Summary

Promt: Harry seems to have it all: A successful career as a pastry chef, a Victorian home in London, and a dedicated boyfriend who he's been with for years. One day he stops by his boyfriend's apartment to surprise him and finds out that he's not so dedicated to Harry after all. Shocked and too depressed to celebrate, he decides to skip Christmas and on a whim leaves on a plane to New York. In New York he meets Louis...

Or...Louis might just be what Harry's needed all along.
I have adjusted the prompt a bit, but hopefully it's still to your liking!!

Notes

Wahoo!!! This is done! Thank you noelchenry for this wonderful prompt!!! I had so much fun writing this story! I am so happy with the way it came out, and hopefully you will be too! Also, I couldn't have gotten here without my lovely beta afirethatcannotdie. Thank you so much for all your help! I'd also like to thank my lovely friend Monica (For reasons we both know why). I am forever in your debt!

With that being said, I want to point out one thing for you all, in case you happen to notice. I did not put Louis' birthday in the story line. With the timeline the story had, it was just going to be too much to take on, so I didn't incorporate it. Hopefully that avoids any confusion beforehand!!

**Also credit to all those that edited the photos I used in my board!!

***And lastly, THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU THAT READ AND LIKE THIS STORY!! You all are so amazing and wonderful, and I honestly keep writing because of you. So truly, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

See the end of the work for more notes
“So, Harry Styles...you’re one of the most sought after pastry chefs in the world, you have a beautiful Victorian home in the city of London, and you have a doting boyfriend of about four years. Is there anything else you could possibly want?”

The interview is almost over; this is one of the last questions of the night. As Harry leans his chest toward the blonde female interviewer, his black jeans shuffling a touch on the red velvet couch, he rests his elbows on top of his thighs. At the end of her question, the interviewer smiles at him, and Harry returns the gesture charmingly. Looking at the audience while showing off his crooked grin and dimpled cheeks, he fixes the strands of his hair that he fears have come loose, glances back at the woman, and then coughs out a laugh.

“Erm, no. There’s nothing more that I want. I have everything that I could possibly need.”

The audience voices “aw” altogether, and Harry turns to chuckle bashfully as he scans over the crowd.

With a crest white smirk, the interviewer asks in return, “Is it safe to assume then, that you’re one of
“the luckiest men in the world?” As the words are said, there’s a glint in her autumn eyes that procures a scarlet hue to liven Harry’s cheeks.

Shaking his head, Harry begins to move his hands like a composer, orchestrating along with the words that play from his mouth. “I wouldn’t say I’m lucky. If anything, I’ve had a lot of really great opportunities knock on my door at the right time.”

She gleams back, “How very modest. Well, that’s all the time we have for today. Mr. Styles…Harry, are there any last words you would like to address to our viewers?”

Turning to face the camera that’s just a little farther away from the stage, Harry stares down the lens with the fondest expression he can manage. “I hope you all have a Merry Christmas, and Happy Holidays.”

“Wonderful! Well, this has been Nancy Goodfellow, see you next time London.”

The camera crew, along with the studio audience, applauds as the interview ends, and Nancy steps up from the chair to give Harry a hug.

“Thank you so much for coming back on the show. You’re always such a pleasure to have.”

“Anytime, Nancy.”

Pulling away from their embrace, Nancy steps back. “Now go home to Nick, and tell him I say hi. I’m sure he’s missing you to bits.”

A grin pulls at Harry’s lips as he replies, “yeah, ‘m gonna surprise him. Told him I’d be home tomorrow.”

“You’re too cute.” Nancy slowly begins to step away from Harry in the direction towards her office, while she continues to yell out, “Have fun! Oh, and since I probably won’t see you, have a Happy Holiday Harry.”

Waving his hand goodbye, Harry brightens as he responds. “You too. Happy Holidays!”

Wrapping his coat and scarf tightly around his body, Harry gestures goodnight to the last final crew members lingering around and escapes out the back door. Once outside, a snowflake lands on his cheek as more drift lazily from the dark blanket of the night sky. He wipes away at it and then checks his watch, realizing that if he can hail a cab in the next ten minutes, he could be home within the hour.

Handing money to the cab driver, Harry scoots his body out of the car, and up his walkway to his London estate. As his long legs make the trek up the stone pathway, Harry admires one of his most prized possessions since his career took off. With its white trimmings that perfectly accentuate the stone blue color of the siding, and its old architecture that gives it a vintage feel, Harry fattens with pride. Nothing feels better than coming home to this after a long trip.

Unlocking the front handle, Harry pushes the door open to the eerily quiet foyer, and steps inside. It’s kind of laughable now that Harry thinks about it; he never even considered that Nick might not be home to be surprised. Harry shakes his head as he realizes how silly the effort was, and then takes his coat off, placing it on a hanger in his front closet.

“Fuck...”
As Harry shuts the door, there’s an audible moan echoing from the second floor that sends Harry’s heart into a frenzy. I guess Nick is home then, he smirks to himself. Tiptoeing up the plush carpeted stairs, Harry starts silently peeling off his shirt as he devises a new plan. While Nick is in the room, clearly masturbating, Harry’s going to surprise him with his wonderful, naked self. And then maybe they both can help each other in relieving some of the pent up stress? If Harry could, he’d wink, and then high five himself.

The plan is foolproof, Harry thinks smugly, excited to be wrapped up in his boyfriend’s arms in just a few mere seconds. Climbing the staircase one painstakingly slow step at a time, Harry’s managed to get his shirt, shoes, and socks off, as he arrives at the top floor. Now all that’s left is to travel over to their bedroom, without making any noise.

“Fuck, Greg.”

Wait…what? Greg? Greg? As in Greg, Nick’s coworker at the radio station? Why would Nick be yelling out Greg’s name?

“Shit, Nick. You’re so filthy.”

And wait…that’s…that’s another voice? In his room? Saying his boyfriend’s name? Suddenly, anger boils like lava in Harry’s veins as it flares his rage to sudden eruption. Marching violently towards his room, Harry shoves open the bedroom door and gawks at the scene in front of him. Nick, his fucking boyfriend, has his face buried three feet deep in Greg’s arse. And. What. The. Actual. Fuck.

“Harry! You’re home?”

At the sound of the door slamming against the wall, swinging from the force Harry pushed it with, Nick and Greg both jump. When Nick’s eyes connect with Harry, all the color in his face drains to a ghostly white color, maybe even slightly green. But as bad as he looks, it’s not even a quarter of the way Harry feels.

Storming forward, Harry jabs his chipped, red painted nail in the air at his boyfriend. “What the fuck Nick! What the fuck is this shit!”

Throwing his right hand up in a defensive shield-like gesture, Nick pulls the sheets over his exposed body as he simultaneously hurries out, “It’s not what you think!”

“You mean to tell me, that you weren’t just fucking Greg on our bed while I was out?” Harry’s words are dripping with sass as they’re said, and his eyebrows scrunch in annoyance. Standing there, he crosses his arms irritatedly over his chest, as he waits for Nick to try digging himself out of this hole. Spoiler alert…he doesn’t.

“Alright…it is what you think it is! But fuck Harry, you were gone! For like what? Four months? I have needs! I can’t be sitting here trying to be the Virgin Mary when my boyfriend’s prancing around the world, promoting god knows what.”

Harry’s mouth gapes, “You…you’re blaming this on me? Are you out of your fucking mind? If you had an issue about something, you should have talked to me about it! Not gone and fuck somebody else. Fuck, Nick. Fuck! I’ve been loyal to you! Faithful to you, for four fucking years!”

“Well, I tried!” Nick takes a breath, continuing with less bite than before. “I’m just not made out for these long-distance relationships.”

“Just long? Clearly, you’re not made out for any kind of relationship!”
“Oi, don’t be like that!” Nick points at Harry with an accusing finger, but then he brings it back to his side as he watches Harry staring off into the distance, a somber expression now captivating his face.

Without bringing his eyes back to Nick, Harry asks, “How long?”

“Excuse me?”

This time, Harry raises his voice while glaring dead center into Nick, “HOW…LONG?”

“I…I…”

“I want the truth, Nick.”

“F*ck it, Harry! I’ve cheated on you, before. I don’t know how long or with how many.”

Harry’s green irises have tinted into a poisonous color that is aimed to kill, and he so desperately wants to rip Nick apart, shred his heart to pieces until he’s unable to love again, but he can’t. The fury that had traveled like wildfire throughout his body until he was completely swallowed in its fiery depths has since ceased. In its place, rivers of ice cold water flood his veins until he’s full of nothing else but its heavy weight. Harry wants to lay down. He wants to lay down and cry away the frozen waves that are thrashing against his ribcage, threatening to make an icicle out of what’s left of his shattered heart.

It’s too much. This is all too much. Harry stares through teary waves at Nick, a frown has permanently etched itself upon his cracked lips, and there are tiny tremors that radiate within his bones until he’s visibly shaking from their vibrations. But he needs to say one last thing. He needs to get it out, and then he can leave. Huffing out one long unsteady exhale, Harry’s voice cracks as he struggles to talk. “Goodbye, Nick. I hope I never see or hear from you again.”

Nick mumbles out shakily, “Harry?” But Harry is already thundering down the stairs, and out into the December night. And fuck, he should have grabbed his things before he left… being shirtless and barefoot in winter is definitely not a good idea.

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“Harry, slow down. Can you hear me? Take deep breaths.”

Crying on the phone to his best mate Niall, Harry is in the backseat of a driver he hired, set on taking him home to Holmes Chapel. It’s going to be a few hours, but it’s better than having shown up on a train without clothing and/or shoes.

With the phone pressed against his ear, Harry takes a few deep inhales and exhales before he whimpers out, “Niall, he was fucking cheating on me! F*ck.”

Niall scoffs aggressively. ‘God, I’m going to kill that motherfucking cunt, and shove me foot so far up his arsehole he’ll be spittin’ toenails fer a month.”

“Niall,” Harry wipes his flowing eyes, “Please, calm down.”

“Sorry. Sorry.”

“I just don’t know what to do. I don’t want to go back home, but my parents are leaving in a fucking week to go out and visit Gemma in Paris. It’s bad enough I fucking broke up with Nick, but now I have to spend the holidays alone?”
“Don’t.”

“Excuse me?”

“Don’t,” Niall pauses to emphasize his answer previously, and then adds, “Come to New York. Liam and I would be more than happy to have your sorry arse spendin’ some time with us. It’s been too long anyway.”

“I thought Liam moved in with his boyfriend Zayn like a month ago?”

“Oh he did, you’ll probably stay with me and my new flatmate, Louis. Think I’ve talked about him before, yeah? He’s cool. Anyways, that’s beside the point. The point is, you’re coming to New York! So pack your bags and get your ticket.”

“Ni…I can’t.”

“And why exactly is that? Last I checked, ya don’t have a boyfriend to spend it with, and your family’s not gonna be home.”

Surprisingly, Harry comes to the realization that Niall’s right. It’s an option that Harry hadn’t thought of, and he has to give Niall credit because it’s a good one. Escaping to New York would give him just enough time to clear his head, so that he can come back to London with an idea and a plan. Ultimately, there’s a lot that needs to be discussed with Nick, but he just doesn’t want to do it now. And also, this way there’s no chance of him running into his (now) ex. He can go wherever he wants, and not have to worry about who he sees or who sees him.

Pinching at the bridge of his nose, Harry squeezes his eyes shut as he huffs out his answer to Niall. “Okay…okay. You’re right. I need to get out of here, and just, erm…not deal with this at the moment. I’ll go home, stay for a week, and then I’ll take the first flight out Christmas Eve.”

“Great! Ya stayin’ till New Year’s?”


“We’re gonna have so much fun, H! Ya won’t believe it!”

Even though Niall’s enthusiasm manages to persuade a chuckle from Harry’s lips, Harry can’t help thinking the opposite in his mind. He wants to have fun. He needs to have fun. But he’s sheltering a newly broken heart, and Harry’s hyper-aware that it’s going to take more than a few shots to encourage him to enjoy his time.

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Travelling back to his childhood home is frustrating. Not only does Harry have to leave his own beloved London house, but now he has to explain to his mum why he’s even back in the first place. Great. Just fucking great. And Nick can fucking kiss his arse. Actually, Harry furiously notes, don’t. I don’t want Greg’s sloppy seconds.

The car carefully comes to a halt in his driveway, and the driver tilts his head as he notifies Harry of their arrival. “Here, Sir.”

Lifting his lips into something a little less pouty, Harry extends his fingers to pass along the owed money for the driver’s service. As the driver’s hand grasps the cash, Harry says to him, “Thanks, mate,” and then opens the door.
While Harry begins to scooch out of the car, sliding across the black leather interior, the driver calls out to him from the front. “Happy Holidays, Sir.”

And internally Harry jokes, happy fucking holidays, but instead, he simply states, “Thanks.”

Shutting the car door, Harry staggers onto his feet as they press coldly into the snow, he then wraps his arms around his uncovered torso to retain whatever heat he has left and walks up to the front door. While Harry does have a key, he knocks regardless, because he doesn’t want to scare the living life out of his mum and stepdad by barging in unannounced.

After he knocks, he starts rubbing his hands together to create heat, as he waits impatiently on the front step. While there, he takes note of all the holiday decorations his mum has put up, when a frigid chill sweeps across his bare skin, procuring shivers to reverberate within his bones. It’s a cold night even for December, and Harry seriously begins to question how long he can last until hypothermia sets in, when footsteps can finally be heard shuffling on the other side. As the door swings open, Harry tries to form a smile on his face to at least pretend he’s somewhat okay standing half naked and shoeless on his parents’ doorstep, but well… it’s kind of hard to hide the obvious.

“Hel-…Harry?”

His mum’s initial greeting dies in her throat as soon as she recognizes Harry in front of her. Without another passing second, she yanks Harry inside into the heated house, where the carpet instantly begins to thaw his frozen toes.

“Harry, what are you doing here? It’s the middle of the night… and where are your clothes?”

“Mum…Nick…Nick…”

You can do this. You can be brave. You can tell her what you saw, and what happened. You can do this. Despite Harry’s best efforts in convincing himself that he is capable of discussing the events of tonight, no sentences, nor words, or letters, depart from his trembling mouth. He tries to smile, but standing under his mum’s worrisome gaze, leaves him defenseless against her familiar forest green eyes. And he knows he can’t do it. He can’t lie to her. So instead of trying to lie, he just doesn’t say anything at all.

But then she places her gentle hand on his arm, the same one that’s mended his body through every fall, every fight, and every emotional turbulence Harry’s had to endure, and it breaks apart what little façade Harry had maintained. Her touch brings forth all the emotions he’s been trying to cover with anger since he’s left behind Nick, and it’s so overwhelming he can’t breathe. Air constricting his lungs, his throat closing up, and then…then there are tears. And they come on so powerfully that they force Harry down on his knees in a state of utter weakness.

“Harry!”

But god bless his mum because she doesn’t repeat his name, or question his behavior further. Instead, she acknowledges her son falling apart, and wraps her arms around him on the floor, attempting to use her limbs as makeshift yarn to sew him back together. Though they both know it’s not enough. And then they just stay. And they stay entangled like this for a while.

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December 16th, 2015 (Wednesday)

Morning for Harry comes as a bad headache and dry eyes. There are ten seconds where he’s
disoriented enough that he can’t remember the events of last night, but then everything comes back, crashing down on him like an avalanche. Forgetting briefly that he’s at his parents’, he lets a distraught sound shoot from his lips, piercing the silence that’s filled. As soon as it vibrates into the room, his mum knocks on the door, and then cautiously enters.

“Harry? Are you alright?”

Using his hand as a point to lean his head off of, Harry glances at his mum. “Yes, sorry.”

“‘S alright,” his mum sighs before taking a seat on his bed. Looking down at him, worry prevalent on her face, she brushes her fingers through his curls and then asks, “Are you going to tell me what happened?”

“Not today, no.”

With a tight-lipped smile, she goes on, “Okay. How long are you staying home for? You know we leave next Wednesday.”

“I’m taking a flight out Christmas Eve to visit Niall,” Harry says quickly.

Her eyes widen as she responds, “In New York?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, I hope you have fun, darling. Whatever it is that’s bothering you, you should leave it here. Don’t bring your troubles with you on your trip. When you come back, that’s when you can deal with them again.”

Without really meaning to, his mum gives worthy advice, and Harry wholeheartedly agrees with her. He has a couple days to dwell on his misery, but next week...next week he’s going to burn Nick from his memory. Next week, he’s going to set ablaze all the lingering words and traces of ‘love,’ letting them simmer to ash until he’s not provoked by them anymore. Next week, he's going to enjoy his freedom as thoroughly as he possibly can in New York. But for now, right this moment, he’s not releasing anything yet. Right now, he wants to suffer just a little bit more.

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One Week Later

December 23rd, 2015 (Wednesday)

“Let me know when you land, alright love?”

His mum tangles her arms around his torso as she hugs him goodbye in the airport. Harry squeezes back and responds to her as they’re still in their embrace. “I will, and safe flight.”

“Love you.”

“Love you, too. Tell Gem that I miss her.”

It’s finally a week later, and Harry’s shitting bricks. In the span of the week, Harry slept, ate, slept, drank, and sort of confessed to his mum what happened. He left out the bits about Nick eating out Greg’s arse, but well…she got the gist. In the end, she was glad that Harry and Nick were over, and was mostly upset that it had taken four years for Harry to figure out they weren’t meant for each other. However, then she went on to add that as difficult as it may be, things in life happen for a
reason, and Harry should trust that things were meant to happen this way.

In addition, his mum also convinced Harry to book his flight a day early so that he didn’t have to be home alone. Which ultimately means, just another day away that Harry will be glad for.

Also during this past week, Nick contacted Harry multiple times, to the point that Harry had to block his number. He’s not ready to talk to him, nor is he going to address anything in regards to their relationship until after he’s returned from his travels. It may not seem like the most mature reaction or response, but Harry is still trying to process what happened, much less how to handle it. Thus, dealing with Nick after the trip is the only logical way Harry can go about it.

So with a final thought in regards to his ex, Harry stuffs the events of the past two weeks in a safe within his mind and temporarily locks them up. He’s currently at the airport, which means his vacation has already begun. So with his newly painted black nails to reflect the color of his heart, Harry sends out a text to Niall, and stands patiently waiting as the sections of the plane are being called.

**Hey Ni…about to board my flight!**

**Great! See ya later when I pick ya up!**

*This is going to be good. This is going to be good. This is going to be good.* Harry ends his mental pep talk when his area has been announced, tucks his phone into his front pocket, and throws his hair up into a bun. With a long stride, he steers himself toward the gate and thinks one final thought as he steps onto the plane. *Here we go.*

* * *

Positioned at baggage claim in the JFK airport, Harry is surrounded by a crowd of others all waiting, when he’s suddenly being pulled by strong arms. “Harry! So good to see ya, buddy,” Niall yells, with his grasp tightly around Harry.

With the blonde haired, blue eyed lad in his field of view, Harry greets back, “Niall! Same here, mate. I missed you!”

At the end of his comment, the alarm goes off signaling the luggage is about to be released on the conveyer belt, and Niall steps away. With a bit of distance between them now, they can get a better look at one another, searching for physical changes that might have occurred since they were last together for Niall’s birthday. Harry nods in approval at his friend standing in front of him, dressed in a black sweater and jeans, and then smirks. In response, Niall smiles at Harry brighter than any form of light that possibly exists, and Harry is reminded of how much he honestly has missed his best mate. Needless to say, Niall’s last trip home had been too short.

“I’m so glad you’re here. I mean, I know it’s not fer a good reason, but we’re gonna make the most of this, a’right? It’s gonna be the best lads holiday ever.”

Rolling his eyes teasingly, Harry laughs, “Whatever you say, Ni.”

* * *

“Me flat’s nothing special, thought I’d warn ya. It’s small, but it’s home.” Niall makes the comment as they are taking an elevator up to the sixth floor of a basic, concrete building they previously entered.

“I don’t care, Niall. You could be living in a shoebox, and that’d be more than perfect for me.”
Niall snorts, “Always the charmer.”

Niall’s flat, or rather apartment, is situated in Manhattan, and he couldn’t be more proud of it. It took him a while to work up the ladder at various music labels, but when they offered him a substantial raise and promotion to move overseas, he couldn’t say no. Harry thought it wouldn’t be too bad, since he’d still have his other childhood mate Liam, to cry over Niall’s departure with. Until Niall said he needed a flatmate, and Liam was suddenly eager to get away. Harry thinks Liam’s breakup with Sophia had a lot to do with that, but Liam’s never admitted to it. Regardless, with the two of them living in the States, Harry was left in London without his best friends. Though he still had Nick, who he had met at uni, it just wasn’t the same. Honestly...fuck Nick.

Nearing the end of the hallway, Niall stops in front of apartment 6B and starts keying his lock. When he pushes it open, Harry maneuvers his way inside first, with Niall close behind him. The apartment is fairly large in comparison to most others, with a full kitchen, living room, a bathroom and two bedrooms. It’s nice, with the interior design of the place fairly modern, however, upon further observation, something strikes Harry as odd.

Pointing to a vacant shelf, Harry smiles. “This is really nice, Ni…but erm…it sorta looks like you haven’t lived here for the past three years.”

Laughing, Niall shrugs his shoulders and says, “Yeah, when Liam moved out he took a lot of the shit with him. Fucking twat. And Louis’ not sure if he’ll live here more than a year, so he didn’t bring much when he moved in. I should get stuff so it doesn’t look so barren, but whatever. Rather spend me money on the important things.”

“Like food and video games?”

“Exactly!”

“Why am I not surprised?” Harry mocks, peering out into the living room. “So…’m taking the couch?”

“I’d offer to share the bed, but it’s only a single.”

“Only a single?” Harry dramatically gasps.

“Wanted more room space than bed space. Anyways, ya can leave your stuff in my room in the meantime,” Niall says as he points to the furthest left room.

Harry nods his head. “Sounds good, mate. Oh and Niall?”

“Hmm?”

“Erm... thanks for like, letting me come. It really means a lot.”

“Honestly Harry, anytime.”

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The rest of the afternoon was spent with Harry and Niall catching up on everything they have missed out on in the past few months, aside from Nick. Harry started their conversation by sitting Niall down on the couch, and explaining that he didn’t want to utter his ex’s name once during this whole trip. Niall was gladly on board. So instead, Harry talked about his past promo season for his annual holiday pastry, while Niall animatedly retold drunken stories of nights out with the lads.
“Oh god, Harry you missed out. Liam was pissed, and Zayn just kept sayin’ over and over again... he goes, ‘I didn’t mean to kill him. I didn’t mean to. I swear.’ I was laughin’ so hard I wet meself.”

Harry’s eyebrows raise in shock, “No you didn’t!”

Putting his hand to his heart, Niall says, “Swear on me grandad’s grave. And to think… that was the first night Liam and Zayn met.”

“Sounds like it was epic.”

“It was. New Year’s always is. Glad that you’ll be here to celebrate with us this year.”

“Me too. Speaking of, what are the plans for the week. If there are any?”

“Well Christmas Eve, the lads are gonna come over, and we’re gonna get pissed and watch movies. Fer Christmas Day, our neighbors upstairs - James and his wife, invited pretty much everyone in the building over. After that, it’s takin’ it one day at a time until New Year’s where we have tickets for the club.”

The plans don’t seem to be anything crazy, and yet, Harry finds himself a bit anxious. Seeing the lads again will be a good distraction, but the idea’s also a bit nerve-wracking. Harry doesn’t feel whole, and though he’s trying to smile and laugh with genuine meaning, he can’t. How can Harry be one hundred percent in anything, when barely half of his heart is available? Even at this moment, Harry knows that Niall can see all that’s missing, and he’s not sure how he’s going to sustain with everyone else looking at him the same way. Like he could break any moment. But Harry questions to himself, will they realize? Will they see? That I’m already trying to piece myself back together.

Returning from his thoughts, Harry picks back up in the conversation and asks Niall about the tickets for the club. “How much do I owe you?”

“Nothing!”

“Nial…”

“Nope,” Niall interjects. “No complaining. Also, ya hungry yet? Cause I’m starved.”

“Yeah, I could eat.”

“Cool. I can run down the block and get pizza? It’s the best one by us, hands down.”

“Oh, alright. You want to me to come with?”

Niall stands up and shakes his head. “No, no. Shouldn’t be more than five minutes, and you should probably check in with Gem or your mum to let them know ya made it safe.”

“You’re right. Okay, thanks.”

Niall narrows his gaze with a playful smirk and says, “That’s your last ‘thank you’ for this whole trip.”

Harry, in turn, rolls his eyes and sticks his tongue out, while Niall flips him off as he walks out the door.

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Instead of phoning, Harry texts his mum to let her know that he made it safely. He’s sure they’re
spending much needed time with Gemma, and he doesn’t want to get in the way of that. However, due to not calling, Harry has a few minutes available to spend checking up on his social media accounts. Not that he’s bragging, but he has over a million followers on Instagram and Twitter, so he tries to make an effort to keep up with it. After updating both profiles, he then checks his Facebook to find that he has a message.

The notification startles Harry, but the thing is, is that he knows who it’s from. He knows without opening it, that it’s from Nick. He’s not sure if he should acknowledge the message, but maybe one look couldn’t hurt? Hovering his thumb over the icon for a few seconds, Harry shuts his eyes and then presses his finger down. When he opens them up again, he focuses on the text in front of him, and then starts to read.

Harry- The fact that I’ve had to resort to facebook messenger to contact you is unbelievable. I thought we could handle this situation like adults, but you’ve done nothing but act like a child. I’m appalled at your behavior, and it only goes to show that our breakup is for the best. I haven’t been in love with you for a while, and honestly, you haven’t been in love with me either. –Nick

Bad idea. Bad idea. Bad idea.

Harry’s eyes are swelling, and his face is blotchy, and he’s trying as hard as he possibly can to choke back his sobs. He shouldn’t have done this to himself, what was he thinking? And fuck…Nick. Why would Nick say those things? Why would Nick turn everything around on Harry as if it was all his fault? Does Nick not realize that he was the one cheating? Is that suddenly okay because Harry decided not to talk to him right away?

Trying to wipe away at the few tears that have broken past his barrier, the door to the apartment opens and Harry panics. Shit…Niall is going to be so pissed at me. I swore I didn’t want to talk, think, or do anything revolving around Nick. Fuck. Harry tries to cover his face, but he can’t hide it, and there’s really no use in trying to. Instead, he glances up at the doorway, ready to own up to his first mistake since arriving. Except, where he’s expecting to find Niall looking back at him with concern, his eyes hook onto someone else. And oh shit…they’re gorgeous.

Through Harry’s blurry vision, his eyes confront a sapphire gaze that ignites the room in its tantalizing color, leaving Harry helpless in its presence. Harry swallows, hypnotized by the alluring boy like a monarch butterfly that’s stumbled upon a flame. Suddenly so consumed by the light that it’s willing to burn itself, just to reach the beautiful blue center of the flame’s eclipse. It’s overpowering, and before Harry’s managed to catch his breath, his eyes wander down to thin pink lips that are slightly agape, smooth sandy hair that’s sweeping to the left, and toasted caramel skin that somehow is glowing in this winter season. And Harry’s floored. This boy is an absolute vision, and well…Harry’s a mess.

“Oh, erm…” Harry doesn’t really know what to say, but the words fall out of his mouth in a plea to avoid the awkwardness that is sure to ensue.

The other boy, however, grins as his cheeks flush a bit, and then walks in as if unaware of Harry’s state. Which Harry’s not sure if he’s thankful for, or not.

“Are you…Harry?” His voice asks in a raspy cadence that dances down to Harry’s bones and sticks to him like the sweetest of nectar.

Hurriedly swiping at his eyes, Harry sniffs, and then stands up to extend his hand out to the other boy to shake.

“Yeah, ‘m Harry. I take it you’re Niall’s flatmate?” Harry asks as their hands collide, trying really
hard not to focus on how small and soft the other boy feels within his grasp. No, he’s not going to focus on that at all.

“Yeah, Louis,” he replies with a bashful gleam.

Releasing his hand from Louis’ grip, Harry finds himself disliking the emptiness left within his palm. But fuck…he was seriously just crying over Nick, and now he wants to hold Louis’ hand for the rest of his life…like how? How did this all happen?

The boys are just standing in the living room, and Harry has no idea what to say, but the silence feels heavy. So with a bit of a stutter, Harry says, “Niall just left to get pizza. Should be back soon.”

This fact seems to spark Louis into movement, nodding his head before going towards the kitchen. Harry follows him, not wanting to be captured by the dreadful thoughts in his head, once again.

As Louis is standing in front of the kitchen cupboards, he tilts his head towards Harry’s direction to ask him a question. “Do you want something to drink?”

And then without warning, everything happens in a flash. Louis turns back around to open the cabinet door, reaching for a mug just as Harry replies, “Sure, but I can get it—” and extends his own hand to the same cup. Of course, by the time Harry makes it there, Louis’ much smaller hand is already placed on the handle, which leads to Harry clutching onto Louis instead of the mug. Whoops.

Flustered, Harry removes his limb but doesn’t have a chance to step away before Louis turns to face him. Within the space between the counter and Harry’s torso, Louis is pressed up firmly against him, and he’s losing his shit. Harry basically has him cornered, and he should really back away, except he doesn’t. Because the minute Louis’ hazy eyes drag up the length of Harry’s body to meet with his emerald green, there’s a stirring in him he can’t deny. It tingles at his fingertips, and buzzes along his skin, and Harry licks the corner of his mouth, desperate to find out what flavors make up the taste of Louis’ lips.

When Louis watches Harry’s tongue, his eyes darken as his pupils are blown wide, only the tiniest ring of blue outlining the black. Harry swallows, trying to keep himself from ravaging Louis here right on this kitchen floor, but then, then Louis bites his strawberry pout, and Harry can’t help watching it with lustful intent. As he’s locked onto Louis, he takes note of the swirling scents that flow from the shorter boy, something sweet and a little bitter like dark chocolate with caramel swirls, and a pinch of sea salt sprinkled on top. And wait…when did Harry start imagining sweets and comparing them to cute boys?

Regaining his focus on the beauty in front of him, Harry gives in to the hunger that’s swelling inside, and zeroes in on Louis’ lips. He’s not sure how appropriate it would be, but he wants to suck them until they’re a swollen cherry red, and then trail his own mouth down to leave blueberry bruises all over his tapioca skin.

Harry unconsciously inches forward, and even though his mind is saying STOP STOP STOP STOP STOP, he can’t. He cannot defer the pull that’s lassoed around his neck from Louis’ hands.

“Harry…” Louis breathes out his name like it’s something unholy, as Harry places his grip on the other boy’s waist. His fingers knead into Louis’ hips like dough, massaging the skin as Louis lets out a subtle moan, and fuck…Harry’s so hard it’s painful. He needs release, and preferably soon.

But of course, as Louis starts tilting his head up to meet Harry halfway, and a million flavors of desserts come bursting at the seams of his mind like candy-made fireworks, the door to the apartment
is swung open. Harry begrudgingly yanks himself five steps back, just in time to see Niall walk in with a shit-eating grin on his face, directed towards Harry.

“I see ya’ve met Louis.”

Louis’ cheeks are sporting a velvety red tint, and Harry feels as if he’s just plunged into boiling water. He continues to stand there, uncomfortably hard, and is severely disappointed that nothing is going to come of that. Though now his mind is somewhat at ease, his conscience is still threatening to kill him off. You’re supposed to be staying away from your problems, not creating more! And yeah, that’s true. But he’s also never met Louis before, and that somehow changes everything.

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The rest of the evening was spent eating pizza and watching a few movies, which Harry was thankful for because he got to be pressed up against Louis for the duration of the films. There was nothing more than Louis’ arm against his, but that was enough to keep Harry struggling to breathe all night. Eventually, Louis and Niall went off to their own bedrooms, leaving Harry alone on the couch, failing at his attempts to fall asleep.

As he lays there, peering at the small expanse of window that isn’t covered by the grey curtains, every thought possible passes through the tendrils of his mind. Of when Nick said he didn’t love him. Of when Nick said he cheated more than once. Of when Nick accused Harry of not loving him back. And it hurts. Harry’s heart feels like it’s been beaten with a mallet, and he wants it to go away. He did love Nick, maybe…maybe he didn’t love Nick like he should have loved him. Maybe he wasn’t in love with him, but he still loved him. And that’s enough for Nick’s actions to leave behind a scar.

But then, what the hell was going on with him today? With Louis? He knows better, he doesn’t want a rebound. He doesn’t want to lead Louis on when there’s nowhere to go, but hell…there was something there beyond the sexual tension. Something more grounding that had Harry stuck, and it scares him. It scares him that he’ll fall recklessly into Louis like an ocean, and drown in his depths before he’s even learned to swim.

With that being said, this is his vacation. And he can’t stop what’s destined to happen. Whatever will be, will be. So as his eyes drift into midnight’s slumber, he promises to himself that he’s going to enjoy this while he can. Whether that includes the blue-eyed boy with the decadent smile, or not.

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December 24th, 2015 (Thursday)

“Harry Styles, in the flesh! I thought it’d be months before I’d see your ugly mug again.” Liam wraps his arms around Harry with a firm hold and pats him on the back as Harry chuckles into his shoulder. When Liam pulls away, Harry gives Zayn a quick hug, and then returns back to standing in front of the two in Niall’s apartment.

“Liam you’re absurd,” Harry shakes his head and then turns his focus to Zayn, “I don’t know how you deal with him.”

Zayn smiles, but looks at Liam with the utmost admiration in his eyes, “I don’t know either, but I love him all the same.”

Liam melts at the affection, and Harry wholeheartedly feels jealous. Good thing Niall decides to interrupt their conversation before Harry thinks of clobbering them. “Lads, let’s sit in the living room.
I’m too lazy to stand.”

Liam grabs Zayn’s hand while he answers Niall, “You’re the laziest, skinniest person I’ve ever met. You sit on the couch and eat all day, yet you still look malnourished.”

Louis chuckles loudly, and then bites in, “Oi, you should see him though. If the remote is too far away on the table for his arms to reach, he starts yelling my name to get it for him. Like a fucking baby.”

“You’re no better,” Niall argues with flushed cheeks, “Ya leave a mess everywhere, and I have to clean it up!”

“Do not,” Louis starts, but then rolls his eyes when Niall gives him a death glare. “Okay, okay. Maybe I do. But I’m not your fucking house husband, I don’t need to cook and clean up after you, too.”

Louis is sitting next to Harry on the couch, and after Louis’ comment, Harry thinks to himself, bet you’d make a beautiful husband. Except after he’s thought those words, Louis is staring at him with blown eyes and Harry jolts. Oh fuck, he yelps internally, did he say that out loud?

It doesn’t seem that anybody else heard what Harry said, but that doesn’t help much because Louis still heard it. The one person it was about, and of course, Harry just went and messed it up. He wants to dig himself a hole and lay it in until the incident has been forgotten, until Louis whispers, “Uh… thank you,” and Harry all but dies just a little bit.

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For the rest of the afternoon, things feel staticky between Harry and Louis. Harry keeps sneaking glances, Louis keeps catching them, but then there’s nothing more. It’s exhausting, whatever game this is that they’re playing, but Harry doesn’t want to stop. He wants to push further and further, pressing on until some form of physical connection is made. But as the night rolls on, the more out of reach that is seeming to be.

“Here, here,” Niall stands up with a beer in his hand, in the living room. Clearing his throat, the Irish lad looks at the rest of the boys sitting around and goes on, “Here’s to Chinese food for always being available during the hols, and the best buddies a man could ask for.”

“Now that, I’ll drink to,” Zayn announces, and raises his glass.

With their drinks held high, the five boys’ toast to Niall’s proclamation, and then with laughter bring their drinks up to their lips. After they’ve all taken a healthy sip, Louis stands up, grabbing shot glasses from one of the kitchen cupboards.

“Oi, time for a Christmas drinking game,” Louis says, mischief apparent on his face.

Harry repeats back in confusion, “Christmas drinking game? Never heard of that.”

“Never heard of that? My god, Curly…it’s like, the best tradition to have ever existed!”

Harry basks in the nickname, “Apparently I’ve been deprived.”

“Deprived is right, but no worries. We’ll change that, won’t we lads?” As Louis looks around for reassurance, he finds Niall is busy getting a movie into the DVD player, and Zayn and Liam smile back as if they’re only somewhat conscious they’re being talked to.
Louis scoffs at the lack of enthusiasm, “I see, great help you lot are.”

Harry giggles loudly and then sniffs, trying to hide the fondness abound on his face. Louis sits down next to him on the floor, lining up the shot glasses on the coffee table.

“All right Curly, pay close attention. It can be really hard to get it the first time you play, but I have the utmost faith in you.” Louis turns to him with a bright grin, and voice animated when he speaks again. “So…are you ready?”

“I’m ready,” Harry answers with a smile.

“Can you handle it?”

“I can handle it.”

Louis peers at Harry with pride in his expression and Harry’s not sure why, but he never wants to forget how it looks. With a final grin, Louis playfully raises his eyebrows. “There’s only one rule to the game, Harold, and this is it. Every time Buddy says ‘Santa,’ drink.”

Harry cocks his head to the side in total, and utter confusion. “Buddy? Who the hell is Buddy?”

Niall bursts out laughing “From ‘Elf!’ We’re gonna watch the movie, and every time Buddy says ‘Santa’ in the movie, ya have to drink.”

“Elf’ the movie?” Harry continues, “Is that the one with Will Ferrell?”

“Yes, Curly,” Louis replies.

“Oh, right. Never seen it.”

Everyone in the room has their mouths to the floor, and Niall even looks personally offended. Harry gazes around curiously at all of them for their strange reaction to his little confession, furrowing his eyebrows in their direction.

Liam chirps in after a few seconds, “Never seen it? I thought…I thought I knew you.”

“What are you going on about?”

“That’s the best movie ever, Harry. I don’t…I don’t think we can be friends.”

Louis loudly interrupts, “We’re about to watch it now, yeah? So stop being so damn dramatic, Lima bean.”

Chuckling at the interaction, Liam curls closer into Zayn, as Louis surprisingly cuddles into Harry. When Louis seems to be all settled, Harry turns to him and says, “Thanks for having my back, Lou.”

It’s not meant to be much, but Louis’ eyes glow at the nickname Harry’s given him, and Harry wants to whisper it up against his ear until he’s got Louis begging for more.

When the DVD starts to play, Niall throws popcorn at the center of Louis’ forehead, pulling the older boy from focusing on Harry. It’s odd how instant Harry misses the attention, but after another second, Louis leans in and softly murmurs, “No problem, Hazza.”

The way Louis says the new nickname, drawn out and languid, smothering Harry’s heart with its gooey marshmallow fluff, makes it hard for Harry to focus on much else during the film.
Fast forward a few hours and Harry is undoubtedly drunk. The alcohol he consumed has impaired his mind, and as he finds himself lying on the floor, Harry wonders in complete seriousness how he got there. With Niall’s obnoxious laughter bellowing from above, Liam’s genuine smile shining from below, and Louis. Louis with his bubblegum lips so close to Harry, as he’s sitting by the younger boy’s hips, rubbing blackberry swirls with his thumb into Harry’s side. It’s marvelous.

The ounces of vodka in Harry’s system have heightened his senses, making Louis’ touch on his skin feel like the most pleasurable thing he’s ever felt. Or maybe it has more to do with the fact that it’s Louis tracing tiny circles into him than it does the alcohol. Either way, it’s stimulating, and Harry would very much like to spend all night doing this. But first, he needs to pee. Stumbling to his feet, Harry walks by Zayn passed out in a chair, and continues towards the bathroom.

After Harry’s done his business, he splashes cold water on his face in hopes that it will help sober him up. It doesn’t of course, and instead, leaves him a bit wet as he then washes his hands. When he’s about to leave, there’s a silent knock on the door, to which Harry opens up and finds Louis standing on the other side. Without warning, Louis pushes inside the bathroom, closing the door behind himself as he rests his back up against the wood. Harry startles, because somehow, he’s found himself in the same position he was in yesterday, pressed up into Louis. Except this time, he’s drunk, his self-restraint is lowered. And this time, he’s not going to be able to stop whatever may start.

“I…uh, wanted to see if you were okay.” Louis murmurs into the atmosphere encasing them together.

Harry raises his left arm above Louis’ head, to rest on the door, which leaves Louis completely surrounded by Harry’s body. It’s an appealing thought, but Harry tries not to overthink that, and instead, peers curiously into Louis’ eyes. With a shaky deep rasp, due to his nerves at their proximity, Harry slurs back, “I’m okay.”

Louis smirks, “Good.”

Without having anything better to say, Harry repeats back ‘good,’ while trying to maintain his focus on Louis. And unlike yesterday, this time when Louis hooks his eyes back onto Harry, it’s not shy or weary. It’s confident and filled with a purpose that Harry wants to completely devour.

Suddenly, Louis places his hands in Harry’s hair, tugging at the curled ends that fall around his shoulders, and Harry moans. It must alarm Louis because he hesitates, but then Harry nudges his head into Louis’ hand, making it obvious he wants more. When Louis gets the hint, he pulls again on Harry’s hair, and this time it’s not gentle. And Harry fucking loves it.

Biting his bottom lip to keep him from groaning loudly, Harry puts his hands on Louis’ hips. Where his thumbs press against the boy’s creamy skin, Harry starts kneading, gripping with an urgency that causes Louis to inhale a sharp breath. Harry refrains from surging his lips forward, wanting to take his time. He wants to peel apart each layer and wreck Louis inch by inch. Giving him just enough to taste, and yet not enough to be satisfied. Harry wants to drive him crazy. Positively insane.

But then Louis starts leaning forward, and Harry figures that he can’t deny the boy what he wants anymore. He keeps closing in until they’re two inches away. One inch away. Half an inch away. And then all of a sudden, they’re so close that Harry’s lips tingle with the presence of Louis’ mouth, just above his own. It’s the calm before the storm. The deep breath before the plunge. Louis is lingering, but they haven’t collided yet. And in this pause, Harry inhales Louis’ scent, wanting to remember exactly how all of his senses come alive at this precise moment. So he breathes, and all he
can smell is strawberries. Chocolate covered strawberries, where the tartness of the berry perfectly blends together with the sweet chocolate coating, shelled around.

Holding on to that scent that’s begun to course like a river in the valves of his veins, Harry follows it blindly; beginning to make the final descent towards Louis’ puckered lips. He’s so close, but yet not close enough. So with his erratic heart beating wildly out of control, Harry prepares for landing, when the worst thing in the entire world happens. There’s a knock on the door. Fuck…

With a frown on his face, Louis slips out from within Harry’s arms, and Harry steps back to grab the handle. However, when Harry opens it up, he sees there’s no one there. When he exits the bathroom with crazed curiosity, he only comes to find a few possibly suspicious looking lads, back in the living room. Harry shrugs at Louis as he follows behind, and then they both stride over to their friends. It may be Harry’s last attempt for the night in wanting to kiss Louis, but it’s not his last attempt ever. No, absolutely not.

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December 25th, 2015 (Friday)

The afternoon of Christmas Day, everyone gathered at Niall’s after having showered and changed. Liam and Zayn had gone home for a bit to get ready, but now they’ve returned, and so the lads make their way up to the Christmas party. As they take the stairs, Niall tells Harry that James and his wife are the nicest people around and that Harry is bound to get along with them well. Harry nods his head, only half listening, as he secretly thinks of getting along with someone else instead.

Glancing over at Louis, Harry’s mouth waters. The boy looks unbelievable in these skinny blue jeans and this cream-colored sweater that hangs loosely on his frame. Harry struggles at the sight, wanting nothing more than to slip his hands under the wool fabric of the shirt, leaving traces of his fingerprints all over Louis’ chest. Unfortunately, Harry pouts, attending a family-orientated Christmas party will have to suffice.

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“So Harry…you just released your holiday desserts, right? How is that going for you?”

Niall was right; James is one of the friendliest and funniest men Harry has ever had the pleasure of meeting. When they all walked in, James greeted them boisterously, talking with the group for a few minutes until the lads wanted to greet a few of the other party attendees. Luckily, James stood behind, staying by Harry’s side just a bit longer.

“Yeah, it was alright. Had a bit of a hard time this year thinking of something to make. But it seems everyone’s been happy enough with the product so far.”

Harry’s annual holiday treats started a few years ago, when he was only twenty-three and a recent uni graduate. He knew that if he wanted to open his own bakery, he was going to need money and resources, and unfortunately he had nothing to his name. So on a whim, he auditioned for ‘The Great British Bake Off,’ and after that it was insanity. Ten weeks of difficult tasks created with the sole purpose to have him fail, and on top of that, he was competing against other contestants who were just as good, if not better than him.

Despite some criticisms about his young age though, Harry survived. Battling it out each week with the best of them, until he made it all the way to the finals, where he came in as runner-up. In the moment, the results were upsetting because he had been so close to victory, but afterward, he was just so incredibly honored to have the experience at all.
So with his new fame, Harry and the growing support he had from fans, helped in opening his own bakery in London. At the time, he had known that people were aware of his existence when he could see how many followers he was gaining on social media, but nothing prepared Harry for the hordes of people coming into his shop on a daily basis. After the first month of mayhem, Harry had to double his staff to accommodate the growing number of customers they were receiving.

But truly everything was going great, and it wasn’t until six months later, that he received a random call from the producers of the show. According to them, Harry was their most popular contestant thus far, claiming that people loved him for his charismatic attitude and genuine ambition. They said that because of this, Harry was the next big thing in the pastry industry, and they wanted to continue to benefit off that. While Harry said no to any more reality television, he did confess that if they really wanted to work with him, he would be willing to collaborate for a good cause. Thus, the holiday treats were born.

Aside from the fact that eighty-five percent of the proceeds collected are donated to a singular charity voted by his fans, Harry also has the chance to distribute his desserts globally within select stores and cafes. This means that for his fans that can’t come to his shop in London, they now have the chance to buy his pastries in other major cities, in addition to helping out those in need. Not to mention, getting to travel to promote his products and the charities, is a nice added bonus, as well.

“Bit crazy, innit? All of that fame? I mean…did you even think any of that would happen?”

Harry chuckles. “No, I didn’t. I went on to the show because I didn’t know what else to do, you know? I had just graduated, and like... I didn’t want to apply for work at other people’s bakeries or shops. Half the owners I was better than, and the other half couldn’t afford to give me a high paying position. I wanted to open my own place, but erm, I had no money. And if I could get a loan or whatever, how was I gonna get people to want to come to me? Out of all the others, how could I make myself different, yeah? So going on the show just made sense. But even still, I never thought it would get me as far as it has.”

“That’s brilliant. Well look, I’m sure you hate being asked a bunch of questions and talked to like you’re a celebrity, so I’ll leave you be. Just let me know if you need anything! And hopefully you can still enjoy the party and the food, even though it’s made by us lowly peasants,” James teases as he pats Harry on the back and walks out of the room to talk to someone else.

Thankfully, Harry doesn’t stand by himself for too long, as Louis comes around and settles next to him. With Louis there, Harry realizes that this will be the first time since their initial meeting that they’ll be left alone to talk, seeing as nearly everyone else in the apartment is currently occupied by their own conversations. At this realization, he’s suddenly hit with nerves, wondering if he’s built this up in his head, just to be disappointed once again? What if Louis only wants a good fuck, and doesn’t care to listen to what Harry has to say? Each separate thought prods at Harry’s brain, but he tries to ignore his doubt. He knows they’re fueled by his insecurities, and that Louis hasn’t done anything to infer such ideas.

Before his mind can tarnish Louis any farther, Harry’s pulled by Louis’ voice, as it saunters its way into the younger boy’s ears. “Enjoying yourself there, Harold?”

Harry widely grins back, “As a matter of fact, I am.”

“That’s good, wouldn’t want to bore you now.”

Tilting his head, Harry questions, “Why would / be bored?”

Louis rolls his eyes and laughs as he answers. “We’re hanging around with a bunch of older couples
and families on Christmas, most of these people, in fact, you don’t even know. Seems to me like that could add up to a pretty boring party.”

“So it’s not because I’m a famous pastry chef who’s been to a number of lavish affairs?” Harry teases, although with a hint of seriousness.

With an immensely judging expression, Louis retorts. “Are you drunk? Have you sipped the eggnog a few too many times?”

“No!” Harry snorts.

“Who the hell cares what you do for a living? Or what parties you’ve been to for that matter? I bet half of them were just as boring, if not more than this boppin’ shindig right here.”

Harry’s eyes scrunch together as he outright cackles, and then responds back once he’s controlled his breathing again. “Well, you’d guess right.”

“What?”

“The parties,” Harry coughs, “are definitely boring. Most people only talk to me about my pastries, or what I plan to do with my newfound money. It gets tiring after a while repeating the same answers over and over again.”

Louis’ expression transforms into something more concerned, as he asks in return, “Then why do you go?”

“Because they’re usually the same snooty people who hire me to supply desserts for their fancy events. Beggars can’t be choosers.”

“No offense, but I highly doubt you're begging.”

“True, but I do still like to work, so really…all the same.”

Louis nods his head, and adds, “Is that what you want to keep doing? Baking and catering to events?”

“Erm, yeah? I mean eventually I’d like to take a break, but right now I’m just enjoying it while I can. I travel a lot during the holidays to do interviews and shit, for the new products. But when I’m not doing that, I’m at the bakery. And honestly, I love it there. I love the environment and the rush of adrenaline at the start of every morning. I love the people that come in so excited to be there. And when I’m in the kitchen, I get so…so lost in what I’m creating. It’s just really cathartic. When I’ve felt like I’ve had a bad day, a customer will come in and say something really positive, and that’s honestly the best part of it all.”

“That’s how I feel about my job.”

“Yeah? What do you do?”

“I’m a sports journalist.” Louis proudly grins. “Back in London, I was writing columns for footie, but now that I’m in the States, they have me write about ‘soccer’ or baseball. But it’s still the same for me. Watching the games is wonderful, but it’s nothing like getting to write about them. Like getting to convey those emotions when a team wins or portraying the heartfelt grief in a loss; it’s electrifying. And then seeing the reviews, and reading how people actually felt like they were at the game with me, it’s unlike anything else.”
“Wow,” Harry spills out, overwhelmed by the passion sparking from Louis’ tongue. It’s contagious, Harry feels as though the sparks are burning into him as well, but he focuses back on their discussion. “That’s incredible, Lou. So wait…what are you like, doing here if you were in London before?”

“The place I was working at has a sister office in the states, and the New York staff just lost one of their sports journalists over the summer. They decided to send me here as a temporary replacement until they could hire someone else for the position.”

“So you’ll be heading back to London when they find someone else?” Harry tries to hide the excitement in his tone.

“Maybe… I got talked to a couple weeks ago that the New York office has been pretty impressed with me, and is thinking of offering me the position if I want it. They haven’t made it official or anything yet, but if they do, I’ll have till June to make my final decision.”

“What do you think you’ll do?”

Louis sighs, “London’s me home, yeah? But I’ve had a lot more opportunities and freedom with my writing here, than I did there.”

“Well then, what’s the goal? What’s your career endgame?”

“Goal? Hmm, it’s kinda silly.”

Harry motions with his hands as he talks, “Lay it on me.”

Louis rolls his eyes, “Okay… I’d like to teach. Like be a professor at a uni and teach journalism.”

“That’s not silly! In fact, I think I could definitely see you doing that. You don’t seem like the office type to me.”

“Yeah, ‘m definitely not.”

Since they started talking, nothing has really changed, and yet everything feels like it has. The atmosphere lays lighter against Harry’s body, not pressing down into his shoulders like it always does. The air tastes sweeter as it slithers on its way into filling his lungs. The scenery appears brighter, softer, like a pair of rose-colored glasses have been placed in front of his eyes. And Harry knows Louis’ to blame. That Louis has this effect, and it’s not just with Harry. People always seem to be comfortable around Louis, always laughing around Louis… they always seem to sparkle a little more, as if Louis has sprinkled glitter into their eyes. But it’s not that, it’s just him, it’s his impact… and Harry finds it all obscenely fascinating.

Biting his lip, Harry says. “Well, I think London is better for you, but I’m obviously biased.”

“So if I go back, does that mean I’ll have a friend?”

Obviously, Harry would like to be more than friends, and his cheeks redden a bit at that thought, but he answers with something else to keep it safe. “We don’t need to be in London for that, we can stay friends, even if you’re still in the city.”

“Good,” Louis says with an impossibly wide grin, “Because I’d like that.”

“You would?”
Louis looks straight into Harry’s chartreuse orbs, and Harry stares back, observing the specks of color that shine within Louis’ pupils as if there are a million tiny galaxies within his gaze. When Harry’s almost lost in his space, Louis finally breathes out, “Yeah…yeah, I would.”

It’s perfect, Louis’ perfect. Everything about him has Harry wanting to kiss him till he’s out of breath. But this time it’s different. Harry honestly wants to kiss Louis, and then cuddle Louis, and then spend all his time getting to know Louis, whereas before, he just wanted to get out some sexual frustration. But now…this…this is something else. And quite frankly, Harry’s terrified… but really, only in the best of ways.

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The Christmas party has continued on with lively holiday spirit. Niall has eaten the apartment clean, Liam and Zayn are practically having sex on the couch, and Louis is plastered to Harry’s side, having only left for a total of ten minutes to speak with some other people from the building. To sum it up, it’s been wonderful.

Leaning against a wall currently, Harry is waiting for Louis to bring him a drink when something bumps into his legs. Looking down, there’s a short, blonde girl in a red dress, looking up at him with wonder in her eyes.

“Well, ‘ello there.” Harry bends down to get eye-level with the young girl.

“Well.” She says shyly.

From above, a woman with silver hair comes over and starts talking hurriedly to the two.

“Lux, what have I said about running off?” She directs to the child and then turns her attention to Harry. “I’m sorry about that, my daughter loves wandering about, and meeting new people.”

“It’s all right. No harm done whatsoever, right Lux?”

Lux smiles excitedly and nods her head. “Right!”

When he’s about to say something else, Louis returns with the drinks and then greets the two girls with joy. “Oh, hey Louise, and Miss Lux!” Louis bends down, and Lux wraps her arms wide around Louis’ neck, giving him a tight squeeze.

“Louis! Louis!” She squeals.

“Hello, darling. I see you’ve met my friend, Harry. Were you being nice to him?”

“Yes!”

Their interaction is incredibly sweet, and Harry tries really hard not to think about Louis with children. Harry’s sure it’ll give him a heartache if he lets those scenarios invade his mind.

Returning back to what’s happening in front of him, Harry watches as Louis gives Lux a kiss on the cheek right before she let’s go, and returns back to her mother’s side, who then looks back at the boys. “Yeah, we’re about to leave, actually. Lux needs to get to bed. We’ll see you around though, yeah?”

Harry and Louis wave them off as they leave, and then Louis hands Harry the drink he had obtained for him. After Harry takes a sip, Louis starts discussing something that Harry does his best to keep engaged with, but it’s hard. In the forefront of his mind, Harry couldn’t refrain from imagining Louis
with kids, and to put it simply...he’s a lost cause.

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“Oi, Harry. You have to tell them about that time when Liam first got pissed, and we lost him!”

“Oh my god Niall, please...anything but that story,” Liam begs as he stands next to Harry.

Zayn snickers, “No, no...I want to hear this story, babe.”

Giving in, Harry watches the four other lads positioned around him as he’s about to talk, but he holds his gaze on Louis the longest as he begins, “So Liam, Niall, and I went to this party. We were only in grade nine, and it was the seniors throwing it-”

“Yeah, and...” At the exact moment that Niall goes to chime in, he shakes his beer to emphasize his point a bit too much, causing him to accidentally spill all over Harry’s shirt. “Shit, sorry mate!”

“That’s alright,” Harry admits. “But it’s cold though, so I’m gonna go back to the flat and change my shirt.”

“A’right, here’s the key,” Niall tells him as he passes the key in his hand.

“Thanks.”

Heading to the apartment, Harry opens the door and heads straight to Niall’s room where his luggage has been kept. When he takes off his shirt and starts shifting around his things to find another to wear, he hears the front door open. Harry just assumes that maybe it’s Niall coming down to see if he’s really alright, but then when the footsteps resound closer to him, Harry looks up surprised to find Louis standing there. And oh...that’s a nice alternative.

“If I didn’t know any better Lou, I’d say you’re stalking me.”

Louis shakes his head and giggles. “You wish.” After the words are said, it doesn’t go unnoticed the way Louis’ eyes rake over Harry’s naked chest.

“So what’re you doing here?” Harry asks, hoping that maybe this could pick up where they left off yesterday.

“Well uhm,” Louis starts out nervously. “I know this might be like...I don’t know...too much too soon? But Niall had told me before you came, that you had just had a bad breakup and was looking to get away. And then when I came home to the apartment and saw you crying, I didn’t really know how to address it, so I didn’t at all. But I couldn’t help thinking how rude that was of me, to just ignore your feelings at that moment. I uhm...I have four younger sisters, so I have a very biased repertoire on how to handle breakups, so sorry if this is really dumb.”

Moving his right hand from behind his back, Louis passes Harry a rainbow-colored teddy bear, and then continues on, “I just wanted to say too, you know...I’m sorry for whatever that dickhead did to you. I don’t know what happened, and you don’t have to tell me, but in the few days I’ve known you, I already know that you deserve the world, Harry. So don’t waste any time being upset over someone who never deserved you in the first place. It’s their loss, not yours.”

“You got...you got me a gift?”

“Well I mean,” Louis itches the back of his neck, “It is Christmas, so like, yeah...?”
Harry closes the distance between him and Louis, and he’s hoping to hide it, but there’s already a tear in his eye that he desperately doesn’t want to let fall. Holding the plush toy within his hands with the utmost care, Harry stares at it astoundedly. This is more meaningful than anything Nick has ever done for him, in all the years they’d been together.

“Thank you, Lou.”

Harry raises his eyes to Louis’ lips as he whispers his gratitude, and he’s not hesitating this time. He starts leaning forward, more sure than he’s ever felt before, until Louis meets him halfway and completely solidifies all that’s been left questioned. Their lips don’t crash together; they don’t collide like they’ve been tempted to doing before. This time, this time they gently press against each other with delicate precision. Harry’s numb to all else except for the warmth pressed upon his lips, where Louis is rushing in. The only thing he can hear is his own heart thundering like a jackhammer, and he’s positive it’s loud enough for Louis to hear. After Louis pushes into him a little bit more, he then pulls away, leaving Harry with only a shadow of the warmth that was there.

“Merry Christmas, Harry.”

The words are tossed carelessly into the silent room, and before Harry can say anything else, Louis turns around, leaving him alone with the bear in his hands. When Harry listens as the front door of the flat is opened and closed, he exhales greatly like he’s been blown up with air. As he regulates his breathing once again, he licks the bottom of his lip, intrigued at the faint taste of cinnamon left behind on his mouth.

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December 26th, 2015 (Saturday)

Harry’s dreams had departed from him early in the morning, sailing away wistfully from the shorelines of his subconscious. When they had gone, Harry woke up with his limbs splattered on the couch, and the events of late last night replaying in his thoughts. After the lads had left the Christmas party, Liam and Zayn had somehow made it home, though Harry doesn’t quite recall how. Once they had, however, the other three friends stayed up chatting for a little while longer. It was nice getting to spend quality time with Niall and Louis, though all too soon, they both went off into their respective bedrooms, leaving Harry back on the couch. Regardless, it had been a great day.

But now it’s a new day, and Harry’s hungry, and as he’s quickly learned that Niall and Louis have nothing in their apartment. They literally live off of pizza, Chinese, and anything else that comes in the form of take out. Which to Harry, gets old, very fast. Getting up from the couch, Harry tugs on his shoes and jacket, and googles the closest grocery store from them. Once he has an idea of where he needs to head, he tucks his phone and wallet into his coat pockets as he directs his feet out of the building.

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“Harry? What’s that?” Niall says groggily as he stumbles out of his bedroom with droopy eyes.

“I’m making a full English,” Harry shrugs nonchalantly. “Thought you and Lou might be hungry. Plus, I figured you probably haven’t had one since maybe you were back home.”

Niall’s mouth visibly waters, “Wow, I love you. But…where’d ya get all the food to make this?”

“Went out and bought it.”
“Harry!”

Harry starts pointing accusingly at Niall with his spatula. “Nope, none of that! I wanted to do something nice. A belated Christmas present, if you will.”

Niall flips him off. “You’re a fucking cunt.”

“Love you!”

“Yeah, yeah,” Niall answers with a smug grin.

Just as Harry and Niall’s banter dies down, Louis comes waltzing out of his bedroom with ruffled hair and black joggers on. Only, black joggers on. Harry’s mouth drops at the sight of Louis shirtless, and he can’t pull his gaze from where they’re locked. Louis must realize this as well, because he lifts his eyebrows playfully, and then points at Harry’s food.

“Think you’re burning the toast.”

“Hm?” Harry sounds, and then smells the strong scent of something gone wrong. “Oh, shit!”

Turning around, Harry pulls the toast out of the toaster oven, hearing the two other boys chuckle behind him as he does. Despite their laughter, the toast is thankfully salvageable, meaning that Harry can plate it along with everything else he’s made. Sectioning the food into three parts, Harry fills the separate plates for Louis, Niall, and himself.

“So…you made this for us, Curly?” Louis asks as Harry places the food in front of him and Niall.

“Yes…yes, I did.”

Harry’s eyes look to Louis for reassurance, but what he finds is unexpected. There, stitched into the fabric of Louis’ facial expression, shining the brightest of the stars in the galaxies of Louis’ eyes, is fondness. Louis peers up at Harry through his delicate eyelashes, and Harry wants to frame the image for the rest of time. Louis then drifts his eyes back down to his food and goes to take a bite. When he chews on it, Harry feels like the world is rotating in slow motion, time barely passing, until Louis swallows and then glances back up at him.

“This is really good, Hazza.”

Harry preens and then starts eating his own food in comfortable silence. Albeit with a dusted pink shading of raspberry tart, now clinging to his cheeks, and a few glances at Louis that feel like best-kept secrets from Niall.

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“I can’t believe Liam convinced us to go to a bar tonight,” Niall whines beside Harry and Louis. Liam had texted the three boys earlier in the day saying that he and Zayn wanted to go out, if they wanted to come along. Niall was excited about a round of drinking until he found out that Liam invited the girl Niall’s been pining after, who too lives in their building. After that, Niall altered his decision drastically, claiming that he didn’t want to go out anymore. Of course, the lads weren’t letting him off that easily.

“Look,” Harry begins, “Don’t worry about if she’s there or not. Let’s have us a lads’ night, and just have fun, yeah?”
“But Liam invited her…”

Louis chimes in this time, “Niall… if you want to, talk to her. If not, don’t. If you want something to happen, then you need to stop being dim, and make a move.”

“Okay fine, fine. I get it. Just, let’s find those two lovesick idiots and get us some drinks. I should have been drunk an hour ago.”

Behind Niall’s back, Louis rolls his eyes to Harry, who quietly snickers in return. After, they follow the Irishman until they get to Liam and Zayn, who have a table reserved at the back of the bar.

“Hello gentleman,” Harry greets, as he sits at the table.

Niall starts in, “I’m not waitin’. Gonna get some beer. Anybody else want?”

“I’ll have one too,” Zayn comments from the other side.

Niall nods and then makes his way over, as Harry and Louis settle in. Harry’s adjusting his hair when Liam pokes him in the side and leans in to whisper.

“Hey, what’s going on with you and Louis?”

Harry cocks his head innocently, “Hm?”

Liam looks back and forth between Harry and Louis, as he says his next words. “You guys seem to be awfully close.”

“Oh, it’s nothing really.”

“Harry…”

“Okay, well erm… we kissed, yesterday.”

“Kissed!” Liam’s eyebrows raise in shock, “Harry what the fuck, mate?”

“What?”

“What about Nick? You know… your boyfriend of four years?”

Harry snorts and spits back with emphasis. “Ex-boyfriend…remember, Liam?”

“No, I don’t actually! Since, let’s see, you never told me anything!” Liam snaps in an angry whisper.

“Well, he bloody cheated on me. Multiple times! And so it’s over. And yeah, maybe I shouldn’t be going around kissing anyone for a while, but Louis’ been better to me than Nick ever was, and that’s…that’s…”

Liam lets out an audible exhale, as he rubs his hands onto his face in frustration. “You’re an idiot.”

“Yeah, well…”

Harry can tell that Liam wants to continue the conversation, but Niall comes back to the table, disrupting the discussion they were having.

“Alrighty ya cunts, now that I have my beer, I’m happy again.”

Niall sits down in between Harry and Liam, and then Louis turns to Harry.
“Hey, do you want to get a drink with me?”

Louis doesn’t seem to notice, but the other boy’s eyes are locked on him, and Harry knows what they’re thinking. He already knows what is going through their minds, and the judgments that they’re making, but he doesn’t care. Ignoring them all, Harry replies with a smile, “Of course.”

When they leave, Harry can almost feel the sharp edge of the daggers the lads are staring into his back, but he reaches the bar with Louis unaffected.

“At the bar, Louis says to the female bartender, and then turns to Harry, “What would you like?”

“Erm, sex on the beach?”

Louis’ eyes widen a bit as he stares longer than necessary, but then he smirks and nods, turning to the bartender to tell her his order.

While Harry tries to listen to what Louis is saying, a finger pokes into his shoulder, and a loud high pitched voice invades his focus. “Excuse me?”

Turning around, Harry comes to two women behind him with eagerness lacing their faces. “Yes?”

He asks with a hint of annoyance.

The shorter of the two girls gives her friend a curious look and then returns to Harry. “You wouldn’t happen to be Harry Styles, would you?” She asks with hesitation.

Harry tries to hide it, but he was really hoping this wouldn’t be the case. He loves his fans, he does. And he genuinely would do anything for them. It’s just that sometimes, they act like Harry is obligated to do what they ask, as if he owes them whatever they want because they support him. And well… it’s a fair argument, but it’s not right.

Trying not to sound disappointed, Harry grins, “I am,” and prays that they only want a picture.

“Oh my gosh, okay! Look, we’re not going to bother you we promise, but can we just get a picture?”

Harry nods gratefully, “Yes, that would be fine.”

The two girls squeeze in closer with Harry, as the shorter one who’s been talking pulls out her phone. Leaning in, she snaps a picture, and then the three of them pull apart again.

Harry starts to feel relief at the interaction being over, but then the other girl who hadn’t said anything, now starts talking. “Thank you so much. By the way, what are you doing in New York?”

Taking in the bar, she squints her eyes in a criticizing manner at Harry, and asks another question, with much more accusation in her ton. “Shouldn’t you be spending the holidays with your boyfriend, Nick Grimshaw?”

And ouch, that was said a bit harshly. Or maybe Harry’s just sensitive to the topic because it’s fairly new, but still. He doesn’t want to answer. So through tight lips, Harry states, “If you don’t mind, I’m not going to comment on that.”

It’s clear the girl is upset to hear that as the answer, and she’s about to start up again with a more aggressive expression ensnaring her face, but suddenly firm hands pull Harry away.

“Sorry ladies, but he’s with me tonight.”
Bending his head to the person, Harry hooks onto Louis, who’s pushing him through the crowd and away from the others. When Louis notices Harry looking, Louis offers an uneasy pout, or maybe discomfort, but Harry smiles regardless. “Thank you.”

“Sure thing, Curly.”

Louis’ right-hand remains on Harry’s lower back for the rest of their walk to the table, and as they make their way closer to their destination, Harry waits for when Louis will pull it away. But he doesn’t. Instead, he moves his arm a bit further up and rests his small fingers against Harry’s shoulders. It’s comforting, and brings a heat across Harry like molten lava cake, gooey and warm as it oozes from Louis’ palm. Harry wants to bathe in it, wants Louis to touch every inch of his barren skin with his molten chocolate love, but it won’t happen tonight. And it probably won’t happen soon. So Harry convinces himself to be satisfied with what he’s got, a lone settled hand on his aching back.

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It wasn’t much longer that they stayed at the bar because Liam and Zayn gave in early to exhaustion. Niall had wanted to stay just a bit more because he finally mustered enough courage to talk to Barbara, and it seemed like they were hitting it off, but even Louis began to protest. So the five of them grabbed their things and left.

Eventually, Niall, Louis, and Harry made it back to the apartment, and the other two went right to bed without saying another word. Harry didn’t mind though, he was tired too, and it was sort of exciting to lay on the couch and just think without any interruptions. Every day with Louis has been getting increasingly more difficult to deny the feelings that have developed for the blue-eyed boy. And Harry’s not sure how to handle that.

Because for instance, if Harry sticks to whatever it is that they are, some form of friends with very few benefits, where would it go? It can’t sustain the way it is, at some point, they will hit a fork in the road and have to make a choice. And would they go down the relationship route, or go down the path of friendship? Maybe if Harry were living in the city, he would be fine to take his leisurely time figuring themselves out, but he doesn’t. When he leaves New York in a few days, the chances that he will see Louis again unless he makes an effort too, will be slim. And that’s why Harry needs to decide something.

On the other hand, if Harry picks friendship, Harry will be devastated. He knows there’s something more here that he can’t verbally explain, and each minute that he spends with Louis, he feels the pull becoming more imminent. He’s not sure that he can honestly ignore whatever it is that exists in his heart for Louis, and he’s definitely sure he doesn’t want to.

And lastly, let’s say Harry picks relationship. Let’s say he throws the coin into the fountain and trusts in his gut, giving in to his feelings though still very small. What if it doesn’t work out? What if Harry tries, only to have another broken heart? He can’t do it. He can’t stomach the idea of feeling that again. If Louis…if Louis cheated on him, it would be the end to Harry, and that he’s sure of.

So what does Harry do? There’s a seed in his hand, there’s something physical though small, that he knows is due to Louis. Does he toss it to the wind, and let it fall where fate may take him, never to be seen again? Does he keep it with himself, always as a seed, always kept safely within his pocket? Or does he water it? Does he give it sunlight and room to grow into potentially a flower more beautiful than Harry’s ever known? But on the same hand, that beautiful flower could wilt, fading into dust along with Harry’s fragile heart.

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It’s the middle of the night. It’s the middle of the night. It’s the middle of the night, and Harry needs to pee. His body doesn’t want him to get up and is refusing to move his limbs, but Harry shoves them regardless. He needs to pee, so he shuffles across the room with his eyes still closed, and goes to the bathroom. Once he’s out, and a lot happier, Harry starts to pace back to the couch when he hears a noise. Stopping in his tracks, Harry pauses to listen for the sound again, unsure of what exactly he heard the first time around.

It takes a few seconds, and Harry’s on the verge of giving up when he hears it…and it’s…it’s a moan. *Fuck…it can’t be.* But it is. It’s a moan, and it’s coming from Louis’ room. Harry shouldn’t, he really really shouldn’t, but he walks up to the bedroom door and presses his ear against the wood.

On the other side, he can hear faint sighs, and the sound of rubbing against skin echoing from within, and Harry’s cock swells. *Fuck, I didn’t sign up for this. This is too much.* He knows he should walk away, but the sounds have him glued against the door, listening intently for the next noise that escapes Louis’ lips, leaving Harry to wish desperately that he could see Louis’ pretty mouth right now. Watch him as he plays with himself, or as his eyes grow black, laid out all pliant on his bed for Harry. *God, stop! Stop!*

“Nff, fuck.”

Louis’ voice is raspy, and Harry is harder than a fucking rock. It truly hurts with just how turned on he is, and he seriously needs some release. Just a little. Ignoring whether it’s right or wrong, Harry starts palming himself through his pants, hoping the friction will satisfy him, but quickly realizing it doesn’t. If anything, it’s making matters worse.

As Harry keeps rubbing himself, he gives in to the fact that it’s not enough. He wants to go into the bedroom and shove his cock in Louis’ mouth to keep him from moaning so loud, but he can’t. *But it can’t hurt to just…wank out here…can it? No Harry, that would be horrible! I’m invading his privacy as it is.* But the louder Louis’ moans become, the more hopeless Harry is. Shoving his hand in his boxers, Harry finally grips himself and starts tugging on his cock, not going gently as he increases the pace. His hand squeezes hard as it moves fast, pushing and pulling relentlessly against him, but Harry focuses the most on hearing Louis. On how he must look on the other side of the door, legs spread wide and long, his small palm tugging on his pretty cock, and his eyes hazy while his cheeks are flushed.

It doesn’t take long for Harry to start feeling the buildup, and he doesn’t mean to, but he lets out a groan. He almost stops, afraid he was too loud, but then Louis purrs more audibly than Harry, and Harry just gives in. He rubs himself until he reaches the climax, listening as Louis lets out a slew of moans just as Harry’s voice does too. Harry can’t imagine what this must look like, two boys getting themselves off at the same time, with only a door between them. But he doesn’t care. This was the best wank he’s ever had, and after he’s done, he feels like he’s temporarily cured. That is, until he sees Louis again tomorrow morning, and his sexual frustration is kicked up again.

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**December 27th, 2015 (Sunday)**

Harry’s woken up in the morning by the sound of the shower going off. When he opens his eyes, to his surprise, he finds sunlight peering in through the apartment instead of cloudy greys. Rubbing at his eyelids, Harry shuffles his body into a seated position, and yawns. For once he feels well rested, which is a rare occurrence for him, and is curious if that is caused by the strange event that took place last night. Harry’s not sure, and he’s also not sure if he actually wants to know the answer to that question, or not.
“Oi, Harry. You’re up?” Niall asks as the bathroom door opens, and he steps out in a towel.

“Yeah, you going out?”

“Well, if ya want…figured Tommo and I could show ya around town.”

“Yeah? That’d be nice.”

“Cool! Well then, let’s get fucking ready!”

Chuckling, Harry silently wonders to himself how Niall is always filled with bounds of happiness. It’s as if he’s stocked up on a lifetime supply of endless joy. Though Harry’s not complaining, being around someone like Niall is a quick cure to any depression, and he’s more than glad that he has access to it as much as he needs. Niall is the greatest friend Harry’s ever had, and he’s never going to take him for granted. Not ever.

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As they’re standing on the subway cart, waiting four more stops until they have to get off, Louis turns to Harry to talk.

“Alrighty Harold, we’ve got a long list to get done today, so you better not walk at your usual snail’s pace.”

Niall giggles from Louis’ left side, as Harry is on his right, arguing back, “I am not slow!”

“Harry… I hate to break it to you, but yes, you are. You’re like watching my nan get out of bed in the morning.”

“Rude.”

Niall interjects, “It’s true, but that’s okay, cause we love you all the same.” And then Niall adds as he pokes Harry in his dimple, “Slowpoke.”

Harry tries to bite his finger, and then spits out, “shit heads,” at the two boys who are laughing too hard for his liking. But then Louis looks at Harry with adoration in his eyes, and Harry grins back fully because he’s a goner when it comes to those sapphire orbs.

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The first breath of air Harry intakes of the city smells like asphalt and cigarettes. It’s a unique scent, tinged with various restaurants, and the occasional strong perfume or cologne wafting off people they’re passing by. While London in truth, has the same smells coursing throughout its streets, it’s overall scent is different. It’s cleaner, it’s lighter… London itself is a lot less concrete jungle and more historical architecture, and maybe that it’s. Maybe it’s how the River Thames flows through the city, purifying the London air in a way that the Hudson River could never do. Or maybe…maybe, Harry’s just partial to his English roots.

Either way, Harry doesn’t dwell for long on how a small part of him is missing home, as the lads walk around the streets of New York. With an elated tone, Niall informs Harry that the first place they’re stopping at is Times Square, where they head specifically to M&M World. Louis wants them to stop there first because he loves the machine that apparently analyzes people’s moods, and tells them what color m&m they are. Harry’s confused about what Louis is describing, but decides he’ll just wait to figure it out, as they enter the store and go up to the second floor.
Once upstairs, the three boys wait in line for the machine, where it seems people are standing in a designated spot, and staring at a screen in front of them. After a few moments, the rotating m&m in the middle of the screen transforms into a color that’s supposed to represent their mood, and then something else is written underneath it. A few of the messages have been like fortunes, while others have been more random.

After some time of waiting on line, it’s their turn to stand up, and Niall goes first. Staying still for a few seconds, the screen changes, and then he’s being given his color. It’s silver.

“What does it say underneath, Nialler?” Louis asks.

“It says, ‘you secretly wish you were a famous mime.’”

The three boys look at each other and laugh at that one. Harry comments in, “Damn it, and I always thought you wanted to be a famous boy-bander!”

Niall chuckles as he hops off the floor. Next up is Harry, who gives out a big exhale like he’s nervous for what he’s about to find out. And in some part, he kind of is, though he reminds himself that this is just a silly gimmick for tourists, not anything more.

Staring at the screen, Harry purrs out, “Come on love, give me something good.”

“Harold, you can’t sweet talk the machine. It doesn’t work like that!” Louis instantly injects.

“Oh hush!” Harry waves off. As he returns his attention back, the color changes, and then Harry is shown the blue m&m.

“What’s it say?” Niall asks.

Harry reads aloud, “You want to try new things and encourage others to do so as well.”

“Very prophetic,” Louis remarks snarkily, and then starts shooing Harry away with his hands, as he talks again. “Alright, off off! It’s my turn now, Curly.”

Hopping up into the spot, Louis dances around and makes a goofy face at the two boys waiting, igniting giggles from them as they watch. After a few more moments, the color changes, and Louis is shown the dark green m&m.

“Read it, Lou!” Harry cheers.

“Oh uhm…it says…‘you think honesty is the best policy. The next thing you say will be the absolute truth.’”

Louis turns his face to look at Harry, with flushed cheeks. Niall doesn’t see it, but Louis and Harry are locked on to each other. Harry’s not sure why it feels like something monumental is supposed to happen, it’s a silly machine and yet, why does it feel so important? Niall continues to be completely ignorant to his surrounding, and tells the lads to follow him out, adding that he wants to show Harry Central Park, next.

As they walk out of the store, a fair amount of people eye Harry curiously, as if they know they’ve seen him before, but they’re not exactly sure of where. He tries to ignore it while they head back onto the street, but Harry’s self-conscious gets the better of him, so he turns to ask Louis a question. “Do you think I look okay, today? I feel like I stick out a bit.”

Louis drags his eyes all over Harry, and mumbles out, “You look beautiful Harold. You always look
Harry’s heart stalls, and then kick starts again a million times faster than it had been beating before. He feels his cheeks heat up as if he’s been placed in an oven, and then he clears his throat, stuttering out, “Oh, erm… thanks.”

But it’s not enough, it’s not enough to show truly how Harry feels, so he does something else. He brushes the back of his own hand against the back of Louis’, testing the waters before diving in. Louis doesn’t pull away, and Harry takes this as incentive for more. Extending his fingers, Harry catches Louis’ hand within his own palm, letting them stay intertwined between their bodies as they move along the sidewalks. The two boys don’t glance at one another, for fears neither one is completely sure of, but as Harry grabs on, Louis holds back tighter. Niall doesn’t notice as he paces a few steps ahead of them, leading them away, but Harry and Louis know, and that’s all that matters.

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The three boys pace block after block, covering much of the grid of the city, weaving through cars and people as they head to every destination on Niall and Louis’ list. They made it to Central Park, had frozen hot chocolate at Serendipity, bought mounds of sweets at Dylan’s Candy Bar, and spent nearly every minute together immersed in conversation. Harry hadn’t laughed so hard in years. Being with Niall felt nostalgic, but being with Louis felt exhilarating and whimsical. And the three of them together had this perfect dynamic, that kept them entertained even when they were just sitting down to take a rest.

Currently, they’re traveling down a busy street as Niall turns to Harry, who’s in the middle, “Oi, Harry. Let’s stop in Macy’s last.”

Harry looks up to the building across the street that Niall is pointing to. “Alright. Is it like Harrods?”

“Sort of. It’s the same concept in that they’re both department stores,” Louis answers.

Harry nods at that. “Cool. Let’s go.”

Making their way up to the door of the building, Harry trudges along with the two others as they head inside. It’s bustling with people, and Harry is already finding himself out of place. Trying to keep up, Harry grabs onto Louis’ jacket sleeve, and let’s himself be pulled along by the shorter boy. Louis’ probably aware of the tug on his arm, but he doesn’t do anything to suggest he notices it. Harry thinks of maybe grabbing onto his hand again, but then Niall turns to them.

“Right, so I’m gonna go check out the shit over there. Do ya want to split up, or stick together?” Niall asks.

Harry let’s go of Louis, and responds back first, “Well, I’d like to check out the toys. Should we just meet back here in ten minutes?”

“Sounds good to me,” Niall replies, heading in the opposite direction. As Niall goes the other way, it seems for a second that Louis is confused in which person he should follow, paused for a moment in between the two. But soon enough he gives Harry an apologetic smirk and marches after Niall.

That works out for Harry though, because secretly he’s been wanting to buy Louis a gift, something in return for the one Louis gave him on Christmas. So it’s definitely best that Louis doesn’t follow along with him. With those ocean eyes in mind, Harry guides his feet, looking around for plush toys until he finds the section where they’re nearly wiped out. On a lone shelf, there’s only a unicorn, dolphin, and a teddy bear left behind. Harry weighs his options, giving each animal a fair chance,
until he notices that the teddy bear has rainbow colored fur… like the one Louis gave him.

Harry wonders if that would be weird to give Louis essentially the same thing he got for Harry? Though the bear in front of Harry is a bit smaller than the one he was given, it’s practically the same. But maybe…maybe that would be cute? Maybe Louis would find it oddly nice that they almost look like they're meant to be together, like a pair? And even better…Louis would have the small bear while Harry would have the big bear, and that practically screams fate for Harry.

Grabbing the soft plushie in his hands, Harry doesn’t give it a second thought, and goes to the checkout lane to pay for the bear. Afterwards, he holds the bag the gift is placed in, and makes his way back out of to their agreed upon meeting spot. He’s nervous, questioning whether this is a bad idea. Whether Louis will like the gift, or think that it’s too much. That maybe Harry is pushing for something Louis may not want. But then Harry nears the location, and Louis comes into view, looking up at him with those eyes that hold the entire universe in their gaze. And suddenly he doesn’t care. The nerves wash away, and he bites on his bottom lip, full of electrifying courage as he stands in front of the shorter boy.

“Where’s Niall?” Harry figures this is the safest way to start.

Louis shrugs, “The leprechaun told me he’d be out in a sec. It’s been five minutes.”

Laughing, Harry shakes his head along with saying, “Yeah, that sounds like him.”

Louis nods, and then looks down at the bag in Harry’s hand curiously, “Find what you were looking for?”

“Oh, erm. Yeah? Actually… it’s for you.”

“For me?” Louis asks back in shock.

Handing the gift over to Louis, Harry starts, “Yeah. Merry belated Christmas, Lou.”

Reaching into the bag, Louis pulls out the bear, and an expression of endearment thankfully etches onto his face. He peers back up at Harry with surprise, and then back at the bear with devotion. Harry wants to tell him why he bought it, but suddenly there’s a smile breaking through Louis’ adorable attempt at concealing it, and it’s wide, and bright, and full of teeth. And Harry just melts. His whole body crumbling like the chocolate chip cookies he used to bake with his nan when he was a kid.

It’s strange, but as Harry’s standing there, basking in the sunshine Louis spouts, that familiar sweet scent seems to drift around them as if it’s escaping from his memories. It floats in the air, swirling around the two, leaving them trapped in a web of cookie dough. And Harry’s curious why that is. Why he’s being reminded of it now? Why he’s thinking of it here with Louis? And why is his scent of home, seemingly dancing around Louis like it’s where it belongs?

Reeled from his questions, Louis wraps Harry up in a needy embrace, hugging him tightly against his frame. Harry nestles into his shoulder, holding Louis in return as his own limbs reach around his back. While they’re pressed together, Louis tilts his head to talk, his lips tickling against Harry’s neck as he does.

“Thank you, Harry. I love it.”

And Harry almost replies, ‘I love you,’ but that would just be crazy, right?

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When Niall comes back, he doesn’t question the bag Louis has now despite the boy having not purchased anything, but Harry’s grateful for that. He truly doesn’t feel like explaining to any outsiders about why he bought Louis a bear, deciding that for the time being, it can be another one of their secrets. With that avoided, the three continue on normally, shopping around the rest of Macy’s as they go up each and every level. By the time they all actually leave, Niall’s purchased about a dozen new shirts for himself, and Harry’s nearly bought Louis the same amount in gifts.

Once they step outside, they direct themselves to the subway, catching the next train back out to Niall’s stop. Inside the cart, Harry grabs onto a pole for support, as people cluster in the already cramped space. With the three of them close together, up against one of the side doors, Niall asks, “Are ya lads hungry?”

Louis remarks back, “Starving, mate. We haven’t eaten a proper meal today.”

“Well, where should we get food from?” Niall asks.

“I say let’s stop to get pasta from that place, and bring it back to the flat.”

Harry jokingly says, “We’re in America, Lou. It’s called an apartment.”

“Oh fuck off,” Louis responds with a smile.

Niall comments back to Louis’ earlier suggestion, “Ya wanna get pasta? That’s fine with me. Harry, how about you?”

“Fine with me, mate.”

It’s another five stops before they finally get off, and Harry follows the two as they take the lead ahead of him, towards the restaurant. When they reach it, the three walk inside, going directly up to the hostess at the front. She smiles wide as they enter, asking Niall who’s right in the front, “Table for three?”

“Actually, we wanna order out,” Niall informs.

Nodding her head, she pulls out a menu for him, “Okay! You can go order at the bar.”

They walk over to bar countertop and sit at three available stools. Once they’ve ordered and paid for their desired meals, Niall leans into the two, informing them that he’s running off to the toilet for a second. While Harry and Louis are waiting at the bar, Harry’s eyes grasp onto a woman passing them by, who happens to be carrying a box of Harry’s holiday desserts. After staring at the box for an obvious amount of time, Louis takes notice, because then Louis asks, “What’s it like? Getting that stuff ready for the holidays each year?”

Harry turns back to him, “The hardest part is coming up with what to make. This year was the worst, I had absolutely no inspiration for it.”

“You don’t have some beautiful muse that inspires you to bake?” It’s said with humor, but also enough seriousness that Harry knows Louis is truly curious.

“Erm, no. I mean…Nick…he’s my erm, ex. We were together for four years, and honestly? He never inspired me to bake a single thing.”

“Really?” Louis responds in shock.

“Really. He…he didn’t fully support baking as a career at first. We met at the end of uni, and he told
me I needed to get a proper job. But then I started doing well, so he stopped making those comments. After that, he would start getting mad if I was home too late, or eventually because I was gone too long. I mean, I understand… he didn’t get together with me thinking we’d be in a long distance relationship in the end, but…”

“Harry, stop. That’s ridiculous thinking. Baking is clearly your dream, and no matter the circumstances, he should have always supported that.”

Harry wants to ask Louis how he got to be so amazing, but he just huffs out a sigh instead. “Yeah, I wish.”

Louis nods, and then asks, “Was that the reason you two broke up, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“No, not at all,” Harry answers, and then says, “And no…we broke up because I walked in on him with his coworker, in our bed.”

Louis’ mouth drops open, and there’s a flash of anger on his face that Harry almost doesn’t catch. “Are you serious?”

“Yep, found him face first in the other guy’s arse.”

“That’s fucking horrible.”

“It is, isn’t it?”

It’s quiet for a few seconds as though Louis is carefully crafting what to say next. Harry wants to tell him not to worry about it, but then Louis starts up. “I know it’s not my place, but you should find someone that encourages you to do the things you want to do. And on top of that, you should find someone who inspires you. I know I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, you deserve the entire fucking world Harry, and you shouldn’t settle on anyone who can’t give you that.”

Goosebumps engulf his skin as a calming cold wind drifts over him. It’s an invited cold, an enjoyable cold, like eating ice cream on a leisurely summer day. Harry wants to swim in it, surging his body within it’s refreshing waves, letting it soak into his overheated skin. Louis doesn’t seem to realize the effect he has on Harry, or how every word that stumbles out of his mouth, starts up a crazed tango in Harry’s heart. Louis doesn’t seem to realize that it’s not just simple advice, it’s meaningful, and purposeful, and it’s a support that Harry’s never had before. Louis doesn’t seem to realize, that this is more than who deserves to be with Harry. It’s about Louis and Harry, and them together, and the fact that Harry’s been unable to stop thinking about Louis this entire fucking holiday…and this all is just totally surreal.

Harry comes back to the discussion, wishing he could just press ‘fast-forward’ and kiss Louis already. But unfortunately, he can’t. Though internally frowning, Harry physically grins at Louis to respond to his statement. “That’s what I’ve always wanted, you know? When I was younger, I always hoped I’d fall in love with someone that inspired me to bake little wonders.”

Harry almost tells Louis, that Louis inspires him. That since their first moment together, flavors have been bursting around Harry like a volcano, shooting out with ideas and recipes on desserts to make. Harry almost tells Louis that in the few days they’ve been together, he’s brought on more happiness and motivation for baking than Nick ever did. Harry almost tells Louis that he’s already become the baker’s muse…but almost… sadly means he doesn’t.

“Well, you’ll find that. I know you will.” Louis says reassuringly as he places his hand on Harry’s upper thigh.
Harry replies back, “Maybe I already have?” And he’s staring at Louis, hoping Louis is picking up what Harry’s putting down. And it seems like he does, that there’s a glint in his eyes that wasn’t there before, but their gaze is broken. Interrupted by Niall who starts shouting something offensive at Louis, causing them to break their focus and laugh. But though their eyes are no longer locked together, the moment’s not forgotten. Not by a long shot.

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**December 28th, 2015 (Monday)**

Monday morning Harry woke up to a flustered Niall rushing toast into his mouth as he races out of the door to work. He wasn’t able to take the whole week off, but Harry is okay with that. He should probably spend today trying to get in touch with his mum, and check on how the family is doing. As Harry starts to unplug his phone from the charger, another set of footsteps are heard coming from the second bedroom.

“Morning, Curly.”

“Louis…I didn’t realize you were still here. Don’t you have to go to work?” Harry asks quizzically.

Plopping down on the couch next to Harry, Louis leans back into the cushions and then turns his head to respond. “Yeah, but I can work from home whenever I want.”

“Really? That’s nice.”

“Yes…” Louis says, and then adds, “You hungry?”

“A bit, yeah.”

“There’s this placed called ‘The Crooked Knife,’ that’s great for brunch, but I thought we could go there for lunch today, if you want?”

A smile erupts on Harry’s face, “Sure, that’d be nice.”

“Cool, I’ll go change.”

“Me too.”

Louis heads back into his bedroom, while Harry goes into Niall’s. With the door closed, Harry allows himself to breathe a few more times, suddenly very nervous about spending the whole day with just Louis. Just the small moment of him sitting on the couch next to Harry, had Harry’s organs in an absolute panic. For precautionary measure, Harry takes a few more deep breaths to ensure he’s genuinely relaxed, and then vows that by the end of this trip, something’s going to happen with him and Louis, because he can’t keep going on like this. Louis’ driving him insane.

After his personal promise is made, Harry gets back to the task at hand, dressing up in skinny jeans and a green sweater. Once he’s all together, Harry exits the bedroom and waits in the living room for Louis to come out. It’s only a few more minutes that pass before Louis’ door opens, and Louis steps out in black tight fitted pants, and a black button-up shirt, and Harry almost drops to his knees right then and there.

“Wow, Lou. You look…erm, you look…really good.” Harry thinks Louis looks beautiful, but somehow that was too hard to sputter out.

Louis’ cheeks flare as he says, “Thanks, Harold.”
'The Crooked Knife,' is the kind of eclectic place that Harry totally adores. The minute they walk in and are sat down, Harry’s already in love. The mismatched rustic furniture, the smell of food cooking, and the welcoming atmosphere has Harry feeling right at home. After a waitress sits them down, and they order their drinks and food, Harry leans back in his chair and begins, “So Lou, tell me…”

Louis cocks his head, “Tell you what?”

“I don’t know, anything. I just want to know something about you.”

“Okay,” Louis giggles, “I uhm, I have six siblings.”

“Wow, really?”

“Yeah, there are two sets of twin, and all but one are girls.”

“That’s wonderful. I have an older sister, but that’s it.”

“Lucky you.”

Harry shrugs, “I guess. Okay, since you know about my ex, tell me about yours?”

Louis holds his focus on Harry for a few seconds, and then slowly drawls, “Alright…I don’t have many. I was pretty celibate until uni, not many people were out of the closet before then, so I didn’t really have many choices. Once I got to uni though, I definitely explored my sexuality a bit, or uhm, more like a lot. But then after freshman year the excitement had faded, I settled down again, and started dating someone. We were together for about three years, and on graduation day, he told me that it had been a good run, but that it was time to end it. He said we didn’t have a future together, and it was silly of me to think that we did. I guess looking back on it, he was right. I moved to London while he went off to Australia for some amazing job offer he was given. But it still tore my heart out all the same.”

A stern, tight-lipped grin plasters onto Harry’s face at Louis’ story. “It’s funny,” he begins to tell Louis, “But I never really pictured a future with Nick. I thought at first that we would just take everything one day at a time, and we did. But then that’s how we were still treating our relationship one year, two years into it. The only reason we even moved in together was because I was buying a house around the time his lease was ending, and it just seemed like that was what we were supposed to do. That we were expected of it. But I never thought about proposing, I never thought about him doing it either. I mean, maybe I was using my job as an excuse not to have to face our issues for a while, but…I don’t know? He never told me he was upset about anything, and I guess I never took the time to question it.”

“It still doesn’t mean he had any right to cheat on you though. He should have talked with you if he felt indifferent.”

“Yeah…sorry, I wanted to talk about you this time, not me. Erm… have you dated anyone since then?”

Louis glances away briefly. “Er, not really. I was caught up in my job, and the few dates I went on weren’t anything great. Then after a while, I was told I was moving to New York, so why bother looking? And since I’ve been here, I haven’t wanted to, because there’s a chance I’ll be back in London again by the end of the year.”
“Yeah, I know how that feels. The back and forth of constant traveling.”

“You said eventually you want to take a break, yeah?”

“Yeah, and settle down.” Harry adjusts his hair. “I’m a family man, I’ve always wanted to have a husband and have kids, so if my life finally starts going in that direction ‘m gonna follow it. I’m not the kind of person who likes to be alone.”

Louis smiles at Harry’s last comment, and Harry wants to bottle it up, but all too soon Louis’ talking again. “Neither do I, honestly. I grew up in a big family, and I’d love to have the same thing for myself.”

“You definitely will, Lou. You’re beautiful and so incredibly genuine.” Harry really should stop there, but his big mouth can’t keep back the compliment’s once they’ve started rolling. “You know, I don’t think you realize just how amazing you are. Anyone who gets to be with you will be the luckiest person alive. You’re so funny, and supportive, and bright...you’re so bright you outshine the fucking sun, Lou.”

“The sun?”

“Yeah, the sun…” Harry starts to feel embarrassed for having let all that slip. However, Louis’ expression is that of a child being given a puppy on Christmas morning, and if Harry is the reason for that...well, then he doesn’t feel so ashamed about it after all.

“Wow,” Louis says, “That’s the best thing anyone’s ever said to me.”

Harry fails at hiding back a dopey smirk, “Well you deserve it. To be talked to like that, I mean. You deserve to hear how amazing you are, every single day.”

The waitress seems to appear out of nowhere, dropping their food off in front of them, and interrupting Louis’ state of shock. Harry’s only a little bitter, not getting to enjoy Louis’ reaction to his words for as long as he had hoped. But it’s okay, because the rest of lunch is spent with Louis unable to contain his wide-eyed grin, and Harry falling further than he’s ever been.

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Louis has been walking especially close to Harry on their way home from the restaurant, and so Harry takes a chance, intertwining their fingers together like he had done yesterday. It luckily still doesn’t seem to bother Louis as their hands tangle between them, and Harry tries to act like it’s not the scariest thing he’s done in a while.

Standing side by side, Harry’s eyes gander over at Louis, taking note of the shorter boy shivering beside him, and of how his toasted coconut cheeks have turned an apple red. On a whim, Harry pulls his hand from Louis’ and wraps his arm around the other boy’s shoulder. He rubs his palm against the fabric of the jacket, hoping to create some heat as he asks, “You cold, Lou?”

“Oh? Uhm, yeah. But it’s okay, you don’t have to do that.”

“I want to.” The words rush like a blizzard from his lips, drifting into the space between the two boys. Louis halts his pace and looks up into Harry, glimpsing at him with something akin to wonder. Harry stares back, wanting to peer into Louis’ iridescent eyes until he understands all the secrets that Louis holds. Harry wants to read every story, watch every memory. Harry wants to grasp the entire being of that which is Louis fucking Tomlinson, but before he does, Louis inches forward and kisses Harry, and Harry forgets all that he had been thinking before.
It takes Harry by surprise, the soft press of cold lips against his own dry mouth. He doesn’t move at first, but once his brain comprehends what’s going on, he pushes back. Kissing carefully, their lips slot together as if Harry is the lock to Louis’ key. It’s overstimulating. Tingles pulsate along the miles of Harry’s skin, and he feels it trembling to the core of his soul. Unconsciously, Harry shifts his hands to cup around Louis’ face, and he doesn’t care that it’s the middle of the day or the fact that they are stood in the middle of the sidewalk. Louis is kissing him, and everything within himself comes to life.

It takes considerable effort, but all too soon Harry regretfully breaks apart their kiss, “Let’s pick this up in the apartment.” At the suggestion, Louis raises his eyebrows and bites his lip, looking absolutely sinful. He went from being shy and nervous, to outright confident and sexy, and Harry can’t take it. Grabbing onto Louis’ hand, Harry pulls him to the building as fast as humanly possible. He needs to get Louis home now.

Once they’re inside the elevator, Louis shoves Harry against the wall and starts nipping at his bottom lip. Harry growls at the contact, clutching onto Louis’ luscious hips to turn him around. With the new position, Harry presses Louis’ arse firmly against his groin, grinding into him with desperate need. Louis lets out a raspy groan, and Harry leans down, dragging his starving lips across the boy’s exposed neck.

When the doors to the elevator open again, Louis pulls them apart, yanking Harry behind him as they walk up to the door. As they near their destination, Harry’s skin feels like it’s on fire; all he can think about is how much he wants to kiss Louis again. The minute Louis gets him inside, Harry plans to shove him against the wall, and fuck him until forgets his own name.

Once Louis unlocks the door, Harry grabs onto his hand and whispers “Lou,” against his earlobe, Harry’s voice already sounding wrecked. As he pushes Louis through the doorway, Harry begins to say more, but he doesn’t get the chance to finish what he’s started.

“Hiya lads.” Harry stomach drops. “They let me off early today!”

Niall is sitting in the living room, a cheeky expression on his face, and all hopes for Harry getting Louis naked in his bed are lost. Of course, this would happen.

Louis sounds out of breath when he speaks. “Oh yeah? That’s great... great.”

Niall flashes them a skeptical look, and Harry suddenly needs to get out of there. He’s so uncomfortable, he can’t even form words, still struggling with a painful erection pressing firmly against his jeans.

“Heh, bathroom,” he finally mumbles, trying to make a quick exit. Once inside, he locks the handle behind him and leans against the door, unzipping his pants as quickly as he can, just enough to wedge a hand inside his boxers. If he doesn’t get off soon, he might actually die.

He closes his eyes, and he swears he can feel Louis’ mouth on his, the warm press of lips against his own, the way Louis’ arse had felt grinding against him. Pictures run through his mind, filthy images of Louis kneeling before him, Louis taking his cock in his small, warm mouth…

The pressure explodes, and his head falls back, hitting the door as he cums. His legs are quivering, and it’s all he can do to hold himself up.

Damn, he thinks when his mind finally clears, and his heartbeat slows. If that’s my imagination, how much better will the real thing be?
He needs to find out.

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**December 29th, 2015 (Tuesday)**

Harry wakes to the sound of Niall and Louis eating breakfast in the kitchen.

“Be quiet,” Louis’ voice hisses, “Harry’s still sleeping,”

“He sleeps like the dead, he’s fine,” Niall bounces back.

With a loud exhale Harry snaps, “You’re not as quiet as you think you are,” causing the two boys to jump.

“Oi, you’re up?” Niall asks. “I’ve got to head into work, but Lima bean and Zayn are comin’ over to spend time with you.”

“Okay,” Harry says.

“And I have to head out too, got a meeting today,” Louis adds.

Harry tries not to pout; he was hoping he and Louis could have spent some time together today - *alone*. The disappointment, however, doesn’t last too long, when he thinks about getting to spend time with just Liam and Zayn. The three of them have lots to catch up on.

“Alright, have a good day at work, you guys.”

They shout their goodbyes as they close the door behind them, and Harry rests his head back down on the couch. Now that it’s silent again, he should be able to get some wanted sleep, at least until the other two show up.

* * *

“Harry, you are absolute shit at this game,” Liam teases from beside him as they play FIFA. Or rather, Harry *attempts* to play.

“Shut up, I never play these things.”

After a few more ineffective efforts to block Liam’s team from winning, they score a goal, and the game is over.

“Liam, it’s not really winning when you’re up against someone who doesn’t know how to play,” Zayn quips as Liam starts cheering for himself.

“Hey, you’re supposed to be on my side!”

“Just saying,” Zayn smiles at the end of his words in a way that makes Liam dissolve into a puddle of fondness.

Harry cuts in, “Thanks, Z. And it’s okay, I just don’t want to play anymore.”

“And I don’t want to watch you two play anymore, so you’re out voted, Li.”

“Okay fine. Well, Zayn and I wanted to talk to you anyways, Harry. Might as well do it now.”
Questioning back, Harry says, “Talk to me? About what?”

Zayn responds, “About Louis. We uhm, know something is going on between the two of you, we just don’t know what.”

“And what? You want to know?”

“No!” Liam protests, “No. We just want to discuss how you’re feeling. I mean, you just broke up with Nick, your heart is a fresh wound. You might want to think twice before giving it away to someone else until it’s fully healed.”

“Who said I was giving it away already?”

Zayn cuts in, “It just seems like it. Like you’re already falling quite hard for him. And the thing is... we like Louis. We like him a lot. He fits in with us better than we could have ever imagined, and we understand the appeal. We just...we don’t want to see him get hurt. Or you.”

“You think I’m going to hurt him? Nothing’s even happened yet!” Harry snaps back in frustration.

“Yeah...” Zayn counters, “You’ve kissed! And honestly? We think you’re both going to end up either hurt or disappointed.”

“I can’t believe you’re talking to me about this.”

“Harry, please.” Liam continues, “We’re not trying to fight with you, or attack you. We’re just looking out for you and him. No offense, but the way you two have been acting comes off like you’re running into the next pair of arms blindly, and I’m scared Louis is going to end up being the rebound.”

“Liam...how long have you known me? Have I ever...have I honestly ever done something like that? I understand how fast this is, believe me, I’ve been dealing with it this whole time.” Harry sighs. Why don’t they trust him? “Thinking about this has been eating me alive, but I can’t deny it. I can’t deny that there’s something there with Louis I never had with Nick, and it’s not me being reckless!”

They both give him a skeptical look, and he runs his hands through his hair in frustration. “Look, I didn’t come here looking to be with someone. Louis... sort of just happened.”

Zayn responds, “But Harry...what’s going to happen when you leave?”

“I...I don’t know.”

“Exactly...We’re not trying to be mean, but you haven’t thought this through. Louis is going to be here in New York, and maybe he’ll head back to London, maybe he won’t? That’s for him to decide. And you’ll be flying off to wherever your next interview is, or you’ll be at the bakery, and you’re never gonna be around to see him. What kind of relationship is that?”

And okay, yeah... Harry never thought about the outcome of all of this, because he didn’t think it would get this far. At the beginning of this, he was just physically attracted to Louis. But now he knows Louis, and it’s not just his physical appearance that has Harry on his hands and knees, begging for everything. He wants more out of this than he could have imagined, and that is downright frightening.

“Okay, you’re right. But...but I want to try. Is that really so bad?”
Liam looks Harry dead in his eyes, “You were just saying that nothing has happened between you two, and now you’re saying that you’re serious about him? After barely a week’s time?”

“I’m not lying! Nothing has happened between us… not really. And in some ways yes, I’m serious about wanting to see where this goes. I’m serious in not wanting this to end just yet.”

Zayn and Liam give each other a look as if they’re not sure how to handle this anymore, and then Liam sighs.

“Harry…you’re my best mate, and you know I’ll support you no matter what stupid decisions you make. So if you want to give it a shot, I’ve got your back. But if you break his heart Harry, I’ll have to punch you in the face.”

Harry grins. “Okay, deal.”


December 30th, 2015 (Wednesday)

Harry wakes up to an empty apartment because Niall had to go to work, and Louis has another meeting. It’s okay though, Harry’s actually thankful for the time to himself because he’s been severely needing to contact his family. Other than sending a few texts, he hasn’t been able to talk with them, and Harry could use some serious advice. After making a cuppa, Harry grabs his phone and rings his mum.

“Harry, love!” Her voice comes through like a lullaby, comforting and safe. “How are you darling?”

A smile instantly decorates his face. “Good! How are you?”

“Fantastic! Just been touring around Paris, and spending time with Gem.”

“How is she?”

“Good, you want to talk to her?”

“Yes, please.”

Harry can hear the shift in the air as the phone is being passed along, and soon his sister’s voice takes over the line.

“Baby bro, is that you?” She giggles after her comment.

“Ugh, stop calling me that.”

At that, she laughs a little louder, and then continues, “How are you, Harry?”

“Good, erm…actually Gem? Wanted to talk to you about something.”

“Oh? Hold on, let me step away from the parentals.”

After a few more seconds, she comes back on the phone. “Okay, what’s up?”

“So…there’s this guy that I met. He’s Niall’s flat mate…and, erm-”

“Let me guess, you really like him, and you’re asking me what I think you should do because you feel guilty having just broken up with Nick? Does that sum it up for you?”
“Jeez, Gemma. But yeah…pretty much.”

“Nick’s a fucking prick. He cheated on you, and he never deserved you. If you’re enjoying your time with someone else, then enjoy your time with someone else. Don’t worry about your ex who never worried about you at all.”

Harry pinches the bridge of his nose, and sighs “Oh…okay.”

“Look Harry, maybe the timing doesn’t seem right, but maybe it is. Don’t deny yourself something great because it may seem unorthodox. If it’s what you want, then go for it.”

It’s true, Harry’s biggest issue, along with Zayn and Liam’s, is that the timing seems wrong. He just broke up with Nick barely a few weeks ago, and to be jumping into another thing, whether it’s a relationship or not, seems abnormal. But if it feels right…if it feels like this is what’s supposed to happen, then why should Harry deny it? There’s no rulebook on love, there’s no set in stone guidelines on what’s correct and what’s not. There’s nothing else standing in Harry’s way at this point, except for himself, and maybe it’s time to move aside. Let fate do what fate does best.

Harry mumbles out, “How are you always so good with advice?”

Gemma snorts as she replies, “Because I’m the wiser, older sibling.”

“Older, yes, but I’m not so sure about wiser…”

“What!” She scoffs, “Take that back, or I’ll straighten your curls the next time I see you!”

“Not like you haven’t done that before.”

“And not like I don’t have pictures of those times that I could easily show to this new potential boyfriend…”

Harry can practically see the smug smile on her face, “Ugh fine…I take it back…”

“Good! Now go kiss lover boy and tell me all about what happens.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Harry laughs, “Okay, love you.”

“Love you too.”

“Oh, and Gem?”

“Hm?”

“Thanks.”

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After getting off the phone with his sister, Harry spends the rest of his day checking emails, updating his social media accounts, and updating his agenda with what’s coming up after this break. It was a fairly busy day considering he hadn’t left the flat once. Later, by the time Niall and Louis both make it home, Niall suggests to them they should all take it easy tonight, maybe only go out to see a movie, since tomorrow is New Years. Harry and Louis agree, and then they all grab their jackets and scarves, to keep warm as they exit the building.

“I can’t believe that I leave the day after tomorrow,” Harry sputters out.
Louis is standing on one side of him, and Niall is on the other. It’s Niall who comments back first, “Well, you’re free to come back as much as you’d like.”

“Thanks, mate.”

As the three of them walk into the movie theatre, Harry feels a tugging on his fingers to find that Louis has taken hold of them. Harry smiles down at Louis, who seems to be visibly upset, and wonders if it’s from what he said earlier. Once they buy their tickets and grab the large popcorn to share, the three of them head into the theatre and take their seats in the middle of the aisle. Even as Niall is talking to them, he never notices Louis keeping a hold on Harry. Or Harry keeping a hold on Louis. Niall never notices that throughout the entire movie, Louis and Harry’s thumbs are engaged in a dance, twirling across one another’s skin with gentle attention. Niall never notices the way Harry peeks at Louis, or how Louis glances at Harry, and that neither of them really watch any part of the movie. Niall never notices, that Harry and Louis are entranced in their own little world that neither of them are easily getting out of it.

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December 31
st
, 2015 (Thursday)

“Alright lads, it’s time to pregame. Shots up!” Niall shouts as the four other boys raise their glasses to meet with his, circled together over the coffee table in the living room.

“One,” Niall shouts, “Two… three!”

On three, they all tilt their glasses back, letting the vodka thrum in their system as it races down their throats. Harry feels on fire, and it’s partly due to the liquor, but mostly because Louis looks fucking godly. His hair is gelled into a cinnamon swirl that sharpens his features immensely, he’s wearing these painted on black jeans, and he has on this white shirt that says ‘not heartbroken,’ and Harry wonders if that’s a personal message meant for him. Harry tries dressing up as well, putting on his black jeans and a pink shirt with white hearts around it. He only buttons it halfway, showing off his array of tattoos with the hope of enticing the aforementioned boy, in particular.

“Harold, you up for another shot?” Louis says to him, and Harry gives him a cheeky smile in response, allowing his dimples to show.

“I suppose another couldn’t hurt,” Harry winks. Louis nods enthusiastically, and fills the two glasses with another shot of vodka, clinking their cups together before bringing it to their lips. Though as they tilt their heads back to drink, the tension they’d tried to ignore stimulates the air around them. It charges the room as they keep their eyes maintained onto one another, never daring to break the connection. And all the while, smirks evident on their faces. When they’re done, cups abandoned on the table though their eyes have yet to part, Harry wonders if this is how the whole night’s about to go.

❄❄❄❄

The club is insane. There’s a room where food is being catered, a room where drinks are being served, and then there’s a room where the DJ is playing music, and everyone’s dancing. Harry moves straight for another drink, ordering a vodka cranberry and gulping it down, leaving the empty glass on the bar countertop. When he turns around, he glides back over to the boys, only to find that Louis isn’t sitting with Niall anymore.

“Where’s Louis?”

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“Where’s Louis?”
Niall leans his head towards the crowd of people who are dancing, and Harry follows it to find Louis swaying around in the center. Harry doesn’t think of himself as much of a dancer, but he’ll be damned if he doesn’t go after the boy and make a move. So shuffling through sweaty bodies, Harry slides up against the back of Louis, and Louis responds as if he’s known all along that Harry was going to do this.

“T ook you long enough.” He jokes as Harry presses into him.

“Hey, Lou-” Harry starts, but is stopped by Louis turning around abruptly and placing his hand on Harry’s mouth.

“Not tonight. Let’s not…let’s not talk about anything tonight. Let’s just be here in the moment, yeah?”

Harry nods, and when he does, Louis drops his hands from his face and then moves his body, so their chests are pressed against each other. Keeping their eyes locked, Louis wraps his arms around Harry’s neck and starts dancing on him. It feels so intimate Harry could burst, but he tries to follow Louis’ rhythm and lead, moving his hips as he sways with the other boy.

When the pace of the music picks up, Louis turns back around, his arse pressed against Harry’s cock so deliciously that Harry’s mewing. Louis leans his back against Harry’s chest as he dances on him, lacing his arm around Harry’s neck to press the two boys into a heated kiss. Harry is sliding his tongue along Louis’ lips, pressing through them, and into his mouth. As they’re dancing, and kissing, Harry’s stomach flutters like rabid butterflies have invaded him, and it feels perfect.

Harry doesn’t want to pull away ever, but unfortunately, there’s a tap on his shoulder that interrupts their moment. Turning around he finds Liam, who yells a little to say, “Let’s head back to the table. Going to order more drinks.”

Louis and Harry stop, but not without giving one another an apologetic look, before they follow Liam back where Niall and Zayn are sitting.

Alright, I want more drinks. Louis, come with me to get everyone a round of shots,” Liam states more than asks.

Louis nods his head, and then Harry settles at the table with Niall and Zayn.

“See you getting pretty cozy there, Styles,” Niall shouts, with Zayn snickering beside him.

“Piss off,” Harry says as he flips them the finger.

Niall laughs and then responds, “I’m not trying to mess with you! Glad you two seemed to figure it out.”

Harry blushes a little and then grins. It’s nice to know his friends accept them, even if Harry’s not exactly sure what they are, yet. Speaking of Louis, Harry turns his head to look for the two boys that should be making their way back to them by now.

Across the room, Harry’s eyes land on Louis talking to another guy. Harry tries not to think anything of it, but as he’s watching, the guy suddenly puts his hand on Louis’ arm. Before Harry can fully register what he’s doing, he’s got his own grasp around Louis’ shoulders, slowly trailing his palms down to Louis’ waist. Subconsciously marking what’s his, as Harry whispers, “Hey babe, been looking for you.”

The other guy’s eyes grow wide, and he turns around without saying anything else. Louis looks up
at Harry with Harry’s arms still around him, and says appreciatively, “Thank you.”

“Yeah, of course, love.”

Harry thinks of kissing him again, but then Louis grabs his hand, directing them back to the table to join the others in another round of shots. After they all take it down in unison, Harry really feels the effects of the alcohol as his body sways a lot more than he can control. Louis seems to be in the same boat, with his face a now permanent flush of raspberry sorbet.

They sit at the table and talk for a while, but after some time, Louis drags Harry back out to the dance floor. There are more people now then there were before, meaning that when they move their bodies against each other, they’re rubbing up on ten other people as well. Everyone’s too close in this confined area, but they dance regardless, making waves in a sea of people. Harry’s unaware of how much time they spend dancing, he just knows that after a while, the music stops playing and the DJ announces that there’s only a minute left until the ball drops.

Everyone else in the room is staring at a digital clock showing the countdown, but Harry and Louis only have eyes for each other. The seconds begin descending, and though there’s yelling all around, Harry zeros in on Louis, and Louis alone, as the boy stares back at him while biting his mouth. Harry loses his breath and continues without breathing as he fumbles at the sight. Louis standing in front of him, glistening with sweat, and his bottom lip trapped seductively by his teeth. Harry nearly chokes, wanting terribly to lick up every ounce on Louis’ salty skin.

Once ten seconds is declared, everyone starts counting down, while adrenaline rages through Harry with newfound purpose. Remembering with a jolt of electricity what they’re doing, and why they’re here, Harry fills with determination. Around them, the crowd yells, but all that Harry’s attuned to is Louis. So when the clock shows five, Harry takes a step. When the clock shows four, Harry touches Louis’ waist. When the clock shows three, Harry licks his lips. When the clock shows two, Harry takes a breath. And when the clock shows one, confetti pours, as two boys fall in love in a New Year’s kiss.

In the center of the floor, Harry melds into Louis like it’s his only way of breathing, sucking on his lips like it’s the only way Harry can satisfy his hunger. But it doesn’t help. It grows. Louis grabs Harry, and Harry grabs Louis, and it’s all they can do to keep from falling apart. Yet, Harry doesn’t care anymore, isn’t going to hide it anymore. Harry wants all of Louis. Louis, who tastes of sweet and bitter lemon bars, as Harry licks greedily into his mouth.

Without ever breaking apart, the boys start moving off the dance floor and head towards the front doors. They only break apart to grab their coats and get into a taxi but are back into each other’s arms as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Eventually, they arrive at the apartment, having to retake a momentary pause to go inside the building, but Harry can’t wait. Shoving his chest up against Louis in the elevator, while starting to suck on Louis’ neck, Harry growls with desperation.

When they get off on the floor, and into the quiet apartment, Louis shuts the door though Harry soon crowds him up against it. “You’ve been so naughty Lou, haven’t you? Teasing me all week.” Harry purrs, as his tongue licks along the edge of Louis’ jawline.

Louis intakes a sharp breath as he grabs hold of Harry’s hair, pulling the taller boy away to look him in the eyes, “Well it worked, didn’t it?”

Harry grunts, and then grabs Louis by the waist, twisting him so that his head is now leaning against the door, giving Harry a chance to grind his hard cock into the swell of Louis’ arse. As he does, Harry whispers into Louis’ ear again, “You tell me, love.”
Louis tilts his head so that Harry can see when the boy licks his own lips, and at the sight, Harry moves his black painted thumb to glide across the bottom of Louis’ pout. With the invasion, Louis parts his mouth, slowly moving them forward till he’s sucking on Harry’s finger.

“Fuck, Lou.”

Harry can’t take the teasing any longer, changing his plans as he picks Louis up, carrying him into Louis’ bedroom. Once inside, Harry gently lays him down on the bed and starts pulling the other boy’s pants off. As Harry peels the black jeans down to his ankles, Louis tugs his own shirt off, and then suddenly he’s naked, laid out patiently on the covers.

“Fuck…” Harry mutters at the view, “You’re so beautiful, you know that?” Harry gets down on his knees, tilting his head as he starts sucking into Louis’ inner thighs. “Every inch of you drives me insane.”

Louis wraps his hands in Harry’s hair, and tugs a bit, procuring a loud moan to escape Harry’s mouth. Harry’s eyes roll back as he licks his lips at the feeling, until he returns to kissing up both Louis’ thighs, marking red dots into his milky skin like the map to a treasure chest. Harry moves all the way up until his mouth is hovering over Louis’ cock, when he slurs out, “I need you to tell me what you want, Lou.”

Louis’ eyes are completely black, and he’s looking down at Harry like he’s going to swallow him whole. When Harry looks back at him, Louis smirks devilishly, and then responds, “I want you to fuck me.”

And fuck, that gets Harry so much harder. Smirking back at Louis for his response, Harry sticks his tongue out, licking filthily up the underside of Louis’ cock, and listening as Louis gasps at the action. Harry hums at the reaction and goes back down, opening his mouth this time to take Louis in. He does it gradually, torturing Louis as Harry’s swollen lips move lower and lower down his length, all the while, Harry’s tongue rubbing against his slit.

Louis squirms from under him, trying to buck his hips up, but Harry places one hand on his waist to keep them pressed down. As he’s holding Louis, Harry sucks harder, and then teasingly pops off, sliding his tongue over Louis’ shaft, as Louis cries, “Please Harry, fuck! Fuck... I need more.”

Not wasting another second, Harry goes all the way down until Louis’ cock hits the back of his throat, and then pulls back halfway. With his mouth around Louis’ length, Harry starts going back and forth at an unforgiving pace, feeling Louis’ pleasure in the pressure his hands grab Harry’s hair. Harry revels in the tug on his loose strands and sucks more until Louis sputters out, “Harry stop, I’ll come if you keep going.”

Pulling off, Harry wipes his mouth with the back of his hand so that he can start kissing Louis again. “God, Lou…”

Gripping Louis’ hips, Harry turns Louis over onto his knees, having him kneel on the bed on all fours. Harry drools at the sight of Louis’ arse, slapping one hand onto his cheek before kissing into the watermelon blotches that sprout in its wake. Not wanting to rush, Harry trails his lips all over the back of Louis, until Louis pleads, “Harry, stop teasing me.”

Harry chuckles but pulls back from kissing to instead suck on his middle finger, until it’s slathered in his spit. Taking it from his mouth, Harry brings it up to Louis’ hole and gently slides it across the muscle. Louis withers in response, and so Harry then pushes a little more, pressing his finger in carefully till Louis yells out, “Ugh, fuck that feels good.”
“Yeah, baby?” Harry croons. “You like this,” he teases as he slides his finger in and out.

“Ye…yes. Please… another.”

“Okay love,” Harry coos. Licking his second finger while not pulling the other one out, Harry moves the drenched digit up to Louis’ pretty hole, alongside with his first finger. Sliding it along with the other, Harry takes his time till he thinks Louis’ adjusted around him. When he thinks he’s okay, Harry starts scissoring Louis open, pushing further in until Louis grinds into Harry’s motions.

“There, fuck. Right there.”

Rubbing against his prostate fervently, Harry sucks into the swell of Louis’ arse to keep himself from wanting to lick into Louis. Another time, he promises, another time he will.

Against his skin, Harry says, “Baby, I’m going to put a third one in.”

“No, Harry. Please, I’m ready.”

“You sure?”

“Yes!”

“Okay, where are the condoms?”

Louis points to a table beside the bed, where Harry finds in the drawer a box of condoms and some lube. Taking out the items, he rips open the wrapper of a condom, and rolls it down head first. After it’s fully on, Harry adds more lube to make sure it will glide as easy as possible.

“You ready, love?”

“Fuck…yes, been ready.”

Aligning his cock, Harry points his head against Louis’ entrance, and then grabs onto the boy’s sides as he tentatively pushes in, waiting to do anything else until he bottoms out. When he does, he hears Louis let out an audible exhale, and then Harry begins to thrust, though still easing into it to not hurt the beautiful boy. Pulling himself out, Harry goes to push in again at a gradual pace, but Louis clearly doesn’t approve. Because the next thing Harry knows, Louis somehow whips them around so that he’s on top of Harry, sitting comfortably on his thighs.

Taken by surprise at the change of position, Harry moans. “Fuck…wanna ride me baby, is that what you want?”

Louis nods, “Yes, please…need you…”

“You’re so pretty begging for my cock.” Harry praises, “Alright love, go on, do what you want.”

“Fuck,” Louis groans as he starts to ride Harry with torturous speed that has Harry in a dizziness of pleasure. He can’t think at this point, he can only feel while Louis moves mercilessly on him, not slowing down a fraction. Harry’s blinded but somehow manages to find his hands on Louis’ cock, jerking him off without remembering to do so.

“Fuck, Harry…I’m gonna…”

Before Louis finishes, he cums all over Harry’s hand and stomach, leaving Harry to follow quickly afterward as Louis rides him out.

“Wow…Lou,” Harry starts saying between inhales of breath, “That, that was amazing.”
Louis pulls himself from Harry’s lap, and then Harry tugs the condom off, throwing it away in the nearest bin. After grabbing a few tissues, Harry cleans himself, then hands some to Louis to do the same.

“Lou? Would it be alright if I slept in here tonight?”

Louis looks at him curiously, “Oh? Yeah… I don’t mind taking the couch.”

“No idiot… I mean with you.”

Louis laughs and then nods his head, “Good. Yeah, I’d like that a lot.”

Moving their naked bodies into bed, Harry curls his frame into fetal position, taking the role of the small spoon as Louis lays his head on Harry’s back like a pillow. Louis falls asleep first, up against Harry, and Harry feels so content that he doesn’t know how he’s ever going to be able to leave tomorrow morning. Turning himself around so that he’s facing the sleeping boy, Harry kisses Louis’ forehead, and then whispers into his ear, “I never want to let you go.”

When he lays his head back on the pillow and feels the pull of sleep at his mind, he hopes with all his might that Louis somehow heard him. That somehow through the muddled dreams, and fantasies, his words reached a lonely Lou, and informed him of his promise to never leave him alone again.

❄

January 1st, 2015

Harry wakes up in a mess of sheets and opens his eyes to a sunny day. Go figure it’s nicest out on the day I feel the worst, he groans to himself. Scanning his eyes across the covers, Harry takes note that Louis is already out of bed, and noticing that he’s actually alone strikes him. This is the last time he’s waking up in this flat, meaning this is the last time he’s waking up and having Louis be there. Harry tries to pretend that he’s okay, even when the taste of lemon bars is still lingering on his tongue. He can try to fool the others all he wants, but he can’t fool himself. There is not an ounce of him that wants to wash that taste away.

After checking his phone, he notices that it’s time to start packing up. With a solemn frown settled onto his mouth, Harry opens the bedroom door to where Niall, Liam, Zayn, and Louis are all sitting in the living room. There are small greetings of ‘good morning,’ but all the words are burdened by their disheartened tones and saddened expressions. And Harry doesn’t need a doctor to know it’s because he’s leaving.

As he gives a nod, not knowing quite what to say, the boys stand up and help Harry in packing up his belongings. But to Harry’s dismay, it doesn’t take very long to be done. He wants to stay here, he does…but he knows he can’t leave the Nick situation unresolved. And for once, Harry actually knows exactly how he’s going to handle his ex.

“Well, lads… this has been a great trip…” Harry starts, but then Niall interrupts by grabbing him in a bear hug.

“Shut up… you’ll make this even sadder than it is.” Niall jokes, and Harry sort of laughs.

When Niall pulls away, Zayn steps in quickly and gives Harry another tight gripped hugged. Harry pats him on the back, and then Liam yanks Zayn off so he can give Harry a hug after too. It’s emotional, saying goodbye one at a time and leaving behind all his friends, but he has to keep himself together.
But then… then Liam pulls away, and only Louis is left to hug, and yep, this time Harry’s eyes are definitely watering. Louis wraps gently around him, leaning his head on Harry’s shoulder, and Harry wants to sob it hurts his heart so bad. But then Louis pulls away, leaving a cold frost where his warmth had been, and Harry sighs.

“Well…” Harry attempts again, but then his phone buzzes, saying that his Uber has arrived. Harry looks down, and then lifts his head back up, “I guess that’s my ride... erm, I can’t thank you all enough for this week, it’s been amazing and was exactly what I needed. I’m going to miss you all so much,” and when Harry says that, he keeps his eyes held on Louis. “But I’ll try to be back soon.”

“A’right, just get outta here before you have us all crying too,” Niall remarks, causing Harry to somewhat smile as he grabs his bags. Making his way over to the door, he pulls open the handle, and gives everyone one last look…gives Louis one last look, and leaves the apartment. When the door closes behind him, reality gives a hard smack across his face, and Harry gets into the elevator with so many unsaid words buzzing in his head.

When he makes it outside, the Uber car is pulled right up in front of the building, and the driver steps out to help Harry put his luggage in the trunk, before getting back in the front seat. Harry opens the back door, and then stalls to look up at the building one last time. It’s not bittersweet, he thinks, it’s just sad. After another moment, Harry drops his head down and then shuffles into the car.

As the driver starts pulling off from the curb, all Harry can think about is Louis. About how every single detail, every single speck that makes up who Louis is, is genuinely the most intoxicating substance Harry’s ever met. And Harry can’t deny all that floods in. Knowing Louis has been life-changing, and he’s inspired Harry in so many ways that Harry would have to repay for the rest of his life, in kisses and sweets and love for Louis. And that thought…well, that’s a nice thought. Waking up every morning to Louis, kissing him till he opens his eyes, telling him all the ways he makes Harry sickeningly happy until he smiles. And…and Harry’s an idiot…Harry’s a complete fucking idiot.

Once everything dawns on him, Harry yells out hurriedly to the driver, “Excuse me, sir! Can you pull over? I forgot something.”

With the car pulled back over along the sidewalk, Harry jumps out, and starts running down the street back to the apartment…because this doesn’t have to be over. This doesn’t have to be the end. As his legs take him into a full sprint, Harry looks up ahead to see Louis jogging down the steps of the building. The older boy is frantically scanning around on the street until his eyes lock onto Harry already coming towards him. Louis beams, and then also breaks out into a run to Harry. Along the sidewalk, they’re racing as fast as their bodies can take them until they collide into each other like crashing cars.

Louis grasps on to Harry tightly, “I thought you left. I thought you left and I didn’t get to properly say goodbye.”

“Oh baby, please. ’m sorry.” Harry tilts Louis’ head up so that he’s looking at him, and then continues, “I’m the biggest fool in the world for thinking I could just leave you behind. And I don’t want to. I don’t know what this is, but I want to drown in it. I want to see how far we can go until we can’t go anymore. I don’t want to let this go...let you go.”

Louis’ eyes are glossy, and a tear streaks down his face, “I was so scared that you were going to leave me. That you already did.”

“I could never,” Harry mumbles as he presses his lips to Louis’, and kisses him something fierce.
When Louis pulls away, he takes out his phone and hands it to Harry who looks at it questioningly. “I don’t even have your number,” he laughs out.

Harry shakes his head, “Wow, I’m really such an idiot,” but then puts his number in. “Please text me so that I have your number too.”

“I will,” Louis says affectionately. “And text me when you land.”

“Of course. I’m sorry I have to go back at all, but I have to take care of a lot of stuff first.”

Louis grabs Harry’s face with his two smaller hands, “It’s okay. I know that. Just…please don’t let me go.”

Harry bends down and kisses him again, and then presses his forehead to Louis’ as he declares passionately, “I will never let you go, love.”

❄

December 15th, 2016

(One Year Later)

“Welcome back, Harry.” Nancy Goodfellow glows at him from her cushioned chair on set, starting off the interview with a welcoming smile. “I’m so glad to have you on the show again, and exactly a year later too, no less.”

Harry smirks, “Yes, Nancy. I’m happy to be back, too. This has been a crazy year.”

“Yes, it has! The last time we talked you were in a relationship with another man, and now you’re happily together with a beautiful gent, by the name of Lewis Tomlinson.” She glances up from the cards in her hand, with a curious expression. “Did I pronounce his name correctly?”

Harry chuckles, “Not quite, it’s Lou-ee, not Lewis. And yes…we’ve been together for almost a year now ourselves.”

She returns to her eager smile. “Tell me… how did that all happen, and in such little time, as well?”

“Well,” Harry begins, a bashful smile of his own, taking refuge on his face, “I don’t know that I have a logical explanation for that. I fell headfirst into Louis, and some days I still don’t know if I’m swimming or drowning in him. He’s just…he’s absolutely incredible.”

“Sounds like he means a lot to you,” she adds.

“He means everything to me.” The audience swoons at that, causing Harry to feel flustered as he says, “I love him a lot, yeah.”

“Aw, I’m so happy for you.” Nancy says as she pats Harry on the knee, and then leans back against her chair when she continues, “But before we get too far off topic, you are here today, to talk about your newly released holiday pastries! This year, the foundation that will be benefiting from the purchases of these treats will be the ‘Believe in Magic’ charity. That’s so wonderful for them, I’m sure they’re very excited to be nominated for the donations this season.”

“Yes! They are very grateful, and I’m excited to be helping out another wonderful cause.”

“And this year, your desserts sold out in nearly all the stores on opening day. I mean…that’s…
wow!” The audience applauds along with Nancy in congratulating Harry on his early success.

Once the clapping has subsided, Harry answers, “Yes, which was really unexpected. This winter they have been selling faster than any other, and I’m not sure exactly what the cause is, but I couldn’t be happier with the outcome.”

“Well many are saying that these treats are the best ones you’ve created, thus far. Do you mind telling us where you got the inspiration for what you’ve called, your ‘Mon Beau’ pastries?”

A cheeky smile lifts on his face, and Harry snorts out a laugh. “It’s silly really, but I had been trying to make a dessert that tasted like Louis. That’s how it all started. I wanted something sweet, and salty, and so I was baking non-stop. A lot of my inspiration for this particular dessert comes from the French, because the first trip I took with Louis was for our second month anniversary, when we went to Paris. That was the first time I told him I loved him, and it felt important to me to include it. Obviously the name, ‘Mon Beau,’ is French…which means ‘my beautiful one.’ But the treats I designed were also based off of the French pastries, called ‘petit fours.’”

“That’s wonderful. You know, I think too, people have been really enjoying the different flavors you provide in each box, also.”

“Yes, well…Louis isn’t just one flavor, and that’s what was hardest to realize. Some days he tastes of strawberries, and other days it’s lemon. Some days it’s caramel, and some days it’s cinnamon.”

Nancy laughs, “If that isn’t the sweetest declaration of love, I don’t know what is.”

“I see what you did there. Always love a good pun…” Harry shakes his index finger while he giggles at her.

Nancy winks, and then goes on, “Well, Harry…before you go…what are your future plans?”

Harry glances into Nancy’s eyes, and then out into the crowd, as he responds, “I wasn’t going to announce it for a while, but I guess for you all I will. Currently, I’m actually in the process of opening another bakery in New York City, come next Spring.”

“Wow, that’s amazing. Congratulations!”

“Thank you. A lot of great things happened for me in that city, and I was more than thrilled to choose that location to open my second shop. Plus, it gives me an excuse to visit some close friends of mine.”

Nancy grins, “That’s really great. Well, this has been Nancy Goodfellow. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays, and see you next time London.”

After the audience finishes applauding, and the camera crew walks off set, Nancy gives Harry a hug goodbye. “Congratulations again, Harry. And thank you, as always, you’re such a pleasure. Maybe next time though, we can get your boyfriend up there with you too, no?”

“I don’t know,” Harry teasingly says with a smile, “You’ll have to ask him yourself.”

Nancy nods, “Oh I will, but not tonight. I think I’ve taken up enough of your time this evening, and I know someone’s been waiting patiently for you.”

“Thank you. And Nancy, if I don’t see you again before then, Happy Holidays.”

“You too, Harry. Bye!”
As Nancy makes her way in the opposite direction, Harry exits off the stage and is instantly met with a pair of ocean eyes, waiting for him with open arms.

“You did so great, love.” Louis cheers as he pulls Harry into a hug, and kisses the side of his cheek.

“Well, it’s all thanks to you, mon beau.”

Louis shakes his head in disagreement. “No…it’s all you, mon coeur.”

Harry smiles, “Maybe that’s what I’ll call next year’s pastries…my heart.”

“Nope! That’s my nickname for you, only I can say and use it.” Louis says as he snuggles into Harry’s shoulder.

“Of course, baby.” Harry stands in front of the shorter boy, lifting his right hand up to Louis’ face, rubbing circles with his blue painted thumb against Louis’ cheek. “I can’t believe it’s nearly a year already, it’s been so amazing.”

“Moving back to London was definitely the best decision I’ve ever made.”

Harry starts pressing kisses against every inch of Louis’ face, his cheeks, his forehead, his jaw, his lips. After he’s covered every skin cell, he nuzzles his nose against Louis’, giving him eskimo kisses as he tells him, “The best decision I ever made was getting out of that cab, and running back to you.”

Louis places his own hand on the outside of Harry’s and leans his head into Harry’s palm. “I can’t wait to see what this next year brings.”

“Oh Lou,” Harry whispers, “It’s going to be everything and more.”

❄

End Notes

Again, thank you so much!!

Here is the rebloggable post for this story, along with the image!
This is my main tumblr blog: afangirlfantasy
This is my fic rec / author rec side blog: alarriefantasy

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