into the back window, making sure that his father really was getting further away from him. He wasn't going to lie to himself or anyone else, he would love a kind, supportive and friendly William. Looking back at his own childhood, he figured he could use it in his life, but to see it so suddenly come back into his life even when it could be a 'sober week', gave him pause.

"That's a bit frightening." Pitch said, not wanting to expand on whether it was frightening because William was trying harder this time, putting more effort behind his own recovery meaning that if he failed he could enter a worse emotional and addictive state then before or the fact that Jack could remember smelling alcohol on his father whenever he attempted to make good on his promises to care for the family.

"Tell me about it. I nearly hit the ceiling when he touched me the first time...felt all weird and creepy – as gross as that sounds." Jack was shivering in the back seat, wiping his hands together and then dragging them across the upholstery of the car as if removing slime from his skin.

"I know how you feel." Pitch shuddered silently in his seat, flashing back to some of his own abusive or creepy in retrospect relationships, he couldn't even count the amount of times where his survival instincts and common sense had been dulled due to alcohol or due to feeling absolutely pathetic about himself as a human being. He was sure that Jack's own terror didn't come with William attempting to touch him sexually – that certainly hadn't occurred – but the sensation of feeling sticky and grossed out by another person's touch rung familiar to him. He silently extended his sympathy to a disgusted Jack.

"So, where are we headed to?" Jack stopped rubbing his hands against the car seat in favor of using his pants, figuring it to be rude to do otherwise. "Or has Sanderson not told you yet?"

"Oh, right..." He realized that his boss and Jack still had yet to meet face to face and, in a moment of both agony and revelation he stared into the back window of the sunflower colored vehicle in front of him with vehemence.

Sanderson often took it upon himself to privately 'test' the emotional durability his partners, meaning that this meeting was going to go one of two ways...Sanderson would insult him until he cried or Pitch would successfully occupy enough of his time so that he could get Jack and him away without leaving the two alone in a room together.

"Look Jack, do me a favor for today and try not to get caught in a room alone with him. We're heading in the general direction of the office so, I'm guessing he wants to reinstate me for work and things of such a nature. It appears that you're stuck with me for the day I'm afraid." A sent the younger man a playful grin that wasn't reciprocated. Lightening the mood, it seemed, was not a possibility.

Luckily enough, they were a few sparse blocks from the office. Pitch could feel the growing, half-feigned hatred dripping from Sanderson's car – although, in the shorter man's defense that could have just been his own misplaced hatred of the car itself.

"Why? Is he dangerous or something?" He could sense the smaller threads of information being knit together in the younger man's mind. The truth of the matter was that the question wasn't whether or not Sanderson was an unsafe person to be around – the question was if he was intimately linked to whatever Pitch was previously dependent on.

Pitch coiled his tongue and sucked on it, trapping it in-between his teeth as he did – thinking of which words from his repertoire he could cherry pick and use to not give Jack the wrong impression.
"Not dangerous but aggressively defensive of me."

"Like...stalker level defensive?"

It wasn't difficult to see where Jack was going with this, where he was leading the both of them. Despite both the clear lack of power he held over them and the complete denial of sexual feelings from Jack, Jamie was still an active and present presence in their lives even when he was no longer in the room tormenting them both, playing with and scraping against the cords of Jack's heart like a bow against violin strings.

'Oh. Great.' The shrink swallowed and tried to make sure his following words would be rational, fair and wouldn't lead to more guilt. "Look, Jack...I think your beginning to just...make connections where there are none."

"We've stopped."

Pitch looked forward in shock, unsure of when that even came to be. Sanderson was standing impatiently right next to his car, tapping his foot and repeatedly clearing his throat while Jack kept a blank face in the backseat, almost as impatient but not revealing it just yet.

In truth, Jack was a seething, pent up bottle of rage, impatience, anger and a deep, throbbing want to know. What was Pitch's addiction – he couldn't be kept away from information so precious and not be driven wild from the lack of knowing. The worst part was that with every last second that passed as they made their way to and into the office he felt as if Pitch was somehow stalling his ass off with every last fiber of his body.

Which made sense because, secretly, he was.

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By the time they both made it out of the car and began their asent up the office steps behind Sanderson, who Jack couldn't help but laugh at when he was confident the man wasn't looking, Pitch was sure that the entire thing was behind them. He believed this was a good thing because he despised talking about the less then happy parts of his past with Jack, whom he intended to spend the rest of his future with.

Jack on the other hand was admiring the scenery – or the distinct lack of such – from his own position next to Pitch. He'd never been in a therapist's office before and he was curious as to what the place was like...he imagined there would be more chairs, frankly.

After a short turn that reminded Pitch of how truly quiet him and his party were, Sanderson stopped short mere feet from Pitch's room, typing a message only he could see.

"What's up?" Jack inquired, hands nervously fingering the hem of his pants, once again he felt as if he was in someone else's home and couldn't touch or glance at anything for too long.

'Hey faggot.' The phone screen shined brightly in the dim hush of the hallway, Pitch almost wanted to scream – this would be where it began, wouldn't it? He glanced to Jack and nearly interjected, trying to repair the damage before it sunk in...

"Hey tiny-tiny world." Jack scoffed, keeping an unusual level of cool considering their previous conversation and the words that were went to come. He even began restfully chuckling to himself, keeping his hands in pockets and eyes unfocused. Pitch stepped back and raised his hands to Sanderson in mock surrender, unsure of where the entire meeting would lead.
'You taking dick from the brooding onyx statue?' Sanderson’s face was an unreadable mirage.

"Depends," Jack took a short pause to stretch and glare down at the little man holding the screen so he could think of something good enough to finish this ‘competition’ of theirs. "You giving head to papa smurf?"

Sanderson’s eyes narrowed in shock, hearing the words. There were very few people who had the balls to both insult his sexuality and his height and got away with it. Behind Jack Pitch was mere moments from stepping in and becoming a human barricade – the man was after all, vertically challenged but that in no way, shape or form meant that he was weak.

And then, he calmed himself, released a long, hard laugh, typing something else out on his screen while repeating quietly ‘papa smurf, really?’.

'...You pass.' It read and Jack chuckled, still playing it cool but feeling like an entire ton of solid weight had crashed off his back.

"Damn right I do, now get the fuck out before I punt you like a baby seal." Jack nudged his head to the opposite direction down the hall and smiled to a frightened and confounded Pitch, who gazed at him as if he'd just solidified the rings around Saturn with a single word. "We have a meeting, don't we Doctor Pitch?"

Sanderson smiled wide and threw the keys in Pitch's face as he passed, chuckling under his breath at the new revelation he received.

"...Ah! Right, meetings. Y-yes..." Pitch rushed ahead of him, extracting his keys before rushing inside and preparing the room. Later on, he decided, he'd have to ask how the hell Jack did that.
I'd like to note before the next chapter airs: No, both part 1 and part 2 of this chapter are non-consecutive. They share similar themes but take place with a long amount of time between one another.

In a slow and reserved stride Jack entered, not able to vocalize his reaction aside from a hypnotized ‘Wow’. The sight of the pale, gray room before him was suspiciously inconspicuous. The colors were, in no way, shape or form phenomenal or eye-catching but at the same time it was where Pitch came to work and help people – this was where people came and were consulted, asked to pour their heart out into Pitch's hands and, in-exchange, received epiphanies about their lives and came to confront their personal issues.

Jack felt there was something oddly mystical and worthy of awe in that. The thought that Pitch had at his disposal, without any sort of machine or tool needed aside from his voice and his skills, the prospective ability to fix problems that no other type of doctor could. He ran his fingers down the famed curved chair with a tiny grin reaching his face. “This is where I sit right?”

Pitch ceased his gatherings and musings of papers that were pushing weeks to a full month old and instead did a double take on Jack’s form with a delighted smirk painted on his face. “Yes, if we were having a session...” Still shaking off the shock from Jack and Sanderson's little bout in the hallway, it was an interesting thing to say the least; he'd never seen his friend let someone go like that. It was always a fight or a few more brutal insults that would have your normal person making a beeline for the door or, more often then not, fully leaving the relationship.

Jack threw himself over the chair and let his body relax from a built up tension that he intended to release when the time was right. It wasn't the most comfortable thing he ever sat on this early in the morning but he found a sense of welcoming rest in it and he wasn't sure if this was because of the knowing that he was in Pitch's domain or if he was merely imagining things. “Can we have a session?”

“Well my schedule is...free today.” Pitch laughed, pleased to see that Jack was calming down and making things more about them and less about Jamie. “I don't assume why not, for the fun of it.” He made his way around his desk with an abnormal magnitude of glee – he forgotten the joy he extracted from his job and in hindsight he knew that the stress and resentment of the days he spent at work before meeting Jack were because of September.

He'd always enjoy working to figure out the innumerable number of varied emotions that made up each person, every shade of gray they could show when reduced to their most basic of interactions with a simple, basic, minute action that he discovered quite quickly in life that he had a talent for. Talking.

He couldn't go over the amount of times he could tell whether or not a person was lying, hurting or in pain by dancing around them with his words, changing the subject and agreeing with them only to come back to it in a subtle way. Extracting the truth without them even being any the wiser.
Even better though was in his office – this was where secrets came to be shared. He bit his lip to prevent a mirthful snicker from escaping his mouth as he pulled his rolling chair over with a small but reasonably important clipboard in his opposite hand.

He’d compare the minds of people to puzzles if it were so simple but the truth was that they were more like clay or marble – and for a fun few perhaps 'play-dough' would be the best description. Easily reformable, twist-able and changeable with the correct instruments and pressure, easy to leave a permanent dent in and easy to rub a mark out on...

With that thought still resonating in his mind he sat down in the chair and smiled as Jack placed his hands behind his head and sighed.

“So, where do I start?” Jack’s wide and open beam made Pitch smile all the more – which he hid with his clipboard but then quit trying after his patient began to giggle at him.

“Well, we could start with this: Hello Jack, how is your day going so far?”

“Well Doctor, I have to say that this day has been pretty good so far.” Pitch couldn't help but smile as Jack put on over-dramatic airs, waving his arms about to match the mood as he went to explain why the day was only 'pretty good' and not 'perfect' – all while staying truthful, strangely enough. “I felt rather faint this morning.” He raised his arms to feign exhaustion, one hand over his forehead and the other over his chest, over his heart. “I worried myself to sickness over my beloved beau, I worried all through the night without sleeping!”

“Oh, do tell me about it!” Pitch laughs and plays along, knowing the moments when they both laugh are few and far between...for now at least. When Jamie and the guilt and the stress all goes away then Pitch decides he'll go out of his way to make these moments happen with more frequency, just to heart Jack's delighted chortles if he can.

“I'm so worried sometimes” And like that, quicker then Pitch can foresee it coming for himself, the mood changes. “That he doesn't love me.” And there it is, Jack bashing him out of the 'happy' times and back into seriousness – no overacting movements or unneeded flair was needed or used, Jack was speaking honestly now.

“Jack please.” Pitch wants to and tries to recapture that same essence and moment of happiness and carefree, childish joy they had a moment ago, he wants to return to having no problems or guiltiness stacking on his shoulders.

“No.” Jack shakes his head and denies him the opportunity to even try to get the moment back. “You have been putting off telling me your addiction haven't you?”

“Jack, for the love of-”

“Don't try and put this onto me!” He suddenly rises from his seat, there no anger in his words but there is a familiar intensity that reminds him of 'Mary-mode' as Pitch had come to now call it. “You would’ve told me over the phone or now, before this whole stupid fake session started, if we weren't trying to hide it from me.”

“Oh would you!” Pitch said shamefully, getting out of his own seat and looming over Jack, forcing him to be reminded who the stronger and larger of them was.

But Jack refused to be intimidated by Pitch's figure and instead smirked at him. “Why, what are you gonna do? Yank me into another room and insult my mother again?”

There were things that Pitch never wanted to bring up again – their first heavy 'Ground Zero' fight
being one of them and with those words, bringing back those memories, Jack unintentionally wiped all thoughts, counter-arguments and rationalities from Pitch’s brain. The older man gaped at Jack and stepped back in offense and utter shock. Jack felt a pang of regret but his inner bravado would not allow him to back down – he merely rolled his eyes to betray his true feelings while Pitch attempted to deal with his.

By the time Pitch believed himself capable of forming sensible sentences Jack was reaching a state of denial regarding the whole incident.

“Okay, we apparently need to talk about...that.” Pitch sneered unhappily, facing away from Jack while he silently scribbled with a marker over the clipboard paper. Everything was just going so well and then it all came crashing down so suddenly – it was frightful to think that Jack could, with but a few sparse sentences, completely ruin his mood and train of thought in such a swift and precise way.

“Look, Pitch I'm sorry okay? But when you hide something like that from me you can't expect me to just forget about it.”

“Yes you do have a bad past and relationship with addiction...” Pitch twiddled the marker in his fingers, 'accidentally' marking his fingers up with messy black smudges that were only a few shades darker than his hands.

“Yeah and a bad current with it. I mean, fuck, Pitch would you just tell me?”

“Fine, since you appear to lack any form of tact or emotional reading: sex! It was sex, of all the things I love.” He spat, the repressed anger in his words reaching a rolling boil and releasing itself in more volume, more rage. “I was absolutely addicted to it, to the point where I was getting hurt, bleeding from the inside out and yet still I wanted more.”

Jack watched with raised eyebrows, unsure of what to think. There were things to normally find out about someone but then there was this; to find out that his boyfriend would have sex until he had internal bleeding and then just want more – it only hurt further to remember that it was only after he suffered more physical injury that he stopped.

It begged the question: exactly how bad was the injury to pull him out, if internal hemorrhaging couldn't?

Even worse was the fact that he never knew or realized about it, Jack would've expected or guessed substance, self harm or alcohol abuse before 'sex' came to mind. It just didn't seem 'Pitch-like' to him, although he could see Pitch taking something too far and continuing with it despite the pain, if he believed it was helping him.

Like Seraphina and the cafe.

“So are you pleased Jack? Can we stop having stupid, obnoxious annoying arguments and get back to us? Because, believe it or not, I like spending time doing fun, asinine things with you and not being sad, depressed and angry all the time. I've spent well over too many damn years of my life feeling pathetic anyway.” Pitch hissed, arms crossing and looking away from the now bent over figure of his younger boyfriend, who now felt like a complete tool for even beginning this in the first place.

“Okay Pitch, I'm sorry, I'm not the most elegant or tactful person but when you hide things from me that I clearly want to know I get worried, like really worried. And it's not because I don't trust you, it's because I do trust you and I know you wouldn't hide something from me that could hurt me, so when you do hide stuff, I know its something mega-important and frightening.”
“Then you should trust me to tell you when I can Jack.” Pitch places both his hands on Jack's shoulders and sits them down, looking him straight in the eye as he explains. “Jack for sake of sincerity I'm going to be honest. You are the only person I think I've dated, slept with, argued with and lived with and still wanted to be around after the first fight happened but at the same time, I've never been this frightened of someone leaving me.” It was the truth, Pitch couldn't stop thinking about how to proceed in the relationship, how he could please or appease Jack so that somehow this active itch of worry that he'd find someone else would ease itself. “Understand, it's not that I want to keep things from you but that I want to keep myself from pushing you away with my own fucked up history.”

“I'm not going to leave you just because you used to have a lot of sex Pitch, that's stupid.” Jack deadpanned, shaking his head lightly and staring at the ground. “You think that after hearing about...” He fiddled and stabbed at his front teeth with his tongue before saying it. “Seraphina something like 'sex', which we both enjoy mind you, is going to push me away? If anything I'm just more enthralled to stay – you saying your an ex-sex addict really seems more an an admission of experience.”

“Jack, it's...” Pitch soughs at noticing his personal error and how strikingly similar both their problems were: they kept on assuming the worse was going to occur, always focusing on the negative. While Jack issues were with his parents and expecting them to never change or get better Pitch allowed himself to buy into the thought that Jack would be revolted by his sexual history and break off the relationship. He assumed Jack's side of things without hearing his point of view – a dumb move.

“I apologize. I keep superimposing my own...moderately fucked up self-esteem onto your opinion and having break ups with you in my mind.” He mumbled his words and paced the length and perimeter of the room, rubbing the increasingly worrying forehead lines with a tentative hand, wondering just how long he'd been doing this to himself; thinking that Jack would find him unworthy because of different that in reality, Jack never even knew or considered.

Jack's belligerency deflated and he let himself sink down into the couch again to stare at the ceiling, feeling absurdly calm considering his earlier sense of panic. “We really need to – I think – have another day of you, me and Mary.”

“I think so to, I miss you...and her.” Pitch smiles lightly, not facing Jack but instead facing the window, staring through it and senselessly observing the gray urban landscape.

“Me too.” He grins and picks himself up, approaching Pitch with purpose. “Did I ever tell you?” His arms wrap around his older lover in an embrace that is one part admiration and two parts intimacy, his hands come together in an interconnected knot that Pitch holds in his own hands. “You two look great together, you know? Like you belong together. I almost feel like I shouldn't be there sometimes.”

“Don't feel that way Jack. If there's anyone needed with me and Mary it's you.” Pitch takes Jack's hands into his own and kisses them individually, breathing in his scent and admiring the entirety of him, right down to his old soul. “Wasn't that the original plan? You, me and Mary in that big house, a happy family?”

“Yeah...” He reminisces of the first few days of their relationship and places his head against Pitch's back, listening to his heartbeat with a focus that is beyond what he thinks possible. “I still want that.”

“Me too, really.” There is a sense of worry that lurks underneath his most base instinct – the feeling that they may never claim their white picket fence dream, that something was bound or destined to go completely haywire and tear their hopes to shreds. “Jack you need to promise me something,
Alright? Promise me that you'll start making a conscious effort to help your parents along with their recovery.”

Jack’s nose wrinkles as he squints and twitches, as if in physical pain, before returning to normal.

“I know, I know.” Pitch’s shoulder slunk and he turned to embrace his younger, troubled lover before he could retreat away. The apprehension and anger towards that statement was in no way subtle, Jack didn't even bother to raise his arms and embrace back.

It made sense really. Jack was suffering from other people's addictions and emotional disturbances. Jamie's obsession, his mother and father's questionably concluded bouts of violent abuse from intoxication and Pitch's own lack of openness regarding his past, with Jack who was – for better or worse – a currently fully functional human being with perhaps just a tad bit too much on his plate for him to muster through alone.

For Pitch, the real shock was how surprisingly sane and stable Jack was through all of it: he was at the center of all of it like the epicenter of a tornado, peaceful and calm through the storm. He pecked a small kiss to Jack's head and felt a warm hand push at his chest, not welcoming or rubbing but rather weakly attempting to push away.

“I know, me to ask you, to help them.” The older man shook his head and, as carefully as he could, slowly weaved together his reasoning in a way Jack could, hopefully, agree with. “Understand, Jack, I'm not saying your parents or I have gone through more suffering then you. If fact, dare I say us and our old bones have cause you quite a bit of worry and turmoil that you, my precious dear snowflake.” He glanced down towards Jack and at last caught his hurt, wetting eyes.

“But please, listen when I tell you that we all need to rely on each other to pull through things like this; there's no point in pushing them away and still hoping they get better, work is required. Trust me,” his eyes became briefly distant as he remembered how he felt, ruined and pained with his body more taxed then he could ever remember, aching from the inside out and with no one – not even Sanderson there – to help him or hear his worries and confessions. It was only when Jack's hand gripped his shirt to pull him back that he returned with a small jolt, shaking his head and continuing. “...I'm not telling you that you have to completely forgive them, I'm not even telling you that you have to like them – God knows I don't. But, getting through things like this alone is hard work, I would know.”

Jack sighed and averted his stare to the floor, teeth half gritted. “Pitch, look I know but do you have any idea how hard it is to be around them? It's been years of living in fear of getting beaten up or coming back to find Mary dead on the floor or not being able to feed her because dad lost his job or something or the other.”

“You don't have to forgive them Jack.” He repeated, pressing his lips against Jack's forehead and running his hands in a smooth, reassuring motion down the center of his back, relishing the closer, more informal contact. “Help them make themselves better people, for Mary's sake. Don't push them to get better, just try and be there for them. Please.” He begged with a light squeeze.

“Years.” Jack's voice broke in a whisper and his muffled sigh broke against Pitch's shirt, warm and heart-felt. As much as he wanted a better life for Mary and himself, he yearned to be told that it was okay to hate his parents – that just this once hatred wasn't a poison but a cure and a reassurance of higher moral standing. He couldn't find a single part of him that agreed with Pitch’s words, not a single shred of him wanted to give his parents another chance to try.

Because they would mean they could nearly succeed...
'Again'

Then fail.

Then he'd get hurt.

'Again.'

Watching his parents drink their lives away.

'Again.'

“Years spent furious and upset, I know. It's hard to just...” He shrugged, thinking and looking up at the ceiling in a sense of wonder at it all. "Let it all go...but why continue them when you can help assure they end, at least for you and your sister?"

Jack glanced up at him with slitted eyes, a rage in him growing against his knowing; Pitch was right. His parents could make it this time and he could help them along, he could be there to back them up, maybe help stop the urges. “Years don’t end with a single conversation.”

That wasn’t an agreement, nor a denial. It was a promise to consider the chance of assisting...and to Pitch, just that, was an achievement in and of itself. He gave his younger beloved a wide, pleased smile, nuzzling his face into Jack's hair and delighting in the constricting, gripping hug he received in response.

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“Hey there Mary!” Sophie put on her brightest smile and watched Mary's face light up, jubilant and joyful like Christmas lights mid-December.

“Ooh...Sophie!” Mary screamed and tackle hugged the blonde young woman, only just remembering her name and face from times from a long, long time ago, from when Jamie would come over the Jack's house and they would spend rare, brief moments together with their younger sisters in tow. “I haven't seen you in so long!”

“Tell me about it, you got so much taller and bigger!” Sophie declared, immediately kneeling to hug Mary despite the rain tearing away at the ground around them. Despite what she was sent to do, she did in fact miss Mary. She missed her eager hugs and wide smiles and even the slightly painful tackle hugs she'd give to her closest friends and family. “I haven't seen you in so long, how was your day?”

“It was good, I don't have a lot of homework or anything. It's a half day today so they're letting us go home early.” The young girl shrugged and happily took the familiar friend's hand as offered. “Are you gonna walk me home?”

'...here it comes.' Sophie thinks to herself, feeling every moral part of her body suddenly hiss and bite at her – the phone in her back pocket feels like a weight on her very soul. She wants to call Jamie, she wants to pull out but...the sheer thought of Jamie’s disappointment, his sadness, weighed down on her arms. “No, today you're gonna be spending some time at my house okay?”

“Do my mommy and daddy know?”

'Smart girl.' Sophie smiles and pulls out her phone immediately, trying to use the spur of the moment emotional exoneration to dial the number of the Frost home and tell them of Jamie's over-the-top plan to 'win' Jack back.
The phone rings and Katherine is on in an instant, which throws Sophie for a loop considering how much alcohol she remembers seeing her leave Jon's business with. “Hey there, Ms. Frost?”

’Sophie?’ Katherine's clearly thrown for as much of a loop as the young blonde is for a moment.

“That's my name, don't wear it out.” Her response is natural-sounding, smooth and painstakingly practiced in the large glamor mirror in her room. “Anyway, Jack's coming over to our house for a little while. Do you mind if I take Mary to my house?”

'Of course not, go ahead darling!' Katherine sounds happy and relieved that someone else is taking over her responsibilities of Mary, to the point where Sophie doesn't doubt that even while they are talking Katherine is buzzed out of her mind.

“Thank you Ms. Frost, I'll try to have her home by a reasonable time!” Sophie felt part of herself cheer in victory while another part screamed in defeat, she failed to gather the bravery to reveal that she wasn't picking Mary up to escort her to some Jamie and Jack play-date.

Mary was a hostage.
It's 7 pm....

Chapter Summary

Ah yes, the beginning of my favorite arc...

And the one I'm writing the worst ;_; Sorry.

Pitch, despite his profound, professional involvement with the human condition, better yet known as the feelings, drama and the mysteries of the human mind, did not specifically enjoy experiencing the hardships and pain of life with Jack. He'd much rather see Jack do nothing but be happy, perhaps not always smiling since after all, he did plan to make Jack moan and beg for more, saliva dripping around a gag while he begged in want and despairing need, but he still always wanted Jack to be – at a core level of his fundamental being – utterly blissful and content.

With that in mind, their chat concerning Jack's need to support and be supportive of his less then currently successful parents had possibly succeeded in the opposite effect. After Pitch had released Jack, the young man had resigned himself to feigning sleep on the lengthy chair on the other side of the room. His body faced the opposite wall and he was silent, his breath not labored but erratic, as if crying in acute bursts of negative emotion.

In a test of what effect he may have had on Jack's current state of mind, Pitch called to him in an attempt to get some form of response. "Jack, it's nearly noon. You've been lying there for hours...you need something to eat or drink?" His voice was careful and patient, soft and melodious and he didn't dare approach the other side of the room – if there was one thing Jack probably needed; it was space.

"I'm fine." His voice sounded stuffy, agonized and on the verge of breaking. He was clearly crying and upset, his nose clearly stopped up and his chest heaving shortly after speaking.

'And this is where it starts.' Pitch shut his eyes and exhales, sending the boy some silent love from across the room with a bittersweet but understanding smile. He knew the game of hatred rather well, he'd been playing it for years with so many people – Seraphina's biological mother for trying to take Seraphina from him, old lovers of both male and female origin who'd left him without so much as a 'Have a nice day', his own parents and their lack of care for him after he'd left the closet, himself for just existing, the list of those who were hated went on and on.

He'd be lying if he didn't know the challenge Jack was facing right now – he knew the familiar point when your hatred felt so justified that it was as if you were superior to them just by hating, that you held a sort of power over them by denying them the ability to get emotionally close to you. The truth was that you didn't hold any real power – your actions were emotionally sanctimonious, but when walking away hurt from anything in life licking your wounds and being forced by differing circumstances to accept changes or challenges that you detested, anything that you could cling to, right down to even the pettiest grudges, could feel like grand victories.

Breaking ties with what may be the only 'victory' one had after years of clinging and remembering was no small feat even when you trudged past the ego problem of it.

He permitted Jack twenty more minutes of solemn, lonesome grieving before announcing his leaving in the form of 'Getting some take-away for the both of us, be back soon, don't talk to any weird
people, any normal people or Sanderson, whatever he is.’ A ton of weight lifted from his heart as a weak laugh escaped the room just as he closed the door.

Jack didn't enjoy challenges that required him to suffer, he didn't particularly like the pain of punishment and non-physical punishment. It was a torture he had his fill of already and didn't wish to experience further. Pitch's plea for him to help was reasoned automatically as a plea for him to simply 'forgive and forget' – even when he knew he was saying otherwise. There was the faintest echo of 'they don't deserve it' that followed every moment of his consideration and if that was not enough then followed remembering and reminiscing over the pain.

Had it just been one memory, Jack thought that maybe he could push his way past his anger...but each time he kept remembering new things, new reasons to be angry. Sometimes they were flashes of phantom pains in his stomach, reminding him of the injury and the violent night that lead him to Pitch, other times they were memories of having to adjust and change his lifestyle to fit his parent's own schedule and behavior.

Having to learn things at the first few years of his single digits that other people didn't learn how to do until they were in their tens or even their teens; work a stove when he was too short to even see over the edge of it, often burning his fingers, having to wake up early in the fifth grade to take Mary to and from pre-school and claiming he was older then he really was so he wouldn't get in trouble, not having birthday parties, not getting anything for his birthday, not being listened to, not being cared for like other kids were.

But the worst ones were the moments he came to realize how fucked up his own time on Earth here was, not the moments in retrospection but times at twelve and thirteen years of age when he watched other children get along with their parents, have days out them and have them say they were proud of them and loved them and feel like they meant it.

One bitter memory stood out amongst the rest and made him grind his teeth and curse between rushed whispers. "Fuck them."

He remembered himself at eleven, still relatively bright eyed despite the flaring reddened cheek that marked the first time his father put his hands on him. He had previously gathered the bravery to intervene between a fight between his parents, throwing himself in harm's way with tears dripping from his face begging, 'Daddy stop hitting mommy!'..

To say his pleas fell on deaf ears would be an understatement but the real shock was Katherine's lack of care regarding his injury. She stood there, unsurprised and as calm as an untouched pound and watched him get hit. Afterward, she didn't move a muscle to help him slink his way back up the steps to escape William's verbal barrage of curses and insults.

He returned upstairs, face flaring up with pain and quietly crying only to glance wishfully out of his window, watching his classmates and friends out playing in the snowfields with their parents, smiling and happy. In the background the sound of breaking furniture and his own screaming mother, arguing and begging not to be beaten again and that William was a 'pathetic slob'.

That was when he realized how really fucked he was.

"Fuck them, they don't deserve shit." Jack hissed to the nearly empty room, his shoulder growing in ache at repeated pokes.

His fiery rage was kindled to the point where he was even upset with Pitch. The way he saw it, the older man was minimizing his feelings and pushing him out of the way for the sake of taking a
chance that Katherine and William could become 'better people'. Didn't he realize that the past half a decade had been filled with these same 'miracle turnarounds' that only flipped back at the last second and spat in Jack's face? He knew that the moment he started investing any level of hope or happiness into this it would just crumble anyway, so what was the point?

"Fuc-" Jack was brought out of his bitter trance from a rough upper-shoulder strike that sent him tumbling from his chair, rolling onto his side and crashing to the floor with a painful landing.

Above him loomed Sanderson, phone in hand and face looking rather worried and displeased about Jack's condition. 'Where's Pitch?'

"That's a good fucking question." Jack spat, feeling none too pleased about being literally pushed out of his thoughts and back to the rest of the world.

'Oohh. Pitch hurt ya?'

Out of all he ways he could have answered that question, none of them seemed to 'click'. None of them grasped the full depth of how he felt with Pitch asking him to do what he considered the impossible. There was a faint knowledge that Pitch was right, that despite the emotional thrashing about he was doing now Pitch was really on higher moral ground – he should support his parent's endeavors.

But there was only so much that Jack could see himself pushing past, the madness buried inside of him was profound and it felt boundless. It was as if the more and more he thought about what he didn't have because of – as he saw it – his parents' addictions and selfishness, the more enraged he became.

Lost for an answer, he wordlessly climbed back on the chair and sighed aloud with a shrug of simply not knowing, letting Sanderson assume whatever he wanted to.

'Gonna assume its more complicated then that then.'

"It always is." He complained, rolling his eyes until it appeared he was moments away from fainting. It was true, wasn't it? Everything in his life was at least ten times more complicated then it really had to be – his parents fluctuating from on the straight and narrow to drunkards and back again, Jamie's recent unpleasant reentry into his life and Pitch expecting him to take on more pressure and responsibility when it came to his parents...who were masters at escaping pressure and responsibility.

'I'm not saying he's wrong or anything but speaking as Pitch's friend you're smart to take what he says with a grain of salt, while also listening and understanding him. He's gone through enough fucked up things – most of which self-inflicted – to both justify and disprove his advice."

"I gamble that's true for you too?"

'Somewhat; I see where you're coming from too. I was with him the night Seraphina died.' He adds a tiny sad face to the end; a pleasant afterthought that tells Jack all he needs to know. It's a charming like smiley face icon and Jack lightly chuckles, glancing up to see that there's a wistful yet hopeful grin on Sanderson's face, matching that of what's on the screen.

There's a fragment of Jack that realizes – this is the man that witnessed Pitch reach his lowest point, at that place where the world finally broke him without even laying a hand on him. From this, it's obvious that Sanderson is much more experienced in the matters of Pitch's heart then he is. He was, after all, the one who helped gather and put the pieces of it back together.

"It's weird isn't it? He's apparently gone through so much shit but like, he's still so caring and nice to
people younger then him." He rubs the back of his head in circles, thinking about the sight of Pitch and Mary together...and the need to see it again as soon as possible. "He's so good with kids too – you should see him with my little sister."

Sanderson's entire face changed into a squint and frown, his typing rapid and partially worried. 'Wait, wait, little sister?'

"Umm...my parent's are abusive and he lets us stay at his house sometimes, takes us out, buys us stuff, spoils us, but recently my parents have been okay and I went back home for the first time in a couple days."

'Jack, wait a second," His eyebrows were furrowed with worry and disapproval – Jack hoped this wasn't something that was forbidden for Pitch to have: Sanderson was more then likely still his doctor along some lines and perhaps, staying away from children was a technique to help Pitch heal correctly...he didn't know and he wasn't sure he wanted to. 'your little sister, describe her?'

Jack paused momentarily, fingers threading together and pulling apart nervously as he answered. "Brown hair, brown eyes, little, single digit age, eyes still too big for face?" What if Sanderson said that he and Pitch shouldn't see each other again anymore, began to try and keep them apart? "She comes up to a place in-between my waist and my knees now, when we met it was closer to my knees."

'Full legal name?'

The look in Sanderson's eyes told Jack that this was serious, Pitch probably wasn't supposed to be around them and he had just dedicated himself to taking them apart. Jack thought briefly, looking up to the ceiling and considering his options before deciding on the one he had chosen all his life; not telling superior figures a single damn thing. "I really don't think it's any of your business." He didn't even look at Sanderson and let his eyesight retreat to the ceiling. "I'm pretty sure what goes on between us is mine and his business."

'Jack that's not helping, I'm trying to help you here.'

Jack's gaze turned on him and he stabbed quickly, "By eavesdropping?" His voice judgmental and a laugh held prisoner at the bottom of his throat as Sanderson himself physically took a step back.

'How'd you know?'

"You said I should listen to Pitch's advice; advice wasn't previously mentioned or motioned to in the conversation, the door was closed and I never said anything about being upset with Pitch because of advice – you had to have listened from the doorway. Nice try, bad slip up." There was a note of victory that lingered on every word and Jack felt his sense of competition and lust of winning overtake him, briefly.

'Good catch, kiddo. I'd applaud you if I didn't hate the noise.' Sanderson smirked, eyes narrowing at the new knowledge he'd found; Jack was young but when he felt threatened he certainly wasn't a pushover. It made sense too, with his background. Jack's living and being raised in an unforgiving and unstable household made him perceptive to emotions and words. He would have to change what he knew and what he had to keep other people from knowing for the sake of keeping his family together, while also being smart enough to link together words with feelings. 'Ever consider being a police interrogator or a lawyer?'

"Not much of a future person, more of a here and now type of person." Jack chuckled lightly at the change of topic, hiding his victory note with a barely-there joke – from the looks of it he'd
successfully pulled Sanderson away from his sister and her existence in Pitch’s life.

'Well then, I leave you in the here and now and promise you we will, more then likely, meet again in the future.' Sanderson typed and then bowed, turning around and exiting the room in a half-defeated stride. "Oh and I should probably mention—" He turned around in front of the open door. "I already know your sister's name is Mary Frost, I wasn't trying to attack you or Pitch – I was looking out for you because she goes to the same school where I offer children's counseling. You automatically assumed I was going after Mary just from inquiring about her existence. I should also note I have security cameras and listening devices in here for the sake of safety." 'For Pitch's sake' was the unexplained but equally understood meaning in that sentence but for sake of staying silent Jack didn't bother commenting on it, especially when the second meaning under in the sentence was 'without his permission or knowledge'. "In any case you're overly defensive – fix that."

As the door closed with a quiet, victorious sound and Jack was left to his lonesome, now realizing not only that Sanderson was more perceptive then he appeared...and not mute from the sound of it, he noted that the older man wasn't just a close friend of Pitch – he insulted Jack and repeatedly tested him on mental battlefields...he was trying to defend Pitch from bad relationships, albeit poorly and in annoyingly insulting manner.

He returned to lounging on the couch, mind prohibited from venturing too far from the increasingly complex matters of Pitch, his parents, Sanderson, Mary, Jamie and himself. He examined every relationship a little deeper as he thought of how to try and forgive his parents – and get back at Sanderson for calling him overly defensive. The more he thought about it the more his relationships seemed like they were a massive, multi-person balancing act, dealing and exchanging with the people around him, careful not to drop one or hurt one. Too much of something set someone off – too little of it felt as if it was hurting him.

He didn't feel time pass as he thought and considered what his next actions should be – was his hatred really giving him something here? Should he take Pitch's advice and help his parents or maybe even go so far as to forgive them? Try and deal with Jamie and his now momentarily distant ball of overly-obsessed insanity first – furthermore should he try and salvage the relationship between him and Jamie? Would there be anything left to salvage or would it just get awkward?

In all his wondering and attempted decision making he caught himself scowling at a dark, strangely familiar shape in his peripheral vision, only to reach out and capture Pitch's right thigh in a light grip.

"Ah, so you are awake." Pitch chuckled, turning around and revealing three large bags of Chinese take out and an additional plastic bag carrying two different brands of the same cream flavored soda. "Behold young child, I bring nourishment for thine hungering stomach."

"I said I wasn-" He stopped himself mid-sentence, deciding that not only was he hungry but eating together, in a quiet scenery with no television raging on in the background and no stupid programs to rudely and comically insult was something he and Pitch didn't do enough. "As a matter of fact, did you get white rice and boneless barbeque spare rib tips?"

"With the especially sweet barbeque sauce, yes." Pitch chuckled, bending over to place the bags down on the floor.

And Jack saw a great, enjoyable way for them to both hit two birds with one stone – to piss Sanderson off and have a little fun time with Pitch. He prepared himself, aimed his swipe and proceeded to spank Pitch with an open palm, earning a surprised and half-broken moan from his bent-over boyfriend, who quickly dropped the twin soda bags and food bags.

"Oh...nice." Jack mumbled, eying the soft curvature of Pitch's back and admiring how well curved
his ass looked in the now afternoon light.

However, unlike he would have normally expected, Pitch didn't immediately get up and throw him a snark-filled comment on his lack of sexual knowledge in comparison. He didn't even move, only released slow and shallow breaths. Jack had no idea what to do – he was paralyzed with momentary fear until he remembered Pitch's admitted sexual promiscuity. At that, he guessed that he'd unexpectedly triggered something in Pitch's memories and with a tentative hand he ran a smooth motion down the older man's back, not drawing attention to the noticeable shivers that escaped him or the later gasping sounds he could just barely hear.

"I'm sorry." Jack whispered, a painful ache irradiating from the sight – his heart broken from hearing and see Pitch break down from such a simple motion. Something as simple as a slap on the ass could break him like this? It hurt to think of what he had been through, with whoever he had been with, that something like that would be enough.

"Y-you didn't do anything Jack." With the hurting whine at the end of the sentence and the brokenness of his voice telling him otherwise he came down from the couch, resting by Pitch's side. "Just...memories."

"I know the feeling, I've had it all day."

"Great." Pitch said, body shaking with tremors as he tried to get up onto his knees and right himself on some level. "Now we're both hurt, having flashbacks and hungry."

"Was it something from post-Seraphina time?" Jack was trying his best to not be crude or insensitive and he hoped his voice would give that much away, he was trying to tip toe around Pitch's more volatile feelings. The older man glanced back at him, eyes dripping wet and face strangely at peace, despite the heart-broken frown that marred his features.

"Can we just eat please?" The brokenness ghosting along his voice stabbed at Jack's heart and the light hesitation of his tone, opposite to Sanderson's ever self-confidant one, only served to pour salt in the wound. "I would really like to have some return to...normalcy, if we could."

Jack blinked, a sense of self focused disgust falling over him as he realized what he had just done – just this morning Pitch was telling him how much he missed them after all of the emotionally charged drama that their lives had been filled with as of late. Now, after bringing Pitch's painful sexual history back into the spotlight and practically forcing him to discuss it he had triggered him without realizing it.

He nodded and proceeded to retrieve the bags for Pitch while the other man pulled himself off the floor, a sluggish hesitance in his movements that Jack, for the sake of his conscience, tried to ignore but couldn't.
The weighty sadness in the room, mainly caused by Jack's own merciless guilt and lack of knowledge of how to apologize, brought along with it that familiar silence that both of the room's occupants are quickly learning to despise, like a friend who has happily overStayed his welcome.

Jack, reviewing his previous actions, frowned shamefully at them – how could he apologize for what he did this time? In retrospect, he could see his acts as having a calculated coldness to them, bringing memories of pressure, blood and sexual harm up to the surface and then in a moment of what could have been either idiocy or just suppressed malice, his intentions regarding Sanderson's cameras notwithstanding, ended up hurting Pitch to the point where the older man had begged for them to just not do anything but eat and enjoy each others company...

For as much enjoyment as one could get from a silent meal with one's lover.

Guilt, he decided, was something he hated just as much as the thought of hurting Pitch or forgiving his parents.

Both successfully feeling as if they had ruined the moment for the other, they resigned themselves to eating in separate parts of the room and not daring glance at the other person should they do something else wrong. It was the polar opposite of what Pitch had in mind – he was hoping that bringing Jack to his quiet, often desolate workplace would help the younger man relax and ease a few of both their burdens but so far it appeared to be a lost cause.

Pitch reasoned that since he was the older one in the relationship, it was his job to break the silence and fix everything. Yet, every time he mentally prepared his speech and revised it he found himself feeling as if his over-reaction to something so simple and innocent on Jack's part (all things considered) was completely unnecessary. After a few times he found himself wondering why he was even trying.

'Was I not, just minutes before, begging him to shed a bit of mercy on his parents?' Pitch thought, rubbing his temples and feigning work by continually writing the same sentences time and again on a piece of scrap paper. 'I forced him to a place he could not escape, I mentally trapped him between me and his emotions that didn't revolve around me – feelings that I have no right, even as a mental doctor, to tell him to dispel unless he asks me for help.' He both criticized and reminded himself, telling himself to back off and let Jack make his own decisions before he did more harm then good, assuming he didn't already.

Across from him, Jack was secretly wishing that Pitch would say something to try and reassure him that no damage had been done, that he was okay and that, as a couple, they were okay. So far, all he could think about was how much he was fucking up Pitch's emotional life – the older man had been going through his periods of self doubt and fear of being abandoned in this relationship long before he had but all the input he really ever did did was weigh him down with his problems, his feelings, his stupid issues and ex-boyfriends.

And sure, Pitch had those issues just like him but unlike Jack he didn't freely just come over and explode onto him, his issues were (mostly) over and done with. Jack's were new, fresh and still in a perfect position to tear them apart and from his own standpoint, he was just watching it happen.
After seemingly unlimited time had passed Jack knew that someone, anyone really, had to say something to alleviate the crushingly painful silence. He stood up, clapping his hands together to somehow whisk away the worries he felt that anything he said would now do more harm then good. "Pitch, I'm sorry, really. I-

"It's alright." There was an innate gentleness to Pitch's voice, the hushed depth of it, that assured them both that he really meant it – it was okay and they didn't have to go over it anymore.

"I, just- I thought it would be fun thing to do. Dumb of me to do it out of nowhere when you said...what you said."

"It's fine, Jack." Pitch, at long last, had raised his eyes from unimportant papers, empty plastic food containers and a half finished plate of barbeque boneless spare rib tips on white race to gaze at him instead. A wave of comfort and calm crashed over him with Pitch's strange but beautiful golden eyes pointed in his direction with a simple, honest smile set just a few inches beneath them. It felt like further assurance that he was not the target of any hate or blame. "Just an innocent- well...mostly innocent, move. I over-reacted. I worried you. I apologize."

"Oh, okay..." There was something that veered on the edge of frightening about Pitch's tone of voice and Jack could see, in the faint gold glimmer of his eyes, that despite the lack of blame he received the older man was going through...some level of pain. "I-I think I need to do something..." Jack felt the blank, stark walls close in on him, Pitch was hurting because of him and even though he wasn't being condemned for it he could feel it.

His steps made no noise as he silently approached the desk and in his movement Pitch's head turned up and to the side to gaze at him directly, curiously. He was at the older man's side quicker then he thought he'd be, hands twitching and breath uneven as he pressed himself close to the chair, which turned to face him. Pitch's face was expectant and the edges of his lips were straight and expressionless despite the aching Jack saw in his eyes.

Then, in a moment of trembling, shaking bravery that lingered behind his guilt he moved forward in a careful lean and after a moment of hesitation and worry, he pressed his lips to Pitch's. For a moment, nothing, and then everything. At once.

Pitch's mouth tilted upwards, lips forming a smile beneath Jack's own. His arms looped around Jack, bringing him into a familiar embrace and the younger man grew embarrassed as they wordlessly hugged but he didn't bring himself to point it out.

He focused on the fact that he made Pitch stop hurting, if but for a moment.

It was like walking over a river on weak ice, every step felt like a possible crack or even worse, a freezing death. Jack sat on the therapist's spinning chair and watched Pitch leave the room, bags and plastic containers overflowing in his arms. He wanted to help somehow, thinking that spending more quiet time together, doing something other then cuddling would help the healing process along.

However, behest Pitch's politely mumbled request he had stayed in the room, now passing the time by fiddling unenthusiastically with numerous tiny thingamajigs on his boyfriend's desk, arms resting on the now empty space where he was certain important papers had been.

It wasn't long until Pitch had returned and after clearing his throat declared loud and clear like the sharp noon chime of a grandfather clock that it was almost four o'clock and that they should leave, patients would be coming soon to receive Sanderson's services and he didn't want his friend to worry about the presence of Jack in his office.
Jack wanted to get offended at that but couldn't summon up anything he thought was a sufficient level of anger and, instead, gladly left the premises with Pitch walking by his side. The idea of holding hands as they walked popped into his mind but he couldn't bear it now, it felt too intimate. They both still needed breathing space to get everything back on track.

He didn't believe things had gotten too alien, however, when he piled into Pitch's car and gently breezed his fingertips over his older boyfriend's hand. Pitch's eyes shot upwards and soon after the edges of his lips followed suit, his other hand coming to rest on top of Jack's.

They drove, hands apart for safety reasons, back to Pitch's home, the closest thing to any conversation between Jack and his hard stares at the swift, muddled green wonderland of trees that paved and marked the path back to Pitch's house.

Across from him Pitch's full mental concentration was on the road ahead but in the back of his mind his worries lied with Jamie and Jack's current fragile state. When it came to reasoning Jack wasn't hard to figure out – the younger man felt it was too early to initiate more personal forms of intimacy. He feared that Jamie would choose now to reveal himself, instead of later when things got better. It would be now that Jack would be the easiest to persuade out of a relationship...

And then he dumped those thoughts away and fixed his attention onto the road, thinking himself to be slipping back into an over-protective, apprehensive state of mind again and using his lack of self-esteem as a crutch.

"Mary, stay up here okay? You'll be staying for just a little while, I promise." Sophie assured her, dumping a staggering amount toys at the little girl's feet, the tiniest smile playing on her features when Mary screamed in joy, jumping around happily and picking up toys, already organizing a tea party for her new friends.

There was a lightness in her heart after that, the knowledge that Jamie couldn't use her lack of ability to help him escape Dad's earlier sexual assaults to his advantage any more after this: he couldn't use her guilt against her now. She paid for her part of this in full.

"Mary, I'm gonna go get something to drink okay? You want anything? Any candy or anything?" After receiving multiple nos, and then a childish 'hmmm' and a then cheering yes for a small bag of cotton candy she left the room and headed back out into the streets of Burgess to get her shopping done.

The clock had reached and past the mark of 4 pm when they arrived back at Pitch's house, the older man had no idea why he decided to bring Jack here or why the younger man wasn't crying fowl. He hoped it was because Jack wasn't too worried for the well being of his sister, that his mind had finally been brought back to ease.

Normally, he would've asked but things were still icing over. Instead he made his best attempt at being casual, shedding his black coat to reveal a pair of well-fitting black pants and royal purple tight shirt that he'd changed into after getting them lunch. "I would think now would be a good time for television or...maybe snacks?"

Jack's eyes turned up to his and he made a noise of consideration, humming gently before nodding and looking back to the blank television. "Yeah snacks alone sounds boring. Why not both?"
"Good question." Pitch mused, a welcoming smile returning to his face. Jack was coming back round from his all-too obvious guilt trip and in that there was an assurance that they'd soon be back to being the average couple with the mere side note of having overly complicated and emotionally charged family and friend relationships. "Chips?"

"Sure, unless they're that relish flavor." Jack made a sound of soft disgust and adjusted his position, aiming himself up in line with the television before turning it on. By the time he'd found something moderately interesting and, for once, not reruns he'd seen a million times before, Pitch was back with a large bowl of salt and vinegar.

"This good?" Pitch sat next to Jack, making sure he was close enough to touch but not enough to have any strange accidental brushes. He was there, but not interfering with Jack's personal space. "Salt and vinegar. Personal favorite."

Jack didn't bother to comment until he got his hand on a bushel of chips. "Really? Surprised me there." Then he stuffed his mouth full of them, hoping nothing embarrassing would escape him.

"I remember when I was younger, I'd eat so many of them I wouldn't be able to taste – for a short while anyway. It always went away eventually."

"Ever did the fifty Warheads challenge?"

"Jack, I was young. I wasn't psychotic."

"I'm thinking of tackling it myself."

"Please don't. As a doctor I can't recommend it and as your boyfriend-" He resisted the ever-present urge to bite his tongue and get through saying that word, hoping it wouldn't make things too weird. "I can't say I'd like having to nurse your mouth." 'In such a way, from such an injury', he added thoughtfully.

"Oh please, you're a thought doctor, basically. The matters of my body-" He grabbed another handful of chips in-between sentences. "are none of your business."

"Oh, aren't you just so adorable – it doesn't work that way Jack. I do have to pay attention to the shape, weight and physical attributes of my patients. It helps with the distribution of medicine and positive encouragement." Snark and snapping back was something that just came second nature – their personalities were naturally aligned with one another and there wasn't any vile intention or ill-will between the lines.

"Yeah uh-huh. Sure. What medicine made you look like the Iron Giant's cousin?" Jack elbowed him lightly to the stomach before burrowing his face in the chip bowl.

"Iron Gian-" He squints, thinking about the reference before bursting into smiles again. If there was any ill-will that glanced along Jack's words earlier, it was gone now. "Oh. Hah. Well played. I wasn't told there was silver in it. Trust me I wouldn't have put silver in my body even if someone payed me."

"Oh, so...accident?"

"Basically."

Jack let silence take center stage for a while. The episode had ended and the familiar and welcoming return of overused reruns returned. He bit his lip and prayed that, through some inane miracle, he wasn't making things worse. "Can it be like, reversed or something?"
More painfully deafening silence and Pitch, he didn't even more. Jack scorned himself fiercely for his
idiocy and lack of fore-thought. He kept on bringing up things that didn't need to be talked about, in
the worst possible moments.

"Look Jack-"

Jack cut him off, not meaning to be rude but wanting to keep bridges over water. "I'm not saying I
do't like the way you look, I do. I really do. I think you look really..." A moment of thoughtful
pause. "unique, in a good way. I actually really like it. But I think fixing it, making you quote off
quote 'normal' again, it might..." Jack sniffled and looked in the polar opposite direction from Pitch.
"It might help with your self-esteem, I guess?"

Pitch recalled times where he was beyond ready to grab Jack, push the young, sexually
inexperienced man onto the ground and fuck him so rough and raw that he'd became part of the
floorboards of his home.

Jack, with his face turned other way away from him, tense, cute and looking out for him, trying to
take care of him, charming sweet and well-spoken, cradled against him was making this one of those
times. Pitch made a personal note to remind Jack that innocent sweetness was an aphrodisiac to use
sparingly.

"It's fine Jack..." He wasn't sure what he was even assuring Jack of. "Leave it be, darling. Come
upstairs." He rose from the sofa, half-hiding his hardening erection from embarrassment. 'Poorly
timed.'

"I'm sorry, if I troubled you."

"It's fine, you fill my life with problems anyway."  

"Oh..." Jack felt guilty, his fingers twiddling themselves together as he let the thought sink in. He just
kept on ruining and upsetting Pitch – before he came along Pitch was perfectly fine, drinking coffee
alone and with no other person ballsy enough to come and ruin that for him aside from Jack. He
frowned and tried to force down tears, forgetting the Pitch was even there until his hand was on his
shoulder.

"Hun, Jack. Look at me." He said, alarmed, hand trembling. "Jack don't cry, you misunderstood." 

"I'm sorry." He said, glancing at Pitch with tears in his eyes. "You're right I keep fucking up your life
with my issues and you keep trying to help me and all I ever do is fuck up I'm sorry, I'm so stupid
please, please don't be upset with me."

"Jack I didn't mean – fuck, damn it don't cry like that it breaks my heart." He swept the younger man
up into his arms and kissed him, making sure he understood – he had done nothing wrong. He
wanted Jack to feel it and, soon enough Jack was panting, his soft, smaller hands both pushing and
pulling at the older man's clothing.

–

The time was coming around to 5:04 pm when Pitch laid Jack down on his bed, hands moving
swiftly over unwanted, obstructing clothing. Jack's eyes were laden with drying tears but his lips
turned upwards into a beaming grin upon finding out that his boyfriend had meant problems of a
much more...sexual kind.

Pitch sucked his teeth, tearing away the offensively existent and still being worn shirt and discarding
it across the room, "You and I need to have a long, long talk as to when and where you are allowed
to wear clothing."

"I'm supposing that your bedroom is a special place?"

"You have to suppose?"

"I believe I do." Jack mumbled, unable to bring his voice to a louder volume without moaning. "I think I do, at least." His voice quivered, unsure and aroused, Pitch's lips on his throat bringing a wanting feeling to be filled in his lower half.

"Don't worry, soon you won't be able to think at all. I'll make sure of it." Pitch's voice had a tone that rung of promise and lust. Jack couldn't bring himself to care about any of what had happened at the office or what had happened downstairs – he was getting sick of outside circumstances complicating his love life anyway. He moved his hands to each side of his body and Pitch took it as a clear sign for 'Do whatever you want'.

It wasn't long until Pitch's hands were running down Jack's upper chest, teasing his skin and dragging his nails over erected nipples. His mouth whispered sweet words to him and every so often Jack caught himself breathing heavy, begging for more between breaths.

Pitch made sure not to rush a single thing. His hands were slow, cautious workers, carefully detailing every touch they made with infallible precision, pulling out each reaction, twitch and gasp as if handling fragile glass but not because Jack was delicate but because this morning had proven that everything else was.

Peaceful moments that they could spend alone, not worrying about their surroundings, Pitch now knew, were few and far-between. He kept his hand caught between Jack's flesh and the hem of his jeans, keeping an intense gazed locked on Jack as the younger man ground against his hand, shuttering every thrust.

"That's right." Pitch's voice was low and heated, matching the rolling excitement in Jack's lower stomach and he couldn't even bear to keep his eyes focused on him. Jack turned his head to the side and bit his lip, hands tightening like claws against the back of Pitch's shirt for security. "Oh don't be shy, Jack. I love it when you moan, it's almost..." Pitch squinted and then stroked against Jack's rhythm, letting Jack feel the difference and squeal between his teeth. "Yes...it's like a kitten's purr. How cute."

Jack threw his head back, mouth gaping and letting out every moan that came into him, his grinding going erratic and his lower body starting to shake, out of his control and getting off to the friction between his too-tight jeans and Pitch's hand. "That's right, just for me Jack. Put on a show, that's right, good...good..." His voice sank lower in note and quieter in volume as Jack's shaking waist began to become more distinct, sharp thrusts that he couldn't control. "Come for me, Jack. Let me watch you unwind, darling."

Jack's vision went white, just as his knuckles did with hands clenching and shaking the fabric of Pitch's shirt as he came, unable to stop himself from screaming deafening obscenities and Pitch's name. Even as he came he didn't stop his movements, riding his orgasm out in his boyfriend's hand and enjoying how his lower body continued to twitch as his climax reached its apex and then began to calm.

Only after Jack stopped moving did Pitch remove himself from Jack's pants and then – much to the younger man's wide eyed amazement, lick his hand clean with long, slow licks, gathering all of Jack's cum onto his tongue before swallowing it.
"I n-never had that much build up before." Jack mumbled, still wide eyed and baffled from his peak, beginning to retract under the covers. He'd briefly considered reaching for his shirt but still, Pitch's attention was so passionate that he didn't want it to seem like he was trying to cock-block him.

"Really? That was only a moderate pace." Pitch curled up next to his quickly cooling form, recognizing the signs of naturally cooling down post-orgasm. Jack read behind the lines and smiled.

"I'm willing, don't get me wrong, but I think I need a moment to rest." He rested his head on Pitch's shoulder and then, without giving it any thought or consideration he fell asleep there within minutes.

Jack awoke to the sound of a high-beeping and Pitch saying something that would get them both killed in certain neighborhoods.

"What's that?" He was still half-asleep but he couldn't see the familiar darkness of what he'd considered night.

"Phone, don't worry about it. You've only been sleeping for...twelve minutes."

"Alright." Jack sighed, relaxed and took Pitch's advice; sex was tiring and he was sure there was nothing too concerning going on in the outside world. The phone had rapidly evolved into background noise, with no message left after the tone...

Until it rung again.

"Telemarketers." Pitch dismissed again, sucking his teeth angrily and half reaching for the phone before dismissing it, deciding it best not to move from his comfortable position.

And then it rung once more...

And before Pitch could finish damning whoever was calling to hell, Katherine's voice filled the room.

"Hey there Jack, assuming you're at Pitch's place of course – I couldn't get your phone. Be sure to keep it charged when you're out honey! Anyway, I need you to come home as soon as possible okay? Pitch, if you get this and you know where he is I'd appreciate you telling him. Thanks!"

The message beeps again and Pitch curses aloud, not wanting to move much less separate himself from Jack but still, he doesn't want to awake suspicion. He wants to keep the illusion of them both being fellow students under a similar teacher for now and so he gets up, careful not to disturb Jack's position too much with his movements.

"It appears Katherine is beckoning you home, sweet prince." His voice is tried and tired, broken in some places and Jack wonders whether Pitch is just upset by their soon to be separation or by the interruption of their impromptu romancing.

"I should probably go then." Jack doesn't argue or make excuses, post-orgasmic exhaustion wearing what little remains of his stamina thin for the moment. He rises and follows Pitch downstairs, wordlessly following the man around like a lost puppy, getting and briefly indulging a sudden urge to hug him, which strikes him as strange considering his optional lack of intimacy earlier.

Eventually he piles into the car and drifts into a world of restful, dreamless napping as Pitch drives them both home.
He's woken up sooner than he expects and when he greets the land of the living again he is briefly stunned and forgetful of where he is, not realizing that he is still in Pitch's car until his older boyfriend enlightens him.

"See you, stay safe..." He drones, unable to put any authentic passion or meaning behind it as he shuffles his exhausted body from the sidewalk to the door.

"You too, get some rest...you look like the walking dead." His playful tone assures Jack that there's no offense meant behind it and even if he was, he's too tired to respond in kind.

"No thanks to you." Jack noted, ascending the stairs and knocking on the door after trying and failing to open it. Behind him he can still hear the car's engine rumbling and it doesn't fade into the distance until the door opens, revealing a very aware and sober Katherine, and he takes a few drained steps inside.

His mother's appearance doesn't make itself known until he hears her chipper, high-pitched voice ring in the air with a happiness that, if it were not for his level of tiredness, he'd be glad to hear. "Hello there, how's my favorite son doing?" As if someone had sent a bolt of energy through him his posture straightens out and his head whirls around to Katherine, who has changed more than he thought possible in his time away from home.

Katherine's hair is longer than he last remembers, not by much but enough that he notices. It's drawn back in a dark brown scrunchy that matches her buttoned up plaid brown and red cardigan, which awakens memories of it being shorter then he sees it now – he pants are also looser and he begins to see a bigger picture then just not remembering: Katherine has lost weight. At least a solid ten pounds.

"I'm good, thanks." His tone is as shocked as the rest of him feels. How long has he been ignoring the changing that his parents have been doing? Has he missed anything else other then Katherine's lost weight and grown hair?

Like something about his father?

"Well I'm glad, I missed you Jack! You're always gone so long now-a-days, you know? We never have any of the fun mother son times we used to have." There's a pang of sadness standing off the edge of her words and a tiny pout on her face that he can tell she is trying to hide.

It doesn't take long for all the memories triggered by Pitch's suggestion to 'forgive and maybe not forget' to come back into play. 'Yeah, like what? Getting called a mistake?' was the first mental response he thought up before he slipped into auto-pilot 'nice son', as he usually did during the sober weeks. "Yeah, we need to spend more time together...I remember you, me and Mary crowding around the T.V. to watch Doctor Who marathons and scarf down popcorn like candy during leap year day." Of course, this was a stock sentence, it had no real meaning behind it. All it was was an acknowledgment of something they did in times long past. They'd discuss it and then never actually do again. Those days were gone.

"Ah, the family holiday!" Katherine notes, a nostalgic expression painted on her face for a split second, before it melts away into surprise and shock. "Oh right, I should have told you. Mary's spending the night over at a friend's place so she won't be back til tomorrow."

"I see, that explains it." He couldn't see Mary resigning herself to her room and then not come bolting from the hallway running at top speed the sound of the door. "Well, I'm gonna go finish some late school work, charge my phone, yadda yadda." His footsteps were light and quick, finishing up
the fat-chewing before he hit the entrance to his room and when he got there, he hooked his phone up to the charger and collapsed in a heap of tired limbs on the bedspread.

Mary had long since fallen asleep against the absurdly large, fluffy teddy bear that Sophie kept laid on one side of her room, an icon of a childhood forgotten and displaced. Sophie herself stayed up, unable to let her mind rest for even the slightest second. Guilt had broken her and she give herself away to fear of lawful punishment – what was Jamie doing? Waiting this long had never been part of the plan!

After what seemed like hours of hugging her knees, silently listening to Mary's napping she decided it was time to confront Jamie about his lack of action. She got up, careful not to wake the sleeping child and ventured out only to find Jamie sitting in front of their repaired television with a cracking, crooked smile, only him are shattered the are food he decided that he'd need for a party – mainly chips, soda and candy.

"Sophie, hey there. Nice job with Mary by the way." Had it not been that he'd given up on succeeding in this plan hours ago, too late to call Sophie off and too early to face consequences, his smile would be sincere. "You need to leave for a little bit. Go take the night off – I'm already starting the next phase of my plan."

"What are you gonna do with Jack?" As she makes her way past him, her steps are intentionally made to look tenuous and small. The last thing she needs him to know that she is considering backing out and keeping a weak persona helps to keep suspicion away.

"The same thing everyone does to a bitch on a leash – I'm going to command him to bark and beg." Jamie doesn't even look at her as she passes him by and instead starts dialing the number to Jack's cellphone.

"I'm gonna go buy some cotton candy." She declares.

"You do that."

"Don't hurt anyone."

"Go buy your cotton candy, your work is done here."

The door slamming behind him is the signal that all is going according to plan and that he can now commence the next step of his plan.

Chapter End Notes

Ugh. Non winter appears to be my writing off season...
Do you know where your Children are pt 2

Chapter Notes

Sorry guys, I'm falling a little behind again - this is actually normal though since I'm a Winter writer.

Jamie wonders how despite the goosebumps forming up and down his arms the biting chill in the air hasn't forced him to adjust the heat. Even with his favorite black sweater clinging to him like a welcoming hug that's just a tad bit too tight around the waist, he feels cool. He feels an urge to get up to try to fix the problem but the motivation to due so eludes him...until he sees that his hands are shaking.

His annoyance goes from zero to sixty and he dashes to the house's internal heater, turns it on and then returns to the comfortable, warm living room, takes the phone in hand and sees that his hands still shake.

The violence at which he shakes his hands, trying to get rid of the trembling, extends until he feels small explosions of pain underneath the surface of his skin. Yet, the shivering remains. 'Second thoughts?' The clock is nearing seven now, twilight has come and gone and the time is exactly right for when he planned to begin.

To find that his greatest obstacle is himself is disheartening but after biting his lips until they bleed and forcing his dedication and focus onto the matter at hand he is able to stop the unneeded movement.

All the pieces are on the board and it's his turn, he reminds himself. To boost his confidence, he reminisces about things that now seem so distant and half-faded from his memories, when Jack loved him and not Pitch.

His thoughts, cautions and fear are shrouded behind a facade of bravery before a recurring thought of having missed a necessary step in his plans. Worse, he knows that it is something so irritatingly simple it could drive him mad in moments but so horribly obvious and powerful it can undo his whole plan.

Jamie's grip on the phone in his hand tightens and he exhales, trying to get all his thoughts on the same path. 'I'm not thinking clearly.' He revisits the plan, step by step in his head...once...then twice....and once more for good measure.

He feels a looming sense of apprehension rest in the bottom of his guy as he realizes what he has had yet to deal with...

Pitch.

Through grit teeth he notes to make sure Jack doesn't bring Pitch into this – this needs to be a private meeting between them, as old friends. The last thing he needs in their presence is his number one enemy and trigger standing over Jack, watching and dissecting his every move and acting mightier then thou.
The faded, dirty windows on the other side of the living room confirmed that twilight was setting in and he is sure that every individual variable he needs is where he needs it to be. His speech has been practiced, modified for better effectiveness and then practiced repeatedly in the mirror so that he knows he has the right effect, the perfect sneers, the perfect vocals and the perfect words.

Then, he presses dial.

The phone rings....and rings....and rings again until it's finally picked up.

“Jamie-“ It's Jack voice, beat and broken, clearly entering 'I'm not in the mood' mode but Jack's voice all the same and Jamie knows that now's his time to shine.

“Now before you start.” Jamie's voice reeks of command and order, he wants Jack to listen to him not to try and squirm around his words like the little worm Pitch taught him to be. “I realize that you and I have a sort of...rocky relationship. You and Pitch are a couple and I have no right to try and intrude on that, I apologize. The things I said at the cafe were god-awful and rude – I apologize for that too.”

There is a moment of 'too good to be true', a moment where it seems like he's dreaming and nothing is real, but at that very same time he wants to believe, he wants be to willing to try and figure out and fix the problems in his life.

His parents are getting their shit together. He figures its about time he did as well.

“Okay, man what's this about?” A hint of apprehensiveness and equal curiosity that moves along with a level of exhaustion that has made him weary of the world and hasty to finish conversations.

“I was wondering if you could come over to my place – not like, you know a date or anything but just a friendly chat or something. I just want to try and get all the water under the bridge so we can be friends again.”

“Oh...” And that, to Jack, is an attractive offer. One less issue clouding up his thoughts and he might get a friend that isn't Pitch back into his life. A light surge of happiness and energy wells up in his chest and , immediately his exhaustion a faint and unpleasant memory.“Sure man, I'd love to come see you again – it's been a while after all.”

“Oh...” And that, to Jack, is an attractive offer. One less issue clouding up his thoughts and he might get a friend that isn't Pitch back into his life. A light surge of happiness and energy wells up in his chest and , immediately his exhaustion a faint and unpleasant memory.“Sure man, I’d love to come see you again – it’s been a while after all.”

“Yeah, I missed you man – who else in this town am I gonna complain about shitty T.V. and bad movies with?”

“I know this probably isn't the time but, what happened? I mean-”

“I know what you mean, I'll talk to you when you get here.”

“When?” Jack's voice was enthralled and excited – a part of Jamie felt like it was almost too easy like this, so easy to just string Jack along over and into his lap.

“Whenever you want, my house is your house Jack.”

“No Jack, never too late.” He grins, happy to see that Pitch had added one good thing to Jack – a spring in his step. “I'll be waiting here, I got us some chips, your favorite type of drink – you pansies and your ice tea – and all three seasons of the Spawn cartoon.”

“That exists?!”
“Yes, and let me tell you my friend it is glorious. Tis a treasure from a time long past, where you could show boobs, blood and guns on television and eighteen different social rights groups didn't try to fuck you for it.”

“Holy fuck, I'm already at the door!” Jack sighed, head back as he thought about old cartoons and times long past that he'd forgotten, all the while thinking of how awesome it would be to relive those things again with Jamie. “See you soon man.”

“See you, Jack.” Jamie stayed on the phone until he could no longer hear the delightful sound of Jack's shuffling feet and movement before hanging up.

There was another pang of worry that something could go drastically wrong, that things just wouldn't work out in his favor again but he buried his anxiety under a bushel of sour cream potato chips and left it at that. He felt as if, this time for once in his life, his victory was assured and for once he wouldn't be the one caught holding the shorter end of the stick.

After all...he had Mary.

If that didn't work...he had weapons.

–

When it was all said and done even Jack was surprised at how quickly he had gotten ready, shoes on, recharged phone in pocket, hair – as always – half done and comically mused and his normal bright blue hood pulled up to hide his face.

It was an uplifting thought, that he could keep his relationships with Pitch and Jamie entirely intact and as awesome as they always were, without having to give one up for the other. If he thought a mere few weeks back to when he and Jamie were still on tentative 'post-kiss' standings and he'd just met Pitch, he couldn't think of life without the both of them.

Jamie was his friend, Pitch was his lover but they both meant the world to him, he couldn't imagine anyone else in the world understood him better then they did.

He gladly walked out to the curb, wishing his mother a quick fair well and then walking out into the night, happy as could be. There was a bounce in his step that he couldn't shake and the more he walked, the more embarrassed he was that it was even there but he couldn't hide it or get rid of it so he just went with it, hoping that the few people who did travel by foot this late at night didn't question him or stare at him.

He saw Jamie's house in the distance, as gray and broken down as it always looked and grinned, reminded of the usually grossly brazen Jamie himself. Even before the incident in the cafe and even before the kiss, Jamie was frank, no-nonsense and upfront about his beliefs, opinions and thoughts. Like his house; he often was disgusting to look at due to just how he held himself, even if he did sugar coat it, and, again like his house, he didn't give the slightest bit of a fuck about how other people saw him.

The more looked at the house the more he missed Jamie – in a friendly way – and the quicker his feet approached the house until he had broken into a full-blown mad dash, hood flying away from his face after a few moments. Then he arrived, knocking rapidly on the door with heavy pants and a light sweat forming on his forehead. It made him think of when had he last worked out or ran a long distance – too long.

'Should take up jogging.' Jack thought, playing with the idea before the door opened and he was
happily welcomed again into the Bennett household.

“Dude, you wouldn't believe how-” Jack exclaimed, cutting himself off with a point to the new, large television, adorned with multiple huge speakers paired up on each side seated across from the couches as a sign of 'what the fuck is this?'?

“Dad actually made money. Shocking, I know.” Jamie deadpanned, partly joking but mostly serious – it was a real shock to Sophie and him when they saw the new entertainment system sitting downstairs. “And he spent it on something for us, even more shocking.”

“Wow that's...a coincidence.” His eyebrows knit together as he removed his jacket, staring at the blank television, deep in thought. Both his and Jamie's parents were getting better at the same time – they were both at least trying to do a better job with their surroundings.

Maybe this was the end of a bad time, maybe the rain was passing and their lives were getting back on track. Their lives were looking up now and he felt like it gave him all the more reason to rebuild the bridge with Jamie.

“Coincidence? What, your parents finally getting back on track too?” Jamie didn't feel like this was territory that he needed to be too careful treading in without anyone else besides Jack but now he was talking to Jack and so he let him take the conversation to wherever he was comfortable taking it.

“Yeah, actually. I think my dad hasn't been drinking – at least not as much as he usually does. My parents have been picking up Mary, helping out her social life and making food for her I think. Things are...nicer now in my life, you know?”

“A weigh pulled off Jamie's back but he didn't diverge from the main topic, that might gather suspicion. “Yeah Sophie and me...I know exactly how you feel man. After having to be so hands on you kinda get used to it, to the point where, even when you don't want to be hands on you feel the need to be?” Jack nodded. “Yeah, that feeling.” Jamie sighed, unwanted memories of the past lingering around the darker corners of his mind.

“Someone told me its like motherly instinct.” Jack flopped down on the couch and felt it press back up against his weight despite memories serving that the chairs were old and near-empty. There chairs were new. “A lot really has changed.”

“Yeah.” Jamie let everything get quiet, let words stop for now before he changed the subject. “So um, yeah the Spawn stuff is already in, let me turn it on and you just chill over here...” He could hear Jack chuckle behind him, felt the lack of suspicion in the air and kept working to make everything just right., turning on the disc and chilling on the same couch as Jack.

The snow haired teen didn't move away and instead reclined into Jamie without realizing it as the old male narrator began weaving the story of Spawn.
By the time they reach season two Jamie had stolen more quick swipes and touches than he ever had before in his life. His particular favorite so far being a careful stroke up the side of his shirt, feeling through to one of his nipples as he playfully snatched a chip from him. He, shortly after, realized that Jack's nipples were glass-cutters and that, when sleepy and engrossed in television Jack could get head and not see that he was being sexually excited. At most, when Jamie intentionally brushed his hand against his groin he only shifted weirdly to try and ensure it didn't happen again.

“Seriously, why doesn't this have more then three seasons again?” Jack asked, gulping down a few ounces of cola as Spawn went on a bender on some poor fool. He couldn't take his eyes away from the screen and, after dripping cola on himself like a four year old he sees that he has an admiration of dark skinned, frightening and mysterious men with serious crippling issues involving children.

The memory of Pitch brings a strange wave of happiness and he smiles, not even remembering Jamie is in the room. Jack soon finds himself growing bored of the animation itself, instead enjoying toying with the image of both him and Pitch, bodies half touching and so close to touching in places that matter, watching something they'd both like.

From the corner of his eye he sees Jamie give him a questioning look and he realizes, only after removing it, that he had a wide, gleeful grin on his face. He rights himself, sucking on the insides of his cheeks and forcing the grin away.

But then an image of a younger, sparkier and less-world weary Pitch, around fifteen maybe. He'd be donned in a shirt two sizes too big and loose fitting boxers, sitting cross legged on the couch with a large bowl of popcorn tucked between his legs on late Saturday nights with saucer sized eyes unable to pull themselves away from the screen.

‘One day we're gonna watch this together.’

“Because television producers are idiots.” Jamie shrugs, curious about what's causing the outburst of spontaneous smiles. He wonders if Jack is toying with the idea of letting him have his way, forgetting about Pitch and clinging to him instead? He hopes that Jack can sense what he wants and is making the connections in his brain between the show and their relationship.

“Honestly though, if I was in his position I'd be pissed.” Jack said, half thinking of Pitch and half thinking of the show. “Put through hell, literally, lost my SO, they have a kid now and I just have to wat-”

Suddenly, Jack felt like the biggest idiot in the world. He got rose from the couch so fast he nearly tumbled over, his skin felt itchy on his flesh, abruptly hyper-aware of Jamie's touch.

Jamie however, was already planning how to wash it all over by the time Jack began speaking.

His voice was sharply accusing and even threatening, sharpened to a point. “You intentionally chose this didn't you Jamie?” But it didn't carry enough weight to sound fully convinced, because he didn't want it to be the truth. He wanted Jamie's choice to be fully random or at most altered by what he liked, not what he wanted to symbolize. He wanted this entire thing to be an honest, polite attempt to rebuild what they had lost.

“Yeah, actually. I mean I do like the show but Jack, come on. Don't even act like you aren't just a little sympathetic to his plight – and by extension mine.”

“I'm sympathetic, I'm just not a push over Jamie.” He crossed his arms and shifted his weight from
one leg to the other in impatience. “I thought you brought me here so we could be friends again, you know I wouldn't have come over if that wasn't the case.”

“Exactly. You wouldn't have. So I extended a...slightly untruthful olive branch.”

“And hopefully that branch stays in your pants cause I sure as hell am not touching it.” Jack made his way to the door, grabbing his coat as he passed, thoroughly sick of Jamie and again found himself tired, angry and annoyed with the set up. He wanted his friend back and all he got for trying was more of the same pervy, seedy Jamie that he didn't even want to be in the same country as.

“Where you going?” Jamie said, calm and even as a straight line.

“I'm leaving, I'm sorry Jamie but I just can't with you anymore. You're disgusting, underhanded and you just drain the life from me.” Jack meant every single word – he came with hopes high to try and rebuild something and all he got was disappointment. The boost of happiness he got from their call had just evaporated into nothing and now, he felt even more tired then when he first walked in.

“Well then.” Jamie leaned back on his heels. “I suppose you can tell Katherine that Mary will be staying with her friends for a few more days, you know, til you come around.”
Crazy

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

A wave of searing heat climbs up and down the walls of Jack's skull, stress and pain pressing down on him, crushing him from the inside out – it was so simple, so easy to see if he would have stepped back and looked at if from afar. Jamie, now feeling like a jaded ex rather then a friend, starts calling out of nowhere to try and be polite, to try and rebuild broken bridges? That wasn't anything like Jamie before he had made his real feelings known and it didn't line up completely now. Jamie was more likely to get mad and get even then attempt to forgive and forget, even before he had confessed his love.

Considering he was dating a psychiatrist he figured he should have at least noticed the little things.

“Damn it.” Jack swears aloud, licking his lips while his heart starts blasting in his own ears. He doesn't notice how his breath has rapidly become a loud, clear telltale sign of his level of stress. In front of him Jamie's eyebrow raise in interest and the older cocks his head, wondering what could possibly be going through the albino's head.

“You seem to believe that I actually want to inflict some form of mindless violence on Mary.”

“Your threats-” Jack gasped loudly and squeezed his temple at the on-set of a small headache. “-don't inspire a sense of safety in me.” his voice lowered into a whisper, hands rubbing the different ends of his head, mind now fogged with sugar and exhaustion – not enough of the junk food to give him the sugar rush needed, not enough sleep to keep energized. Pain was hounding him on all fronts.

“Oh wow, you sounded a lot more like Pitch then Jack there...” Jamie laughs at him, openly, and steps past Jack's half-crumpled form, knowing that as long as he has Mary he has Jack over a barrel – simply out of fear Jack will submit.

The man can do nothing to him.

“And you sound a lot like a psychopath.” Jack spat, getting up and following Jamie towards what he can faintly remember being the family kitchen. He doesn't have to be told whose beat he's dancing to now – Jamie has Mary, Jamie calls the shots. “I suppose this is when you start showing me the locks of my hair you have woven into your bracelets or something?”

“Offending me isn't going to save her any quicker.”

“Oh, I'm sorry.” Jack feigns sorrow, thinking to himself how nice it would've been if this were an honest attempt to rebuild what they had lost and now how doomed they were – he could never forgive Jamie for possibly hurting Mary. “Here I was thinking that you were wearing your insanity like a badge of honor.”

Jamie contemplates giving that an answer, his drying lips pursing as he thinks before he just chuckles and points to the puce green door between the kitchen and the living room. “Basement.”

It's a simple one word order that draws a shudder from Jack that he can't control, his hands tightening into fists by his sides. Going down there is not a good opinion, in any situation, but he is at a loss for what to do.

He doesn't know where Mary is and, if rumors and the difference in their physical body builds were
to be believed, he couldn't beat Jamie to a pulp even if he did know how to throw a punch. Running wouldn't accomplish anything and bouncing around too much would give away the one thing he thinks will be his saving grace: his phone, sitting fully charged in his pocket.

And for right now, he can't use that. Calling the police would most certainly be the best way of dealing with the situation but what if Jamie panicked or – worse – took his phone away before he could do anything with it?

He gave Jamie another hard glare and, before the brunette could give another snide comment, he opened the door and began his descent into the darkness, his feet moving down the carpeted steps as slowly and carefully as he could manage. The air was thick with a smell that made it hard to breathe, his mouth felt full of cotton and his eyes started to water, the scent itself wasn't hard to place: chemicals and cleaning products. Mainly bleach, he gathered.

Behind him there was a flick of the switch before he could see the world again, albeit in a faint half-orange light. It was obvious that Jamie had gone all in on this plan: even the basement had new furniture on it, for whatever reason. Jack continued his slow saunter, already planning his escape. Jamie couldn't watch him forever, he'd eventually have to go to school or participate in life activities, albeit begrudgingly and if he didn't, someone would start asking questions.

The moment those hazel eyes were off of him he'd dial 911, find Mary and end all this.

Jack narrowly avoided tripping on the bottom step, the stench of chemical induced cleanliness growing sickeningly strong. His nose twitched and he didn't doubt that Jamie's plan was to knock him out with the smell before doing whatever he wanted with him.

'I need to get out of here before I either pass out, kill Jamie or get raped.' Jack didn't put criminal acts like that past Jamie, he already kidnapped his sister after. “So...” Jack turned to face his captor, stepping back slow and feigning some level of bravery when in reality he was terrified that he'd been tricked somehow, that Mary was fine and he walked straight into a trap or that he might not behave up to Jamie's standards. “Why am I here?”

He made sure to keep away from offending Jamie, as well as he could, since the list of things that could go wrong or just not in his favor were particularly high.

“Please,” Jamie grinned. “let me ask the questions here darling.” Jack held back a shudder with Jamie's overly-familiar language, that word should never be uttered by anyone but Pitch. “First off, why do you think you're here?”

“I'm here because,” He sucked on the tongue in his mouth and twisted it around, trying to find the right sequence of words that wouldn't get him or his sister hurt. “You love me more then Pitch does.”

“That's exactly what I want to hear.” Jamie's smile widened and he approached Jack, hands out stretched. Jack, playing along, walked into the embrace and despised every moment of it – Jamie's arms wrapped around him with a crushing, otherworldly force. Then Jack was pushed away weakly, onto the bleach laden floor – the impact light compared to the strength of the hug. “Now tell me what you honestly think.”

“That is what I think.” Jack said on the floor, arms hugging his legs but his voice finding no significant emotion other then the need to manipulate and remove himself from the situation with his sister intact. “I think you love me more then Pitch ever could and I'm sorry that I wasn't there for you when you clearly needed me.”

“Wow.” Jamie said with a real sense of shock coursing through the word. He was taken aback to
where he glanced around the world for a moment, trying to absorb the dead voice's words. “Pitch really has been rubbing off on you.”

Jack didn't say a word.

“I'm going to be honest here, that would be impressive if it wasn't lacking feeling. I may have even been convinced. But no dear, you aren't escaping that easy.” Jamie walks to him and presses the open hand of his palm to Jack's face, a deliberate smile peeking out from behind the shock.

“I'm not trying to 'escape' anything...” Jack thinks that has enough trembling emotion in it, even a sense of fear and terror lingering on the edges but the truth is that it is mostly rage, his skin crawling from the touch of Jamie's hands.

“I don't want a puppet. I want Jack.” Jamie says, a loving lit of both indirect praise and pleading coming from his tone. In a deep part of himself Jack can feel an echo of sadness lingering just out of reach.

Jamie was pressing Jack to give him a part of himself that he had reserved for Pitch and Pitch only but has only really shown after certain events has taken place, events that assured that him and Jamie could never be a thing.

“Jamie, you and I could never work.” Jack admits, looking away as he feels tears, of all things, peek out of the corners of his eyes. “What you've done, I can't forgive.” His Adam’s apple bobs as he swallows, Jamie isn't even in his line of sight anymore and the room grows uncomfortably quiet.

“I haven't hurt Mary, Jack.” Jamie says pointedly, with a wide grin, as if its something to be proud of.

“That's not the point Jamie.” Jack closes his eyes, getting a vibe of 'blue and orange' morality from Jamie. “That's...completely beside the point. Still part of the reason why though, so I can't say you aren't close.”

“Then what is it then?” Hints of desperation twinge his tone and Jack nearly lets laughter slip.

“It's not the fact that you are even kidnapping Mary at this point Jamie – I'm still mad at you for that but its not even the main reason now. Its the fact that after doing this, after doing all this you expect me to immediately fall in love with you because you've got me holed up here.” Jack shacks his head, a smile playing on his features.

“No Jack,-”

“You don't even respect my sense of judgment or sanity enough to treat me like I'm a fucking human being. I'm a mule and Mary's the carrot on the stick.”

“Jack I love you, I do.” Jamie comes forward, giving Jack a wide, open hug and embracing him, whatever trace of love boomed through that statement made Jamie feel like he mattered. Meanwhile through the fabric Jack can feel Jamie's lean, young muscles and grits his teeth.

He can't win a physical fight.

Regardless, he isn't going to give up that easy. “Jamie, the worst part is you can't even respect the relationship I have with Pitch enough to back off and let us be us.”

Jamie pulls away, one arm still halfway holding while he gazes, wide-eyed at Jack, his pupils dilating the more he stares. “He isn't good for you Jack. You need someone more like yourself-”
“Someone like you?” Jack's noticing of it is emergent and he can see Jamie back off, just a tad, as if abruptly realizing the definition of the word 'boundaries'.

“I mean, I...I know I've done some fucked up stuff and you can't forgive me but the least you could do is get someone healthier for you...”

“Me and Pitch are healthy for one another Jamie, you just can't see that because all you see is me and how much you want me.” Jack doesn't believe a single word coming out of his mouth and has to struggle to keep his eyes from shifting to the door and back, instead he looks at Jamie and feigns more emotions. “And even if we aren't healthy for one another, I fell in love with him Jamie. It should be my decision,” He struggles to keep his voice agitated when all he can think about is how much he wants another day like the mall, another day where he can go out with Pitch and bring Mary along and they can be partially sexual and tease one another to their hearts content. “to fall in love with whoever I want.”

Jamie's eyes are filled with a pity that Jack yearns to laugh at. Jamie could never understand the depth or breadth of what he and Pitch have and it is almost sadistically funny that he can't. “He's a psychiatrist,” Jamie hugs him again before pointing to the nearby chair and pulling Jack down to sit with him, “He knows how to manipulate people into loving him, his love isn't love. It's control.”

Jack – now currently dying from laughter on the inside and struggling to maintain a facade of honest care and emotion on the outside – closes his eyes and sighs. “Jamie, look at yourself. Look at how hypocritical your behavior is! You know I love Pitch but you don't respect me enough to just leave me be. If you really loved me you'd respect me enough to know that if I was in danger, I'd know better.”

“But you don't. You're being here proves that!”

“Me being here proves that I care about you enough to try and rebuild what we had, it isn't me being dumb enough to walk into a trap – its me loving you enough, as a friend, to not care whether or not its a trap...”

That strikes Jamie square and breaks a piece of his heart, Jack uses the current tense but he's sure that what he's done may have ruined any and all chance...

“If I said sorry would it make things better?”

“It'd put an end to things.”

“...No.”

Jamie gets up, huffing as he moves and looks blankly at Jack. “I don't want us to end- I don't want you, loving him.” He's panicking, going red in the face, and biting his lip repeatedly, hands twitching by his side – he knows what he wants to do, he knows what he should do but none of that matters because he wants what he wants.

He wants Jack.

“Me loving Pitch wasn't 'ending' anythi-”

And at that moment Jack's phone goes off, violin and a rich male voice singing through the room. 'Kiss by a rose' starts bouncing off the walls of the room and Jack has to avert his eyes from Jamie, it's Pitch on the phone, calling him now. It's tense, its heavy and Jack isn't sure whether or not he even wants to ask Jamie...it feels as if any slight movement could set off something irreversible.
The song goes off for the second time and Jamie's eyes are still on him like police headlights, authoritative, glaring and threatening. Jack shifts in his seat and is considering running away, phone in hand with a ring and a prayer, before Jamie asks him...

“You gonna answer that?”

Jack blinks, blinks again, and then wordlessly digs the bright blue snow symbol studded phone out of his pocket, checking its glowing face as if he didn't already know who it is.

Then with a loud thwack a gun makes impact with his temple and he's out like a light without a sound, his phone giving off faint sounds of 'Hello? Jack? It's Pitch, you there?'.
A Perfect Circle

Chapter Summary

Finished all my major tests for the semester....mostly.

Terrified frankly.

Here's your newest chapter. Hope you enjoy.

He makes a note to take better care of his teeth, because when he sucks his teeth in aggravation (for the seventh time) after calling Jack's phone (for the fifth time) it hurts.

Pitch has paced the floor for the last forty minutes, trying to get a hold of Jack since he made his way home at eight o' clock. This was after dropping by Sanderson's place of residence and warning him through gritted, cracking teeth and furious glares that if a single hair on Jack's head was missing or a petite streak of a tiny tear discovered on his face and he was found to the cause, there wouldn't be a devil in hell he could sell his soul to to save himself.

All the good that seemed to do, considering Jack wasn't picking up his phone.

'Maybe it's me.'

He doesn't want to jump to conclusions but the thought of Jack wanting some breathing space away from him and all his crazy, wanting to be alone, seemed high. Maybe he needed a few days for himself to figure things out without having to look at Pitch for guidance.

He calls again, expectant and continuing to make shoe tracks in his living room carpet as the phone dials. He wants to see Jack, he wants to hear his voice and make sure that he is O.K., not because of their previous conversation but because it's late and he feels overly protective-

The dial tone ends and there's no one on the other side.

'This is why you don't pry.' With this in mind he tried to remember why exactly Jack could be mad, aside from his begging for his parental forgiveness. 'Could his phone not be charged?' He thought, pushing aside the obnoxiously loud voice in his head that screamed that he was the common denominator in all his screwy relationships.

Then he remembered that Katherine had told him to charge his phone and that Jack's phone was, apparently, dead.

'Must've forgotten to charge it...' Pitch thought, and with that he pulled his black long coat over his head and shot out of the house, making a line drive for his car. He hated driving this late at night, especially near his own home since deer often found his road to be a delightful one to stand still and stare at car lights in, but he'd put it aside for the sake of seeing Jack again...

Then he did a one-eighty and headed back into the house, grabbing a random book, 'Mental health and Signs of Deterioration' from a small pile of books stacked near the top of the steps. 'Cover story.'
He thinks, before getting back into his car and driving to Jack's home.

–

When he is storming his way up the steps the lights for the front door are on, there no signs of police around and everything is eerily quiet and still. He remembers that despite their apparent efforts to rebuild their lives and family relationships, everything was still up in the air for the Frost family. Their addictive behavior had yet to be fixed and whatever the root cause of the problem was, it wasn't anything that could be whisked away at a moments notice.

He makes his plan: Make sure Jack and Mary are okay, and that Jack recharges his phone. Don't leave the house until it is plugged in and make a note of William's current state of physical and mental health.

He knocks, once. He doesn't have to make a second knock before the door opens wide, revealing a figure that makes him open his mouth to greet her, before getting cut off.

It's Katherine, looking much more destitute then last he remembers. Her hair is clumped up with knots beneath those red-brown strands her eyes are red, round and puffy which gives away her obvious emotional disposition. With a snotty ball of tissues in her hand and mascara running down her face, unruly strands of hair sticking up this way and that, she grabs onto his shirt with desperation and a rasping ripple in her gasps that assures him she's been crying for a long, long time before he arrived. "Where's Jack?" Her shirt is strained with blackened tears and her face is as reddened as her eyes.

She is completely sober and smells strangely of vanilla.

"He isn't here?" Pitch says, remotely concerned with how Katherine's tears or, worse, her mucus, could stain his clothing.

"He isn't with you? I thought h-he was wi-" Katherine cuts herself off with another shaky sob, turning around and slinking into the other room with disappointment lingering behind her.

Pitch is taken aback. He follows her steps to what he assumes to the Frost parent's bedroom and finds a blonde young girl, phone in hand standing in the middle of the room and a very downcast William glaring potholes into the floorboards.

"He isn't with Pitch." Katherine's voice is barely able to vocalize anything through her tears before she resigns herself in a corner away from the rest of the group to continue her tumble through despair in muted moans.

Pitch believes that William, given the circumstances, is a tad bit more level headed about the issue. "Katherine, Sophie says she knows where he is."

"Sophie." Saying her name is more a reminder not to trust her than recognition of her presence. He doesn't know exactly why she's here and that's the main problem. He knows it can't be anything good. Is she attempting to manipulate them? Trying to lure him into a trap?

All he knows so far is Jack is missing and that Jamie is involved. Sophie wouldn't be here if he wasn't.

"I think Mary was with him, I know where he is, if that helps." Sophie's speech is consistent and, if nothing else, is stable and reasonable. She doesn't sound like she's reading from a cue-card or that she's being manipulated. Pitch finds a solace in the fact that Sophie could, actually, have been manipulated into helping Jamie out with something.
But the fact that she is withholding the fact that Jamie is the one holding Jack – obviously, her just appearing here out of the blue makes that much obvious – strikes him as expected but not enjoyable. He doesn't cut her off or let anything slip though, as William and Katherine pester her for answers.

"I really can't tell you. The person who has him is, well, he's got 'friends' for lack of a better word. I can go reason with him but I just wanted you to know that your son is safe."

William's voice breaks as he yells with an abrupt intensity that makes all three other of the room's occupants jump in fright. "How do you expect that to calm us down??" His eyes are filled with confusion and worry, honest worry that makes Pitch realize that maybe Jack really could keep hope alive for his parents quitting their less than productive life choices.

"I don't, but me and Pitch can go reason with him." Pitch couldn't say he didn't see that coming but Sophie just got him caught up and involved in the action so fast he didn't have to time properly react without the Frost parents looking at him anticipative of his confirmation that 'Yes', Pitch was going to help find Jack.

"I'll go, I'm a mental doctor-" He hands the book to Sophie in an annoyed gesture, hoping to get across that maybe she was too blunt. The young girl then sets her phone down on the Frost parents bed and grabs the book in both hands, clearly interested. "You, take that and leave me and them alone for a little while."

Sophie eyes him and he sees that she doesn't want him to reveal the real identity of the kidnapper. "Don't worry." Pitch says, hoping she gets the double meaning. "It won't be long, I'll come along and make sure everything goes smoothly." 'I'm going to make sure you and your brother are okay after this'

She nods and then leaves, book in hand and phone forgotten.

As soon as the door shuts and he hears her the resonance of her steps go from close to distant he takes action."I take it she's explained quite a lot?" Pitch walks and talks on pins and needles as despite his own back-story he always hated dealing with grieving families. Their tears and refusal to give up hope always hitting him far too close to home for him to be comfortable with.

"I don't trust her. She hasn't told me the full story." William's speech is objective, fast and without the teary-eyed, drawn out formalities that Katherine has no doubt already prepared. Pitch finds he appreciates the man's straight-forward brevity in a such a trying time.

But he can't help but frown, the wrinkles and lines around his mouth and eyes showing off how exhausted he is with high-tense situations as of late but they don't show the vile taste he has in his mouth for the words he is about to say. "For what my word is worth I trust her regardless of whether or not she tells me the full story. Dare I say, in a situation like this her telling me and you everything she knows would be damnably stupid of her." The way his words border on praise actually makes him want to wash his mouth out with soap and forget even speaking them, but they are true. Sophie has set up the chessboard to her benefit here.

"Why?"

He wants to say 'because the little bitch got here faster then I did.' but he figures going on a bender wouldn't help anyone now. "Because she's got the best of chance of leading us to Jack, likely has the fullest grasp of the situation at hand here and more then likely has strong ties to our kidnapper. This puts her at both sides of the double edged sword, unfortunately." Sophie's choice to tell the Frost parents before getting him involved has completely tied his hands. From where he stands, he must play along if he wants everything to go down without anyone getting arrested or hurt.
"As much as I trust your intuition, given your job and experience, I can't find it in me to take her word as gospel. Not with both my kids at risk here."

"No..." Pitch registers the word, his mind beginning to panic from new-found information. "Mary?"

"Yes."

'Oh god...' "If its any consolation," 'It isn't.' "I have many friends in higher places as well and I served as a police negotiator for a short while."

William's exhales turn heavy and there is a pause that makes Pitch doubt he got that lie out without raising suspicion. "You know more don't you?" It's a plea for answers, assurance and comfort which to him are mere platitudes that he does not see himself as having the time, patience or care to give.

"Yes. Sophie trusts me not to release more."

"Aren't you Jack's friend? Don't you have the slightest bit of concern about how we feel about his well being?"

"If we're going to be frank, no." Pitch gets no sense of concern from Jamie being involved in this, not for Jack's sake anyway. He's more afraid of what Jamie could do himself in the presence of Jack, and the aftermath of such especially knowing that Jack is the type to assume blame.

"Don't pretend you love my children more then I do."

"Don't pretend like you spent the last two months – or better yet ten years – around them, playing with them, fathering them." Pitch knows he's speaking from a position of mutually known superiority. "And I mean that aside from the phoned in, god-awkward desperate tries to get Jack to like you again."

When William audibly sniffs, clearly affected by the truth and how heavily its now impacting his life, even Pitch feels a tad bit of regret having brought it up so brazenly.

"Just...just get our kids back to us."

But, for all the civility in the world he can impart on their relationship and all the pity he can have for the brokenness of the man, he can't bring himself to respect him even if he can twist his own thinking until it sounds as if he's doing it for the children's sake, "I'll bring the kids home."

"And the kidnapper?"

"I'll spare you the good news," His sarcasm slashed at William with a finely sharpened point, patience quickly meeting its end. "and tell you that I don't believe you'll be able to prosecute, assuming you even get it to court."

"The bastard kidnapped my children."

"He isn't right in the head, his actions have no longevity past getting caught, William." Pitch struggles to have his voice sound less monotone then it would in any other situation, not because he doesn't care but because looking at Jamie's actions now is like reading from a cue card. Too obvious, too easy to follow. "This wasn't a malicious act, it was a desperate one and I'm not jailing a desperate, depressed man much less a child. I know the feeling too well to do that in good conscience."

"I'll call the police." William says, non-compliant beyond reasoning and Pitch chuckles at him,
seeing a foolish man with too much hope in his heart and not enough shades of gray in his vision.

"I'm telling you, not as a person and not as Jack's friend," It's weird for him to hear that come out of his mouth, so soon after such a stressful time in their relationship, it feels like he's friend-zoned himself away from Jack even when he knows its something completely different. "but as a psychologist, that you aren't going to get a trial here. Not any leading to a conviction and sentencing anyway."

"But the police will take him in – he's not of right mind right? A visit from the police will put him back."

"No. It'll end up with fatalities, our kidnapper doesn't feel safe. He's unstable and police will just confirm that - and really William?" He's seen too many cases like Jamie to get a single beat wrong. "You keep on acting like this is some type of purely malicious act. This is someone crying for some help, not someone who needs men with guns charging at them and screaming at them to get on the ground."

The sound that William makes radiates anger and hatred of one's own powerlessness. Pitch can't blame him, if Seraphina was in the same position he'd be moments from tearing the flesh from an innocent man's bones, if it were to save her. "I don't understand, why?"

"Our kidnapper is, more then likely, asking himself the same question and getting no answers. This isn't his first time trying to get someone to care enough to help him, more then likely. He's 'acted out' before. This is just his greatest performance yet."

"And what has that little brat gone through that is worse then what we're going through right now?! We could lose our son and our daughter!"

"Well," Pitch's eyebrows raise and he straightens his cuffs while he answers, William's questions now becoming an emotionally charged waste of breath. "strangely enough I remember when I saw Jack with a big purple bruise on the side of his face, crying his eyes out because his mother called him...and I quote: 'a failure kid'. Dare I say, all chance of loses are drastically decreased when you've already lost, no?"

"We haven't lost our kids Pitch." Katherine makes her first entry into the conversation and places a supportive hand on William's shoulder. "We're not the best but we sure as hell aren't gonna stop trying now. We'll fix things. We've got a few more months still and at most the rest of our lives. We'll have time after this, we'll apologize to Jack and we'll make things even better then they were before."

'Before what?' Pitch wonders. Before it got bad? Before it got worse? Before it got physical and Jack found himself running into the arms of anyone willing to help him without tearing the family apart? Even with the knowledge that Katherine's speech is meant in a positive light, Pitch doesn't know how she can live and breathe, being so ignorant.

"Fine by me." Pitch shrugs, making his way towards the door. If he were to be honest, he couldn't find a cell in his body that believed a single word of her promises. Contrary to what he encouraged Jack of the other day, he held out little hope for Katherine and William, though he would admit that his perceptions of them were drawn askew by his meeting Jack first. "I'm leaving, taking Sophie with me. She'll be a major help." Then he figured, he might as well make a safety net if something should happen, if for Jack's sake then anyone else's. "If I'm not back by midnight you should call the police, warn them of weapons."

"Get my kids back to me!"
Pitch doesn't respond as the door closes behind them and Katherine and William being their own heated discussion. Instead he stumps through the living room and takes Sophie by the arm, yanking her up in a violent grasp that he prays will leave bruises later. "Thank you for putting me on the spot there, little one."

Sophie winces, her shoulder and upper back beginning to spasm as Pitch walks them both towards the door. "Don't mention it."

"Trust me, if I can turn it against you – you ignorant demon child – I will."

Sophie's knowledgeable smirk is unbecoming of her and it touches something in Pitch's mind that makes him want to hurt her in a way that no human on Earth or god in heaven can ever heal. "That's comforting."

Her movements here, Pitch knows, were an intentional way of assuring she didn't have to fix all this alone. Beyond question she was looking for someone above the age of eighteen to link all this to so she'd have a scapegoat if something went wrong, probably a sentence along the lines of 'Well, I went to so and so and they told me...' and then lucked out with his on-point arrival. Had something gone wrong the Frost parent's immediate response would've been about him and his lack of action and they'd have painted him guilty before they took any responsibility themselves.

Not even counting the still-secret relationship he and Jack had together, he figured he was in deep shit with all families involved, legal or otherwise.

By the time Pitch is done thinking about the potential legal consequences, arrest and prosecution notwithstanding, he is standing next to the car and is beyond thinking of her personal comfort, practically throwing her in as if she was his kidnapping victim.

He slides into the driver's seat, glaring at her through the driver rear-view mirror and smiling as she guiltily puts on her seat-belt. "Now listen, you little hoodlum," he spits, sneer dripping with ire, "I expect a full explanation. Now. I want your most recent updates on Jack and Mary's current condition."

"Well you better not start driving because boy, are you in for a ride." Sophie laughs, half nervous and half serious, her heart isn't in the gesture and Pitch notes that if he can, he should make sure she gets juvenile detention for sheer annoyance alone.

Pitch rolls up to the house, smooth as silk with the engine rumbling low, its sound too low to wake anyone up but loud enough to alert someone to their meeting.

Luckily for them both, the lights are still on.

Pitch hisses loudly through grinding teeth as he stops the car and undoes his seat-belt. "I trust that you are going to be utterly useless for everything, including calming your brother down."

Her voice is smart, high and delighted with itself, as if getting Pitch to go along with the entire thing was a well-thought out plan and not a fluke of pure luck. "You trust correctly."

He pulls leather gloves from his pockets and over his hands, relishing the small dance of fear he catches in Sophie's eyes but not giving her eye-contact besides that, avoiding her gaze with the help of the natural darkness playing with his unnatural skin. "Good. Then you can call the police if something goes wrong, stay near the car."

"Why should I?"
"Because I can make a counter argument that your brother has been planning this for weeks rather than a spur of the moment emotional decision that he is now regretting." Then, and only then, does Pitch turn to her, rounding his hand to a fist to fill out the rest of his gloves and flash her a malicious smile that briefly re-awakens the terror in her. "Keep in mind you aren't to trifle with me anymore then you already have."
Perhaps it's due to stress or that even with all the professionalism he can muster he can't help but be a little distressed. As his car rolls up to the Bennett home he feels anger come over him. It brings thoughts of wrapping his hands around Sophie's all-too-vulnerable throat and ending her.

He cannot think of a time he's felt more angry with a single human being. No one brought this level of exhausted hatred over him. Not the man who killed his daughter, not the woman who tried to steal her away from him, not the man that could be hurting Jack right now.

By the time his car slows down as he puts it in park he is gripping the steering wheel like a lifesaver and glaring death at the girl in the backseat.

"I've never before been so unfortunate to met a human being with less empathy," are the first words to leave his mouth in over ten minutes. "You are a heartless, soulless husk of a woman aren't you Sophie?"

"You say that like I'm the one raping him."

Pitch shudders when it becomes clear that Sophie sees 'not being a rapist' synonymous with 'being a good person'.

"At this point, I doubt your hands are spotless."

Sophie shrugs. Her eyes are downcast but the emotion in them is not one of self-blame, she just lacks the ability to care. "Him or me. I choose me."

"You revolt me on a basic level of my now distant humanity and frankly if it wasn't for Jamie, I would love to have you strangled."

"Oh great, I tell you everything you want to know and you start threatening to kill me." Sophie pouts and shows off a sadness that no human being should be able to fake. For her, its like a switch she's flicked on in her head.

Disgusted, Pitch rushes to remove himself from the car. He wants no part of whatever twisted plan Sophie's formulating now. "No, I just assure you I'll be dancing at your funeral."

Sophie, in Pitch's honest opinion, was the worst type of person. She has no mental illness or case of disease. No job, no rent, no bills to pay, nothing that could attribute to stress. Nothing that could explain her disgusting, soul-crushing level of self-centered behavior.

With crocodile tears dancing in her eyes she continues. "Just because I've removed myself from the situation-"

"I swear to god," Pitch says, resting his head against his seat with a small pit of acidic bile widening in his stomach. "If I hear just one more derailing excuse I might just turn around and slap you."

"Just hurry up an-"

Pitch lashes out, pushing his chair back and before Sophie can protect herself, backhanding her. The
resounding sound of her whine and the sound of her flesh swelling, the mere smack of it within itself is a beautiful sound to his ears.

"One more word. I make you the next Joffrey, child. I swear to whatever heavenly body you should be praying to you save your own retched soul – what you did was disgusting." All the venom he could leak into his voice wasn't enough to faze her and she just rubbed her cheek and stared at him. 

"and I should have you carted off prison to rot for what you've done to that young man in there, do you understand me?"

"Yes." Her tears are gone in a heartbeat, replaced with a dead-eyed, deep-boiling anger. Pitch knows for sure he's seeing a psychopath in the making. "I just don't care."

"Oh good." Pitch fakes a smile, getting out and ignoring the wave of nausea that flows through him. He makes sure to take the keys with him to make sure Sophie doesn't steal his car. God only knows what she's capable of. "Get out of my car, stay near the exit, don't say a god damn word."

"I don't see why your so pissed about it." Sophie's voice behind him.

"All I'm hearing is; I should just burn in hell. No judgment, no judge. Just burn."

"Look," Sophie said, swallowing. "we all do things to survive that we aren't proud of."

"I can assure you not everyone makes a deal with their brother's rapist."

"Yeah well, not everyone is me okay?"

"Bitch."

Sophie has the door of her own house slammed in her face before she can counter that.

–

If Sophie's word was worth any weight, which was a near impossibility but Pitch would take what he could get, Jamie was in possession of with a ranged weapon – a pistol to be precise.

He was a rape victim with no mother or (respectable) father. He had a strong martyr complex that was so focused on the protection of his sister that it bordered on self-harming.

'Congratulations Jack, your throne of 'King Martyr' has been usurped'

The door behind him shuts as he can manage and at the same time the horrible stillness of the house just gets to him.

Beat for beat, the house reminds him of Frost's beautiful and strangely dystopian home. The house is impeccable except for the scattered junk foods here and there and the television is on and playing...

'Spawn? Really?'

It appears Jamie had good taste at least.

Keeping his ears focused he listens in for any signs of distress; anything from clawing to sobbing. Yet, there is nothing except the Spawn video, playing another sequence of a red caped crusader beating the living day lights out of men who walked the grayer shade of life.

And at the same time Pitch knows, for certain, that Jamie is here. 'Nothing for it.'
"Jamie?" He calls out, trying to stay as neutral and polite as possible. "Are you in here?" He walks with careful steps, through the living room and over half-eaten bags of potato chips.

Jamie invited Jack over and Jack, being his abnormally hopeful self, took the bait. It explains why the house looks so faultless. Jack tried to get Jamie back as a friend. Then something happened, someone let a secret slip or Jack realized how impossible it was but couldn't get away in time.

'Or he's cheating on you.'

"Bullshit." He whispers aloud, shaking his head before raising his voice again. "Jamie?"

"I'm in- I'm in the kitchen."

Pitch smiles.

The young man's voice isn't gruff or even near-confident. In fact, it carries the slightest hints of fear and desperation.

'Perfect'. Pitch can only think that Jamie knows he's backed into a corner and the only way now is to fight or flee.

He must remind himself, as soon as this is all over, to go back and thank Sanderson.

Pitch never went through formal police training on hostage negotiations. He'd never thought he'd needed it. But Sanderson had given him his own informal training, recordings and notes on police proceedings and hundreds of books.

He glides into the room, making sure not to seem condescending or rude. The last thing he wants is for Jamie's emotions to become even more unsettled.

In return, Jamie points his gun at him and he steps back, frightened until he sees how Jamie looks. The young man looks as if he's been through absolute hell. His imposing, bullying stature is gone, replaced with a meeker, more frightened look. He appears as if he's just been mugged. There are bloody bruises on both his cheeks and one of his eyes is a rainbow of purples and reds, swelling.

"Are you alone?" Pitch open his mouth before getting screamed at again. "Are you alone?!" Jamie takes the safety off the gun as a threat and Pitch holds up his hands in mock-surrender.

"Of course I am."

"I.." Jamie exhales in relief, lowering the gun for two quick heartbeats before raising it again. "I don't t-trust you."

"Of course you don't. I don't trust you either." It might be a bad place to start but Jamie doesn't need a scolding now, he needs empathy.

"So why are we still talking then?" He sounds testy, expecting a certain answer.

"Because you haven't shot me yet." He shrugs. "Your choice on whether we talk or not, kiddo."

Jamie lowers the gun, physically much less shaky then when he first raised it. Pitch can see it in his motions; Jamie is a fighter but he sure as hell isn't a killer.

"What are we gonna talk about then?"
"What do you want to talk about?" He smiles, welcoming and friendly. "Your house, your choice Jamie."

"I..." Jamie chuckles, showing off two rows of bright teeth with the slightest hint of overbite. "I don't know..." His fingers toy with the gun and Pitch can barely stand to look at him. He may be a mislead teenager but aside from the stress and how he looks, Jamie could pass as twelve. "You say something I...I can't be bothered right now, hehe..."

"Jamie, are you okay?"

"Yeah I'm...I'm fine..." He pouts towards at the gun, fingers toying around looking almost infantile. Pitch imagines that the gun was just too big for him to be holding or in possession of.

"You sure?"

"Yeah I think, I'm-" He cuts himself off, eyes squinting in the other direction away from Pitch. 'He knows.' Pitch smiles, taking a tentative step forward and after finding no bullets in his chest, walks towards Jamie.

"You're what?"

"I just feel like I fucked up too much." There was always an inner fire Jamie had, a hidden furnace of energy and spite but now Pitch could see that it was nothing but embers.

Pitch knows this line; Jamie's finally crossed his own moral threshold. This isn't like the threatening letters, the fighting or the acting out in class. Even Jamie knows he's wrong at this point.

"You ever kidnapped someone?"

"Somewhat." He cocks his head to the side with a wide grin. "It's strange how similar me, you and Jack are."

Jamie frowns with a huff of anger. "Of course, you and Jack."

"Are not the topic of conversation. As long as he is safe and nearby you are my main focus, you understand?" He doesn't need to be told Jack is in the house; Jamie wouldn't be here if he wasn't.

He nods, leaning his head against his arm, his fingers twiddling with a long black mark on the wooden table. "So...who'd you kidnap?"

"My daughter. It was more a counter-kidnapping to stop a kidnapping-in-progress but yes..."

Jamie listens, confused and shocked. "You have a kid?"

"Let's talk about her later, please."

"Does Jack know?"

"Yes, but this is about you-"

Jamie's eyes narrow and turn on him."No, this is about Jack. If I kidnapped someone else, you wouldn't be here. You wouldn't give a shit. This is about Jack; so let's talk about Jack." Pitch got caught off-guard by how sharp he is, even when he looks so tiny and frightened. "How does he feel that you went playing around as a teenager and knocked up some innocent woman?"
Pitch is almost impressed how good Jamie is at leading the conversation when he wants to. "He's fine with it, I would think." He says honestly, "He doesn't say much about her – there's not much left to say."

"What happened to her then?" And like that, he's polite and nice again, in less then half a minute he's returned to being the tiny little kid in need of help. "I've never seen her walking around and you..." Jamie looks away, scratching his head, "You wouldn't be a bad father; I'm sure."

Pitch feels as if he's rubbed Jamie the wrong way, unsure on whether Jamie is asking him to adopt him or if he's interested. "She passed." It's easier to say it that way then to say she 'died'.

Jamie looks at him as if he's become a monster and Pitch decides it would be best if he expanded on that.

"She got hit by a truck in the candy store. You know where the parking lot downtown is?" Pitch watches Jamie's expression sour. "Happy?" He wishes that last remark didn't leave his mouth, but he couldn't prevent it in time. Just speaking about Seraphina's death brings bad attitudes in him to light.

"Why would I be?"

"You wouldn't be..." Pitch repents, unable to look at Jamie anymore and avoiding eye contact altogether.

"Oh, hey- um, shit wait." Jamie panics, grabbing Pitch's shoulder and pulling him towards him. "Look, hey man I'm sorry, I shouldn't be pulling bad memories up. I- I'm stupid, I'm sorry. It's um...it's okay alright? Jack's downstairs in the basement. I checked on him a couple minutes ago; he's still out like a light alright?"

Pitch smiles up at him. "It's fine, stop overreacting..."

"I...I look I'm sorry I just- everything." Jamie motions to the house and pulls his arms up to rest on the table before banging his head against them, as if giving up. "I'm sorry I just; life is rough here you know?"

"All too well." Pitch notes, placing his hand over Jamie's head and petting him, giving him comfort he only wishes he was here to give sooner.

"I, I didn't mean for this to happen I was just gonna try and be friends with him again I'm sorry." By the end of his apology he's sobbing and gripping onto Pitch desperately, muffling his cries into his shirt and Pitch is patting his back, whispering words of consolation into his hair.

"Jamie, Jamie it's fine I know how you feel. Someone you loved dearly is with someone else, you feel like you just have to have them to yourself, you do stupid things. It's fine."

"Yeah but, I'm afraid of Jack, what if he's angry? What if he doesn't forgive me?" Jamie pulls himself away, wide eyed and terrified. "I fucked up with him didn't I? I just wanted things to be like they were back when we were younger, back when there was 2 way interest and-"

"Wait what?"

"When we were younger we had a little thing, we just kissed and Jack told me that he wanted a relationship." "I see..." 'Well great, now I'm not even sure who's the victim of who anymore.' "Jamie, relax. I can help you, we can fix this, I know it looks bad but you are in fact, just in a really bad life situation

"I see..."
right now. I can get you out but I need a little bit of help from you okay?"

"Oh....okay..."

"Can I trust that you'll be fine with me getting Jack from downstairs?"

"What-" Jamie realizes that Pitch is asking him whether or not he'll shoot at him. "Oh no it's cool, go ahead but you know, I just..." He sighs, shakes his head with tears twinkling in his eyes. "Please help me."

"I don't plan on doing anything different."

"Thank you." Jamie says, still in disbelief but ending his sentence with a needy grasp of Pitch's hands. "Thank you, you have...no idea."

"I've spent time around Jack. I think I have a little idea, trust me."

"I will. Thank you. He's in the basement, you can – here-" Jamie pushes the gun onto the other side of the table. "Go ahead. I'll stay here and help you with Jack once he wakes up."

"Alright. You going to be okay up here by yourself?"

Jamie smiles wider then Pitch thought the child could. "I think I can handle five minutes by myself."

"Okay, be right back." Pitch rises and swings open the basement door before running down without a second thought. As he comes down a powerful scent hits him full force. It smells like a cocktail of cheap cleaning chemicals and its so strong that it makes breathing uncomfortable.

Jack is lying face-down on a no doubt recently cleaned couch, looking peaceful as ever despite the wicked bruising on his head. Pitch stumbles over himself trying to reach the child. Before he can stop himself he's running his fingers through his hair and down his cheek, cooing to him.

"Hey, Sleeping Beauty, you alright?" Pitch makes a quick check over him, repeating the phrase as he opens Jack's eyes, checks his fingers and his pulse. Jack's alive, not altogether healthy at the moment but alive.

Still the only response he can coax from him is an exhausted groan.

He sees why Jack never took the initiative to come up here himself. Jamie knocked him out, probably with a pistol whip considering the bruise.

"Whatever is in your system can get flushed out in a couple of days I'm sure...let's get you out of here."

Pitch is certain Jack cannot walk up and out of the basement in his current condition and so he does the next best thing. He hoists the younger man in his arms and carries him bridal style up the steps, staying mindful of his head and feet.

Chapter End Notes

I love this re-write...so much more...then the original.
Because originally Jamie was supposed to be more crazy then Sophie - in fact *Sophie* was supposed to be the victim. But then it was like 'you can't do that...Jamie's adorbs.' So here you go.

Song is Beauty From Pain by Superchick
Fatal Attraction

Chapter Summary

Oh hi there.

Imagine with me for a moment...that I hold in my hands a gently beating, beautiful small red stone...
And it is...
Your heart; but it has a blue sadness inside...because you don't have any Cafe Claussen to read.
Then you receive a chapter of Cafe Claussen and it makes everything better!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

'Completely and utterly idiotic.' Pitch swears to himself, under his breath, as he finds himself on the receiving end of a half-perplexed death glare. Which he can't return while staring down the barrel of a gun, also pointed his way. Jack lies in his arms as motionless as he is.

It was an oversight that he attributed to panic for Jack's sake – any other day he wouldn't have made this mistake; even normal people would've asked the simple question 'where did you get those bruises from and how recent are they?'. It did however, explain more about why Jamie was so quiet and frightened; his abuser must've still been in the home and now here he stood, holding the gun at him.

Jamie's brown hair was bunched up in one hand opposite the one wielding the gun, his lip now bleeding with more bruising on his now tear stained and betrayed face. The man holding him even resembles William in the crazy, devil may care look in his eyes.

He doesn't care about the consequences or the limit as to how much society can take of him before they just get rid of him. He isn't like Jamie; he doesn't have a limit to what he will be willing to do to get his way.

He's in a white shirt underneath a well fitted blue (un)buttoned down jacket and tight blue denim jeans, his gray and white shoes are muddy – 'House work?' - and his smile is frighteningly infectious.

"So, would you like to explain why you're on my property?"

He's confident, self-righteous and impatient. Already Pitch can hear the anger peeking over the edges of his voice but he knows for a fact that a good majority of his ire was spent on Jamie's face.

Pitch wastes no time in answering, lest he leave with more holes then he entered with...or not leave at all. "I was picking up my cousin here," he motions to Jack, "up from the house." He measures every movement he makes, only halfway seeing the chemical burn on the side of Jack's face as he does.

"You had a friend over and you didn't tell me?" He yells, angrily, down at the now whimpering Jamie who just has enough time to cover his head before a boot comes crashing down on his head, sending him sprawling. "Look," he turns to Pitch, gun now down and face as welcoming and sweet
as could be, "I'm really sorry, my boy here he's..." the man makes another disgusted face. "just not a really good influence. Oh, my name's John by the way." John outstretches his hand and Pitch motions again to Jack. "Ah, right...sorry."

"It's...fine..." Pitch doesn't even know how he can have such a switch. He's heard about people like him who can just harm someone, including their own child, and then go right back to being friendly people. Yet, watching one right in front of him, happen in real-time, is jarring. He isn't sure whether to run away or try and kill him now.

"Anyway, I apologize for this, really." The 'this' being the crying, fetal position Jamie. "The best thing you can do is keep your kid away from him. The entire basement stunk like chemicals- is he gonna be okay?"

"Um," Pitch can't even remember actually being a part of the conversation – he can be charming and attention grabbing. He looked concerned and positive in all the right times and had a brightness about him that Pitch was sure kept him out of prison. He was the stuff psychopaths are made of. "yeah he'll be fine. I'm pretty sure most of it was cleaning stuff, it's nothing."

"Really? Cleaning products?" John yells, kicking Jamie in the shin – the yelp of pain the teen gives is the only sound he made since Pitch first left. "You could've fucking blew up the house, Jamie."

'Is that really the issue here?' Pitch would say that, but that wasn't sufficiently subtle. "Well, you know, kids. We always make mistakes."

"Yeah you know, I had my crazy times too but when I was his age."

'You've having one now.' Pitch takes a deep breath in, sighing at Jamie at the floor and feeling John's eyes on him. The man wants to know if he's got the other adult under his spell and Pitch immediately averts his eyes after noticing; he didn't want to end up with a bullet in his gut.

"Well..." Pitch exhales, adjusting his grip on Jack. If you don't mind I'll take my leave."

"Yeah man, you take care of yourself and," John points to Jack with a grin that touches place in Pitch that he never wanted to be touched again. ",if you're ever around, bring him."

"Uh sure, man." Pitch grins and – damn it – the little palms on the back of his shirt grip him so strongly he turns right around and just- "Have a nice day." Turn back around. Walk.

"Now onto you, you fucking little shit."

'Damn my morality.' He places Jack on the ground and as soon as Jamie's first scream leaves his lips he finds himself tackling John to the ground with all his strength; trying his damnedest to wrestle both the gun and the boy away from him.

Jamie is able to rip himself away by the torn hem of his shirt, hitting the floor with a groan that tells of more internal struggle then external pain before he got to his knees and crawled away. Pitch can't focus on helping him, not yet, as he's still battling with his (supposed) father over the gun, twisting his hand painfully to try and remove John's hand from the handle while also keeping it away from him.

John freed one of his hands from the butt of the gun, Pitch had to free him if he wanted to take control of the gun but John knew more about combat then he did. He jabbed the side of his face and Pitch's grip slips, a mixture of sweat and a natural lack of knowledge about firearms.

'Damn it.'
As he pulls his hands back, wondering if he should pick either fight or flight, he hears a loud, resounding bang – he shuts his eyes tightly and waits for the pain.

There is none. There's no noise either. Everything is quiet.

He opens to see Jamie standing near the doorway of the kitchen and John staring at him, both with guns in their hand. Jamie looks as if he's seeing sunlight for the first time, as if he's finally got a measure of freedom. John is, probably for the first time of his life, terrified of the consequences of what he's done.

He doesn't have time to feel regret or to pull his arm away from Pitch to defend himself.

It's in near slow motion as Jamie fires again, hitting his father square in the chest – Pitch worries for a moment.

He worries about Jamie's future, about how this might affect him. He isn't sure whether or not killing his father would heal or hurt him in the long run or if this act of vengeance or dominance as it were would actually free Jamie from his father's perverted behavior.

He doesn't have much more time to worry because as John goes down he goes down firing and one lucky bullet buries inside deep in Pitch's lower chest.

Jamie's second shot puts John down and the young man can't feel anything but absolute freedom, like power coursing through his veins. But at the sight of Pitch, his supposed savior, whose eyes rolled back into his head and body violently shaking as it hits the ground Jamie panics and disconnects from himself, fainting to the ground.

—

For the first time in eighty seconds, Pitch's head lifts from the fog of unconsciousness and back to the land of the living. A sharp needle of pain near his liver shoots through him, grabs him by his legs and pulls him back down, forcefully.

The next time he opens his eyes he can't remember where he is or what he's doing. He goes back down, exhausted, thinking he was just lying down for a little rest...'Just...just a moment more.'

The time after that he can keep him open because he knows now where he is, what he's doing...and what Sophie is saying to him.

"...a basic level of my now distant humanity and frankly if it wasn't for Mary, I would love to have you strangled." She quotes him with a grin, phone ringing out a familiar, welcoming voice. She sounds like she's speaking through an entire ocean, he just can't hear her well...but the phone is loud enough.

'911, What's your emergency?'

Sophie covers the phone's speaking edge. "Before you go out again, you should be thankful I'm doing this. It's not mercy though, it's buying time. I need to learn the macarena. I'm going to dance it at your funeral."

Pitch harp at her but he goes under again, pain and lack of blood to correctly keep everything running as it should, preventing him his words.
Katherine had only just finished considering ending her own life should something go horrifically wrong in the mad scheme of things when William beckoned her back into the room.

"I just got a call from the police."

Katherine braces herself, pressing her wad of tissues to her heart before the words 'Mary and Jack are fine' tumbles from William's mouth and she knows, she knows that the pillars of her life now still stand. Then she grips to William as tight as she can knowing she still has time to do with Jack what she couldn't with North.

She can make things right, she can hug him and tell him sorry and this time she can mean it from the bottom of her heart. She can make some new and better memories with him before her time to leave this Earth comes. And she knows it'll start today.

"He has to go to the hospital, the cops said we can meet him there." William says, pulling away from the hug to gather his coat and car keys.

"Oh, oh wow I don't even know where to start." Katherine says excitedly, grabbing a pair of sandals from the closet before running over to a nearby drawer rack to get her coat. "It's like a new day you know, I mean I-...whose phone is this?"

"Huh? Oh...that's Sophie's I think."

"Oh okay let me look for the contact list on it and then I'll call her at her place, tell her sh-"" Katherine wasn't 'tech savvy', not in the slightest. Instead of contact list she scrolled over to pictures and accidentally opened up...

"Oh my god..."

–

Chapter End Notes

AND THEN I THROW YOUR HEART OT THE GROUND AND STOMP ON IT.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!
The Awakening

Chapter Notes

For those of you that didn't see it, I re-wrote chapter 1 of the fic for Black Ice week. If you have the time and are feeling a tad nostalgic for....over one year and two months ago, feel free to check it out.

Title is from the movie. The Awakening.

Ironic; I saw the movie and I had to be awoken after it ended.

Pitch was never good at swimming; in fact he hated it. He thought of himself as a being with legs, to stay on solid ground, not in a moving body of water. Even when he was younger, he refused to swim even before he first set foot in water that wasn't in a bathtub or kiddie pool.

In his youth, he'd come close to drowning when he set the tub too high. Some of his hair, back when it wasn't arrogant and defying gravity, got caught in the drain.

It had awoken a fear of drowning in him that bordered on the unreasonable at times. Getting a degree in psychology helped him to better comprehend the fear and learn to control it. Still, he despised swimming.

Along with treading water, Pitch also hated being an any state below 'fully conscious'. This though, was more a matter of control birthed from his less then emotionally stable days. Mornings when he couldn't properly control his own body and mind after nights horrible drunkenness and sore bodies from abusive lovers.

A loss of control made him feel weak.

And those were just part of the reason why as he swam in and out of consciousness, with half of his chest cut open and a heavy oxygen mask on, he cries in a haze of horror. Doctors hover above him, attending to him. One of them even wipes away his tears and says something comforting; something he can't hear, the sounds are all too muffled. He knows he is in a doctor's office and there is no pain or agony riddling him. He's far too drugged and exhausted to bother with those emotions. It is as if he's trapped underwater but can't find the strength to break the surface.

He realizes...he can't feel any of his body. At all. He screams with all the force he can muster without using his lungs before passing out again.

–

He comes back to himself; he hates the feeling.

It's as if he is waking up into a world of pain. Even when noticing the all too familiar sight of a morphine drip in his arm, there is a fatigue that plagues him. It is 'Post Surgery Fatigue'...he thinks. He isn't sure, he hasn't quite come back to himself yet.

He would normally reason something significant from this...but...he's too...tired...
Every time awakes past that is a strange haze. Jumping into and out of the conscious world. Crying from lack of control and general pain become second nature. His limbs are too heavy, as if they were stuck on a child version of himself. Gunshot wounds, dead bodies and powerful, broken screams plague his dreams.

He isn't sure whether the screaming is him but he awakes one day to find a nurse heightening his dosage, so he assumes so.

One time he comes up and he can move his head before he feels so tired that he just can't any more. From what he can tell, he's in a hospital and there are beeping heart monitors around him and...

He looks down to his hand. He is handcuffed to the hospital bed. The heart monitor's monotone sounds increase in volume and frequency.

'Fucking what?' is the only thing that can come to his drug and injury addled mind before he slips under the waters of unconsciousness again.

In a few more days he's gathered back full control of his limbs; nothing is gone to his knowledge. Both of his legs are at least remotely functional, same with his arms. His head is foggy but it is now more a misty haze then the all-consuming, painful steam cloud he remembers it being. That is, the way he can remember it in the few times he was conscious.

Yet, he is tired and with no one there to hate, speak with or otherwise interact with he can't find the energy to move much at all. He considers calling his doctor but decides against it. He needs more shut eye, he has the chance to get it and he takes it, hoping that more sleep will let him think.

He wakes up from a night terror with wet hands tearing at the sheets. His mouth formed around Jack's name, moments from screaming it.

Now, he feels complete consciousness.

There's heavy beeping from the nearby heart monitor, he uses that to help remind him that he is in the hospital...for a gunshot wound. Just to make sure he isn't completely insane yet, he checks his lower chest. The truth looks him right back in the face. A line of stitches, seals up the wound. He has no idea how medicine or the non-brain related functions of the mind work but it looked to be already healing. Good news overall but for now he had a closed up, stitched up hole in his lower belly. Had he been a more active exerciser he would've been more upset by the lack of mobility it would've given him.

He tests, just in case, every limb he has and finds that not only are all his limbs working but the handcuffs he dreamed about were gone.

There was a faded reddened ring across his wrist.

'So, not a dream. Okay. First order of business down.'

His skin is also much lighter, much healthier looking then it was before – although Pitch doubts it is a good thing per say. He is thankful though; if he was 'normal' colored he might have ended up looking like he'd lived in a cave since the dawn of man.
He continues his self inspection until a nurse comes and raises the white blinds of the window. She gives him an update on when he'll be okay to leave.

There is no argument, though he wishes he could make one, he is to stay in the hospital under minor supervision for three more days. The only upside Pitch can find is that as she turns on the television she doesn't notice Pitch's risen middle finger.

It isn't long after that the familiar sight snatches his focus away from the television. Past the check-in desk and for murmuring nurses he spies a familiar, long missed face; Jack.

The younger man is resting in a hospital bed with his head on an incline, face downcast with boredom and anger. Pitch can only imagine that Jack is about as disinterested with the hospital setting as he is.

'Time to work your old charm it appears...' Pitch smirks. "Excuse me, Miss, I was wondering if I could ask a little more of you..."

–

Jack isn’t sure he can understand what it means to be 'out of your mind'. Yet, he is coming to understand that staring at over-simplistic white walls and obnoxious monitors all day could help you get there.

For the past two days nurses and doctor telling him 'Oh, it's fine, you'll be out soon', have filled his days. He never chose what he wanted to major in college but now, after dealing with doctors, medicine is off the table.

The beeping monitors create a monotone rhythm that bores him but not enough to help enforce sleep. Television is boring when there's nothing decent to watch. He can't watch the news and see current events and he can't get Hidden Temple on in the hospital. He tried bugging the nurses until they fixed it for him but they were steadfast on making him hate it here as much as possible, made all the worse by them also forcing him to stay.

He doesn’t even know how he is currently staying alive, there to be a point where you died of boredom...right? Jack can’t help but hope he is either close to that point or close to something non-white obscuring his vision.

He wants to scream but he can't – his throat too scratchy and scarred from bleach inhalation. There is even a painful wheezing coming from his chest when he breathes. Yesterday, the doctors had come and taken the oxygen mask from him. They told him that his lungs were healthy enough to last on their own, that he should be out of the hospital in just a few days while they observed him...

It had thrown him for a loop. They all walked in and he had no idea why there were so many of them in one place. He didn't know his life was worth the time of what seemed like every doctor in the hospital.

For the sake of saving face he didn’t say anything about it. Jack just nodded and agreed until the air was free of more 'professional' men in white coats talking at him. Now he regretted it, having no human voice to hide the insidious beeping. Hearing the constant quiet but still present wheeze every time he breathed was helping to hide the beeping but awoke a fear in him. Fear that maybe the bleach damage was permanent and he'd be stuck like this forever.

He wondered if this was what people who had lung cancer and holes in their throats had to deal with...
all day.

'Self reminder. Never smoke.'

And like that Jack's final spark of mental inspiration for snuffed out. He had nothing to think about, nothing came to him and the room was too bright for his liking. It was whiter then his hair and he thought that was saying something.

For the next hour he spends his time rolling over and over in his bed, wheezing, in minor pain and bored until a nurse knocks on his door. He waves her in, too happy to see another human being.

She looks around his age and is looking back at her clipboard and then back at him, smiling and giggling a little. "J-Jackson O. Frost, correct?"

Jack can hear the smile in her tone and smiles right along with her, happy to finally have some company. "Yeah, weird, I know. It's the hair."

She giggles, charmed and they make small talk. She doesn't mind his raspy voice or his bandaged up cheek and for a minute Jack feels like he could be out of here in no time at all.

"...believe it or not I've got an uncle that did science research on polar ice caps and stuff at the north pole." He feels a wave of sadness come over him, when was the last time he'd gone to visit uncle North? "Had white hair just like I did. Every Christmas he'd go out, dressed in full red, with his huge sleigh and give presents to kids. We called him North." He could see the flash of disbelief in the woman's eyes but he couldn't care. Not when he had painted a mental picture of his uncle.

It was like he could see North in front of him now. His giant, round stomach rumbling with glee every time a child ran up to him or pointing at him, calling him 'Santa'.

"Jack Frost and Santa Claus." She shakes her head, smiling. "Well, unfortunately for you, you don't get this big, empty room to yourself anymore I'm afraid. We've got an influx of patients from a car pile up that happened a little while ago, need the room..." She scratches the side of her head. "I just wanted to give you heads up that they're bringing him over now – he made a special request for this room, weird as it sounds."

"Who is it?"

"Some..." She flips her clipboard around and squints at the name, before biting her tongue and sighing. "Kroz-mo-tiss, Pitchyner?"

Jack screams.
The young nurse is speaking but Jack can't be bothered to listen, especially after the conversation's high point happens to be when she asks him out and the unavoidable low point is when he tells her that he's gay. After padding out the fat-chewing until it was safe and more definitely not rude or revealing of her personality at all, she leaves the room.

Before she came, delivering such good news to him he'd never felt closer to dying in his life. He was stuck with his own thoughts and beliefs of what happened after he passed out, only to wake up in an ambulance with no Pitch or Mary in sight.

He'd gotten word that Mary was fine but besides for that Pitch was an unknown.

Until now, and he feels absolutely wonderful, full of energy and just plain happy. Pitch is alive. A warm, light feeling rests in his stomach at the thought of seeing Pitch again; the thought of hugging and embracing his boyfriend had previously felt like it might have been impossible. Now it was the single most preoccupying thought in his mind.

"Maybe he missed me too," Jack thinks, a beam shining across his face as he wonders about what happens now for the both of them and where they go from here.

It's twenty minutes of thought filled silence but Jack is already waiting for him by the window when a wheelchair confined Pitch is brought around the corner and into Jack's room. Somehow, the older man is pulling off looking both angry and delighted at the same time.

He is wheeled in beside Jack and the doctors and medical professionals are abuzz with worthless words again, both he and Jack just nod and agree, absorbing none of it.

The moment the door closes, the moment they are alone, Jack is kissing up Pitch's neck and the older man is all the more rigid for it.

"Calm down, someone will see," Pitch says, lips betraying his words when he responds to Jack's intimacy in kind. Running his hands across his body in quick but caring motions, getting all the lip contact he can grab with brief motions.

"Your mouth says calm down" Jack takes a moment to bite Pitch's lower lip, then runs his tongue against it. Pitch can only moan after a point, reaching up to grab handfuls of skin under all the thankfully poorly held together hospital clothing. Jack didn't expect Pitch to taste so much like himself, being in the hospital as long as he was. "The rest of you says you missed me."

"The rest of me has been-" Pitch takes a moment to remind Jack who is the dominant one when it comes to romance. He grabs the back of Jack's head, pulls him back and plunges his tongue in deep, alighting a fire in his stomach. Since Jack is sitting on top of him it's an awkward position but Pitch can't think about it when Jack begins grinding their crouches together. "In a drug coma- for days." Jack's voice is a rasp and it sounds broken, out of tune, but Pitch doesn't mind – in fact, most of his fantasies involved Jack losing his voice.

"Mmmhhmmm..." Jack jokes around but acknowledges him, still grinding. It's a warming, pooling sensation that he's missed and he can't help the high-pitched, desperate noises he makes.

"Christ you're tricky..." Jack chuckles, whispering moaning appeals into Pitch's ear to not stop despite being the only one moving.
"And you love it." Jack gasps after a particularly hard movement, grasping Pitch's sides and panting for more.

"Damn right, darling." Pitch groans, low and heavy. He tightens his grip on Jack's ass, enjoying the feeling of the young man's skin in his palms – it's just so good to know that after such an ordeal, both him and Jack are alive. "But as it stands someone is going to see us – as a matter of fact someone probably already saw us."

"Ten more minutes."

"We can't come in our hospital gowns- Jack..." He hisses, breathing deeper. "They'll know."

"Oh-oooh...fuck...okay, okay...wow...I'm done, I'm sorry." Jack's breathes were heavy and there was sweat now beginning to gather on his temple. "But after we're out of here, I'm jumping your bones so hard that you won't be able to look down and not think of me."

"Sounds amazing. Now that you've told me that, excuse me while I try my best to will down this erection."

"Try trying to get up but not exactly getting up, so like, it pumps the blood to your legs." Jack slips back into his bed, not trying to will down his own erection. He wants to rub himself out, not being a fan of just 'waiting' for it to go away or working to get rid of it.

Pitch half-smiles, amused. "That sounds completely stupid, incomprehensible and impossible."

"Try me." Jack winks, tucking himself in underneath white sheets, leaning back and opening his legs. He wraps his fingers around himself and a light chill moves up his spine. He can't remember the last time he finished himself for a change and the thought that Pitch is right there, wanting him, is intoxicating.

"You aren't helping with the whole 'erection' stopping thing." The older man deadpans, then groans in disbelief and surrender when Jack begins to stroke himself. He looks up, assuring himself it is to reprimand Jack for his horrible misconduct but he forgot Jack was very good at awakening dizzying levels sexual desires in him.

Pitch doesn't just masturbate – in full view he puts on an entire show. He throws his head back and he moans, begs and pleads for Pitch to give him his release. His free hand is spent teasing Pitch's right leg which is all too close to the bed, his uncut and lengthening nails scratch into half-revealed skin before running under the hospital clothes.

The teenager smiles, reminding Pitch exactly who he got into a relationship with.

"That leg thing? Doesn't work."

"Not when I-I'm turning you on it doesn't." Jack's breath goes shorter and shorter, his body is getting tense and locking up around a core of heat. "So, fucking good..."

"I hate you, you and that David like body of yours." Pitch averts his gaze, not wanting to keep his erection around but wishing that he could somehow get rid of it and still stare and watch Jack's performance.

"Fuck...f-fuck, fuck..." Jack groans, shoulders back and eyes hazed with need, the heat that gathers itself in his stomach expands and to Jack he feels consumed by it – making sure no one sees is the last thing on his mind.
Pitch only wishes he would be quieter and yet, he doesn't. This means he enjoys putting on a show, a show just for Pitch without care of whoever else sees and the thought of this, more then anything else, turns him on. Jack is willing to be so public about them, so brazen about his desires, Pitch only wishes that he'd do it at a time when they weren't just getting out of police custody.

"Please...please, more- oh." Jack pants, eyes closed and mouth open, moaning things to Pitch, begging him not to do whatever thing he is fantasizing. Pitch is wondering how there is still no doctor or person stopping in front of the window to prevent Jack from ruining his sheets.

Then he realizes he's a doctor, sitting right next to Jack, and not stopping him.

He licks his lips, imaging the taste of Jack's sweat, wondering how far he can push him before he goes tumbling off the edge. Leaning in close, he whispers, "Beg for me. Beg for everything I have, beg for what I can give you and more of what I've already given."

"Please." Jack turns his head, facing Pitch. He tries to reach him but his lips miss by mere inches, failing to get the contact that his body is begging for. It doesn't stop him from trying. "Give me more, I need it."

"I'll give you everything you've ever needed and things you didn't even know you wanted." Pitch thinks of all the kinks they haven't touched on, all the light bondage and slow moving, rough and black romance they could have once they get out.

Jack shoulders seize up, getting tight and hard to control like the rest of his body. He somehow finds the bodily control to curl in on himself and continue stroking. "I'm,-" Jack can't properly form words and he is gone, his thumb running over his head on the upstroke and white flashing before his eyes as his toes curl. All that exists is the warming feeling in his lower belly, exploding and moving out towards the entirety of his body.

He comes hard into his hands, panting Pitch's name, body shaking and unstable loading itself full of too much sensation. He doesn't remember there being a 'quiet' time post-orgasm when masturbating, but this time he has one.

Pitch doesn't say anything either, not for a long while.

For twenty minutes the room is dominated by deep, calming breathing and the outside chatter of still-busy doctors. Jack ends it by shifting, showing Pitch a lazed, sweet smile. "Well darling," His voice is filled with happiness and jest, poking fun of currently smirking Pitch and his romantic nickname. "That was fun, wasn't it?"

"When we get out of here I'm going to ride you ragged. I hope you realize that."

"I do." Jack smiles, mouth half open while he pants Pitch's name. "Get well soon, love." He rolls over, let's sleep dominate him for the time being, his body tired enough as is.
It's the middle of the night when Jack awakes up, his dreaming strangely interrupted by nothing in particular. A quick glaze through the hazy golden dusk darkness reveals that Pitch had been moved into a bed during his sleep. The older man is quiet, until he can see the twinkling of Jack's familiar eyes.

"Awake at last?" Pure white walls and overly clean places were the bane of Pitch's restful nights; he couldn't sleep in this environment, not without more drugs or more exhaustion.

Jack groans in effort to face Pitch, still tired, and chuckles. "I'm surprised that you're still awake yourself, what happened?"

"Well." Pitch's expression was invisible but the tone of fresh, common place snark was obvious. "You masturbated, rolled over and went to sleep. I, on the other hand, had to force most of the blood in my body to relocate itself away from my balls."

"Oh no," Jack chuckles, happy to see his little tease worked. "I meant...why are you in a hospital bed, in hospital clothes?"

"Ah, that." The smarmy confidence has washed away, replaced with anger that Jack can't quite understand. "I was shot. Nothing more."

"Ah, that." The smarmy confidence has washed away, replaced with anger that Jack can't quite understand. "I was shot. Nothing more."

"...Vaccinations?"

"No. I mean shot, as in, from a gun."

Well that's a shocker. "Oh my god," Jack's head is alight with thoughts and questions and worry. No one had told him Pitch got shot, no one had even told him anything about what happened after he went out like a light. "What, what even happened when I was out?"

Pitch sucks his teeth and rolls his eyes. "Don't panic now. You had your chance to panic and you used it masturbating."

Jack can make out shoulder movement in Pitch's bed – the other man is shrugging the entire fact of getting shot off. "Oh yes, jerk bag. Excuse me for feeling worried about the fact that someone came along and put another hole in you."

"Excuse you indeed."

'Oh...oh.' Jack bites his lip and starts twiddling with his fingers. "I'm sorry. I – that was immature of me." He jacked off before even questioning why Pitch was in the hospital to begin with – right after falling for a trap that more then likely lead to..."Did...did Jamie shoot you?" He can't believe he has to ask this, he doesn't think in his wildest dreams he would ever have to-

"No, his father did."

"...Oh my god, what happened after I passed out?" Jack's eyes widen and his heart skips a beat, the top of his head and his ears heat up. The more he contemplates what happened, the more he can't believe. "You get shot by Jamie's father and I just miss it because of bleach and- what the hell else
did I miss?"

Pitch's lips curl downwards, then there's the sound of physical shifting and Jack can't see Pitch's golden pupils piercing the darkness anymore."...Go to sleep, Jack."

"No, no don't you fucking dare just give me little bits and pieces of things that I need to know. I was in that house, Pitch. I was in danger just like you were – I kind of have a right to know."

Pitch's expression goes from amused to unreadable in a moment's notice. "You're tired, I'll tell you in the morning when your ready to handle what I have to tell you."

"Pitch." Jack's tone hardens in warning. "Don't do this to me."

"Good night." The tone is serious, stern and it is final.

Jack spends the better part of the night making angry, vicious remarks that he is sure he'll have to apologize for later but doesn't, deciding that if he can wait for news then Pitch can wait for his apology. At around 1 in the morning, after acquiring the attention of multiple nurses who remind him he'll be separated or put in sedation if he doesn't calm down, he resigns himself to sleep.

Pitch isn't despaired or phased by any of his comments, in fact it seems like the more Jack continues his barrage the more Pitch encourages him, smug and amused. If Jack had the energy or the drive he would've thrown something at him, but as it stands he can find neither. He rolls over and gives the fight a rest.

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Jack forgot how tired he was, how much he longed for more sleep, until he obtained some. Then he got greedy and wanted more, which he would've taken, had it not been for the sudden memory of Pitch withholding information.

He whirls around in his bed, only to find Pitch's side of the room with significantly less bed and equally less Pitch. Jack sees this and realizes that he is completely alone.

He signals a nurse, who explains in a calm and careful voice that Pitch was moved due to a private complaint filed by his parents, who would see him shortly. She leaves him with a nod and a level of care in her eyes that makes him feel uncomfortable. 'Shit.' Jack groaned, learning forward in bed with his head in his palms.

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When Katherine and William appear in his window, gazing at him with eyes that both say 'we need to talk' and 'we're sorry', Jack doesn't know how to handle it. Their eyes hold a sense of remorse and pity that frighten him and, strangely enough, make him feel nostalgic about the days before they began drinking. Back when they seemed to care about his physical and emotional state of well-being.

The door opens and they welcome themselves in. Jack can't believe how formal and quiet they are, how well composed they seem while they stand in front of him.

"Hey there, kiddo." William's smile is genuine enough but there's just something there that sets Jack off.

"Hey, Dad..." Jack sits up straight in bed, the word 'Dad' sticking to his tongue like glue. "I would assume you guys know about it already?"
"There's a lot of 'it' to begin with, Jack." Katherine leans against the side of the hospital bed, half-grinning. "You're gonna have to be more specific."

"About Jamie and what happened at his house?"

"Ah, no. Surprisingly enough, the police have been tight lipped about that." William notes, frowning a bit as he does so. Jack can tell that Will has his suspicions of what happened there but at the same time, he has a sinking feeling..."That's not the 'it' we were expecting though."

"I don't know what other 'it' there is." Jack shrugged, hoping to tip toe around any argument or issue. "It might have something to do with...your friend?"

"Not Jamie?"

"Not Jamie."

"...Pitch?"

William nods.

"Well...what happened that you aren't telling me about?" After years and years of faking ignorance about various different things in order to not start more parental battles, it was easy to keep pretending like the risk of them knowing now wasn't there. In fact, it was better that way; just in case they didn't, so he wouldn't lead them to know. "Look, whatever you found, just tell me."

Katherine looks him over, her hand comes to his face and forces him to move to each side"Did Pitch," Katherine sighs, running her fingers through her hair. "Did he do anything to you? Touch you anywhere-"

"So you know already? Why ask me?"

"Because we want to know about this – why wouldn't you tell us?"

"Because you already beat the shit out of me and Mary for no reason, why would I give you a tangible reason?"

"Why would we hurt you for loving someone?" Katherine laughs alone, hoping that Jack would see the foolishness of his questions. Her hope stands until her eyes lock with Jack's hardened, stark gaze. They seemed to ask her, 'Why laugh?'. She didn't quite know the answer herself and wondered if perhaps to alleviate the nervousness of knowing what would come next?

"Why then? Why would you hurt me to begin with? Why would you guys get drunk every day and night and leave me to fend for myself against..." Jack's shoulders drooped and hid the wetness forming in his eyes, looking away. "Against like, everything? School and people and questions and just everything – like I'm okay now...I guess but..." He stopped talking; it got too painful, thinking of days when he would just want to run away and never look back, when Mary's needs and her smile were the only things keeping him tied to the family.

"...Come here." William says, gripping Katherine's shoulder and motioning to the outside.

"Be right back, honey." Katherine smiles and kisses Jack on the forehead. "I promise, we're gonna figure this out okay?"

Jack wants to remind her the only thing wrong with them, as a whole, is their drinking.
They talk, in hushed voices out the window before noticing the gray spot far across the hospital floor. "Pitch."

As if on cue, his parents walk towards his boyfriend's room with a sense of purpose that Jack didn’t know they could muster.

'This...is not good.'

Chapter End Notes

Welp, You know how summer goes for me. Slow updates, laziness, tiredness, IDK why.

Here's a tiny update while I look over the next chapter. If you're upset due to the length of this chapter, don't be. The next one is more then twice as big.
Here you are, the 50th chapter in all its beautiful, bloody glory.

The television is off, the only noise in Pitch's new room is the sound of his own breath. The room is still and in this silence, Pitch realizes how strange his own breath sounds and ends up switching to manual breathing.

He tries his best to divert his own attention, he starts to finger the sheets and search for something to grip to in the ruffles. His breathing shifts from calm to wild and conscious-driven. The silence was why he hated hospitals, he felt crushed and trapped within the four, over bleached walls of the room. He kept on telling himself that he was fine; he didn't have to freak out but the fact of the matter was, even when he told himself otherwise, he was around sick and dying people.

People bleeding out from injuries, dying of sicknesses, making him remember last month-

He drags himself away from thoughts of her and instead focuses on his room change and on Jack.

'This could be a good thing,' He tries as hard as he can not to be upset, 'Jack can meet someone normal now, someone who doesn't freak out at the slightest thought of loneliness and blood or pain. Someone normal, someone who can properly function.'

As much as he tries to convince himself, he can't see it. Thinking back, there was not one time when he saw Jack as 'normal', he always thought of his younger lover and boyfriend as better then the rest. Including the come and go rabble he'd meet on his nightly trips to and from different nightclubs.

Jack couldn't be with a 'normal' person because Jack himself was not normal, he was something better. He'd survived being a functioning adult for a majority of his latter childhood, even survived raising a child all on his own.

Pitch remembers his times raising a child on his own. The sleepless nights, the fear, the constant worrying about their safety. Even when you knew you were overreacting, you couldn't just take your money off them – your child was and is the primary thing that concerns you for a majority of your time. It was hard for him to even get up in the morning some days, much less face the world.

Some days, even with his love for Seraphina he couldn't help but want to give her to her mother, go on with his life because he couldn't take the subconscious stress anymore.

And he had functioning parents, more disposable income, a social circle and a degree for a majority of it.

Jack had none of that and, if his short but sweet meetings with Mary have been any indication, he's done a damn good job. Possibly an even better one. Now Jack is being taken away from him, being taken by the very same force they were both trying to get Jack away from.

He feels like a spider that's entrapped himself in its own web. Their relationship was all but out in the open now. What consequences will they face now? Who else knew about them now, besides two psychotic drunkards?
Pitch pulls himself off his emotional slump through force of pride and puts on a mask of moral superiority when Katherine and William come rounding the corner and into his vision through the hospital room window.

With hands folded and eyes patient Pitch watches as they come into the room, eyes kindling with emotions that Pitch were certain he'd now have to deal with. He has a hole in his chest still and his exhaustion is wearing him down but he'll be damned if he doesn't get just one insult in. If he goes down, it's while he's still swinging.

It's a shock to him that they seem to care enough to turn around and close the door behind them and when they turn back around to stare him down, the air is thick enough to be cut through. Breathing becomes a conscious effort as Pitch sees that they came in with purpose and reason; there is no evidence of alcohol usage or drugs, whatever they've come to say it is in a sober state of mind.

"I failed didn't I?" Katherine's voice is like a scream in the silence. "I let you happen to him." Her shoulders are slumped but her eyes are keen, hawklike. "I let a creep like you near my son."

Her breath is heavy and long when she sucks it in through her nose and then, with a muted whine presses her palm over her face. "I let a pedophile near my children, I let you into our home and not one second- not one second, did I bother to question it." Her weight shifts from foot to foot and her whining increases, shoulder's shaking and the hand over her face become a palm to his mouth to stop her from crying aloud.

As Katherine's face turns red with tears, William comes to her and embraces her, wrapping his arms around her. Pitch's eyes widen as he notices; their marriage is not something that can be damaged on a whim. Years of beating and abuse and they still support and love each other, at least when it comes down to their children.

"So all that talk..." William's voice is more quiet, stabler. It's like he has had this all as a prepared speech for a very long length of time but the anger behind his words cannot be ignored. "About hating being called a pedophile. Should have called it there, I guess."

Despite the ire brewing in his own stomach, it's the first time he finds he can respect William as a man and a father. It's as if he's being attacked but this time by people he has to look eye to eye with; they aren't drunken fools anymore.

It's both angering and uplifting. Jack's parents are finally back...which is good news...but they are 'back' and that's bad news. "Excuse me, but what?" He feigns squinting and confusion while inside he tries to grasp hold of his wit again, which he assumes must have leaked out through the wound in his lower stomach. "I believe that this is more then likely some type of misunderstanding."

Katherine's voice keens off in a high-pitched, frightening squeak, as if she's been injured. "We know that you hurt our son."

'Ah, well. Only so much hiding one can do.' Pitch smiles and, as a result, the room feels smaller and more tease on the Frosts' side. "Might I ask how?" He figures if he has to be held accountable for anything, he might as well look over the collection or accusation of his sexual misgivings as a personal 'Best of' list.

Katherine yanks out the phone and all but shoves it into his face, eyes streaked with tears as the phone shows a clear photo of him and Jack in the cafe booth. It's a day that he can clearly remember, after the meeting during the rainy night when they had begun their relationship but before their first 'sexual' moment together.
Pitch cannot see what he's done wrong and his smile only gets wider, especially when he sees Jack appear in the hospital room window, recently released going by the state of his clothing. Pitch waves, William sees and before he can attest to it the window's blinds are down.

"Not so fast, freak-show." Though William is sober Pitch finds he hates the man even more, now that he's sober enough to know what he's doing and still too ignorant to approach it with any sense of care.

In honesty, for Pitch the entire past few days have been made up of blind-sided claims, shouting and fighting all hitting him in rapid succession with no reprieve in between. "So," Pitch pushes his stress and anger into a much more productive rage that he intends to exert onto Katherine and William. It's a freeing sensation in his stomach, to feel hate boil up in his guts once again. "What you're telling me is that Jack, who is 17 and is allowed to consent to anyone he wants in this state, is being abused by me?"

It's difficult to see where they are coming from and hard for him to sort it all out himself, he couldn't understand what point they were trying to make. Were they attempting to control Jack? To get him to break up with Pitch?

The constant banging of the door tells Pitch that if they did try to get Jack to break up with Pitch, it didn't work.

"Mom, Dad, open the door!" Jack's yells from the other side fall on deaf ears and for a moment Pitch feels...wanted. Very strongly so.

"Tell me, does that sound like a child that is desperate to be saved from my ever so evil clutches?"

Katherine's voice is laced with anger – she knows that she's pressed on both sides. "Whatever hold you have over my son-"

"From the confines of this hospital bed, with an ever-present hole in my chest." Pitch interrupts. "Jack is 17, Katherine and I don't take you two or him for a bunch of idiots. If Jack was terrified of me or having contact with me don't you think for just a moment that he would have told you? That he would've come to you for help?"

"What do you have on my son that is making him act this way?"

Pitch squints and tilts his head. "Well, how polite of you considering I saved your son's life. Twice." He considers it and stops Katherine from speaking. "Multiple times actually."

The banging on the door has stopped and from the half-muffled noises coming from the outside Jack is trying his best to explain to the hospital staff about the situation.

"Did you deflower my son?"

"How cute and quaint of you," He cannot find the 'off' switch to his better-then-thou speech mode at the moment, so he rolls with it. "shouting curses at home while your drunk and then coming to me and using such soft words like 'deflower'."

"Kromotis, if I find out you raped my son there won't be a devil in hell that can save you from me." William's voice grows deep and dark but Pitch can only chuckle in response.

"William, speaking man to man I've seen you. I've seen how you are at home. I cannot respect you, much less fear you after the shit I've seen you pull."
"And what have I pulled, huh?!" William yells, his violent rage kindling and his hands slamming down, the bed giving a light bounce in response. "I raised two beautiful children and you come out of nowhere and start ruining my fucking family-"

"You call abusing the hell out of your children 'raising' them? You realize that me and Jack met after you beat him so bad he ran away right?"

"That's a lie. My son never ran away."

"But you admit to the abuse part right? You admit to beating him to a bloody pulp at least?" Pitch is trying to find some ground, trying to see how much William can admit to, so he can get a sense of where they stand.

"You don't know what I've had to do as a father to keep my family secure!" William grabs Pitch and the younger man smiles slyly at him, wishing that he would just go one step further, break all of this out into a ruckus.

Then court cases, jail dates and custody battles could start. As much as he wanted Jack's family to be back together, he wanted Jack to be stable and consistent more, come to his house for pleasure visits, not just to escape his horrible family. Fuck the consequences.

"Dad, stop!" Jack yells on the other side of the glass, hospital teams looking in, curious as to whether or not they should intervene. William's grip falters and Pitch lets himself fall back into the bed sheets.

The older man rubs his leathery, older hands together and walks around the room, face twisting multiple times as he muses over everything he knows thus far.

Katherine grips his shoulder in a motion of support. "Look, as a family, we've made some mistakes. It's true, but as family we're going to do better next time."

"Brilliant speech. But your past actions show that every next time has failed, Katherine. For both you and your husband. Worse for your children."

"You can't just hurt my child because..." Katherine shakes her head.

"Jack isn't a child anymore. He's been an adult for years now, Katherine." Pitch bridges his fingers and throws a wishing look to Jack. "You have to accept that he isn't a growing child. He's already grown."

Her voice breaks as she hears him speaking. "You can't just take my baby away from me, not like this."

"Your 'baby'," He says with a moderate amount of indignation, "had been gone for quite awhile. He's a man now, learn to treat him like one."

"He's still my son." Katherine's voice breaks, tears welling up in her eyes. "You can't tear him away from me, I'm his mother, I raised him, I fed him, I clothed him- I helped him become the good, sweet man he is today."

"You beat him, you insulted him, you berated him." Pitch amends. "He raised himself up to be a good man, not you. Frankly, I don't know why you're so upset." He points to the glass pane where Jack is watching with a tilted head and curious eyes, probably unable to hear Pitch's calm monotone. "He should be upset, he got cheated out of an entire childhood."

"Shut up, just-just shut up." Katherine holds her own face in her hands, "You don't know how I feel
right now, so just...just stop."

"You're right, I don't know how you feel right now. And I don't care either. It was your job as parents to bring your son up, you failed at that. Epically so."

"And what would you know about being a parent, hm?" William speaks up, tears running down his face but his voice not wavering like Katherine's. There's a righteous anger burning in his eyes and he steps towards Pitch, shaking his head. "You wouldn't know a damn thing about what we're feeling right now- how could you? You've never raised a child."

There's a pang of burning pain in his chest, hearing that. "You're off the mark." He can't stop himself from crying, no matter how straight he keeps his face. Katherine and William are taken aback and watch Pitch break down in awe. "You tell me I don't know what being distant from a child is like, you're lucky you can even see your child wa-alk again."

It burns, how much it hurts when he thinks of Jack, Seraphina and Mary. Too alike, too different, not his, any of them, he wants them all though – he wants to be around them and nurture them but he can't. William and Katherine got their chance and wasted it. He felt like a dying man in the desert, watching other people pour water into the ground.

"You wasted your chance." His face goes red and he can barely keep his eyes open as he curls up, bringing his knees up and trying to hide his ugly tears. "You ruined it, don't come to me now. Don't start being good people now, you- you fucked it up! Like spoiled little brats you threw away what I would've taken! Gladly at that!"

Jack is banging on the window, perplexed. Hospital staff are out of sight, advising him to stop. He doesn't. He's not allowed inside and he can't scream for them to stop, voice too aching from the last scream and too weak to put any power behind the next.

"Pitch I don't know what weird mental disorder you have but Jack is our son. Not yours."

Pitch gasps for breath, feeling like he's being crushed under himself. "Kather-"

"Jack is our son, Pitch."

"Listen." Pitch feels a minor wave of exhaustion come over him but forces himself past it, gripping his lower body in pain.

"Ours. Not yours."

"Listen, damn you," Pitch grabs the wound in his lower chest, unable to stop crying. "You were blessed with some of the most wondrous children and you threw that away. How could you come to me and tell me that I'm the one in the wrong. You had your chance with Jack and you wasted it and Jack is raising Mary. I had to watch him come to me with bruises and aches and pains from the both of you and you're telling me that I hurt him – that I hurt him? What of you?!

"We're gonna make it better," Katherine says, turning to Jack and smiling. "Right?"

Jack smiles, shaking his head dejectedly.

Pitch can see something in Katherine's eyes break. He can't hate her for it; he'd break too after hearing the truth, that he'd stood by watching his own children grow up and never got involved, that now they didn't want anything to do with them unless something major changed.

"Pitch," William grabs Katherine's hand, "you stay away from my children." He leads her out of the
room, Jack is only by the window for a few seconds more, mouthing 'I love you's through the glass. He disappears, a nurse quickly reappearing in the window and then movement, foot movement, as multiple doctors come rushing into the room.

Pitch realizes the warmth flooding in his lower stomach, over his legs and looks down – the wound re-opened and bloomed a red flower on his sheets.
Let Down

Chapter Summary

Sorry, re-wrote this chapter from scratch - along with chapter 2 (which is not only BETTER, but bigger, longer, sexier and uncut, *wink wink nudge nudge*) Feel free to go back and read it, I think it's infinitely better! :D

Jack is close to dragged out of the hospital, kicking and yelling insults towards both his parents and the assisting hospital staff in the process. The only thing that keeps him from inflicting lasting damage is the threat of being drugged 'for his own good', which catches him off guard. He didn't think his reaction would prompt such a serious threat.

While he contemplates the chances that he'll get the drugs and be able to stay at the hospital with Pitch he's caught off guard and shoved into the family's dark blue four door sedan. He can't quite remember the last time they rode in this car. His parents were sober enough to remind him or drunk and stupid enough to endanger him with it. Therein, before he is able to fight back, he's buckled down by Will who glares daggers of parental anger and embarrassment at him.

He disregards them, there is too much choler in his heart for him to care about William. The car moves with a hurried lurch forward, both parents too humiliated of their son's immature resistance to stay any longer. They aren't out of the hospital parking lot when Katherine starts her tirade.

"Had you just told us and taken things slowly this wouldn't have happened!" Katherine yells, not bothering with telling Jack about how childish he was. "This is exactly why Pitch isn't good for you!"

Jack knows she isn't drunk but her words cut him in a familiar way, it tears him open to hear her speak. "You aren't concerned with what's good for me, don't even act like you are." Mary, seated beside her younger brother, is unwittingly the sole reason he hasn't begun screaming back. "All you're concerned with is yourself."

Katherine gasps, shaken by his lack of respect. "Jack, I'm your mother!"

Jack's head tilts and his eyes narrow in her direction. "You keep on saying that as of late. What does that mean? Is that some 'get out of morals free' card for you to whip out whenever you want?"

"Jack,-"

"You being my mother is not an excuse to be..." Jack bites his tongue, avoiding saying 'a bitch', "as you are now." He gives Mary a reassuring glance and then embraces her, putting a warm hand on her shoulder. Seeing her reminded him that when he got home, he'd have his work cut out for him. Now, he has to deal with his parents and their currently stalwart denouncement of Pitch and him. He's now fighting to keep something he's taken for granted for a long time. Home? Not only would he have to catch up with work and tests, now Mary's emotional state was compromised.

What did Mary retain of the incident? Was she scarred or afraid of him, or anyone else for that matter? What really happened while he was out like a light on the Bennett family's living room floor?
"Jack," Katherine glowers at him in the overhead mirror, mastering her voice and being as straightforward as she can. "Pitch inspires you to reckless and destructive behavior, as your mother it is my duty to make sure you aren't influenced by people like that."

Jack had to admit that momentarily, Katherine was threatening. Her voice carried a level of self-respect and maturity that he didn't believe she was capable of anymore. It didn't stop him from rebelling against her. "And the devil said," Jack rolled his eyes, his voice a furious groan. "Worry not! I'm here to save your soul."

"Jack," Katherine loses it again and her voice breaks in a screeching, provoked way. Like an eagle driving for prey. "This is exactly what I'm talking about. You're rebelling against me for no reason!"

"I'm rebelling against you because you're full of it and you know you're full of it. The only reason you aren't letting me see Pitch is because he's better then the both of you!"

"Jack, we'll talk about this when we get home." Katherine finishes the argument by refusing to answer anymore, he throws her an unseen pointed glare.

"Yes, I do believe we will."

Jack refuses to just take this lying down, there will be a tooth and nail fight about this if he has anything to say about it. The way he sees it, if the tables were turned somehow and Pitch was something he should have known about, his parents would be just fine with never telling him. It was the fact that they found out that Pitch was providing for him, loving him and helping him escape his parents' rule that peeved them.

He wasn't under their control anymore; he had a 'significant other', a potential future separated from his parents and that was threatening to them. He could sympathize; if Mary came home and said she had a boyfriend who was older then her and repeated Jack's situation, he'd be steamed.

Doesn't mean he'll just let the matter rest though.

When they arrive home it makes Jack nostalgic again for the days when he was much younger, before his parents made drunken fools of themselves.

He could see himself, no older then nine, running up to the front door and pushing it open while his pregnant mother waddled through, Will following closely behind with arms overloaded with groceries, pampers and different types of necessities. Jack remembers feeling so helpful and sweet...

He indulges these memories by unbuckling Mary, carrying her in his arms as he did every so often and storming up the steps and into the house, not bothering with holding the door for Katherine and William.

He only stops his march to ask Mary if she wants to spend the day with him upstairs. When the answer is yes and his parents come through the door, he's in his room and ignoring their cries of his name.

William comes to the bottom of his steps, to give chase, but Katherine intervenes and a short argument both brings the fight to a head and a ceasefire. Mary plays in the corner of the room while they talk while Jack stands to the left of the door, sure that his parents can't see him.

He considers throwing his broken snowman clock at him but a small voice in his head tells him that the clock is too high in sentimental value to just hurl into harm's way. Plus, not breaking down and giving into violence gives him more of a moral high-ground and judging by the terms of the ceasefire
that Katherine negotiated with his father, he'd need that.

Katherine and William leave him be, for now, and Jack takes that chance to be thankful for the moment; Mary is with him and Pitch, though not in the best position, isn't in prison or anything too dangerous.

Now was time to face the devils at home. Mary played with her toys in the corner, building a tall tower with building blocks and being very, very careful.

"Hey, munchkin." Jack said, sitting down on the side of the bed closest to her.

"Hey." Jack knew she had always been a quiet young girl, seeing the other children in her grade misbehave and yell had made him very appreciative of it, but her voice now was too quiet.

"What's wrong?" He opens his arms to her and she falls into him, turning into a sobbing, red-faced mess before he can react.

It takes a while to calm her down and she doesn't say anything while she's crying, she just cries. Jack feels pain when she refuses to speak but he won't force her to say anything she doesn't feel comfortable sharing.

If that's nothing or everything, he's okay with it because he knows the need to turn things inward and deal with it under the surface, while only letting out the little parts that hurt too much to stomach. Mary could be just as introverted as he is.

The one thing he can do is be what she needs and if she needs him to be a sponge for her tears, he'll do his best. Minutes pass, Mary's cries die down for a while but no words are exchanged yet. Jack picks her up, cradling and humming to her. She curls up, her arms looped around him while he babies her and as more minutes pass it becomes unclear who is consoling who.

When Mary pushes against his chest, he releases her with a smile.

"Thank you."

That wasn't what he was expecting to hear but he nods in welcome nonetheless.

"B-back at Jamie's house, the hospital people..." 

"Doctors."

"Yeah, the doctors, they brought you out on one of those hospital beds you carry."

"A stretcher." Jack's holds down a depressed sigh, Mary must have seen that and assumed the worst. He can't even imagine how much he frightened her; did she think him dead? More then likely..."I'm fine, munchkin."

"I tried to touch you but they said not to because they didn't know if you were okay or anything yet," Mary shifts the weight in her feet from side to side, as she did every so often when explaining herself. Her hands are behind her back and her eyes, big and bright most of the time, are dulled and downcast."I yelled for you to wake up but you didn't, so I got scared."

"Oh, Mary..." Jack reaches out for her and they hug again. In that moment when he was trying to rebuild his friendship with Jamie he was only thinking of himself, thinking of how easy life would be for him to have Jamie back on his side. He didn't think of what would happen if it was a trap and what else could go wrong in the process.
When Mary separates herself from him, smiling again, she goes back to playing with her toys. "I waited 'til we got inside to hug you because you looked really mad..."

"Oh, you saw that."

Mary nods and glances up at Jack, "Are we gonna see Mister Pitch again soon?"

She always had that alien habit of shocking him with how quick and smart she was, finding the perfect way to address the elephant in the room without causing too much damage. Getting past his blooming pride, "Maybe, maybe not. I'm thinking of a way to get us back to Mister Pitch's house."

As it stood though, it didn't seem like that was happening any time soon. Their only way of transportation was illegal for him to use thanks to the lack of a driver's license. Pitch was still in the hospital and...

At that moment a great idea came upon him and he smiled at Mary, "But I might, I might."

Mary smiled wide and bounced in place, begging to know what the idea was. By the time Jack was done explaining the details of his plan Mary's eyes went wide with glee and shock. "No way, that reminds me of something I learned in school. About 'yin and yang'."

"Yeah I couldn't stop seeing it either but for right now we gotta lay low and not let mom and dad find out. You can do that right?"

Mary nods and returns to playing, then Jack cracks his knuckles, sets up him laptop and gets to work.

That night, Jack supervises Mary's every move after she leaves his room. Everything from choosing her clothing for bed to tucking her in is done by him. His main reason being that, as of now, he can't see his parents as being capable of doing it without either filling Mary's head with stupidity or doing it at all.

That plus it allows him to get a feel of where he and his parents stand and seeing as how they don't even leave their room to confront him, he'd say everything was still in his favor.

When she hits the hay, he begins his hunt for information: What happened at the Bennett home while he was out like a light? The first few internet searches come up with most of the things he doesn't want to hear; Jamie's father, Jonathan (or in some cases Johnathan) Bennett died to a bullet wound, fired by Jamie in self-defense.

It's startling to think that Jamie killed someone. Though he was the 'schoolyard bully' for a majority of Jack's childhood and teenage years and sure, growing up he made his vague and menacing threats even more frightening and realistic but when it came down to it Jack wouldn't pin Jamie for a killer, even if it was in self-defense.

Jack didn't think he was the most moral of human beings or the one person on Earth who should decide who lives and dies, but after finding out that Jonathan had molested and beaten Jamie on multiple occasions, he can't find any emotion or sympathy for the dead man. 'Good riddance' is the only thing coming to mind.

Too curious to let his discoveries end there, he researches more, discovering things he wouldn't have guessed: First off, Sophie, a girl he can only just remember being the little blonde ball of joy and energy that usually bounced in Jamie's general direction, had grown up now. As of the end of the incident, she's been profiting off of it; appearing on every talk show and radio station she possibly...
could. He can't get a moment's rest without seeing or hearing Sophie come into the picture in some way; she's really ruling her fifteen minutes.

Jamie, despite being in the center of the whole charade and the main focus point of everyone's real attention, managed to stay out of the spotlight. There was little to no information about his current whereabouts or emotional state; the only thing Jack could find was that he dropped out of Burgess local high school and moved a little out of the way. The article he was reading quoted 'I have to get a little ways away, to clear my head a bit.'

Jack takes a deep breath and leans back into the pillows of his bed, exhaling as they conform to his weight. It was good to hear that Jamie was getting the time away that he needed, it all seemed just a little bittersweet though, was Jamie at least seeing some of Sophie's collected money for the incident?

'Well, he moved away so I would assume...'

In spite of everything that happened he considered calling. It would've been just to check up and tell Jamie that there was nearly no ill will, even less so now that he knew about Jonathan, but he didn't have his phone number. Plus, it'll just make things between them more complicated then they already are.

Unable to find anything else on the situation, he falls asleep shortly after catching up with schoolwork, at around four in the morning.

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Jack wakes up and begins his morning, which he can't believe is falling on a Sunday because it throws a huge wrench in his plans, by stretching by his bed and preparing himself for either an all-out argument or a very, very tense situation.

A loose sweatshirt and knee high jean shorts on he stumbles downstairs, all other members of the family are awake and look up at him from their half finished breakfasts. Jack pays them no mind and they don't interfere, so he continues on with his day, parents be damned.

Of course, after getting his own plate he sits down, across from his parents and next to Mary on the couch in front of the television. Come to find his parents were nice enough to make him a plate, filled to the brim with all the things he didn't like, including scrambled eggs and grits. As he eats the bacon and plans on feigning fullness, William breaks the silence.

"Your school called." William says over his food, not looking up.

"Oh yeah? What'd they say?" Jack isn't sure if his tone is giving off a level of hate equal to what he's feeling but doesn't bother to check.

"They asked if you needed more time off."

"No." Jack answers immediately, not wanting his plan to be ruined. "I'm fine."

"You sure?"

William's voice carries a level of caring that Jack has to think about; he isn't sure whether Will cares or it just faking it for brownie points. Reaching a conclusion that he'd much rather not find out, he keeps his voice in an apathetic drone. "Yeah, I'm fine."

Finishing breakfast and putting his still loaded plate in the kitchen, earning a sideways look from his mother who wants to confront him but doesn't want to fight him, he goes back upstairs and prepares to waste the rest of the Sunday away on the internet and schoolwork.
Monday rolls around and Jack is packed and ready to go at the crack of dawn. He makes Mary's breakfast early and is quiet as a mouse as he slips into her room to find she's been up the whole night, vibrating with excitement of the thought of seeing Pitch again.

"Alright," He kisses Mary's forehead and hugs her tight, beaming with happiness himself. "I'm heading out. Breakfast is in the kitchen, sweet sausages and waffles like you like them."

"Be careful." Mary smiles at him and wishes him farewell.

Fully charged cellphone in his back-pocket and school book shoved haphazardly into his bag, he heads to school without incident.

Today, he was going to see Pitch.
Magnet (Part 1)

Chapter Summary


Never before in his life had a school day seemed so damned long. Not once in his life did he feel so morose over his classes or uninterested in anything going on, not even his best subjects could raise his spirits. The distance between his classes and the lunch hour seemed to extend for every class he finished, despite the fact that he time between them had always been less then three hours.

The high-point of the day had been his own complaining about said day, once being reprimanded for laughing in the middle of class at his own jokes; thinking of his biology class as being more boring then a lecture on the speed of molasses-based paint crawling across a wall as it dried, narrated by Ben Stein and run on internet explorer on a dying computer from the 50s.

The low point was the interesting and yet degrading act of walking between his classes, which brought him back up to speed on his real, short term situation. He'd forgotten that the news had gotten out about his 'situation' regarding Jamie and Jon Bennett and what everyone might think. The ever-present 'group stare' popped up with every chatting group of walking fellow students, some of which resorted to half shrouded insults as they passed by.

Some of them seemed to want to start a fight or an argument, whispering 'faggot' or 'queer' as they passed him; they weren't wrong but it made him question what was really being reported. The fact that a child molester was killed, by his victim no less, or that two teenagers that happened to know each other just happen to be gay and go to this high school?

It took a wear on his patience but he ignored them out of both spite and a want to maintain what remained of his dignity, even making it a goal to look as disinterested as possible. Most of these people wouldn't have cared about his two months ago when he wasn't involved in a scandal, why change for them now?

Lunch time approached and as he left his class the was a strange shift in power, the kids weren't whispering insults any more. It was as if something much, much more interesting had caught their eyes and ears. He was last week's news to them within an hour.

Despite them still avoiding him physically and refusing to talk to them (a mixed blessing really) he felt a burden lift from his shoulders. 'Thank goodness.' Still, he went out of his way to wear the most 'Same shit, different day' gaze as to avoid gathering anymore attention and walking to his next class he noticed another significant shift of all eyes once again being turned his way.

Still, he ignored it and got through his class with the usual lack of attentiveness. The lunch bell rang and quicker then he thought possible he was in the cafeteria, struggling to keep his facade of detachment together. But in the usual noisy place there was a tentative silence as he walked in...

And watching the table furthest from his entry point he could see why.

An entire group of kids with purpose in their eyes were walking towards him now, a note of anger in
their steps. They were all faces Jack recognized: Pippa, Claude, Caleb, Cupcake and Monty. All of them old friends and his and Jamie’s.

It didn’t take him two seconds to realize why. That was simple enough for Jack to understand. Jamie had been the school bully; the one with a lot of anger who you didn't fuck with unless you wanted a black eye and sore face. But now he was gone and people had questions.

Looking directly at them was hard, summoning pangs of nostalgia in him that he didn't think he'd get. They had all changed from the school yard pals that he knew and fondly remembered. Claude and Caleb had shot up like trees and got beefy, looking more like professional athletes then high school students. Both donned simple black shirts and jeans.

Monty pulled a Longbottom and went from looking like 'Revenge of the Nerds' to a young, spectacled Jude Law and opted to dress more sophisticated then the rest with a navy blue overcoat and white shirt.

Cupcake was still as frightening and masculine as he remembered but she seemed much more 'sport' heavy, more fit and trained then just mindlessly big. The huge basketball jersey she had opted to wear above loose fitting jeans made her seem even bigger.

"So, look who decided to show up." And then there was Pippa, who had grown her hair out, 'blossomed' as it were and grew up while still retaining the 'Cute girl next door' feeling.

He still has no idea why Will thinks he would fuck her though.

"How long has it been Jack? Since we last talked?"

Pippa was speaking for all of them, clearly. She walked in front and took the lead, had an air of unending confidence in her that reeked with popularity and privilege despite that if memory served correctly she grew up having neither of those things.

"A while. I guess that this—" He gestured to the silent, onlooking crowd of possibly over a hundred student with a few teachers dotted in the mix. "is because we need to talk?"

"Surprise, surprise." Monty chuckled, condescension dripping from every note. "He can speak. Just not to us for the past couple years, right?"

Jack gaped and then swallowed, seeing more and more of the situation. He forgot that he wasn't the only one changed by what happened; his separation and introversion over the past few years hadn't just made him lonely, he also abandoned close friends and burned bridges. Time didn't just freeze for everyone else because Jack Frost couldn't keep up.

"Things happened."

"That's rich." Pippa snorted. "'Things happened'. That can sum up anything but I have a feeling it means nothing."

"I've been having a hard time these past couple years." Jack fumbled over his words, not used to hearing someone other then his parents have so much vitriol in their tone when they spoke to him. "Home issues, my little sister, building my own life, you understand right?"

"Yeah, I understand Jack!" She said with a false, saccharine sweetness in her tone. "I also understand that you broke Jamie's heart, abandoned him when he needed you the most and then when he finally starts getting back on the right path you wrecked his life."
Jack blinks, trying to absorb her words. "Pippa, I don't think you get it-

"I think I get it pretty damn clearly. You pushed us all away like some over dramatic drama queen, abused Jamie until he came running to our house for study meetings crying and now you pop back up on the social radar visiting his house all of a sudden before, coincidentally, his father dies form a bullet wound."

"Pippa, listen."

She gives up, shrugs her shoulders and nods. At least she's playing fair by letting him have the ball in his court for now.

"I know I haven't been the greatest friend, things changed, time passed-"

"You're a broken record, you know that?"

"I-"

"Stop making excuses for the shit you pulled." She points at him accusingly.

"I'm not!" He raises his voice, an aching feeling of both disgust and unfocused anger burning in his chest. She isn't wrong but she isn't right, the whole situation is a big mystery to her and he could just enlighten her- "I, I have...family problems."

"Like Jamie?"

"Yeah."

"Really?" Jack nods. "Show me marks."

"What? I-I'm not." His voice shrinks at the demand of evidence, everyone is watching. Teachers are watching. She can't honestly expect him to just rip off his clothes and say 'here it is.' Plus, he doesn't even remember having marks or scars from one of his father's tirades.

"Show me bruises and scars, things that Jamie had, since you're so quick to say you were abused 'kinda like he was'."

"Pippa...it isn't like that." He doesn't have the physical proof of a recent beating to back it up and he doesn't want to.

"So you weren't abused is what you're saying?"

"My parents don't hit me," He lies and yet tells the truth; the lack of recent beatings leave him without marks to show and he isn't sure if he would show them in the first place even if he had them. "They just...they're irresponsible." He dances around his words carefully, tip toeing around 'too' sensitive subjects.

"Irresponsible how exactly?"

"It's just...they get drunk a lot and I have to take care of Mary, clean the house, other stuff."

"So you had chores basically?" She dismisses him with a wave.

"You don't know the full story! They've done worse things then that..."

"Then why haven't you called the police? Told a teacher? Did something other then act like a total
fucking snob to the rest of us while Jamie suffered trying to get closer to you?"

"Things aren't that simple!"

"Things! You and your things! You never explain shit to anyone and that's why no one likes you anymore! Jamie's father being abusive wasn't some huge ass secret, everyone fucking knew just no one knew how bad it was. At least he tried to get help..."

"I have my help, okay!!"

"And that would be?"

Jack bit his tongue, he got too embroiled in the argument and spoke out of turn. 'In for a penny, in for a pound.'

"Pitch."

The look on Pippa's face just confirms he lost the argument on just about every moral ground but the wave of gasps and low whistles of shock and awe that go through the cafeteria crowd assure him that the rest of the school year will be a long and friendless one.

"...You're kidding me." She finally says after an all too long pause, her eyes wide with surprise.

"You're getting help from the guy who shot Jamie's father?"

"Many problems with that. First, he didn't shoot John, Jamie did."

"I kinda overheard that it was Pitch-.

"I was 'kinda' there."

"You were kinda unconscious." Monty spoke out, adjusting his glasses. "According to those same sources."

Again, not wrong. "Secondly," he completely ignores their rebuttal, "Why are we talking about the rapist like he's some sacred being from on high? He was a scummy person and that's putting it really fucking lightly considering what some of your 'reputable' sources might have to say about it." Pippa's eyebrows raise and she nods, seemingly in agreement. "Third, I was seeing Pitch before I even knew about how screwed up Jamie's home life was – I learned about how screwed up it was probably around the same time you did. I didn't know."

"But you weren't there, Jack." Pippa says, understanding but still confrontational. "He would always talk about how positive and sweet and kind you were but with how much you were distancing yourself right when he needed you – you were tearing him apart."

"Kids."

The teachers intervened, broke up the fight and encouraged – almost too much – Jack to get his lunch and take a seat, as far away from his old friends as possible. Before they turned and left, Pippa and Cupcake shot him a glance. The talk was long from over.

–

As much as seeing his old friends inspired nostalgia in him, their not-so-subtle conversation in the cafeteria made him glad that he didn't run into them again at his second to last class. He didn't want to get caught up in all that drama and emotion, not after what just happened and not with what was
happening now.

Thoughts and memories took grip of his thoughts so well he almost missed the vibrations going through his back pocket, signaling that thus far his plan was going well. Unless it said 'I can't make it', in which case he didn't have the sense of mind or the purchase with the teacher to get away with reading it in class.

It was walking to his final period, in between class rooms that he ended up standing side by side with Monty. Instead of trying to rebuild bridges between old friends, he checked his phone and made sure everything was going as planned; Sanderson was still available to pick him and Mary up. All the pieces were falling into place and-

"It doesn't show."

"What?" Jack said, head turning to Monty.

"Your parents came to a party hosted by my parents a few days ago," Monty said, a sniffling lightly. It was good to see some nerdy habits died hard. "I saw them, they looked perfectly fine. Better then my own really. If you're telling the truth it doesn't show."

"Well, I am telling the truth."

"I'm just pre-warning you. You're going to be labeled as the boy who cried wolf."

"Thanks, great." He replied, half-listening as he turned his attention back to the main part of his plan; Katherine. Everything rested on how well he could play the part of being owed some freedom.

If what happened in the lunchroom was any indication, he was going to crash and burn.

"You really don't care huh?" Monty said, half surprised.

"I've spent years dealing with other people's baggage and issues." Jack notes, too pissed off and in far too prickly a situation to censor himself. "Jamie's obsession, my parent's...things and now a rapist's death. Still not sure how to feel about the last one."

"He was still a human being."

His voice lowers itself to a dangerous growl, a rasp hinting at the edges. "And everyone dies Monty." He rushes ahead, pocketing his phone and entering class without another word.

Jack doesn't meet the group again when the bell rings and for that he is thankful, he isn't sure how much more nostalgia he can take before he breaks down. If any teacher or student believed his outburst in the lunch room, they weren't overly concerned and he wasn't sure how to feel about that.

On one hand he doesn't have to be afraid that Child Protective Services will be storming his house but on the other hand playing 'Abuse victim' card came with having to have proof, especially now with the obvious victim – Jamie – gone. If nothing happened he'd be labeled a liar and a scumbag among the high school populace for saying melodramatic things like that in the wake of Jamie's leaving. If something happened, it had to be soon, big and effective – his parents would have to drink so much and crash so hard it'd leave a crater.

Luckily, though labeled a person of interest by the student body it was still not enough to be paid an obscene amount of attention to. He got away from the crowd and made the call to Katherine.
The first step of his multilateral plan is good, Katherine answers and not William...if William had answered this entire thing would be a near-busy, at the very least.

'Hear there sport'

Her overly chipper tune is grating on his ears but he manages a positive, if not completely ignorant from reality, tone. "Hey Mom! Listen, I'm going to my after school studies but I'm running a little late since I don't have a ride." He didn't intend for the slicing remark to reveal itself and he wasn't sure if he wanted Katherine to realize it or not but he was making careful note of 'Pitch isn't here, so I don't have anyone else to provide for me when you can't.' "I'll pick up Mary but I'll have to keep her with me for a little, I'll bring her home over the hour we have lunch."

The lie ties itself together, history being what it was Katherine and William knew about his and Pitch's relationship but never about the psychology classes being a blatant falsehood. For a moment, Katherine seems to wonder about it. A long note of 'ummmm' leads to a startling question.

'I don't exactly like the sound of that.'

He pulls the phone away so she doesn't hear him sucking his teeth and cursing, then rouses a sense of positivity in him before bringing it back. "Mom," He gets to the heart of the matter as quickly as he can. There's no need to weave a strong web of lies, that would take too much time, he just needs it be secure. "You can't distrust me all the time just because of Pitch. I need my own space."

'I know, but'

"Listen," He's at his last pre-planned excuse and is running around in circles looking for more defenses to hide behind. "if you have any doubts about me then feel free to pick up Mary yourself, otherwise just stop okay? We've already had our big ground zero fight in the car ride home from the hospital and I don't feel like doing this again." That was much more a baited truth then a lie...

'Alright, fine!'

Worked all the same.

'But you better be home with Mary by five and you need to be back by nine, understood?'

That was more flexible of a deal then he thought he'd get – he holds back a rallying cry and answers quickly, "Thanks Mom." He can't remember a time when it was so easy to talk candidly to her. He credits it to her current abundance of mercy and sobriety. "Now for phase two."
Unlike how Jack heard it would be like from movies and television, no rabid reporters dogged him down for his story and aside from some side glances he didn't get much attention. Getting to Mary's school and back to the cafe was the easiest part of the plan, made all the more fun by the hop and skip in the young girl's walk.

"I can't wait! What do you think Mister Pitch will say when he sees us?"

"I don't know," Jack said, opening the cafe door and letting Mary walk in first. "Hopefully he'll be awake when we get there."

"What if he isn't?"

"Then we'll just have to wake him up," He cheers. "We'll scare the boogeyman!"

"That sounds awesome." Mary randomly chooses a booth and Jack follows suit, sitting on the outside and letting her have the window. "What do we do now again?"

"We wait." Jack said, keeping an eye out for Bunnymund. He'd get kicked out if the other man discovered that he was here, sitting around, doing nothing but loitering about. "Try not to make so much noise."

"Okie-dokie." Mary whispered and covered her mouth with both her hands.

Jack spent the next five minutes looking around the cafe, checking his phone and biting his lips. What if he decided not to come? Jack may have thought that he'd gotten in good with him but what if he chose to not help?

The entire plan depended on his cooperation.

"I suppose now's too early to try talking again?"

Jack's eyes darted up and met Pippa's own, rather cold ones. Now was not the time to be having this discussion and with the abundance of chattering, gossiping teenagers, it was not the place either. "Hey," He put on his best, friendliest grin. "I'm a little busy at the moment."

"With no food, no drinks and...Mary." Pippa looked at her sideways, as if she had just popped into existence out of no where. "I haven't seen you either now that I think about it." Her voice went into that lighter, more youthful and bright way of speaking now that it was a child she was acknowledging.

"Hi Pippa!" Mary said, waving from her seat.

The last memory Jack ever had of them meeting was Pippa brushing cold tears off Mary's face after she's fallen in the snow. Mary was only four at the time and just thinking of those days made Jack's
smile fall and his hands to grip the phone like a lifeline.

"How have things been going with you, Mary?" Pippa slid smoothly into the seats across from them. Jack wasn't sure why she thought she was welcomed in but now it was too late to stop her without causing a fight – he'd lost enough overall respect from the cafeteria fiasco.

Instead, he focused his frustration into text messaging his ride while keeping a close ear out for Pippa.

"I'm good. We're gonna go see a friend!"

"A friend huh?" Jack knew that was more aimed at him then at Mary but the only acknowledgment he could give was a quick upward glance with a coy grin. Then, as if knowing it would be the perfect way to start something, she followed it up."Who's the friend?"

Jack didn't know he could inhale so sharply that it hurt but today was just full of learning experiences. Learning that your best friend's best friend is not necessarily your best friend by extension, learning your old best friend and closest thing a main squeeze was a sly, tricky bitch. The list went on and on.

"He's a secret."

Jack sent Pippa another over-the-phone grin, pleased to know he'd raised Mary semi-right at least. She was lying, yes, but for the greater good. At this point, Pitch was much less of a stranger then Pippa was.

"Really? Hmmm..." Pippa grabbed her chin between her fingers and cocked her head. She was being silly, exaggerating and childish – to appeal to Mary."Is it Jamie?"

Mary shrugged. "I don't know."

"So you don't know who the friend is?"

"I know who the friend is. You don't need to know." Mary said, her arms crossed and chin in the air, tone childish but reprimanding. Pippa's mouth parted, shocked but unable to say much back to Mary's judgment.

'Damn, she's good.' Jack smirked as his phone beeped to life.

'Calm the fuck down I'm coming.

'And he's even better.' "Well our ride will be here soon, Pippa." 'And now that you've been laid flat by a grade-school kid it's time we took our leave.'

"Alright," Her voice sounded strained, like she was talking through clenched teeth. Jack found it funny but didn't show, there were certain lines you didn't cross after people got to certain points. Tact, social grace and all that. "I'll see you later, hopefully." Jack wasn't stupid, that wasn't hope, that was a promise. "Take care, Mary!" She said before leaving, Mary waved after her – somehow managing to look disapproving and uninterested with an innocent smile.

"How come she didn't say bye to you?"

"Because she already did."

"I didn't hear it."
"Neither did I, didn't have to- there you are what took you so long?"

Sanderson looked him dead in the eye and glared at him. Jack noticed that he looked worse for the wear; there were bags forming under his eyes and his clothing looked at if it had been worn through his sleep. Knowing the little bit he knew about Sanderson, that was probably the case.

'I take my sleep seriously, Frost.'

"I interrupted it?"

'Take a wild guess.'

Jack feigned looking him over, at one point even jokingly examining his hair. "Hmm...hnnn...yes. Yes everything seems entirely out of order and you are of course, mad." He made sure every movement and action dripped with a sense of flair and arrogance; the type that reminded him of his boyfriend. "Pitch would be proud of me."

'I will get back into my car and drive right the fuck back home.'

"Back to the office, you mean? Don't lie to me, you slept there."

"Oh my god you ARE the Sandman!" Mary said, coming out of her temporary shock to run up and hug Sanderson – who jumped and seized up as if a cold wind blow down his spine. Without his hands free he struggled to free himself from the young girl's suffocating hug – Jack almost felt bad for him after narrowly avoiding death from laughter.

"That is so cool, Jack said you and Pitch were opposites but I never thought you'd look exactly like the Sandman."

Sanderson glared at her in a way that was entirely inappropriate, murderous even, before it softened and morphed into a friendly, tight-lipped smile. 'Yeah, he's my older brother.'

Mary's eyes lit up like sparklers. "Wow...then that means Pitch could be the boogeyman's brother!" She pulled excitedly on the hem of Jack's jacket. "We have to go ask!"

'Now we're back to the task at hand.' Sanderson walked past Jack, only allowing the younger to glance at his phone for a half second before leaving.

"Thanks for driving us here," It feels awkward to say it but Jack's want to be polite is stronger then his social ineptitude. The entire drive to the hospital was silent, which was something he should've expected since Sanderson lived a silent lifestyle only spoken by the pressing of keys. He stretches as he leaves the car, Mary by his side. "Sorry about my little sister she's...excitable?"

"What did I do?" Jack nudged her and she got the gist, "Sorry, Mister Sandman."

'You two didn't do anything wrong.'

"You looked upset back at the cafe when Mary hugged you, is all."

'My angry face is indiscernible from my face at rest.'

Mary made a perplexed face, unsure of what 'in-dizz-earnable' meant.

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Jack isn't sure what he loves more, Pitch's priceless reaction of a wide, delighted grin and bright eyes as their faces appear in the window or the way Mary runs up and hugs him the way he used to run up and hug his father after he returned to work; a charging run followed by a loving tackle. Luckily for the injured but pleased Pitch, the bed took the brunt of the blow.

There's something so loving in the way Pitch throws his arms open for her, hugs her tight as if she was his own, that makes Jack hurt some place deep and buried. He'd missed doing that to his own parents or even having the heart to.

"And how have you been little one?" There's a dry, arid rasp in it, accompanied with an echo of painful swallowing but his accented, melodic timbre remains the same. It hits him like a train, it had only been a few days but he'd forgotten how much he liked the soft, lulling depth of it. He trails behind Mary, entering with Sanderson on his heels, his legs morphing to jelly when those familiar golden eyes come to face him.

"Hey," Jack waves, nervous. His body doesn't feel like its really his any more, he's too embarrassed and too in love.

Pitch's head cocks to the side, "No need to be a stranger, dear."

Jack hated it, he'd given parts of himself, his virginity not withstanding, to Pitch and yet he could still get caught off guard. "Well, what should I do? Crawl into bed with you?"

Mary wasn't old enough to get that yet and pulled part of Pitch's sheets over her head like a joke. Pitch gave him that semi-enthralling, semi-frightening gaze that just promised trouble, right along with the sarcastic self-importance that he just loved about him. "You say that like it wouldn't be welcomed."

'Whores.'

"Always, Sandy."

"Sandy I think you should go before someone learns something they shouldn't." Jack says, pointing to Mary.

'Okay, fine but Pitch we need to talk afterward alright?'

"I'm not exactly going anywhere." Pitch said, deprecative.

The door shut behind them and Jack felt a little more confident to speak.

"Something happen?"

"No, not really." Jack said, not quite thinking about it. Plenty had happened, his best friends essentially forced him to confess that he was being abused and then threw it under the rug because, unlike Jamie, he didn't have much to show for it. Mainly in thanks to the impeccable timing of his parents getting it back together, at least for the moment. Everything seemed to be cooperating with everything else, doing its best to put him in a boy-who-cried-wolf situation.

"You and I both know that is a lie." Pitch said, playfully poking the side of Mary's face. Jack saw, in Pitch's eyes, that he could fully see past that barriers that he put up.

"School's annoying, people are annoying, as usual you seem to be the most intelligent thing on two-legs in this town, next to Mary." He shrugged, "Can it wait until later? When I'm not so happy to see you and its okay to be in a downer mood?"
"Very well, I'll let you be jubilant before I come and ruin it again."

"Oh please, you and I both know that's a lie."

They shared a brief moment there, an equal reminder of love and want, playing the same back and forth sarcastic but honest game.

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Jack had to race to get Mary back home in time so that Katherine didn't suspect anything. He'd lost track of time when Mary began playing a game of pattycake with Pitch, who more then gladly played along. Jack never had a 'I need a camera' moment like that, ever.

After dropping Mary off and returning to the car, Sanderson had thrown a mini-fit.

'I already drove you there once.'

"And I'm asking you to drive me there again."

'And why would I agree?'

"Because you love me like a close friend of a best friend." Jack said, feigning puppy eyes and an upper lip pout. Sanderson gave him a swift kick to the right shin but drove him regardless, stating that he had to confront Pitch about something anyway.

A misty orange was overtaking normally bright blue skies by the time they got there around 6:45. Jack was the first up the stairs and straight to Pitch's room, doing his best to avoid all too familiar medical personnel who eyed him suspiciously.

When he came striding back through the door, Pitch jumped in surprise.

"No one suspects the Overland Inquisition." He said, humor dancing in his voice.

Pitch exhaled, a smile appearing on his face. "I missed the Overland Inquisition."

Jack hadn't noticed it before but Pitch's face was a collage of exhaustion and paleness. The bags under his eyes were darker then they should've ever been and his skin was pale, even more so then before. Previously he'd looked silvery in how smooth and sharp the deformity took to his skin but now it was there in strange splotches, especially in the face. Around his eyes was dark and reddened but his cheeks were a ghostly white.

"I missed you too." Jack exhaled, silently scorning himself. How could he have missed how tired Pitch looked? Did he looked this wrung out the first time? "I'm sorry, you look..."

"Horrible, I realize." Pitch said, taking a deep swallow before throwing his arm over the back of the hospital bed and pulling up a hand towards Jack. "Don't help me." He began pulling himself up, his arm straining and voice breaking on an agonizing note.

Jack stared, in shock. When had things gotten this bad? Pitch had been in sub-optimal condition before, yes, but not so bad that he would have difficulty anchoring himself up against the headboard of the bed. Pitch's voice broke again on a pained groan and Jack twitched, but Pitch raised his hand again and Jack stood down.

Jack wanted to assist somehow, ease Pitch's burden, but not listening to him could do more harm then good. Pitch was injured to an extent he didn't know, for all he knew any help he could give
would exacerbate the pain.

When he was finally fully drawn, Pitch was taking deeper breaths and a light sheen of sweat was waxing his forehead. Jack didn't know what to say and Pitch didn't face him, he just stayed looking at the windows to the outside, opposite the door.

"I guess your injuries are worse then originally thought then?"

"Long story, but you said something about school and people being shite. Please,-"

"No, no. Pitch. Don't change the subject, please."

"I'm sorry. After..." Pitch seemed to be debating in his head whether to tell the truth or not and which words he should use. "After William and Katherine left with you in tow, the stress of the argument got to me and I accidentally tore my stitches open. I lost an eighth of a pint."

"Of blood?"

"Well, I wasn't drinking!" Pitch said, a small chuckle in his voice; Jack knows he's trying to lighten the mood but hearing what happened just heats up whatever dying embers of anger he still has towards his 'parents'. "I'm sorry," He puts his hand over his mouth and stares at an unclear point in the room. "I'm...trying to make this better then what it is."

"Stop then, it's hard to listen to, please. Are you going to be okay? When are they releasing you?"

"It was only an eighth, I lost a fourth from the bullet itself."

"You say that like you aren't sitting in a hospital bed."

"Well, I'm not dead and I learned my lesson the hard way about my limits." Pitch said, rubbing his hands together. "Now then, you promised me complaints about your school mates and acquaintances, let's hear them!" And just like that he was bright and aware again.

Jack wondered if that was just because it was his turn to tell his story or if Pitch was just bored shitless here at the hospital. Nevertheless, he gladly told Pitch everything, becoming more and more enthralled in the story himself as he told it. Pitch's own toothy grin, chuckles and snide comments helping to make it all the more wonderful.

Still through his smiles and remarks Jack would see how beat Pitch was. The older man had enjoyed spending time with him but it was hard to watch, the way he taxed himself for Jack's time. Yet, every time he tried to close off the conversation, Pitch would encourage him to keep going, push him forward to say more.

"So they essentially ganged up on you 'Mean Girls' style in the lunch room?"

"I'm surprised no one told Pippa 'Oh my god, you can't just ask him if he's really abused!'"

"That, I would pay to see."

"Oh and you should've heard Mary!"

The rest of the night until around eight was joyous, until Sanderson excused himself in, phone in hand.

'I need to talk to Pitch and you need to get home very soon I believe?"
"Oh, alright." Jack said, still beaming. "I'll see you again soon, hopefully." He ducked in quick and gave Pitch a peck on the cheek then giggled lightly as he received one in turn.

He waited outside, twiddling his thumbs as he waited for Sanderson and Pitch to finish their conversation. The occasional peek in the window confirmed that Pitch was just done – he'd reclined on the bed now, his eyelids hanging low as Sanderson raised a screen that Pitch didn't seem to have the strength to glance at.

Eventually, Sanderson had forced him to leave as time was running short. He'd only had the mercy to give time time to wave a small, sad goodbye from the window wall.
Burning Bridges

When Jack returned his mother pounced on him like a wild cat. She came at him, smile sharper then a dagger, and began her ravaging against his already waning trust of her.

"So," Katherine's teeth seemed to gleam silver. "How's my favorite man doing today?"

"I'm great Mom," He flashed a grin her way.

"I know!" She said, laughing. "I just wanted to tell you that I'm proud of you, you're...current actions are very good and positive of you."

Katherine was not the type of person who was capable of not being seen through but she was type who didn't care either way. Now, this was when she'd begin lathering him down with every good turn of phrase imaginable, praising his responsibility and his actions.

Jack, inwardly, shuddered. There were few times when he ever felt truly complimented and none of them came from Katherine. She had a habit of laying it on thick, something Jack didn't like from the get go. He didn't like long winded, lengthy praises and continuous words. After just a few he thought they were arbitrary, added on after the fact, weightless. He wondered how long he'd have to stand or sit somewhere in the living room while Katherine adulates him beyond what anyone could consider 'normal'.

He was not complimented like this when he asked for something or when he did something he wanted to do. No, Katherine made it clear without the usage of her loquacious comments. She only used adulation in two types of situations. When someone did something to make her look good or she would later need their help. Going on at length about how great he was never worked for his own benefit.

To avoid confrontation, he entered 'autopilot'. He glided through conversations without any conscious input. Every response was basic, sparse and feigned until he could get to his room.

Waiting for Pitch's hospital release was a nightmare. Monty was right. The past few years of pushing people away had not done his reputation any favors. The students didn't have those same memories of Jack Frost's playful winter personality to lend him leeway. Until proven otherwise he was a liar and a cheat amongst his 'peers'. He know if he bothered to extend a hand of apology, some of the damage would reverse itself. Yet, when he considered it he couldn't get up the motivation to.

Jamie was the type of guy who had your admiration or your respect, nothing between. His behavior and enforcement demanded no less, so even when he was gone his presence could still be felt in the school halls making things worse for Jack.

There had been more then one 'accidental' bump, making him drop his books and supplies. Bending down to retrieve them and getting an 'unintended' stepping on the fingers.

As much as he hated the interferences, he couldn't blame them. He came out of nowhere and yelling 'Well, I got abused too!' to defend himself in an argument. It wasn't tactful, in any sense of the word. With the current state of things at home, he couldn't prove them wrong. Getting enough emotional drive to try was too much to ask, not when he didn't have Pitch. So, he dealt with things as they came.
Sanderson’s stalwart refusal to take him back to the hospital was the only thing he couldn't stop being aggravated with. The older man cited having no 'time, energy and patience' when he first refused. When badgered he lashed out with long, obscene swear words over text.

Heading home just made him confused, making him appreciate the simplicity of Pitch's home. He didn't know what to make of his parents anymore. They weren't beating him but they were unpredictable. What was okay one day wasn't the next, his now enforced bedtimes always fluctuated by hours and rules changed on the fly. He missed the straightforwardness of being able to recline on the couch, trying not to make a mess, and making dumb jokes until Pitch sucked the breath from him.

“I miss you.” Jack whispered one day, brushing his teeth more then needed.

The week moved on and melded into late Saturday when he got the text from Sanderson, 'He's out.'

The days slowed again. Now, Katherine was stepping up to her motherly duties. Jack didn't worry – too much – about Mary's status of preparedness for school. Mainly, he wasn't sure what to feel. Mary no longer had a need for him aside from the 'big brother' role now. Their parents decided to, well, be parents.

He shifted his focus towards his relationships. School; he was already well spoken for, no thanks to himself. He had no friends amongst the populous, except for maybe Monty. He had chewed minor bits of fat with him in the hallways and warned him against different unscrupulous groups who had beef with him. Even when he could see Monty was getting flak for spending snippets of time around him, the blond stayed and kept on going.

Jack never even bothered to ask why either, but then again maybe Monty had other reasons for being there and getting something out of the deal. Jack didn't see why anything else would bother sticking around.

Pippa? Long fucking gone. Pippa and her posse - and Jack refused to call them anything else - had a fair argument. They said he'd been a shit friend and Jack was in full agreement. He'd spent a majority of his years letting bridges burn, focusing on him. It came at a cost, people didn't like him any more. Simple as that.

But Pippa managed to go above and beyond what he was willing to forgive. She, and the rest of his old companions, ambushed him in the lunchroom, publicly made a fool of him. As if they couldn't just wait around after school, pull him aside then and handle this like adults. Then took things one step further in the cafe, and attempted to manipulate Mary for information.

**Gotta watch out for her.** Back when they were children, Pippa was the epitome of the girl next door, cute and perfect in every conceivable way. Or at least, in every way conceived by a bunch of 7 to 13 year old boys. Now though, he was on her bad side and she'd made it clear; her bad side was the worst one to be on. As a kid, she was competitive and tricky. Wasn't above lying or wire pulling, sometimes even offering kisses, ones he knew she'd never given, for favors. She liked to win in the places no one was holding contests, if she wanted a contest, she'd make one. She was losing? She'd change the rules or be underhanded.

Looking back, Pippa was demented. Not in the childish, lacking in empathy way but in a very adult, planned out way. As if, as a child she knew how attractive she was to people and knew how to get what she wanted.
With a horrid sense of disgust, Jack backed away from thinking about Pippa and thought about more wonderful things like...

Pitch. My dearest. Thinking about him made Jack queasy. His voice, his unique skin and deep, rolling voice and - Okay, on topic. Keep thinking~ Released from the hospital two days ago (by now) and still, hopefully, the same smarmy, attractive a-hole that he felt in love with in the first place.

Would the bullet effect them? Jack didn't know. Thinking back and knowing that Pitch had already been in some dark places at times, would something as small and insignificant as that metal ruin him?

What about the media and press? Seeing how Jamie had to drop everything and leave, how bad would things get for him – would it be Pitch in shades, disgruntled look and all having to push his way past paparazzi to get into his own home or would this just be another news story everyone overlooked?

Calling was a good option...but that'd be pushing it. He didn't want Pitch to be smothered – hospital staff probably already got that done. No reason to just impose himself...but damn he missed him. Would the bullet wound be bad for sex?

He ends up mulling over Mary again. His parents' state of mind is anyone's guess and he fears for her, unsure of whether or not they can be trusted...It was never your responsibility to begin with. He tells himself, shrugging his shoulders in tune to music on his laptop. Focus on Pitch, ask Sanderson.

He texted Sanderson, 'Pitch's out right? Where is he?'

'He didn't come to see you?'

'Now that's curious.' He didn't know anything about Sanderson's personality but why would he think Pitch was here?

'He said he was coming over?'

'Yes. I assumed he was with you.'

'With me as of right now, in my house?'

'This is getting redundant.' He's getting pissed with me, 'yes. I thought he was going over to your house, he said he would.'

'Actually....he shouldn't be coming here. Could you tell him not to? I'll call him on his cellphone, see if he picks up –and I won't bug you again today.' He quickly added.

'Done yesterday.' The prospect of being left alone could sweeten any deal for him, enough to make him not murderous.

Dialing Pitch's phone was difficult, the way his hands were shaking but getting him on the line was even more challenging. The first time he got the crude and snappy 'leave a message' tone from the phone. The third time he could swear the phone was picked up. By the fifth time he felt that he was just either being obnoxious or Pitch was still driving here.

Sanderson thinks you're here, I don't know where you are.
So he took his school books and parked out in the living room in front of the front window and feigned studying, keeping a sharp eye out for Pitch's car or silhouette. After a full hour of questioning, looking, and being disappointed, there was nothing. If Pitch was heading here, he'd be here by now.

He dialed Pitch's phone a few more times and developed a hatred of the automated 'leave a message'. The last time he called, he actually left a message;

“Hey Pitch, it's Jack. I've been trying to reach you all day, I even promised to leave Sanderson alone for texting you. Sorry.” Jack chuckled, “You just got out of the hospital and I just want an update, okay? I'm a tiny bit worried at this point. Call me back soon as you get this alright? Love you, dearest.”

Jack prayed he didn't sound too desperate, the last thing he wanted was to stretch Pitch any thinner. He wanted to believe it wouldn't hurt them in the long term but what went down in Jamie's house had, at least, affected Pitch's body with an inhibiting injury. This wouldn't be done the same week it started.

Resigning himself to fate, he returned upstairs books and all and spent the rest of the night studying.

But then, the rest of the night became the rest of the weekend. He spent time through Sunday wondering what the hell happened with Pitch.

Laying down on his bed for the next school day, a strange fear gripped him. Pitch wasn't as emotionally one hundred percent as he looked in the hospital.

Jack felt out of sorts. The 'wake up' ritual had was disrupted as Mary was no longer his obligation. Getting up, getting himself ready and heading directly to school was boring and tiring, worst of all Mary was already gone when he woke up. He would've gladly used the extra time to say in the house but Katherine's attempts to talk with him were painful to sit through.

“So,” She sat down besides him on the couch, “how's it going sport?”

Jack felt a part of him bristle back and shudder. Sport. William had taken up a forced, awkward habit. Katherine was adopting it. The word sounded so artificial and drained of love after what he'd been through.

Autopilot.“I'm good, Mom.” He lied through his teeth. “Everything's fine. Mary get to school alright?”

“Yeah, she's fine.” Katherine said, looking away awkwardly. Then everything went silent. Jack found it funny; maybe now she would realize Mary was the glue keeping him tethered to the family. “So how's everything?” Nope.

“Everything's fine.” He lied again. His friends were all gone. The girl he believed he'd be marrying before he found out he was gay had become his worst enemy. The man he believed he'd be marrying after he found out he was gay had left the state. The current man he hoped he'd be marrying pulled a disappearing act the past few days. Plus the entire school heard him scream about his abuse.

Katherine wouldn't know since, to his knowledge at least, none of the teachers called home or pulled
him aside to talk to him about his home life. If they cared, they were doing a damn good job convincing people they didn't.

“Alright,” Katherine's words were just words. To fill space where there was none. She heaved an empty sigh and patted Jack on the shoulder. “Well, keep up the good work kiddo. Get good grades, brush your teeth, etcetera.” She got up and walked away just as uselessly as she came.

He despised it when she came but watching her leave, with no reason or purpose to be there in the first place, was hate inspiring. She had come just when he decided to spend time by himself. Like it was planned. Out of spare time he turned off the television and got out of the house before any more of his time could be wasted.

School was the usual hellhole. Still angered by Jamie's leaving and desperate to have something to do besides tests and work, the student body succeeded in tripping, teasing or otherwise battering down Jack.

He'd accidentally run into Monty, turning a corner too fast.

He looked up at him in shock, “Oh hey,-”

“Don't talk to me.” He walked away.

“Well.” *Seems like Monty's reached his limit.* Jack made his way to the last of his classes, all too happy to finally be done with them.

Then all too depressed to have a nice, big failing grade thrown in his face from a surprise test on a subject that he wasn't in school to study. Thanks to bleach poisoning.

Heading home, Katherine was buzzing around like a fly; bothersome, noisy and useless. Pester ing him with questions and unneeded commitments of love; she may have meant well but meaning something and being something were two different things. Regardless, Jack dealt with her to get the test signed for a second try.

“Hey there, sport.” It flowed off her tongue more naturally now but still grated on Jack.

“Hey,” He gave her his most charismatic smile, trying to retain a hold over his remaining patience. “I was wondering if you could sign a test for me? I was out the day we studied the topic, in the hospital.”

“Oh, that.” Katherine's face scrunched up, possibly not enjoying pleasant memories. “Yeah, sure kiddo.” *Give me strength.*

She seemed to write as slowly as possible while he stood there, hands in pockets and resisting the urge to just raise his middle finger ever so slightly.

“So, how's everything going?”

You already asked me. “Everything's fine, Mom.”

“No, it isn't.” Her voice broke, mid word. “It isn't, is it?”

“Mom-”
“Here you go sweetie.” And there was the overly chipper, bright yellow joy again. Broken then repaired at the drop of a hat. “Here's the test, you ace it now you hear? If you fail this one again, I won't sign it!”

“Okay.” He tried not to extend his words, or his direct gaze, too much as he took the test and retreated upstairs, shaken.

Katherine was fucking weird.

Jack sealed himself in his room. He was not going near Katherine when she was going off her rocker; he knew too many 'crazy women' serial killer stories to chance it. He didn't even want to be in the same house as her. Which reminded him; where the hell's Pitch?!

His worry was morphing to anxiety and then anger – what the hell had happened that Pitch couldn't be bothered to just give him a quick call to say 'Hey yeah, I'm alive and acknowledging your existence. Love you, bye.' Had he succumbed to injury, maybe decided that the whole 'Jamie' thing was too much and took this opportunity to just leave town?

_Shit up brain. Damn it._ Jack said, detesting himself for worrying. He sent a text to Sanderson, since the promised peace time ended with the new day.

'Hey yeah, I don't suppose you know where Pitch is?'

'Yeah, he's in his office.'

He got three things from this: One, Pitch was still employed – 'his' office. Two, Pitch was capable of movement. Three, Pitch was doing this on purpose.

'Wait, let me guess, he didn't contact you?'

'Good to see you aren't surprised.'

'Mind if I kick his ass then? As long as he isn't in direct contact with you, you have to go through me, meaning I have to deal with you two like I'm a fucking messenger pigeon.'

'Be gentle and leave some un-marked space on his ass for me.' Freudian Slip. 'I've been worried about him all damn day, thinking he's dead.'

'Thank you kindly.'

Jack sighs, a bittersweet taste in the back of his throat. Pitch was fine. But whatever he was going through now was enough to make Pitch...distance himself. Intentionally. Unless his phone is fucking up or something.

Three minutes later, 'Jack. Pitch says he'll meet you at the cafe.'

'What's up?'

'He won't say, I've kicked him in the shins three times and he still won't say. It's something serious.'

Jack realized the terror of hearing the phrase “we have to talk”.
“Hey sweetie,”

Katherine. Jack thought angrily, pocketing his phone and rolling his eyes.

“Hey mom.” He sugar coated his tone, “What's up?”

“I wanted to take a second look at that test with you.”

Are you trying to annoy me or are you just bored? “No thanks Mom, I think I got it.”

“Nope, too late.” She said, half playfully. “Already halfway up there!”

This. This is why people murder. Jack rolled around, making space on the edge of the bed and retrieving the test, so he could feign studying the answers with his laptop.

Dealing with Katherine made him wish she was drunk and someplace else.

Jack knew he shouldn't think of Katherine in that way, to say she was better when drunk was rude and disrespectful. Yet, the more she spoke the more she infuriated him with her presence. He wanted to shove a shot of vodka in her face and say “Here, go nuts!”.

Katherine didn't even know the topic of the studies and had to ask him three times before she seemed to finally absorb it. 'Genomes Mom. You have a degree in this.'

Then Jack saw an opening; something he should have seen before.

Katherine was only doing this because she felt guilty. Any other time, she'd be elsewhere. Doing anything else. Work your magic.

“Mom, look.” Jack said, cherry picking his words. “I know you think it's bad and that it's a horrible idea. But please, I think I need to see Pitch.”

“What?” She said, still laughing from her last joke and trying to laugh her way through this. “That's ridiculous, just because its a little out of my reach doesn't mean-”

“Mom, you and I both know that somethings off and its not just you. You said so earlier, something isn't right. Something hasn't been alright since you made me and Pitch separate.”

“Jack, listen-”

“No, for once can you listen to me?” Jack urged, “The only reason you're doing any of this is to make up for things you have no possible hope of making up for.” Katherine gawked at him, he didn't stop. “Pitch, I'm sorry, but Pitch was the only entertaining thing about living in this town aside from Mary – if she wasn't here, I wouldn't be here. I would've gladly got a job and got out when I could. You and I? Me and William? The three of us? We were done, give or take three years ago. Minimum.”

“Like it or not, the listening? The care-taking? Even the nicknames and time spent together? Bullshit. All things you're bad and out of practice at. Pitch is better at it too. Plus, it hurts me you know? It
hurts me to hear you call me sport or anything loving. It's good to know you've quit Mom and that you want to make things right again but you're three to five years too late.”

“We can't go back to just being happy and loving, there's too much garbage, too much baggage. I can't keep smiling to your face on stressful days like this, praying you'll take the hint one day that this whole 'mother and son' ship we have going on here? It's sailed. A long fucking time ago as a matter of fact. It was gone the first time Dad put hit hands on me and you did nothing.”

Katherine had tears streaming down her face. Jack continued, guilty.

“And I'm sorry for that. I'm sorry that I can't make myself love you. You deserve that; I know you do. I was here before the alcohol, I was here watching Dad kick the shit out of you, and I'll be here for a while more.” He took her hand, trying to encourage her. “But I can't make myself love you like I did when I was eleven, Mom. I can't. I can love you but I'll always have that...little space in me that remembers that you would let me get beat, that you'd insult me at the drop of a dime, for anything at anytime. I can't love someone like that.”

“But I loved Pitch and he was taken from me, just like you were taken from me with your addiction. I need to go to him before we don't have anything more to go on...I don't want me and Pitch to end up like me and you. I'm sorry.”

Katherine was shaking her head and pushing him away, “Just go. Just go I can't- I can't look at you.”

Jack felt a pang of sympathy in his heart. He tried to hug Katherine but ended up having to head downstairs as Katherine slammed the room of his door shut behind him, screaming, crying, “Just go.”

He left the house, phone in pocket. He sent a quick text to Pitch's phone -

'I'm coming to the cafe, please tell me this is the type of conversation that ends with me spending the night at your place.'

He looked back from the corner, hoping to see Katherine storming down the block – drunk and ready to give him a talking to. Nothing. You don't love her, don't get upset. You said it right to her face for her to hear. Don't regret it now.

He kept walking.

Katherine heaves into the pillows once again before breaking. Last one. You promised yourself just this last one just in case. She dashes downstairs, wiping her face and retrieving her hidden poison from the small hole in the side of the cabinet, right under where the flour is.

A half-filled fifth of Vodka.

Katherine runs into Mary's room, thankful the little girl is gone to have a play date with friends and her closet is free. She hides herself towards the back, prays no rats or spiders come to disturb her, brings the drink to her mouth.

She doesn't want this but she needs it. The loss of the edge, bringing back of the unstable stability of never having to care and being removed from all responsibility because she's smashed. She cries while she drinks the bottle and cries as she finishes it.
The walk from his house to the cafe is fifteen minutes, short and simple. Those minutes feel uncomfortably long and he doesn't have the normal burst of joy when he leaves to see Pitch. First, the dreaded words 'need to talk' were hanging over his head like a stormy cartoon cloud. His social life was committing a slow, painful suicide. Pitch wasn't contacting him, even after no contact for days. Katherine was slipping off into the deep end. The whole school hated him and it wasn't a passing phase either, hid abuse had continued into the week.

All of his non-Pitch relationships were going to shit. Pitch only told him 'we need to talk' with nothing else to say, leaving everything up in the air. Jack let himself off the hook. Anyone would be anxious, right?

The sparse amount of people on the sidewalk helped calm his nerves. No Pippa popping her head into his personal space and still no reporters. Approaching the cafe made him nervous. He saw Pitch from the window, the same as how they met, book in hand and uninterested in the meager surroundings.

He came in, took a seat opposite Pitch. "So," Pitch glanced at Jack, "Do I pretend I don't see you like we're in a movie or do we talk?"

Pitch looked much better then what he'd seen him last; the color returned to his face, though this time with a tad more shine. His taste in clothing hadn't budged. Donned in pure black from head to toe. This time in the form of a well fitted white collar shirt, sleeves up, black reading glasses and snug black pants.

And he was smiling, ear to ear. "Either one's fine with me, darling."

Damn it, stop making me love you. Jack shifted underneath the table, smiling, "It's good to see you." He reached over, brushed his hand against Pitch's. "What was it that you needed to talk to me about?"

Pitch's face scrunched up, offended. He put the book down."Save it for later, please." He called Toothiana, "A tall order of coffee, black with vanilla creamer – bring sugar and you-" Pitch pointed to Jack.

"I'm fine-"

"Ice cream, vanilla, bring warm caramel in separate bowl along with coffee cake." Pitch ignored him outright. "Thank you dear."

Toothiana walked away from the pair when Jack spoke, "So I guess I'm eating ice cream for dinner?"

"Isn't that every child's dream?"

"Oh," Jack said, "I'm a child now?"

"I'm sorry, didn't mean it. Didn't add the right amount of sarcasm to that one." Pitch twiddled his fingers on the table.

"Pitch," Jack said, voice sweetening. "If there's something wrong can we just talk about it like adults?"
"Of course we can – but most certainly not here." Pitch exhaled.

"Why not?"

Pitch closed his eyes, let out another heavy exhale like a ton of bricks loaded onto his back, and glanced up at Jack. "You gain your strength in relationships from talking and contact. You know that?"

Jack knew it. This conversation would have to come around full circle to talk about them. He hoped it wouldn't end with goodbye. "I assume you mean, what I enjoy most about the relationship in question?"

"Indeed."

"Yes, doesn't everyone?"

Pitch huffed. "No."

"No?"

"No." Pitch glanced across the diner floor, presumably for Toothiana. "It depends on the relationship for some people, Jack. For example, correct me if I'm wrong. Before your parents decided they'd be better off being ships in a bottle - for lack of a better phrase - you had friends to the rafters and barely spent time inside?"

"Well, yeah...how'd you know?"

"Honestly, Jack how long do you think I've been around? I know some of the other parents. Yard sales, barbecues. I didn't spend every waking moment of my life in a dark corner muttering passive aggressive things under my breath." Jack pulled a face and tried to apologize, "I only do that on Wednesdays."

Jack laughed, "I will be honest, that's good way to spend a Wednesday. Mind if I come with next time?"

"No," Pitch hissed, "My corner, get your own." He laughed, "In all seriousness though, you're an extrovert turned extreme introvert due to consequence. It's a massive generalization I know but for the most part, for most of your relationships, you get your happiness from communication and physical contact. Like what we're doing now, for instance."

"I, however, enjoy silence a little more."

"Oh, sorry." Jack swallowed, seeing Toothiana approach with everything they ordered. "We can talk about it later if you need to."

"I'd appreciate that. For right now, I'd much rather enjoy your company and...well..." Pitch took Jack's hand and gave him a quick wink, "This."

Quiet and physical touch. Not surprising...Jack smiled and nodded. He busied himself with his ice cream and decided the talk could wait until later. For right now he'd enjoy exchanging little pieces of small talk when Pitch decided to spare some and steal tiny touches whenever he could.

–

Pitch drove them both to his house. Jack felt anxious and taut with need, like the air in the calm
before the storm. When they'd left the cafe Pitch wrapped an arm around his lower back and kissed his forehead, the most contact they'd had in a long while.

"When we get back to my home," Pitch whispered in his ear. "I'm afraid I'll have little self control, I'll need to touch you."

A shiver went through him and he trembled closer next to Pitch, a playful smirk in his tone while he imitated Pitch's speech. "I'm afraid I won't be able to resist you either, I wonder what will become of me and my innocence."

"Eagle spread and clinging to the sheets, one would hope."

Damn it, stop. Jack shivered, and a small spark of arousal went down his spine. "Behave yourself."

"Can't for much longer." Pitch opened the side door for Jack and let him in first before calmly rounding the car and climbing in.

The drive was the longest time they'd spent together since leaving the cafe. Jack thought it horrid; an extended tease he couldn't interrupt with stripping, sitting on Pitch's lip and begging to be taken. Worse still, the whole ride there was Pitch showing off what a filthy, blessed mouth he had.

"I wonder what we'll start with." Pitch tapped on the steering wheel with the tips of his fingers. "Wine perhaps? Maybe I'll undress you, use my voice first. Drive you mad – maybe drink my share of the wine licking it off you."

Listening to his teases were hell as Jack expected. No wonder he was so good with people; he had an elegant way of twisting around words and painting pictures with sentences.

"Then what shall we do with you, hm? Have you beg for me? Or would that be too rough, maybe? Would you prefer nice, slow love making in bed? Light a few romantic candles with soft music in the background? Perhaps a serenade and a massage while I look deep into those winter eyes, remind you of my definition of 'love making'?"

Jack exhaled and crossed his legs. He cursed his biology for making him so weak to this. Before they even began their romance, Jack thought of Pitch's voice as sexy, seductive. It felt like overkill, there was no need for him to do this; they both knew he was naturally sliver tongued, in both senses of the phrase.

"Or maybe you need something else, Frost. Perhaps a little touch and a cute little scene bores you, maybe you need something else? A strong yank in your hair, a whispered curse or two then perhaps, a command? A nice, hard spanking before a rough, strong fuck on the floor with me calling you my little whore?"

Jack leaned back in his chair, exhaling through his nose. A wave of slight dizziness swam over him, his pants felt painfully tight. "Damn it."

When the car came to a stop. Jack grasped the door handle. He needed release, space and a way to calm down if not get off. Pitch stopped him.

"Wait for me, love. Let me get you out."

Jack stared at Pitch as if crazed and Pitch huffed, laughing, as he left the car. Jack didn't try to open the car door, knowing full well if he did, Pitch would tease him more and he already felt like a bundle of oversensitive nerves. Jack focused on reeling himself back in, taking deep breaths to calm himself. The door opened and he felt, for a moment, he could keep calm now.
Then Pitch touched him. A simple grasp of his hand. Yet, it gave Jack the feeling of romance and the promise of passion. Something Jack hadn’t gotten during Pitch’s hospital stay.

"You know-" Pitch cuts himself off, separates his hand from Jack’s.

Jack glances at him, feeling pent up and worn thin. "What's the problem?" Pitch pointed to the front door, where a familiar wool cap donning red-head happened to be standing.

"Oh," Jack swallows, his teeth gritting. "You're fucking kidding me."

"You know her?"

"Yes, and-" Jack starts yelling, "I don't exactly think she should be here."

Pippa turns, notices him and then walks towards them.

_You've become a literal cockblock._ Jack simmers, gripping Pitch's hand like a life line.

"Doctor Krozmotis!" She says, jogging the next couple of feet. "I just came here to see you, had I known you brought patients to your own home-"

"Not his patient." Pitch's eyes narrow to slits. "What do you want?"

"I was just curious, wanted to ask a few questions."

"Ask them later." Jack sneers, pushing past her. He stops short when Pitch's arm gives resistance.

"There's no reason we can't entertain the young lady, no?" Pitch says and pulls Jack back. He can feel Pippa inwardly leering, taunting him. Part of him wants to whip around and slap her.

"You're kidding, right?"

"No, I'm quite serious."

"Fine." Jack says, returning to Pitch's side.

"Lead the way, miss."

Jack watches as Pippa walks ahead of them, walking them up to the door before letting Pitch lead them inside. All the while Jack sends Pitch pleading eyes to not do this. _Stop, letting, this happen._ Pitch doesn't explain along the way. He gives him a glance with a sweetened, honey coated smile. It aches on Jack. It brings back a memory of him and Pippa, being friends while she tricked an 'enemy' team of snowball players into believing she was on their side; only to betray them.

Jack never told Pitch how manipulative Pippa was; he didn't even know they weren't friends. Pitch must think she's a _friend_. He doesn't know yet, how disgusting her personality can be and the hell she's put him through.

"Well," Pitch says, releasing Jack's hand. "Do get yourself situated if you so desire, while I listen to Miss Pippa."

Jack gives him a glare, I don't like this. At all. He surrenders himself to the situation. _Perhaps_ if he can get a few words in, twist her around the right way, he can get her out of his life.
"I'm only staying for a few minutes but thank you for letting me into your home, it's very nice here."
Pippa holds a bright pink bag with two hands, despite it being hook onto her shoulder. Aside from her new accessory, she seems like she hasn't changed in the slightest. Red hair cropped short in a girly bob, a purple wool cap keeping the rest contained and a matching purple jacket, then a plaid skirt over pants and boots. "Gives off a very 'winter cabin in a blizzard' type feel."

Jack rolls his shoulder. He doesn't want to give her the attention she always craved, so he shifts his gaze to the unlit, dark fireplace.

"No problem. Miss."

"Pippa." From the corner of his eye Jack can see her curtsy and her glinting knife-like grin, laced with venom.

"Well," Pitch bows back. Part of Jack flares up in fury. Pitch is bending over backwards, being polite to the same girl that's done nothing but reek havoc on his life within the past few days. He reels himself back in before his anger shines through, shrugs her off as if she was nothing, because she is.

"I'm sorry that we couldn't meet in better settings, surely you've tried to contact me through my office?"

"Yes, but Sanderson wouldn't let me contact you directly."

"I see, please, take a seat."

Pippa saunters back into view, making her way past the unused couch opposite him, past the fire truck red recliner, and welcomes herself next to Jack.

There is a moment of childishness, the want to cross his arms and pout and make a snide comment. He desires to resign to it. He doesn't, thanks only to the faint voice in his head repeating 'Don't. Don't give her what she needs.'.

Pippa always needed the reaction and attention of at least a full room of people, any less wouldn't be enough. When he was younger, he and his friends joked around about them; said he and Pippa were king and queen of Burgress. Even then, in his youth before he could comprehend what she was like, he knew she wasn't good for him. She wasn't a good person, at heart. Not even as a child. She was deceitful and sharp; she had no problem weaving a lie if it would help her. She was worse during snowball fights and quizzes at schools; competitive and snooty.

"Fancy meeting you here." Pippa stared at the opposite wall.

Jack isn't sure what to do or say. Ignoring her would give her ammo, but replying was a dangerous game. Pippa wasn't stupid; she would twist everything he said and have him end up shooting himself.

"Pitch," Jack ignores her with a smile. As he walks towards Pitch he can see how she bristles back; defeated. "Can I talk to you privately in the kitchen? Now?"

"Alright, don't see a problem with that." Pitch walks ahead of him to the kitchen. Jack's eyes veer from him, chancing a glance at Pippa as he goes. The young girl is sitting there her face shining with such glee that he wants to double back and smack her.

When they're both in the kitchen Jack doesn't know where to start. He isn't sure if he can stomach even explaining the situation.
He keeps his voice low, making sure she can't hear. "Pitch, Pippa and I aren't friends."

"Really," He chuckles. "Your glare and obvious disdain just screamed love and welcome."

"Then why the hell would you interrupt what we had going on to let her into the house?"

"Because last I remember, the last time someone you weren't fond of, who was previously friend of yours, approached me so earnestly-"

Oh, oh. That's why. Jack swallows, gripping his forehead. "Look, Pippa doesn't need help, she's...not good news, Pitch. She tried to trick Mary in the cafe, she essentially forced me out of the closet in school."

"You were in the closet?"

"Well, no, but I mean, there's a difference between 'not in the closet' and 'not bringing it up until it becomes a thing you have to deal with'. She twisted the whole situation with Jamie around, now everyone at school hates me. I get bullied in the hallways now, that never happened before." Pitch blinks, suddenly worried. "Like I said 'school's annoying, people are annoying, as usual'."

"Sweetheart," Pitch purses his lips, hand hovering over them. His face is painted with shock and worry. "You need to tell me these things."

Jack sighed. "I don't feel the need to just dump everything in my life onto you. I did that to you before with my parents and I feel like I shouldn't. If I just go running to you for help with everything, I won't learn to grow – right? That's how this works, right?"

"No, dear." Pitch goes from shocked with warm and gentle, his eyes calm and his smile is welcoming and sweet. Jack can't resist and smiles back. "You act like I'm going to put you in home school at the slightest word. No, no not at all. You need to tell me these things because you can't just keep bottling up your emotions. I'm not saying you need to run to me with every little infraction but the entire school beating up on the famed Jack Frost? That's absurd. I need to be updated when things like that happen."

He continues, fingers running through Jack's hair like a wide comb. "You need to keep my updated because, when I learn about these things all of a sudden – I'm worried. I'm worried now," Pitch laughs but it sounds uncertain, frightened. "Damn it. Dear, after we remove unneeded things we have to have an at length talk about you because you...After."

"What do you think she wants?"

"I thought you knew."

"Knew what?"

"Exactly."

"So you don't know why she's here?" Jack said, confused.

"Not at all."

"So you're just gonna help her?"

"Oh, yes and no." Pitch said, "You said it yourself, she's a tricky one."

"Yeah, she makes me want to punch her in the balls." Pitch gaped."She doesn't have balls. I just
want to punch her somewhere I know will make it hurt."

"I was about to say, you keep queer company Frost. No pun intended."

"Yeah...but I can't hit her because then she'll just run to her friends and say 'Look, look how much of a scumbag Jack is!' She's intentionally trying to get me to do something to her. What do I do to deal with her?"

"Play her game." Pitch rolled up his sleeves with a mischievous grin. "Follow my lead, do keep up."

They both walked out of the kitchen. Pippa sat, legs crossed and lady like, waiting in the living room. Jack thought it disturbing. Over a few days they had gone to mutually ignoring each other's existence to sitting across from one another in a 'mutual friend's house.

Jamie popped into mind and Jack straightened up. At least Jamie was a good human being at heart, who was in a shitty situation. Pippa was fine, in all aspects of the word. Unlike Jamie, she thrust herself into Jack's life and was reluctant to leave. She'd appeared unannounced, at Pitch's home.

That made him think, what would Pippa have done if he wasn't here?

"So, you needed to talk to me?" Pitch sat in the recliner, the image of relaxation.

Jack sat across from him on the opposite chair and threaded his fingers together. Watching Pippa think, watching the gears turn in her head, made it difficult to seem impartial to the conversation.

Pippa smiled and clapped her hands together. "I was just in the neighborhood and decided to stop by since, as of late, I've been wondering more and more about your relationship with Jamie Bennett."

"My relationship with Jamie?" Pitch looked apathetic; eyes glazed with disinterest, mouth straight, body at rest as if he had no energy to give. "Nothing really between us, I just wanted to help."

"Just wanting to help." Pippa repeated, there was a falling light in her eyes. A sadness washing over her face, Jack gazes at her while she thumbs the edge of her bag. Then all at once she's back to normal with such speed it reminds Jack of Katherine. This, however, is different. Her changing back is timed and mechanical. Not at all like the sudden emotional outburst Katherine had. Pippa sees him, and her eyes turn to him like targeting reticules. "At least someone wanted to."

He swallows dryly and stays silent. She doesn't know about what he and Jamie had, not from his perspective at least, she couldn't. She didn't even bother to ask him, in private, about him and Jamie.

Pitch got their attention with a quick huff of breath. "You didn't?"

A nice twist of the knife; no one helped when everyone could have, but everyone also included you.

"I'm just average," Pippa say, shaking her head. Her face is morose but held together; her expressions are too controlled for Jack's taste. He can't sense the slightest bit of real emotion on her. "There's nothing I could've done."

"So there's special 'prerequisites' for being someone?" Pitch chuckled and Jack straightened himself up; he sees the game Pitch is playing now.

Pippa blinks, found out. "Of course not! But wouldn't it have been better if someone like Jack went, someone who wasn't like little average me?"

"Last I heard, little average pointed a whole school at someone, said 'Sic em' and they obeyed
immediately. That person is question being Jack." It hurt, to be reminded that he was the whipping boy of the whole school but it was nice to see Pippa squirm, caught in her own web. "Little average you did that? *Impressive.*" Pitch managed to make the word sound sarcastic, his face was blank of any positive emotion. Rather, he looked displeased. Then, copying Pippa's technique, he was normal, happy and relaxed in the blink of an eye.

"Well," Pippa let out a harder then normal exhale, Jack wasn't sure where Pippa's feigned emotions ended and her real ones began. How much of her personality and self wasn't some thought through lie? "That *particular* someone should have done something to stop it by now don't you think?" Her lips quirked upward. "If I can take a school off someone, they can take it off just as easily."

*Are you blaming me for my bullying?* Jack sat up a straighter. Out of the corner of his eye he could see how Pippa examined him, watching him for any sign of distress or change.

"In any case," She continued. "That someone in question-" *Jack"-should have done something to help before that anyway. I shouldn't be surprised, frankly, when they can't help anyone else. I was expecting them to be able to help themselves. It's a little confusing though, isn't it? That they didn't do anything to help poor Jamie?"

"I find that confusing myself, too Pippa. But there's a bigger question isn't in mind isn't there?" The amused lit in Pitch's tone doesn't go unnoticed. "Why didn't you do something?"

The game was clear enough – sly, hateful remarks. Jack could do that. He got ready to jump in...

Pippa smiled at Pitch,"*I figured someone else would.*"

"And that someone else needed to be me, apparently." Jack said, direct, never insulting her but making comments, saying enough to draw some blood. Pippa turned to him, surprised. "Don't look so shocked." He said, an air of sweetness in his voice, unsuitable for what was being said. "I believe they call it the bystander effect: Someone else will do something, so why do anything?"

"What I find confusing is, if Jack was so entitled to helping Jamie, why you never came to him and said 'Do something' until after the fact. Or was that also someone else's job too?"

"I hate it when that happens," Jack says, finally getting the depth of what they were doing now. Dance around the issue to highlight it but never say anything, never be frank. Be sneering, drop obvious hints and insults. "When something bad happens and think someone should do something. It's almost like you never stop to think that someone could have – and should have – been you." His expression is sickeningly sweet when he turns to Pippa.

He can see it in her face, the slight twitch in her smile. He got to her.

"But ah, what can you do?" Jack shrugs and throws Pitch a real, truthful smile.

"Someone should have done something is all I'm saying." Pippa was on the run now, standing up to get her things.

One last comment. "Yes," Lacing his words with poisonous, fake sympathy, "and unfortunately for us all, that someone is at the top of a bell curve."

Pippa chuckled but halfway through it faltered and broke, fake. She made her way to the door.

"I'll just- just be going." He could hear it in her tone, he hurt her. He felt damn good about it, despite not actually wanting to fight anymore.
"Oh, its fine, don't be a stranger." Pitch opened the door and gave her another overly pristine smile, "But, if you could be so kind as to not appear on my front door step I'd appreciate it. Next time, go through the appropriate channels before you impose yourself on me, thank you."

Pitch-speak for: Get out of this house and don't come back you purple covered snake woman.

He closed the door behind her and turned to Jack. "Top of a bell curve? Nice reversal."

"Thank you," Jack kicked off his shoes and put his feet up on the couch. "I had a good teacher."

"Yes, that was what we call the 'Indirect Approach'."

"Whoever thought it up must have been a fucking genius because that was fun and rude." Jack raised his head while Pitch sat next to him, letting Pitch scoot in beneath him. He rested his head on Pitch's thigh. "How many other things can you do that are like that? Short of just launching a nuke into someone's face?"

"Well, Liddell Hart was a military strategist."

"World war one right?" He leaned up and kissed the bottom of Pitch's jaw.

"Correct..."

"Hmm, Pitch do you like history?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"I like hearing you talk, communication remember?"

"Yes..." Pitch leaned down, pressed his lips to Jack's neck. "But, I remember taking you home with a mission in mind."

"Why turn on the T.V. Then?"

"Focus on the television, Jack." He said, getting up.

"But why?"

"So you aren't worn too thin too fast." Pitch plucked Jack's shoes off, dropping them on the floor.

"Wait, we're still gonna fuck?"

"Oh, tell me you haven't forgotten me already dear." Pitch laughed, readying his hands for work.
Blue Bossanova

Pitch tickled him with the tips of his fingers, still laughing.

“Seriously, please, a little mercy.” Jack said, now smiling as wide as Pitch was.

Being around Pitch was a strange miracle, how quickly things could go from tense and controlled to happy and joyous without a second thought. Now was no exception.


“All pent up then?” Jack relaxed into the couch. Pitch taught him indirect warfare, how to correctly word things without saying them. He'd make him regret it. “I can help you.”

“Television, Jack.”

“No, no. Communication. You spent the whole ride here teasing me. Now before you get to ride, I get to tease you. It's only fair after all.”

“Oh, you're a fun one.” Pitch laughed. He pulled insistently at Jack's jeans.

“Haven't you heard?” Jack said, yanking his legs back and watching Pitch’s expression change from smug to surprised. “I'm Jack Frost. I'm the definition of fun. Now, let's have some fun, shall we? Sit.” He pointed to the empty spot next to him. He made every word he said drip with the same dominant sexual confidence he recognized in Pitch's voice.

Pitch's expression changed. He realized, with a pout, he was no longer the dominant one in the room. “Jack-”


“Jack, I hope you realize what you're initiating here.”

“Why?” Jack gave him a bravado fueled grin, the same he had when the second time they met in the cafe. “Afraid I'm a better fuck then you?” A calm, even tone. Sharp on every syllable.

Pitch raised an eyebrow. Without further fuss, took a seat next to Jack. He crossed his legs and put him arm around Jack's shoulders.

“Hmm, acceptable.” Jack ran a hand against Pitch's arm. He could get used to this. It was sweet and familiar with a caring warmth in the gesture, something he felt was growing absent in his life as of late. “I expect you to be just as obedient for the rest of the night.” Jack gave him a half-second grin mixed with a promise of something more, unsure of how it looked but enjoying the act.

“One little show of insults towards a girl and suddenly you're Queen B. I've created a monster.”

“Yes, yes.” Jack said. He reached to Pitch's shirt and undid the top three buttons – revealing a hint of cleavage. More a tease to himself then his lover but he wanted to see more then just pulled up sleeves. To Jack, it sort of completed the 'relaxed and sexy' look he'd always imagined Pitch having.
Pitch noticed and said nothing. “So, let's talk. About what we're going to do or at least, what you—” He gave Pitch's chest a sharp poke. He felt a jump in Pitch's arm, more of surprise then fear. “Thought you were going to do to me tonight. I remember something about wine. Let's start there.”

“You’re,” Pitch exhaled, looked away. It was getting darker out, light was scarce and in this light Pitch looked as if he was blushing, almost. Jack felt another snippet of heat from his chest sink lower. “You're really serious aren't you?”

“Correct me if I'm wrong but I'm not laughing or smirking right now am I? Yes Pitch,” He let his eyes go half-lidded, let himself relax more. "I'm quite serious.”

Pitch's brow furrowed and his body shifted. “Stop that.”

“Stop what?”

“Stop...acting like me. It's—”

“Intimidating?”

“Cute.”

Jack smiled at him, letting playfulness shine through. “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.”

“I wonder where that phrase comes from...”

“Nice try,” Jack laughed, “Back on topic – the wine.”

“Yes?”

“Bring it to me.”

“I thought you weren't a fan of alcohol—”

“Pitch, you were the one who recommended it in the first place.”

“I didn't exactly recommend—”

“Pitch.” Jack said, reaching out to brush his hand against the other man's cheek. “Wine.”

Pitch was obedient. So obedient Jack wondered why he wasn't getting more sneers or snark. Pitch, without another word, got up and poured Jack a glass of white wine he had stored in the kitchen. When asked he only commented he saved alcohol for 'special' occasions. Jack didn't deny the thought it may have had something to do with his parental situation, which he had yet to update Pitch on.

I'll tell him tomorrow.

Jack swirled the wine around in his hand, looking over Pitch as he stood in front of him. His hands were tingling, he felt on edge. He wasn't sure if he was enjoying this yet but there were happy butterflies in his stomach and Pitch was okay with it now. No reason to stop now.

"You look damn good, you know that?” Jack said, taking a sip of wine. "Like something of the
cover of G.Q. magazine. I'm jealous."

Pitch shifted in place, responding in a low breath. "Thank you."

"Is your chest okay?"

Pitch looked down, into his shirt. "Yes but, I'm not sure if I can bottom."

Jack blinked, "Pitch, I'm not going to force you to bottom."

Pitch blinked.

"I'm not going to do that, not yet anyway." Jack sniffed.

"Oh. Thank you."

"No, it's fine. I don't want to anyway."

Pitch's eyes lit up and he stopped shifting. The only thing he was afraid of, it seemed, was Jack opening his stitches.

Jack resisted the urge to smile too wide. He showed Pitch a flash of a grin before motioning to the steps. "Come, let's head upstairs."

--

Bravado aside they both knew Jack was infinitely less experienced in the bedroom then Pitch. If anything, he should be taking the lead and getting the ball rolling but he had yet to stop him. So, Jack went with it hoping he wasn't pushing too much off on Pitch.

Then again, Pitch had a history being a submissive. Perhaps this came as naturally to him as snark and spite. Maybe the older man was curious what he was planning and let him go to town, to see where things might lead. Jack didn't want him doing something he didn't feel comfortable with for the sake of sex. He wanted Pitch to be doing this because he wanted to do it, not because he wanted sex or wanted to please him.

When did I start getting all worried about you?

Whatever, he was planning to make the most of it. Pitch was sweet and giving but he never knew how compliant and submissive the older man could be until he pushed him back on the bed. The gaze he got from those gold eyes sent a happy spark to his stomach. In them he could see a range of emotions. A careful hint of nervousness, a dash of fright from new rules and new actions, and excitement blanketed over it all.

Jack swirled the off white liquid again. He was uneducated in these things, when he had sex he'd been submissive and wanting. Pitch had taken the lead every time and each time he did Jack never bothered to stop and take notes. He put himself in the dominant position this time, something new to him. Would it break the mood to ask what he should do first? Pitch looked so submissive and wanting, he didn't want to ruin it.

At the same time, given Pitch's history, he didn't want to awaken any inner demons. He dipped his finger in the wine and stalked over to the bed.

Pitch's eyes were expectant, as if he knew already. Jack raised a wine covered finger to Pitch's lips,
“Here, try it.”

Then, despite his previous look and knowledge, Pitch glanced sideways at him. Confused.

“It's not going to bite you.”

Pitch wriggled his nose and opened his mouth. Jack hovered his finger in Pitch's mouth, never shoving or forcing. He wanted this to feel as open to stopping as possible, if Pitch didn't want it he could say so at any time. He didn't want to force him into anything. Pitch was too quiet to begin with.

Pitch enclosed his lips around Jack's finger. His gold pupil turned upwards to look at Jack, wide and shimmery in the faint light provided by the bedside lamp.

The inside of Pitch's mouth felt warm and wet and he never broke the gaze. Jack thought for a second and carefully, doing his best not to seem too aggressive, gave it a tiny bit of force. Pitch didn't give him any resistance, let his finger in until the second knuckle. Then a warm, long muscle trailed up and across it. Jack kissed the side of Pitch's face, putting the glass of wine down on the nearby table.


Pitch stopped at once. Jack's finger felt slick and wet.

"Are you okay with this?" Jack said, taking a sip of wine for himself. He didn't feel tipsy but he wanted to be careful; he knew what too much alcohol could do to a person. “I don't want you to do anything you aren't okay with.”

Pitch let out a huff of breath, like laughter. “Yeah, I know." Jack chuckled, "But I wouldn't feel right if I didn't ask you.”

“I appreciate it, I do. But, this is ridiculous Jack.”

"What part of it is so ridiculous, hmm?" Jack giggled, poking Pitch's cheek.

Pitch's eyebrows turned downward and his gaze refocused itself, as if he noticed something engrossing but threatening. "Stop it. That's not funny."

"What's not funny?"

"That."

"That what?"

"You, being me." Pitch said, looking away, "If this is some type of revenge plot, I get it. I'm sorry for it and you can tell me what I did now, I've learned my lesson."

Jack dropped the act, letting a smile reach his eyes. "Pitch, I'm not upset. I was just playing around, you know? I'm not trying to make you feel uncomfortable or insulted - which is why I asked you before, 'are you okay with this?'. If you aren't, I can stop right now."

Pitch shot his a questioning gaze before shaking his head.
"I assume that means we stop here?"

"No, I - I want to do this I just didn't want you to be upset with me and not tell me."

"Pitch, you're too cute."

"You're the one acting like me."

"And you find me 'frightfully cute', meaning you know how adorable you are."

Pitch exhaled between his teeth, "It's cute because its you acting like me, not because what you're acting like is cute."

"Just find a way to twist this into a brooding session won't you dear?"

"Jack, it's not that it's just...I feel weird about this."

"What's the problem?"

"I feel like...you aren't being yourself. Like something else brought this on."

"Would it make you feel better if I did something more...'Jack-like', then?"

"Please."

"You care about these sheets in particular?"

"No, I have replacements and I was thinking of changing these actually...Jack, where are you going with this?"

"Shh." Jack put a finger to his lips and hooked a fingers around Pitch's jeans, "Off with these."

Pitch raised an eyebrow at him and then unzipped his pants, unbuttoned them and started pulling them down. Jack stopped him to move across the room.

"Go ahead, I want to watch."

"Not Jack-like."

"Then, you don't know Jack." He giggled before seeing how ridiculous the statement was. How much had he drunk exactly?

"Ugh. I'm offended you actually said that."

"Your mouth is moving, which I like, but those clothes are still on and its offending me."

"Grand." Pitch sneered and shrugged his pants the rest of the way off, revealing black boxers.

"Those too."

A quick, impatient yank and now Pitch was half-nude, in front of him...
Pitch nodded and shrugged off his black shirt, throwing it aside unceremoniously. Jack looked him over, quirked at his own jealousy. Pitch didn't fidget or chance a glance at himself in a moment of self-consciousness. He stood there, hands tucked behind his back like a soldier awaiting an order. Jack wished he had his composure and confidence.

Pitch's mouth twitched, a quick and nervous movement, when Jack got up. He noticed but didn't voice it, instead choosing to walk in front of Pitch and put his head on his chest.

"What, precisely, am I supposed to be doing now?"

"Nothing." Jack said, hands inching their way up Pitch's chest. He took his time, feeling him out and admiring the lengthy, wiry muscle of his chest. "Just let me enjoy you." His fingers danced upwards, catching one of Pitch's nipples between his thumb and index finger. With a curious thought he pinched it.

Pitch gasped.

Jack smiled, licking a warm stripe on the center of his chest. He twiddled his fingers, applied more pressure to twist the hardening flesh. Pitch's breathing deepened, Jack could feel it against his head.

"I like you like this." Jack reached up, stroked Pitch's lower lip with the tip of his index finger. When he pulled his hand away to caress the rest of Pitch's face, he didn't miss the small tug his teeth gave over the same lip or how his tongue ran over the spot. "If I do anything that makes you want to stop, say so."

"Alright." Pitch exhaled, Jack's hands moving back down and grabbing Pitch's cock. The older man hissed between his teeth and Jack giggled at him.

"Not yet, sit down." He all but pushed Pitch back onto the bed, enjoying the still dominative role.

"What are you planning?"

"It wouldn't be 'Jack-like of me to tell you.'" Jack spent the time admiring what he'd missed: Pitch's body, his mouth, his physical form. He wasn't sure when he'd taken such an interest in watching just how the human body moved but he was certain that only his boyfriend's was this...enticing. Pitch gave him a curious look while Jack slow, delicately, ran his fingers against Pitch's protruding clavicle then venturing up to trace the curvature of his Adam's apple. Jack cocked his head, reflecting Pitch's quizzical gaze.

"I'm sorry?" Pitch said, shaking his head in confusion.

"You didn't do anything wrong, I'm...absorbing you. That's weird, right?"

"No." Pitch spoke with more confidence in his voice, "You're in a sexually dominant position and this is the way you choose to accept it and-

"What happened to quiet?"

"I'm sorry."
"Stop apologizing." Jack said, his voice on tipping point between monotone and rude. He wasn't angry so much as distracted, he found himself enjoying a simple gaze at Pitch's body.

"Oh, alright. I'm, sorry?"

Jack snorted before pushing the older man so his back hit the bed. Pitch fell without resisting Jack picked up the cup of wine, swirled it around again.

It continued to the point where he was certain he'd spent more then enough time for it to be creepy. He spent the majority of their romantic time trailing fingers over places, giving absent minded, feather light kisses, quiet praises.

"I missed this." Jack said, without thinking. "What am I doing though?"

"Body worship." He sounded strangely disconnected.

"Right..." He scratched Pitch's right nipple with the tip of his nails. Jack yearned to kiss him when he heard a hiss, then a pleased exhale. "Sensitive?"

"Don't remind me."

"Don't like someone touching all your good spots?" Jack teased, "The ones that disarm you?" He pinched Pitch's nipple and felt himself twitch when Pitch let out a rumbling, held back moan. Jack saw it traveling through his throat, up from his lower chest.

He got himself undressed, tossed his clothing in random directions. Pitch, even when he was disarmed, was a master of seduction. Jack was unsure of how much longer he could keep this up. It hurt to be wearing clothes now.

"Wait - Jack, lamp table. Second one down."

"Oh-" He pulled the table with more force than needed, finding lube and condoms. "Thanks for the reminder."

When Jack relaxed, sitting with legs spread, knees on each side of Pitch's lower stomach, he noticed how much taller he'd gotten. When was the last time he took a moment to look over himself, document his own growth?

"I've missed you."

A small glimmer of happiness pecked up in Jack's lower stomach, "I missed you too. So much."

"Let me." Pitch said, lubing up his fingers. A ghost of a grin passed over his lips.

"No, I'm supposed to be in control here."

"Is that what was happening?"

Jack felt Pitch's fingers, ghosting over his entrance. He gasped, the lube wasn't warm and he was losing dominion over the situation. "Yes, that is what was happening."
"Well, what's happening now?"

"...You're taking control back. For now."

"Thank you." Pitch smiled, prodding him with two fingers - not nearly enough. Jack wanted to swipe the grin off his face. He loved Pitch but in times like these he wished that sarcastic asshole behavior had an 'off' button.

There was a harder push, against him. He was too tight for two. Putting the small bottle down next to Pitch, Jack lulled himself to relax. "Just, more okay?"

"Yes, yes your highness."

Jack sneered, "Keep behaving like that, you'll get none of me."

Pitch raised an eyebrow, his grin widened and he pushed with a single finger. "Really? That sounds entertaining."

"Stop it."

Pitch's finger brushed...something and Jack's head fell. His arms were turning to jelly, hard to maintain strength and keep upright. His body felt boneless and weightless. "There."

"You're quite strung up as of late aren't you?" Pitch purred, his mouth too close to Jack's ear for him to be comfortable with. His finger pushed again, massaging his prostate. A warm wave surged through him, not pleasure but a welcoming, thrilling pulse. "Stressed? Maybe, you need a good fuck, hm?"

"Yeah, if only I could find someone to do that for me." He showed Pitch a toothy smirk. "You've gotten out of hand Frost," Pitch laughed, "You need to be reminded, I think, of just how thoroughly I can ruin you." Pitch added a second finger, too soon for Jack's liking.

"Ow. Fuck off."

"I would-" Pitch was cut off when Jack's head dropped and he hissed out a broken curse, "You're entirely too sexy to be left to your own devices."

"Shut up, keep going."

"Gripping to the last of that dominance I see."

Another tendril of heat around his body, this time focusing and crawling up his back. Jack felt torn; he wanted to ride Pitch's fingers but he also didn't want to seem desperate. Jack focused on keeping himself in control as Pitch's fingers drew circles inside him.

"You feel like velvet and lust, Jack. You know that? You're hot, tight and entrancing. Soft, silky, begging to be filled."

"If I ha-ave to tell you to shut up on more time..." Jack didn't look at Pitch. He was biting his lips and looking down, watching the gray hand move up and down. He had to repress an urge to cover his face, he felt so embarrassed. This was the preparation and already he was coming apart at the seams.
"Fine then, dearest." Pitch's hand moved. There was a sound of slippery wetness, looking down Jack could see Pitch's hands. Covered in lube, rubbing his erection down until his fisted palm could run down it, slick and steady. Watching it made something in his stomach burn. "Do tell me if it hurts."

Pitch entered and Jack gasped. Something buried inside him shook and he trembled against Pitch. He felt stretched too thin on all fronts. Stretched physically because Pitch wasn't lacking, in any area, and stretched through his feelings because he split too wide on both fronts. On one hand he wanted to be dominant and commanding but on the other he enjoyed the thought of riding Pitch like a mechanical bull.

Another brush, "God." Jack's head hit the bedspread. At last, he felt the tickle of hair and warmth of skin on the either side of his inner thighs. Pitch was fully seated. Jack felt like he might explode, stretched too thin.

"Need time?"

"Amongst other things."

"Any of those other things include me?"

Jack panted, he was adjusting at least - but Pitch hadn't started moving yet. "What do you think?"

"I think you need a few minutes."

Jack smacked Pitch square in the chest while he regained his composure. He wasn't going to let Pitch say whatever he wanted and get away with it, especially not like this.

"Should I take that as a signal that you're ready?"

Jack noticed, Pitch was wrestling control away from him. Taking initiative, taunting, touching more then usual. Jack gathered himself as best he could and held tight to Pitch's shoulders, to balance himself. "How about, instead of you moving, I move - at my own pace?"

"I would recommend-"

Jack rested his open palm over Pitch's mouth. "Great, thanks, glad you agree." He replaced his hand, lowered himself down and rest his lips against Pitch, gave him a long, passive kiss while he felt himself out. He still felt full but he didn't hurt.

Taking a deep breath, Jack raised himself up. Pitch was slipping out of him, he could feel every inch. He was well lubed but it ached him. The faint goodness of being full, having no more room to spare gave way to painful sparks of being stretched too far. He hissed.

"If you need more time, Jack."

"I'm fine." He was, the pain was manageable. He let himself down again, slowly. Felt more and more of Pitch's cock enter him and stretch him out. A shaky breath left him, from the bottom of his lungs. His limbs were light, airy even, when the ache started to give way. "Oh, yes,"

Beneath him Pitch moved. He shifted his hips forward to go deeper, trying to touch places inside Jack that he didn't know he had. Jack bristled and tapped him on the chest.
“No, don't come up. D-Don't meet me halfway.”

Pitch gave him an incredulous look and thrust up harder, Jack thought he was going to go utterly mad. He gathered the rest of his composure and eased off, canting his hips up enough to see Pitch's cock almost slip out. "Don't you dare. It may be your cock in my ass but I'm fucking you, you understand me?" It took most of his presence of mind but he managed to grit out the dominance needed to get his message across. Pitch blinked then nodded in agreement.

For his good behavior, Jack brought himself down harder then usual. The sensation of Pitch hitting one spot inside of him gave him chills but the sound of their flesh slapping together sounded too indecent for him to forget. He was sure he'd visit it in a dream later.

Pitch inhaled sharply and, at the sound and sensation of it all, Jack felt a strong pull in his lower stomach.

“No,” With a smile Jack snapped his hips down, harder then last time. An intense heat coiled around his waist and he blew hot air. Pitch's eyes rolled before setting back on him, a lust consumed but pensive gaze. His lips were parted, revealing his tongue grazing over his teeth. Jack admired it, examined all the reactions he got from one simple touch.

But domination wasn't his strong suit. He didn't have the restraint, yet, to stop himself from riding. On one hand, ruling over Pitch and controlling what could be felt, what he could stimulate in him with mere movement and denial alone, was exciting. He enjoyed his position of power, the strength it gave him. He liked watching Pitch's reactions knowing he was the cause. On the other, he liked relaxing on his back while Pitch lorded over him. He liked a being on the receiving end of Pitch's good, through fucking.

Jack brought himself down harder then last time. “No, I want to hear you say it.”

“Jack, I-.” Pitch hissed when Jack started getting up again. "You're fucking me."

Jack started again, made his hips flop back down. He was hungry to hear Pitch's voice break, hear another broken, desperate sound. Maybe, if he moved right he could ride Pitch and watch the man melt into nothing while he controlled everything. Pitch, obedient, moaning, panting, begging. That sounded like a nice sight to behold.

Then the faintest tremble in his waist, a coil going loose. Jack didn't have the stamina to keep this up, not at this pace. Beneath him, Pitch shivered as if someone dripped cold water down his spine. Jack trailed his fingers against Pitch's waist to remind him who was controlling the pace, who was dominate. But his rhythm was unmeasured, uncontrolled.

Jack felt something in him slip loose and a hot feeling gripped his toes and part of his tongue, spreading all around his body. He wondered if he should let up, let his arousal cool down and let anticipation make everything better. Pitch made a noise, reminiscent of a squeak, and gripped Jack's hips.

Jack stopped immediately. "No," The few remaining strands of his self control woven into his words. "Let go."

With a grunt Pitch relented, resting his sweat slick hands palms up against the sheets. "Better." Jack leaned forward, his lips hovering over Pitch's. He noticed they were both breaking into a sweat.
"Please." Pitch moaned, his back arcing off the bed like a current ran through him.

Jack huffed, it was hard to keep up everything. There was a tired burn of exertion running through his hips and his breathing felt over worked. He stopped, easing off only to feel Pitch whine.

"Don't tease me."

"And if I do? What will you do?" Jack leaned down, smiling. "After all...I see you...shiver with...anticip-"

"Please." Pitch grumbled, rolling his eyes.

"Pation." Jack said, letting himself down and watching as Pitch's expression changed again from annoyed to needy. Jack let himself move naturally. He brought himself up and pushed against Pitch, purring when he slid back into him.

"Damn."

Jack chuckled as he came back up, "Told you I was better fuck."

"Spare me," Jack cut him off pushing back down. Pitch couldn't catch the moan leaving his throat.

Jack felt the heat in his stomach growing warmer, stretching and spreading through his entire body. He had a desperate, wild urge to stop this dominative play and skip straight to the climax but he wanted more. He wanted to play more. "And that's what I'll do to you whenever you misbehave."

"That," Pitch pushed himself onto his elbows, looking Jack in the eye while the younger man rode him. "is not a good plan if you want me to behave."

Jack laughed then gave him a quick kiss. Pitch's lips felt softer, wetter then normal. "Who said anything about wanting that?"

"Mercy-" Pitch grabbed his hips with bruising, strong force but he didn't force him back down. Jack still controlled the pace and he didn't let up. Pitch's hands on his hips kindled more embers in his stomach, made his body hotter like a spark turned to flame. He wouldn't last, not like this and not at this pace.

Jack beamed at him, doing his best to retain himself. "Comical."

Pitch sighed, blinking longer then he normally would've. "Stop that."

Jack squeezed around him. Pitch grit his teeth, hissing through them. It shocked Jack. He never knew it could be like this, with Pitch looking divine, writhing and moaning like a porn star when he brought himself down onto him.

"I'm-" Jack brought himself down again and this time, he kept up a fast pace. He felt pent up. He needed to ride Pitch to his release. Pitch's fingers pressed into his waist and for a moment Jack thought the man would stop him, until he felt him go deeper then Jack ever knew he wanted. He swore he could feel Pitch in his throat, taste him on his tongue.

"Don't stop." Jack heaved into Pitch's ear, pressing his body against Pitch. He felt the weakened but
healthy muscles of Pitch's body press against his still developing ones. Pitch's sweat was dripping against his on their chests and rubbing against one another. He felt as good as he looked and in the blackened azure gleam of near midnight he looked ravishing, like everything Jack dreamed. "I missed you." He panted, gripping slippery biceps for a lifeline. His body was sweltering in heat, his palms were too slick to hang on anymore.

After one so hard Jack felt it in his teeth, he found himself looking eye to eye with him and not being able to look away. "More, please, please-." He said, then repeated it like a mantra while Pitch adjusted them. Pitch sat up with Jack in his lap and moved. Jack felt as if he was going to fall, unstable, and wrapped his legs around Pitch's waist.

Pitch hit a spot Jack didn't know he had. Orgasm hit him like a wall of heat. All over was warm, shaky and surprised but not unwelcome. He came, screaming Pitch's name while his toes curled and his body coiled up like a spring. Pitch kept his speed up, not stopping for Jack's orgasm. Jack felt torn, he loved how Pitch looked. Broken, sweaty, gasping for breath like the heat in him was going to destroy him. Yet, Jack lost dominance so easily and the pleasure was heating him in places he'd never felt warmth in before. He didn't feel like he could get it back.

Pitch huffed, "Inside?"

Jack nodded, gasping. Pitch sped up, his movements were rougher, they had an edge to them; Jack wasn't being inched to release any more, the ache was coming back. 'Come on, hurry up.' Pitch rolled his hips with a pleased hiss and Jack gaped - it hurt. Then again and he was blinking back tears, body shivering with heightened senses. Once more and he cried out as Pitch came with a relaxed exhale.

"Too long?"

"For starters." Jack said, drained.

He let himself fall to the side. None of his limbs felt response enough to justify complicated movement. A short, angering tussle with the sheets and he was lying on his back, Pitch's limbs intertwined with his own. Jack relaxed his head on Pitch's shoulder, a warm tingly feeling lingering all over him and a strange scent.

"What is that?" He said, sniffing.

Pitch tucked an arm beneath Jack's head. "Cinnamon."

"I remember you smelling like that before..."

"I smell like it all the time."

"Mmm," Jack purred, enjoying the contact. "Why do you smell like cinnamon all the time?"

“Special soap.” Pitch nuzzles his face into the crook of Jack's neck, licking the skin there. Jack runs his fingers down Pitch's chest underneath the sheets. His breathing is slow and deep.

“You got all washed up for me.”

“You say that as if I fuck you like an animal in heat.” Pitch chuckles, licking a wet, heated stripe.
“You don’t?” Jack says, exhaling. “Color me shocked.”

“Christ, Jack, stop being me.”

“Well, someone has to be you. Otherwise we're just screwing like teenagers.”

“Thought we decided on animals in heat.”

“There’s a difference?”

Pitch laughs aloud this time. He loops his arms around Jack's waist. “I love you.”

“I love me too.” Jack says, stealing a kiss from Pitch. “But I love you just as much.”

“As it should be.”

--
Here is an intimate apology; in the form of a 4k word long chapter that I mulled over. I am multiple chapters ahead this time. I love you all and I apologize for my sickness, my schooling and my general laziness that delayed me for so long.

Jack woke from dreamless sleep to sounds of sizzling and a tune of old-time swing. Something jazzy, Ellington maybe. The pungent scent of bacon and sex filled the room.

The space beside him empty and cold. Pitch had gotten up long before he had...yet he wasn’t upset. He'd needed the sleep. That and Pitch's humming, melodious tune meant warm breakfast was waiting for him downstairs.

Gathering his clothing depressed him. At best, he was at three interchangeable outfits he'd been wearing for months. No new additions, despite his new lifestyle that was helping him fill out a little more. Some muscle was beginning to peek out with a little fat dotted here and there.

If the places on his skin that Pitch reddened were a sign, it was all coming in the right places. He didn't look too raggedy at least.

Now, things had changed. He was starting to go out more, becoming more conscious of himself. He needed more variety in his wardrobe.

Asking his parents for new clothes would lead to some drama. William wouldn't take him and, even if he did it'd be awkward as all hell. Katherine held the image of him being twelve like a lifeline and things were...iffy. He didn't want to tax her anymore then he already had. He could ask Pitch but he already felt like he was burdening him too much. Too many emotional events, he'd learned the hard way, could ruin them.

Last night was fantastic, of course. He did something with Pitch that didn't think he'd ever do, until he did. But if he were to lose Pitch in his relationships now, he had nobody to connect with. Losing Pitch was more frightening then Pippa popping out of no where. Where would he go if his parents decided being sober wasn't for them? Where else could he take Mary? Those were just the first few reasons.

"I'd say 'Penny for your thoughts',' said Pitch, leaning against the door frame. "but with a face like that I can't help but feel like I'd be prying."

He'd be right. He asked for help, but having Pitch wandering around in his head now would hurt.

"Bacon, waffles, homemade apple syrup. All for it?"

Or maybe he needed some food in his system.

"I'd love some." responded Jack, feeling more calm then he had in years.
Pitch set up at the table and sat opposite, watching television. Jack wished he could change the channel, to start a ruckus. Pitch was already watching cartoons though, Spongebob included.

A curling ache in his heart reminded him of Mary's absence. He faded out. Allowed his body to relax in the moment, going lax and into auto-pilot. It helped to quell the loneliness.

"I'm getting the impression that you've taken a liking to the quiet I often enjoy."

Jack shrugged, disinterested. There was plenty to fill the empty silence, ranging from explanations to questions, but none of it seemed appropriate.

"So, where shall we start love?"

Jack's lips molded into a thin line and he bit his tongue, turning away.

Pitch paused, then exhaled. "We have to talk, Jack. School. Pippa. Katherine."

Jack let out a pained groan, like a dying animal.

"Yes, I know." sighed Pitch, his deflating shoulders mirroring how Jack felt inside. "She called here, after you fell asleep."

"And what did she say, exactly?" He loved his mother through thick and thin, but his only concern was the threat of police action; whatever she had to say about their relationship was moot, considering her previous decisions.

Pitch hummed, checking under his nails for dirt. "She asked if we were at least using protection, sounded upset."

"Yeah, that happens." said Jack, his voice curt and sharp as he made his excuses and headed for the kitchen, plate in hand.

"Don't leave, we have to talk about it." To no avail, it seemed. "You have to talk to me, Jack."

"I can, I just don't want to do it now." Jack shrugged, playing off the comments. "Can it wait?"

"Until when?"

"Until later."

"You're being ridiculous, Jack."

He loved Pitch as well, but that inquisitive nature was getting on his last damned nerve.

"Later would be?"

"Not now."

"Why not now?"

"Because I'm sore and I'm tired, Pitch."
"...Not enough lube then?" He tried to pass it off with a smile.

Jack feigned a chuckle, doing his best not to snap back. "No, no. I'm tired of feelings, okay? I lost my best friend. I've got no time to spend with Mary. I've got every person in school assaulting me like I'm their whipping boy. " He exhaled, a waft of ache dashing through him. "I'm tired."

"I understand, but you're tired? Physically or-"

His patience ran out and something slipped out, too fast for him to stop. "Take a damn good guess."

"I'm sorry."

"Stop apologizing." spat Jack.

"I don't know about your troubles Jack," said Pitch, his voice a calm anchor for Jack to grip to. "How am I to know what your anger focuses on? Is it me or your situation? You have to tell me for me to know."

"Is I'm fucking tired' not enough of an update for you?"

Pitch blinked, taken back. "I'm sorry-"

"Stop."

"That you feel that way," He continued. "I need to understand so I can help."

"I'm sorry but," Jack made a jabbing movement at the air and shook his head.

Too drained to open up, too empty to refuse. He needed to speak, to give and receive the offer of love and understanding. Years ago, this would be when he would jump on the chance. Now, in a strange twist of fate he didn't feel open to it.

But here Pitch was, giving all he could to heal Jack's pain and hurt. His home, time, food, love and care all for free. All without Jack doing a thing to earn them. Here he was now, refusing it all because he didn't feel like it. "It's hard."

Pitch smiled at him, nodding. "You're talking about it now. That's better."

"I'm exhausted. In every sense of the word." Jack lowers his face, admitting defeat. His hands crossed into a bridge with thumbs pressing at his creasing brows.

"That's...depressing." Pitch scratched the back of his head. "Here I am, bringing you home for a fuck and you're suffering in silence."

"I thought we were both healing from..." A shudder crawls up his spine. Jamie appears in his thoughts, forces more detailed words down. "Everything." Everything was the perfect word wasn't it? More then one brush with death, news cameras, coverage, friends moving away. Things changing, shifting all around him.

It almost made him wish for days long gone. The days when he was unhappy and burdened with work, a drunk father and a depressed mother. At least then he could take comfort in the routine.
Pitch eyeballs him, he can feel it. He wishes he didn't, so that any answer he received would feel genuine. The way Pitch analyzes the question, mulling it over, makes him feel as if he is being lied to. "I've felt perfect as of late, to be honest." The carefree smile on Pitch's face does nothing to assuage the gripping disbelief.

"You almost died." said Jack, glaring a hole into a random spot on the carpet. "You damn near die and you're 'perfect'?" Thinking about it, days earlier hadn't Pitch been joking about his near death? Even on the hospital bed? Had he ever considered the brushes he's had - how lucky he is to be sitting here?

Black eyebrows shoot upwards, scrunch up again and then relaxed. Pitch leaned back and looked up, perplexed before shaking his head. "Nothing."

"What?!"

"I don't feel...frightened of the incident, Jack."

"How could you not? I thought I lost you, I thought things were over and-"

"Jack, me and Death have played chess quite a few times." Pitch's face is a mix of different emotions. A tenuous smile on his lips but concern in his eyes. "I was right next to," And there, Pitch's face twisted. Inner conflict and debate, rearing away from more detailed words. "the car."

Seraphina.

"So, you felt nothing?" asked Jack, hands now running over his face, scrubbing the shock away. Twice now, he almost lost Pitch without realizing.

"Not the second time, nowhere near."

Jack made an inhuman sound of annoyance. With Pitch's sexual history of abusive partners, 'more then twice' shouldn't have surprised him. Yet, Pitch was sitting across from him now, lost between laughing and frowning.

"How many times have you managed to almost die before I even met you?"

Pitch glanced up to ceiling, smiling."Weren't you going to the kitchen?"

"Weren't you interrogating me?"

"Fine," Pitch pouted, rolling his eyes. "Take all the time you need to."

"Thank you." Jack made a beeline for the kitchen, unable to sit near Pitch anymore. He didn't know how to feel for him any more. One second he was on the verge of losing him. The next, he was sitting around joking about it. Soon, he'd switch to trying to help him.

Pitch, as enchanting as he could be, knew how to be a major pain in his ass. Jack took a moment to pace in the kitchen, hoping to walk out some of the excess energy.

He had a level of admiration for Pitch's work. Fixing people by talking to them. A skill he wished he had when his house first started falling apart. He didn't like the prospect of it being used on him.
There were some things in his head he didn't want Pitch to know about, he wanted privacy.

After ten minutes he still didn't feel ready.

Jack gave Pitch some credit, he needed this time more then he thought. Though he returned, in time. His head cooled, his patience extended, curiosity outweighing his fear.

Pitch awaited him, of course, legs crossed and body relaxed on the recliner. An eager note danced in his voice, "Ready to talk?"

Did it matter? He was a young man with deep seated family problems dating a psychiatrist. Wasn't a little search and fix through his mind a long time coming?

Briefly, a line of fear spiked through his heart. Summoning up more bravery then he thought he'd need to, he sat on the couch opposite Pitch. Tried to convince himself that he was alright, in control, braver then he felt. "Yes."

Pitch squinted at him then chuckled,"Feel free to take more time recharging your batteries."

"I feel like I need to." said Jack, unsure of what he should be doing. What was the first step, the first requirement to get the healing going? "But at the same time, I want this conversation to be over."

"Take all the time you need. Remember what I said yesterday."

"You need to tell me these things. You can't keep on bottling your emotions." Jack paraphrased. He understood; bottling didn't do anything, it wasn't healthy. Things needed to be filtered out in some way.

Yet, life managed to get more complicated then he thought possible. His home was a bomb waiting to go off. Abandoning Katherine, because that is what he did, made the timer tick down faster. William managed to become even more threatening. His over compensation for years of abuse coming across as forced, disturbing.

School was hell, no thanks to Pippa. She doubled his troubles and destroyed his creditability, in front of the entire school. Even without approaching her she was managing to be a pain. Worse, Jamie wasn't here to cushion the blow with his fists or put in a good word where needed. The student body chewed him up and spat him out. He had an exhaustion in him that went deeper then the physical.

"I don't condone holding your emotions in. Not in the slightest. Yet, if you need to internalize this for a little while, I understand. I would hate to force you out of the gate before you're ready."

"No, I want this over and done with."

"Don't rush through your emotional healing." Pitch's frown struck a chord in Jack. That was a 'Seraphina' frown, a sign of much deeper damage. "Trust me. I've been there."

As much as Jack's heart went out to him, he still needed to have this discussion. "Sure, and we're the same exact person and we heal just alike. If I nearly get killed tomorrow, I'll be making syrup and holding pseudo interrogations in no time."

"Jack-"
"No, don't Jack me. You wanted this talk, now let's talk. Katherine's phone call. What was that all about? Why didn't you tell me you started getting buddy-buddy?"

"She wasn't all that friendly, the call was more for you. She's worried, Jack."

"About me?"

"I already told you, protection and lube. She implored me to be gentle with you."

"But she called after we had sex."

"Yes, I didn't tell her that much though."

"Because...?"

"She was forward." Pitch's face twisted in disgust. "'No double penetration' was amongst the list of direct embarrassing quotes, straight from Katherine."

"Oh." Despite his rejection of her, she still cared enough to look after him. Enough to call someone and say ridiculous things to make sure he was alright.

"Would you like me to recite the rest?" Pitch flashed a trickster's smile. "Scat was amongst them."

Katherine may be loving but she doesn't grasp the concept of 'self censorship'.

Pushing past his disgust, he exhaled. "Well, I'm glad that's all then."

"Ready to talk now?"

"Sure." He didn't feel ready but he wanted it done with. Like tearing off a wax strip - rush through it. Don't extend the suffering.

"No, you're not." Pitch said, exhaling and rubbing his hands against his legs. "I'm going to go gather a few things, a little house work, etcetera. Call me when you're ready."

Jack let him go. He was right after all, he still wasn't up to talk. He took the time to enjoy the silence.

He admired Pitch's job. Psychology. Thinking about it, Pitch was alien, freakish even, compared to the normal. His job contributed to most of it.

A man with rich parents from a foreign country far away. For all intended purposes he should've been a spoiled brat, all the money he had. But he had, wanted and cared for a child. A child he loved enough to call a six-winged angel.

Then going to a new country to escape a psychopath, only to lose his reason for coming there. Hurting himself, dancing the razors edge with his own life many times. Having a friend save him, help him turn that hurt outwards to help others. Heal other people's hurt by speaking, leading them back normalcy.

"Thinking deeply again I see."

Jack's head snapped up, Pitch stood at one end of the sofa, hands resting on the arm. "Just thinking
of how weird you are."

"Mad at me?"

"No. You're just weird, Pitch." The older man made a face anyway. "That's not a crime or anything
to feel ashamed of. My hair is weird. Life is weird."

Pitch looked at his own hands, turning them over. "Me looking like an alien doesn't help, I guess."

The image of Pitch making a Vulcan salute raised his spirits. He smiled.

Pitch smiled back, taking a seat. "Now, I think, you're ready to talk."

"Christ, Pitch you're so damn impatient." Giggling through the sentence, nothing mean meant behind
it.

"But am I wrong?"

"...No." He relaxed.

"Start when you feel ready."

"Where do I start?"

"Wherever you feel comfortable starting."

He scratched the side of his head, "Well to start, you had me worried sick."

"I heard."

"So you did get my message."

"Yes, I apologize for not calling you back but my phone ran out of minutes."

"And no home phone I'm guessing?"

"Yes, but I wasn't home. I was catching up with...life. Hospitals have a habit of wasting your damn
time." Pitch's eyes rolled back as if he was about to faint.

"Alright." The weight melted off his shoulders. He overreacted. So much time went to waste. He
worried about the most extreme conclusions. It was simple; Pitch couldn't call him. "Thank you."

"It's fine, I'm sorry...and I'm sorry for apologizing so much."

"No, no that time I deserved an apology." said Jack, a breathy laugh leaving him. His chest felt
pressed, it was hard to breathe - like his mouth was full of cotton. "I thought maybe I was
smothering you or maybe you passed or you know..." He doesn't know why but a tiny, nervous
laugh sneaks through his mouth. It was stupid. He felt stupid thinking about it.

Pitch being dead? Sanderson told him he was alive. At the time of leaving the hospital Pitch was fine
- weak but fine. 'Smothering him?' He was sure if he was choking Pitch, he know it. Pitch would tell
him. He was nice but he wasn't a pushover. "Just dumb things. I thought you were sick of me or
"It's because it was an abnormal time for you. Think about it, Jack. I was gone. Not, 'you can dial me up and call me any time', but gone. For days. And your parents finding out about us? Jamie being gone? Your parents stepping up to their role and accepting responsibility?"

The older man ran a warm hand through Jack's jagged winter hair. Jack swallowed, thinking of the last time he brushed or combed his hair. Too long. "It's normal that you would freak out. All your social circles rearranged themselves. Of course you'd worry that I would be amongst the...removals."

Jack couldn't reign himself back in. He ended up sniffing with his head against Pitch's chest. His face felt hot, he wasn't sure whether he was crying or not so he assumed he was. Pitch had taken the initiative and began cuddling him, whispering platitudes in his ear. Warm hands caressed his face and he felt gentle, wet presses to his neck and cheeks.

He shouldn't have; this was why he stopped informing Pitch about his life. So things wouldn't end up like this again; Pitch carrying his own burden plus his. Pitch made it clear that he worried and cared for him. Their pain split and shared between them, disconnected but palpable.

All their history of losing people, relationships, feeling betrayed, was something they shared. Lately though, Pitch did double duty for both of them. Jack couldn't see himself being anything but another burden, dragging Pitch down.

He started to see the beauty of the phrase, 'Nothing's wrong, I'm fine'.

"Please, let me up." He felt trapped, he shouldn't be laying here letting Pitch do everything. "I need to get up."

"Why?" Pitch's voice was the same smooth, steady lifeline it always had been. A strong shudder whipped through Jack again, wracked him. This time Pitch's hands moved to embrace him. He was as gentle and solid as he always was. Like a rock Jack could lean on for love and guidance.

But he didn't want it. Not now. He felt trapped and held in against his will. Pitch was doing everything and he was doing nothing.

Jack gasped for air and Pitch's hands moved. He saw his opportunity and took it, escaping Pitch's arms and dashing upstairs. Out of breath and too caged in. Running into the first room he could hide in, he slammed the door behind himself. He hid under the bathroom sink, against the wooden cabinet, curling into a ball.

"Jack!"

Jack grit his teeth and shoved his hands over his ears. Pitch sounded worried but Jack didn't - couldn't - care. He didn't know what he was feeling, everything felt raw and rubbed too hard. He was sweating, his heartbeat was in his ears pounding like war drums. The bathroom seemed safe.

"Jack, your breathing - calm down."

Pitch was right outside the door now, not coming in.

The room moved in an easy, frightful rhythm, like the center of a beating heart. It caved in, as if the air vacuumed out, tightened around Jack then receded just as fast. Then faster, then faster still. The
room was a warped mixture of pale pink and blood red lines across his vision.

He tried to grab a hold of himself, pull himself up to the sink. His stomach twisted in complaint and he lurch, as if kicked. He dropped back to the floor, unstable. The color was melting off the walls, his palms looked colorless.

Another strong lurch and he puked in his mouth. He grimaced when he forced the burning bile back down.

"Jack, please- I'm coming in."

"No!" Jack said, sheer force of will kept his legs in place as he got up and turned, facing the sink.

Another rolling wave hit his stomach and he hurls. All at once, his strength and his legs gave. The only thing keeping him up is Pitch's arms, pressing him forward.

"Jack, breathe." Jack wasn't sure if he was still alive but he followed the guiding, steady tone.

"There's nothing to be afraid of - you need to calm down."

That's the thing - Jack doesn't feel afraid, not anymore. The walls stopped moving, color is back in the world. He feels exhausted, shaken and powerless. Pitch being the sole thing keeping his world moving.

Again.

"I'm-" He feels his body shaking, breaking down, before he realizes what's happening. "I'm f-"

"Please don't." Pitch says, there's a damning tone in his voice. Jack senses the faintest touch of hate in it. He's ruined it now, Pitch hates him, he made a mess, he's just broken everything-

"I'm sorry." Jack cries, again, shame rising in him like flooding waters. At every turn, it felt as if he was finding more reasons to feel pathetic. Now, Pitch was beginning to see it and this is when he would finally-

"You aren't ready, not by a long shot." Pitch shakes his head. Jack's heart jumps when Pitch picks up him and gave him a little toss. Just enough to replace his hands and carry Jack bridal style out of the bathroom.

"I'm sorry." He doesn't know what he has to be apologizing for. Pitch's annoyed glance forward dams him. Before he woke up this morning Pitch was on cloud nine, wasn't he?

"Jack, you've done nothing."

"But," Jack feels another wave of nausea rising up in him. Pitch's walk stops when he curls more then he should. As usual, the man is waiting for him. Jack sees it without needing to be told; he is now stopping Pitch in a more physical way. He forces his words out, trying to make what he did wrong right. "You're mad at me. I did wrong, I haven't- I can't carry this."

"No, love." Pitch's smile lifts the burdens from his back. Jack feels a sense of normal return. "You're fine now, everything's fine, get some sleep." He feels gravity start to affect him, though lightened. He supposes he's being laid to rest and sighs. Exhaustion grips at the edges of his thoughts when his head hits the pillow.
"I'm sorry," is the last thing he hears before his eyes close and won't open back up. "I am."

The last thing on his mind is a promise to pummel Pitch if he hears another apology.

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When he came to, Pitch was in the other room, rummaging around for whatever reason. Jack curls under the covers, no longer asleep. There's a pang that runs through his limbs every few heartbeats. Serving to remind him how weak he feels, how much gravity weighs. He twists, trying to hide his face in embarrassment from an invisible audience.

"Awake I see," He can see it in the window's midday light. Pitch is standing over the bed now, inspecting him.

"I'm sorry. Don't apologize, because I might hit you. And I'm sorry."

"Alright, well." Pitch rubs his hands together. He seems unfazed by the entire situation. "I'm sure you're sick of hearing this today but when you what to talk about it I'll be here."

"Thank you." Awkward and out of sorts, his hands tremble and he's hypersensitive. The slightest movement would ruin everything. He doesn't want to remember what happened earlier. He embarrassed himself in front of Pitch and caused a bunch of trouble and - ah. "Um, I puked in your sink."

"I realize," Jack hears it, the careful phrasing and choice of tone. Pitch was treating him like a bomb prepared to go off any minute. "I was there."

"I'm sorry," He's obligated to apologize, to show remorse for his actions. He's the one who panicked, it's his job to set things right. "You made that delicious breakfast and I wasted it."

"Don't worry about it. Get your rest, I'll be downstairs."

"I want to talk about it now."

"Last time we were in the mood to talk about it..." Pitch looked around the room to illustrate his point.

Jack pouted, unsure. One moment he was fine. Everything was alright and they were gabbing away about life, people and their relationship. Then in a flash all he felt, all he could recall, was fear. A looming sense that something was going to go wrong between him and Pitch. He needed to run away and hide so Pitch couldn't see him or touch him. He needed space.

"I don't know what, triggered, that." He tries to be as delicate as he can with his words. "How do I know when its time to talk about it - I don't even know what happened."

"You had a panic attack. Either I chose the incorrect tone of phrase or you had a rather negative thought. Doesn't matter what triggered it. All that matters now is if you need to heal, learn what to do when it occurs and how we go about that."

"If I need to heal?"

"You scared yourself to the point of sickness Jack, you're frightened."
"I don't get it." Jack leans against the headboard. He doesn't feel 'frightened'. The only thing he feels is out of sorts. Something is wrong, something he should be able to feel but nothing feels out of place. "I'm fine, I don't feel scared."

"Of course you don't, you have nothing to fear. Or anything to conjure up the same level of fear you felt before." Pitch's hand is a calming weight on his head, warm and still. He doesn't let himself lean into it but he smiles at him. "Don't worry though. Your fears aside, as much as I care for them, whatever it was was likely irrational."

"How do I know if I'm going to get one again or not?"

Pitch's eyes flatten, emotionless. "You don't."

"I don't?" It wasn't an experience he wasn't too eager to repeat. Yet, here Pitch was, telling him that it could well happen. "When?"

The golden switches from analytical to sympathetic. "Any time."

At any time he could go from 0 to 100. Vomiting. The urge to claw out of his own skin if it would fix things, things he had no idea could break. The rush of his own blood in his ears. His heart beat thundering out of control. The room he was in going concave, sucking itself in around him. "Any time?"

He nods.

"How do we stop it?"

"This isn't the type of sickness that's cured with some pills and rest. Though they help."

"So wait, I have to constantly make sure I don't get scared?"

"No Jack, you need to relax a little more, be a little more rational and confident. That's all."

"So yeah, making sure I don't get scared."

He can see it, Pitch feels for him. "For right now, rest. You need to sleep and relax."

Jack lays back without a fight, surrendering to exhaustion. "I have school tomorrow."

"I'll drive you."

"You'll be here?"

Pitch's eyebrows crease inward, betraying the beam on his lips. "Where else would I want to be?"
The early morning was a new, slow slog through old, quick habits. Jack woke without incident and washed up, taking extra care of his mouth. He replaced his vomit stained clothes with new ones, given by Pitch. Taking them without a 'thank you', he gave Pitch a soft smile, hoping it would end his guilt. It didn't.

Nervous of every movement, careful of every moment. Jack walked through the morning on pins and needles. How come his own body felt like a minefield now? Did he need to be careful of everything?

Trying to take back his body as best he could, he dressed himself. A plain, white long sleeved t-shirt with hip hugging black pants. It reminded him of Pitch. Straight forward, simple, charming. Everything in the morning was reminiscent of Pitch. Jack wasn't sure how to feel, once he saw that. This one guy came and turned his life right side up, and now he couldn't stop thinking of him.

Then he remembered he was still in Pitch's house, wearing Pitch's clothes. Of course everything would remind him of Pitch.

He ate his breakfast with small bites. His hands were shaking from the sheer fright he felt.

'That's stupid, stop it.' He cursed himself under his breath. He was beginning to become frightened of fear. But that was the right thing to be afraid of right? The only thing one has to fear is fear itself?

It was a change of pace. For ten years, his parents' domestic chaos were the pinnacle of his powerlessness. When life was spiraling out of what he could call his 'control' he turned inwards. He found his middle ground and mainstay through self-control and self-denial. It was how he got things done.

Waking up early to get Mary to school, not eating to save time. Denial of self was how he kept his world moving.

Now, his body was rebelling with fear and panic. Doing something he couldn't stop, understand or immediately cure. Now he had to be afraid of being afraid.

Pitch's stalwart but silent technique was helping, in a way. Never questioning the fright but answering anything with a small, patient smile.

Jack got faint vibes that Pitch was trying his damnedest to make sure he felt no guilt. The more he thought that, the harder it felt to accept the older man's compassion. In truth, he knew Pitch gave him affection from a place of love and understanding. Yet, the creeping doubt that it was weighing him down made him feel guilty.

The fact that he felt that way made him more guilty.

Then, realizing how he was adding complexity where there shouldn't be made it unbearable.
Hours ago things were so much simpler.

By the time he stepped out on the concrete sidewalk to school, he wasn't sure what to feel.

He dedicated himself to rediscovering the original 'routine' he had. His body was alien to him now and everything followed suit. People were more noticeable now. At times, their presence so palatable that it loomed over him and dogged him down. A weeping willow tree of people to deal with.

Knowing Pippa lurked around the halls, ready to strike at any moment, was frightening. Like the jaws theme played constantly in the background.

He felt disconnected. Absorbing and retaining information from his classes was a waste of effort. The teachers may as well have been speaking in foreign tongues.

After lunch, when the shock of waking up passed, things went easier. He rationalized things better. People would look, recent events made him a person to watch. Pitch wasn't leaving him or weighed down, they both had responsibilities that needed filling. He needed to take more notes in class and diligently study the material. Life wasn't half as complicated as he was making it out to be.

Lunch came, he felt hyper sensitive but pleased. No one attacked him. Aside from the normal gossiping groups everyone was uninterested. Why did people think being a 'nobody' in high school was a bad thing? He ate his lunch in peace and didn't taste a thing of it, too distracted in his own thoughts.

"Had I known you were going to go and open Pandora's box I wouldn't have talked to you."

Nervous energy spiked for a moment, once more, until he realized who it was. "Don't sneak up on me while I'm eating."

Monty took the seat next to him, empty handed and sighing. His face framed with dark shadows, betraying his youth. Beneath the based the blonde wore a thin sheen of sweat. "Pippa's been delightful as of late."

A faint echo sounded inside of him at hearing her name. It brought back a feeling of uniformity along with an uncomfortable ease. Was he growing used to trouble, used to drama, but unused to the normal day to day?

Regardless, Pippa was a pestering fly he needed to deal with. "Isn't she always?" he responded, not meaning to sound as disconnected as he did.

Monty glazed over him with raised eyebrows, hands bridged in front of him on the table. "I'm not gonna sugar coat it. She's doing crazy shit Jack. She's literally lying, cheating and stealing to get her way. Doesn't care who she fucks over in the process."

"I'm sorry, who do you think we're talking about again?"

"Pippa is Pippa, but Pippa isn't like this."

Jack turned to Monty,"Apparently she is."

"Jack, whatever you did you need to fix."

"You think Pippa's following my orders or something now?"

"She only started this after she came back from talking to you."
"Where'd you hear that?"

"Her words." Monty said, cocking his head.

Jack smiles,"You seem so ready to believe everything she says. You know, despite her propensity for this whole...'lying, cheating and stealing' thing."

"Are you saying she didn't go to your house?"

"I'm saying she's a liar."

"You're being defensive."

"How so?"

"You're not engaging the question."

"The question being?"

"What did you do to Pippa?" Monty said, sharp on every syllable.

"I'm not Pippa's retainer. She doesn't answer to me. Don't make me responsible for anything she does."

"I'm not saying your responsible for what she did but she's not in the best frame of mind."

"Is she usually in the best frame of mind?"

"Besides the point. She's taking it out on whoever says two words to her."

"And what'd she do to you?"

"Besides the point-"

"Now who's being defensive?"

Monty grabbed Jack by the collar, pulling him just shy of too-intimate contact. "Look, Jackass. I know you think that you can skate by playing coy and that's cute and all. But, the actions you take have these cute little things called consequences attached. You don't go around fucking with a person like Pippa and expect her to not retaliate."

"You assume I care about her retaliation."

"You don't care because she hasn't come for your ass."

"No." Jack sneered, grabbing Monty's hand. "I don't care because I know the difference between someone doing lasting damage and a kid throwing a temper tantrum. Now if you don't mind?" He squeezed Monty's hand and grinned when the blonde released him. "Thank you."

"So you don't give a shit about all the people she's fucked with because of what you did?"

Jack exhaled through his nose and rested his head on the palm of his hand. "If this conversation is going to go where you start blaming me for her shit, let's end it here."

"Look, I'm sorry. I'm just trying to figure out what happened." Monty swallowed, Jack could see the tiny glimmer of tears in his eyes. "She's ruining a-lot of people's stuff. Like a-lot."
A damning sense of guilt peeked through and he conceded to it, both curious and upset. "Alright. I know you man, you're a fucking turtle when it comes to emotional strength. I've always been a little jealous of that."

It was true, despite Monty being the biggest wimp to ever exist in grade school. He only remembers seeing Monty cry once: when Jamie got hurt.

"So, I'll tell you what. Since this is breaking you up so bad and I feel for you, tell me what she fucked up and we'll trade stories."

Monty brightened, less downcast then before. "To start, she posted Jamie's diary on the internet and his school suspended him."

"What?" Jack yelled, "How the fuck is that even fair?"

"He said he wanted to have sex with you in his diary. He's eighteen, you're seventeen - that's intent to commit sexual assault where he lives now." Monty explained. "Thankfully, it was over two years old and written while he was living with his father. They ended up reversing the decision based on that."

"...Bitch." He hissed.

"Yeah."

Jack rubbed his forehead, temple aching. This made everything between her and him seem so juvenile by comparison. It was no wonder Monty was at wit's end with her. "She came to my boyfriend's house and tried to insult us and get us to break up. We played along, ended up insulting her."

"...You're kidding." Monty said, slumping.

"She's a psychopath."

"Dude, have you see half the shit she's done? She's trying to start some internet crusade. Telling people that if the school doesn't suspend him again they're letting a rapist in."

Jack took pause at that. "Has she fucked with anyone else to that level?"

"Honestly? No."

Jack slammed his hand onto the table, enraged once he saw the connection. "Then she's still taking swings at me."

"What?"

"Jamie and I had something. It wasn't much and it didn't get far but we had something. She's doing this to Jamie knowing she can't fuck with me directly."

First, he thought she was being petty for the sake of being petty. Yet, here she was again sowing trouble and discord. This time though, it was through another person that he couldn't readily help. It was as if Pippa lacked a soul, almost. He couldn't see her as understanding any sense of humility, empathy or moral understanding.

As awful as it was, knowing that her target was Jamie made her end game pretty goddamn clear. Monty's eyebrows raised, then knit closer before raising again. "That, actually does make sense."
"This isn't even bullying anymore. This is her being an outright nutcase. When I find her-" Jack got up, scanning the cafeteria from his spot before Monty pulled him.

"Don't give her the satisfaction, not in school anyway."

"And you want me to just let her run wild, I'm assuming?"

"No, you just explained why. She's desperate Jack."

"She's ruining Pippa's lives, using the people around her as weapons-"

"Pippa's popularity is taking a major hit every time she does shit like this. She can't keep getting away with it. Jack, you might not know this but Pippa and the old crew went our separate ways a while ago."

Jack grinned, ear to ear, "So karma is a bitch then."

"Precisely. As long as nothing crazy happens on Jamie's side we can sit back and watch the fireworks."

"Any sparks then?"

Monty chuckled, "Well...the tales I could tell you."

**

Routine had returned by his last class. In retrospection, he looked and felt better in then he had in a long while. The entire day had passed without any attacks against him, minus Monty's grab. His grades were back up, even the questions in his book seem easier.

Pippa's time, it appeared, had passed.

When the bell rings, Jack strides from the school, pack flung over his shoulder. His step becomes a saunter when he passes by Pippa. She gazes up at him then quickly continues talking to a familiar blonde girl.

Pitch is leaning against the door of a gleaming black car, dressed to the nines. Black jacket, white tee, black jeans, expensive looking black thick heeled shoes. "Well, good day Frost?"

"Surprisingly so." He grins. "I thought coming back would be harder."

"Everyone does." Pitch opens the passenger door for him. Jack wonders if this is how a princess feels, Pitch being his knight in black armor and all. "Should've seen me when I went back for my master's degree."

"You got a master's?"

"You thought I was lying? I told your parents I was studying for a Ph.D."

Jack can't hide his smile, thinking far back makes him happy. Gives his mind a place to wander to. He remembers that tense family dinner, how enraged William was. "Has Katherine called again?"

"No, thank heavens." said Pitch. Then he looked back in the overhead mirror, "Thinking of heading home?"

"I don't know, I haven't wanted to go back home in a little while."
"Do you think you could feel comfortable going back now?"

Jack spends a moment staring at the school grounds, mulling over the suggestion. Katherine and he hadn't exactly ended things on forgivable terms. "Can we give it one more day?"

"One more it is then."

"Thank you."

"Thank you, Jack."

"How was your day?"

"Exemplary. Sanderson and I talked to a friend, doing that 'social life' thing that we both know I love."

"Good conversation?"

"Yes, right up until a baseball flew into the conversation. Hit Sanderson square in the crouch. Then it became a great conversation. Especially once Sanderson stopped cursing and started explaining the situation."

"Ah, stop at the cafe."

"Will do.", chuckled Pitch ",He just went on and on about how we were on the third floor of the building and 'who the fuck threw that? Jackie Mitchell?'."

"Nice, someone got words out of Sanderson. You give him an award?"

"Does a standing ovation count?" Jack beamed at Pitch's smiling face in the mirror. "What are we heading in there for?"

"I'm getting a job application."

"No internship?"

"Why would I need an internship to work at the cafe?"

"I meant, couldn't you just get an internship working with Sanderson?"

Jack exhaled, why didn't he think of that before? "."...That's actually a good idea, never mind about the cafe. That would be a perfect start. It'd be close by, he would always be near people who could help him if his attacks came again. He would be near Pitch, but that wasn't the best part....arguably.

"We continue onwards."

"Thank you, GPS."

"Ugh, you are having a good day."

"To your determent, as usual."

Pitch laughed, again. "But never unwelcome."
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next day passed without incident. With a new week ahead came new rumors, new targets. People who couldn't keep Jack's name out of their mouths last week moved on to other people with more salacious and provocative stories to tell. After that, no one assaulted or harassed him. Even his most frequent tormentors had moved on. All students, including Pippa, had bigger fish to fry.

Thankful to have only his own business to mind, he got down to work. It didn't last long. Skimming through his school book, not only bored him to tears but forced abandonment of attention. Not due to difficulty but even speed reading through the chapter, mustering the focus or interest to invest brain power into it was impossible. His head was clouded, full of the same repeating moments from earlier that morning.

The panic attack promised of a slew of life changes. But he didn't expect things to change as fast and without warning as they did. Difficult to tell at first, but retrospection showed Pitch's behavior shifted.

Pitch's attention hadn't shifted. He still found ways to disarm and delight Jack. At first the morning passed with all the glorious and intimate honeymoon phase affection Jack came to expect. Sweet nothings whispered into his ear when they passed each other in the hallways. Sexual subtext hidden in every other sentence, thanks in part to a shared inability to keep it in their pants. The day easing into a heady ease with the promise of something even more fulfilling.

They reached his school, Jack clenching his thighs to stave off an erection from Pitch's descriptive imaging of many lewd, forbidden ways to take him apart. First with wet, heated kisses and the occasional sweet nothing whispered into his ear. A gentle coaxing grind elevating to a rough, hard fuck leaving him breathless, wanting then slowing down again to tease. Jack left hoping he wasn't sporting a problem.

When Jack turned, intending to hug Pitch farewell. The man declined with a simple 'no' and, with no explanation, drove off.

Playing it safe was the best explanation. Neither of them knew the precise cause of his panic attacks but the best way to fully avoid them would be to not invoke the same circumstances. Pitch wasn't pulling away, he was playing it safe. But understanding didn't make him feel any less dejected and it didn't hinder the growing pool of fear and guilt in his stomach.

At the same time, if this was how Pitch was going to help him get better, he'd rather be sick.

Lunch didn't help. Looking at the food reminded him of vomiting in Pitch's sink. He let himself go hungry out of sheer embarrassment.

Wordless and without warning, Monty slid into the seat next to him and spoke. Jack was taken aback, they hadn't exactly left off on the best of terms last time. In fact, Monty never spoke or glanced in his direction. Yet, here the bespectacled blonde was, mouth running miles a minute, rumor milling and chewing the fat. When Jack saw there was nothing of value in it, he entered auto pilot and pretended to listen. When lunch ended he was running back to his classes with new appreciation.
At least the teachers could shut up.

When boredom was lulling him to sleep, the bell rang. Jack hit the curb in record time. Like clock
work, Pitch was waiting for him. This time, he was sitting inside the car, wearing a dissatisfied
scowl. The urge to beg for answers about the early morning was racking him. On the other hand, one
morning was his limit? If he couldn't go a few hours without intimate contact, there were worse
problems he had to deal with the Pitch being distant.

Ignoring his own empty stomach, he smiled. "Good afternoon."

Pitch flashed him a half-assed smile. "Same to you."

"How was your day?" Jack said, getting into the car on his own.

"Not good, have to say." He stated.

Jack did his best to not seem too obvious. "Did I do something?"

Pitch shrugged him off, started driving. "No, difficulties with a client."

"Oh." Jack muttered. He strapped himself in and rested his hands in his lap. Was he the client? Had
the panic attack affected them so bad Pitch had begun distancing himself from him to this degree? He
chuckled bitterly and shook his head because no, couldn't be. This was him looking for any
explanation. Most didn't make sense. Pitch wasn't mad at him, he was distressed about something.

What was Pitch struggling with and why wouldn't he be open about it?

"Don't worry about it." Pitch said, on cue to exaggerate his worries even further.

Jack's eyebrows furrowed because what else was he going to do?

'Don't worry'.

The contrast between Pitch's behavior before and after the panic attack made it difficult. Yelling,
begging for answers and choosing to do nothing would get him nowhere. What else was there
besides discussing it?

"Listen, Pitch, you know I'm here for you right?"

"I already told you, don't worry about it."

"How can I not worry about it?"

"Because it does not matter to you. As it shouldn't."

"And why should it 'not matter' to me?"

"Because it doesn't involve you."

"It doesn't?" Jack hissed, mildly offended.

The car swerved before he could adjust his body and ended up leaning against the car door, heart
pounding in his ears. He peered up to see Pitch, cringed when he realized he misspoke.

Pitch's eyebrows pulled downward and mouth agape in disgust as the rest of his body rested against the steering wheel. Jack pinned and out of words, turned away. Moments passed, turned into minutes and Jack couldn't help but feel he'd fucked up beyond what he could fix.

Pitch made a guttural sound with the back of his throat, twitching away from him. He could see his mouth tightened with revulsion. Curl up and disappearing would be a blessing now, knowing he did something to garner such a reaction. Ashamed, he hushed and avoided looking Pitch in the eye. The rest of the ride passed in relative silence.

When they got home, Jack gathered the bravery to try and engage Pitch again. Not even knowing what was wrong, he tried again. This time, meeker, softer careful not to say anything pressing while he shifted his weight from foot to foot. "Pitch, listen." Jack asked, arms roped around his back and standing on pins and needles.

Pitch turned, keys in hand and gave him a glare.

"I don't know why you're mad so if you could just sort of tell me, I'd appreciate it." Jack swallowed.

Pitch's expression softened, melted. "I apologize."

"It's okay, I mean you carry a lot of weight, clearly." Jack mumbled, interlacing his fingers. "I just don't want for you to be upset with me and not tell me because that hurts. I'm here for a reason, you know?"

Pitch nodded and opened the door, letting Jack inside first. Then let himself in and discarded his coat with a lazed hurl. Jack tried to reach out and give Pitch and reassuring touch but the older man was storming up the steps before he could gather his bearings.

Jack burned inside, wanting to make amends but unwilling to tax Pitch anymore. He kept to his own, watching television as quietly as he could. Pitch was unpredictable today. One moment upset, passive aggressive and unwieldy. The other, dare Jack say, happy if not outright delighted to merely be in Jack's presence. Then back to anger again with twice the intensity.

Times like this made Jack wish life was more like a television crime drama. A predictable step by step formula with the occasional twist.

The clock struck four by the time Pitch got downstairs. Jack rose from the couch, unsure. Pitch's expression gave no hints at what he was feeling. Strange, considering how Pitch wore his heart on his sleeve when it came to their fights.

Pitch whizzed around the house for another half hour. Either cleaning or wasting time. Jack watched, quiet and unwilling to stir the pot.

Pitch came downstairs again, this time in a new long, black cloak. Unsurprising. If Pitch wore anything other then black, gray, white and the occasional navy dark he hadn't seen it.

"Coat." Pitch pointed.

Jack summoned up what little remained of his patience. "Can't you at least take a few minutes to talk with me?"
"We're taking you home."

"Pitch, please."

Pitch smacked his lips and reclined on the nearest chair.

"I feel," Jack started. "as if maybe I've hurt you and if so I want you to know I didn't mean it and I'm sorry. I'm sorry and I'm stupid and I don't want it to happen again. I just can't fix anything if I don't know what's wrong, you know?"

Pitch's shoulders drooped. "Look, I know you and I have our respective issues. I'm not kicking you out. This isn't me being malicious, alright? Yesterday, you asked me to take you home because you missed your parents."

"I realize."

Pitch's eyebrows bent, lips curled. Disgusted, if not outright hateful. A pit of guilt opened in Jack's lower stomach. No matter how much he knew Pitch wasn't angry at him, there'd always be a crippling doubt of blame lying with him. Knowing somehow Pitch suffering because he wasn't good enough, carried too much baggage, was too high maintenance.

"I apologize if I seem crude to you." He flicked the sofa creases and kept his hands busy. "You can come back later, stay here, do whatever you want. I, frankly, don't care." He shrugged.

Jack continued. "You could relax, you know. Worse come down to worse I call the cops and they handle William."

"And while they head there you get the shit kicked out of you, again." He growled through gritted teeth.

Jack gave him a tight smile, unsure of whether to smile or cry at Pitch's reaction. "This isn't about me, is it? This is about William and Katherine. That's why you fight me so much, isn't it Pitch? You want me to either hurry up so you don't have to think about it or decide to stay here, so we can kiss and make up."

Pitch inhaled, sharp and deep before exhaling through his nose. He rubbed his hands together and began with a stunted breath. "I admit. I have my reservations about them, yes. But, you have to realize that this isn't me thinking." He frowned, spreading his hands across his chest, near his heart. "It isn't a planned reaction. I don't somehow think fighting with you will keep you here or hold you back from heading home, I just don't want you there. And I know, I know, I know - god."

Pitch squeezed his temple and breathed in deep again, going silent for a few moments. Then he heaved, eyes turning teary, face blooming red as his voice cracked. "I know you want to believe the best in them but I can't Jack. I just can't and I've tried so hard. Over and over and over again to think better of them. I hold out all the hope I can, I do." Pitch voice broke and he went quiet.

A sad stillness washed over his face and he leaned back in the chair, not crying but, in a way, lying lax in surrender. He spoke clear and calm in an unsteady voice. "I want your parents to be better people Jack. I want you to have a home aside from mine. Not that you are unwelcome, mind you, but because you deserve that. But you've got to understand that I've seen too much. Too many relapses back into the same, horrible behavior. I've gotten my hopes up for so many people so many
times that it hurts Jack. It hurts."

Putting two and two together, Pitch having 'difficulties with a client' meant a relapse had happened to someone else. With whom, he wasn't sure but Pitch was suffering because of it and now he wasn't able to see a bright resolution because of it. Jack yearned to wrap his arms around Pitch, to reinforce and assure him he - and his client - would be in a better and more stable place soon.

Yet, how could he? It hurt to admit but Pitch was completely right. There was no guarantee of permanence with William or Katherine; going home now to find them pummeling one another into paste wouldn't be a surprise. Pitch was a trained professional in his field for a reason. His personal fears and connections certainly biased him but this wasn't his first time in this situation.

Jack rounded the table and took Pitch's shoulder in a strong grip. Pitch embraced Jack's hand with his own and lowered his head. "I'm sorry."

"It's...not okay, but I forgive you." Jack sat next to him and rubbed circles into his shoulder.

Jack gave Pitch a massage while he considered what tomorrow would bring. Jack ran his thin, deft fingers over the hidden hardness of Pitch's shoulders, thinking of how to fix this mess and make Pitch more comfortable.

"Thank you."

Jack kissed Pitch's leftmost temple, hoping to relax him. Impossible, but the thought counted for something. "I think we have work to do. Like, shit tons. Between you, me, mom and Will."

"Yippie, more work." Pitch droned, empty of emotional energy.

Jack smiled fractiously and shook his head.

"But isn't it just like me to break down over the littlest things?" Pitch groaned.

Jack bristled and hissed, offended. "Shut up. You're strong as all hell - I can't even be bothered with my class mates but every day you go into work to help put people's minds back on track."

Pitch hummed, leaned his head against Jack's body and breathed in a slow, gentle rhythm. His head was a nice, insistent weight that forced Jack away from his own worries and onto someone else's. Spending a few quiet moments relaxing on the couch helped things clear up. This morning he focused on himself and wasn't aware of Pitch's insecurities.

"We need to talk about your work more." Jack thought aloud. "It would help." Hearing Pitch talk about work, no matter how depressing, could pull him out of the pitfall of worrying about everything else in the universe.

"The internship should help out with that."

"Yeah. It's about time Sanderson was useful for something beyond punching you in the stomach."

Pitch smiled. "Let me take you home now, since we've finished all this drama."

Jack mulled over the idea and sighed. "I'm not sure about you but I could do with resting another twenty minutes or so."
"Even better."

Chapter End Notes

To give you a short explanation; I - an asocial introvert who doesn't like people - just got my first job as a cashier. I had a bit of an emotional overload recently, decided that now might be a good time to get back to my passion. Writing and creating. I apologize for abandoning this story in the first place, but I needed the break to stoke whatever fire I still had in me.

Thank you for understanding.
Pitch's want for him to have a safe place to come home to was understandable. They had a relationship that couldn't come to fruition until Jack was eighteen and capable of taking custody of Mary. Him having a lack of worries about his physical well being would be a very nice, if standard, thing to have.

William and Katherine had other plans.

Katherine was playing house at this point. Fooling herself into thinking she could effectively play the father knows best role of an always upbeat suburban mother. The doctored smile she had when she welcomed Pitch in for dinner brought bile to Jack's throat - how long could she keep this up, exactly?

Pitch declined, possibly sensing the same sense of wariness that Jack did, noting his 'busy schedule' for the rest of the night. Jack's worries were increased tenfold when Katherine visibly twitched, as if personally slighted. Then she disappeared, without saying a word. Jack wondered if she realized how un-cut out for this she was, if she was getting angry when people dared to say 'no' to her stepford wife act.

She reappeared from the hallway leading to their room with William, presumably sober, in tow. Then, Pitch was more then happy to stay and all but begged to be here. The rest of his busy night now suddenly free. Katherine knew Pitch hated William and Pitch wouldn't let an opportunity to irritate William pass by him. Well played on Katherine's part.

William wasn't briefed on the plan though, judging by how his teeth grit together as he 'welcomed' Pitch into the living room and sat besides him, staring a hole into the side of his head. Pitch paid him no mind, only serving to make William angrier. Jack watched, not wanting to rise from his own seat next to Pitch but also wanting some popcorn for the future show.

Mary bounced into the living room and jumped into the tiny gap between William and Pitch. "Hi~, Mr. Pitch!" She hugged his side and Pitch, delightfully surprised, hugged her back.

"Well, it's been quite a long time since I've seen you dear! How've you been as of late?"

"It's all been good." Mary explained, grinning ear to ear. "Me and my friends are doing a special school project. We're gonna help make a big paper mache pumpkin."

"Sounds exciting, but isn't it a bit early to be making giant decorations?"

"Today's the twentieth I think? We don't start the festival for another three days."

"I don't suppose it's going on top of a giant headless horseman?"

Mary gasped, now visibly upset. "No, but that would've been so much cooler! I should have told Sandra - it's too late now, isn't it?"

"It's only the sixth."

"But it's part of this big school festival, a giant headless horseman seems...kinda big?"
"I don't know." Pitch said with an interested grin. "What do you think William?"

Jack should grab Mary and move her out of the way - she's the only thing stopping this from turning physical. William is utterly boiling, fuming out of the ears. Pitch is, within this short span of time, not just proving that he can actually interact with Mary on a deeper scale then he can, but that the young child trusts and respects him.

"A big school festival?" William said, only now jumping into the conversation. "It's the first time I've heard about it."

"No, I told you two days ago, remember Daddy?"

"Yes, don't you remember Daddy?" Pitch repeated, as innocent and charming as possible. Good god, where was that popcorn right now? He'd never seen William go so red in the face without alcohol or screaming, it was brilliant.

"I don't remember you ever telling me -"

"Well, you'd remember better if you actually paid attention." She claimed, crossing her arms and acting far too mature for her age. William stared at her, mouth agape in shock from the sheer amount of attitude and sass that reeked from Mary. Jack reached for his phone, the police needed to know that he'd just witnessed a murder.

Katherine walked by, putting plates on the table, her smile tense as all hell. Like her face was held together by a wing, a prayer and some poorly made paper mache. Everyone ate their dinners quick and hunched over, as if the food might get snatched from their mouths if they did different. The token exception was Mary who rattled on about the event and how good of an idea a 'headless horseman' would be.

Pitch listened, smiling and asking more questions about her recent life at school and with friends. William never ran out of steam, simmering on the other side of the room, occasionally butting into the conversation and then burning up more when Mary sharply reminded him how little he knew.

The night wound down, William failed to keep his composure and sent Mary to her room with a sharper tone then what would be acceptable and received a strong glare from all three other people in the room. Then he chased her down and publicly apologized and received forgiveness, though more as an afterthought then anything.

Pitch placed a gentle kiss to Jack's temple and ran his hands down Jack's sides. Jack wanted to return the favor, but William and Katherine's onlooking was a bit more of an audience then he felt comfortable with. Not that he was unwilling to fuck Pitch right in front of them, but that was going a little far.

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Running late through the school doors, Jack sprinted to his second class of the day because the alarm clock on his phone didn't bother to work. When he got there he was treated with all his classmates staring at him like a madman. Didn't help that he looked like hell, since he threw on the first clothes he could find.

His teacher smiled at him. "Bad day?"

Bad life, honestly. Jack gave her a smile, played the 'No, I'm fine' card and took a seat. He went through all of his classes until lunch in a heavy, methodical daze where he both paid attention and didn't. He answered questions, nodded and spoke correctly when called on but otherwise spent the
day dreaming of heading back home with Pitch, with no drama and problems to speak of.

Lunch rolled around and Jack spent it sitting alone, with no Monty in sight to fill his ears with endless bullshit. He took a moment to be thankful, then, as if on cue, she appeared.

Her sharp grin and the full posse behind her were brimming with mischief as they marched towards him. Their level of self importance came close to disguising itself as some form of over confident stride. Evidenced by how quickly they moved aside and how many people's conversations ended in their tracks, everyone in the lunch room knew Pippa was there to make trouble.

Jack prepared himself to be smothered by smug and wore his best expectant grin. By the time she made her way to him, everyone was watching to see what would unfold.

"Here you are." She said, sounding like a delightful parody of herself. "I was looking all over for you."

Bullshit. "Really?" He smiled back, as delighted to see her as she was. "You couldn't be bothered to wait for me to come to you?"

Pippa scoffed. "You and I both know you can't be bothered to take action until its too late. Isn't that your modus operandi?" Then her face split again in an open grin.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I just thought you were too busy with your little internet crusade to do much besides sit around and complain."

"Sweetheart," She purred. "Unlike you I'm always on top of things that need my attention."

"Darling," He mimicked. "Unlike you I don't need to be the center of anyone's attention."

"Really? Is that why you splay yourself all over that older boyfriend of yours? And still haven't bothered to call Jamie, haven't given him any closure?"

Jack slammed his hands on the table and got up, shaking his head. "How fucking dare you pretend like you actually give a shit about Jamie? And what fucking business is it of yours who I'm fucking? You and I both know you didn't do a damn thing while Jamie was 'suffering' - it was only after it became a big issue that you bothered to do anything and even then, even fucking then, all you did was ride my ass on it, just like you're doing now."

Pippa eased from smug to shocked, her eyebrows raised and arms crossing. It was feigned, in her gaped mouth there was a grin; this was the exact reaction she wanted. Jack wanted to wring her neck because, if anything, she was more to blame and wasn't she in the middle of making Jamie's life even more of a living hell as is?

"You can stand there and talk all the shit you want, what with your lack of having anything else to do besides worm your way into everyone else's lives, but I'm done." Jack gave her a dismissive wave and, not bothering to acknowledge her further, stormed out of the lunch room.

Who the fuck did Pippa think she was kidding with that whole act? She wasn't some holy pariah who was doing everything in her power to somehow save Jamie, she was on the internet spreading lies about him, harming him and yet she had the fucking nerve to stand there and say that, to him.

Walking towards his locker, for no reason other then it was the first place he could think to go, he saw a few students staggering behind for lunch. The heat in his hands and his head screamed that he couldn't be around anyone right now so he took a random turn and headed down an unfamiliar hallway to cool off.
Turning the corner, silently screaming as if it would help his situation, he tripped and fell over a yellow container full of cleaning tools; brooms, gloves and an empty bottle of bleach, amongst other things. Sniffling away the acrid scent, he coughed and tried to make sense of where he was only to be reminded that this was overwhelmingly familiar. Then the hallway seemed to stretch on for miles and nothing made sense anymore.

The heavy, familiar scent of bleach, scraping and squeezing his throat tight until the effort hurt. Breathing harder made it worse, then everything tilted to his side and he collapsed, tumbling to the floor with a loud scream. He was getting clumsy and dizzy and, ha, he was having another panic attack right here in school. How graceful. He crawled towards the nearest door, more to hide if anything else. Pippa would make his life an even bigger hell if she saw him acting so pathetic.

By the time his rapidly failing arms dragging him into the unused bathroom, Jack had calmed down - mostly. His body still felt wrung out and his breath hadn't caught up with him, heart still banging in his ears. He supported himself against a nearby white sink, the bleach stinging his insides and flooding his nostrils. He examined himself in the mirror - he was a wreck. Eyes bloodshot, face drained of all emotion if not life, even his hair looked damp and lifeless.

No wonder, really, why Pitch was distancing himself if he walked around like this.

Somewhere along the lines he stopped bothering with his hands and support himself on his elbows while he washed his hands free of bleach - only to cry into them once he realized how much a wreck he was. His body was falling to shambles, his relationship with Pitch was nonexistent at this point and when in the hell was the last time he sat down and actually spent time with Mary? Half the things he scorned William for not knowing, he wasn't too well versed in himself.

The world span around him, tilted then pulsed inwards with a gelatinous quiver that left him queasy. The walls were caving in and the air was escaping, exaggerating the burning at the back of his throat. He was thankful that he had already hit the floor by the time the shock hit him and his vision was blurred through tears he couldn't push back.

He gasped, gripping the bottom edge of the sink when a dry heat rose in his throat. Two hands pulled him up by the collar and led him to be the sink.

"Hey, hey. I'm here, for what its worth. Just relax okay? Focus on breathing for me, can you do that?"

Jack heaved, his body hanging over the sink held only by two hands because his arms became noodles. Jack spasmed again, throat aching with effort and struggle. The nauseous waves kept going, despite how little Jack ate that morning. When he finally had a moment to breath, his mouth tasted vaguely of cheap chocolate and waffles. A creamy hand came up and wiped away the sweat on his forehead. Cream, not gray meaning not Pitch, thank heavens.

"That's good," The shifting in the walls made it difficult to focus but he could hear the notably proud smile. "You're breathing again. Keep doing that."

He would have to tell Pitch wouldn't he? Not telling him wasn't an option but how would he react? The thought of Pitch somehow finding a way to be even more distant because of this made his head hurt. Spitting out what bile remained in his mouth, Jack mumbled a thank you because this was the closest he felt to Pitch in so long, it didn't feel like they really connected anymore and this person was the best he could get.

His throat convulsed again, this time he shivered through his retching as he came back around to tears. If he lied, Pitch might get mad and leave him and Mary behind and they would have to deal
with William and Katherine all alone, all over again.

The retching turned dry and painful, a rough tug against an already stretched organ. Didn't seem like his stomach had anything left to give. A shame, really. He and the sink were becoming such close friends. One hand let go, the other soothed down his spine and followed the rise and fall of his back.

Unassisted and exhausted, Jack lowered himself to the floor, happy to have some semblance of understanding about physics again. The tiles acting as a cold pack against his sweating skin was a nice bonus. Whether because he either gave up, allowed it or merely forgot he lost track of time and laid on the floor, boneless and peaceful, his caretaker nowhere to be seen. He didn't want to go and face the world again, not after that. Not so he could get up and have the world remind him how awful he was.

Then the school alarm went off and woke him up. He'd missed three hours of classes, because he was too busy being upset for himself because a girl said two words to him. Jack groaned, his body was stiff and rung out, walking out hurt but he managed. Everyone saw the fight in the lunch room, yet no one came looking for him or even spoke to him as he staggered his way to his locker, collected his shit and left. Because of course not. Why would they be interested in Jack Frost without drama attached?

Leaving the school, the gleam coming off Pitch's car all but blinded him. Half dazed, he shambled his way towards the car and collapsed in the back seat. The disapproving click of Pitch's tongue was, disturbingly enough, the most calming sound he'd heard all day.

"Pippa?"

Jack felt a tiny uplifting in his heart at Pitch's straightforwardness. "Oh yeah." He used his backpack as a pillow, did his best to relax because with the beginnings of a migraine storming behind his eyes sleep currently wasn't an option.

"Is today a lost cause or would getting some ibuprofen, fluffy blankets and hot chocolate make things a tiny bit better?" Pitch said, turning onto the main street.

Jack hummed. "The former is true but the latter is a damn good option right now."

"Thank god," Pitch huffed. "That was my plan when I got home today."

"You too?"

"We can compare horror stories when we get home."

"If its no big thing, somethings been bothering me."

"Yes, the sun is out today and its ruining my 'sophisticated, snobby wealthy goth' aesthetic. My car is shiny now. I look like I'm here to carry away a princess."

Jack copied him, laughing. "Are you not? I mean, look at me."

Pitch smiled to him in the mirror but it didn't seem to hit his eyes correctly and Jack understood; Whatever was bothering him could wait until later, when Pitch was more emotionally prepared to handle it. Whatever client or issue he had for their talk yesterday was weighing on his mind.

Jack smiled wider and teased Pitch on the way back home, hoping it would ease his worries.
I'm sorry, I really am. I've been going through a bit of an emotional time as of late.

My mom just caught my dad cheating, essentially. I'm in the middle of quitting my job for one closer to home and trying to get my own, nonexistent up til this point, personal life together.

Note: This was released on FF.Net first - also by me. I'm uploading the chapters here NOW because...reasons.

Fun fact: I may or may not regret the use of so many tags. Four chapter release date for those of you who didn't see it on FF.Net though so...enjoy.

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