Legacy

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/9250724.

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning: No Archive Warnings Apply
Category: F/M, Gen, M/M
Fandom: Hamilton - Miranda
Additional Tags: I’m Bad At Tagging, Here it goes, Washingdad, Martha is an angel, Homeless Alexander, but only for a second, Nonbinary Marquis de Lafayette, Hospitals, Social worker Kitty Livingston, John Laurens is a cinnamon roll, he needs a hug, seriously, someone hug the man, Henry Laurens is a jerk, Abuse, Child Abuse, Lafayette - Freeform, The frenchiest fry, It hurts writing them in pain, Teen and up because of abuse, This is terrible, I Wrote This Instead of Sleeping mullette, Lams - Freeform, I Will Go Down With This Ship Henry Laurens’ A+ Parenting, custody papers, Kidnapping, nothing graphic, James just doesn't tell the Washingtons he doesn't have papers, Bless you for reading all of this
Series: Part 2 of Legacies
Stats: Published: 2017-01-08 Updated: 2017-06-28 Chapters: 34/35 Words: 38524

Legacy

by My_Name_Is_Alexander_Hamilton

Summary

Alexander is homeless in NYC and almost dead of hypothermia when George Washington finds him under a park bench. He feels it is up to him to help Alexander find his path, and if he has anything to say about it, that boy is about to find his path easier than the yellow brick road.

Yet another Hamilton foster care AU.
Beginner in fanfiction (please don't hate me) and updates will probably not be regular, but I'll try. :D

COMPLETE!!!!!!!!!!!!!
So I couldn't sleep and I needed to do something, and this came about. Yes I know, another Hamilton foster-care AU. Sorry!!!! Also, this is my first Hamilton fic and multichapter fic, so yay for that. Any comments are appreciated beyond belief, as is constructive criticism. I'm still very much a beginner, so please don't hate me too much. Tags will be updated as this goes along. This has not been edited. And I think that's it. Please enjoy!!!!!!:D
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Alexander sighed as he curled closer into his thin hoodie, trying to protect what little body heat he had left against the snow. Of course this winter had to be the coldest on record in New York, because when had the universe ever decided to cut him some slack? First his dad, then his mom, the hurricane, and Peter. Yes, he had made it here, to New York City, but only to join the ranks of the legions of forgotten homeless in the metropolis. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad to just fall asleep and let the drifting flakes take him away. He wouldn't be the first this winter, not even the first on this street. He closed his eyes, imagining someplace warm, inviting, with his mother waiting for him, and smiled. The snow continued to fall gently, almost caressing Alexander as his consciousness faded.

No one saw the fourteen-year-old boy, curled under a bench as the blizzard worsened and he stopped fighting.

George huffed and mumbles to himself as he gathered his papers from his most recent meeting with Gates.

"Can you believe... Does the man ever give Canada a break..."

He starts as a very nervous-looking intern taps him on the shoulder, hands him coffee he most certainly does not need, and quickly retreats to the relative safety of the doorway before reminding him his wife wants him home early tonight. It's Laf's birthday, and Martha's making a family dinner to celebrate. He glares at the intern's general direction for a second before taking a sip of his espresso and thanking them for the reminder. They quickly scurry away, and he finishes gathering up his things. George does a double take when he glances outside his window, gawking at the raging snow before putting on two more scarves and a hat. He was not built for this weather. Hoisting the box of papers onto his hip, he sets out for what will be a very long walk.

He's only two block away from home when George sees a strange splotch of bottle green peeking up from a small mound of snow. He slows down for a second to take a better look, and his eyes widen in surprise. George knows that New York is home to thousands of homeless, but there is no way that the scraggly frame wrapped securely in a tattered sweatshirt is any older than 15. Children have always been George's downfall. He can never refuse Laf anything, and has passed dozens of bills (as well as drafted countless others that weren't passed) to improve the foster care systems. So really, he's less surprised than nervous when he kneels next to the boy and gently shakes him awake.

"Son. Son. Are you alright? You really shouldn't be out here." The boy stirs slightly, but George can tell that he's not entirely awake. Nor entirely healthy. Upon closer inspection, he seems even more sickly and thin than from the sidewalk. His oily black hair hangs in frozen little tendrils around his head, and his olive-colored skin looks far too pale. Not to mention how shockingly blue his lips are. George whips out his phone.
"Alright. I'm calling 911. No way do you not have frostbite, at the very least. Lord knows how long you've been out here." He's talking more to himself now than anyone. George as no problem admitting he's scared. He's never seen so sick a child before. The boy seems to be fighting to stay wake. George takes off some of his scarves to try and give him some heat and waits for his call to be picked up. What do those people do with all their tax money?

"Finally. Hello? I'm here with a boy who needs help..."

The ambulance can't come fast enough. George is still desperately trying to keep the kid warm. He looks a little more awake now. George isn't sure if it's a good or bad sign when the shivering increases, but now the kid is at least trying to speak, getting a legible word in here and there. George does his best to keep him calm while cursing the imbeciles in charge of the ambulance. In reality, they were there in around five minutes. George was unaware of that fact, however, and as the minutes wore on, began using some more descriptive words than imbecile.

Finally, the ambulance arrives. The paramedics are cogs in a well-oiled machine. In no time, they know the vitals of the kid, have him hooked up to more machines than he can count, and are in the process of trying to learn his name and where his family is. George feels something inside him flip at the sight of such a tiny kid hooked up to so many unfeeling machines. As ridiculous as it is, he reminds George of a little songbird, frail and in obvious need of help. And birds are not supposed to be held captive, even if they are held by machines that are keeping it alive. He has a gut feeling that this kid is going to need someone to look out for him. So again, he's not even surprised when his body acts of its own accord, trying to get closer to the kid and comfort him.

"Sir? Sir, unless you are family, you are not permitted to be on the ambulance with him. I am sorry," A particularly prickly-looking paramedic monotones.

George inhales deeply, takes a long dull look at the paramedic, and silently debates whether or not to play the 'Do You Know Who I Am?' card. It takes less than a second. This kid needs help.

"Mister," He pauses quickly to glance at the man's name-tag. "Adams, I am Senator George Washington, one of the most prominent members of my party. I have passed so many laws regarding childcare I can't even remember them all, have a child myself, and have fostered two children before them. Do you really see any reason why I could be a possible danger to that child, who by the way, was found curled under a park bench with no family in sight? I have a feeling that I am the only person who even knows exists. I suggest you let me get on that ambulance." The Adams guy seemed satisfactorily intimidated, and George gave him an overly exaggerated smile as he moved past him. He got to the kid's side just as a kind-looking woman get him to say his name.

"Come on, sweetie, we just need your name."


Chapter End Notes

So I needed a political enemy for Washington, and there was this guy named Horace Gates who had a (not so) elaborate plot to invade Canada which would somehow lead to him taking over command of the continental army? Washington said no and he got super salty. Anyway, that was what he was mumbling about in the beginning.
If it is not apparent, I know nothing of hypothermia, and this was written way too late at night, so I kind of ballparked it.
In the future, this might have a slight TW for mentions of abuse and homelessness, but not too severe. Like, literally a sentence or so here and there. Just a heads up. Please comment!!! Constructive criticism is my life source.
I'm starting to feel for Alex a bit. It's 17 degrees outside. I do not like cold. On the bright side, snow days means more updates!! Thanks to everyone who commented and left kudos on this. It made me so happy!! Enjoy!!!!

George smiled a little at hearing the kid's name. It seemed fitting that such a small-looking boy would have such a pretentious-sounding name. He moved to sit next to the kid-Alexander- and squeezed his hand. He was really looking forward to getting to know this kid.

"Well, Alexander, I'm George Washington. I found you in the park." George is attempting to keep his attention, but he can tell how tired Alexander is, how much he just wants to stop. However, he gives a faint nod. The nurse across from Alexander mouths keep him awake while attaching yet another tube to the boy. George nods and continues. "You're not in any shape to be talking right now, so I guess I'll just have to tell you about myself. I have a wife, Martha, and a kid, Lafayette..."

The first thing Alex thinks is that this man really likes his family. George talks for what seems like forever, telling him about his home in Virginia, about Martha and Lafayette, even about the park he was found in. Alex was trying hard to stay awake and listen, but it's hard. The world is a deep haze for Alex, and he can barely pick out George's voice. All he wants to do is sleep, but something in his befuddled brain says that a nap would not be a good idea right now. It's hard though. Whatever vehicle they are in (Alex is quite proud of himself for picking up that they are in a vehicle, even if he doesn't know quite what kind yet) is rocking him gentle, whispering to him. Sleep. Sleep. Sleep. Sleep.

Suddenly, the rocking stops with a jolt. His gut hardens, and his fingers squeeze a little closer to George's. After almost a year of living on the streets, he doesn't like not knowing where he is or what's going on. He's running a few scenarios through his head, trying desperately to figure out where he is, how to escape, anything, but his mind is not cooperating. His thoughts are interrupted by George speaking and whatever he was on rolling forward. 

"...Alexander? Alexander, they're going to take you into the hospital now. The doctors are going to run a few more tests and fix you up, good as new. I promise I'll be right here the entire time." George pauses for a moment as a second, nasally voice interrupts. "Yes, Mister Adams, the whole time." An argument occurs between the two voices, but the haze blocks them out. Then George is back.

"Alright, I just need to fill out a few forms for our dear friend Mr. Adams here. It won't take long and then I'll be right behind you, O.K.?

Alex frowns and squeezes George's hand with all his strength, though frankly, that isn't much at the moment. He isn't much, but George is the only person he knows. He doesn't want to be left alone with these people, complete strangers who act as if he's some kind of specimen. He doesn't have
the strength to protest, though, and it's all he can do to turn his head and look at a very annoyed and concerned looking George as he is rolled through the hallway. He keeps his eyes trained on George, the only person he even remotely trusts, until two plastic doors close behind him, blocking his view.

George fairly collapses into the chair that Adams steers him to after handing him a mountain of paperwork, all energy drained from him. He knows he needs a break, that Martha is probably livid at him missing Laf's dinner, but all he can think of is poor, tiny Alexander alone in this cold, unfeeling place. So he picks up a pen and starts flipping through the forms as he dials Martha's cell.

"Hello? Martha?"

"George Washington, you have some explaining to do. Missing Laf's birthday, ignoring my calls, and not sending any word of where you are? I was worried sick that you had gotten into a car crash or hurt, and Lafayette is heartbroken. You have a child George, you cannot just disappear like this, with no regard for your family." George smiles weakly at Martha's tirade and fills out another form.

"Martha, you are absolutely right and I deserve all of this. It's just- I got sidetracked, you could say."

Martha must sense something is off, because she is considerably more gentle when she answers.

"What happened? Where are you?"

George launches into the full explanation, starting with how he had left work early and ending with how he was currently sitting in the waiting room of Jackson Hospital, halfway through the torture Adams had designed for him

"Martha, you're right. I should have been there for Laf, but this kid, he was dying. Dying, Martha, under a park bench, and no one cared. I'm not sure, but I think- I think I'm all he has now. I couldn't just leave him at the mercy of complete strangers."

He hears Martha sigh deeply before responding.

"In that case, then I'll get Laf to help me set up the guest bedroom. If you really are the only one who knows he exists, then he will have to stay with us." She pauses a moment to call for Lafayette. "I always knew children would be your downfall."

He grins wider than he has in a long time.

"Martha, you are an angel."

"I know dear. And George?"

"Yes dear?"

"Don't think you're off the hook for this."

He laughs.

"Wouldn't dream of it."

And with that, he turns to Adams, who's lurking smugly in a corner, and hands him his forms.
"There. Now let me see him, please?" George doesn't even try to mask the annoyance in his voice.

"Of course, sir. Right this way."

Chapter End Notes

So I had like half of this done and then my computer just kind of blinked and erased it all. It's not as good as it was. D: D: D: D: D:

I stink at titles, but I wanted to post this, so if you see it with a different title later, it'll say it in the summary.

For a schedule I'm thinking at least once a week, but in all likelyhood more often than that.

Finally, I have an idea for the next couple of chapters, but if anyone has anything they want to see, leave it in the comments and I'll work it in there. I'm open to anything, though Lams and WashingDad have the best shot of working with the plot. As always, constructive criticism is incredibly welcome!!!
Alex woke up with a start and frowned before remembering that he was in a hospital. His head was still cloudy from the nightmare he had just woken up to and some kind of illness he couldn't put his finger on. He was laying in an odd type of bed covered in a hodgepodge of blankets, made up of both what he assumed were hospital regulation and much softer, more colorful ones that Mr. Washington's family must have sent for George to give him. He smiled at the thought that someone would do that, inconceivable just twenty-four hours before.

George startled Alex by knocking twice on the door frame of his room before striding in and settling into the chair next to his bed. He held his hand again, and Alex was thinking about how much he liked it when George started talking.

"How are you feeling Alexander?" Alex sighed. He really hated that name.

"Alex." Was that his voice? It was so scratchy.

George blinked. "Sorry?"

Alex worried for a second. Did George think he was being disrespectful? Was he going to leave him here alone? He responded in a rush, "I prefer Alex to Alexander, sir. I'm sorry if I offended you. Please don't leave me here.

George chuckled a little. "No, Alex is fine. Alexander is a bit of a mouthful, I just never had the chance to ask your preference. If anything, you should be offended. Sorry."

Alex looked at him in confusion. George was sorry? Alex just talked back, and he was fine with it.

"It's... It's O.K." The words sounded so strange coming from his mouth.

"So, Alex, do you feel any better?"

"Oh- Yes, so much better. Thank you for finding me."

"It was my pleasure." George shifts in his seat. "Actually, I was wondering. You probably don't remember, but I told you some things about me and my family on the way here." Alex nods and grins. That was an understatement. George smiles back. "Right, well, I'd like to get to know you better, so maybe you could tell me some things about yourself." Oh. There it is. Alex's face must show his distress because George hastily adds, "Or not. It's absolutely fine if you don't want to talk about anything. I just wanted to know if..." George looks really nervous. "If you have... a place to stay." He looks slightly more relaxed now that he's said what was on his mind, but Alex can clearly see the concern and anxiety written across his face.

"You mean if I'm homeless." He almost smirks at the uncomfortable look on George's face. "The answer is yes. I immigrated from Nevis, and have no family in New York. I'd rather not talk about my past beyond that for now," He added, seeing the question on George's face before he asked it. To George's credit, he recovered quickly.

"O-Of course. I'm so, so sorry, Alex." Huh. Normally, Alex hated when people gave him their sympathies. It was one of the main reasons why he rarely told others the entirety of his sob story of
a life. But with George, it seemed sincere.

"It's alright. I've been homeless for almost a year, I'm used to it." George flinched when he heard those words. Quite frankly, Alex agreed with him. A year was way too long for anyone to be without a family or home. Besides, here he was laying in a hospital bed with barely enough strength to be having this conversation. Because no one in politics cared enough to change things for kids like him, he had almost died. Being a politician had once been his dream for this very reason. People in tough places and hard times would have at least one person who would represent them. It was ironic: by coming to the land where dreams came true, his hopes for greatness were dashed.

"Well then, I have a proposal for you." Alex looked up at George in interest. "Martha- My wife and I would like to know if you would be interested in staying with us." The young boy's mouth dropped open. "It's entirely up to you. I understand if you would prefer to find a different family. But I'd like you to think about it. My wife and Lafayette are really looking forward to meeting you." Alex had to shake himself out of the stupor George's "proposal" launched him into. A family? He had to be dreaming.

"Are you kidding me? Of course! I'd love too!" All of the anxiety on George's face melted off immediately into complete relief and joy.

"Great. That's really great. I just have to fill out some papers for Kitty and then you can move in with us right away."

Alex frowned. "Who's Kitty?"

George started from what seemed to be a scene playing out in his head.

"What? Oh, Kitty is your social worker. She's the person who the state has assigned to make sure we're 'taking care of you'. George said the last few words with finger quotes and rolled his eyes. "As if you need to be looked after by some stuffy government employee. Hopefully, if you don't want to find a different foster home, you'll never see her more than once every few months when you first start staying with us." George checked his wristwatch. "Actually, she should be here in about half an hour to check on you and drop off some papers I need to fill out." Suddenly, George face palmed. "Gosh, I'm an idiot. You should rest until then. You must be exhausted, and here I am rambling your ears off." He got up and moved to leave. Alex was glad. He had never been so tired in his life, but he hadn't wanted to seem rude and ask George to leave. Besides, he needed time to process all of the new information George had just given him.

"Goodnight, Alex." George gave him one last grin before practically bouncing out into the hallway and closing his door gently.

Alex smiled and snuggled down into his blankets. He really couldn't wait to meet all these people: Kitty, Martha, Lafayette. He had a good feeling about his stay with the Washingtons.

Logically, George knew he was being ridiculous, but he still couldn't seem to wipe that goofy grin off his face. His joy was barely contained in front of Alex, and now that he was out of the room he couldn't help but act slightly like a schoolgirl, to his shame. He clapped and laughed out loud as soon as he closed the door, attracting the attention of some wayward nurses. He blushed slightly, but his grin stayed stubbornly in place.

"Sorry. He said yes! He's coming to live with us!" George silently cursed himself at that last bit,
but news this good couldn't be kept quiet. Luckily, the nurses smiled at him indulgently, probably thinking him more cute than insane. Probably.

Hopefully.

Well, George could live with insane too. Right now, he was on cloud nine. Alex had said yes! He called Martha immediately. He knew she would be overjoyed.

He seemed to have failed to remember the fact that it was only approaching six in the morning, and Martha was not a morning person.

Chapter End Notes

Can someone help? I'm not sure how to get rid of notes from past chapters. I'm new at this.
If there is a particularly kind soul out there, could someone explain why this came up in the stream for Hamilton for chapters one and two but no for three? I did everything the same. I'm so confuzzled. ¯\_(ツ)_/¯

Also, please leave in the comments anything you would like to see. Thanks!!!!
George sat down after informing a slightly grumpy Martha of the good news. (She would've been much angrier, but George was so cute she didn't have the heart to tell him what time it was.). He had just admonished Alex for needing rest, and here he was, practically sleepwalking. He checked his watch. Maybe a little nap would be O.K....

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

George awoke an hour later to a very perky woman in pink placing a hand on his shoulder. She beamed at him so widely he wondered if she was entirely sane. He was too tired to tell.

"Well, I presume you're Kitty." George said groggily. He didn't speak for the next five minutes.

"Yes sir, I am! And may I just say, it is an honor to speak to you. Any friend of a child is a friend of mine. I was really impressed when I heard how you and Alex met..."

George just sat there staring at her and blinking. She was like a bright pink human chihuahua.

"...And I guess that's why I was drawn to public service. Oh! You probably want these." And with that, she dumped a pile of paperwork to rival Adams's directly onto his lap. Kitty must have seen the way his eyes bugged out of his head. "Well, I guess you don't want it, but you certainly want Alex to stay with you, I can tell. Speak of the devil, I can't wait to meet him! Come on, you can show me his room!" George just managed to put the mountain on the seat next to him before he was yanked out of his seat with surprising strength. He sent an apologetic smile to the nurses, doctors, and visitors that Kitty almost mowed down as she dragged George through the halls. Funny, she seemed to know exactly where she was going.

A few minutes later, George leaned against Alex's doorway and caught his breathe as he watched this human hurricane descend on the poor boy. He smirked at them when Alex sent him pleading glances, not willing to cross Kitty's path when she was on a roll. It wasn't until Alex's occasional looks turned into death glares that he decided to intervene.

"Well, Kitty, Alex has had a long twenty-four hours. Maybe it's time we give him some space." He tried to say it as gently as possible, not yet knowing how she would react to criticism. Kitty looked like someone had just stolen her puppy and dyed all her clothes black.

"Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry, Alex! George is right. I'll give you two some time alone. George has all the paperwork he needs from me for now," She turned to face George, slowly inching her way toward the door while still talking. "If you need anything, call me. My number's on page three of the self-assessment packet. Goodbye, boys!" Suddenly, she was gone, leaving Alex and George in
silence.

"Wow." Alex said, looking shocked. George laughed.

"She is something, isn't she? I'll have to double check how many times we'll actually have to see her." They both laughed at this, though a little bitterly, knowing that they would have to face her again, this time without Alex being conveniently sick.

"Well, we'll cross that bridge when we get to it," said George. "For the time being, I think we'll stick with just worrying about you getting better, O.K."

"That sounds good to me."

"By the way, I just talked to the doctor. You should be O.K. to leave by tomorrow night." George felt his heart give a tug at the light that filled Alex's eyes.

"Really?"

"Yep! Once you're good to go, we'll drive down to my house in Virginia. You'll love it there."

"I can't wait to meet Mrs. Washington and Lafayette." Suddenly Alex dimmed a little as a thought came over him. "Do you think they'll like me?"

"Are you kidding? They're going to love you." Alex looked slightly comforted at this. It bothered George how quickly he jumped to the conclusion that someone didn't like him or would abandon him. He knew that Alex had asked him to leave the subject of his past alone, but he wondered what had happened to such a sweet kid to cause him to believe that he was unworthy of basic attention. George moved that train of thought to the back of his mind, to be explored in private before Alex could detect a change in him.

"Speaking of Martha and Lafayette, is it alright if they come visit later? I know you're tired, but they really want to meet you, and Lafayette rarely takes no for an answer."

"I would love that." Alex looked so sincere when he said that, it melted what used to be George's heart a little more, if humanly possible. He could see them as a family in his mind's eye, Alex and Lafayette going to school and hanging out together, them going out together, showing Alex all of Virginia.

"Good. They'll be here at 3:00. You really should get some rest before then, or the doctor will yell at me again."

Alex giggled.

"He yelled at you?" It did seem a bit absurd. George was 6'2, muscled, and intimidating, while Dr. Franklin was elderly, 5'9, and wore glasses that would pin anyone younger than 50 as a lifetime nerd.

However, the experience hadn't been one George was willing to repeat. Dr. Franklin was one of the most terrifying people he had met when his patients were concerned. The man had wielded his clipboard with the same passion others have with assault rifles, and George had no doubt he could do as much damage if his hospital or patients were in any way insulted or endangered.

"Let me tell you, it was no walk in the park." Alex laughed more at this, then paused, mirth still dancing in his eyes.
"Actually, I can see that."

George opened his mouth to respond when they heard Dr. Franklin in the hallway. They both jumped a foot in the air. George started gesturing wildly for Alex to pretend to be sleeping, his face a mask of pure terror. Alex complied, silent tears of laughter streaming down his face. They managed to compose themselves just as Dr. Franklin walked in.

"Hello, boys," He sighed, raising his clipboard into defensive position. "Don't think I didn't hear you earlier. George, I did not think you would be ready for another *discussion* so soon." There was a distinct note of anger in his voice.

George groaned.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry it's so short!
Please leave any ideas you want to see later on.
And comments. Comments and kudos are literally my motivation for writing these.

P.S.: Thank you to whoever wrote the fic with Benjamin Franklin as a doctor. I tried to make them different, but leave a comment if it upsets you and I'll change the name.
More Visitors

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT!!!!!!!!!!
So there is a nonbinary character in this chapter, and I don't have much experience with writing nonbinary characters. If anything I wrote was offensive in any way, please tell me IMMEDIATELY so I can change it, no questions asked. The last thing I want to do is inaccurately label or portray people.
Without further ado, enjoy!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Alex groaned as he peeked his eyes open. The sun glared through the blinds on his hospital windows.

Well, that was just great.

He checked the clock over his doorway. 9:00.

George had said just a short nap before Martha and Lafayette arrived. Just thirty minute. Alex scoffed. He had slept for over two hours. He couldn't believe he had actually fallen for the same trick that petulant toddlers who refuse their naps do. It figured George had left him, after all, who wanted to deal with him awake? Asleep, he couldn't talk back. They had always hated it when he did that.

A frazzled-looking George arrived in Alex's doorway as if on cue, panting slightly.

"Oh, Alex I am so sorry. I just saw the time." He waited to continue until he saw Alex nod, still upset he had forgotten about him, but a little less so knowing it was an accident. All anger disappeared at seeing George's face spread into a giant smile. "Good. Guess who's here early?" He stepped aside to show two people standing beside him. Martha and Lafayette.

Martha was significantly shorter than George, to the point where it would be comical if it was not clear that any short jokes would not be tolerated. There was something about her that exuded confidence and kindness. Her warm cocoa colored skin and graying rich brown hair gave her a motherly kind of beauty, refuted by the massive pile of what were probably homemade quilts and other healing miscellaneous that filled her arms. Her eyes were a bright amber, a color Alex didn't think he'd seen before, but suited her to a T. They were accentuated by a road map of laugh lines crinkling at their corners, the only wrinkles on her face. It was clear by the way that George looked at her that they were deeply in love, probably had been for decades. Alex smiled at the look George gave her. Anyone who George loved that much, he knew he would get along with.

Lafayette was a slightly more complex person to figure out. Alex had guessed, from the way George always called them his kid and never used pronouns that they were gender-nonconforming, and he had been fine with it. He didn't see it as that big of a deal, so he never questioned him about it. Back on Nevis, very few people even expressed their gender out of the typical stereotypes. Those who did were either mercilessly teased by peers or even attacked. Alex had never really seen the problem in it, and when he was old enough to understand, did everything he could to help them discreetly. After all, those who identified as homosexual faced the same challenges. Once he came
to America, Alex met more nonbinary people than he ever had in his life. Unfortunately, a huge number of them were homeless because of traditional families. Some of them had told him about the gender and sexuality spectrum, and for that he was thankful, and always would be. Lafayette seemed to be an equal blend of both masculine and feminine. They had on (quite beautifully applied, Alex thought) makeup, as well as wore mostly gender-neutral clothing. Their fuzzy dark brown hair was pulled back tightly into a ponytail, creating a small puffball on the back of their head that bounced adorably as they jumped up and down clapping. Lafayette's smile spread a mile wide across their warm brown skin, chocolate brown eyes alight with excitement. Alex had the feeling they didn't try to disguise their heavy french accent as they spoke.

"Bonjour mon ami! J'm'appelle Lafayette. Ooh, I have been so excited to meet you! Herc has been most annoyed for the past few days." They paused, head raised up in thought. "Actually, everyone has. But we are finally here! I cannot wait for you to move in with us. John and Herc will be delighted."

"Laf!" George chuckled, "Let the poor boy speak." Lafayette rounded on Alex, looking ridiculously upset.

"Oh, I am so sorry, Alex! Je peux être très excité parfois."

"C'est bien. Je peux obtenir la même maniér." Alex laughed a little as Lafayette stood dumbfounded for a moment. After recollecting themself, they proceeded to let out a squeal so loud several nurses in the hallway winced.

"Tu parlas françias? Oh, this will be the beginning of a beautiful friendship, mon ami."

All people in the room laughed at that. Martha and George a little ruefully, knowing it was true and neither of them spoke French.

Alex felt so awkward asking this question, but it needed to be established soon. So, gathering up his courage, he asked Lafayette,

"I'm sorry if this is indelicate, but what-" Luckily, Lafayette cut him off. He could feel his cheeks starting to blush.

"Oh, of course, mon ami. Do not worry, I take no offense. I use they/them pronouns and am androgynous." Lafayette looks completely unconcerned as they said this, which Alex took as a good sign.

"Oh. Okay." Lafayette stopped and looked him square in the eye, an odd expression on their face.

"You are, how you say, all good with this, yes?"

Alex hurried to reassure them.

"Of course, of course."

Lafayette visibly relaxed, becoming an incarnation of the energizer bunny once again.

"Good, because if you did not, you would have three very angry teenagers and two parents after you." Alex's expression must have been terrified, because Laf laughed. "Do not worry. So long as you respect my pronouns, you will fit in beautifully with Herc and John."

Martha stepped forward at this. "I'm positive he will. But if you keep talking his ears off, there may be a delay in that meeting."
Lafayette looked bashful. "Of course, Mama." They bent down to peck her on the cheek. "Do not worry. I will be in the hallway, spreading the delights of the American vending machine." They raced out of the room before Martha could catch them.

She turned to Alex, laughter in her eyes. "I'm so sorry about them. They can get a little over excited. I'm Martha, George's wife. Though, from what he's told me, you probably know all about me." Alex nodded. "Well, I can't wait to get to know you.

"You as well, ma'am." Martha waved her hand at him.

"Alex, call me Martha." He could tell he was going to like Martha.

"Of course."

"Now. Let's begin getting to know each other by discussing our dear George, shall we?" The twinkle in her eye could have lit up an entire city block. George groaned from the doorway.

"You too, Alex? Will I ever catch a break?"

Alex and Martha responded no in unison before gossiping about the poor man for the next half an hour.

George watched Alex and Martha talk about him with pride in his heart. Alex was fitting on so well with his family. He shuddered to think of the time when Alex, Laf, Hercules, and John would all join forces, but even that he could get over. Although it could quite possibly cause the apocalypse. The important thing was, both his kids were happy.

George startled as he reviewed that last thought in his mind. Did he really already think of Alex as a son? He had hardly met him. Although, people who have gone through a traumatic event together did develop closer bonds faster, and George knew that whatever Alex had gone through in his short life could only be called traumatic. For what was probably the millionth time, he wondered what had happened to Alex in his past. He had managed to learn that he grew up in the Caribbean from hours of talking and coaxing, but immediately after sharing this information, Alex closed off for the rest of the day. He hadn't even been able to get him to eat, something Alex normally let him coax him into.

And that was another problem. When George had found Alex, he weighed 90 pounds. 90 pounds. A fifteen-year-old kid should not weigh that little. Logically, George knew that Martha would not let that last past the kid's first month in their house, but it still worried him. No matter what Martha thought, no amount of fried chicken and cherry pie could make up for that amount of scarring. Alex would carry the memories of what he had gone through with him always.

Martha walked up to him. Lafayette had returned from his foray into Americana and was now educating young Alex on the wonders of manufactured cheese product.

Martha cuddled up to him while watching Lafayette try to force-feed Alex cheese whiz.

"They really do make a pair, don't they?"

"Indeed they do, Martha. Just wait until John and Herc get a hold of him."

Martha grimaced, imagining the messes they'd make in her kitchen. Her phone rang, ruining the image.
"I'll be right back."

George nodded his assent and went back to watching the two teens.

When Martha came back a few minutes later, there was concern written all across her face. George pulled her close and asked what was wrong. She gave a deep sigh.

"It's John."

Chapter End Notes

Someone help me I have no experience in romance and stink at it even though there were like two lines of it. This asexual needs help. Also George was over a foot taller than Martha, and personally, I find that hilarious, especially as you just KNOW she was the one who yells at people for insults and random comments while George stands in the background intimidatingly, nodding and saying amen at appropriate intervals. And repeat of what I said earlier, PLEASE comment if there is anything wrong with how I show Laf or if you have suggestions on how to write them.
GUYS!!!!!! I just got over a hundred kudos and a THOUSAND hits on this!!!! Thank you SO MUCH!! I'M FLIPPING OUT!!!!!!!
This has not been edited, but I'm having a rough day and need to write, so here we go! Seriously though, you have no idea how happy it makes me to see that people are reading and enjoying this. Thank you so much!!!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

George grabbed Martha's hand and led her out of the room and the the two teenager's hearing. They settled into a corner in the end of Alex's hallway.

"What happened?"

"Herc just called me. He said John's been acting strangely for a few days now, and he's scared." Martha took a deep breath. He thinks- he thinks it may be John's dad."

George's blood ran cold. What could Henry possibly be doing that could diminish the ray of sunshine that was John Laurens? John was always the first to comfort Laf after a bigoted comment, the first to reassure Herc when his anxiety and depression started to get the better of him. George could see why Herc had called them even though they were away: If something was causing John to act strangely, it was cause for national alarm. He seriously had half a mind to call the 6 o'clock news.

"What can we do?"

"When we get back, we can have Laf and Herc talk to him, but right now? Nothing. We just have to hope whatever it is can wait until we get back tomorrow. George, I'm scared. You know John, it must be serious if he's letting it show that it's getting to him."

George closed his eyes. He hated being inactive. Being hours away while Laf's best friend, the kindest kid he knew, was hurting and being powerless to stop it? That was torture.

"Did Herc mention what it was that was bothering him?"

"He said that he’s seen bruises and John won’t tell him where they came from. He clams up whenever Herc mentions his father. And he hasn’t made a joke in two days."

George growls. “If Henry Laurens has been hurting John, I swear-”

Lafayette popped his head out of Alex’s room.

“Martha, George? Is everything alright?”

George and Martha made eye contact. If they told Laf, they’d be crazy with worry until they could get back to Virginia.

“Everything’s fine. We’re going to go see if the doctors will release Alex early.”
Lafayette seemed to think this an acceptable answer. They nodded once and disappeared back into Alex’s room on a sugar-bent warpath.

“Let’s go.” George and Martha set off in search of Franklin.

Two hours later, Alex was walking out of the hospital and into fresh air for the first time in two days. He had on a ridiculous amount of winter clothing, courtesy of Martha, and was being bombarded with instructions, courtesy of Dr. Franklin.

“Remember, no longer than fifteen minutes in any cold weather. I don’t care if it’s only a little longer, I want you inside in fifteen minutes. I trust Martha will help me out on this. And lots of food. The fattier, the better. I’m talking pizza, sausage, pizza with sausage, the works.”

George interrupted him by opening the door of the minivan and bowing to Alex like a medieval footman. Alex giggled and climbed into the car, leaving Franklin behind in mid-sentence.

“Start the car!” He whispered to Martha. She chuckled and obliged, laughing as George raced to get into the passenger seat, Franklin seething behind him. Lafayette waved at him cheerfully as the Washington’s car pulled away from the hospital and Alex's past, and toward Alex’s new life.

They passed the hours quickly. It was hard to be bored for long when Lafayette was around. Alex sang reinterpreted lyrics to songs, played license plate, and participated in at least four massive rock-paper-scissors tournaments. Still, while Lafayette seemed to detect no change, he sensed that George and Martha were preoccupied. From the moment they had left his hospital room, they had seemed quieter, more sullen. Alex had even caught George muttering to himself. (He had no idea how the man had made it as far as he had in politics with the habit.) He had said something about people named John and Henry. Alex had no idea what that meant, and he didn't want to know. With his luck, they were the names of his new social workers who were waiting in Virginia to take him away from the Washingtons. He was so stupid. He actually thought they had liked him. He was sure Lafayette did, but looking back, he could understand how Martha and George didn't. After all, George had helped him out of the kindness of his heart, and in return, gotten saddled with another child. All those hours of George cheering him up, wheedling little bits of information out of him. He had even told him that he had lived in the Caribbean. He had broken his number one rule: he let someone in. Every single time he did that, they left or got hurt because of him. After about three hours of the car ride, Alex couldn't take it anymore. He faked sleeping for the next three hours. No one woke him up.

The entire car ride, George didn't stop thinking about John. He knew he was overreacting, but he couldn't help it. It definitely seemed like John was being abused, and that was something that scared the daylights out of George. With all the legislature he had passed concerning children, he had met kids who had been abused at banquets and the like. They were always hollow, a shell of what a child should be. They had a look in their eyes, like they knew they were being hunted but they didn't know by whom, and everyone in the room was a suspect. George knew that if John was being abused, he would never again see the happy, carefree fifteen-year-old. He would be replaced by one of these hollowed out shells, and George couldn't stand it. No child deserved that, especially not John.

He was vaguely aware of Alex seeing how distracted he was. He knew that halfway through the
trip, Alex kind of shut off from the rest of them. Looking back, he knew he should have comforted him, but if he had told Alex the real reason for being so distracted, Lafayette would have heard, and Lord knows how they would react. John had been their best friend since as long as George could remember, even before Herc had moved to Virginia. Knowing Lafayette, they would have stopped the car and ran to Virginia themself if they thought it would get them any closer to a hurting John.

Alex gaped at the scene before him. They had just arrived at the Washington's home, and Alex couldn't wrap his head around it. First Virginia, now this? When they had crossed the border into the state, he had been amazed. Alex had never seen that much green in his life! Everywhere he looked there was farmland, rolling hills, and houses that looked like they were cut out of a magazine. It was heaven for a kid who had grown up knowing nothing more than a dirty, slightly crowded suburb.

Then they had pulled up at what could only be described as a mansion. Alex had actually assumed it was the government building for the state of Virginia and they were going to hand him off to 'John and Henry' inside. Huge columns lined the main building, which was painted brick red and a creamy white. Then Alex had looked at the gates and seen the words "Washington Residence" painted in a chipper yellow on a wooden sign, and he realized that this was actually going to be his home.

He thinks it was somewhere around there that his mind exploded.

Martha turned around in her seat to face him and smiled

"So, what do you think?"

Alex's mouth opened and closed, creating some inarticulate sounds.

Lafayette laughed.

"Do not worry, mon ami, you will get used to it. My reaction was similar when I first saw my new home."

George laughed at that.

"Similar? You ran around like a chicken without it's head for a good fifteen minutes."

Lafayette blushed. They were not proud of that moment.

"It was a new country?"

"Sure," scoffed Martha. "Alex, Laf, do you want to grab the bags out of the back? George and I will park the car."

"Of course, Mama. Make us children do all the work. I am certain your country has laws on this, no?"

"They do, Laf. Unfortunately for you, they do not apply to kids helping carry luggage. Go." Lafayette grumbled and walked to the trunk, heaving a suitcase out.

"Coming, mon petit lion?"
"Sure, Laf." Alex knows it won't be long before they ship him off, but he's willing to be part of this family for as long as he can.

Chapter End Notes

This may have been my favorite chapter to write so far. It feels so good to get Alex out of the hospital. Writing a sad Alex hurt my heart, but they all make up so it's ok. (I tell myself as I listen to Meet Me Inside and sob.)

Fun fact, I have driven from around New York to Virginia, and let me tell you, it is NOT a fun trip. Very long, lots of farms. It's all farms. All of it. But I figure Alex would like it, so yay!

Mount Vernon is HUGE. Seriously, look it up. It's amazing.
The rest of the day was a blur for Alex. In the next four hours he saw more marble and crystal than he ever had in his life. Mount Vernon dated back to the days when America was first created by Christopher Jackson, and its decor had not yet caught up to the times. The colossal estate kept court over the banks of the Potomac River, with what was probably acres of lawn sprawling down the hill it topped. Picturesque scenes were everywhere, from the trees that dotted the opposite bank to the honest-to-goodness horses that roamed corners of the property. The entire thing looked like a postcard come to life.

One of the more important things Alex learned that day was to never again ask either Laf or George for a tour of their home. Lafayette had dragged Alex through the mansion with a speed that could have burned rubber while babbling in rapid French. George followed behind them with equal speed, dispensing random historical tidbits and anecdotes that Alex was sure he must have spent years accumulating. It was obvious that Mount Vernon was his pride and joy.

"Come on, Alex! We haven't shown you the best room!"

"Oui! You will love it!"

Lafayette tightened his grip on Alex's arm as he raced George to a room that was hidden behind a pair of intricately carved oak doors.

"Alright, mon petit lion, you must close your eyes," they giggled.

Alex sighed. Laf was going to be the death of him, and he'd barely known him for two days. He complied to Lafayette's orders.

"Alright. On the count of three, Alex, open your eyes." He heard the scraping of wood on wood, and then George counting.

"One. Two. Three."

Alex couldn't believe what he was seeing. It was a library. Walls upon walls were piled high with books of every color of the rainbow. It was a bounty unlike anything he had ever seen. He was reminded of the days back on Nevis, where there weren't this many books on the entire island. After his mother's death, he had scammed his employer out of books that other children had considered essentials. The bible had been one of his first. He had told Mr. Smith that it was for a more religious trader that he had been dealing with, who had demanded this particular book in exchange for some rare spices. He had of course thought it a strange request, but complied anyway. He couldn't remember the exact reason for wanting that particular volume so badly. In retrospect, it was probably because of its popularity, and how easy it was to make Smith believe it was for
trade. Alex had been giddy with that first success. After that first book, the 'religious' trader had moved on to reading first Charles Dickens, then Henry David Thoreau, and after that William Shakespeare. It hadn't been until Alex tried to wrangle J. K. Rowling that Smith had caught on. He demanded to see this trader, and when Alex couldn't produce an address, had beat him to within an inch of his life. He had never been punched so hard before, and certainly not after, though some had come close to beating that record.

No, he chided himself. This is not the time for a panic attack. You can't fall out of favor, or they won't let you read all these books.

Alex turned to face George and Laf. They were waiting for his reaction with huge grins on their faces. He smiled back.

"It's incredible."

The two high-fived.

"We knew you would love it!" George looked overjoyed. "Laf, why don't you show Alex his room? I've got to talk to Martha for a minute."

"Of course, George! Go, speak with your lady love. Alex, I will show you the room of rest!"

"Bedroom, Laf."

"That is what I said, no?"

George chuckled.

"Sure. Now get going. Alex looks like he's about to fall asleep standing up."

It was true. Alex was tired. But he just couldn't tear his eyes away from all those books! When was the next time he would see something so magnificent?

"Come, Alex! It is just up the stairway."

Laf set off again, this time letting Alex follow without his help. He had to jog to keep up.

"Aaaand here we are! Ta-da!"

Lafayette stopped in front of a room at the very end of the hallway and flung open the doors.

For what was the third time that day, Alex's jaw hit the ground.

The room was more than he could ever have dreamed. It was painted a shade of forest green that almost exactly matched the hills surrounding his new home. Two large windows took up the majority of one wall, giving him incredible views of the Potomac. An oak desk sat underneath them, complete with a plush black office chair. Fully stocked bookshelves lined the opposite wall, breaking only for the door. The remaining walls were occupied by a closet and Alex's bed. It was the softest thing he had ever seen. A pale green and cream-colored quilt enveloped it, and it took all of Alex's willpower not to flop down on it immediately. He spun around to face Laf.

"This is all mine?" His voice was barely above a squeak. Laf nodded once.

Alex flung his arms around the Frenchperson, who gave a surprised oof.

"Thank you so, so, so so much!" All emotions besides joy and gratitude were shoved aside for a
moment as he squeezed the life out of Laf in what was one of the tightest hugs he had ever given.

"I take it you like it, then?" Martha and George had appeared behind them, smiling as they stood hand in hand.

"Are you kidding? It's the best place I've ever seen in my life! It's... it's perfect!"

Lafayette and Martha would testify for the rest of their lives that the smiles on Alex's and George's faces were the biggest they had ever seen.

"Well, we'll leave you to get settled." George waved Laf out of the room, closing the door. "Oh, and Alex? Look in the top drawer of the desk." With that, he quickly retreated, fully closing the door. It did little to muffle Alex's squeal of pure delight.

"What was in the desk?" Lafayette was curious.

"Oh, a laptop for his writing."

All three Washingtons were beaming as they walked back down the stairway.

"Laf?"

They looked at George and Martha.

"We have something we need to tell you."

Lafayette was unsettled slightly by how quickly the grins had slipped off their faces.

"If this is the chat Herc warned me about, I think I am O.K., non? I know you love me and Alex will never change that-"

"Actually," George interrupted with a small smile. "This is something different."

"We're concerned about John."

Martha was always better at delivering news.

"What do you mean?"

"Herc called us while we were at the hospital. He's worried that John's father might be... Abusing him."

They jerked back as if they had been slapped.

"What? Why would Monsieur Laurens hurt John? If he has..." Lafayette's surprise turned quickly to anger. No one hurt John and got away with it, especially not on their watch.

"We're not certain about anything yet," Martha rushed to console them. "We just want you and Herc to sit down and talk to him about it."

"Of course. We will not let notre petit turtitle be hurt though. John is our best friend."

"And we're not asking you to," George clarified. "We just want to make sure that's what's happening before we talk to Mr. Laurens about it, and John will be more open with you and Herc
"Alright. Wait... You said you had known since the hospital? Why did you not tell me?"

George and Martha glanced at each other bashfully.

"We... may have taken our role as your parents into more consideration than was necessary."

Laf pinched their nose.

"I am not the best with your language, but you mean that you did not tell me my best friend was in danger because you were worried how I might react?"

"... Yes."

Laf barked out a laugh.

"Well, I'm reacting now, and poor John has been exposed to danger for another day!"

"We're sorry, really. But you are not allowed to take that tone with us," George said sternly.

They breathed in deeply.

"I am sorry as well, but did you not think about how Alex would react as well?"

Their parents looked at him confusedly.

"Alex doesn't know John."

"No, but he noticed your preoccupation. It hurt him. I don't know why, but did you think about his past? We know nothing of it. Is it not possible he could have been neglected?"

George's eyes widened as he caught on.

"Shi-Shoot. I'll go clear things up with Alex. Maybe he can even help you and Herc get John to open up."

The man jogged up the stairs, calling his foster son's name. Martha faced Laf.

"Well, I'm going to make dinner. Why don't you call John and Herc and see if they want to go to the mall tomorrow. Alex needs clothes and the basics, and you can talk to John."

They nodded, already typing their friend's numbers into their phone. They hoped John could hold on for another few hours. He had to.

Chapter End Notes

So, I am a despicable human being. I PROMISE updates will be more regular. Please leave comments, suggestions, or whatever you want. I'm looking for ideas or future chapters, since I'm kind of winging this, so please throw me a bone. I need help.
John groaned and opened the fridge, grabbing a bag of frozen peas and pressing them to his side. He really messed up this time. What had been Martha's number one rule? 'Don't cross Dad when he's drunk or angry.' Of course, that had been before Martha went off to college, leaving him alone. Back when Dad barely hit him at all.

After Henry's political career started failing, he had gone out to drink more. He had been growing more and more tense, until John wouldn't go into the same room as him when he was drunk. The night John's mother announced she would be divorcing him on public television without telling either Henry or John was the night that Henry first beat John. He had punched him before, but this was worse. This was bad. He had needed to skip school the next day, and it had been weeks before he was able to wear short sleeves in public again. Which wouldn't have been a problem if it hadn't been the middle of August.

He sighed and shifted the peas to his eye, hissing and then sighing again as the peas touched the tender area. He tried to remember what he had done this time to make Henry this mad. The bump on his head wasn't helping his memory.

John jumped as the front door slammed shut, his pencil shooting across the sketch he had been working on for the last hour while Henry was gone.

"John!" Henry slurred his words, a sure sign he was drunk. John jumped off his bed and hurried down the stairs.

"Yes Dad?"

"Where were you?" Henry is uncomfortably close to him now, so close he can smell the beer on his breathe.

"N-Nowhere."

"You were somewhere." Henry's eyes go cold. "Were you drawing again?"

"Of course not," John stammers. He doesn't meet his father's eyes. Henry hates it when he sketches.

"Yes, you were." He draws up to his full height. "What did I tell you about doodling?"

"Real men don't draw- doodle."
"Good." He seemed satisfied at first, but he must have seen John's face. "Is there a problem?"

His voice was dangerous.

"I..."

"What?"

"I don't understand why I can't draw." John drew back, anticipating the blows to come.

Henry stared at his son for a moment, contemplating.

"Then perhaps it's time I remind you."

John winced as his phone bough him out of the memory. Lafayette's ringtone, the French national anthem, was blasting at full volume. He leaped up from his seat at the kitchen table and answered it. Who knows what would have happened if Henry woke up because of him.

"Hello?"

"Bonjour, mon ami! How are you?"

John heard the hesitation in his friend's voice. Herc must have told them about the bruises. Great.

"I'm fantastic, Laf. How are you? How's Alex?"

They had called John earlier and filled him in on the newest addition to their family.

"He is doing fantastic as well. He's talking to George now."

John smiled.

"He's talking to G-Wash? In private?" Laf laughed at that.

"Oui! Don't worry, he's just, how you say, clearing the air between them. George was... distracted on the way home, and poor Alex thought he did something wrong. Speaking of Alex, he, Herc and I are going to the mall tomorrow to get Alex supplies. Martha will not tolerate his lack of warm clothing. And to be honest, his sense of fashion is appalling."

John could sense Laf wrinkling his nose on the other end of the phone.

"Yeah. The mall sounds fun. I'll see you there. Around 3 is good?"

"Oui. A plus tard, mon petit tortue."

"Bye, Laf."

He hung up and set the phone down on the table and leaned back into his chair. He was not looking forward to the comments his friends would make on his newly acquired black eye, not to mention the myriad of bruises the Frenchperson had not been in Virginia long enough to be introduced to gradually. How much longer could he hide this?
Hello! So this is the shortest chapter I think I've written so far, but I finished this and figured it was a good place to leave off. *cackles*

Also:

AAAAAAAAAAAAAABAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH

THIS FIC HAS OVER 2 THOUSAND VIEWS!...........................................
"Laf! Alex! Get yourselves down here, Herc's gonna be here any minute!"

Alex groaned and rolled off his bed. (His bed!) He was in the middle of writing an essay on the many injustices of the American foster care system on his new laptop. (His laptop!) Honestly, at this point he'd written so many essays on the topic he was just copying one into a digital document, but it felt so good to write he didn't stop. He loved the sound of the keys clacking away, how easy they were to press, how fast he could write without having to do it all by hand. He was in his own little world when Martha called.

"I'll be right down, Mrs. Washington!"

He quickly shoved his feet into the beat-up sneakers that his first foster family on Nevis had gotten him. He hadn't stayed with them for long. Just enough time for them to lure him into the trap of making him feel loved and then use him as a punching bag.

Well, he had a good foster family now. One that was undoubtedly going to get him a new pair of sneakers at the mall. Besides, the Washingtons would never hurt a kid. They even tried to stop other people's children from getting hurt. George had told him about Herc's suspicions about John Laurens' father. The knowledge had made him feel ten times lighter and heavier at the same time. Lighter, because he knew that it wasn't him that the Washingtons had been upset about. George had been very clear on that point, making sure that he knew he was cared about in this home. He felt heavier, because even though he had never met John Laurens, he still felt like punching his father in the face and then hugging the boy. No one deserved what he had gone through, most certainly not a friend of Laf's and someone the Washingtons obviously loved so much.

He tugged his favorite green hoodie on and raced down the stairs, meeting Lafayette at the front door.

"Ready, mon petit lion?"

"Yep!"

"Good. Herc is here!"

They flung the door open and bolted into a tall, muscular teen in a bandanna.

"Hercules!"

Herc laughed, sweeping Laf up into a hug.

"Hey, Frenchie! How was New York?"

"Fantastic! We met Alex here!" Laf gestured behind them. A thought crossed their mind, and their face fell. "But I missed you."

Herc feigned mock offense.

"I hope so. I am your boyfriend."
Lafayette's head whipped around to see Alex, apprehension and protectiveness written across their face.

"Mon amour! Alex does not know!"

Herc pulled them into a hug.

"Well, he's gonna find out eventually. Besides, if he doesn't approve, he'll have me to deal with." He glared at Alex intimidatingly.

"No, it's fine. I'd be a pretty big hypocrite if I didn't support you two."

Laf squealed, and Herc whooped.

"I knew it!"

"The streak continues! We are officially still completely devoid of straight people."

Alex chose to address Herc first, ignoring how Laf had apparently been speculating on his orientation.

"What does that mean?"


Herc glared at them.

"But we're all close. It's just me, Laf, John, and now you. And not one of us is straight."

"Oh." The tiny Alex in his mind set off fireworks. They were like him! They accepted him! "John is gay?"

The two teens exchanged glances.

"He is, how you say.."

"The gayest man you will ever meet. Gayer than the fourth of July, if you will," Herc supplied. "But, we're the only ones who know. John's dad is super conservative, and he's scared what will happen if he comes out." Alex could see Herc's and Laf's eyes flash with anger at the mention to John's father.

"Will he be O.K. that you told me?"

Herc waved his hand.

"Of course. You wouldn't have stayed ignorant for long, even if we didn't tell you. Your foster sibling here cannot keep a secret for the life of them." He glared at his significant other pointely.

"Oh, come on! It was one surprise party! John loved it anyway."

"Yes, but that defeats the point."

"Guys! Oh, sorry Laf, friends! Shouldn't we get going?"

They stared at him.
"Yes, he's definitely approved of."

"I agree. Alex, mon ami, you are officially adopted into the Revolutionary Set. Initiation has been completed."

The two high-fived. Alex just stared at them.

"What? I'm confused."

"If you can see Herc and I together, how you say, for better or for worse and still like us, you are one of us," Lafayette explained smugly.

"Uh, Laf, sweetie, that quote was from, uh, marriage vows." Herc looked supremely uncomfortable. He was very fortunate that his blush didn't show through his skin.

"Oh," they laughed. "Sorry, mon cherie."

Alex clapped his hands.

"Sorry, but I have another question. What do you mean by Revolutionary Set?"

"Oh. That." Herc had a sheepish grin on his face. "It's a name we came up with for us. You know, since we all are kinda different. I mean, I'm a big intimidating guy who wants to become a fashion designer and knits, Laf is the nonbinary adopted child of a famous senator, and John is the gay son of a very conservative Republican senator. We all are paradoxes of sorts, and we all want to change the world. You know, lead a revolution. Hence, the revolutionary set." He looked very pleased with his explanation.

Alex was slightly in awe. These three teenagers who were at odds with society, instead of turning bitter, banded together to support each other and actually change the world. These people were his people.

"That's... incredible."

"Really?"

"Of course."

"Well, anyway Alex, you're a part of us now."

"Thank you. You- you really have no idea how much that means to me."

Laf clapped their hands loudly, dispersing the serious spell that had fallen across them

"Well, mon amis, we really must be going. John is waiting."

They all jogged to where George was waiting.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Alex was amazed at the mall. He had never been in one place that had so many things before. He saw everything from massage chairs to pretzels stuffed with pepperoni stuffed with cheese. He had no idea such a thing existed!! Over the next half an hour, he bought a set of sheets, (Lafayette offered to get him a new comforter, but he decided to stick with the one he had after learning Herc had made it.), new sneakers, an entire wardrobe of clothing artfully picked out by his two fashion-crazed friends, and at least ten notebooks he had found in the bookstore they had showed him.
Still, nothing topped the moment he saw John Laurens.

He had been devouring his cinnamon-coated pretzel outside of the Auntie Ann's Herc and Laf had taken him. The two were still ordering their food, so Alex had been sent out into the jungle of a food court to find them a table. He chose one between a boy about his age and a mother desperately trying to reign in her children. The two toddlers had spotted a puppy in he pet store across the mall, and were going berserk.

"Alex!"

He looked up to see his friends walking toward him with enough food to feed him for a month. He started at the gasp he heard behind him, and a voice saying,

"Laf? Herc?"

"Mon petit turtue!" They thrust their tray into Herc's arms and raced to meet the boy who was sitting behind Alex.

Alex turned to look at who he guessed was John.

He should really just start walking around with his jaw on the floor, because this was the third time in two days he felt his mouth pop open.

John was one of the most beautiful people he had ever seen. He had shoulder length hair, so curly that if it was cut any shorter it would be considered an aphro. All he wanted to do was pet it. The freckles that dotted his skin reminded Alex of the nights on Nevis, where he could see the stars so clearly, he could spot the milky way. And oh, John's eyes. They were a vibrant green that made Alex think of spring on the island, of smiles shared with his mother. He could get lost in those eyes. The black eye that circled his left eye oddly only enhanced its beauty, drawing out its olive color. Now that he noticed John's black eye, he could see the bruises that covered him. They covered his body, almost blocking out the constellations of John's freckles. Alex instantly felt an intense hatred of whoever had hurt the boy. He looked so broken, standing there with a half smile on his beat-up face, that it broke Alex's heart.

He had only met John, and he was already falling in love with him. And honestly, he was O.K. with that.

Chapter End Notes

So, some hints into Alex's past.

Does anyone know what Herc would call Lafayette? Not his boyfriend, but is there a term I could use beside significant other? It seems out of character for them to use so long a term, and I was wondering if there are any other options.

Also: I know I have been stalling Lams, but I need pointers on how to write their relationship. As previously stated, I am asexual, and have no experience writing romance. I usually skirt around it, but alas, the ship calls to me. If you have any advice, please leave a comment.

And fear not, because next chapter, LAMSLAMSLAMSLAMSLAMSLAMSLAMS
John was in awe.

The boy in front of him, who Laf had just called Alex, was beautiful. He was painfully skinny, yes, but there was something about him that seemed to fill the room. He was almost as much of a presence as Herc was. And oh, his eyes. They had a hunger to them, reminding John of forest fires. He was hypnotized.

"John? Hi, I'm Alex... Alexander Hamilton."

Alexander Hamilton. The name fit him perfectly. Laf nudged him.

"John," they stage-whispered. "Say something."

"Oh. Oh- My name is John Laurens."

"I know. I mean- wow, that sounded creepy. I meant I've heard all about you. From Herc and Laf, I mean," Alex stuttered. He was adorable.

"It's cool. Laf's told me about you too."

An awkward silence fell over them.

"Well, this conversation is stimulating, to be sure. But, John, I would like to know how you got all these bruises, mon ami!" Laf transitioned into Mother Hen Mode, fawning over John like he was a newborn kitten. "If anyone has been hurting notre petit turtue..."

John sighed, knowing he had better get this conversation over with. That didn't mean he liked having it any more.

"I'm fine Laf. I promise. I'm just... you know I'm klutzy. I've been knocking into things lately. It drives my dad crazy." He forced a laugh, hoping to disarm the tension. He was proud of himself for sticking to the script he had come up with. It was true, him being klutzy, and he most certainly had been knocking into things lately, like Henry's fists. As long as he kept to this story, he wouldn't be actually lying to his friends. Only... fibbing.

"... Alright, John. But if anyone has been hurting you, please tell us. We won't be mad, and we won't even tell anyone else. Just let us know." Herc always did have an uncanny ability to say just the right thing, and he very nearly did tell them.

"I agree with Herc. I know we just met, but no one gets that many bruises from knocking into things," Alex spoke up. Great. It was so transparent the person John met thirty seconds ago knew he was lying. "I... I know what it's like to feel trapped. But believe me, no one deserves to be someone else's punching bag."

John's chest constricted. That's all you'll ever be. My punching bag. It was exactly what Henry had said to him the last time he was drunk. He suddenly couldn't breathe. All these people surrounding him, he didn't deserve their concern. The didn't know what it was like. Alex was wrong. He did deserve to be a punching bag. He was a terrible son. He deserved this. He deserved this. He
"John? John, you O.K.? You're kind of scaring me." Alex cursed himself. He just had to open his mouth when Herc had it perfectly under control. He couldn't even tell John it wasn't his fault without messing up. And now John was panicking, or at least it looked like that.

He almost missed it when John bolted.

"John!"

"Mon ami!"

Herc and Laf reacted much faster than Alex did. They were halfway out of sight before Alex could blink. As soon as he got over his shock, he ran after them as quickly as he could.

"Laf!"

"Alex! You keep following John, Herc and I will wait in his favorite spots," they gasped. Laf was apparently not one for exercise.

"What happens if I find him? I don't have a phone."

That seemed to puzzle them. They perked up a moment later.

"Tell John to send out the bat signal. He'll know what it means."

"Could that be any more cryptic?"

"I think it's quite fitting for the moment. We are running through a mall chasing our best friend." Laf skirts around an elderly lady on a scooter as they speak.

"Fair point." Alex apologizes to the same lady, who he did not manage to avoid as artfully as Laf. When he gets up from picking up her things, Laf is too far ahead to catch up to.

"Wait in the art shop next to the book store we took you to! The isle with all of the paints is John's favorite! I'll follow him!" With that they were gone, swallowed by the crowd.

Alex looked around him. He had no idea where he was. He wandered around, asking random people where the store Laf had mentioned was. Unfortunately, 'the art store next to Barnes and Nobles' was not descriptive enough for anyone to answer. He finally found a security guard who took pity on him and pointed him in the right direction. After thanking him, Alex raced to the shop, hoping that John decided to stop for one of those delicious pretzels on the way to the store.

He eventually arrived at the store, called Bellamy Arts. It was surprisingly (and frustratingly) large for being run by two men, who Alex had to say made an adorable couple. The one who said his name was Jonathan pointed out the paints isle, which had a dismaying amount of selection. So much so that it was split into two isles. Alex sighed, and started walking down the first, checking behind boxes and calling his friend's name.

"John?" He wasn't next to the crate of fiery red and orange pigments. "John, are you here?"

He froze when he heard a sniffling noise, followed by an incredibly quiet voice.
"Alex?"

He let out a breathe he didn't know he had been holding.

"Yes! It's me. Where are you?"

"I'm- I'm behind the cerulean."

"The- I'm sorry, what?"

John laughed weakly.

"The teal color."

"Oh. Thank you."

He pushed the crate John was hiding behind aside. He was curled up in the space behind it with his knees to his chest. His eyes were rimmed red from crying, and his voice was hoarse.

"Are you O.K.? That was a stupid question. Of course you're not O.K.." He was stammering again. Smooth, Alex. Real smooth.

He felt slightly better when John gave another tear-filled laugh. Alex sighed.

"Do you want to talk?"

"Actually, yeah. Yeah, that would be really nice."

Alex was surprised. Most people declined that offer. Honestly, he loved how John didn't beat around the bush. He quickly shifted so that he could listen to John for as long as he needed to talk.

"This is stupid, but I get the sense I can talk to you, you know?"

He seemed to be waiting for an answer.

"Oh- yes. I mean, if I didn't turn into a stammering idiot every time I try to."

John's laugh was slightly stronger this time.

"I don't know about 'stammering idiot'," here John did little finger quotes, "But O.K.. Anyway, you won't tell Laf or Herc, or anyone, right?"

Alex crossed his heart, nodding solemnly.

"O.K." John steeled himself. "My... My dad hits me. Sometimes." John looked up at him, gauging his reaction. Alex gave him an encouraging look. Or at least, he hoped that's what it was.

"It's only when he's drunk, or really, really angry. Which, unfortunately for me, is quite often. Especially... after my mom decided she was going to divorce him. And he found out over national television."

Alex winced. "Ouch."

"I know. It was pretty rough on him, and he started hanging out at the bar more. Eventually, one night, when he came home, he-" John was cut off by his own sob. Alex immediately crawled in next to him, rubbing circles into his back and hugging him.
"It's O.K.. You already told me so much. That's something to be proud of. It's so hard to tell people these things. I had something similar happen to me with a foster family. And an employer, actually, which is a long story. And a cousin- another long story. The point is, this is tough. You did fantastic. I can see why you ran when I mentioned, um, vesicles of hits performed with fists."

"You mean a punching bag?"

"Yeah. That. Wasn't sure how you'd react." He blushed at John's laughter. At least he wasn't crying anymore. "And I promise, you don't have to deal with it alone anymore. If you need to talk, or- well, I just moved in with the Washingtons myself, or I would offer you a place to stay. But, I'm sure I can find something if you don't feel safe at your home. Whatever you need."

"Thank you, Alex. So, so, so much." John launched himself at Alex in a hug. Alex clutched him tightly.

"Oh, hey, I almost forgot. Laf and Herc will be insane with worry right now. They said to send them the bat signal if I found you?"

John huffed a laugh, and pulled out his phone, sending off two quick texts.

"The dorks."

"Why? What was it?"

"A bat emoji."

"Oh. Wow. Yeah, that was dorky."

They sat together, laughing in the cerulean section of Bellamy's Arts, waiting for Herc and Laf to find them.

Chapter End Notes

*Pan out all the way to view of Earth*

Aaaaaaaaaaaand scene. I wrote a long chapter! Aren't you proud?
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

AHJDGSJAKSGGAFKDDHAHGKAHSLKDHSGBJAKHDLDGKAILHDLJDGKAHLSDDJGA.
THIS HAS OVER 3000 VIEWS
THE AUTHOR IS HAVING A BREAKDOWN
NO JOKE I AM LITERALLY SCOOTING AROUND MY ROOM IN MY SPINNY
CHAIR LAUGHING LIKE A MANIAC

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA.
PRIDE IS NOT THE WORD I'M LOOKING FOR, THERE IS SO MUCH MORE
INSIDE ME NOOOOOOOOOOWWWWWWW

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Two days later, and John was holding out O.K.. Or at least, that's what he was telling himself. He had made sure not to anger Henry, and was going out of his way to accommodate him. Henry seemed to be noticing it too. He actually bought John a pack of pencils, probably as a guilt gift, but hey, he'd work with it. They were accompanied by a glare from his father and 'The sincere wish that these would be put towards essays and schoolwork, not your delusional doodles,' but again, they were a start.

He had called Alex when he got back to his house after the mall. (They had bought Alex a phone after the whole Bellamy Arts fiasco) John had said in what he was certain was less than fifteen words that he was getting anxious and needed to be distracted, and Alex immediately launched into talking. He painted pictures for John, of everything from stories Alex had come up with about knights and palaces, to stories about his home on Nevis. He told him about the way dolphins and rays glide through the Caribbean, about brave knights who rescue each other from dragons. The knights had suspiciously familiar names, and Alex might have gone slightly overboard in his description of how terrible, jerky, etc. the dragon was, but John wasn't complaining. He talked to John for half an hour, calming him down little by little until he was able to go downstairs and face Henry again.

John considered himself one of the luckiest people on Earth. At just the right moment, Alex came into his life. Someone who knew what it felt like to be betrayed like this, who had also had the person who was supposed to protect him become his tormentor. He was so grateful that Alex was here, and willing to talk to him. He was willing to do anything not to mess that up.

Alex was distracted. For the first time in fifteen years, he couldn't focus on the blank page in front of him. Ever since the mall, he had been thrown off balance. He couldn't get his head out of the clouds. Lafayette found it absolutely thrilling the first time he had been so lost in his thoughts he hadn't heard them say his name. They thought it was a sure sign of Alex's undying love for who they affectionately called 'the little turtle'. Alex had no idea why. However, that amusement was quickly turning to annoyance. After the fourth time it happened, Alex decided to go up to his room and try to clear his head.

Which was why he was where he was now. He just didn't know why it was happening. He hadn't
been unable to write since his mother died. After that day, he had found himself in a position similar to the one he was in now, only then his mind had been blank. He had tried so hard to write, write anything, but he just couldn't hold focus for more than a few seconds. Alex was having the opposite problem now. His mind was full, but it was full of the wrong things. The color of John's eyes. John's hair. John's freckles.

John.

Why couldn't he get him out of his head? It was as much a relief for him as it must have been for John when he called Alex for the second time later that day.

"Alex?"

Something was wrong. His breathing was way too fast.

"John? Are you O.K.?" Anger flared up in his chest. "Did he hurt you?" He spat the word he out like it was poison.

"Yeah. He- he hit me again."

Alex's heart hardened at how fragile John sounded. He immediately transitioned into what John referred to as Mother Hen Mode.

"What? How bad was it?"

"Pretty bad," John's voice wavered out. "Alex, I- I don't understand why! I was doing everything I could-" He started crying, and Alex rushed to comfort him.

"No. John, listen to me. It's not your fault. Say it."

"It was my fault, Alex! If I did something different..."

This was not good. John would hyperventilate soon if he didn't calm down, or worse. Henry could still be drunk and hit him again.

"John. You need to calm down. Count with me, O.K.? One, two three."

"One..."

"One, two, three."

"One, two three."

It wasn't as slow as Alex would have liked, but he could work with that.

"Good. One, two, three."

"One, two, three."

"That's fantastic, John. Just keep counting."

"O-O.K."

"Can you tell me if you feel safe right now? Do you want me to come get you?"

"N-no. Henry left, so it's just me."
"Alright." Alex relaxed a little. "Can you tell me where he hit you?"

"My arms, mostly. It's usually my arms or my side."

"Anything above an ice pack?"

"No. I'll be alright physically, but... I'm scared. And... and frustrated."

Alex had told John last time he had called that it was important for him to tell him exactly how he was feeling. That way he could help. He almost regretted that conversation now.

"Why are you frustrated?"

"B- because I was doing everything right. I didn't antagonize him, I was good, he even gave me pencils. And then, he walked in and..."

"This is good. I mean, not good, but it shows it's not your fault. Believe me John, it's never your fault."

"Can... you sing?"

John sounded so scared that Alex had to. He only knew one song, a lullaby his mother had sung to him so many times that he remembered it even now.

"Alright. *A la nanita na na nanita ea nanita ea*

*Mi jesus tiene sueno bendito sea bendita sea*

*Fuentecilla que corres, claray sonora*

*Ruisenor q'uen la selva, cantando lloras*

*Callad mientras la cuna la cuna se balancea*

*A la nanita na na, nanita ea. A la nanita na na, nanita ea.*"

Alex had almost forgotten that song. It was old, really old, from Spain. It must have come to Nevis when the conquistadors did. Most of the villagers didn't sing it because it was from Spain, and not native to the island. The lyrics were gorgeous, and that was probably what had drawn his mother to it. He was happy she had learned it.

"That was... beautiful, Alex. Thank you."

"No problem, John. Are you O.K. if I go now? Martha's calling us down to dinner."

"Of course. I'm fine now. Thanks, Alex."

"Anytime."

*Chapter End Notes*

Seriously though, you have no idea how much this means to me that people are reading this and actually enjoying this. The fact that people actually LIKE my writing
is insane. My brain is exploding. This is short, but I've got school tomorrow and wanted to post a little bit of fluff before I got too busy. Don't get too used to long chapters! Or fluff, because next chapter is some heavy angst.

P.S.- I forgot to ask! Anyone have any ideas who the other owner of Bellamy Arts is? I will answer one (1) yes or no question to the first couple of people who get it right, so long as it doesn't give too much away. May the odds be ever in your favor. :P

P.P.S.- That lullaby is actually one I sing to my little sister. Its words are beautiful in English, look it up.
"John, I think you should tell them."

"Alex, I just don't know."

"Why not? What's the worst that could happen?" Laf is right to call John a turtle, Alex thought. Coaxing him out of his shell is near impossible. This was the third time he'd brought up telling George and Martha about Henry, and he hadn't come any closer to his goal. He'd hoped trying to loosen John up first would help, so he'd taken him out for ice cream. Laf had a small heart attack when they heard. Honestly, Alex was proud of himself for working up the courage to ask, even if he had made it clear that they were just hanging out.

"What if... What if they don't believe me?"

Alex huffed.

"No offense, but have you looked at yourself? John, you are covered in bruises. I don't see how they couldn't." Henry hadn't eased up on John since their last phone call. His bruises had increased at an alarming rate, and Alex had had enough. John was not safe anymore, and it killed him, Laf, and Herc a little every time they saw him.

"Well, where would I go?"

"You'd stay with us, obviously. George and Martha love you."

"I can't just force myself on them. I need to know they approve first, and how am I supposed to ask them?" He pantomimed a conversation with George and Martha. "Hey, Mr. and Mrs. Washington! My dad's been abusing me, can I come live with you?" He turned to Alex, exasperated.

"Well, not like that, but Laf and I can help with the wording."

"And I suppose you want me to come out to my dad while I'm at it?"

That brought up another topic he'd been thinking about.

"Actually..."

John took one look at Alex and laughed.

"Oh no. Absolutely not."

"All I'm saying is it wouldn't be a bad idea. If you are moving in with us, I mean. The whole 'two birds with one stone' theory."

John just looked at him.

"Do you know how much trouble I would be in if he found out and I still lived with him? After practically killing me, he'd send me off to conversion therapy." John shuddered as he said the words.
"No. We wouldn't let him. John, we just don't want to see you hurt. Please, at least think about it." Alex stared up at him with what his mother would call 'puppy dog eyes'.

John sullenly swirled the spoon around in his ice cream, trying to look anywhere but at Alex. Finally, he sighed.

"Fine. I will listen to what you, Laf, and Herc have cooked up, but I guarantee nothing. What did you have in mind?"

Chapter End Notes

Guys, I'm sorry. This is short, but I am a strange person. My two writing moods are either
1. Alexander Hamilton reincarnate (writes 12 pages)
2. The only difference between me and Aaron "wait for it" Burr is I'm not about to kill a guy in Weehawken.
At the moment, I'm in Aaron Burr mode, and this part of the plot is giving me trouble so the next update will be somewhere around Friday???? Don't worry it will be long.

ALSO last call for answers to the question on last chapter!!!! HINT: They are a Hamilton character.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

So it is way too late. But, I promised a chapter, so here you go!
This is so terrible I may go back and fix it later.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"George?"

He looked up from his paperwork to see the Revolutionary Set lined up against the wall of his office. All four of them looked nervous, playing with the hems of their shirts and not meeting his gaze. George was both amused and anxious himself. It was heart-achingly cute, the way none of them ever went without another member of the Set close by, especially in times of trouble. Then, the four teens became one, not letting anyone out of their sights until they were positive they would be taken care of. He remembered one time, when John and Laf discovered that some idiot at their high school had been bullying Herc for knitting and sewing. John and Laf had destroyed that kid so fast, he didn't know what hit him. For at least a week afterwards, they had ensured constant physical contact with Herc. It was like some giant perpetual hug.

Of course, the fact that they seemed to be resuming the perpetual hug, coupled with the fact that the last time they were this nervous, he had needed to buy a new car, was creeping him out significantly.

"What is it?"

"John has something... he would like to... tell you," Laf stuttered. They nudged their best friend forward.

John took a deep breathe.

"I- My dad... I mean..." He looked back at his friends for help. They were all staring back encouragingly.

"John, you know you can tell me anything. I won't do anything you aren't comfortable with, provided you aren't in danger. You're like a son to me."

The boy looked slightly less agitated. He steeled himself, and then blurted out,

"My dad's been hitting me." John recoiled as soon as the words left his mouth, retreating back to his friends, who were surrounding him protectively.

George was stunned.

He'd been expecting something like this was happening, but had been praying to every deity he could think of that he had been wrong. Apparently, they either hadn't heard or didn't care, because he was now having a conversation no one should have. He sat frozen in place for a moment before sighing deeply.

"How... How long has this been happening?"
John looked up from Alex's shoulder, where it had been resting in a hug.

"About a month."

A month. For a month, John had been at the complete mercy of his father.

"Well, now that you told me, we can fix that. I swear to you that you will never go back to that house again." Rage was already welling up inside George. No one hurt a kid like Henry Laurens had and got away with it. Not if he could help it.

"No!" John blurted. He looked shocked that the word had left his mouth. "Please, Mr. Washington, don't do anything yet. I want to talk to him first. There's something I should tell him."

Understanding dawned on George.

"You want to come out to him?"

"Wait- you knew? Of course you knew." John gave Lafayette a withering glare. If looks could kill. "I figured that I might as well tell him, if I'm not going to live with him anymore. Two birds with one stone, as Alex so eloquently put it."

Alex looked bashful.

George considered this for a moment before responding.

"I'm not sure about this. You must know better than any of us how dangerous Henry Laurens is when he's angry." John flinched. "But, I suppose if it's what you really want to do, and he can't hurt you, that it might be okay. In any event, and I hate to say it, it could make him more willing for you to move out. You can do it, but only if you have a plan that you run by me first."

Herc nodded vigorously.

"We do. Mr. Laurens let John invite Alex, Laf and me over after school tomorrow. We thought that you could drive Alex over, and come inside to talk to Mr. Laurens. While you're talking, we'll get John's stuff into a bag and then come back downstairs. Once we're all in the same room, John will tell his dad and we bolt. Mr. Laurens won't be able to hurt John if he's not there, and you'll be there for extra protection before we leave."

"We will stop him from hurting notre petit tortue as well." Laf's eye's flashed. "Oh, and of course, John would stay with us. We have enough room. If it's O.K. with you and Mama."

George nodded grimly.

"Of course he can stay with us. As for the plan... Well, it's a plan. It's as good as any, I suppose."

The Set cracked a smile.

"This is happening tomorrow? John, are you going to be okay with your dad for one more night?"

He nodded.

"I've made it this long, one more night won't kill me. Besides, how much damage could he possibly do in one night?" He grinned shakily. "He has a public appearance tomorrow morning, so he can't even drink. I'll be fine."

"I still don't like this." In truth, every fiber of George's being was screaming for him to keep John
as far away from Henry as possible. He wanted to wrap the boy up in blankets and hiss at anyone who came near him. But that wasn't possible, so he had to trust that John would be fine for one night.

"George? I really will be fine. Soon, I'm going to be better than I've ever been."

"I know. I just wish it was sooner."

John was terrified. Knees-weak, eyes-watering, quaking-in-your-boots terrified.

Today, his father would know. Today, he would be free.

He had acted normal perfectly for the last twenty-four hours. Henry didn't suspect a thing. He wondered if this was how James Bond felt when he was undercover, just about to take down a criminal.

Today he would be free.

When the doorbell rang, John jumped. He plastered a smile on his face and went downstairs to meet his friends. The plan was in motion.

"Hey guys!"

"John!" three voices chorused. They met in a hug, and then raced up the stairs, leaving George to distract Henry. The echoes of their discussion could be heard from the foyer.

"How are you?" Alex whispered. The question had an urgency to it that chilled John.

"Fine. Pretty much all my stuff's already on my bed. I just need your help putting it in the duffel bag and collecting a few last minute things."

They set to work, Laf and Herc packing John's things, Alex and John slipping in and out of his room, grabbing trinkets and photos from John's childhood.

Today he would be free.

All too soon, ten minutes were up and the timer went off on John's phone. They looked at each other and descended to where George and Henry were sitting. Herc hid John's duffel bag behind him, while Laf followed, giving extra protection.

"Now, I'm not saying that." The two adults seemed to somehow have gotten into an argument about politics in the time they had been gone, and George seemed like he was just beginning to get fired up.

"Hey, Mr. Washington!"

"Hello, John." George stopped his tirade and turned to him. He had the full attention of everyone. *This* would be fun.

"Um, dad?"

"Yes, Jack?" Henry seemed to be in a better mood than usual. His eyes were clear, and he was wearing a well-put-together suit. He was reclining in a chair that seemed like it would be uncomfortable with the amount of embroidery it's cushion possessed, but Henry had the strange
effect of making whatever piece of furniture he sat in look like it believed was a privilege to hold him.

"I'm... well, I've been meaning to tell you that... I'm gay."

Henry's eyes went cold and he sat up.

"You're what?"

"I mean, I like boys. I didn't mean for it to sound that way-"

"After everything I've done for you, you have the audacity to think that you are attracted to men?"

Henry was standing now, and John was shaking.

"Dad I'm sor-"

"You're right you're sorry," Henry interjected. He raised his hand, and everyone in the room tensed. Time seemed to slow down.

Herc and Laf abandoned the duffel bag, lurching forward to pull John back just as Alex leaped in front of him, trying to shield him from his father. At the same time, George jumped up and grabbed for Henry's hand, but not before it hit his foster son full on.

Alex reeled back, clutching his face, and Henry pushed past him. He slammed into the wall.

"Alex!" Four horrified voices screamed. George was the first to react, grabbing Henry and pinning him to the wall, only a foot from where Alex lay crumpled against the floor. Laf raced to their brother, Herc right behind them. John was frozen in place.

"Don't you ever come anywhere near my family again!" George growled. Pure rage was rolling off him in waves. Even John was scared of him.

When Henry didn't answer, too terrified to speak, he dropped him and turned to his foster son.

"Alex? Are you O.K.?"

Alex nodded, still clutching his cheek. Laf gently pried his hand away, revealing an angry red mark in the shape of a hand. John felt like he might be sick. Alex, perfect Alex, was hurt because of him.

"John?"

He snapped his head around to face George, who was lifting Alex off the ground.

"Grab your bag. Herc, help him. We're leaving." He whirled to face Henry, who was still frozen in place. "If you bring your fat, homophobic self within fifty feet of John or Alex, I will personally ensure you go to jail for so long, never see the light of day again!"

John felt himself be ushered out by Lafayette, who was rubbing circles into his back consolingly and reassuring him.

"Do not worry. Alex will be fine. We will all be fine."

He was still shaking like a leaf as he got into the car and they pulled away from his house, from Henry Laurens. He would never hurt him again.
John found himself agreeing with what Laf had said.

He was free.

Chapter End Notes

So the answer to the question was (drum roll please)... Aaron Burr!!!
Aaron burr and Jonathan Bellamy were real-life possibly-more-than-just-bros. Like, on a Hamilton and Laurens level. Our man Aaron wrote a letter to Jonathan that's somewhere on the internet (couldn't find it, and even then I don't know how to link) and is decidedly homosexual, but who are we to judge? Anyway, it's cute and one of my many OTPs, so there. Congrats to definitely.not.asha for getting it right!!!!
P.S.- We will be seeing more of Burr to come, never fear.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

So, I figured some fluff was in order. But don't get used to it, some pretty heavy stuff is coming up.
P.S.- It's about time Herc get his own POV! I feel so bad he hasn't gotten any time yet. Also- unedited and written at like ten at night. I promise my writing quality will go up soon.

Herc was out of his mind worried.

John hadn't stopped shaking since they left Henry Laurens' house, and nothing Laf was saying had any effect on him. Alex had gotten over what was probably an adrenaline rush after Henry hit him and was now letting tears slide silently down his face, cradling his cheek in one hand. His other was clenched tightly around John. George was clenching the steering wheel of the car so hard Herc thought it would snap in two, and the speedometer had yet to dip below 70 miles.

He had no idea who to comfort first.

Seeing how George literally held their lives in his hands, and he was by no means being gentle about it, he decided to start with him. He placed a hand over the man's.

"George. Everyone is fine. You need to slow down."

George breathed in sharply, then nodded once. Herc sighed with relief when the minivan slowed down considerably.

"I'm sorry, Herc. I'm just..." George trailed off, looking lost and furious at the same time.

"I know. I don't like seeing Alex and John hurt any more than you do." In fact, Herc had almost punched Henry Laurens himself. See if he liked being treated the way he treated Alex and John.

"I swear to all of you in this car, if he lays a finger on any of you or Martha I will personally destroy him." George spoke in a low growl.

"I second this motion," Herc said, equally angry.

"Oui."

"Do you really need to ask me or John?" Alex had so much venom in his voice, he could have poisoned a snake. He helped Laf comfort John, who was staring off into space.

"The Anti-Henry Laurens League has been formed," Herc quipped, attempting to lighten the mood. He beamed when John smiled. Deciding that this was a good sign, he rambled on about random topics until everyone's tension seemed to lift, if only slightly. His family was happy, and so was he.
"He what?!" Martha was fuming.

This was going about as well as Alex had expected.

"Martha-" George attempted to calm his irate wife. She was inspecting him and John with such vigor, he doubted she missed a single bruise. Alex wouldn't have minded if she did, as with every injury she grew more and more angry.

"No. That man hurt my children. Why, that little-"

"Martha." George gestured to the kids congregated around them.

Martha huffed.

"George, let's be real, they've heard every curse word under the planet by now. But," she added, seeing George's glare, "I will contain myself for the sole fact that my babies need me."

Alex smiled at the fact that Martha already counted John as her child. He tightened his hug around him. He didn't remember when he started to hug John; all he knew was that it had been a while, and he wasn't going to stop anytime in the foreseeable future.

Alex winced as Martha touched his cheek.

"Mrs. Washington, I'm okay, really. John needs help."

"Alex, John does need help, but so do you. Now, get yourself into the kitchen with Laf. They'll get you an ice pack. John, sweetie, we're going to go upstairs and get some Neosporin. Your arms look terrible." John had been holding his arms so tight, his fingernails had begun to draw blood.

John's head shot up, and he shrunk closer to Alex.

"Mrs. Washington, can I stay with Alex?" John's voice was hoarse, and barely above a whisper.

Martha's eyes melted a little as she stared at them.

"Alright, honey. Whatever you want." She led them off into the kitchen for some ice packs.

It becomes an unspoken rule in the Washington household: Do not attempt to separate John and Alex.

John wasn't sure if they talked about it when they weren't around or if George, Martha, and Laf just communicate on a telepathic level, but after their first encounter with Martha, everyone leaves them alone. Alex and John seem to be always touching, whether it's John leaning against him or Alex making sure John has someone's hand to squeeze as Martha fixes them up. John is grateful to them for not asking questions. He honestly isn't sure how he'd explain his and Alex's relationship, and right now that's the farthest thing from his mind.

He's trying desperately to fight it, but his mind has been playing their encounter with Henry in an endless loop. Every time he closes his eyes, he sees Alex getting hit, or Henry when he first heard John say he was gay. It's too much. He's supposed to be free, but wherever he looks he's reminded of what he's running from.

"John."
He turns to look at Laf.

"If you want, we have finished preparing your room. You can come see it." They wink. "It has been much improved."

John looks at Alex, who has been acting as the go-between between John and anyone he needs to communicate with. Alex understood immediately that right now, he's just too tired and lost in his own mind to try to talk with people. Alexander Hamilton is a godsend.

"That sounds good, Laf."

They lead them up the grand staircase and down a hallway, stopping at a plain white door.

"Here we are!"

Laf flings the door open, revealing a pale blue room. Rosy sunlight streams in through the massive windows, falling across the dozens of sea turtles that pattern the walls. An ornate iron bed sits in the corner, opposite a matching desk that already has a stack of sketchbooks piled high atop it.

"Wow," he breathes. Alex and Laf are beaming. "How did you guys know I'd be staying with you?"

"We had a hunch." Laf looks down at their shoes. "Herc helped with the turtles."

"It's... beautiful. Thank you."

"Anything for notre petit tortue. I'll let you get settled in."

Laf walks out the door, and Alex makes a move to follow. Before he can stop himself, his hand darts out and closes around Alex's arm.

"Stay?" he squeaks.

Alex smiles and nods, curling up with him beneath he massive window and singing to him until he falls asleep.

He's going to be fine.
The rest of the week goes, blessedly, perfectly. Alex hasn't enrolled in school yet, and the 
Washingtons decided that it would be best for John to stay home for now, so they've been enjoying 
each other's company. John has never met a more understanding person than Alexander Hamilton. 
Alex has been his crutch since he left Henry.

Martha stayed at home with them, making sure they ate and didn't blow up the house trying to 
make soup. (Lafayette still maintained that they exaggerated entirely too much on the fact that they 
blew up the house. Let's just say, it was a long time until the kitchen looked normal again.) On the 
whole, Martha was the coolest babysitter John had ever had. She gave them free reign of Mount 
Vernon, trusting that some fresh air and friendship would at least start to heal John. And it did. He 
felt better than he had in a very, very long time. He felt like he had found heaven on Earth, being 
able to spend his days watching the Potomac and talking with Alex. George emerged from his study 
every so often, joining them.

Today, it was snowing, and Martha had ordered them inside. Strangely, Alex didn't even put up a 
fight. In fact, he seemed happy to be indoors. John didn't press him as to why. He figured Alex had 
his reasons. Besides, they were baking cookies today.

"Alex! That is way too many chocolate chips!"

Alex laughed off Martha's chiding and dumped at least two cups of chips into the batter.

Martha nearly shrieked.

"Look at this! Can you believe this disrespect, John?"

John grinned from his position of watching the cookies bake while Martha chased Alex around the 
kitchen, smacking him upside the head.

"I gotta agree with Martha on this one, my friend. You're on your own."

Alex clapped a hand to his heart, feigning heartbreak.

"Et tu, Laurens? I'm wounded!"

John was so busy laughing he missed it when Alex snuck up behind him and dropped flour in his 
hair.

"Hey!"

"It's what you get for being a traitor!"

Alex dodged his missiles of cookie batter. Martha ran around them, trying to get them to stop. 
Unfortunately, she made her way into the line of fire.

All three of them froze when a fat glob of batter landed on her cheek.

"Oh, you're on, now!"
It turns out, Martha is a beast when it comes to food fights.

Fifteen minutes later, and the kitchen was a disaster. Alex and John banded together to launch a surprise attack on Martha, which they were currently plotting from behind the kitchen island.

"John?"

He wiped flour off his eyes and looked at George, who was standing in the doorway with a phone in his hand.

"Yeah?"

"You've got a phone call. It's... It's from your father." George spat the word out. John froze up, all merriment leaving him. Alex was at his side in a second.

"You in no way have to take this, okay? This is only if you want to. We have to ask if you want to, it's an ancient and completely outdated law that Henry is invoking." George said into the phone. "He'll be on speaker the entire time, and none of us are leaving the room. He won't be able to threaten you, and if he does he'll have us to deal with." George did not look happy about John being anywhere near the phone, and was no doubt already plotting the downfall of whatever law Henry had dug up.

He took a shaky breath.

"Alright. But only if you guys stay with me."

"John, you won't be able to throw me out." Alex had a fire in his eyes.

"Okay then." George put the phone on speaker and passed it to him. "Hi, Dad."

"Hello, son."

John flinched. Alex grabbed his hand and squeezed it hard.

"Pack your things. I'll be there to pick you up soon."

"Wait, what?!" four voices chorused.

"We'll be talking about your... deviance when you get home," Henry continued as if he hadn't heard anything. "But besides that, I've decided to let you come home."

John couldn't breathe.

"And what if John doesn't what to come with you?" Alex's voice was dangerous, and John could feel his hand tighten around his own.

"Jack, is that the immigrant you said the Washingtons brought home? I thought I told you not to talk to him. I will be coming to pick you up in half an hour. Until then, you stay away from my son."

"Excuse me?" Alex's face was beet red.

"You heard me. I want you nowhere near Jack. Not with your freelading ideas-"

He was cut off by the three Washingtons in the room.
"Why you-"

"Don't you dare-"

"SIT DOWN, HENRY, YOU HOMOPHOBIC MOTHER-"

George clamped his hand over Alex's mouth before he could finish the curse. John could tell immediately that that was a mistake. Alex's eyes, previously filled with rage dilated with fear. Something entirely different came over him. He quickly dipped out of George's grasp and kneed him in the shin. George let out a yelp and bounced on one foot. Alex's eyes widened slightly at seeing what he'd done.

"Sorry, I'm so sorry, sorry, sorry..." he stuttered. Then he turned on his heel and ran. John had never seen someone run so fast in his life.

"Alex!"

George cursed.

"I should not have done that." He took off after Alex, calling to him.

"Jack? What just happened? All I heard was that obnoxious-"

"Dad, stop. Alex is one of the best people I have ever met. I am not leaving the Washingtons. I'm safe here, and you can't hurt me anymore. Please-" John's voice broke. "Please don't call again."

"Jack-"

John hung up. He took in a shaky breath and turned to Martha.

"What just happened?"

Martha was already pulling her coat and shoes on.

"John, honey, don't you remember? Alex was homeless for a year when George found him. The poor boy must have... acted on instinct or something."

Now it was John's turn to be amazed. A year on the streets of New York? No wonder Alex reacted the way he did. John probably would have done the same thing in his place.

"Martha, he's going to be okay, right? We're going to find him?"

"Of course, honey. He will if I have anything to say about it."

John was continually amazed by Martha Washington. At first glance, she seemed like a sweet lady who wouldn't hurt a fly. And usually that was true. But if her family was in any way endangered, she fought longer and harder than a grizzly. She was one of the strongest people John knew. If she said Alex was going to be fine, then the heavens above couldn't reverse that.

John slipped on his shoes and followed her out the door.

Chapter End Notes
So, what do you think?
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Hey guys!! This is a little early, I know, but I've got a retreat for my youth group I really don't want to go to and they ban phones. Count your blessings. Count them.

Alex didn't know where he was. All he knew was he had to run. He had to run because he messed up. He messed up again, he messed up, he messed up, he messed up...

The words were a steady rhythm as his sneakers beat against the pavement.

He messed up, he messed up, he messed up...

Alex didn't know when he stopped running. It had been long enough that he was tired, long enough that the panic had started to melt away. He still had no idea where he was. He took a deep breath and tried to focus.

Where was he?

There were plants and trees surrounding him, but also asphalt pathways. A park, then.

He shivered. Now that his heart rate had started to slow down, he noticed just how cold it was. In fact...

He looked up.

Snow.

No, this couldn't be happening. Not again. He couldn't do this again.

All of the panic that he had smoothed away came back in a rush. The last time he had been caught in a snowstorm in a park, he had almost died of hypothermia. He had been rescued, but he was taken from New York. He couldn't leave the Washingtons. He couldn't.

The snow started to come down stronger.

Alex felt like he was back on Nevis, drowning. The swirling white flakes threatened to swallow him up. He didn't know what to do. The logical part of his brain was telling him to find some kind of shelter, anything, but the rest of his brain was screaming at him to run, hide, get away.

The rest of him compromised. He stumbled over to a park bench, nearly invisible in the snow, and curled up.

He couldn't leave the Washingtons. So, he would just have to wait here, and hope that no one found him.

"Alex!"
John was scared. They had been searching for Alex for at least half an hour, and he grew more and more anxious with each minute. The snow that had started out in flurries was coming down furiously. Scenarios looped through his head. Alex could be hurt, he was definitely scared, he could have gotten lost, he must be freezing...

Then, he saw the sweatshirt.

John had almost given up on looking in the park George had assigned him. But the jolt of bottle green, that was Alex's sweatshirt. The one he wore almost constantly, that he had received before coming to the Washingtons. That sweatshirt meant Alex.

That sweatshirt covered a tiny figure curled up on a park bench.

He raced over to find Alex with his knees against his chest, eyes blank and breathing heavy.

"Alex, oh, thank... Thank every deity who ever lived. Are you okay?" John was almost giddy with relief.

Alex didn't answer. He just sat there, shivering and clutching his knees.

"Oh. Okay, I can do this," John had no experience with panic attacks, besides what Alex had done for him when he still lived with Henry. "Alright. Alex, breathe with me, okay? One, two, three..."

Alex struggled against an unseen weight, eventually managing to suck in a breath.

"Good, Alex, that's really good. Can you do it again? One, two, three..."

This time, Alex was able to breathe in right away, although it was shallow.

"Alright. Just keep breathing. I'm going to call Martha and George. Then we need to find somewhere to warm you up." Alex was as cold as ice. That combined with how still he was made him eerily similar to an ice sculpture.

After John dialed Martha and told her where they were, he shook off his Jacket and put it around Alex. It dwarfed him.

"George said that there's a coffee house across the street that we can go to. Do you think you can walk there?" John had gotten Alex calmed down enough to answer yes or no questions. Alex shook his head.

John huffed, thinking.

"That makes it a little harder. You're not that heavy, right?" Alex shook his head. "Good. I should be able to carry you at least part of the way." He hesitated for a moment before scooping Alex up, bridal style. He was pained by how easy it was. When they got back to Mount Vernon, he was going to put Alex on a diet of nothing but bacon and grease.

The snow was coming down with a fury. Even with how light Alex was, John had trouble making it to the coffee house. Eventually, he found himself of a storefront that declared itself Vernon Coffee & Co.. He set Alex down as gently as he could on a nearby bench and pounded on the door.

"Hey! Is anyone there?" Please, let someone be there.

A woman must have heard him, and was rushing to unlock the door. John sighed in relief and picked Alex back up.
"It's okay. You're gonna be fine," he murmured into his hair.

The woman finally won her wrestling match with the deadbolt. She ushered them inside, John explaining to her hurriedly why they had been outside in the middle of a blizzard. She clucked over how cold they were and disappeared behind a door to make them hot chocolate. John observed all of this distractedly. His main concern was making sure Alex was as warm as possible. He settled on putting him on a fluffy blue couch next to the bay window at the front of the store. Within minutes, Alex had a hot chocolate in his hands and was wrapped tightly in all of the jackets and blankets John and the woman could find. She left them alone after seeing how protective of Alex John was, confident he didn't need her help in calming the frozen boy.

John curled up next to Alex, hoping to give him whatever body heat he had. Alex sighed, obviously happy.

"John?" he murmured.

"Mmh?"

"Thank you. For finding me."

"Of course, Alex."
Chapter 17

Guys??? Social anxiety is a thing??? I just found out about it, and apparently I have severe social anxiety all my life and I didn't know??? I thought I was so messed up and nobody else was like that??? Guys, IT HAS A NAME!!!?????!?!?!?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John sighed. He had just gotten off the phone with George and Martha. All roads had been shut down because of the blizzard. They had talked to the woman who let them in, whose name was Lizzy, and decided that John and Alex would wait out the storm with her in the coffee shop. She was very kind to them, giving them all the space they needed. Especially Alex, which he was incredibly grateful for. It was funny: after all of the time he had spent teasing his friends about being Mother Hens, he was doing the exact same thing to Alex. He just couldn't stand the thought of seeing him hurt, and he looked so frail, curled up on the couch under a mountain of blankets. Every part of him was screaming at him to protect him, make sure no one hurt him again.

"John?"

Alex was awake, and staring at him almost bashfully. John stopped pacing and hurried over to him.

"Yeah?"

"I... Do you mind if I talk to you?" Alex's voice was barely above a whisper. John had never seen him look so tiny.

"Of course." He settled down onto the couch. "What is it?"

Alex took a deep breath. "So, I know you guys don't... know about my past, b-but-" Alex's voice broke, and it drove a crack into John's heart.

"Alex, are you sure? You don't have to tell me anything if you don't want to."

He laughed sharply. "No. John, I want to. I hate keeping it bottled up inside like it's something to hide, even though it is..." John closed the three inches between them and pulled Alex into a hug.

"You can tell me anything. I won't go to George or Martha or anything unless you want me to. Alex, you are my best friend. I hope you know that, and I hope you know you can tell me whatever you need to. Or tell me nothing, if that's what you want. Whatever makes you feel better." It was true. He hadn't known Alex for long, but they had gotten so close in the short time he had. Alex was his best friend, and he would do anything for him.

The look Alex gave him made his heart melt. He looked so grateful, and all John had done was tell him he was loved.

"Thank you, John, so much. You will never understand how much that means to me." They sat in comfortable silence for a moment before Alex spoke again.

"Okay. I guess... I guess I'll start at the beginning."
I was born in St. Croix, Nevis, which is this really tiny island. My dad left soon after I was born, decided that he wasn't ready for a family. I haven't seen him since. I stayed on Nevis with Mamá. Nevis is pretty much a forgotten spot in the Caribbean, what with all of the bigger islands drawing tourists. I have no idea why though. John, you should have seen it. It was the most beautiful place I've ever seen. The ocean was so clear, nothing like the water here, and it was so green." He paused for a moment, lost in his memories of the island. "Every few weeks, a cargo ship passed by with supplies and the island's trader would meet it and trade for the entire island. At least, that's what he was supposed to do. He had this shop and farm that he ran 'on the side', but he pretty much monopolized the island. All of the best goods from the ships came to his shop, and the rest of it was priced ridiculously high. My mother was a shopkeeper too, not nearly as prosperous as him, obviously, but we got by, you know? She was the most amazing woman. I remember, she would always make sure that when I got home from school, there would be something for me. Sometimes it was a wildflower, or when Mr. Smith, the trade was especially generous, sugar or candy. When I had to stop going to school so I could help her work, she found me these beat-up textbooks and hounded me until I knew those things cover to cover." A smile fell across his face at the memory. "Man, she must have paid a fortune for those. Books weren't cheap on the island."

"She sounds incredible, Alex."

"She was. Education was important to her. She never learned how to read, and I think that was her biggest regret. She needed me to keep the books at the shop, which is why I had to leave school once Joseph quit. Joseph was Mamá's assistant," he added for John. "We went on for a while just fine, but eventually, Mr. Smith raised up the prices on goods. We couldn't keep the store."

John gave a little gasp.

"Mamá went to work for Mr. Smith, and for a little while I got to go back to school. I was three grades ahead of my age," he said, the pride clear in his voice. "I felt so guilty, though. I thought that if I worked, I could help us get our store back. I didn't understand that learning to read would get me further. My mom had it tough. That jerk of a trader worked her way too hard. She had the longest shifts on his farm, and once she started to get sick he would threaten her that if she didn't work harder he would fire her, and then no one would be able to provide for me." Alex's fists clenched at his side. "She didn't know I heard. School let out early one day, and I was so excited that I could finally see her at work... and I heard him talking to her." He paused. John rubbed circles into his back, trying to keep him talking. This was the most Alex had opened up to anyone, as far as he knew.

"Anyway, after that, she started getting much worse. In about a week, she was... she was so bad she couldn't walk. Smith fired her after the third day of missing work."

"No!"

"Yeah. And then, I caught what she had. I'm still not sure what we were sick with. I've been doing some research, and it looks like it was some mutated form of malaria that's contagious. It got so bad that neither of us could do anything more strenuous than crawl a few feet. We just sat there in our own vomit, and she was holding me-" he cut off into a sob.

"Hey, it's okay. Alex, it's okay. You're safe now. I'm sure she would be so proud of you for everything you've done." He was holding Alex as tightly as possible, while the boy sobbed into him, shaking with the force of his own tears.

Fifteen minutes later, Alex was much calmer. His eyes were still rimmed red, but he had stopped crying. Lizzy had brought them out another round of hot chocolate, which Alex had gulped down greedily. The good news was he seemed to have no lasting effects from being out in the blizzard
for so long beyond a minor cold, which Martha would quickly put an end to. He asked John if he could continue his story.

"I know you don't think it's a good idea," he said, seeing the disapproving look on John's face,"but it really helps to talk."

John sighed. He couldn't say no if it helps Alex, and he knows it. He nods.

"After my mom died, I went to work for Smith. He knew I could read, so he put me in charge of keeping his books. I think he felt bad about my mom. It was pretty okay until I started scamming him for books. I know it was a weird thing to do, but I was scared. I thought if I didn't read enough, I would forget how. And... it was addicting," Alex blushed. "Once I started reading, I couldn't stop. Eventually, he caught me. He beat me up and fired me, and I decided I had had enough of St. Croix, so I moved in with my cousin Peter. There were pretty much no child services on Nevis. Nobody knew that Peter beat me up, too. I was in a position similar to you and Henry." John shivered involuntarily. "Peter started falling on rough times. Eventually, he committed suicide. I had to go to the three people who made up Nevis' child services, and they assigned me a foster family in St. Croix. They were, um, of the same mindset as Peter, if you get what I mean. I stayed there for a few years, until the hurricane. It came out of nowhere, John. It just... hit. And then everything was water and rain, and it stayed that way for maybe two days? When it was over, I woke up, and it was all gone. Everything was just... washed away. I'll never forget that sky in the eye of the hurricane. It was yellow. I had nothing. So, I wrote. One of my poems, a local priest got a hold of and published. Everyone who survived read it. They put together enough money for me to come to America. They knew that once the newscasters and red cross left, no more aid was coming. They read my poem and decided that at least one kid from Nevis would survive, keep alive the island's legacy. They were total strangers, and they gave up everything just to smuggle me onto a ship bound for New York. They couldn't raise enough for me to come legally, so I couldn't get a job when I got here. I ended up homeless. Then George found me, and now I have a shot to make Nevis proud of me again. That's my story."

John sat shocked for a moment before pulling Alex into a hug so tight he didn't think he would be able to let go.

"You're going to change the world some day, Alex, and when you do it's going to blow us all away."

Chapter End Notes

P.S.- Alex's age is altered for the story
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

James sighed and shut the lid of his shiny new suitcase. Smith had just called him, telling him the information he had found out about one Alexander Hamilton, who was currently living in America. Why would Alexander want to move there?

He moved to look out the window of his hotel room, over the crystal clear Caribbean sea. According to Smith, Alex had loved Nevis. He even wrote essays defending it, desperately trying to draw tourists to his home. James huffed. The nerd.

Well, he thought, Maybe not that much of a nerd. Tourists meant economy, and economy meant jobs. Jobs meant opportunities beyond Smith and his plantation. Alexander had been looking for a way out. He had been looking after his own skin just as much as James did. Yes, they were most definitely related. No one could deny that.

The clock on his wall chimed. One, two, three. His flight leaves at six, and the drive to his airport was no hop, skip, or jump. The only airport on Nevis was an hour and a half away from the hotel James was staying at.

He swept his suitcase off the creaking bed and left the room. Alexander had lost his way, moving to a new country. A new family. It was almost as if James wasn't enough for him. Well, after this flight, they wouldn't have that problem anymore. He was going to bring Alexander back to Nevis, away from the people that must have taken pity on him, because why else would they take in just another nameless, homeless kid from the Caribbean? What was their name? The Washingtons.

He had his son to find.

Chapter End Notes

FFrrriiiieeenndddsssss
I need help. I have writer's block in a major way. This is totally just a filler chapter, but it does set up the major arc, so yay for that!!

Also, I am sick. Like, really sick. So don't expect too many updates until Monday.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

HEY Y'ALL I'M BACK!!!

enjoy!

“Alexander Hamilton!”

Alex and John bolted up from their position tangled up on the couch, knocking their heads together.

“Ow.”

Alex thought back to how he ended up curled up asleep on a couch next to John Laurens. After he had finished talking to John, he remembered John hugging him. He was so tired. He usually was after talking so much about Nevis. The music Lizzy was playing was so comforting, and John had sung his mother's lullaby to him, and he must have just… Fallen asleep. He had fallen asleep on top of John. He scooted off John, brushing off his hoodie.

“Sorry! I'm sorry, John.”

“It’s fine, Alex. You’re cute when you’re asleep.” John’s eyes were bright with laughter. Wait, what? What did that mean? Did John think he was… cute? Alex felt a blush creeping up his cheeks.

“Well, if you two are done having a moment, can we get back to focusing?” Lafayette was standing in front of them, impatiently tapping their foot.

“Lafayette! What are you doing here?” John answered nervously, glancing behind them for Martha and George.

“Oh no, mon ami, George and Martha are not going to save you now. They graciously agreed to let me collect you two lovebirds, and I am out for blood. How could you? You didn’t call me once in the last twenty-four hours! I have been worried sick, and poor Herc! He has been sewing non-stop since we got home from school! And you,” Laf rounded on Alex. “Why would you run? You know that George wasn’t mad at you. Did the snow storm seem that appealing to you?”

“You know you can't control a panic attack.” Alex's voice rose slightly, his temper rising with it. John rested his hand on his shoulder.

Lafayette sighed.

"I know, mon petit lion, I know. I'm sorry, I've just been very worried. It wasn't all bad, though. Hercules made me a gorgeous skirt in his stress-sewing, and it seems like you two have had quite a good time, hmm?" Their eyes sparkled mischievously. Alex looked away, furiously trying to avoid John's eyes.

"They did indeed. Wouldn't shut up unless one of them was asleep," Lizzy said cordially, sneaking up on them from the kitchen.
Lafayette did a double take. They obviously didn't see Lizzy. They recovered beautifully, though, taking Lizzy's hand and pressing a kiss onto it.

"Who might you be?"

"Way too old for you." John and Alex snorted laughter. "My name's Lizzy. I stayed with these two during the blizzard."

"Well in that case, thank you so much, from all of us." Lafayette launched forward and hugged the woman. "Also, no need to worry about any of that, I'm taken." They swooned, clutching a hand to their heart.

"Well, whoever they are they're certainly very lucky. If I were you, I'd get going now, though. The snow's just slowed down, and it won't stay this way for long." Alex looked outside. The blizzard had almost stopped during their nap, and the streets were cleared and salted. He had a newfound respect for the efficiency of American street cleaning crews.

"That's a good idea. Thank you Lizzy! Come on, Alex." John ushered him and Laf out the door, honing in on the Washington's minivan parked across the street from the coffee house. John opened the door.

"Oh thank goodness! Alex, John, you're okay!" The two boys were smothered by Martha Washington bursting out of the van.

"Martha, it's okay, we're fine."

"Well, you can't expect me not to worry. This is the second time this week my babies have been hurting or in pain, and you want me to ignore it? No. You're all going to need to become much more safety conscious in the very near future, or none of you are leaving our house again unless it is in heavy bubble-wrap."

"Please, anything but the bubble-wrap," Laf laughed.

"Oh, yes the bubble-wrap. I trust you gave them a proper piece of our minds?"

Laf saluted. "Yes ma'am."

"Well done, soldier." Laf nodded and dropped their salute.

"You too, Martha?" John said, betrayed.

"Yes, me too." Martha swatted him upside the head. "You had us worried sick. And you, Alex. Why did you run?"

Oh no. This was exactly what he had been trying to avoid. All of these people were facing him expectantly, waiting for his story. He swallowed.

"It has to do with some previous families I've stayed with. They didn't treat me as well as they should have." John sniffed. "I... kind of freaked out when George covered my mouth. I'm sorry. Is it okay if I don't talk about it any more?"

"Of course, sweetheart. Just remember that we're here if you want to talk to us."

"And Alex," George cut in, shifting the car's attention to him, "I'm really sorry about scaring you so badly. I hope you can forgive me."
"It's fine, George. It's no big deal." Alex smiled in relief. The Washingtons had taken that better than he had hoped.

"George, why don't we go home. They all look exhausted," Martha chided her husband gently. She was right. Even with his few naps at the coffee house, Alex was barely keeping his eyelids open. Soon, the swaying of the car drifted him off to sleep.

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Alex was adorable sleeping. John had accepted this fact as part of the universe. The sky was blue. Laf was crazy. And Alex was the most precious human being to ever grace this planet. He felt a stupid grin spreading across his cheeks watching him doze in the seat next to him.

"John?"

He smiled at George.

"Yeah?"

"Did Alex happen to say anything about what happened to him while he was with you?"

Oh. That conversation was significantly less adorable than Alex.

"Yeah, he did. He told me about his life before he came to America, and yes, he did tell me about who he lived with previously. He's been through so much, George." Looking at Alex now, peaceful in sleep, you would never know what had happened in his life.

"I was afraid it was something like that. Do you think Alex would be okay with you telling us about it?"

"No," John answered immediately. "It took a lot for him to tell me. I don't think he would be okay with three more people knowing his life story when he wakes up. I wouldn't be comfortable telling you even if Alex gave me permission."

"Can you at least tell us who caused him so much misery?" The look on George's face was pure paternal protection when he looked back at Alex in the mirror. John only hesitated a moment.

"A trader named Smith."
Hey friends! I wrote a side fic for this about Laf meeting the Washingtons. Check it out if you want? Or don't, it's pretty terrible. I haven't decided if I'm going to continue it or not. If I do, it'll be mullette-centered, because I am utter trash.

"No no no don't do this to me!" George slammed his hand onto his study's desk as his computer died. He sighed.

Martha stuck her head into the room.

"George? You okay in here?"

"I'm fine. I've been trying to track down this trader John told us about. Smith. It's nearly impossible. Apparently, Nevis kept no records of any kind. Did you know that they have less than twenty-five people working in Child Services?"

"That's terrible! Only twenty-five, for the whole island?"

"Yeah. I don't understand, I should be able to find this guy in fifteen minutes. He's like a ghost. John said he practically ran the island, there should be some trace of him somewhere." George put his head in his hands. He couldn't help but feel like it was partly his fault that he couldn't find this trader. He felt like he should be looking harder, finding the right places to look, not sitting here taking a break.

Martha rubbed his back.

"Did you try looking in the shipping records?"

"Nothing there. I was about to get access to Nevis's census and try to find him that way when my computer died." George glared at the offending device.

"George, the computer didn't do it on purpose. You can't set it on fire by willpower," Martha scoffed.

"I know. Still, if looks could kill.."

"It's dead anyway," Martha laughed.

"That was a low blow." Still, George did smile in spite of himself.

"I know, but George, you need to take a break. You won't do Alex any good if you're sitting here having a funeral for your dead computer."

"Well, what do you suggest I should do?"

"You know we need to discuss John and Alex going back to school."

George winced. "Ouch. Frying pan into the fire, huh." It was times like these he regretted marrying
such an efficient woman.

"Suck it up. They need to go back sometime, but how soon is too soon?" She sighed and flopped onto his desk.

"I think that we should ask them. I don't want either of them to go back, but Alex definitely wants to and John goes wherever Alex goes."

"You're right. They are kind of a package deal, huh."

George snorted. "You think?"

"Well then, we'll ask them," she said, ignoring George. "I just don't know if John's ready. He's been through a lot, and Alex won't go to school without him. I hate to see him like this, all cooped up, but if John won't go he wouldn't dream of it."

"I know. Maybe if we ease John into the idea of school..." he trailed off. There didn't seem to be a good solution to this problem.

"We'll ask them at lunch. Let them have a nice morning." Martha wrapped her arms around him.

"That sounds good. Lunch it is." He sighed and pressed his head into her shoulder. "They deserve at least one stress free morning."

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Martha was the best cook on Earth.

She said it was the love she poured into her meals that made them so good. Alex still wasn’t sure. Whatever was in this food was definitely not native to their planet.

Judging by John's face, he felt the same way.

"Mrs. Washington, I will never understand how you make a turkey sandwich taste like it should have won Chopped."

"Flattery will get you everywhere, John," Martha chuckled.

"Hey, I'm a southern gentleman. There don't seem to be a lot of damsels in distress these days, so I am forced to give outlet to my talents by flattering godlike cooking skills."

"I guess it's better than nothing," George cut in.

"I resent that you all looked at me," Alex grunted, "but right now I'm too hungry to fully care." He stared lovingly at his own turkey masterpiece before devouring it.

The Washingtons waited until they were done eating before they spoke again.

"Well, Mr. Southern Gentleman, George and I need to talk to you," Martha said.

John glanced at each of the members of the table.

"Like, in private?"

Alex inched closer to him.
"No, together with Alex. We were wondering what your thoughts were on starting school." George didn't beat around the bush. He just gave them news and trusted them to take it like an adult. Alex admired that in him, much preferring it to the well-meaning coddling of most adults.

Alex exchanged looks with John before answering.

"I'm not sure. I'd like to go to school, but I won't go without John."

"That was what we expected. John, what do you think?"

Alex prayed he said yes. It was true, he wouldn't consider going to school without John. That didn't mean he wanted to stay home. Every fiber of his being wanted to be in school, to learn everything America had to offer.

John must have seen the look on his face.

"I... School sounds okay." Alex sighed in relief. "How soon were you thinking we should start?"

George grinned.

"Next week would be ideal. We've already registered you at Laf and Herc's school. Their third semester starts next Monday, so it would be easiest to transition then. Of course, if it's too soon, we can wait. Remember, if you feel like it's too much once you go back, we can pull you out. You will have to repeat the grade, though."

Alex turned to John, eyes pleading. Next Monday, he could be in school, learning everything high school had to offer.

John sighed. "Next week is good."

Alex squealed.

"Yes! John, this is going to be fantastic! School, in America! We have to decide what electives we're going to take, and catch up on the reading list. I wonder if I've already read some of the requirements..." Alex trailed off, wandering out of the kitchen and into the library. He was going to have to start reading now if he was going to be at the same level as his classmates. High school, here he comes!
Hey y'all! I feel so bad I haven't updated in so long, but I've been super busy and have been having a really rough week. Next chapter will be soon, don't worry. In the mean time, have a long chapter. (Yes, I wrote a long chapter, cuz you guys deserve it for being patient and actually reading this, and yes, I'm really dang proud of myself for writing it in two hours.)

School starts in a week. This was all John thought about for the next two days.

Alex was thrilled. He was finally going to school in America, as he put it, "Where dreams come true." John had never seen anyone read with as much speed as Alexander Hamilton did when faced with the prospect of public schooling. He seemed to take it as a challenge to complete all of the required reading for the seniors before entering his freshman year of high school. It was honestly terrifying to watch, John thought. People say knowledge is power. He never fully grasped what that meant until he saw Alex reading with a deadline. The wildfire that usually burned beneath his eyes heightened to an inferno, and the expression on his face was unlike anything John had ever seen. He imagined it was how a general looked in battle. Every centimeter of Alex's face spoke of determination and intense focus, and something John could only describe as grit. He was scary and powerful at the same time. John knew that in his head, the world around him was a hurricane, and he was stuck in the eye of his own little storm of knowledge. It was how John felt when he was deeply concentrated on a drawing. Alex would pump his way through hundreds of pages a day, flipping pages so fast John didn't see how he could be absorbing any information. He worked like he was running out of time. It was like he was working under a different deadline, his own. Like he knew that soon, someone was going to come and rip the book out of his hands, and he was going to learn as much as humanly possible before that moment came. Knowing what he did about his past, John wasn't surprised.

Across the house, in their room, Lafayette was making plans. They had been ecstatic when John told them that he and Alex were going to come to school with them next semester. Finally, they said, the missing pieces of the Revolutionary Set would come together, and Liberty High was not going to know what hit it. It was true. He, Laf, and Herc had caused enough chaos in the school when it was just the three of them. Imagine what they could do with someone as smart as Alex behind the scenes? Their days of immaturely and haphazardly pranking the jerks who teased them were over. Now, whoever crossed them was going to be introduced to a sophisticated new style of but-kicking. Both he and Laf were fully aware of how juvenile that sounded, but when they pictured how sweet it would be to get back at Lee once and for all, they couldn't find it in themselves to care. Besides these pressing matters, Laf, ever the perfectionist, of course had to make sure that their friend's closets were up to par for almost daily public appearances. John wasn't as interested in these proceedings, (A shirt was a shirt.) but Herc was incredibly enthusiastic. He must have spent hours with his datemate debating the merits of blue over green. Of course, if the occasional bit of snuggling snuck its way in there, who was John to judge?

And John? He bounced between relaxing with Alex, sketching him and soaking up the last few stress-free days he was going to have until he went back to school, and chatting excitedly with Laf...
and Herc about how great it was going to be to be together even more frequently then they were now. A tiny (Okay, so it was pretty big.) part of him wanted to stay stuck in this moment forever, in awe of Alex and happy with Laf. School had never been pleasant for him. His dad had always pushed him to do better, get a higher grade, participate in more sports. The stress and pressure had made school a living hell for him before Laf and Herc came along. At first, he was reluctant to befriend them. After all, the less friends he had, the less people he could let down. The combined power of their sunshiny personality, immature sense of humor, and annoying optimism grated away at him until he let them in, though. John smiled as he remembered their first few days as true friends. He still regarded letting them in as the best decision he had ever made.

"Mon petit tortue?"

John blinked at the sound of Laf's voice. He had been so lost in thought in the library, the turning of Alex's pages creating a steady, calming rhythm, that the reminder of the real world was startling.

"Coming Laf," he called up to them. He jogged up to Laf's room, opposite his in the upstairs hallway.

When Lafayette had first come to live with the Washingtons, they had cried for days about leaving France. Even as a six-year-old, they loved their country to a ridiculous point. The Washingtons, to cheer them up, let them paint their room whatever color they wanted, which was a poor move on their part. Laf painted their room with colors and pattern of the French flag. George and Martha, unlike most first-time parents, just rolled with it. John thinks they thought it was a phase, and that they'd be repainting the room a solid color within the month.

They were wrong.

Laf's room was still painted with the French flag, eight years later. Their love of France actually grew, to the point where every inch of their room was covered in something french. At this point, it had become a sort of joke. How much French could Laf possibly cram into one room?

Quite a lot.

John shoved a pillow with the French flag embroidered on it and sat down next to Laf, who was playing with a tassel on a similar pillow.

"You needed me?"

Laf nodded.

"Are you okay, John?"

The question, simple as it was, threw him off guard.

"Of course. Of course I am. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know." Their eyebrows furrowed. "You just seem... very worried since George and Martha told you you're going back to school."

Lafayette was way too good at reading people. It could be freaky sometimes.

"Yes. I'm fine, Laf. Just... excited."

He offered a smile that even he knew looked forced. Laf eyed him for a moment before huffing out a breath.
"John, if you feel like you need to talk, then you need to talk. You can't keep-"

John stood up. "Laf. I am fine." His voice was louder than he'd like it to be, and he knew Laf noticed, the way their eyes changed ever so slightly. He didn't mean to get so defensive, but Laf was getting to close to the truth. He sighed, pushing a hand through his hair. "I'm sorry. I... I think Alex needs me. I've got to go."

He didn't look back as he left Lafayette's room, his friend protesting behind him.

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James flipped open his laptop and bounced onto the creaky mattress. The sleek, shiny device stood out in stark contrast to the dingy motel room he was staying in for the moment. Yellow wallpaper peeled at the edges, and the dirty curtains doused the room in an unappealing brown. No matter. It was only temporary, and he was closer than ever to finding Alex.

He had traced his son to New York City, but there the trail went cold. Apparently, the kid had gotten himself homeless. James had found only one man who remembered encountering Alexander, and even after James had bought him a meal at a decent restaurant, his memory had stayed 'forgetful'. The man said his name was Tim. He claimed to have helped Alexander out a few times, when his son had been at his lowest points, and he himself had been relatively prosperous. As prosperous as you can get when you don't have a home, James thought with a sniff. Even this man, who seemed to show Alexander the most kindness of anyone, didn't know where he was. He had lost track of him at least four months ago, after moving to a different part of the city. After telling James this, he had kept his head down and clammed up. They finished the meal in silence. James needed to think.

Where was Alexander? It was sometime after loosing touch with this man that those Washington folk had found him.

A lightbulb had gone off in his head. If it had been a few months, he had probably been enrolled in school. A quick search and a call with a friend would lead him right to Alexander.

Which explained why he was now sitting cross-legged on an old mattress, more optimistic than he had been in months. He whistled a short tune as he typed in the link his friend had given him. It took him to a sketchy-looking website, the banner at the top proclaiming it had thousands of records on the American schooling system that could be accessed with just a name. Perfect.

He quickly entered his son's name.

*Alexander Hamilton.*

One result popped up. Alexander Hamilton, newly enrolled member of Liberty High School, Washington D.C.

*Place of residence, Mount Vernon, Falls Church, Virginia.*

Perfect.

Chapter End Notes

Any one who gets the 21 chump street reference gets free hugs and a unicorn
I'm so sorry! Thank you for being patient with my seemingly arbitrary story arcs coinciding. James needed a way to find Alex, and he wouldn't be entered in anything except the official database for child services, which I am praying is harder to hack into than school records but I was too scared to look. Do not worry, both will have a satisfying (get it) ending.

Also comments are my caffeine, which I quite obviously do not need more of right now, but is still really helpful and uplifting!!!!

Last thing I promise: Mount Vernon is actually either in a town called Mount Vernon, or is actually SO big, google maps has made it its own...separate area... which is completely mindblowing to my suburban self... and obviously there's some inaccuracies there, like how did the Washingtons get a town named after their estate if it didn't house any famous people, not to mention the MONSTER commute to Washington D.C., so I moved it up the Potomac a little.
Lafayette was mad. And if they were being honest with themselves, more than a little upset. They knew something was wrong with John, but John wasn't telling them anything. For Lafayette, being 'out of the loop' was the one thing they hated most in the world. They had worked so hard in English to avoid this. Not knowing enough about genders had caused them immeasurable pain for years. And not knowing enough to save John from pain? That was terrible. John knew this, too. He knew how much Laf struggled with it, and he still cut them out. They were going to find out what was wrong with John, one way or another.

Which was why they were steaming down the halls of Mount Vernon towards the library. Towards Alexander. And they weren't nervous at all. Normally, this would be a suicide mission, trying to tear Alex away from his books. Right now, Laf didn't really care. They were on a warpath.

They found him surrounded by his books. Lafayette took one look around the room, making sure it was clear of John. They nodded, satisfied, and darted forward to slam Alex's book shut. Alex yelped and glared up at them.

"Lafayette! Why?" he whined, reaching for the book. Lafayette scooped it up and held it out of reach.

"Non, mon ami, s'il vou plait. I have to talk to you."

"You can talk to me when I'm done reading Mansfield Park!"

Lafayette opened their mouth to respond but stopped, taken back for a moment.

"Wait, you are reading Mansfield Park? But that is on the reading list for A.P. English Four!"

Alex just glared.

Lafayette recovered quickly. "It does not matter. Alex, I must talk to you about John."

At the mention of their best friend, Alex softened.

"Why? Did he do something?" He glanced out at the porch where John was sitting.

"No. Have you not noticed how moody he is?"
Alex fidgeted and avoided Laf's eyes. "So, maybe I didn't notice."

They huffed. "Truly, mon ami, we are going to need to work on your people skills before the start of school. Anyway, since you did not notice, John has been acting very strange and distant lately, and that is never a good thing. My theory is that school holds too many memories for him, which trust me, it does. So, we must find a way to counteract these memories. The question is, how?"

They had started to move as they talked, until now they were pacing the floor in front of where Alex sat.

Alex raised his hand. "Maybe we invite Herc over to do something? To show John we're still gonna be there for him when school starts?"

Lafayette thought. "It is not a bad idea. I will call Hercules and see what he has to say. Knowing him, he will be in favor of a sleepover. This could work."

"Glad I could help. Now will you please give me back my book?"

They looked down at the heavy tome they had been subconsciously waving around while they talked.

"Oh. Yes, yes, fine." Laf handed it back to Alex, who let out a very undignified squeal and opened it back up.

Lafayette left Alex to his books. They had to call Herc as soon as possible. He could put together a party in ten minutes flat, and a party was just what John needed.

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One day later, and the living room of Mount Vernon had been transformed into Party Central. Blue and green streamers hung from the center of the ceiling, creating a canopy. Herc had bought an armful of cheap party supplies in the same colors, and Laf had found a playlist of French pop songs which they swore John liked. Alex was on lookout for John. Herc had pulled the entire party together incredibly fast. He had even thought of the perfect distraction to get John out of the house: picking out paint with George. Now, Alex was just waiting for their car to appear in the driveway.

Soon enough, the minivan made its appearance.

"Quick! They're coming!"

Alex, Laf, and Herc dove behind a sofa, waiting for John to come in.

"Uh, guys?" That was their cue.

"Surprise!"

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Ring

Two hours later, George huffed and pulled himself out of bed. The last thing he wanted to do right now was actually go to the door and interact with another human being, but Martha was already snoring, so the duty fell upon him. He shambled his way down to the door.

"Laf, turn down that music. Someone's at the door," he hollered. The blaring French pop music dropped into background noise. He hoisted the door open.
A chipper man in a suit waited on the other side.

"Hello!"

"Hi."

"I'm so sorry to wake you up, but does Alexander Hamilton live here?"

George perked up, slightly more awake at the mention of his son.

"Yes. Why would you be asking?"

The man laughed nervously. "Well, it's a long story. Do you mind if I come in?"

George moved aside grudgingly. Something about this man just felt... off.

"I don't believe I caught your name."

"James Hamilton."

Chapter End Notes

pls don't kill me
I apologize for the wait! I also am going to go back and name all the chapters, so have fun with that.

DISCLAIMER: I am fully aware that in Spanish, papa without an accent means potato. Unfortunately, my computer is not allowing me to type the accent in above the a. So yes, Alex does call him a root vegetable, but he does not mean to. Rest assured, James Hamilton is not a potato. (Well, maybe a little. But that's it!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The party was going fantastically. John's eyes went as wide as an owl's when he saw Alex, Laf and Herc pop up from behind the couch. It turned out, Laf hadn't been lying. John actually enjoyed French pop music. Apparently, he knew the lyrics to almost every song they played, singing along with Laf in annoyingly loud voices. Herc groaned with Alex about how bad their voices were, but Alex knew that he loved whatever his datemate did, even if it was annoying singing. Besides, he was content as long as they let him decorate their friends with party supplies and glitter. Most importantly, John seemed happier than he had in a long time.

All in all, Alex counted it as a success.

Ring.

He perked up. Who would wake the Washington family at ten o'clock at night? He looked at Laf. They had the same thought, judging by the look on their face.

"Who d'you think it is?" Herc said, stretching out across the couch he sat on.

John shrugged. "Probably some salesman." He popped a piece of popcorn into his mouth, dislodging some of the glitter buried into his hair. Alex had to work very hard to look away from how adorable he was with green sparkles dotting his messy curls.

That didn't seem right, though. Who sells things door-to-door at night?

"Laf! Turn down that music, there's someone at the door," George hollered sleepily. Laf pushed a button on their phone, and the music died down considerably.

"Why don't we send someone out to see who it is, yes?" Alex saw the glint in their eye. He knew that look. Nothing good came of that look. "Come on, it will be just like the spy movies Herc loves so much." They snuggled into their datemate.

Alex glared at them. "Aren't we a little too old to be spying on adults?"

Lafayette snorted. "Never underestimate my immaturity. Since you so obviously do not believe we are capable of this, you will be the one to spy on George."

Both he and Herc groaned.
"Oh, shush. It won't be so bad."

John laughed. "Yeah, guys, I think it will be entertaining."

"Of course you would, Laurens," Herc said.

Still, Herc ended up agreeing to their plan.

Which is how Alex found himself balancing on a stack of phone books ("Why are you so tiny, mon ami?") looking into the Washington's foyer, his friends all clutching part of his shirt to prevent him from falling. So far, the conversation between George and the stranger was pretty boring. He could tell George resented the man already. One look at their seating arrangements was enough to tell him that, more than any conversation could. No one sat in George's chair. He was about to tell his friends nothing was happening when he heard the stranger speak again.

"Sir, I think we both know why I am here tonight. I'd like to discuss my son, Alexander."

All four teens gasped. A flood of memories rushed through Alex's mind. A picture in his house on the island, coated in dust. Whispers in Smith's shop about a man named James. Pitying looks sent toward his mother from the gossipy older women of Nevis. A very clear message from his mother herself: Do not trust that man.

Papa?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

"James Hamilton."

"George Washington."

James gave him an obviously faked grin. "It's a pleasure to meet such a high-ranking senator, sir."

Oh, so he was one of those people. George had been in politics long enough to know when someone was trying to kiss up to you from a mile away. He had an intern once who reminded him a lot of this man, before he got out of the government.

George guided James into the foyer, where they both took a seat. The man took his favorite armchair, forcing him to sit on the uncomfortable couch Martha had insisted on buying. George wondered where his wife was now, and why she was not helping him with their unannounced, chair-stealing guest.

They sat in awkward silence for a few moments before James abruptly started to speak again.

"Sir, I think we both know why I am here tonight. I'd like to discuss my son, Alexander."

James jumped as a crash echoed through the house. Both men turned to find Alex stumbling into the room behind them, a crooked party hat on his head and eyes impossibly wide.

"P... papa?"

George answered first.

"Alex, this is James Hamilton. He's your biological father," George said, a bitter taste on his mouth as he said the word father. He couldn't help but add the clarification of biological. George still felt like something was wrong. He couldn't connect the slick, calculating man in front of him with Alex, the sweet kid who always spoke his mind. They may have been related in blood, but George
knew that that was the only bond they shared.

James spoke up. "Hello, Alexander. How are you?"

Alex blinked.

"You are my father." He waited for James to nod, still smiling his emotionless grin, before continuing. "The man who left me and my mother. She died because you didn't care enough about her to stay."

James winced. "I know. Leaving her was the decision I regret most in my life. I simply wasn't ready for a family."

"Well, you got that right," Alex said harshly.

"Believe me Alex, if I could take back the pain I caused you, I would."

"You can't. My life was... It was hell. And you left me to deal with that. Did you even know she died? Did you even know I was on my own?" Alex was shouting now.

"No." James sounds heartbroken, and looking at his face George saw pain. Looking at his eyes, though, was a different story. In his eyes, George saw nothing but frigidity. "I had no idea until I tried to return to St. Croix a few years ago. I've spent the past two years looking for you. I found you, Alexander."

Alex started to slowly shrink in on himself. The burst of pent-up anger that had powered him through his encounter with James was fading quickly, leaving just Alexander, the scarred teenager afraid of being hurt again.

"You really didn't know?"

"I swear it." James sounds sincere. George almost believes him. Almost. But then, he remembers how this man left Alex, his Alex, with not so much as a goodbye to him or his mother. He knows that anyone who can do that to a newborn child is heartless. His son doesn't, though. He can see Alex starting to cave into the man's lies, and as much as he's trying to restrain himself, give this James the benefit of the doubt, he can't stand to see Alex taken advantage of again. He walks to Alex's side and puts his arm around the boy.

"Mr. Hamilton, this has obviously been a very emotional day for Alex. Would you mind giving us a few moments alone?" George works hard to make his tone as polite as possible. If it comes out a little cooler than he intended, then so be it.

James Hamilton gives an apologetic smile. "Of course. Take all the time you need."

George guides Alex into his office. He can feel the boy shaking under his hand. Alex plops down in a nearby chair as soon as he closes the door, and George crouches beside him.

"Alex. Are you all right?"

Tears are slowly starting to make their way down his cheeks.

"George-" His voice breaks, and George pulls him into a hug.

"It's okay, son. Relax. It's perfectly okay to cry, you've had a big shock. Band-aids like that aren't meant to be ripped off all at once." He holds Alex as he cries, rubbing his back and shushing him.
It hurts him how much Alex cries. He has already been through so much, he deserves no more pain in his life. They stay like this for a few minutes, until Alex pulls away and wipes his eyes.

"T-Thank you, George."

"Anytime." He offers Alex a smile. "Do you want to talk?"

Alex fidgets a bit. "Actually, yes. John helped me figure out- well, sometimes it helps." George nods at him encouragingly.

"Before my mom died, she told me stories about my dad. She was usually so full of... love, the only time I saw her angry was when she talked about him. She told me that he hit her, sometimes, when he was drunk. Actually, that was pretty often. She told me that no matter what, I should not go to him for help, even if I knew where he was. I never thought I would need to, and even when I was desperate enough to need his help, I didn't know where he was. But, George, the man out there... He doesn't seem so bad. What if he changed? What if he's different now? Mama also told me that I shouldn't judge anyone, and that people change. What part do I listen to?" Alex was on the verge of tears again. George pulled him in for a hug again.

"Alex, I can't make the decision for you. Some people change, some don't. All I can say is, something about that man does not seem right. I don't think he's as perfect as he seems. Especially after you told me that about your mom. If you want to get to know him better, you should do it with someone else in the room. I don't trust him, but if you're willing to give him a chance, at least let me make sure he doesn't hurt you." He wasn't going to allow anyone to hurt Alex again.

"Okay."

"Okay. Do you think you're ready to go out and see him?"

Alex nodded. "Let's go."

Chapter End Notes

(I'm so sorry for the terrible musical quote at the end. I couldn't help myself. :D :D :D :D)

Guys I went to Virginia! I have to say, it's different than I imagined. For one, why is everything so huge? Like, even the trees are bigger than where I live and I live next to a forest. Also, I drove through Falls Church! Cool town. My parents had no idea why I was frantically pointing to it on every exit sign and grinning like a maniac. There was a radio station who's motto was "Where playing what we want means what we want it to." and if you don't think that's the most Jefferson thing ever, you, good sir, are WRONG
When they walked back into the living room, Laf, Herc, and John were already there, sitting across from James, who was looking supremely uncomfortable. George loved it.

"So, where do you come from?" Herc inquired. He smiled. To someone who didn't know the Revolutionary Set, like James, it seemed like they were just trying to get to know their best friend's estranged father. Maybe a little awkwardly, but at least they were trying. George knew them better. Herc, Laf, and John had long ago perfected their good-cop-bad-cop routine for getting the answers they wanted out of adults. Herc took on the role of the nice, mature one, and John was more excitable. While they kept whoever they were targeting occupied and happy, Laf would pop into the conversation with the question they really wanted the answer to. Sure, Laf looked abrupt and a little rude in the adult's eye, but somehow their target answered the question every single time. George was seriously considering using their system in congress hearings.

"I live a little farther north than you do," James responded, nodding to acknowledge George and his son. George noticed how he avoided giving a more specific answer and filed the information away for later. Now, he steered Alex to a seat across the room, making sure he sat closer to his friends. In front of them, a short coffee table divided James, to their right, and Alex's best friends, to their left.

"How far north?" Laf pressed. Years of watching George play politics left their mark on Lafayette. They weren't giving up that easily.

"Son, it's fantastic that you're so concerned about Alexander..." James began, trailing off after he saw the glares aimed at him. "Did I say something?"

Laf gave him a tight-lipped smile. "I'm not a boy." They slipped their hand into Herc's covertly for support. George saw Herc give it a squeeze.

James nods, his eyes cold. "My apologies, Miss...?" The tension in the room suddenly doubles.

They straighten their spine and fix James with a cold glare. "I was not clear. It is Mix Lafayette. I am not a boy or a girl, I am nonbinary. My pronouns are they and them." The unspoken respect that, or else was clear.

James Hamilton fidgeted, averting his gaze from Laf, and looked at George expectantly. Eventually, he said, "Well?"

"Well, what?" He knew exactly what James was doing, and he didn't like it one bit.
"Well, aren't you going to say something to your son?" James sneered.

And there it was. He would never get used to people purposely misgendering his child. Laf winced slightly, and Herc pulled them into his arms, giving James a look that would spoil milk.

George clenched his fists. "Mr. Hamilton, I think it would be best if you left. Now. And do not return."

James laughed, and George froze. "Sir, I wasn't planning on coming back. I just needed to collect my son. Alex, you're going to come with me."

The room sat in shocked silence for a moment before George jumped up. "Excuse me? We did not discuss this." This man could not just waltz into his life and take his son. Rage was starting to fill him. He glanced back at Alex, who looked like he had just woken up from a bad dream and found that it was real.

"I'm afraid I can, sir. See, I am Alexander's only blood relative. Now I'm here, and since you did not legally adopt him, he is no longer in the foster care program. He'll be coming to live with me." George opened his mouth to protest, but James held up his hand. "Before you say anything, I do have papers confirming that Alexander is my son, and that I have sole custody of him." He smirked. "The court ruling came through earlier today."

"You can't just uproot him from his home! He's starting school in a few days. He and his friends have been planning for weeks! Do you even care if he wants to go with you?" He didn't care that he was shouting. He didn't care that he had probably woken up every creature within the house. He didn't care. His focus was completely on James Hamilton.

"Well, I'm sure Alexander will find a school where I live. Really, there's no obstacle that we can't get around." The smug smirk was still on his face.

They had hit their breaking point. John stood up and started toward James, but Herc pulled him back down onto the couch. Herc's expression, however, made it very clear that they only reason he didn't let John beat the man to a pulp was that he wanted to be the one to do it. Laf was now babbling in French so fast that George couldn't even understand them. He caught the words judicial system, forgery, and no way, along with a few choice words that Martha most definitely did not approve of.

Ignoring everyone around him, Alex raised his hand, miffed. "Um, hi? Yes, I'd like to speak now, seeing as we're talking about my future. Mr. Hamilton," he addressed James. "And before you ask, no I will not call you father, because so far you have done nothing to earn it. If you made that court case, we would have heard about it. The state would need to investigate whether or not you are fit to be my parent, inspected your house, informed the Washingtons, and arranged for the Washingtons to meet you in court." Alex ticked each item off his fingers. "Not to mention the Washingtons would never have handed over custody of me. Then, of course you could have pressed for custody, but you would have had to go up against one of the most powerful senators in the United States, the U.S. media, at least 90% of all Democrats once George explained the situation, and some incredibly competent lawyers. Of course, that doesn't even begin to explore the biggest problem, which is that I don't want to go!" Alex had turned beat red somewhere around halfway through his speech, and had somehow made his way on top of the coffee table, giving him enough height to look James Hamilton squarely in the eye. George felt pride swell up inside him at the look Alex was giving him. He had no doubt it made grown men curl into balls.

John wrestled himself out from under Herc. "There is no way Alex is leaving with you. You'll need to get through us first." In unison, Alex's three best friends walked across the room and stood
around him.

James stared at them, deliberating. George prayed that he was intimidated, that something they had said got through to him. That this man had any form of a conscience. Finally, he sighed, and George learned that he was wrong.

"I'm sorry, but you really don't have a choice. Alexander is my responsibility now. We're leaving."

Chapter End Notes

I am so sorry

DISCLAIMER: I am not a lawyer. I have a VERY loose understanding of how the foster care legal system works. Details will be off. If you see any problems in my legal procedures, please leave me a comment so I can fix it! The general gist of it is that it would be impossible for James Hamilton to gain custody of Alex without the Washingtons knowing. At least, as long as he got the papers through a judge, like he said. *insert suspiciously shifty eyes here*
Chapter Notes

In which James better start running because John is gonna kick your but. Seriously, RUN.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Alex closed his eyes. The sounds of George fighting James could be heard throughout the house. Martha had finally woken up and stepped in as mediator. George brought out every law he could think of and threw around as much weight as he had, but in the end, he couldn't erase the existence of those custody papers. In the end, Alex still had to leave.

He was in his room now, staring at an empty suitcase. Martha had given it to him and told him to pack his things, just in case, once it seemed clear that James wasn't backing down. Alex knew she just wanted him out of that room, because sooner or later he would get caught even further in the middle of George and James' war than he already was. He stood up and walked over to his closet. Picking out a few outfits he liked, he started to fill the suitcase. Only what he really loved or needed went in. His ever-present green hoodie, a pair of jeans, some books he'd grown attached to, the devices the Washingtons had given him. A photo of him, Laf, John and Herc, grinning at the mall. A sketch John had given him of what he identified as a leatherback turtle. The endless notebooks he had started to fill with essays and stories. Looking over these things, the realization that this could very well be his last day with the Washingtons hit him full force. He wasn't ready to leave them yet.

John knocked on his door frame. Alex jumped and yelped, not realizing he was there. He blushed. "You can come in. I'm just..." He trailed off, gesturing to his suitcase. John walked in and sat down next to him. He faced Alex and stared into him, his eyes fierce as hurricanes.

"Mi abuela, she had this saying. Paciencia y fe. I want you to remember that, okay? Patience and faith. We're going to get you back. I swear it. No matter how long it takes. Just have paciencia y fe." Alex nodded, a familiar lump rising in his throat. If it meant getting back to his family, and John, he would have all the patience and faith in the world. Still...

"John, I'm scared-" his voice cracked. John was there in an instant, encircling him in his arms.

"I know you're scared. Trust me, I know. But you're going to be okay. I know because you'll still have your phone, right? If he does anything, and I mean anything, that makes you feel unsafe, I want you to call me immediately. Get a picture of it if you can. Anything we can use against him in court, we will." The urgency in his voice brought a fresh wave of panic to Alex. He shuddered, thinking about how in just a few minutes, he was leaving and might never come back. James could easily take away his phone, his laptop, any form of communication. He wouldn't be able to stop it, and he'd never see them again, and oh God... John felt him beginning to shake, and pulled away, holding him at arm's length. Gently, he wiped the tears off Alex's cheeks and offered him a half smile. "Look at me. Breath. Remember, we're still here. You're always going to be able to talk to us, okay? I'm not going anywhere."

That was his breaking point. He jerked away. "But I am. I am leaving, John. What if I'm not able to
call you, what if he..." The room blurred again as the thoughts of what James could do ran through his head.

"Hey. It won't be that bad. It won't be a picnic, but you're still his son. Deep down, he loves you. And soon, you'll be back with us." Alex watched John from the corner of his eye. Gradually, his breathing evened out until he felt okay again. He sighed and picked up his suitcase.

"You're sure he won't hurt me?"

John's eyes flashed. "He won't lay a finger on you."

"Alright." Alex took John's hand in his. His heart tugged as John squeezed his hand as tightly as he could. For a second, beneath all the anger and fire, Alex could see the same emotion in John's eyes that he knew was in his. They walked downstairs to where James and the Washingtons were waiting. The perpetual sunshine that usually shone out of Laf was dimmed, and Herc looked angrier than Alex had ever seen him. Martha stepped forward and enveloped him in a tear-stained hug.

"You'll come back home, don't you worry about that. In the meantime, don't forget about us, alright?" Martha choked out. Alex smiled up at her.

"Of course not." He moved to say goodbye to George. The mood brightened for just a minute while they did an awkward dance, one trying to hug the other while the other offered a handshake. Finally, George pulled him into a tight hug.

"Take care of yourself, son." Alex's heart lifted at the last word.

James coughed. "We need to start driving now if we're going to get to my house by morning." Alex nodded. He would at least try to get to know James in the hopefully brief time they lived together. For once, he would keep what was on his mind to himself.

He gave John, Herc, and Laf one last hug before following James out the door.

"Right this way, Alexander," James said, his voice falsely cheerful. He led Alex to a deep blue hatchback, brown streaks and dips on the doors attesting to its age. He swung the door open and shoved the suitcase inside before going in himself, settling into the worn leather seat.

"You better get comfy," James mentioned, observing him. "I live a long way away. You know, I really think you're going to like it there. the neighborhood's great..."

Alex tuned him out and watched his home grow smaller and smaller out the window of James' car, until Mount Vernon was nothing more than a dot in the distance.

Paciencia y fe.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry to anyone who didn't like how Laf reacted to being misgendered in the last chapter. I do not have experience with being misgendered, so it's hard for me to write. If it really bothers anyone that much, tell me and I'll go back and change it.
Hi guys,

I'm so sorry I haven't posted in so long but I've got standardized testing (whoo hoo) all week and Monday, and have had no time lately. I promise I will update as soon as I can. You all deserve an explanation for why I dropped off the face of the earth. The next chapter will be long, have no doubt, and hopefully the next few will be too.

See you soon!
Alright. This is short, I know. I just wanted to let you guys know I'm still alive. Thank you so much for being patient and sticking with this fic! It means a lot!! <3 <3 <3 <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John stood watching James’ car putter down the driveway for as long as he could, not looking away until Alex had disappeared over a hill and out of his life. His heart began to race. Fear for Alex and anger coursed through him. Alex was their family. George hadn't even listened to John when he tried to protest sending Alex away. He was no expert on the perfect family, but he was fairly sure parents are supposed to give their children the light of day. He rounded on George.

"Well, he's gone now. I hope you're happy."

George looked at him tiredly. "John, I know you're upset-"

"Yeah, I'm upset! I might never see my...my..." John sputtered. How did he describe what Alex meant to him? Somehow, best friend didn't seem quite right. "...Alex again!"

"Son, please. We're going to see Alex again."

"Don't call me son!"

He felt something in him twinge at the look on George's face, but stood fast. George waited for him to apologize. When it became evident that the apology wasn't coming, he rearranged his face into an indifferent mask.

"John. I didn't want to. Believe me, the last thing I wanted to do was give in to James. But he planned this too well-"

"You just handed him off to the first person who waved some papers in your face!"

“Do you think I had a choice?” George shouted. John took a step back, a stray memory of Henry after a night of drinking flashing through his head. George took in a breath, reeling in his temper. When he spoke again, his voice was calmer, but John heard the anger boiling under the surface.

“James intended to fight for Alex. If we kept him here, even if it’s what Alex wants, nothing good would have happened. Best case scenario, he takes us to court. The fact that we kept Alex from his biological father can be spun so hard in James’ favor that even without a good lawyer, James almost definitely would have won. Besides, is a long custody battle really what Alex needs? He’s been through so much, this could have been the last straw for him. I hate to see what would happen if the camel’s back breaks.” He was right, John knew. Alex wouldn’t be able to take being removed from another family. John knew how easy it was to slip into depression, and how hard it is to make it back out. Alex was strong, but no one was strong enough to go through all he did and be separated from people he cared about again. George continued.

“Worst case scenario, he calls the police and files kidnapping charges against Martha and I. They would’ve been debunked pretty quickly, but Laf might’ve been put back into foster care. And…”
George’s eyes softened. “You definitely would have. You’re not really supposed to be living here, you know. It’s fine as it is now only because no one cares. No offence, but Henry couldn’t care less, and we love you, John. We want you to be here. As far as anyone outside of the Washingtons and Laurens’ is concerned, we really did adopt you. But if someone investigates us, they won’t care that it’s in your best interest to stay with us. They would’ve put you into a foster home, and the fact that we brought you here to stay with us wouldn’t have helped our case if James did file charges. James is smarter than he looks. He thought this through well enough that these were the only choices we had. Give Alex up to a potentially dangerous man, or risk losing all three of you.”

George finished his explanation looking three times as old as when he started it. He sank down onto the stairs behind him, putting his head in his hands. Lafayette moved to give him a hug, and John had to struggle to remember he was mad at him. He saw now how hard George was taking this, but the fact remained that Alex needed help. There had to be another way, a way they could put James in check in his own chess game. He wasn’t giving up.

“There’s got to be something. No one is so smart they don’t make a mistake. We just have to find the chink in his armor. What did he do wrong?” He paced through the room. Chess wasn’t his specialty. In fact, he lost every time Laf weaseled him into playing. His brain just wasn’t wired to pick up every minute detail, see three steps ahead. He knew he was missing something, he just didn’t know what.

“Laf, what’s the name of that one move in chess? The one where no matter what piece you move, the other team will always get one of your pieces?” Herc asked, suddenly much more alert.

"A fork?” They offered.

Herc snapped his fingers. “Yes! James put us in a fork. We sacrificed Alex,” John winced, cutting him off.

“Please don’t use that word.”

“Sorry. Anyway, you get into a fork if you don’t pay attention to the other team for long enough that you don’t see where you can take their piece. So, what did James do that he knew we wouldn’t pay attention to? What is something we would take for granted?” John began to understand. Somewhere, James had had to make something up and hope they wouldn't notice. They just had to figure out what. If they did, they could get Alex back.

George mumbled something under his breath.

“What did you say?”

“The papers. He could have forged the papers.” George stood up. “I’m going to check them now. If that man does not have custody of Alex, I swear to whatever god there may be…” He trailed off, leaving the threat hanging forbiddingly in the air before rushing off to his study.

“Mes amis, what happens if James does not have custody of Alex?” Laf’s eyes were filled with fear. The realization why hit John like a sledgehammer.

If James didn’t really have custody of Alex, then Alex had been kidnapped.
Guys, I need help. I haven't actually thought this out well enough, and now I have a gap between these next couple of chapters and the climax. Any assistance with anything you want to see in the plot would be greatly appreciated. I have the general idea of what needs to happen, but the little events to fill them in are still up in the air.
James is (not) actually a good guy

Chapter Notes

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
TW for off-screen abuse. Also a panic attack. Because I'm a terrible person.
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had only been a day, but so far, Alex had decided that James was not completely worthy of his hatred.

Sure, James hadn't been a peach. During their conversations, he was distant and sullen. But at least he had made an effort. He brought up at least ten different conversation starters on the car ride to the hotel they were staying at, each sounding like he'd memorized them off of a pamphlet. Alex bit back his snarky remarks and answered the questions about his favorite color (Green), favorite food (Breadfruit), and favorite animal (Turtles. So what if they were John's favorite too? Sue him.). In return, he got bits of information out of James. His favorite color was deep blue, he was partial to giraffes, and apparently his grandmother's enchiladas were heavenly. Sure, it wasn't much, and the elephant in the car loomed over them no matter what they talked about, but it was a start. And Alex had begun relationships on much rockier terms than this before.

The car ride to the hotel James had reserved for them was much longer than Alex had thought. When James had said he lived up north, he wasn't kidding. They'd been driving for six hours. Every mile they drove thrilled and terrified Alex. He'd been itching to see more of America since the moment he'd set foot in New York, but the further they drove from Mount Vernon the more anxious he felt. He in no way knew James well enough to trust him yet. There was something... off about him that he couldn't quite describe.

"Alexander?" James said. Alex faced him. "We're here. Let's check in and get some food." Alex nodded. Food sounded very good.

He got out of the car and helped James with their bags, lugging a suitcase into the lobby of a dingy-looking hotel. Alex looked around distractedly while James checked them into their room. Beige carpet covered the floor, making it near impossible to roll the suitcase, Alex noted with annoyance. The walls were painted a pale baby blue. On the left side of the lobby, a counter stood for the concierge, and on the right glass double doors led to what he assumed was a small restaurant/bar. Hopefully, they wouldn't go in there except for food.

"Come on. Our room is on the second floor." Alex snapped his head around and picked up the suitcase. They trudged to the elevator and piled in, listening awkwardly to muzak. Alex almost laughed. The doors pinged open, and five minutes later of finding their way through the impressively complex system of hallways the exterior of the building hid, arrived at their room. Alex set the luggage down while James rifled through his pockets for the key the concierge had just given him.

"Got it! Alexander, could you move that bag?" James gestured to the suitcase, which was blocking the door. Alex moved it aside before sucking in a breath and daring to ask what he'd been meaning to all day.
"James? Could you not call me Alexander?"

James turned around, positioning himself so he could open the door to their hotel room while talking to Alex. "It's the name your mother and I gave you."

Alex's chest grew tight. He couldn't help himself from stating petulantly, "You didn't name me. Mama did."

"Your mother and I both discussed your name, and agreed for it to be Alexander, before..." James trailed off, evidently uncomfortable with stating it out right.

"Before you left!" Alex burst, finishing the sentence for him. James raised his eyebrows.

"I thought we were past that. I apologized, Alexander. What more can I do? Next time, control your temper. Speaking your mind will get you nowhere in life," he snapped.

"If you stand for nothing, then what will you fall for? Every one needs to speak their mind. You were absolutely right when you said you can't do anything more than apologize for abandoning us. You can't take that back. I'm not just going to forget that you left us to be all but enslaved by Smith!"

"Son-"

"Do NOT call me son!" Alex couldn't help it. The words fell out of his mouth before he could stop them. He didn't regret them, at least not until James started toward him with a look he knew too well.

"You are my son, Alexander. Like it or not, you are my son. And I will not have my son behave so rudely," James seethed.

Alex shrank in on himself. "I'm sorry, James."

"Well, as you put it, sometimes sorry doesn't cut it. Sometimes, you need to be taught a lesson."

Alex flinched as James slammed the door on his way down to the bar. He let out a breath he didn't know he'd been holding and slid down the hotel room wall.

James had hit him. He knew it would come eventually, parents like James were never gentle with children, but so early? They'd barely known each other for a day. He messed up, he messed up, he messed up. Alex numbly felt his heart beat faster and his breathing slow to a crawl. The logical part of his brain was reaching out to him, desperately trying to get him to see sense. James had hit him! Now was not the time for a panic attack. Call John, call anyone. His panic only increased.

Whatever rational part of his mind was left was being slowly drowned out. He put his head in his hands, the bruises on his arms crying out in pain.

Think. What will get you out of a panic attack? he asked himself. There must be something. Something he could think of quickly before the panic washed everything out.

His brain did not respond.

He could feel the panic swallowing him, and he needed someone to come, anyone, just come soon...
Alex imagined John next to him. *Alright. Alex, breathe with me, okay? One, two, three...*

John's voice slipped into his mind, the same words he'd used the last time Alex was having a panic attack. The tension in his shoulders eased, just a little. He tried to breathe with John's voice, getting in a shallow breath.

*Good, Alex, that's really good. Can you do it again? One, two, three...*

Alex continued to breath, his memories of John's voice playing over and over like tapes in his mind. Slowly, his breathing evened out, then grew deeper until he was breathing normally. As the panic attack faded away, so did John's voice. The sense of home that had returned to him was evaporating, leaving Alex helpless again, grasping at it and watching it slip through his fingers. He let out a choked sob.

*I miss you, John. I miss you all.*

He hadn't missed anyone this much since Mamá died. But, he wouldn't miss them much longer.

He took a few breaths to steady himself, then shifted to a position that he could crawl in. He ankle still hurt from earlier, when James had pushed him and he fell with his foot still caught on the strap of his duffel bag. He screwed his eyes shut as the memory darted through his head. *No. Don't think about it. Just do this.* Slowly, Alex made his way across the room to where his suitcase sat, and more importantly, the phone the Washingtons gave him. He'd been careful hiding it, putting it securely between two notebooks on the very bottom. Hopefully, if James looked in his things, he wouldn't dig too deeply.

He reached the suitcase, each bruise on his body yelling at him. Quickly, he fumbled with the zipper and dug through the clothes he's packed. Who knew how long James would be gone? Alex felt relief wash over him as he lifted the notebook that hid his phone.

It was gone.

Chapter End Notes

If this chapter were a tangible thing I would punch it in the face. I swear I spent more time staring at the screen and internally screaming THINK than I did actually writing.

P.S. I haven't had sleep in two days so this is terrible.
Two hours later, George sighs and puts down his phone. The act seems like a surrender to the anxiously waiting revolutionary set and Martha. He closes his eyes for a moment, and John's heart sinks to his feet.

"No custody papers were made out to James Hamilton."

It's the worst possible thing that could have come out of his mouth. John numbly felt Herc wrapping an arm around him and Laf find his hand with theirs. He squeezed both of them as tightly as he could. Who knew when they would be taken away from him too?

"I'm calling the police now." George was frantically dialing away yet again.

"Yes, hello? I believe that my son's been kidnapped." Herc clutched John tighter as he buried his face deeper into his shirt.

"George, sweetheart. He'll be fine, I'm sure. All of Virginia will be looking for him. There's no way he won't be found."

Even she didn't look convinced.

________________________________________________________________________________________

Two days later, George gets a call. They were eating breakfast in silence when his phone vibrated and displayed the number the police gave him. George pounced on it like a starving lion.

"Hello?" He turned to the others, who were staring at him curiously, and mouthed the police.

"Yes, I'm here." He pauses while the officer speaks. "You're certain? Yes, I'm aware that it's not confirmed. Thank you, Officer, so much." He hung up and put the device down, feeling hope rise in him for the first time in two days. A smile crepted up on him.

"Well?" John asked, his voice slightly frantic.

"The police just received a lead on where Alex might be." His heart lifts a little bit at the looks on his family's faces. "It's just a tip really, the officer says we shouldn't get our hopes up."

"But it's a start, yes? It might lead us to Alex?" Lafayette doesn't try to hide the hope in their voice, and neither does George.

"Yes. Officer Young asked John and I to come to the hotel where the lead is and help him
interview the concierge who was on duty."

For the first time in three days, George sees John and Laf smile.

In retrospect, when George described the place they were going to, hotel was not quite accurate.

To John, hotel seemed too generous a word for the barely-held-together building they were pulling up to. Shillings were falling off of the roof in abundance, giving it seemingly random bald spots, and the garish pink paint was peeling off the walls, making it look like a bad sunburn.

George hurried them inside as soon as they pulled up, anxious. A frazzled-looking police officer greeted them inside, introducing himself as Officer Young and ushering them into the lobby. As seemed to be the theme with the place, the lobby was almost completely bare and painted the same scary pink as the exterior. John really wouldn't have been surprised if some Hollywood actors had used the place as a set for a horror movie. Officer Young monologued to them as they rushed through the hotel.

"I've been trying to get the girl to talk to us for two hours. She absolutely refuses. We have security footage of Alexander and James Hamilton coming through here, and we can access the guest list, but until the owner of the hotel lets us, we're not allowed to even know if they're still here. The owner is currently enjoying a stay at the state penitentiary, so the concierge on duty at the time they checked in is the only one who can let us go any further." Officer Young gave the girl behind the counter a pointed glare, but she didn't react. She looked to be about eighteen, and was quite possibly the most intimidating teenage girl John had ever seen. Granted, he didn't pay much attention to girls, but this one was six-foot, with more piercings than he thought humanly possible and close-cropped black hair. She looked like she was perfectly willing to punch someone should the need arise. "The records say they checked in under the names James and Maria Reynolds three nights ago."

"Maria?" John asked.

"Yes. That's what Mr. Hamilton used as Alexander's alias."

"Why on Earth would he use a girl's name? Alex is clearly a boy." John said. The girl shot him a withering glare. "And why is she so upset?"

"Did you ever ask her about her gender?" the girl said, venom in her voice. Officer Young looked at him exasperatedly, as if to say this is what I'm dealing with. John looked over at George, confused. The older man placed his hand on John's shoulder and said in a low voice,

"The hotel seems to believe that Alex was a trans girl. Hence, Maria Reynolds." George explained. John's mouth opened and shut.

"So... They think Alex is a girl?" The words felt strange coming out of his mouth. "How is that even possible? Alex wouldn't have told anyone he's a girl."

Officer Young sighed. "The lovely Miss Natasha Smith here," he gestured to the girl, who sniffed. "tells us that Alexander wasn't paying much attention when James checked in. James asked her to keep 'Maria's', um, shall we say supposed gender a secret, as he was still transitioning. Miss Smith apparently took his words to heart. It's completely plausible that Alexander didn't hear him."

"So Ms. Smith thinks that Alex is a girl, and we're transphobic," George said, frustration evident.
"It was kind of brilliant, actually," Officer Young mused. "You can't bring the press into this without them showing the Washingtons as the villains. Mr. Hamilton would be seen as a hero for getting his son away from a transphobic environment, and we can't send out any reward for Alexander's return."

George glared at the man. "Not helping." The officer apologized, and George went back to pacing the floor. John felt anger start to rise inside of him.

"I don't see the point of making Alex's fake name trans. We're already LGBT!" he burst.

Officer Young's mouth popped open, and he made a fulfilled noise. "So that's why you're so attached to Alexander. I suspected, but I didn't know for sure. I must say, it's sweet to see such a devoted relationship between two kids. Alexander is lucky to have you." He paused. "You are dating, right?"

"Of course not!" John sputtered, blushing. He was not in love with Alex. Of course not.

Officer Young raised his eyebrows. "Are you sure? Because you seem to be in pretty deep," he said skeptically. John really hated how smug his voice was. John continued to blush furiously and give the officer a death glare until George stepped in.

"Officer, I can assure you that John and Alex aren't dating," he said, but even he sounded like he was trying not to laugh.

Natasha Smith coughed. "This is very informing, but the poor kid is blushing." John shot her a grateful look.

"Does that mean you'll answer our questions?" Officer Young asks eagerly?

"No, it means that I don’t want to see the kid being grilled by you idiots," she countered.

"And there’s square one," George mumbled under his breath. John turned to Natasha. He knew that the police had tried every tactic they knew, and that one teenage kid wasn't going to change her mind, but he had to try. He moved as close to the counter as he dared and began to talk.

"Please. I may not be dating him, but I do love Alex like a brother. I- We can’t imagine life without him, and if we don’t see Alex’s room, we might never see him again. I can’t take that. Please ” John was hoping his desperation showed as much as he thought it did, because it if that were true it would be very hard for Natasha Smith to say no.

She studied him for a minute. John had the sudden urge to stand straighter. "Alright."

"Alright?" John's voice was incredulous.

"I believe you. I'll tell you what I can."

John waists no time. "Do you know where he is?"

She gave him a pitying look. "They left a day ago. I'm sorry."

John leaned closer to the counter. "How was he when he left? Did you see him?"

There's a bit of guilt in her eyes when she continued. "He had a few bruises. There's something else. Before they left, his dad stopped in the bar. Twice. And... um. There were a few loud bumps coming from their room." She looked down, no longer able to meet his eyes. "I really am sorry,
John. If I had known, I would have called Senator Washington immediately."

John stepped away from the counter. Bruises? Alex was hurt. How badly? Where? Questions rush over him like a waterfall. His eyes start to well up from the unwanted images of Alex his mind is producing. Mechanically, he turned to face the girl before his emotions overwhelm him.

"Thank you, Miss. I appreciate your help."

Alex hurt, Alex bloodied.

"I really do wish I could help more, John."

Alex with a black eye, Alex alone with James.

John smiled the best he could and walked slowly toward the door. "George, I'm going to get some air." His voice is thick.

Alex cut, Alex bruised.

Alex, Alex, Alex...

He made it outside just as the tears began to fall.

Chapter End Notes

*Me in full Marius costume, center stage, with a spotlight* MY FRIENDS, MY FRIENDS, FORGIVE ME. I DID NOT MEAN TO WRITE THE ANGST

Believe it or not, this was supposed to be fluff. The angst was just too tempting.
Chapter Notes

I am so sorry this is late!! I've been really busy. I also rushed this chapter, so if it feels a little forced, apologies! D:

Also: Frick yeah there's a Chekov's gun!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In all fairness, the last few days could have been worse.

A dragon could have swooped down and toasted them all.

Besides that, they were rock bottom.

James tried, at least when he wasn't drunk, to apologize. Alex answered all of these with a nod, and James was satisfied for then. He'd ask Alex more of his Parenting 101 questions, and when Alex didn't answer with more than a sentence in response, he'd give up and they'd spend the rest of the day in silence. At least until James accessed alcohol.

Alex was relieved when they left the hotel. When James drove, he didn't have to make eye contact, and the need to pass dwi tests left him noticeably more sober. Still, the close quarters made it far short of a picnic.

Alex had given up hope of contacting George or John, at least with his phone. James hid it behind a bush just before they left the hotel. Alex didn't even react. Now, of course, he wished he'd been able to grab it.

Alex jerked his head up. The setting sun had glanced through the car, sending spangles of light off of any reflective surface. He'd caught a glimpse of metal sticking out of James' duffel bag next to him. Slowly, he lifted the cloth flap to peer inside.

It was James' phone.

Alex bit down on his cheek quickly to keep from grinning. Of course James wouldn't leave his own phone behind. No one knew his number, so why would he throw away an item he'd paid good money for? Smith was the exact same way when Alex worked for him. Of course, now all he needs is to get his hands on the phone without James noticing, which will be nearly impossible. His best shot was to get James out of the car on some errand and text somebody with the phone before he came back. Again, nearly impossible. Although, he didn't necessarily need a long time with it. Alex had seen enough crime shows to know that if he could get his number to his family, they could track him. All he needed was a few moments, just long enough to let them know it was him, and he'd be back at Mount Vernon before he could blink. Now he all he needed was to bide his time.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

His opportunity came a few hours later, when James handed him the map (The paper map, of all things.) and told him to navigate. Later, he would be very proud of how quickly he came up with a
plan. Within a minute, he knew exactly what he was going to do. Sure, it probably wouldn't work. He had no idea what James' phone password was, and even if he did get through it, he'd have very little time to actually text. The most he could say would be one or two characters, so he'd have to make them count.

He waited a full two minutes before putting his plan in action. Carefully, he positioned the map so that with a good gust of wind, it would blow right out the open window. Which, of course, it did promptly.

"Alexander!" James shouted. Alex winced. "What was that for? We needed that map!" Alex didn't have to pretend to be scared.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to. Maybe we could stop and get a new one?" He could feel his hand starting to shake.

James sighed. "We might as well just stop and ask for directions. We're close enough to my house that we won't need a map." He maneuvered the car into the driveway of the next gas station.

"Stay here," James ordered. Alex nodded vigorously.

Alex waited three seconds before diving into the duffel bag. He practically tore the fabric in his rush to get the hone out. His fingers trembled as he unlocked it, sagging in relief when he figured out James hadn't had it long enough to set a password. He typed out the first number he could remember. It was either John's or George's: He wasn't quite sure which, but if it was George's John would tell him what the message meant. Glancing out the window, he saw James start to turn back towards the car, this time with a man in tow. He typed in his message before hitting send. His heart was racing faster than it'd ever had. He tapped his foot on the floor as the text sent, the motion calming him slightly. He heard the device ding and deleted the conversation without missing a beat, leaving no trace of his mission.

Alex shoved the phone back into the recesses of the bag just as James got back to the car. He barely had time to sigh in relief before James was with him again. He did a double take at Alex's smile, the first one he'd shown since the hotel.

"Well, it's nice to see you're in a better mood Alexander." Alex just nodded. He took pride in knowing one thing James didn't: This time, he had the upper hand.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

John was sitting on a bench outside the hotel when his phone pinged.

To be honest, he debated whether or not to open it. His energy had been severely zapped over the last couple of days, but the events of the last couple of days were exactly why he needed to answer it. What if Alex texted him? George had reminded the entire Washington family, him, and Herc to make sure that their phones were never on silent, but even he knew it was futile. If Alex hadn't texted them by now, he never would.

Still, the annoying part of his brain that hoped seemed to hijack the rest of him, and he grudgingly pulled his phone out of his pocket.

His jaw dropped. Not so futile, after all.

He leaped up and darted inside.

"George! George!" He crashed into the man himself. Before George could ask him, he blurted out,
"It's Alex. He actually texted! This must be somebody's phone number. Look!" John practically shoved his phone in George's face.

The brief happiness that was on it slowly dropped away, and hen George looked at him next, it was the look one gave a person they were about to admit to an insane asylum.

"John, you are aware that all that text is is a bat emoji from an unknown number?"

"Yes. It's Alex," John said matter-of-factly.

"John, I know you're excited, but how do you know it's him? It could be anyone."

"George, trust me. This is Alex. The bat emoji thing, it's something Laf made up. It's the bat signal. We use it if one of us is in trouble. Ask Lafayette or Herc! They'll tell you, this is definitely him."

George appraised him. "You're certain this is Alex?"

"I'm positive."

He sighed. "I'll take it to Officer Young and see what he says. It's just that I hate to waste his time if it isn't a lead."

"It won't waste his time."

Two minutes later, George walked back with John's phone in hand.

"Well, the police agree. They say it's actually common for someone to use a signal like this if they're pressed for time when they try to contact family. Something about psychology. And..." he trailed off.

"And?" John said anxiously.

George's face shone like a light bulb. "Officer Young says we can track the number."

Chapter End Notes

Seriously, I am so sorry. I'm hoping to wrap this up soon, so the next few updates should come in quick succession, but if they don't PLEASE yell at me in the comments. I deserve it.

(P.S. So I put this in docs and it's up to like 150 pages or something crazy like that. That's just really cool!!)
Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Alex had to hand it to him.

If nothing else, James Hamilton had a very good taste in real estate. And judging by the last few days, this was indeed James' only redeeming quality.

The house he had picked for himself was isolated. Almost half an hour's drive passed of nothing but trees. Alex had let them slip into a green blur, musing that they looked rather like a kaleidoscope. When they did reach James' house, the chipped blue paint was a welcome break in color scheme. It was small, probably intended to function as a camping resort for a rich family's vacation before James bought it. However, it served his needs just fine. It was plenty big for two people to live in, and Alex could even picture himself having some measure of fun looking around outside.

James quickly parked the car and grabbed their suitcases, obviously happy to reach his home. When they got inside, he dumped the bags in a pile by the door and steered Alex into a study. He didn't even have time to look around before James was looking at him with a slightly guilty gaze. Eventually, he dipped his eyes down.

"So, there might be something I didn't tell you," James sighed. "I've got a guest this week. Smith is staying with me for a little while." Alex's head jerked up, and James falsely took this as a sign to continue. "You remember Smith? As I recall, you worked for him for a bit. So did your mother."

Alex found his voice. "Yes, I do remember him. I'm never going to forget him, and you know why, too. If you didn't know full well why this would be a problem, you wouldn't have kept it a secret." Stay calm, he warned himself.

James crossed his arms, but the look on his face was on of exasperation. "Alexander, we've been over this before, and I'm really not in the mood for an argument. I kept it a secret because I am your father, and as such I don't have to tell you anything."

Alex was not going to let this go, though. Not this time. "Smith? Of all the people you could buddy up with, you chose Smith? Regardless of what you may claim, I know you stayed in St. Croix long enough that you know exactly how that man treats his employees. He's the slave master of the whole island, for saint's sakes! That man is evil, cruel, and sadistic."

"That man is my friend. You will be expected to treat him with respect and dignity, or else. I only have one guest room, so you two will have to work out any imaginary differences you may have in a civilized manner, without annoying him. It's high time you learned to respect your elders."

"No." One little word, and he already feels so powerful. "No. I will put up with you, James. I will let you do what you want, and I will stay, because believe it or not eventually someone's going to notice the bruises and ask where they come from. Eventually, someone's going to find you out, and child abuse isn't taken to as kindly in America as it was on Nevis." James opened his mouth to object, but Alex plunged on, already drunk off of the freedom of speaking his mind. "Don't you dare try to interrupt me, you know that's what it is. I'm perfectly content with living off of that knowledge, and as long as I am, my tolerance for you is sky high. But I draw the line at sleeping in the same house as my mother's murderer."
James' voice took on a monotone. Alex could tell that this lie was one he had told himself many times before. "Alexander, he didn't kill your mother. Rachel died of sickness."

"Really? You believe that? Because I think we both know that's not true! She never would have gotten sick if that man," Alex jerked his finger towards the door. "If that man, who you invited into your house, didn't treat her like a slave for a few handfuls of bread and some empty promises! If you ever loved her, he would not be invited within five miles of this house."

"Now, come on-"

"I'm leaving, James," he snapped.

Ten, twenty, thirty seconds passed of dead silence, James staring at him wide-eyed and Alex too shocked by what had just left his mouth to continue. He swallowed. "Unless you want to boot Smith out?" He took James' silence as a no. "Then I'm leaving, because obviously you value whatever debt you owe him over your son, and there's no way you're holding me back this time."

James continued to stare at him for few seconds, a few seconds where Alex thought he might actually let him leave, before scoffing. "Smith!" he called. "Get in here. My son thinks he's leaving."

Smith walked into the room. The massive man fills the doorway entirely. Alex's body went cold at Smith's beady eyes. A year was far too short a time to be separated. "Where do you think you're going?"

Alex swallowed, hard. Smith wasn't any dainty flower. There was no way he'd be able to get through the door by brute force. Still, he didn't have much of a choice. "Home!" he said, swiftly turning and punching James in the face.

"Ow!" James grabbed his newly bloody nose. Just as hoped, Smith ran over to check on his friend. Alex seized the opportunity and ducked out the door. Shouts of "Dammit Smith!" and "Go get the kid!" echoed behind him. Alex locked into one goal: The front door. He fumbled with the doorknob for one terrifying second before it swung open and he was free. Without really thinking about direction, he bolted down the sidewalk and into the forest across from James' house. Faintly, he wondered why he wasn't already being caught and hauled back into the study. Maybe he'd punched James harder than he'd thought. Good.

He skirted around a tree he'd been about to run into. For now, maybe it would be best to keep his mind in the present. The forest started to come into focus. There was an absurdly wide variety of trees and plants, everything from pines to blueberry bushes. At least, Alex hoped they were blueberries. None of them would be on the menu unless he was sure. Bluebirds and robins darted between nests, and Alex cocked his ear towards their songs. Almost a year in America, and he still wasn't used to the songs of its birds. New York hadn't presented many opportunities to learn about the ecosystem, unless he counted Central Park, and even there car horns and sirens interrupted nature. Here in the forest, the birdsong reached a crescendo. He thought it must have been as complex as an orchestra.

Alex found it amusing how for once, he was running away from something and still in complete control of his mind. No panic attacks, just the scenery. He didn't think he'd actually ever gone for a relaxing jog. He'd have to fix that once he found Mount Vernon.

Once he found Mount Vernon. How did he do that?

Slowing down, Alex thought about the newest problem in what was becoming a series. The sun
was already low in the sky, and he'd successfully gotten himself lost in a forest. He didn't even know what state he was in. All he knew was it was significantly colder than Virginia. Wrapping his arms around himself, he started looking around for shelter.

Oddly enough, his next thought was of this place's deplorable lack of park benches.

Chapter End Notes

Hello. Finals are hard. Good luck to everyone taking a crazy-long test or test in general. You've got the backing of pretty much everyone taking high school classes.
George was on a mission.

He was pulling up to a worn-down blue cabin that the police officer driving the car assured him was James Hamilton's house. The results from the phone tracker had come back a day ago. George had insisted he come with the police on the ride to rescue Alex. Poor John had wanted to come too, but the police had drawn the line at George. George made sure to give Laf and Herc orders for extra hugs before he left.

When the car parked, he flung open the door and raced outside before the driver could stop him. Something was wrong, however. James Hamilton was already standing outside the house, along with a buff, sun-tanned man. James had a mess of band-aids from various children's shows covering his nose.

Both men raised their hands into the air at the sight of police brandishing pistols. "Wait!" James shouted. "We're unarmed."

George didn't have it in him to be patient for one second more. "Alex!" he screamed. "Where is he? Where's my son?"

James avoided his eyes and remained silent.

"I'd suggest you answer the senator's question, Mr. Hamilton," Officer Young said icily. His hand tightened on his own gun for emphasis.

James lowered his arms in defeat. "You gentlemen better come in. There's something you all have to hear."

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

George paced the length of James' study, far madder than he had ever been. James and who he now knew to be Smith sat in chairs behind James' desk, guarded by police officers and looking for all the world like chastised children. "So you let a fourteen year old child leave the house, and your defense is that he's too weak to survive and will come back before the end of the night?" His vision darkened to a crimson hue at the silence that followed. They didn't even look remorseful. "You imbeciles. You complete and utter imbeciles. He's going to die. Do you understand? I am going to lose my son. Because of you, my Alex is going to die."

James responded with a bite to his voice. "Well, I don't know about that. I don't know about that, and I don't want to." Of course he didn't even want to think about the consequences of his actions. "But you have said such words to me, 'imbecile' and so on, that as a man of honor I will not allow anyone to use." Rather against his will, stirrings of something resembling pity rose up in George's chest. James couldn't even put up a good act. The man was probably panicking inside for Alex. Not to the same degree as George of course, but still panicking. At least in the beginning, he had cared enough about Alex to risk years of prison to be with him. His voice softened.

"James. Stop acting smarter than you are." He held a hand up to James' open mouth. "No, we all know it's an act, don't interrupt. Everyone can see through it. You're not some kind of almighty puppet master. The only people you're fooling are the ones not worth anyone's time. Such as the
piece of filth known as Smith. I haven't even started with him. Was this even your idea, James, or was it Smith who convinced you to abandon your son? Again?" His tongue curled back as soon as the words left his mouth. Even for someone who deserved it, bringing up James' cowardice on the front of fatherhood was going too far. James took a step back, physically pained. His words were harsh.

"That's not fair, and you know it, Senator Washington."

George nodded, quick to apologize. "Alright, that was a low blow. I'm...sorry."

James' face lost its offended look, but he wasn't ready to let it go yet. He plunged on. "Besides, I didn't do anything wrong. Parenting styles differ. Mine's just a little...stricter than yours. I'm sure Alexander will turn up soon enough."

George looked at him in disbelief. "Seriously? Your way of dealing with children isn't a 'parenting style', it's abuse. Not only that, it's abuse of a boy I count as my son. I write laws for a living. I know every loophole and clause that exists. Do you know how long I can put you in jail for?"

"On what charges?" James scoffed, but George was ready for him, retorting before the last word had even left his mouth.

"Child neglect and endangerment." He had no problem in admitting he was pleased to see how quickly their faces changed. Especially Smith. He grabbed James' arm and turned him away from George.

"James, you said it was fine," Smith half-whispered.

"And you believed him?" George cut in, ignoring Smith's attempt at privacy. The two police officers looked like their favorite TV drama had just heated up. "I thought you were some kind of mastermind." Smith grew less and less like who he had imagined by the minute.

Smith gave him a cheeky grin. He certainly wasn't modest. "Oh, on Nevis I am. Nevis has, how you might say, a relaxed legal system. America is harder, worries too much. Too many lawyers."

George's eyes grew wider at the man's sheer stupidity. "Too many..." How in the name of all things good and holy had he made it this long in America without being arrested?

"Yes. Too many lawyers, too many laws. Too many things you can be held accountable for." Smith took pleasure in George's disbelief. He was the kind of man who would gladly do something harmful if it meant impressing the right people. Yet another personality type George had seen far too much of in Washington. He shook his head.

"This is besides the point. Do you or do you not have any idea where Alex is? Specifically?" He was not spending any more time with these two idiots than was absolutely necessary.

"More specific than the woods across the street? No." James at least had thee good grace to look sheepish when he answered. It didn't stop George's anger from returning. He closed his eyes and exhaled, slowly. When he opened his eyes again, he spoke calmly and deliberately.

"It looks like your nose has been broken lately."

James smirked, pleased at the attention to his injury. "Yes, it has been. Your little brat hit-.

James was cut off by the sound of his nose breaking for the second time that week. His curses could be heard by the officers outside
George had never been so satisfied with a punch.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I completely stole forty words of this from Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812, and no, I feel no remorse.

I have some questions for you guys. If you can, please answer them. I really don't want to sound like an idiot, I'm just curious about a couple things involving writing and this website is home to a lot of people who have far more experience than me so please, help a person out. Thanks!!

1) How do you tell if a story is drawn out or not?
2) Is a sequel necessary or should I do one? What's the benefit of a sequel? (This one's more for curiosity. I'm not promising a sequel.)
3) This one's really really stupid and embarrassing to ask, but could someone explain a character arch to me? The google results are so confusing.
To everyone who commented on my questions last chapter: THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!!! You are all godsend. I wanted to thank you all individually but I didn't want to blow up the comment count on this. It all makes sense to me now. :D

P.S.- advanced warning on the cheesiness that is this chapter's ending. I really don't do romance. ;D

Alex wasn't one for vanity, but even he had to admit he was proud of himself.

He had managed to put together a lean-to and campfire, the products of hours gathering twigs and twirling them as hard as he could against a larger piece of bark he had found. The sun had already set by the time he eked out a flame, but Alex had never been so proud of something he'd made. Now he lay on his back, fire crackling and head staring out of the lean-to and into the sky, trying to remember what his mother taught him about navigation and stars. He dragged his hands lazily through the air, tracing the shapes of constellations he'd memorized.

If that star was there, and the big dipper was to the left, than that meant... Alex sighed and dropped his hands in defeat.

He had no idea what he was doing.

With no food or drinking water, he wouldn't last long lost in the woods. James' cabin had been a half an hour drive from the nearest group of houses. It seemed reasonable to Alex, knowing James, that they were going beyond the legal speed limit of forty. His best guess was sixty miles an hour, but even that was very likely to be wrong. Alex's knowledge of cars wasn't profound by any means. Still, he finished the calculations in his head. If he walked without stopping for eight hours, he could reach the cluster of houses. However, include resting periods and the fact that dehydration starts faster when you're moving, and he was looking at a solid day's journey.

He hadn't even opened the can of worms that was directions.

Alex had kept track of which way he ran. He was fairly sure which way James' house was, and therefore which way to avoid at all costs. Any mistake would lead to him ending up right where he started off: with James and Smith. This was assuming that they were still undiscovered by the police and George hadn't tracked them there already. If Alex took a leap of faith and George had found them, he'd be walking straight into salvation. Alex had heard of the expression Russian roulette, and he figured that if ever there was a time to use it, it would be in a situation like this.

In the end, he wasn't willing to tempt fate by going back to James' house. He left for the direction he hoped (read: prayed) was the way to the road. As soon as the sun came up, he put out his fire and started walking.
A day later, and Alex was standing on the porch of a cookie-cutter suburban house. He'd made it out of the forest.

He rang the door bell, taking a moment to savor the action. Then, his mission complete, he leaned back against the railing and let out a deep breath. Soon, he really would be home.

Alex turned as he heard the door open and the woman behind it gasp. He must look insane. His hair hadn't been washed in at least three days and in all likelihood had leaves sticking out of it, thanks to a chipmunk who decided it was in the mood to fight for a tree branch. He cracked a smile. "Hi, ma'am. Do you mind if I use your phone?"

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Alex grinned at George and Martha Washington. They had just reached Mount Vernon from where Alex now knew was northern New Jersey, the home of James' cabin. Ironically, George really had been at his house. He was told his face when George arrived at the house in less than twenty minutes (George had bribed an officer into flooring it) was priceless.

Martha spent the ride home alternating between fawning over him like he was a newborn kitten and plotting the death of one James Hamilton. Frankly, Alex was quite terrified by the amount of murder tips she knew, but was willing to accept her excuse of dabbling murder mysteries. For now. George was slightly more civilized, he restrained himself to hugging the life out of Alex at every convenient (and inconvenient) opportunity.

Now, after deftly untangling himself from another hug, he stood in the driveway of his home.

"Alex!" He whipped his head around at the french-accented voice that called his name. Sure enough, his friends were running toward him. John gave a joyful yell and crashed straight into him. Alex was nearly knocked over by the force he put into that hug.

And then John leaned in, and Alex's brain short-circuited, because no one gets that close unless they're planning to kiss the person, and Alex felt lips on his, and...wow, John Laurens was kissing him.

He swore he saw fireworks, bright blurs just visible around John's halo of hair. In retrospect it could've just been Laf and Herc jumping up and down behind them, but he liked his cliche more. He was so surprised he didn't notice John's face until he pulled away. He knew he wasn't the greatest kisser, but he was pretty sure John shouldn't have looked that mortified.

"Alex," John breathed. "I'm so sorry. I- I should've asked-"

"No," he reassured him. "That was...perfect."

And Alex kissed him again.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah.

This is almost over. I have an epilogue chapter left, after that it's done. I'm really going to miss writing this and everyone who's read it. You guys are awesome. <3 <3 <3
Hi everyone! Sorry for the disappointment of no chapter. I would murder me too but I need help.

So because this is over, and I have no further ideas, I was wondering if anyone could help me out. If you've got any pairings you want to see or prompts/AUs you want, please please please let me know! I'd love to write them.

The restrictions are pretty simple, just about the only one is no smut. I'll do romance, but any kissing scenes are going to be severely cheesy. Remember, I'm basing all romance above a crush on things I've seen other people do or have read.

As always, thank you for your kind comments!! I'm sorry if I wasn't able to respond to some, there were so many!! I'm trying to get to all of them.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dear Papa Father Mr. Hamilton James,

Is this what people feel when they say they don't know what to say? I don't know. I always know what to say, but for this letter, my mind is blank. I don't like this feeling.

John says hi. Really, he said "Rot in jail, you -----------," but you probably won't be able to read that. Officer Young says the jail you're in censors letters. Herc and Laf are doing fine. They also sent you some greetings, but if I write them too you won't be able to read any of this, and I've got too much to say.

I'm not ready for forgiveness yet. You're not ready for forgiveness yet. You've done nothing to earn it. Although, George says that for it to truly be forgiveness, you don't need a reason to forgive. Martha says you most certainly do, and some other words I can't really write in here. Right now I'm on Martha's side. I'm not visiting you until you prove yourself. There are some people who can forgive with no prompting. I've always thought they were the bravest of all of us, to put their hearts on the line over and over, even after they get stomped on. I'm not that brave. Compared to them, I'm a coward. But I can't take all the blame, you had a role in making me that way.

My biggest question is why? You knew I was happy with the Washingtons. Why did you take me away just to hurt me? That's all you've ever done. People don't hurt people because they love them. Although, maybe you do? I'm told you're getting treatment for psychiatric issues. Officer Young warned me that this letter might be used by your therapist. I don't know how much they can do, though. Some people are too far gone to be helped. If they do read this, I'd like them to try. At least try to make you see what you did was wrong.

You won't see Smith. He got sent back to Nevis for his trial. I'm praying the legal system there actually has its act together for once. The Washingtons promised that with all the publicity this case is getting, it's almost guaranteed he'll be charged. St. Croix will be better for it.
We start school this week. My friends and I are all in the same classes, except for electives. John's taking art, and Laf's going to try theater. They've always wanted to help out with the sets, and Herc finally convinced them to do it with him. He's doing costumes. They're both trying to get me to audition. I haven't decided if I will or not yet. Laf says the play is monologues, so I won't have to sing. It's called *Our Town*. Apparently, there are some good lessons in it.

You once said I forgot what life was like on Nevis, how lonely and painful it was. I've been thinking about it, and maybe you're right. I've had so much love since the Washingtons came into my life, it's dulled my memory. I have everything I was missing then. I have a family, a home, a country and causes I believe in, and people I love. That reminds me, John and I have started dating. He's the best thing that ever happened to me. I could go on for pages about him, but you don't deserve that and I don't think you want to hear it anyway. They've started to fill the holes you and Smith left. Is that why you took me? Did you need someone to fill your holes? There are other ways than to steal someone away from the life they love. The caged bird doesn't sing because of happiness. I still don't forgive you, but I guess I hope you find someone who starts to fill your holes. No one deserves to have their hearts eaten away like that.

I guess I'll close this the Nevis way, then.

Your obedient servant,

*Alexander Hamilton-Washington*

Chapter End Notes

I'm so sad this is over.
Thank you to all of you who took the time to read this. I hope you enjoyed.

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