Do you feel the hunger, does it howl inside?

by merrythoughts, ReallyMissCoffee

Summary

It's been weeks since the Fall. Since Will had leaned against him, the wild scent of blood thick and cloying on the air, and had taken them from the top of the cliffs. And for every second of every day since, Hannibal has been calmly dealing with the fallout of his decision that night: Life over death. Will had intended them to die, had allowed himself a moment of weakness, of desperation. Perhaps the last act of an exhausted soul. Yet Hannibal had denied him.

[Slow burn exploration of Hannibal and Will's developing relationship post-fall/season 3. Possible triggering graphics at the start of each chapter. Blood, gore etc. but canon for the show]

COMPLETE.
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Our take on these two fascinating characters moving forward with each other after season three.

*This story is heavy on the introspection side with less action-y plot at the moment.*

Title taken from the beautiful and haunting Hannibal fan song *Become The Beast* by Karliene.
Will still dreams of the night on the eroding bluffs, of two men vanquishing a dragon, bloody and broken, clinging to each other. Hannibal's face had been so close - just another few inches and Will could have connected their mouths to complete the bizarre intimacy they had been sharing - but he only does so in his dreams. In dreams he can be fanciful, in dreams he can allow himself to follow the stag without fear.

The dream, as usual, turns into a nightmare when, after falling, Hannibal refuses to let them drown, fighting tooth and nail for survival, for the both of them, even though Will is a burden and is not helping. If anything, Will is resisting, becoming dead weight in Hannibal's arms. It had been no easy feat for the good doctor to pull them out of an ocean that would have easily swallowed them whole. His body had been all but torn up from it. When Will sees Chiyoh, he wakes up because he's living the nightmare now -- alive, healing, and brimming with bitterness in his veins.

He understands that the will to survive has always been strong with Hannibal. He also knows that it's counter-productive to stay upset at the man. Hannibal, who has been walking on eggshells around him, being ever the proper gentleman and doctor as he tends to both their injuries -- or at least those of a physical nature. The wounds on the inside are surely festering the longer they go without really talking to each other.

Will hates being petty, hates that he knows Hannibal would converse with him as soon as he asks -- all Will has to do is open his mouth and, like two civilized adults, they would have a conversation and start to sort out the messiness that is his head and heart. That task seems far too daunting.

He also hates this giant divide between them as they putter around each other, moving carefully as to not rip stitches, their shared past weighing heavy on them. It's been proven that they can't survive separation, yes, but that conclusion isn't something Will especially likes. Dependence on another has never sat well with him and now he is at Hannibal's mercy completely. It's the older man's money, cunning and connections keeping them safe, tucked away in a farmhouse somewhere in Canada. Even so, Hannibal never pushes or takes (although sometimes Will wishes he would do something - anything - to shake things up, but he never does).
Instead, every six hours he measures out a safe amount of whiskey for Will to drink with the amount of pain medication he's on and gives him the glass with only the slightest amount of disappointment registering in his eyes. This time, however, Will's other hand reaches out and his fingertips graze the back of Hannibal's hand, signaling that he doesn't, in fact, want the other man to leave. Will downs the whiskey quickly, knowing that it won't kick in yet, but the thought of liquid courage seems comforting.

"Stay a moment?" His voice is rough, he hasn't talked for hours today, too caught up in his head. Will's on the couch, bundled up in a thick blanket, but there are other chairs in the room that Hannibal could choose to sit in.

Freedom tastes different than Hannibal had assumed it would. There's elation, the potent cocktail of chemicals - dopamine, oxytocin, endorphin, and serotonin - that linger somewhere on the back of his palate, but their influence has slowly tapered off, regulated like contraband given the situation he's found himself in.

Dopamine induces an anticipatory sensation, the expectation of joy or pleasure, and he's not shy of that. His body - beaten and broken as it is - is supplying him steadily with endorphin, though it does little to dull the deep ache in his abdomen or the sting of lacerations slowly healing. Serotonin is more difficult to come by, but he's careful to keep it regulated with relatively regular meals and sleep for not only himself but his companion. The dilemma is with a dwindling supply of oxytocin. Regulated by closeness with another person - be it through physical touch or merely casual conversation and eye contact. Its absence has a unique taste, unpleasant, yet Hannibal does nothing about it. He can't.

It's been weeks since the Fall. Since Will had leaned against him, the wild scent of blood thick and cloying on the air, and had taken them from the top of the cliffs. And for every second of every day since, Hannibal has been calmly dealing with the fallout of his decision that night: Life over death. Will had intended them to die, had allowed himself a moment of weakness, of desperation. Perhaps the last act of an exhausted soul.

Yet Hannibal had denied him. He had made his own decision in the free fall and had gathered Will closely to his chest, cradling him like something precious; he had accepted the worst of the impact, sparing Will his quick, simple end but violently extending his own recovery. And weeks later, Hannibal is calmly aware he will be paying for that choice indefinitely.

Chiyoh had been a boon in those first few hours after their fall, locating them and assisting Hannibal with his own injuries while he'd tended to Will's. A hospital had been out of the question; the manhunt for the both of them had been stunned by Hannibal's brutality streaked across the highway, but it would have only been a matter of time before Jack sent the word out. Instead, Hannibal had managed to instruct Chiyoh on crucial supplies and she'd gone off, stoic and loyal, and had found them. A vet's office, most likely, though Hannibal hadn't asked. He'd only been concerned about treating Will's wounds and administering antibiotics immediately to forestall infection. As he'd worked, Chiyoh had done what she'd been able to with him moving about, but he'd cared little for his own injuries. He'd only cared for Will.

In the end, Hannibal had been graced with nothing short of a miracle: nothing vital had been hit. No organs clipped, though the extensive damage to his abdominal obliques would take months to fully repair. It was unfortunate, but not unmanageable. The worst, by far, was the pain and the lack of core strength, but he'd managed to mitigate that as well. Dolarhyde had apparently not wanted his fun over so quickly; in that instance, his sadism had worked in Hannibal's favor. Every now and then, Hannibal spares his memory a mental toast, though he's not allowed wine to touch his lips since the
Will, on the other hand, is another matter entirely. It's been weeks since Chiyoh left the farmhouse she'd assisted them to, Hannibal's muttered instructions fresh in her ears. But in her absence, the true impact after the fall has been slowly bleeding out. Not into flesh, but into negative space. Hannibal had been expecting Will's ire, had been anticipating his anger. What he had not anticipated had been his indifference.

It burns far greater than anger and stings with greater beauty than ire. Will has shut himself off, sometimes retreating into his own head, often retreating into a bottle - one Hannibal reluctantly allows when it is safe considering the level of pain medication Will is on - and through it all, Will has been silent. They've spoken the cursory words to each other, but Will only speaks when absolutely necessary.

Hannibal has felt anger brimming under Will's skin, but it never works itself free. Will only ever turns a dismissive gaze upon him and allows him to work, allows Hannibal to tend to his wounds and treat his body while giving none of his mind - what he knows Hannibal wants. It's a calculated punishment that Hannibal both despises and finds himself oddly proud of. Will has nothing; in their dynamic, the power has always been firmly held in Hannibal's hands. This is the only way Will knows he can fight back, and it's beautiful in its cruelty.

They've fallen into a routine. Hannibal administers pain medication on a strict cycle. Always Will first, and then himself, if he deems it necessary. Though despite the pain in his own body, Hannibal has been making a concentrated effort to leave the majority of the pills for Will. He can handle pain, and given the delicate nature of their situation, Hannibal doesn't want to leave the both of them dull. He wants his reflexes sharp should he need to use them.

So he administers Will his medication, checks on his wounds and the state of the stitches, and leaves in silence unless he has questions regarding Will's recovery. He cooks, though he can't stand for long stretches of time and so the meals are frustratingly simple, yet still of impeccable quality. And through it all, he eyes the slowly emptying whiskey bottles - poured by his own hand - and wonders how many there will be in another month.

That day, Hannibal expects nothing but the same. He finds Will bundled up in a blanket on the couch - one of many places Will has silently claimed as his own - and he pours whiskey into a glass before handing it over. It's so routine by now, so unchanging, that Hannibal has grown to expect nothing but the same. Will is careful to give absolutely nothing, to keep himself reigned in, and Hannibal respects his protest even if the results are agonizing.

When Will reaches out with his other hand that morning, his fingertips light on the back of his hand, Hannibal freezes for only a fraction of a second before realization dawns. Hannibal is careful to keep his expression steady, to keep it nearly blank but still mildly receptive. He's been nothing but professional for weeks and the urge to allow relief or warmth to show through is maddening but he resists it. Instead he looks at Will, cautious yet curious, and allows himself a single nod.

"Of course, Will."

Easing himself back carefully, Hannibal sits in one of the chairs near the couch. He doesn't curl an arm in against his abdomen, but it's a very near thing. His own wounds still ache, still send agony through him upon core strength being used, but Hannibal immediately dismisses it like an irritating thought. Will's sudden shift is far more important.

"Do you require something?"
Hannibal chooses not to sit next to him and Will doesn't know if he feels hurt or relieved by that choice. Either way, it's an uncomfortable thought. He doesn't want to long for Hannibal, for closeness -- he tries to chalk it up to the base need for human connection, but Will knows that's not quite right and it's harder allow himself these false beliefs than it used to be.

The question Hannibal asks him, that goddamn phrasing... If he requires anything... It has Will reaching up to scratch at his beard, half in an attempt to hide the incredulous expression he's surely sporting and half because he feels fidgety. Will places the empty glass on the table beside the couch. He doesn't trust himself to not throw it if things get heated. He's never thrown things out of anger before, but Hannibal always has had a way of bringing out the violence within.

"Yeah, I do require something," Will begins and his tone is too harsh, but he can't help it. He feels rough, all coarse edges and nothing remotely soft about him anymore. "I want you to stop treating me like Ja--" He stumbles over the name, but forces himself to continue. "Like fine china. Wasn't that the analogy you used before?" Will's hands clench at the blanket.

"I know... I know what I did before - back at the house," his voice is a little quieter. How does one speak about a romantic deathwish? "I'm not going anywhere now, Hannibal. I'm not going to leave."

It's the truth, but the words still feel sour in his mouth.

Will is all frayed seams and sharp edges, danger lingering around him like a shroud and yet Hannibal merely watches him. He's careful not to look relieved, careful not to allow too much to show even if the urge is there. He merely watches Will like he's a particularly interesting subject, though be it to a scientist or artist is anyone's guess. It's been a long few weeks of forced silence, Will speaking to him only as much as necessary for the essentials of survival. Hannibal has been following his lead; maddening as it is to see Will and dismiss him, this is a delicate dance of sorts and Hannibal won't push him. This conversation has the possibility to be both promising and damning and so he's careful not to play his hand too soon.

Hannibal's frown is mild when Will speaks. The near-slip, the almost-mention of Jack has Hannibal sitting a little straighter in his seat before he's forced to relax once more. He's stronger than he was directly after the Fall, but he's still weak. For the most part, he's been hiding it from Will as best he can. Somehow he doubts it is a good idea to show weakness at this time. So while Hannibal takes mild offense at the implication, he merely considers it, considers its truth and allows himself a slow, cautious nod.

"If you wish more candid conversation, that is within your right," he says simply, but at its heart, it's false. He is perhaps more cautious now than he'd been before; he's not willing to risk Will's silence. Though in his defense, he hides his caution well. In a few minutes, once the alcohol has settled around Will's senses, he won't have to hide it quite so much.

"It was simply my intention to allow you your privacy. I am well aware you are having... difficulties. I thought it best not to force you to speak." No matter how viciously he'd wanted to.

He knows Hannibal is watching him, observing him with penetrating eyes. They both do this -- watch each other, take in the other's smallest flickers of emotions, trying to read the visual signs as very little verbal has passed between them. Will doesn't let himself look too often, afraid of what he could see reflected back at him. Behind that mild mask, there's a depth to Hannibal that he's both frightened and intrigued by, shies away from and is drawn to.
At Hannibal's answer, frustration curls in his stomach, but he tries not to clench his jaw as the stab wound is still healing and he doesn't feel like being a masochist in this regard. From the gunshot wound and the fall, Hannibal is easily more hurt than he is, although he hides it well. Will never has asked about Hannibal's healing progression, his pettiness getting the best of him at times.

"Within my right?" Will echoes back. "Allowing me my privacy..." He scoffs, turning to face Hannibal directly now. The other man has been respecting his need to brood, but he couldn't respect his wish to die. No, suicide would have been too blasé for Hannibal.

"For someone who didn't give a damn about what I wanted before, you're awfully accommodating now, but I guess you can be since you have everything you want now, don't you?" Will raises an eyebrow in challenge.

"The 'murder husbands' can now live happily ever after?" He snorts derisively at the label. At least he wouldn't have to deal with Freddie anymore, that was a positive.

There it is. Hannibal is careful to keep his expression level as Will finally turns to face him, though he finds he's unable to fully remain as visibly indifferent as he'd like with Will channeling his bitterness and anger into the look he sends Hannibal. It's beautiful in its intensity, feral and raw, genuine in the way Hannibal has always found Will. Never content to go with the grain, rough and abrasive and difficult in ways that had nearly driven Jack insane many a time. Hannibal had merely watched it, had seen something stunning in Will's rudeness that he would have killed a lesser man for. Yet even now, faced with the heat of Will's anger, Hannibal makes a concentrated effort to merely observe him and to not let any of his admiration show.

"Perhaps not everything I want, but more than I hoped for when I considered the possible outcomes to your attempt to use me as a lure," Hannibal replies smoothly.

His hands move, folding over his lap in a parody of casual interest. For a moment, it's simple. A conversation from opposite chairs, shades of the early days of their relationship: Hannibal gently guiding and Will shoving back. The sentiment is almost enough to make him smile, but he resists the urge. At present, Will would not appreciate it.

"I won't insult you by apologizing. You and I both know it wouldn't be genuine; you'd not be speaking with me now had you not realized that."

Hannibal lifts his chin. It's barely enough motion to register, but it makes him look like his positioning is intentional. In this, he can't afford to let Will see anything he doesn't wish to show.

"But that said, yes. I am accommodating now, Miss Lounds' unfortunate title aside... Perhaps I am accommodating because I was unwilling to allow you what would have undoubtedly been a much simpler outcome. How deeply can you fault me for denying you death?" Hannibal adds, tone mildly curious as he searches Will's face.

Words out, a scowl on his face, and Will only feels slightly better from his outburst. Whatever he slings Hannibal's way won't change anything -- he knows this as deeply as he knows that he needs to say them anyway. He's never liked talk therapy, never really liked simply talking about himself to anyone, really, but it can't be helped. There is no other option if he seeks to eventually find some semblance of peace here.

He notices Hannibal's hands relocate themselves to his lap and Will lets his eyes linger on them. They're hands that have been both cruel and kind to him, hands that have steadied him, comforted
him, hurt him and hands that, save for checking on his wounds, do not touch him now. It's almost a sobering thought, but the lazy pull of alcohol is starting to make an appearance, or maybe he's just tired.

Will Graham might actually be more of a tired man than an angry one. As he listens to Hannibal speak, that slightly accented voice as elegant and calming as ever, Will feels his anger subside just a little.

The question posed to him, Will's shoulders drop as he sinks into the couch, the fight, for now, dissipating.

"I can't see you - us - as a sustainable thing," he states, eyes not daring to meet Hannibal's. He’s shared this sentiment before, back when he was caught up in a dangerous game. His cheeks color slightly because it's the first time he's acknowledged them as an 'us' and in his head it sounds all wrong.

There is a measure of beauty in pain, and Will wears it well. Artists would not have dared capture the intricacies of human suffering on canvas were there not a draw towards it. Hannibal watches, rapt, as Will goes through each individual motion, watches Will's eyes go from bitter and angry to unsteady, to tired, and then to resigned. It's an intricate dance that he considers prodding at in an effort to see it anew but he resists the urge. The time has long passed for Hannibal's curiosity.

Will is no longer so naive, so willing to listen to him and speak with him as a friend. Hannibal knows he could easily orchestrate a conversation, could carefully lay verbal barbs down and watch Will's eyes brighten and burn with anger but he is not the man he once was. While the thought of seeing Will Graham unbridled and beautiful settles something base within, he isn't willing to deal with the fallout. Will is no longer merely a convenient entertainment. He is so, so much more. Much more, Hannibal thinks, than Will even suspects.

Hannibal keeps his hands still in his lap as he speaks, though he notes Will's attention immediately. Unwilling to shake it off lest it not settle once more, he waits until Will has replied in order to carefully adjust his position. The gunshot through his back is still troubling him, making it difficult to sit straight and sit unaided but he's not supplied the information and Will hasn't asked. Hannibal sees no reason to change that now. So he merely makes an effort to settle back in his seat like it's a simple adjustment of his position, as fluid as if he'd done the same in his office in Baltimore. Done for ease instead of necessity.

"Perhaps not." Hannibal doesn't move his gaze from Will, though he does respect him enough not to attempt to catch his eye. He's admittedly somewhat distracted by the color to his cheeks. Interesting.

"But I would argue that just because you can't see it doesn't mean it isn't worth attempting. If it turns out you're right, you've lost nothing. We will likely both be where you wished us to be that night, had I not taken matters into my own hands." Hannibal tips his head slightly, regarding Will curiously.

"I will not ask anything of you that you will not freely give, Will. And since you will not leave, you have already given me more than I'd hoped."

The answer he receives is logical, of course. They've both been incarcerated before. If things go poorly for them, death would be the better option. Will would never say he's been suicidal, even at the peak of his instability, he fought to come out on the other side. Even now, amidst the unknowns and trepidation, he still wants to live. To him, the scene on the bluffs had been a moment out of time.
It had felt as if dying with Hannibal would be the culmination of their relationship with two bloody bodies falling to the sea, two souls seeing each other clearly for the first time...

The possibility of surviving hadn't really seemed like a plausible outcome, no ride off into the sunset for them. Will doesn't think he can fathom sharing his thoughts about the fall, although he is curious as to what Hannibal's thoughts are on the matter.

He considers the phrase... *I will not ask anything of you that you will not freely give...* and it sits awkwardly with him. How long has there been a power differential between them? Nearly their entire relationship, and mostly in Hannibal's favor. It's more than a little disconcerting to think that the ball is now in his court and Will sighs. He needs another drink. He needs to stop looking and thinking about Hannibal's hands too.

"I need... another drink," Will decides, but makes to stand, unwrapping himself from the blanket and getting up gingerly.

Normally Hannibal is the one to fetch him nearly anything and everything, but Will wants to stretch and move. He also suspects Hannibal is in more pain than he lets on. Will doesn't wait for an answer as he pads out of the living room with his glass. He probably shouldn't have another, but right now he can't bring himself to care. His mouth wants to run away on him and if that happens he definitely doesn't want to be as sober as he still is.

He gulps down another two glasses in the kitchen, not wanting to bother with bringing a drink out with him. He waits for a few minutes to see if Hannibal will follow him, but he's allowed autonomy in his poor decisions. The burn is delightful and Will feels more blunted when he returns, less defeated.

"You can sit next to me," he offers but doesn't look at the still seated man. He doesn't want to have to ask, he wishes Hannibal could just read his mind, but he's been told that he has to initiate these things.

He knows he can never have his old life back, but right now he misses the simple comfort a hug from Molly or Walter could bring. Will doesn't know if he can bring himself to admit these all too human needs to Hannibal.

Hannibal knows immediately that something he's said has taken root. There's a slight twist in Will's expression, hardly anything more than downcast eyes and the faintest of twitches indicating some sort of emotion, but it's enough. Unlike Hannibal, Will has always been wonderfully expressive. While he doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve, he allows himself a certain level of clarity that Hannibal enjoys seeing. It's visceral in its honesty and after so many weeks prefaced by so many years without seeing it, Hannibal silently locks the image away in his mind to attend to later.

Still, he is admittedly not pleased at Will's announcement. For a moment, Hannibal considers standing, considers setting a hand on Will's arm to gently direct him away from the kitchen and dissuade him from the pull of the alcohol. The thought goes as far as his hands, and they unfold and affix to the arms of his chair before a particularly sharp twinge through his core forces his stillness. Irritated, but accepting the pain as an admonishment Will hadn't known to give, Hannibal merely glances away and allows Will this one reprieve. It has been some time since Will's medication; the effects of the alcohol shouldn't be unsafe at this point. That doesn't mean he enjoys it.

When Will returns, his limbs a little looser and the scent of alcohol sharp on the air in his wake, Hannibal allows himself only the barest of frowns to indicate his displeasure. He says nothing just yet. Instead he silently nods in welcome. If he's surprised by Will's allowance (or perhaps more
accurately, his unsubtle hint) he doesn't let it show. Hannibal regards him for a moment, looking far more curious than wary, though the latter emotion is strongest inside. Then Hannibal stands, slower and painfully stiff; there's no hiding that it hurts, but he doesn't mention the extent.

There's a book on the side table and Hannibal takes note of it as he steps across the small divide between them and gingerly takes his seat beside Will. He smells strongly of alcohol, true, but the immediate immersion into Will's space feels not unlike the promise of a meal following starvation.

"I will only say this once," Hannibal says as he leans back upon the couch, careful not to invade Will's personal space, yet still close enough that it wouldn't be difficult, "I would strongly advise caution when it comes to alcohol consumption. Side effects of your current medication can be far less pleasant when alcohol is a factor. You'll likely feel far more tired and perhaps suffer nausea at least. In the event you believe you'll be drinking more than what I've taken to allowing, I would ask that you inform me first so I can make the necessary adjustments to your dosage."

Even with the slight haze of the alcohol, he can see Hannibal struggle with the movement of standing and relocating himself to the couch. Will feels a twinge of guilt that he hasn't been more helpful in the everyday affairs, but in his malaise it had been far easier to be waited on.

(Maybe there's a darker part of him that thought Hannibal deserved it, that taking care of him was a form of penance, but Will doesn't want to think on that.)

Hannibal is closer, but still not close enough (no, don't think like that). Will looks at his own hands (hands that have been as bloody as Hannibal's) as the man beside him launches into an unsurprising warning about mixing analgesics and alcohol. Will knows the cautioning words are coming from a place of caring. His own half drunken state is more than likely contributing to him not being overly bothered by it.

"I'm unsure how to be around you now," Will admits, his eyes shutting as he lays his head back against the couch's pillow, body warm and relaxed.

Deep breath in, exhale. He opens his mouth and lets words pour out.

"You've been many things to me, Hannibal. A therapist. Friend. Doctor. Villain. Betrayer. Betrayed. Nakama. A persistent memory... and here we are..." Will makes a vague motion with a hand, bleary eyes blinking open and he turns to face Hannibal. "I'm angry at you. At myself, but I'm... lonely too, and sometimes that feeling is harder to cope with."

Vulnerability is something Will abhors for himself, but what does he have to lose by opening up? Respect perhaps, but Will thinks that Hannibal is more human than he's been given credit for. These quiet tension-filled weeks have weighed heavily on Will and something has got to change or he's going to snap.

The honesty comes as a surprise, though one that Hannibal is able to carefully mask into a mere lift of his chin. The pleasure of being spoken to is vast, yet he knows better than to push in this instance. Will Graham is many things, and unfortunately, vulnerable is currently one of his identifiers. It would be so easy to reach over and take advantage, to use Will's inebriation and loneliness to an advantage of his choosing but the very thought has disgust twisting somewhere within Hannibal's core.

He has never desired Will to be anything but genuine, in all its forms. He has never faulted Will the attempts to kill him; no, he's merely reflected on them fondly, focusing on the raw emotion that had to have been driving each and every attempt.
Will is a fascinating man. Pure empathy and darkness, with the rare ability to see whatever is placed before him. Once Hannibal had sought to test that, but those urges are long since quieted. Right now, seated on a small couch in a farmhouse in the thick of the Canadian forests, Hannibal merely regards Will in silence, giving him the respect of an answer that he has to take a moment to think on. The silence is poignant in itself, though he doubts Will notices with the alcohol coursing through his blood. And perhaps there is a modicum of bitterness left, that Will can only speak with him under the influence.

For now, while less favorable, Hannibal will take it.

"There is no set of emotions that is proper in this instance. I don't fault you your anger, or your bitterness. Nor do I fault you the loneliness. At heart, are we not still human?" Hannibal allows himself a glance at Will and, after the barest beat of a heart, he reaches for Will's blanket to very calmly tuck it in around him. He doesn't touch Will, but it's an act of care. It couldn't be anything else.

"Prolonged isolation is used as torture for a reason, Will. There are certain chemicals that can only be released from human contact or conversation. Loneliness has its use: to inform you that something is missing. You may not know how to respond to me at present. I admit, I am battling the same dilemma. However, I don't want you to be anything but genuine. If you are angry, allow yourself that anger. If you are lonely, you need only let me know. I am aware of the dangers of pride, but I assure you: I will not think less of you, nor will I mock you for informing me of what you need."

The blanket is eased back onto him and it would take very little effort to reach out and touch Hannibal's hand in some appreciative gesture, but Will remains still and soaks up the conversion. He hadn't quite realized how starved he was for Hannibal's attention, like a parched man finally being offered a sip of water.

_But do you... ache for him?_ Bedelia's words ring clearly in his mind, through the fog, and he'd resisted the idea at the time, struggled against it despite the copious amounts of evidence that the answer had been _yes_.

The answer still is _yes_.

"Inform you of what I need?" Will repeats back, as if mystified by the notion of admitting his desires aloud. Hannibal's words aren't surprising. They may be monsters, but they're still human, yes. Wasn't it Hannibal who had offered his hand and helped him up, clinging to him in equal parts desperation and relief?

"I don't want to... need you, Hannibal," Will whispers, voice shaky as his hands grasp the blanket. He feels a great depth of emotion threatening to rise up, but he doesn't want to let it surface. The man sitting next to him is a transformative force, more than simple destruction, an enigmatic presence that, no matter his attempts, Will can never be finished with.

"You've taken everything away from me," he chokes out.


Will Graham has always been a stunning example of emotion and this moment is no different. Hannibal watches, hardly daring to breathe, as Will registers what he had said. Hannibal watches the play of emotion across his features, watches the frustration and anger bleed into Will like shading and highlight. Will's desperation forms a delicate chiaroscuro to bleed into the other emotions, and bit by
beautiful, agonizing bit, Will begins to form.

The shell of the man he's been these past few weeks begins to crack. Fissures rise, rippling and chaotic, and Hannibal merely watches as mildly as he can, rapt in the beauty that is Will Graham as he is. No games, no shadows, no thin, false smiles or cutting sneers made to play a role. And no careful blankness, a vicious absence of emotion to punish Hannibal for his sins.

"I have," Hannibal replies simply, though his tone has slanted, less clinical and carefully warm. Inching closer to a deer looking ready to bolt at the slightest sound.

"I have taken everything from you. I have also given everything that I was. I gave it all to you that night at your home. Of course that doesn't make us even. I consented to give it up. You had no such opportunity. Yet I know that were I to offer you an apology, it would ring of falsities and perhaps draw your ire even more."

Hannibal merely looks at the picture Will makes, looks at his bitterness and the white knuckles gripping the blanket. Silently, and slow enough that Will can draw back, Hannibal reaches out to gently nudge Will's right hand, a small admonishment to not aggravate his shoulder further.

"That said, I only wish you to inform me when you need something. I didn't say anything about requiring you to need me."

The last comment is what does Will in.

"Sure, you don't require it, but you know that I do anyway," Will spits out.

It's not even about the help -- Will can handle needing a doctor's care, can live with the knowledge that Hannibal is keeping them both safe; it's needing Hannibal himself that feels overwhelming. He licks at chapped lips, eyes glaring at the man beside him. He's sullen in his anger, confused and lost. He feels childish because what he's longing for is right next to him, but he doesn't want to give in.

He thinks back to the last time they were at his place in Wolf Trap. First waking up in his own bed, Hannibal sitting near him, watching over him like some righteous protector. Then the great rejection (and it had felt so sweet being the one to twist the knife this time). Then the scene shifts to the night and Will hadn't expected Hannibal to give himself up. The notorious Chesapeake Ripper going to his knees with hands behind his head. Jack finally had his catch. Then again, perhaps Will should have known -- Hannibal had always been one for shocking reveals.

Hannibal's hand lingers by and it's with self-loathing and need that Will drops the blanket and reaches out for it. The hand is warm and dry and horribly familiar and now that they are touching, Will is pulled in further, shifting into Hannibal carefully, head falling to Hannibal's shoulder, forehead resting against the other man's warmth. Will feels sick to his stomach and intertwines his fingers with Hannibal, clasping tightly. He closes his eyes and breathes through his nostrils.

"I'm not supposed to be like this." He's purposefully vague.

Hannibal simply tips his head in acknowledgment though makes no effort to answer Will's accusation. Yes, he knows. He knows that Will had made his decision. Perhaps he hadn't intended it to end up like this; he had likely been swamped and overwhelmed by the sheer need in his heart. So much so that death had seemed the simplest option.

For a man like Will Graham, admitting to need is difficult enough. Admitting to needing Hannibal would have been practically unheard of. Yet this is where they are, where they've both
found themselves. Hannibal, tentative yet present, staying his hand and rationing his care while silently yearning. And Will, bitter and cowed and full of need that he likely hates himself for. What a pair they make.

Smartly, Hannibal stays silent. He's well aware that Will's priorities have slowly shifted despite his wants. He's stubborn but he's still human. Hannibal has no doubt that Will resents him, perhaps even hates him for past actions and yet now, seeing the sheer emotion bleeding from him, hearing the bitterness in his tone yet still noting the way Will almost seems to curl into him, Hannibal suspects there is far more to Will than meets the eye.

Hannibal remains still, not willing to startle Will away. And when his companion finally seems to cave, when Will drops the blanket and exchanges its softness for that of Hannibal's hand, Hannibal says nothing. He's unable to help the warmth in his eyes, nor can he forestall the twist of sentiment in his chest, but he at least makes an effort to hide that.

Will slowly shifts against him and Hannibal remains still, allowing Will to select his own position. Only once the battered, broken body of Will Graham rests comfortably against his own does Hannibal curl his fingers carefully around Will's hand, holding him like blown glass, like he's afraid of shattering this trembling peace.

"You are precisely who you were meant to be." Hannibal's voice is softer, as close to reassuring as he allows himself.

Will is a solid warmth against his side and for a moment Hannibal honestly fears that the last month has been a dream. That somehow he's still in the Mental Hospital back in Baltimore, lost amidst the rubble of his mind through the haze of drugs. He squeezes Will's hand and finds it solid and some of his concerns ease.

"This is but a shade of you, Will. You are so much more and that will be evident in time. You need only open yourself to the opportunity. I don't expect you to trust me, nor do I expect your forgiveness. Merely allow me to ensure your care, if not your contentment."

Hannibal adjusted his position then, just a bit. He's careful as he reaches around with his free hand to draw Will's blanket in around his side. And when his hand returns to his lap, Hannibal finally allows himself no more than a mild tilt of his head, but it allows them to rest against each other. The air, for once, tastes sweet on his tongue.

"I will not fault you this, dear Will."

Both the words and tone are a soothing balm to Will's agitation. He may not believe it, but Hannibal does and that certainty makes him feel just slightly better. He sees himself as a fugitive, a criminal, someone who has deserted their family, their livelihood, and all for what? For his inability to let Hannibal go, for the ache in his bones that has remained through the years, during their games and amidst all the violence. They both bear scars from one another and the beauty and meaning isn't lost on him.

As with any new development, Will still fears being rejected, but no. Hannibal allows Will's closeness and only after some time passes, seems to relax more into it, wrapping the blanket around him and taking some comfort from Will as well. Hannibal is calm whereas Will has a storm raging within.

He can't help but think of Molly, smaller and softer than Hannibal, smelling of their shared bodywash. Feminine and pressed up against him and in that scenario Will had been the one to offer
comfort, hadn't he? Hannibal is much more unyielding, completely masculine, but in a refined sense and altogether dangerous... Although this moment is almost tender and as much as Will wants to be lulled into safety, a part of him still wants to rock the boat and shatter the image.

Contentment -- is such a thing possible within Hannibal's clutches?

While Dr. Lecter hadn't taken very good care of him when they first met, Hannibal has indeed stepped up to the plate these past weeks. It's unsettling for Will to realize that he does trust him. Forgiveness, on the other hand, isn't something Will knows how to even approach, so he lets the word float away to the back of his mind.

"I've never been remotely interested in men." Until you is on the tip of Will's tongue, but even with the alcohol loosening that muscle, he refrains.

The scent of alcohol is stronger up close, yet Will wears it as well as can be expected. With how frequently he'd taken to drinking over the past few weeks, Hannibal isn't surprised that the scent of it seems to seep from his very skin. Yet on Will, mixed with his scent under the mask of medication and pain, it is soothing. It's also a sharp reminder to his senses that despite the closeness, despite this being the first crack in the dam, Will is still under the influence of alcohol.

So while Hannibal cannot deny his impulse to push, to covet this new closeness Will has tremulously allowed him, he knows well that this allowance may not be there still in the morning. It's a raw, sobering thought but Hannibal, for all his whimsy and prose, is a realist at heart. He briefly aches to gather Will in his arms and soothe his doubts away, but he remains precisely where he is. He refuses to do anything Will could find fault over come the next morning.

Hannibal doesn't deny his need for closeness, however. Not even he, with all his patience, is willing to give this up. Will is warm against his side, and Hannibal silently locks away every single second that he is permitted this. Will has not been the only one affected by the silence, by Will's insistence to treat Hannibal as a stranger. Hannibal has merely made a point to keep his own distress hidden; the last thing Will needs is for his only remaining rock to crumble in front of him. Not even Hannibal is that cruel.

His thoughts come back to him quickly when Will speaks. Hannibal pauses only for a fraction of a second before he considers what Will has pointedly left unsaid. It might have been lost in subtext, but he still hears it clearly. Hannibal carefully fights back a smile; no one had ever claimed he wasn't a prideful man.

"And you might never be again," he says calmly, though he silently confirms that he knows there is a this time. "Sexuality and orientation are fluid and transient. What is simple for one man may be complicated for another. There are exceptions to some rules, yet for some, their rules are firm and their resolve never shaken. Are you shaken, Will? Though... I feel it pertinent to reiterate what I have already said." Hannibal's thumb presses lightly against the metacarpal bone at the base of Will's thumb, so close that he can make out the fleeting pulse underneath.

"I will not ask anything of you that you would not freely give to me. You owe me nothing, save maybe your company."

The explanation of sexuality is not new to Will Graham, it's just something he never thought he'd ever apply to himself; He's not homophobic, but yes, he's shaken (and in so many different ways). He's a straight man, for all intents and purposes, but he's attracted to Hannibal Lecter. How did he ever get so unlucky in life to draw such a fate? Over thirty years Will's sexual identity was simple
and stayed the course, but now he has to wonder just how far this desire goes. How much will he give or ask for (both things he wishes Hannibal could just inherently know so he wouldn't have to admit, wouldn't have to take responsibility for...)

The slight pressure on his thumb shouldn't cause Will to gasp, but it does anyway. His eyes flutter open and his heart gallops a little faster. It's not anything that should be perceived as erotic, but it's something different, something Hannibal has done on his own and not in the realm of checking on old wounds. Will presses his thumb into the touch and is so very glad that eye contact is impossible in their current positions.

"I thought you'd be more smug," Will jokes, but it's weak sounding even to his own ears, and he's pretty sure Hannibal won't even take the bait. He's grasping for a distraction from his response to the slight touch. He's a man in his prime, used to sleeping next to a doting wife... but even drunk, he doesn't want to be giving himself permission to have sexual needs.

It is such a soft sound, hardly more than a breath, but Hannibal is more than close enough to hear that soft gasp. He glances down to where their hands are clasped and he feels Will's pulse jump under his thumb, betraying him without words. This time, with Will's head safely resting on his shoulder and the man undoubtedly shaken by his response, Hannibal does allow himself the most fleeting of smiles. It hits his eyes far more than the curl of his lips, but it is no less genuine.

And as Will inwardly fights to find an appropriate response, Hannibal merely strokes the soft, thin skin under his thumb and takes silent pleasure in the feeling of Will subtly pushing against the touch. It's reckless given the uneven ground on which they stand, against the constant threat of a sudden clashing of antlers in the event Hannibal pushes just a little too far. But in this, he allows himself that recklessness. Will is too distracted to notice, and Hannibal is too taken with this man to stay his hand.

"Perhaps I should make an attempt to pretend I'm not smug, but I feel you would find that quite transparent." He allows his smile to fade but the satisfaction that had prompted it stays warm and reckless inside.

"In a way, I am. But smug may not be the best description. I am... satisfied. Honored. Awed, to be completely transparent. But this, I fear, is a conversation for when you have your faculties about you. I will not force your hand, Will. While I am aware of your attraction, if you decide against acting on it, I won't be so uncouth as to remind you."

No, much as Hannibal has ached for this man, has spent many long years thinking of him and only him, in far too many ways - be they soft and sensual or caked with violence - Will is more than the sum of Hannibal's thoughts.

He is beautiful and broken and reckless, a perfect example of the dangers of empathy and sentiment. He is impulse personified, sheer temptation wrapped in the asocial shell of a man so often overlooked. But just as Will had seen him, he had seen Will. And it's with that thought, Will's pulse a steady thrum under Hannibal's thumb, that Hannibal considers something very simple. It could backfire in the morning, yet perhaps it is something chaste enough that Will would allow it.

Sighing softly, resigning himself to the repercussions whatever they may be, Hannibal simply lifts the hand holding Will's and brings it higher. He does nothing but press the most fleeting of kisses across Will's knuckles, so soft it might as well have been a breath. Then he lets their hands drop back once more.

"Forgive me," he says softly, not sounding apologetic but definitely sounding warm, "You are not alone in your revelation. I have rarely given thought to the gender of those I choose to share space
with, but I admit... my sentiment for you is unprecedented and rare. And I would not trade it, even in the event you choose to keep our relationship as it was. I mean it, Will. I expect nothing. Take your time. I'm certain you have much to think about. And in the interim, if you would allow it, I have nowhere I would rather be."

A caress is given by Hannibal - gentle, unimposing, but it's an acknowledgment of Will's positive reaction to the initial touch nonetheless. Will shudders slightly, a warmth blooming in his body, most likely from the alcohol, but perhaps in part from Hannibal too. There's a war between a longing for the nebulous concept of *more* and a strong sense of self-preservation that wants him to retreat back to the familiar. Hannibal would allow it, would let him slink away, but the familiar is long lonely expanses of time spent brooding and Will knows he'd rather be temerarious and indulge in this for just a bit longer.

*Satisfied. Honored. Awed.* Despite himself, Will's lips quirk up at the corners. He can't quite process how he *feels* about Hannibal's words, but they make him exhale slowly as if needing to compose himself. Unlike Jack and the FBI who had only cared about his usefulness, Will feels like his presence is the single thing that Hannibal cherishes more than his freedom alone. It's a powerful realization.

In a slow and fluid motion, his hand is brought to Hannibal's mouth, the gentlest of kisses pressed to his knuckles. Instantly, Will is transported back to another strangely tender moment in which Hannibal washed and bandaged those same knuckles when they were bloody and bruised from killing Randall Tier. Hannibal had been *pleased* with him, had been pleased how he handled the act of reciprocity. Will remembers describing the act as intimate. It also felt intimate killing Dolarhyde.

It *almost* feels intimate now.

"Are we only to be close when we're covered in blood and amidst the rush of violence?" Will murmurs, head raising to look into Hannibal's face. It's a face he's seen in fragmented memories, nightmares, from behind bars.

"I feel like all you've said to me has been assurances... Granted, I understand why."

"We are close now."

Slowly, Hannibal eases his head away, allowing Will the freedom to move, to look up at him. Per his sensitivities, Hannibal makes a point to not seek out Will's eyes, though the desire to be seen is all-encompassing and difficult to resist. He manages; he's been managing for over three years and under much more dire circumstances. That Will is willing to look at him at all at this point feels like a blessing. It's been far too long since either of them have interacted. Clinical touches to treat wounds, professional instructions on proper wound care and positioning, and orders to eat properly had been unsatisfying and cold. This, at least, is a step in the right direction.

"Both in touch and in conversation. I have no desire to shut you out."

He never has. Even at his cruelest, his attempts to renounce this flawed creature, the desire to gather him together, to carefully piece together the shattered teacup had been suffocating. Cutting ties only works if the true desire is there. It had never been there for Hannibal, no matter how badly he had ached to simply let go. Now he's pleased he hadn't.

"Which is why I must make my assurances. Perhaps you do understand. Perhaps you don't. It isn't for me to say. However, considering the delicate nature of our history and your somewhat recent
personal realizations, it would be irresponsible of me to not offer them as truth. You have every right to resent me; as you said, you lost everything. Grief displays its tableau in different ways for us all. Your foundation is uneven beneath your feet. Yet it is further complicated by your situation."
Hannibal frowns, more thoughtful than disappointed, though he takes great care to keep his comments from edging into unwelcome territory. Will has never been fond of being known.

"I am the only one you can currently turn to, and it likely puts an... uncomfortable pressure upon your mind. You resent me and yet you must rely on me as well. I continue to make my assurances as I do not wish you to convince yourself of a need to placate me. You are not my prisoner, Will, and you are welcome to work through your grief without risk to your mental or physical well being."

Will listens, glazed eyes drinking in Hannibal's features as best as he can in his state of intoxication - cheekbones, his jawline, the wrinkles beside eyes that are not meeting his own pair. It's out of respect, from a place of infinite patience that eye contact isn't met. How long has Hannibal wanted him for? Years. It's an uncomfortable truth that sits in the bottom of his uneasy stomach.

"Of course you're being entirely reasonable," Will replies a bit disdainfully.

Frankly, Hannibal's calm demeanor and accommodating platitudes are pissing him off. He understands why the other man is doing it, he knows the sentiments are genuine (and oh, how far they have come for Will to be able to seriously apply that word to Hannibal), but he's still irritated.

"Makes me want to mess you up." And it's such a stupid thing to say, a foolish urge that follows, but he gives in anyway: Will's free hand rising to card through lightly greying hair, fingers purposefully trying to bring disarray. Hannibal's hair is longer than it was when in the Hospital (in the back of his mind Will thinks he prefers this), but both of them are sporting unkempt styles as haircuts are not apart of the healing regiment.

Will's hand is shaking and he doesn't cause too much disorder, just a few tufts stick up when he pulls away with a shudder, fingertips grazing across a defined cheekbone at the last moment. These recent actions are probably the most intimate he's been with Hannibal since embracing him and gazing into each other's eyes on that fateful night. Shame and desire turn.

"I feel sick," Will announces suddenly as his stomach gives a lurch and he parts from Hannibal completely, making to rise and head to the washroom.

Intoxication and grief are a complicated mix. Sometimes alcohol serves to bolster sadness, to break down the walls between emotions and allow the dam to break with ease. Sometimes it acts as a bandage, reinforcing the foundation and locking grief in deeper. And sometimes it changes it, takes its chemical makeup and tips the shape irregular. This, Hannibal feels, is what has happened. Will's disdain is accepted as he expects it, as is his ire, though the anger seems to be taking shape, like clay molded under artisan hands, forcing it to grow bigger and more elegant as the moments pass. But the impulsiveness catches Hannibal briefly by surprise. It's not enough to force much of a reaction. At least, not until Hannibal takes note of the hand Will has chosen.

He makes a small sound, chiding, bordering on concern, but the moment is over so quickly that he doesn't have time to select his words. Will's fingers move but Hannibal's hair - while closer to the way it had been before his incarceration - is not yet long enough for Will to do much. He simply touches and were Hannibal not so concerned with the healing set to Will's shoulder, he might have allowed himself to savor voluntary touch. Later, perhaps, the psychologically searing heat of Will's touch will impact him.
"Will," Hannibal begins, but he cuts himself off at the brush to his cheek. It's unintentional; he can read that clearly on Will's face, but for a moment Hannibal looks compromised, as close to shaken as he ever does.

He recovers quickly, though knows his own injuries well enough to not rush to rise with Will. The separation feels like Will has torn through rows of stitches connecting them but Hannibal doesn't fault him his distance, nor does he lift his hand to fix Will's actions just yet. Instead, he frowns and sets a hand on his knee, ready to rise if need be.

"Side effects of your medication, perhaps. Favor your arm; I've not tested the damage in a few days and I would prefer you not overdo it. Do you need help?"

Until this evening, having been deeply entrenched in his own swirling thoughts and conflicting feelings, Will has not done much looking into or at Hannibal (although he can picture him in very vivid detail in his own memory palace). The normal dose of alcohol dulls his nerves but increases the likelihood of him being morose. Now, after loosening his tongue and allowing him to seek comfort, it's a distraction from the ache in his shoulder (of course the angle hadn't been good for it when he went to touch Hannibal's hair, but he hadn't been thinking about that). Like the good doctor had predicted, the liquor mixed with his medication has Will feeling a bout of nausea.

"I'm sure I can throw up in a toilet by myself," Will retorts, but there's a distinct lack of heat in his words as he walks to his destination. He doesn't bother flicking on the bathroom light or securing the door, just eases himself down onto his knees, head positioned over porcelain and wretches. The contents of dinner exit his stomach and the alcohol burns in his throat.

The embarrassment from showing such vulnerability is worse than proving Hannibal correct about it being a poor decision to drink more.

Chapter End Notes

Merry's tumblr!
Dapperscript's tumblr!
Comments/chats always welcome! :)
Scars

Chapter Summary

Will dares to catch Hannibal’s eyes as the tips of his index and middle finger caress up the scar in a tender stroke.

Chapter Notes

It's a busy morning for the boys... x)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Conversation between Will and Hannibal improves following their talk earlier that day, but Hannibal doesn't miss Will's staunch desire to keep a safe space between them. The first day Hannibal bemoans his own recklessness in lifting Will's knuckles to his lips, but he eventually reasons that his actions had altered nothing that wasn't already set in stone. He merely decides to carry on as he has been, though with more conversation. In this Hannibal isn't greedy. While he wants more, he’s not so reckless as to take it, and there is plenty for him to do in the meantime.

The house is not quaint, nor is it up to Hannibal's usual standards, but after three years in a cell he finds he can't fault even this architecture. Slowly, though his distaste had initially been evident, he has grown to understand the nuances of this residence. Despite the agony in movement, he makes a trip out for supplies under heavy disguise once a week, and only once Will is soundly asleep. It keeps the kitchen stocked and has the added benefit of providing a steady wardrobe for them both: softer shirts that don't aggravate Hannibal's injuries, loose shirts that Will can slide his arm into without difficulty, and pants that don't require two hands for Will to fasten. On top of that, the house itself requires basic upkeep and cleaning.

The next few days pass with only the slightest increase in Will's sociability toward Hannibal. However, he doesn't initiate any touch. That's out of the picture. He drinks a little less, down to only one in the afternoon, but Will feels more antsy, giving way to pacing around his room or the house once he grows exhausted of his own four walls.

He finally shaved this morning, evening out the patchy facial hair that had only been trimmed back to keep the knife wound free of hair. He looks more familiar to himself.
Sipping on a coffee in the kitchen, Will decides to raise a little hell and comments to Hannibal across the table, "I miss my wife."

It is true, but he's curious if he can get a rise out of Hannibal. It's certainly not a wise decision by any means. It's too late to retract his statement now, the words already out. Now all he can do is wait and see what he'll get in response.

Hannibal is still struggling with weakness. Abdominal injuries are notorious for sapping core strength and routinely he spares bitter thoughts towards Dolarhyde's final attempt to remove his dignity along with his life. It means Hannibal is forced to keep a chair nearby, forced to lean on counters when Will is safely tucked away elsewhere. He puts on nothing but his best in front of his companion, initially because he hadn't wished Will to see him struggle, but eventually because Will hadn't cared to ask. He limits himself to keeping the kitchen clean; the gentle stretch of light work is its own physiotherapy.

That morning, he's in the process of doing just that, slowly wiping down the counters while conserving his energy under Will's watchful eye when the comment comes at him like a bullet. Hannibal stills.

"Is that so."

It's not a question. Hannibal gingerly straightens and folds the dishtowel in his hands to set it down on the counter and only then does he turn to look at Will. His expression is guarded, but despite his best efforts there is a thread of genuine irritation behind the expression. Will's fallacy is not a topic Hannibal has ever enjoyed. In truth, he would have applauded Dolarhyde for killing them.

"Perhaps an inappropriate comment after breakfast, but nothing I have not come to expect. What about her do you miss, Will?"

There it is -- a slight flicker of annoyance shows up in Hannibal's eyes and although it shouldn't delight Will so much, it does. He's either unable or doesn't care to conceal the look of glee that crosses his own features in response. It's manipulative, yes. Maladaptive even, but he can't help it. The need to do something, to cause something has been far too great. He can't handle the tepid atmosphere that surrounds Hannibal's infinite reserve of calm, not when he's seen what the man is capable of.

Will takes a sip of coffee before replying, in no real hurry to play his hand. It's a heady feeling having this kind of power over Hannibal and all it took was reframing his thoughts. On some level he's aware of what a prize he is to the other man, but he wants to see it, hear it. He wants to provoke the monster, if he can.

"I miss many things, Hannibal. Holding her. Kissing her. Laughing. Making love to her," Will replies casually, but his eyes are piercing and looking directly at Hannibal as he pushes his chair back and stands. He's hoping for jealousy, desperately greedy for it, actually.

"But maybe I've just swapped one wife for another, what do you think?"

He closes the distance between them, gravitating toward that larger body and daring to go one step further by placing his hand on Hannibal's chest, his head cocked to the side as he waits for an answer.

It's clear with one glance that Will is attempting to force Hannibal's hand. He looks far too expectant,
far too alive following his comment and Hannibal considers denying him. He considers simply gathering up his anger - and yes, his jealousy - into a room in the vast expanses of his memory palace to quietly peruse through on his own time. Yet despite Will's apparent pleasure in Hannibal's response, there is a thread of something darker, something wholly manipulative that Hannibal would applaud him for were the comments not so elegantly aimed to tear into his control. Will Graham is a complicated man, but he is also a reckless man, intentionally baiting someone like Hannibal simply because he wants to see what will happen.

Annoyed as the thought makes him, he cannot fault Will for that. It is, admittedly, one of Hannibal's favored pastimes.

"I think you are overplaying your hand, Will," is what Hannibal replies with, though his calm countenance has abandoned him in favor of something with an edge.

He watches as Will stands and near-saunters over, bringing with him a mix of impulses and emotions that Hannibal considers reaching for. This is... a dangerous game that Will has decided to engage in. Hannibal could shut it down, could deny him outright. Yet perhaps in a way he is also intrigued, also curious - through his anger and sharper jealousy - what will happen. It makes his desire to track down Will's dithering wife and put an end to Will's fancy no less barbed, even more so when Will's hand boldly reaches out in a parody of intimacy. Hannibal looks down at it, jaw set, and then looks back at Will. He's unsure if he appreciates this particular game.

"If you miss her, perhaps you shouldn't have plunged us both into the Atlantic. But no, that isn't the point you're attempting to make. Do you wish me angry, Will? Perhaps resentful of a woman who never truly had you. She lived with you, shared your space, she touched you, but she never had you."

Hannibal lifts his chin, boastful without words as he regards his companion. Part of him doesn't want to risk Will's ire, but most of him simply doesn't care. Will had cultivated this moment as his own.

"That particular honor remains mine. You never made love to her, just as you've not swapped one wife for another. You've merely cast aside the facade."

The tone Hannibal uses is worth it alone - to hear that slight sharpness is a welcome change from the insufferable calm. He's playing with fire, he should know better than to dangle the innocent in front of Hannibal, but his brashness is getting the best of him. This tedious business of allowing the healing to run its course has made Will restless combined with the unknown dynamics between them has Will acting out.

Facade. Yes. Most likely it had been a romantic and fanciful notion to think he could have a family with Molly and Walter. Still, Will had tried, had played the role dutifully and even enjoyed the simplicity of their domestic life they had carved out as a unit. He had liked being needed, being depended on for something other than his twisted mind and his ability to empathize with killers.

"Ah, but you haven't had me, at least not in every sense of the word," Will murmurs, voice deliberately lower and he's looking up at Hannibal through his eyelashes.

It's the most overtly sexual thing he's said to the older man and he's actually surprised that it came out of his mouth. It's also uncouth, but Will feels like there isn't much refined about him anymore. His hand slides up to the side of Hannibal's neck, resting there gently.

There is no disguising the sexual overtures in Will's statement. Hannibal has never been one to
ignore the obvious and it's clear that even Will seems surprised with his own words. It's subtle, barely more than a mild hitch to his breathing, but Hannibal knows he's shocked himself, and that alone is enough to solidify what this is. It's simple, really. Will feels powerless, without anchor and without control, his future uncertain and his surroundings different. This, as brazen an idea as it is, is a way to attempt to wrest control back the only way he knows will work, because he knows what Hannibal desires. As always, Will is the master of finding intricate ways to twist the knife.

The jealousy burns, and the desire curls like paper hovered over an open flame. He could act. Could take, as Will is so clearly pushing for. He wants control but he wants no responsibility and Hannibal genuinely considers granting it to him. He's close, blatant in his seduction, and Hannibal is not so composed that Will's attempts don't foster the response he desires.

Hannibal wants, but he doesn't want a badge of honor, a notch in his bedpost. He wants Will.

This is a shade. So silently, allowing his desire to show in his eyes, Hannibal decides to wrest control back.

"Haven't I?" His voice is lower, accent sharper, and the words are pointedly enunciated. "Perhaps I have never had you physically, not in the way most allude to. But I have had you in every way that counts. Physically, I have opened you under my hands. Have held you. Mentally I have occupied your thoughts. Emotionally I have had you."

Hannibal doesn't smile, but there is a threat of something akin to amusement that filters into his voice.

"Those secret moments with your wife, where she disappeared in your mind and you bit back my name. The dreams where you woke, frustrated you couldn't escape the thought of me. The dreams you never told your beloved wife about. My shadow in your wake. Your drunk nights alone. My voice in your thoughts."

Hannibal shakes his head slowly, feeling the movement of Will's hand against his neck, and he reaches up simply to touch Will's smooth chin, tipping it up.

"Dear Will, how you forget. I have you. And it is wholly, entirely your choice."

In every way that counts...

Will's heart beat picks up, his breath hitches for a moment as he listens. Hannibal takes his turn, smoothly and effortlessly delivering his refutation. Of course he speaks the truth. They may not have coupled, but Hannibal is the single most influential person he's met, a profound and unwavering force that has touched him - changed him - and likely still is. Will's body bears the scars of their violent flirtation. How many conversations took place in his own memory palace with Hannibal? How many nightmares or waking dreams did the wendigo or the stag have him utterly transfixed?

When Hannibal tilts his chin and gives his final statement of - I have you - Will is aghast to realize he's completely hard in his pants. Heat and color rush into his cheeks. Thankfully there's still a foot or so in between them so hopefully his problem can remain a secret until he gets his body back under control.

He can't look at those confident eyes and he shudders as he lets his head fall forward, forehead resting against Hannibal's chest. Blunt nails dig slightly into the Hannibal's neck. Will breathes in the clean scent of Hannibal and he knows he hasn't won this round.

Will falls apart beautifully and Hannibal doesn't deny himself the pleasure of seeing it happen. He is
pointedly not breaking any of his own rules, yet he doesn't have to. He doesn't need to touch or force; Will's mind is filling in the blanks like bleeding watercolor, desire rising in him that remains a thick and heady scent upon the air. Hannibal doesn't need to look to know what Will wants to hide, though as a kindness he decides against mentioning Will's physical desire. It makes him no less aware and he takes a great amount of satisfaction in the way Will colors, desire and embarrassment warring as he finally relents.

Hannibal has won; Will knows it. For only an instant Hannibal considers allowing himself to be less than courteous, to repeat Will's earlier barbs back to show him that he can't merely lash out and expect a situation to be within his control. But Hannibal's frustration is not so vast that he lets himself forget. Will is no enemy. He's lost and grasping at straws, trying to find his own footing amidst shifting sands. And Will's bowed head, the way he shudders and collapses against Hannibal and the pinprick bite at Hannibal's own neck is apology enough. Hannibal merely shifts, leaning away from the bite of Will's nails in order to feel them better, and then he sighs, still clipped with irritation, but fond.

"You will not lose yourself, Will. I will always bring you back. And you cannot bait me into violence. Not against you. But I will caution you in this: my patience is not endless. If you insist upon trying to evoke jealousy in me, be well aware where the reticle is aiming once the dust has settled."

Slowly Hannibal's hand shifts, sliding with an almost mocking tenderness back over the swell of Will's jaw to thread his fingers into Will's hair. Hannibal curls his fingers there, firm but not cruel, and ducks his head, breathing in everything that Will is, from his confusion and anger all the way down to his arousal. He is, as always, a feast for the senses.

"As I have told you, if you have need of something, you need only ask. While you are becoming in your manipulation, it is not required here. Not now. Not with me."

Hannibal could gloat, could throw the taunts back in Will's face, but he doesn't. It's a small concession in the end, one that doesn't really make him feel any better. Once again, assurances are given, but this time with a twist - a gentle warning tacked onto the end to not try Hannibal's patience (but still, a small dark part in Will is curious about what would be allowed and tolerated; just how much could he get away with?).

Once again, it comes down to Will asking, something his pride hasn't come to terms with yet. He can't quite bring himself to flesh out the idea of what he wants and needs either. Presently, his body dictates he is aroused, but he doesn't know where to go with it, what to do about it. Nothing physically stimulating was done to him. It's not lost on Will that Hannibal vocally asserting his claim was what brought on an erection, but what he is supposed to do with that knowledge? It's all kinds of messed up.

"I can't," Will laments, hand dropping to the collar of Hannibal's shirt and clutching at the fabric in frustration. His head pulls against the fingers in his hair, seeking tension.

"You took before, why can't you just take now?"

He's being childish, wanting the gratification of being given what he desires without having to work for it and admitting that he wants it, but he doubts very much that he will be given it.

"Because it would absolve you of responsibility." His voice could come out distant, perhaps even calculating, lording his advantage over Will's head, but it doesn't.
Hannibal's voice is softer, warmer, a verbal caress as Will resists Hannibal's fingers in his hair. For a moment Hannibal considers softening his touch, denying Will even the pull, but he is careful, not cruel. He merely looks at his companion, beautiful in his loss and frustration, and relents enough to tighten his hand in Will's hair, tugging just enough for him to feel it. Hannibal's pulse is steady, but he feels every heartbeat and he knows Will likely can too. It's fitting, then, that this conversation is happening while they're so intimately close.

"I could take, could push. By now you must know the extent of my affinity for you, Will. I have made no secret of it. It is not something I am ashamed of." Hannibal moves his free hand then, raising it to settle heavily upon Will's good shoulder, a grounding force as the earth unquestionably shifts beneath Will's feet.

"But were I to take, you would always know it wasn't your decision. You'd find comfort in the fault being mine. You could enjoy each moment with freedom and allow yourself any disgust later, knowing it was not your choice. That I made you. You will never find purchase in your decisions or in yourself if you don't take responsibility for your choices."

Hannibal dips his head, just enough to gently press his chin against the white-knuckled grip Will has on his shirt collar. He wants as much as he ever has; Will's presence is temptation personified, and yet in this, Hannibal won't shift.

"I would urge you to think. Retreat, breathe, perhaps lose yourself in a book for a few hours, and then return to me. I am not so proud that I am unable to sit with you and speak with you like an adult. And perhaps, through a makeshift sort of therapy, you might better understand yourself."

Responsibility. Will wants to roll his eyes at the predictable answer, but a soft groan leaves his mouth instead as Hannibal obliges him and pulls a little on his hair. It sends a shiver down his spine, and it's intriguing because for such a small action, the slight pleasure of the resistance is delicious.

However, the hand that comes to rest on his shoulder, Will finds patronizing. The motion is far too casual, something Hannibal had done in the beginning of their friendship while he had been manipulating and lying to Will. Hannibal is protecting himself, not wanting to allow Will any possible ammunition to use at a later date. It's infuriating, but not surprising, not really. Hannibal is in no hurry now, knowing that he has Will defeated. He is a man that prefers to play with his food and Will's struggle is most likely an exotic treat for him.

At the suggestion to withdraw, Will's eyebrows furrow in distaste. He's tired of looking for distractions, tired of feeling stuck in his own head. At least in his irritation, he feels alive. Engaged.

"Fuck your therapy," Will states and he lets go of the collar to grip Hannibal's waist, taking half a step closer and purposefully pressing his pelvis into Hannibal's. His head tilts up, their mouths are close once more, and he makes to kiss Hannibal, moving close, but not quite connecting. He holds himself still, a challenge in his eyes; he can feel Hannibal's breath on his lips.

"What if I say that I want you to take?" he asks in a hushed tone.

Hannibal has Will defeated, yes, but that doesn't mean that Will won't fight. Many a person would cave, would surrender, would simply listen to Hannibal's advice and retreat in order to think things through properly, but Will has always been at his most dangerous when backed securely into a corner. He's never been a man to take comfort in being advised and Hannibal watches the defiant spark light in Will's eyes, feels its heat like a flame against his skin. He's not certain what Will is going to do; in all his travels, with all his knowledge, he has never been able to entirely predict Will.
Graham’s actions. The space between seconds ignites something anticipatory in Hannibal as well. And Will doesn't disappoint.

He throws Hannibal's suggestion back at him with vehemence at the same moment he acts, closing the distance between them and boldly pressing himself against Hannibal's front, his hand a firm grip on his waist. It's sudden, reckless, and driven completely by impulse in a way that has Hannibal drawing a small breath. He may be capable of rational thought, but that doesn't make him unaffected, and this close he can feel the warmth of Will's body and the obvious press between his legs. It sends a flush through him, turns the desire from a mere suggestion to something Hannibal has to physically swallow back. Pure temptation. Hannibal can't help but be proud; Will is... skilled, when he wishes to be.

"Then... the lines would blur," he manages, though there's a heat to his tone. It is admittedly difficult to focus when a mere twitch forward would bring their lips together and when he can sense and feel nothing but this beautiful creature. His hand moves from Will's shoulder, little more than a casual slide, but it comes to rest securely against the small of Will's back, fingers pressing just enough to feel.

"I do not wish to humiliate you, Will. That isn't why this is in your hands. I simply don't want you to hide. From who I am, or from who you are. You are far too remarkable a man to cower within yourself." Hannibal draws another breath and Will's scent is intoxicating in its intensity. It makes it that much harder to speak.

"But... nor do I want you to act solely on impulse and foster resentment later. As... tempting as this is, I wonder if you aren't allowing yourself to ask why you're doing it."

With a remarkable amount of willpower and restraint, Hannibal refuses to do much else other than hold his ground and relocate his hand to Will's lower back. It's infuriating, but par for the course. In the end, Will's not necessarily surprised by how stubborn Hannibal is. They both are, after all.

Hannibal's words, however, strike a chord within Will and are enough to have his head retreat back a few inches, eyes widening as he processes the statements made to him. Is he cowering? Hiding from his attraction, still uncomfortable with the strange current of desire that flows between them and most likely Hannibal himself? (Yes.)

"I thought conceding to you would be the most difficult decision, turns out it's not," Will sighs. "Living with you after the fact is." He shakes his head, chuckling softly, a wry smile on his face as he takes inventory of how close he was to perhaps breaching the divide between them.

He has the object of his desire in his arms, holding him, and it's still not enough. When it comes down to it, Will doesn't feel remotely okay with the idea of a them. In the adrenaline-fueled moment, covered in blood, the violence thick in the air, he was able to connect to Hannibal, to the majesty and beauty... but now he feels hesitant, unsure of his footing. He wonders what he's waiting for, if, one day, he'll wake up and magically his situation won't feel like a far-fetched story that's not his own. For now, Will's caught in the push and pull of his own psyche's refusal to accept the present reality.

"Making and acting on a decision are sometimes far less complicated than dealing with the aftermath," Hannibal murmurs, and while a thread of frustration still weaves its way around his words, his touch is tender.

He wants, and he has rarely intentionally denied himself something he wants. But in this, in Will, Hannibal wants nothing less than everything. He is selfish, covetous, and he wants whatever Will
consents to giving him. He doesn't want pieces or concessions, doesn't want to trap Will in a corner and make him feel like Hannibal is owed something he is not fully willing to give. He could have Will's body; the reactions speak clearly. But Will has never just been one side of himself. Hannibal doesn't want the body if the mind isn't included. A physical connection can be instigated with the proper words and the right smile with any garden-variety human; Will is so much more. He's well worth the wait.

Slowly, giving Will time to pull himself back together, Hannibal eases his fingers from the tighter clench in Will's hair. His touch gentles until he can stroke his fingers through the curls, then slides his hand back down along the cut of Will's jaw, tender and bordering on worship. Hannibal pushes no further.

"Your thoughts will normalize, and your uncertainty will settle in time. You are without grounding and attempting to find your footing in the only way you feel you are able. You know I desire you, and it gives you control where you would otherwise be without," Hannibal says softly, like he's merely explaining, like he can read the complicated twist of Will's thoughts as if they've been written down for him.

"Talk to me, Will. Silence can only help if you allow yourself to process your thoughts instead of locking them away, as I feel you have."

Hannibal's thumb traces a gentle pass over Will's cheek before he catches himself and the motion ceases. Slowly, careful not to break contact quickly, he allows his hand to fall away but keeps the other still on Will's back, a physical grounding.

"You have merely been existing in my world without attempting to carve out your own space. Busy yourself. You are limited with your injuries, as I am, but I believe it would benefit you to take action here. You are existing, not living, and the first step is to make this space your own. We may remain for some time, or we may move on, but what matters is now. How would you make this space your own if given the opportunity?"

His body is a traitor, still longing for any touch that Hannibal sees fit to give him, as brief as they may be. The grip on his hair lessens, but fingers brush through strands first before grazing across his jaw. The slightest tremor passes through Will and is most likely felt by Hannibal. He first assumed his craving for physical connection could be attributed to how routine it had been with Molly, but the reactions his body gives makes him question that. Question everything, really, because like Hannibal had asked only a few days earlier - *is he shaken?* - the answer is all the more evident now. Will is shaken to his very core.

Time. The great healer for most ailments. Yes, Will supposes that time will quell some of his anxiety, but what does he do in the meanwhile? Mentally reined in, his body lags behind as desire courses in his blood, a dangerous attraction screaming to be allowed to come out and play. Before relenting, he indulges just a little, gripping Hannibal's waist tighter as he rubs his crotch against the unmoving force that is Hannibal.

The thumb on his cheek causes Will's mouth to part and the bizarre idea that he wants to suck on that digit flits through his mind. Hannibal's words bring him back and Will considers them for a moment.

"Dogs. Or a dog." The answer surely wouldn't surprise Hannibal. Canine companionship has always made Will feel good. He may not have been able to protect Abigail or his unborn child, but nurturing and caring for a life has always given him meaning. The loyalty and love of pets is something he didn't need to question.
"And..." This next part is harder to get out. "I was thinking I'd like you to teach me in the kitchen a bit."

Logic dictates that doing something with Hannibal would surely help normalize and humanize Hannibal to Will. It seems almost outlandish to be considering entering Hannibal's domain of the culinary arts, so Will ducks his head into Hannibal's neck, hiding his embarrassment with his mouth pressed against a throat.

That small motion takes a fair chunk out of Hannibal's control, the barest shift of Will's hips, but the action is purposeful and lewd and Hannibal's breath hitches without his permission. He's quick to rein himself in again, but it's further proof that he's not unaffected. The grip on his waist is acceptable, even welcome, though the bandages under his sweater deaden the sensation, but Will pressed so close is a recipe for danger. Hannibal eases himself back as much as he can and he wonders for a moment if Will even realizes he's had Hannibal trapped against the counter for the past few minutes. Likely not; Will doesn't seem aware of much beyond his current scope and Hannibal can't fault him that.

"Will," Hannibal says softly, as much a warning as he can offer. He can see the desire coursing through his companion and Will's temptation magnifies his own even as he attempts to maintain his own control. But thankfully for Will's sake - and his own - Will seems to come back to himself. He thinks, and Hannibal can almost see the gears turning. The answer comes as no surprise to him, though he does permit himself the smallest of frowns. Hannibal doesn't have Will's fondness for canines, but that doesn't mean he won't relent. Right now he needs grounding far more than Hannibal needs peace.

Will's second answer comes as more of a surprise. Hannibal's eyebrows lift and he considers Will anew, looking down to the single arm he can currently use. Culinary arts will be difficult one-handed, but provided Will only uses his right to brace, perhaps there is a future in him yet. Smart man, Hannibal decides, allowing the faintest of smiles to curl his lips. Attempting to humanize him by working alongside him; it's positive and a step in the right direction, even if Will does lean in to hide against Hannibal's throat. He feels the smooth drag of skin and the heat of Will's lips and Hannibal closes his eyes only briefly, regaining his own composure. Then he merely hums his assent.

"It would be my honor to teach you. The act of making a meal is particularly mindful, able to keep one in the present moment despite the influence of other thoughts. If you like, you may assist me with dinner this evening."

Hannibal allows the moment to stretch on, long enough that Will likely doesn't expect him to comment on the dog. Will obtaining a dog has the unique capacity to go one of two ways: Either Will's focus will shift entirely to the dog, to use the canine as a new emotional crutch, or the capacity to tend to such a creature will give him the emotional security to handle the thoughts he's been repressing, ultimately bringing him closer to Hannibal. It's a gamble, and one that would undoubtedly reek and make any potential move that much more difficult, but Hannibal already knows he's made up his mind. He sighs softly, and his fingers press harder against Will's back before sliding up to his shoulder, less intimate in case Will wants to retreat.

"And... if you believe a dog would give you purpose, would... ease the transition perhaps, I fear I cannot deny you that."

Hannibal is warm and firm against him and Will has only just begun to know him in the physical sense. Through their tenuous friendship, it had always been Hannibal who touched him - furtively
almost, with a casual hand to his shoulder or arm. Now Will has been the one reaching out and grasping, making his need known between the two of them. He is aware that he's not alone in his carnal desire, a matching telltale hardness is against his own, but Hannibal, predictably, is a master of remaining mostly composed.

Hannibal likely sees the true reasoning behind the proposed cooking lessons, although he doesn't mention it (for which Will is all too thankful). Will has always held an appreciation for what the older man creates - a sensory experience, works of visual art with both rich and subtle flavors mixing delightfully on his palate. Being a simpler man, he's never required the pomp and circumstance, but Will did like dabbling in it nonetheless. Since coming here, their meals, understandably, have been much simpler, but still a higher caliber than what Will has been used to.

"Alright, this evening we can start," he murmurs against Hannibal's neck. It's almost a kiss.

Nothing is said about the prospect of a dog and Will notices disappointment slide in as he closes his eyes. And then the silence is broken and Will lets out a surprised, "Huh."

It's then he realizes just how much he has Hannibal wrapped around his finger. The realization should make him feel high on power, but it doesn't, not like earlier when he had been provoking Hannibal. So, Will decides to gift a piece of himself in return, a confession of sorts.

He whispers, "In the future, I'd like to hunt with you."

The 'again' is left off. It's a simple statement, but it's heavy with implication, with the promise of spilling blood together. They have not exactly spoken about their future, and even though Will can't see how it would come to be, he still has cravings that he's coming to both acknowledge and comprehend.

Hannibal has rarely questioned his resolve or his self control. Lesser, more base creatures allow themselves to give into their desires on a whim, refusing to look at the larger picture. Hannibal has not gotten where he is by being reckless, with a few notable (regrettable) exceptions. He doesn't regret carving Will's abdomen open, though the intent had not been to kill. He does regret attempting to do the same to his head. But in the grand scheme of things, Hannibal finds his mind and willpower more than adequate to control his own desires save for when he decides it's safe to indulge.

However... he is very quickly finding that Will Graham is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to his self control. He's a feast of scents and heat, the scent of his arousal far more intoxicating than anything else Hannibal can think of. The brush of his lips when he speaks is nearly flirtatious and Hannibal draws in a deep, slow breath to maintain a grip on his control. He'll instruct Will on the finer aspects of cooking, on proper care of ingredients and preparation. He's wondering idly if it's a good idea to allow Will access to the over-sharp kitchen knives when Will's voice hits a soft rasp and Hannibal stills, focusing closely on what has been said.

Immediately he finds himself very certain that this man will be the glorious death of him after all. The scent of Will's desire is intoxicating, but the heavy, whispered statement has Hannibal letting out a breath that isn't at all steady. He feels briefly euphoric, the memory of Will in the moonlight - bathed black with blood, the dominant focus in his eyes, the dance - sending a slash of a completely different desire through him.

"Will..." Hannibal breathes his name like a prayer, practically awestruck. They've not talked about that night; Hannibal hadn't been certain Will ever would. This only serves to tempt him more.

"Were I gifted countless years by your side, I still would not ever be able to predict you... Yes,"
Hannibal swallows, and his hand tightens on Will's shoulder. He intends it to be reassuring, but it likely misses the mark, sliding into need. It's a need he doesn't push, but for Hannibal, it's blatant enough.

"I will hunt with you. When we are able and well enough, nothing would please me more."

He's not prepared for how his name sounds falling from Hannibal's mouth -- astonished and breathy. He knows Hannibal hadn't been expecting the admission. Will hadn't been expecting to give it either, but it was something that he had thought about, dreamed about occasionally (too often, really). His eyes remain tightly shut and he resists thrusting his hips forward, the memory of that momentous night flashing in his mind and serving to excite him further. Facing the possibility of death, he'd felt so vividly alive as Hannibal and he took down their shared adversary, reduced to something primal and empowering, struggling for their survival under the light of the moon.

Will drinks in the reactions he evokes, not just the hand tightening on his shoulder, but in the utter increase in restraint that Hannibal displays to him. It's a marked difference from earlier as knowing that Hannibal is holding himself back is thrilling instead of frustrating. The reply given has Will's lips curling into a smile that he presses against the pinned man's neck. It's an accomplishment to remain unpredictable to Hannibal, one that he doesn't take lightly.

Being told yes, pleasing Hannibal... this time Will does rock forward and continues to do so, muffling whatever sounds threaten to come out by pushing his mouth against that warm neck. His chest heaves, his hand clutches harder at Hannibal's hip, it's been so long, he could probably--

Will breaks away, wincing slightly at the abrupt jerk he makes his body go through.

"Going to... Shower," Will gasps out, fully intending to take care of his not-so-little problem in his pants.

To hunt with Will from the first sighting would be a dream. Circumstances had thrown them together the first time. Hannibal had moved out of desperation, out of rage, a primal need to slaughter Dolarhyde for daring to touch Will. And Will had helped Hannibal for reasons Hannibal still hasn't been able to ascertain. But killing on impulse, while beautiful, is vastly different from hunting.

Hannibal allows himself the thought. Picking out a target, hunting together, watching Will peel off his mask like false skin and watching him kill with aching beauty once more. The desire thickens and Hannibal feels each and every beat of his heart as he looks down at Will, awed and transfixed by something he'd only hoped one day to see.

He forgets himself. For a moment, he very nearly allows his control to break. The urge to simply reach down to grip Will's hips is as strong as his desire to take back control, to know intimately what Will sounds like when he's choking on every breath and falling apart so beautifully. Will moves and Hannibal makes a soft sound that is part-admonishment and part Will's name, yet it's a few long seconds before he moves to stop his companion. The muffled sound of Will's pleasure against his throat is intoxicating. Even then, it's the sharp lance of pain that cuts through him when he braces himself to shift back that reminds him of his own rules.

They break apart almost immediately, Hannibal's breathing slower, but deeper and Will's shallow with desire. He looks gorgeous, and Hannibal sets his jaw solidly as a reminder to stay precisely where he is. He's let Will rile him up, let him get too close again, and the desire to drag him closer and claim him is almost suffocating.
But he won't. If nothing else, his wounds won't allow him, and Hannibal considers sparing Dolarhyde's memory a thankful note before the concept proves too irritating. He merely makes a point to take a few slow, deep breaths (as much as his wounds will allow, anyway) and then nods.

"I believe that would be a good idea. Be cautious of your injuries." Another breath, slightly more in control this time. "I will make fresh coffee for when you're through, and if you wish to speak at that point, you know where to find me."

Panting and on watery legs, Will makes his escape from the kitchen. He closes the bathroom door and stares at himself in the mirror. His face bears many scars now - the freshest on the back of his cheek from the Dragon, along the side of his face from Cordell's scalpel and then Hannibal's own signature on his forehead from the saw.

With a confused sigh, his good arm pulls off the soft cotton t-shirt and he now gets a look at the smile on his abdomen - clearly the most distinguishable mark on his body. Will runs a finger along the scar and shivers.

In the shower, forehead against the cool tile, he thinks of Hannibal - his scent, of the hand that gripped his hair, the feel of mutual arousal, Hannibal's neck against his lips... His mind shifts to the two of them standing side by side, watchful eyes on their selected prey, a chase, the splash of blood, life draining -- when he comes, it's with a sudden sharp gasp, hand jerking away almost violently as if in surprise. It takes Will more than a few minutes to come back to himself, the fantasy still lingering, refusing to completely fade. He washes himself off in a daze, but feels wholly better than he has in a long time.

Redressed, he returns to the kitchen, returns to Hannibal, running a hand through damp curls as he makes to sit at the table once more.

The sound of the shower starting is almost as tempting as the look on Will's face had been as he'd nearly stumbled from the room. The knowledge that Will is trapped alongside him in this is a heady sensation and one that makes Hannibal question his own freedom to act. He considers following suit, giving into the desire Will has stoked within him. It's difficult to deny himself, but with Will's presence no longer lingering directly in front of him and staining his control freely, Hannibal is able to rationalize the moment away. It makes it no easier, but he knows he has only so much he can do with his current strength and there are other matters to attend to.

Hannibal busies himself. He unfolds the cloth he'd been using to clean the counters and returns to finish the task, silently building his control back up even though he has no doubt that the memory of Will's closeness, his skin, and the press of his hips will haunt him in the evenings, lascivious and cruel. Hannibal could listen in, but he does his best not to, choosing to allow Will true privacy. Instead he busies himself with minor chores and on pre-washing the vegetables he intends to use later that evening. It isn't until the sound of the water cutting off in the shower that Hannibal stands to walk to the carafe. It's nowhere near the quality of the one he'd owned previously, but it's significantly better than the abysmal machines Will had become accustomed to (when he wasn't drinking instant coffee anyway).

By the time Will returns, the mood has settled. It's not gone; Hannibal still feels the low simmer of something between them but the distance helps. Will's scent - and all that entails - does not. He pointedly doesn't mention it any more than he mentions how close they had come to overstepping boundaries. Hannibal merely walks Will's coffee to the table, already prepared the way he prefers.

"If you would allow me later this evening, I'd like to check on your shoulder. Your jaw as well,
though that does seem to be healing well. If you were serious about making this place your own, I must be convinced you have the strength to care for whatever you bring inside." A dog. Hannibal isn't pleased at the thought; he can think of little he wants less, but he is not unreasonable and he'd suspected that this might be a concession he'd one day have to make.

The composed image of Hannibal awaits him, but Will can tell that Hannibal is still reeling slightly from their earlier interaction. Not enough time had passed for Hannibal's armor to fully assemble. Fresh coffee is brought to him and Will takes it gratefully, murmuring an almost shy thank you. He hasn't fully grasped what and who were involved in his shower orgasm. He's fairly certain he hadn't been overly loud, but he had got lost in his mind. Either way, Hannibal's face gives away nothing and Will is also grateful for this.

"That's reasonable," Will agrees.

Wound care is unfortunately a part of the norm. From Hannibal's previous estimates, Will's stab wounds are healing on time. In a few weeks he should be back to his full range of motion in his shoulder. He takes a sip, humming a content appreciation out at the coffee. He can't help but think about the prospect of acquiring a dog, despite knowing that Hannibal is doing it completely for him. That fact fills him with an expansive warmth that he wants to do something about.

"I haven't been much help since coming here," Will starts, eyes focused on his coffee. "I'd like to change that. I'm surely just as capable as you, maybe more so depending on the task." He shifts in his seat a little guilty. "I know you pride yourself in being a gracious host, but I don't think it's good for either of us for you to be doing everything... And I should have asked much sooner than this, but how are your injuries? Do you need help at all? I know that isn't your forte, but humor me."

Will makes a point to look up at Hannibal, emphasizing that his offer to help is genuine. This is the first time that he has both let himself and shown care. The realization should be disconcerting, but somehow isn't.

The thanks earns Will a small smile, perhaps the faintest of reminders that proper manners are a boon, but it's a point Hannibal doesn't drive home. He merely waits until he's certain Will has no protests over the flavor and then turns to walk his own mug over. He seats himself across from Will, the table infuriatingly small but Hannibal prefers it for moments like these, where conversation has dipped into domesticity and intimacy. It doesn't escape his notice that Will understands his meaning, quick to allow Hannibal access to his wounds. But what does come as a surprise is the thread of nerves he suddenly makes out.

Hannibal looks at Will curiously, aware Will is working himself up into something and so Hannibal makes a point to not speak lest he cut him off. In the end he's surprised, and he makes no effort to hide that. Will, as always, is a constant surprise. He regards his companion curiously as he lifts his cup to his lips, silently thoughtful over just how much to say.

The full truth would be a ridiculous notion, for while Will has claimed to not want to leave, that doesn't mean he is entirely within his right mind. Hannibal has seen the benefits of always keeping the underbelly guarded, and yet as he looks at Will, he cannot immediately bring himself to believe that Will is searching for weakness. He appears genuine. And perhaps that makes him more dangerous than before.

Because Hannibal believes him, and he knows well that he can't hope to foster an open line of communication with this man if the communication is centered only around one of their needs. So while he's cautious as he regards Will, some of the facade starts to crumble away. Oh, what this man
"I can't fault you that belief. It would benefit you to take on small tasks; perhaps in doing so, you will begin to feel more centered. More involved in the current situation. I would like to keep movement of your arm minimal but I believe you're healed enough to begin light exercise. I'll decide once I've checked it later." Hannibal sighs, and that's the only sign that his focus changes, that he's ready to answer Will's real question.

"As for my own healing, I've not seen fit to concern you with it. It is... improving. A faster recovery than most, yet not sufficient. If you are sincere in your desire to assist, then... yes, it would be beneficial. But it is not something you need to concern yourself with."

"I may not need to, but I want to," Will replies hastily, knowing that he may lose his nerve to answer truthfully if he doesn't.

How many pieces of truth has the other man gleaned from him over the course of their relationship? Some of his own doing, from his own mouth, but a great deal Hannibal unearthed before Will ever could. Those observant senses had taken him in and picked him apart with a keen and penetrating interest. He's always been uncomfortable with the amount of attention Hannibal directed his way, but it's also very flattering. Will's only human after all and now that it's him that's reaching out, that's hungering to know the other man more closely, he feels off balance.

He can tell that Hannibal is taken back from his admitted concern. Wrapping his hands around the mug for tactile comfort, Will squints his eyes as he struggles with the next piece of dialogue.

"Please let me," his voice is hesitant, words clipped. "It's not easy for me to admit..." He stops and changes directions. "To ask."

Hannibal's lingering protests gather around him slowly as he considers Will's sincerity. It's still dangerous to assume Will is entirely without claws and teeth, yet Hannibal prefers him that way. Impulsive, unpredictable, a bastion of emotion and darkness that a thousand cultures and artists couldn't hope to portray accurately. The only question at this point is why Will wishes to help, if it's due to a misplaced sense of guilt or if he truly wants to. Hannibal is beginning to suspect the former until Will's hesitation shows clearly in the way he trails off and seems to curl within himself. A fear of rejection, perhaps, or a simple disbelief that he genuinely cares enough to want to help.

Just like that, Hannibal's concerns fade. The tight grip he's maintained upon his own control eases slightly and the solid line of his shoulders relaxes marginally. The look he sends Will is perhaps most telling, however. It's softer, the expression of a man realizing just how fortunate he is. Hannibal concedes with the barest duck of his head, a nod to Will's favor.

"I am not so cruel as to deny you when you're being sincere, Will, and I am not so selfless as to turn away assistance." Hannibal rolls his shoulders, a silent test, and he's rewarded with a low ache that is blessedly muted seeing as he's seated.

"I erroneously believed that it would trouble your mind less were I to simply not mention my own injuries. And," Hannibal adds, as a reluctant afterthought, "I am not without my pride. Many would argue I have far too much."

They'd be wrong, of course, but Hannibal knows he's a prideful man.

There's pride, yes, but also Hannibal's instinct to distrust and his strong sense of self-preservation to
contend with. It definitely rivals Will's own. They had both been reckless in their own ways, while together and alone, and now they're here together, learning to trust each other with the guises nonexistent - at least Will hopes this is the case. The thought of Hannibal playing with him again, setting him up to fall spectacularly, is too devastating to face, so Will doesn't often let himself think on it. Instead, he holds onto his little shred of hope for a different outcome this time.

"We both have a bad track record for being trustworthy," Will comments, a dark sort of amusement on his features. "But we need to anyway. It's an intriguing dilemma." He takes a sip of his coffee before adding. "I'll say this, I can't survive another game with you. No duplicity, Hannibal. No going behind my back. Can you agree to that?"

He's never given his heart to Hannibal, never offered it, but Will understands the longing to, he can identify it even among the danger and frustration. He's not ready to, not right now, but he's aware, despite the struggles, of where things are likely headed.

To be transparent requires a certain level of trust that neither of them currently possess, yet it appears that the desire is a shared one. Hannibal lifts his chin, thoughtful as he contemplates Will's request without showing the progression of his thoughts. They both have reason to distrust each other. Both of them have attempted to kill the other (though Hannibal silently suspects Will's endeavors had always been far more driven than his own) but more than that, the both of them have laid intricate groundwork for betrayal.

Hannibal still hasn't forgotten the intricate web Will had woven, how neatly he'd wedged his claws into Hannibal's skin without him knowing, how he'd courted the concept of running away together so expertly that he'd lost sight of where the farce ended and reality had begun. The bitterness around the memory is still sharp, but Hannibal knows he has his own betrayals to admit to just the same. The encephalitis had been cruel. It's one reason Hannibal had insisted upon proper antibiotics immediately following their Fall.

But despite his hesitance and the thread of doubt twisting beneath the surface, he has to respect Will for his boldness. And secretly he finds himself doubting that this is another game. If it is, if this is another attempt at taking his life or his freedom, Hannibal silently relents. He looks at Will and decides that if Will can fool him so beautifully again, perhaps he deserves the outcome he so wishes. Finally, after a pause long enough to border on uncomfortable, Hannibal nods.

"You have my word. I cannot guarantee that I will be forthcoming every waking moment, just as I would not ask you to lay all your secrets bare for me. But you have my word that I have no desire to trick you. Nor will I. You are so much more than you were, Will," Hannibal adds, his voice holding a hint of reverence as well as a trace of something uncomfortably close to regret. "If we are to continue and welcome the future, whatever that may bring, it will be with you as my equal. No less."

It's painful how intimate the admission is. Emotionally, he's baring his throat and it is a risk, but one he's willing to take.

"I would ask the same courtesy in return. While I would not ask you to part with your secrets - they're yours and yours alone unless you feel comfortable sharing - you have shown... remarkable talent in properly navigating my radar." In fooling him. In putting on false smiles and preparing the knife to lodge in his back. Hannibal chooses to phrase it less accusatory.

"No duplicity, Will."

Despite how he laid it out, Will knows it's no easy request. The silence that fills the room
demonstrates Hannibal's careful consideration of his words. Will's hands once again enclose around the mug, gripping tightly to the concrete object, seeking the permanence of it. When he finally receives a response, Will lets out a shaky breath. If Hannibal is playing a game, he'd of course deny it now and pledge to be forthcoming... but this is the same man, that after Will's cold rejection, abandoned his very freedom so that Will would always know where to find him. Against his possible better judgement, Will does believe Hannibal Lecter in this.

The concept and invitation of being equals has Will's eyebrows furrowing before he smooths out his face. His masks were intricate and skilled before, mostly out of a necessity to continue his ruse or out of seeking protection. However, since their bloody embrace, he hasn't bothered much with hiding his expressions.

Granted, until this past week, he'd been mostly despondent and distant. Even though Will is taken back by Hannibal's words, the significance doesn't escape him. They have never been equals, but they both have been each other's prey. Will knows that Hannibal is likely still smarting from his deception, not at all used to having the wool pulled over his eyes (for a change).

Hannibal's next statement affirms that - the admittance of Will's cleverness paired with Hannibal's own inconvenient blind spot. Will has nothing to say about the past right now; it's their present and future he's concerned about.

"No duplicity," he agrees firmly and without thought, his hand reaches across the small table for Hannibal's own - a familiar gesture he's done frequently, but for his wife - and when his mind catches up to the action, he blinks at his hand that has stopped mid-journey.

It's a promise, and Hannibal inwardly muses over how much stock he can put in a promise like that, but he decides that in this, Will is likely being truthful. And if he's not, well... Hannibal will be the fool, but he'll deal with a future issue when it happens, not at this precise moment. No, what he focuses on more than anything is the way Will makes to reach across the table. Hannibal merely watches his hand, darting a quick look between it and Will's expression - which seems to freeze when he realizes what he's doing. It's oddly charming even though Hannibal briefly suspects there's more to Will's look of uncertainty. Even so, with Will's promise lingering in his mind, Hannibal nods and then reaches across the table.

Will's hand is frozen mid-way, but Hannibal completes the distance, curling his fingers around Will's hand to give it a small squeeze, a physical promise, perhaps, to enforce what they've been talking about. No duplicity. Perhaps small secrets, like not forcing Will to spill his thoughts and not admitting just how irritating Hannibal finds his own weakness, but no plans or deception that the other is unaware of. Hannibal considers the limits of the agreement and as he presses his thumb gently to the top of Will's knuckles, he does remember one thing that perhaps might be pertinent in this.

"If that's the case, I should inform you I've been making trips to town here and there. I'd not call that a deception; supplies are necessary. But I don't believe I informed you of that fact and it does have a small risk attached to it. I have, of course, been disguised. I simply felt it better to let you rest than to worry you needlessly."

Before Will can withdraw his hand, Hannibal chooses to perhaps take pity on him and reaches out, giving him a reassuring squeeze. Will frowns, licks his lips in a nervous tic and then diverts his gaze. It's an uncomplicated act of comfort, but coming from Hannibal - initiated by himself - it's completely bizarre.
Still, Will doesn't pull away. He likes the feel of Hannibal's hand on his own, the warmth of his skin, the subtle brush of a thumb. He wants to open his mouth and tell the other man that he wouldn't mind these types of touches, wants them on occasion especially if Hannibal chooses to give them, but he needs more time to sit with those realizations. Yes, he misses the familiarity of their early days when Hannibal touched him freely.

He doesn't have to ponder for too long before Hannibal speaks again, bringing what Will had assumed was happening to light. It made perfect sense, supplies did not replenish themselves and Chiyoh had been scarce.

"Thanks for telling me," Will mumbles, his focus fixing on their connection in the middle of the table, mind suddenly shifting. He pulls his hand out from underneath to clasp at Hannibal's and turn it over, exposing his wrist and forearm. Exposing another scar, created by Matthew, but from his own direction, a display of his own premature design.

Will dares to catch Hannibal's eyes as the tips of his index and middle finger caress up the scar in a tender stroke.

There's a small change in Will's eyes, downcast as they are, when his focus changes. Hannibal watches it curiously, enjoying the warm press of Will's hand almost as much as the rapid-fire emotions that flicker just under Will's surface. He merely watches, silently allowing them as they're Will, whatever they wind up being. Yet when Will pulls away and shifts, re-adjusting the clasp of their hands, Hannibal tips his head curiously but doesn't fight. His sleeves are carefully rolled up from where he'd washed the dishes after breakfast that morning, and he's aware of the long white scars painfully visible.

Once perhaps Hannibal had minded them. Now he doesn't. While he's carefully worked at minimizing the scarring to is abdomen and what little of his shoulders he can reach, as well as the old scars across his face, he's left those along his forearms and wrists alone. Will's marks, though not by his hand. The first true act of the man Will would one day become; to quiet Will's proclamation in the scars had seemed akin to defacing a place of worship. By times they ache, and the scar tissue has taken long years to soften enough to give him back a full range of motion, but Hannibal admires them still.

Apparently Will does too. Hannibal watches Will's fingers, and then glances up and is honestly surprised to find Will meeting his eyes. It's fleeting but it feels very intentional. Residual heat from before twists through him, not nearly as difficult as before, but it's low and simmering and it makes Will's touch feel hypersensitive against his skin. Hannibal shifts ever so slightly and allows his arm to rest on the table, bending his wrist just enough to allow the scar to stand out even harsher against his skin.

"There is a certain joy in seeing your handiwork, is there not?" Hannibal asks softly, pleased, "Perhaps not by your hand directly, but with your intent laced into every cut. Do you enjoy them?" Hannibal lifts his other arm up and offers Will the sight of the scar's twin on the inside of his other arm.

To most people, scars are a blemish, something unsightly that they ought to hide or try to minimize. Before Hannibal, Will didn't have strong feelings on the topic, didn't even think much of the on them. After Hannibal, the scars mean much to him. He's seen many around him not escape being marred by Hannibal in one way or another. It's a long list... Abigail, Beverly, Margot, Mason, Alana, Jack, Miriam, Chilton, him. All changed, all with scars that Hannibal orchestrated one way or another. Will's own scars are also evidence of fantastical events that would hardly seem true if he
were to retell them.

His life used to be so small within his rustic home in Wolf Trap with his dogs, living in solitude and teaching. Then the Minnesota Shrike case popped up, Jack Crawford came knocking, and along with Jack came the fateful introduction to one Hannibal Lecter and down the rabbit hole he tumbled. He had tried to seek the simplicity again with Molly and Walter, to create a quiet existence. He'd succeeded in some aspects, too. It might not have been exciting, but there was a peacefulness to it, to just being a husband and step-father, nothing more, nothing less.

When his fingers reach the end, they run back down the path. It's the most attention and reverence he's paid to the scars. How different his life would be if Matthew Brown had succeeded... At the inquiry on whether he enjoys them, Will sighs.

"More than I want to admit," he murmurs, a pang of some yearning rising up. When the other arm is lifted for him to look at, Will does so, shuddering, fingers itching to touch.

Perhaps Will has not directly lain scars across Hannibal's skin in the way Hannibal had in carving the grin across Will's abdomen and the gash across his forehead, but Will has coerced so many people to act for him that the existence of Hannibal's scars is almost more satisfying. Once, he had been disgusted at the idea of Matthew Brown marring his skin, of the Verger brand across his back, of Dolarhyde's bullet tearing through him. Yet a simple shift in focus - some had taken days, others years - had been all it had taken to change Hannibal's view of each scar. Each one had been given to him by a different man, each assuming that by doing so they would either kill him or mark him permanently. But of course, though it may have been their hands, it had not been their idea. No, at the root of it all, all of Hannibal's brushes with death, all the deadly dances, it has always been Will. Will's impulse, or those acting as a direct result of his influence.

Hannibal watches the reverence as Will strokes the scar and he closes his eyes for a moment, enjoying the heightened sensation and the rougher drag of Will's work-worn hands. Hannibal breathes softly and when he opens his eyes again, his gaze is fond, perhaps reflecting Will's own reverence.

"You have no need to feel shame in admiring your work," Hannibal says simply, his voice low, almost coaxing. And, seeing the way Will's attention has slid to his other arm, Hannibal takes a moment to ease his chair closer and then carefully leans over. He braces his other arm on the top of the table, close enough that Will can touch if he so wishes.

"Be leery of your other arm; don't over-extend," Hannibal cautions, but his tone eases from clinical back to conversational. "You have left your mark upon me, in far more ways than you know. This one is physical, one you can touch. It's natural to enjoy the fruits of your labor, Will. Perhaps you didn't wield the blade, but then... it is likely just as well. You would have ensured the job had finished."

Will watches Hannibal close his eyes briefly and he wonders what's going on inside that mind. He could ask, but he won't. He won't pry. Not yet, at least. He's aware that there will come a time where he converses much more freely with Hannibal. He's already moving to it, slowly becoming that person, shedding his reservations little by little. It takes effort to remain on this course, even as captivated he is with caressing his scar on Hannibal, Will still fights against the desire to shut this moment down and escape to his room. There is a staggering amount of intimacy in their sharing right now and it's both unsettling and alluring.

Hannibal's words are honeyed, thick and sweet, inviting him to touch as the other forearm is bared in
offering and laid down across the table. He can tell Hannibal approves of his rapt attention and he feels a tingle of delight from it. As much as Will would like touch both scars at the same time, he listens to the medical advice. His hand moves to the other wrist, a sharp inhale as he pays the same respect to the scars there, fingers trailing along the length slowly.

"Beautiful and grisly," Will says finally, voice hushed, but with a hint of emotion being held back. "For what it's worth... I'm glad that the job wasn't finished."

It's certainly a detestable thing to admit, how much pain and destruction followed because of Hannibal's involvement? How many lives were significantly altered - and ended - due to the man sitting across from the table? Countless, his included. It's a heavy realization, one that causes him to lay his head down on the table, uninjured cheek pressed against the surface. His hand stills, fingers wrapping around Hannibal's wrist and grasping lightly.

Hannibal doesn't need to ask Will the reason behind the suddenly heaviness to his shoulders. Will's fingers against the other scar are as tempting as the first had been, but Will's admission makes it very clear where his mind is. Hannibal doesn't smile; he doesn't have to. Instead he watches the way Will seems to curl in on himself, watches the way Will sets his head down on the table and he stays smartly silent, allowing Will the gravity of his statement in peace until he looks like he can handle the admission easier. Hannibal knows, after all, just what Will is saying. He isn't just saying he's glad Hannibal is still alive. He's admitted to accepting Hannibal's actions since. Perhaps he doesn't approve, but in some way he's relieved and that realization can't be a simple one.

Slowly, Hannibal slides his other hand over, the one without Will's fingers wrapped around it, and he strokes the length of Will's knuckles with a soft touch, half-acceptance and half-reassurance. He knows this particular admission will linger in Will's mind.

"I know," he says simply, when he feels Will can handle the words and the meaning behind them. "I would ask that you stay with me, Will. Tempting as I'm sure it is to allow yourself to travel through your memories and alternative outcomes, I would prefer that you remain with me."

Slowly, Hannibal shifts his wrist, bending it back enough that the scar under Will's hand pales, its gnarled edges pressing insistently against Will's palm.

"These were not the only marks you left upon me and they will not be the last. It is acceptable pride to admire your own work. I have, though my glimpses of your parting gift have been fleeting." Hannibal's only seen Will's scar a handful of time and in each, it has been necessary only to further treat his shoulder. Perhaps one day he will be able to properly admire his handiwork, to admire his personal mark upon Will's skin.

Hannibal is touching him again, but only just, his other hand coming to lay on top and fingers brushing across his knuckles. Will sighs, the contact welcomed, the words following once more taking him back to the night he killed Randall Tier, when he was threatening to fade. *(Stay with me... Where else would I go?)* Now Will has no options, Hannibal and he only have each other, their old lives but ashes behind them. Even *if* he were to leave, he can't envision himself returning to anything remotely similar to what he had before. Would his companion allow such a thing to stand? Will has never asked about news on whether or not they're thought to be alive or lost to the sea. He not sure if he wants to know.

"I'm with you," Will murmurs, words barely audible, but it's more for himself than for Hannibal. He *is* with Hannibal, although not in the fullest sense of the word. Not yet. When Will does attempt to work through things, trying to accept some fundamental truth about their situation or himself, there
still remains multiple angles and facets waiting to catch him off guard. This is one of those times.

At the mention of Hannibal not being done acquiring marks from Will, he wonders if he means internally or externally and it's an unsettling thought. When the other man switches to his scar, it reels Will back in some and his other hand comes to rest protectively over his stomach. He's not ready to remove his shirt for that reason alone, for Hannibal's eyes to behold, or for his hands to possibly touch--

"When do we start dinner?"

Will is done.

Interesting. Not unexpected of course, but interesting. Hannibal silently files away Will's return to the present upon the mention of his scar. It's a sensitive subject of course, even for Hannibal, though he's had many years to think on it, to recreate the moment, and to admit to himself that his actions had been particularly brutal as Will had fully betrayed his trust. It's something he's leery over even now, a wound that is still silent festering within, but it's not a topic to speak about right now. Later, one day, perhaps they will be able to talk candidly about that evening, about the cut of the fillet knife and the way Hannibal had embraced Will as his blood had run cold with the shock of injury. But that day is not that morning, with coffee still in place and the two of them slowly finding their footing.

Hannibal merely allows Will his change in topic and braces himself carefully before drawing his arms back. He's not hiding his own discomfort quite so much though he has to make a concentrated effort to remind himself to be more forthcoming about his own limitations. He goes silent only long enough to sip from his coffee and then glances over at the digital clock upon the stove. He'd made an effort to keep analog clocks from the walls.

"We have little need to start just yet but if you'd like to, perhaps we can dine earlier this evening. Have you any particular cravings?" Hannibal adds, magnanimously, because now that Will is taking an interest in his position here, he wants to extend the control to him as well.

Hannibal pulls his hands away, their point of connection breaking and Will feels a sting of disappointment. It's his doing, so he can't fault Hannibal on it. He's the one that closed the door on their intimate conversion, turning it to a topic of practicality and Hannibal responded in kind. Spurned, his own arm retreats from the surface of the table.

Will is aware how he looks - like a despondent child laying his head down - so he corrects it and straightens himself back up into a sitting position. He runs a hand through now mostly dry curls, regarding Hannibal with a look of interest. He recognizes the question as an invitation of inclusion in deciding their meal, the first one of its kind.

"Soup. Or stew?" It's comfort food he wants, nothing refined or fancy, but Will doesn't seek to impress Hannibal in this, not now anyway. "If we have the ingredients to do such a recipe, of course." He has no idea what the kitchen and pantry hold.

"Of course. Relatively simple to make, and easily something that will be able to serve for more than a single meal if you so wish." It's a good suggestion. While it is involved and requires watching, it's still simple as far as recipes go. There's a fair bit of careful prep to go into it, but once that's finished, it's merely a matter of allowing either to cook. Hannibal considers the ingredients he's brought into the house and decides a stew is possible.
"I would ask your assistance in a few hours, in that case."

Chapter End Notes

Merry's tumblr!
Dapperscript's tumblr!
Comments/chats always welcome! :]


"You will select a word," Hannibal instructs quietly, as this is non-negotiable. He feels somewhat breathless with this new revelation, but not so free that he is willing to risk Will's safety. "Something out of the ordinary that will never come up in conversation between us unbidden. Something you will remember. Once you have selected it, say it out loud." No teacups, no time, no Abigail.

Chapter Notes

And later that day...

The rest of the morning passes with relative ease. Bit by bit he and Will finish their coffee, and while Hannibal gingerly stands to consult the fridge and begin to season and prepare the meat for that evening, he dismisses Will with a promise to fetch him later. The meat itself is simply beef and Hannibal spares a thought to a potential future where his trips to the butcher will be halved by providing the meat on his own, but that particular fantasy fades with uncertainty he doesn't allow himself to linger on just yet. Will wants to hunt, but that doesn't mean Will wants the rest. He listens to Will - who has since retreated to his room - on occasion, but otherwise allows him to rest. He doesn't get Will until the meat has had time to marinate. Ideally it would be overnight, but seeing as they will likely be dining late in the evening, as per usual, there is time for that. Hannibal sets out what they will need for their endeavor, readying cutting boards and checking the edges on the kitchen knives. There are shallots for the sauce and mushrooms, onions, and carrots that Hannibal intends to put Will in charge of. When the hour is right, he merely makes his way up to Will's room to knock on his door - something he has insisted on to instill a comfortable sense of privacy when Will so needs it.

"Will? If you would like to assist me still, we can get started."

Will is pleased that his suggestion is acceptable and approved - not that he believed Hannibal would
shoot his idea down outright, but he had been looking for any signs of disdain, mild or otherwise, but thankfully there were none. They finish their coffee with no further conversation following and Will excuses himself, retreating to the safety of his bedroom. A lot has transpired between them and the day isn't nearly over.

Will chooses to lay down on his back, arms relaxed by his side, eyes closing and he wades into the stream. He misses fishing, the calm, crispness of nature and the outdoors. Will has been cooped up, also by his own doing, peeved from his frustration. This morning had been a fine example of that, tainting the memory of Molly by using her as a jab at Hannibal. He hopes he can refrain from sullying her in the future - it's not what she deserves. There had also been the thrum of arousal in each of them, obvious when Will had all but pinned Hannibal to the counter. *Christ.* He'd been turned on to the point where he'd needed to take a shower afterward... It hadn't ended there even, no. Perhaps what was the cherry on top had been the intimate scar touching. Will pushes it all out of his mind and allows himself this reprieve of peace. He inhales the clean and cool air into his lungs and enjoys the swirl of water moving around his feet. His mouth quirks into a smile when Abigail's presence joins him.

"Hello," Will says, glancing down to her. In here, all is right and Abigail is alive and happy.

He loses himself, but a knock jolts his reverie and he blinks his eyes open. It only takes a moment for him to regain his senses and hear Hannibal.

Will sits up, rubbing his eyes and answers, "Yeah, I'll be there in a few minutes."

The sound of retreating footsteps are heard as he climbs out of bed and, as if preparing himself for what's coming next, he faces himself in the mirror and gives himself a nod. When he makes it back to the kitchen, Will feels more at ease, refreshed, his mental imaginings having helped reset him.

"I'll try to be decently teachable," he jokes as he goes to over to the sink and washes his hands.

The first thing that is immediately apparent to Hannibal once Will shows himself again in the kitchen is that the tight line of his shoulders has eased. There's an easiness about him, shown in the light joke with the hint of something that is nearly a smile. Hannibal regards it curiously, pleased yet uncertain as to what the cause had been. Will has routinely retreated to his space in weeks prior, and any intrusion had been viewed as something akin to a personal affront. Hannibal had needed to tread clinically and carefully, had needed to ignore the heavy looks of distaste and suspicion and merely complete his tasks and leave. This... is something else entirely. Will looks far healthier and far more content; it gentles the mood between them almost immediately.

Hannibal spares him a small smile and crosses over to hand Will an apron, identical to the one he's already wearing.

"I'm certain you won't disappoint. If you're willing, you can handle the shallots, red onion, and portobello mushrooms while I monitor the meat."

Hannibal glances over to where he's already set up the beef, cubed and marinating in red wine, with thickly sliced bacon lining the bottom of a deep frying pan. The juices from the meat are far more important than the bacon itself.

Stepping over once more, Hannibal slides one of the kitchen knives from its place on the counter and, seemingly without a thought to the trust he's placing in Will's hands at that moment, he flips the blade over into his own palm and then holds it out to Will, handle first.
"I would ask that you be exceedingly careful. Your arm is likely not steady just yet and I sharpened this myself. I would not see you injured further. You need only focus on mincing the shallots and slicing the mushrooms. The red onions need only be peeled. Which hand do you feel more confident in, holding the knife? I would recommend you use your right to simply brace, but the knife is sharp."

As a knife is handed to him, Will thinks back to the only other time they had cooked together. Hannibal had prepared lomo saltado, not courtesy of any contributions from Freddie Lounds, however. In Hannibal's kitchen he had glimpsed those prolific scars for the first time as well. Will blinks a few times, refocusing, and takes the knife in his left hand.

"I'm not sure how nice the vegetables will look, but I'll try to not maim them horribly," Will responds, going over to the section of counter space that has said vegetables waiting alongside a cutting board. He does as instructed, right hand utilized as a brace and begins to slice the mushrooms. It's slow going and takes more effort than he'd like as it's not his dominant hand. The pieces are not even, but Will persists, determined to not give up on this task.

Because he can ask, he does.

"Who would you eat next if you had your way?" The topic of cannibalism hasn't been addressed between them for quite some time, there was really no need when they were discussing the Dragon. Will is now curious of Hannibal's answer.

Hannibal doesn't move on to handle the meat just yet, his focus entirely upon Will moving to the counter. His care is subtle, not overbearing, but he doesn't move from his position as Will begins to cut. Each movement is careful and slow but Hannibal prefers it that way, taking silent pride in the fact that Will is working as slowly as he is. The beef is tenderizing slowly, the alcohol breaking down the tighter fibers of the meat, and Hannibal can leave it until Will has finished. Will, as always, is Hannibal's top priority.

Even so, he's not anticipating the question that is voiced. Hannibal doesn't freeze - he hardly pauses for more than a second - but he does send Will a curious look, surprise evident but not unwelcome in his eyes.

"An interesting question, considering the circumstances." Still, he considers Will's question as he walks over, eyeing the angle of Will's hand upon the blade. Quick glances judge the safety of Will's other hand and, while perhaps some might view it as more forward than would be welcome, Hannibal reaches over with one hand to steady Will's arm, cutting back on the mild sway of the blade.

"Set the tip of the knife upon the board and use it to ground every movement," he instructs, idle, and then moves on, tone lower. "I am assuming you're asking who would I choose to eat were it entirely feasible and were it impossible to get caught. A thought experiment." Hannibal hardly needs to think. He eyes the mushrooms as Will works.

"Alana Bloom does come to mind. But when it comes to her, it's an inevitability rather than a fantasy. Jack Crawford is another. Though I must admit, Miss Lounds - given her articles, and her coverage of my story for the past three years - has thoughtfully put herself in my radar. Perhaps one day."

Will tenses marginally as he feels Hannibal coming up behind him and entering his personal space. A stabilizing hand holds onto his arm and Will relaxes, finding enjoyment in the the attention. He heeds
the instruction given to him, making the necessary adjustments. Will's next cuts come out more
controlled, mushrooms falling into more even pieces and he feels a flash of accomplishment.

_Inevitability_... Alana Bloom dying is something Will does not want. She has hurt him, yes, doubted
him, pointed an accusatory finger at him (more than once), but none of it was done out of malice. Of
course Hannibal has more reason to want her death than he. She's gone from peer to friend, from a
romantic partner to a conspirator in his capture and then lastly became his jailer. Jack is another
individual Will would be happier left alone; although perhaps it would be a mercy to put down Jack.
On the other hand, Freddie is a good candidate. Oh, he's come a long way to be weighing the
potential candidates out.

"And if I didn't want Alana's death to be inevitable, what then?" Will asks, placing the knife down
on the cutting board and looking to Hannibal, one eyebrow raised slightly.

"Then I would advise you to either challenge your loyalty to her or look the other way," Hannibal
answers immediately. He's not cruel with it, but his tone is firm. To anyone else, the topic would be
closed, but Hannibal has known Will long enough to know there is a very real possibility for Will to
challenge this stance. Misguided as Will's loyalty is, Hannibal is aware of his softness for Alana even
now. It's a loyalty that would be admirable if directed elsewhere, but it threatens to do nothing but
irritate while aimed at Alana Bloom.

Hannibal merely lifts his chin, a silent bid for control of the situation in nothing but body language.
Even as Will turns enough to look at him - something that would have made anyone else take a step
back to find their personal bubble once more - Hannibal doesn't draw back. He merely looks down at
Will in silence, though he does drop his hand away from Will's arm.

"I don't believe you were there at the time, Will, but I gave her a choice. She made the wrong one,
and she began to live on time I allow her. I believe three years of institutionalization emboldened her,
enough that on multiple occasions, she proved herself to be... rude." There are many words, so many
flowing adjectives that Hannibal could use to describe Dr. Alana Bloom, but that one fits best. And
Will knows why. "I would not be so crass as to assume your involvement. But I do keep my
promises, Will."

It's not the answer he wants to hear and Will clenches his jaw, despite the pain that flares up. It's not
so much as Alana _herself_, although he still has some lingering feelings, but Alana has a _family_ now, a
son _and_ that resonates with Will deeply. He may be slightly bitter that Margot and her got to have
their happy ending while he was denied his, but he doesn't want theirs to end, does he?

"We both know I've been rude. One could say I've been exceptionally rude these past few weeks,"
Will points out. It's a weak argument, he knows this, but it's what comes out first. He's not sure he
wants to voice the real reason, to show Hannibal his attachment to such ideals such as family -
something he still longs for.

Will licks his lips, considering his options. Does he have sway and influence in such a thing? _Could_
his ever hope to?

"Hannibal," Will says quietly, desperation evident in his voice. "She has a _son_, a _family_... Would it
truly be such an inconceivable thing to break a promise? For _me_?"

And now it's out, his plea, not subtle in the least. He feels nervous, lifting his left hand to place over
over Hannibal's heart.
Alana is a delicate subject, perhaps one that should have been saved for far later, but the bitterness of her rule and her churlish, vindictive flaunt of power had marked her. True, Hannibal had taken her life that night, a promise in nothing but words and calm ferocity. He wonders for a moment if Alana and her family remain, or if they were smart enough to flee upon his escape. Such a sharp woman, she'd likely fled. But there's nowhere she can go; Hannibal is an exceptionally patient man, and he has quite a lot to speak with her about.

Will's disappointment in Hannibal's answer leaves a true bitterness on the air between them, but Hannibal doesn't wish to compromise on this particular topic. Will's sentiment aside, Hannibal's ire goes beyond simple vindictiveness. But that said, watching the way Will's expression tightens is a mixed blessing. He truly looks beautiful in his anger, in his anguish; he always has. But Hannibal darts a glance to the healing scar on Will's cheek, monitoring it for signs of re-injury.

Will's voice, when he finds it, is disappointed. It's hesitant. He can feel the tendrils of Will's control reaching out hopefully, testing his own limits. Equals, Hannibal had called them, and they are. Will can ask, and he can deny. But before Hannibal finds his voice to dismiss Will's request, Will lifts a hand to place upon his chest and Hannibal stills. The meaning behind the words register and something undecided yet bitter rises within him. Will's plea finds its way under his skin in ways he hadn't anticipated, yet Will's desire to protect not Alana, but her family leaves something bitter once again between them.

"I would ask that you not do anything in your attempts to persuade me that you would not do were we simply having a conversation," Hannibal says calmly, but there's an edge to his voice as he glances pointedly at the hand upon his chest.

"I would not have your touch tainted by the knowledge you feel it is necessary to sway me. Tell me, Will. What is it about Alana's death you can't abide? Shades of your friendship? Or perhaps that she has a family. As you did."

Hannibal's tone makes it very obvious that he already knows the answer.

Will doesn't want to be in this position. It's a position in which Hannibal has the upper hand completely. It's distinctly uncomfortable and contrasts their differences, bares a desperate side of himself. A very human side of himself. He sighs, fingertips fidgeting against Hannibal's shirt. As much as he may want to see Hannibal retract Alana's eventual death promise, he's not brave enough or stupid enough to think he'd manage it by affectionate or sexual touches. He doesn't remove his hand, he wants to have this tiny amount of connection.

A part of him wonders if he could still, somehow, be a force for good in the world. Or, at least, in Alana's life. For one family. Saving a life can also be a powerful thing - Chilton had been right about that in court. Perhaps not the same rush as taking one, no. Nothing quite compared to how alive he had felt...

His eyes can't meet Hannibal's, especially when the other man knows the answer, knows of Will's softness toward yet another family. Naturally, Hannibal will wait for him, won't rush him to speak. Will's discomfort will be observed, analyzed, most likely enjoyed, too.

"Please." Will presses his hand more firmly against Hannibal's chest and pushes himself to raise his head and look at Hannibal. "Please at least think on it later, consider me in your equation, if you will." He pauses, taking a moment to gather himself before adding on, "I won't ask you to spare anyone again. Just not her. Not to them. I don't wish to muzzle you..." His voice softens, his face softens. All Will can do is hope that he's planted a seed within Hannibal.
Hannibal has never been a particularly jealous man. He's a prideful man, and one who knows precisely what he expects and deserves from any given interaction. This staunch reminder that Will's favor with his family hasn't yet faded to nothing sours the air between them, yet Hannibal cannot in good faith say he hadn't expected this. Will does have a habit of picking up strays, and he's adopted others before this, most notably Abigail Hobbs.

He watches the discomfort play across Will's features, watches him cringe at needing to ask, to beg, knowing fully that at least in this, Hannibal has the control. Will's hand is closest to the knife and yet it's Hannibal, standing tall and silent at Will's side, who has him collared. Yet Will seems to have no idea that in this, despite it all, they are still equals.

Just for a split second, Hannibal allows himself to consider Will's plea. No one has ever managed to sway him even this much before. Will Graham has always had the power between them, though he doesn't seem to know it, and the knowledge tightens Hannibal's own clenched jaw. But Will's words are very telling.

"You won't ask me to spare anyone again," he repeats smoothly, doubtfully. "Even if Jack Crawford were to make that list." Even were Will's own family to make the list, though Hannibal doesn't say this. Will is smart enough to hear the implication and Hannibal wants to push him but he refuses to break Will. Hannibal takes a slow breath, holds it for an unspecified count, and then lets it out again, slow and thoughtful. He studies the look on Will's face, how his expression has softened, and how Will's touch still hasn't retreated. And finally, after a few long moments, Hannibal turns his attention back to the counter, where Will had left the mushrooms.

"I will always consider you in my equation, Will. That doesn't mean mercy. But I will think on it. For now, Alana will live. It would be foolish to hunt her down right now."

He's made a grave error. A Miscalculation. Will's face slides into the disparaging realization. In trying to bargain for Alana's livelihood, he has made the mistake in assuming his abandoned family would be safe. He can hear the implication heavy in Hannibal's voice at the mere mention of Jack. Will swallows past a lump in his throat and he feels rattled, cornered in trying to deal with such extremes, in trying to save lives after they've caught Hannibal's eye. It would be no easy or simple feat.

Suddenly Alana Bloom is completely forgotten. Will pulls his hand away, watches where Hannibal's attention travels to their domestic scene of cooking, momentarily deserted mushrooms and a knife. Suddenly it seems like such a farce to work toward peace with this man who would seem to push and test him. Has not enough be taken already?

Will turns back to the vegetables, picks up the knife, but his hand is shaking so he doesn't attempt to continue his earlier task of cutting up mushrooms.

"Is it not enough that I chose you?" He asks, voice tight with repressed threat. "I couldn't live with you. If you hurt them. I'm telling you that right now, Hannibal. I wouldn't stay by your side."

The moment Will realizes Hannibal's implication is beautifully clear, his expression drawing with the realization, with the power he had accidentally handed Hannibal. It's thrilling, in a sense, to watch the shroud fall over Will's eyes, a shade from the past. Back when their lives had been nothing but careful sidestepping and threats, always one play ahead of the other with absolutely everything to gain, but even more to lose. It's a fetching look on Will's face, though Hannibal wonders at the intelligence of his implication when Will draws back. Risky, yes, but perhaps this is good. Especially after what Will had made him promise earlier that morning.
"No duplicity, I believe you said," Hannibal replies simply, slanting a look at the way Will picks up the knife. He's on alert, perhaps, but he doesn't believe Will is going to use the knife on him. Still, he eyes the lay of Will's forearm and the grip he has on the knife, monitoring it for any increase in grip strength that would indicate a sudden decision towards violence.

"Is this not honoring your own rule?"

Will's threat is one Hannibal doesn't allow himself to respond to immediately. He waits, mulling it over like a particularly complicated mix of flavors on his tongue. It's bitter, of course. Jealousy is an unpleasant taste, though he cannot deny it's the driving force behind his mild petulance regarding Will's... family. Hannibal would just as soon as see them dead, especially as their mention seems to provoke such a violent response in his companion.

"If you would consider leaving, you haven't chosen me. Not consciously. Perhaps you're here in body, perhaps you've a set of impulses that drive you in my direction, but your sentiment remains elsewhere." Hannibal speaks calmly, tone slow. He doesn't sound particularly irritated, but Will likely knows him enough to see the knife's edge he's walking. "I had no plans to hunt them down. Not unless there was reason to. But I do not take kindly to threats, Will, as I'm sure you're aware. Curious, then, that you would entertain the idea."

"Choosing you... Remaining by your side. It's contingent on me being able to live with myself," Will replies evenly. It's the truth. He thinks he can put up with a lot, learn to adapt. Evolve. But certain things... No. He takes a deep breath and tries, in vain, to settle himself some. He places the knife down, knowing that anger and sharp kitchen utensils shouldn't mix.

His sentiment. Said with emphasis, like it was an unpleasant word on the older man's tongue. There's a darkness within himself, yes. It's taking shape, forming slowly, being cultivated by Hannibal, but still Will doesn't believe he will ever truly shed his humanity.

"Seriously, Hannibal. I have chosen you," Will begins in a reprimanding tone. His back and shoulders are stiff with tension. He had been short-sighted in letting curiosity get the better of him. He shouldn't have asked. While he appreciates Hannibal being forthcoming and that, thankfully, Molly and Walter aren't on any immediate list, he's not pleased that Hannibal is downplaying his choice because of his sentiment remaining.

"Heaven forbid a part of me wants to protect those who I've cared for in the past. They've done nothing wrong to you, save for them having my attention and affection for three years. And apparently my lingering sentiment." His left hand grips the counter. "Must I be completely detached from everyone in my old life to prove my devotion?"

The answer to the question is yes. But perhaps in Will's favor, Hannibal merely regards his companion in silence, keeping the single word at bay. Jealousy is an interesting cloak, but Hannibal hasn't lost his grip on humanity. Impulsiveness pushes at him. Jealousy shrouded in instinct and possession. Yet despite his irritation he's not unreasonable. He can pick apart his own emotional responses and chide those that don't fit. Impulsiveness in Will's case has not necessarily worked out well in the past. The deep grin carved across Will's stomach is testament to that, as is the line across his forehead. Impulsiveness and anger and jealousy, and a thin, bitter attempt at forgiveness.

Hannibal knows himself enough to know that if he allows himself to go further down this road, it will be Will who suffers. And Hannibal by association. While the thought of Will's family leaves an acidic taste in his mouth, he merely sets his jaw and regards Will with a careful impassivity.
"I have killed for less," is what he finally says, though the danger that had been threading his tone with Alana has been carefully pruned down. No duplicity, but in this, Hannibal feels it smart to keep the extent of his bitterness in check. If Will wishes to see, he will. He's still an empath, and Hannibal has been keeping himself in check far less as of late. But in this, it will be Will's decision.

"But if their lives are contingent on your presence, then there's little I can do. I made no promise to them. If you would prefer, I can finish making dinner on my own."

Finally, after the tense stalemate, Hannibal takes a step back. He moves to the stove to turn off the low heat and it's like a tension has broken. He's angry; his loathing for Will's family twists, but he's not gotten this far by acting on every impulse. And he will not force Will's company at this point. Not when his presence so closely hinges upon his emotional state.

Ironically, in the morning Will had been toying with Hannibal's jealousy, stoking the fire, and trying to wield it against the older man like a torch against a lion. Now he is chiding Hannibal for possessing that very thing because of how the other man's jealousy could manifest. The realization sits uneasy with him and now having Hannibal's concession on top of it, Will is astonished to find himself feeling slightly conscience-stricken.

An apology would fall flat, so Will won't offer one. It's tempting to take up Hannibal's offer, giving a 'fuck you' to cooking together and leaving, but Will doesn't want to leave things how they are - both of them simmering with frustration and entirely his fault for asking such a loaded question. Maybe if he had just kept his mouth shut about dangerous subject matter - kept it for later in their future when they trusted more - Hannibal would have been acquiesced.

"I'll stay," Will finally replies, taking up the knife and starting on the portabello mushrooms again. There's a calmness to this activity and after a few slices, he adds, "I want to stay with you."

Hannibal is expecting Will to excuse himself; it had been the entire reason he'd extended that option. So Will could leave without concern over how his doing so would affect their standing. So Hannibal finds himself mildly surprised when Will instead chooses to stay. It's calculated, and it's dangerous; with tensions high it could end disastrously, but after a brief moment in which he studies Will - the line of his shoulders, the careful calmness to his actions, and the low tone to his voice - Hannibal merely nods and that's it.

He's angry. Will isn't wrong. Earlier that morning he had intentionally baited Hannibal's jealousy, had observed it and had apparently taken a form of delight in it, and yet now he's changing his mind. Hannibal had warned Will, had cautioned him to keep Hannibal's patience in mind. He's a very patient man but even that patience has limits. Will's 'family' is one of those limits. They are the shroud Will had pulled over himself to hide his impulses and his desires, leaving Hannibal to wait for years. But this is a topic Hannibal doesn't bring up. Right now, it would be foolish. Tensions are high enough. He's angry, yes, but he's not cruel. Not at this moment.

Molly and Walter will be a topic for later.

"Then you will. I am not so petty as to cast you aside when we disagree." Hannibal says simply, like they'd simply disagreed over wine to pair with dinner. There isn't a trace of anger in his voice, though he doesn't doubt that Will is very aware it's still present. "I'll check over your injuries after dinner, if you'll allow it."

Naturally, Hannibal is still angry, although his tone may not reflect as such. Will lets out a slow sigh,
eyes focusing on his task as best he can. He's irritated at himself, frustrated at Hannibal as well, but mostly bothered by the result his own actions have brought. He's the one that dragged them into this stalemate. He doesn't think he can fix this either. There is to be no smoothing thing over. It is what it is.

"Yeah, alright," Will replies. Hannibal playing Doctor with him meant removing his shirt, sitting down under a light and letting the physician check and clean his wounds. Before it had been a rather quiet affair, almost completely one-sided in communication with Hannibal simply explaining his actions. It was harder to do that now, the silence was a heavy oppressing state to be in these days for Will. Somewhat awkward conversation was a better option than nothing. Dangerous topics ought to be avoided in the present and near future.

When all the mushrooms are sliced, he scoops them into a nearby bowl and decides he'll take a break from the knife to peel the onions. He manages a few layers before this deserved silence irks him.

"Look, I'm--" Will almost says 'sorry' as he places the half-peeled onion down on the cutting board. "There's a lot between us... A great deal of it unpleasant to each other, I'll try to be more careful."

The silence they settle into isn't comfortable, but Hannibal acts as though it is. He leaves Will to handle the mushrooms and merely walks over to check on the meat. It won't be as tender as it would have been had there been time to marinate it overnight, but it should be tender enough for Will's jaw. Taste isn't a concern; Hannibal can smell that it'll be fine, especially once cooked. Ideally the shallots would be ready at this time, but Hannibal takes his time, allowing Will to work at his own pace. This endeavor isn't one they've taken in order to rush through the preparation of the meal. It's one Hannibal is allowing in an attempt to ground Will. Earlier conversation aside, he has hope that Will is going to at least feel involved, even if the moment is uncomfortable.

Hannibal has the wine sauce started, bacon sizzling to release the fat into the bottom of the lined pan when Will finally speaks again. Hannibal hesitates only for a moment before continuing with his work, hands quick as he lowers the heat to wait for the shallots. "I don't expect this to be without its pitfalls. You and I have done far too much to each other to carry on as if nothing has changed. As if we've not both been betrayer and betrayed. I am angry. As are you. That changes nothing."

Hannibal casts him a mild glance and then steps over, selecting one of the shallots to place it down on the cutting board, drawing Will's attention to it.

"I would prefer the genuine Will Graham to his cowering counterpart, even if it makes certain moments uncomfortable. These," Hannibal adds, nodding once to the shallot on the cutting board, "need to be minced and peeled." He refrains from asking if Will knows how to mince. Hannibal makes a point to stay close, so that if Will does require a demonstration, he won't have to ask, merely gesture.

Will has kept to his area in the kitchen, not having even inquired as to what Hannibal has been working on or about the recipe in its wholeness. Tackling his small piece of the puzzle suits him just fine - he'll let Hannibal put it all together when the time is right and all the elements are complete.

Knowing that Hannibal is cross with him and hearing it are two different things entirely. The former is unpleasant but tolerable, the latter, however... is troubling to him in the way that it instantly smarts in a way that he Will was not expecting.

When Hannibal comes to his work station, Will turns back to face the counter. Apparently the shallots are needed next, so Will sets aside the red onion and picks up the shallot, fingers peeling off
the husk around the small vegetable, the sound of crinkling skin breaking apart following. It's no shock that Hannibal prefers his rough edges, to the idea of Will trying to hold himself back. Be that as it may, Will is going to try and be more thoughtful. He may dislike the silence, but clashing is both wearisome and potentially deadly.

"Care to refresh me on proper mincing technique? We use the same knife for it?" He asks, regarding Hannibal.

"If the knife is comfortable in your hand, you may use what you're used to," Hannibal replies in lieu of a direct answer. This particular topic is safe and a welcome distraction, yet Hannibal doesn't think for a moment that the previous one has been forgotten. In time it will return, but he simply chooses to deal with it then instead of threaten their tentative peace with it once more. Instead he merely watches as Will peels the husk from around the vegetable and then nods, pleased Will has accepted the makeshift olive branch for now. It's something.

"And while I could show you proper technique, with your right arm in its current state, muscle memory would be beneficial. Of course, feel free to decline," Hannibal says simply, but he's already stepping in close to Will again. He merely moves the shallot to the cutting board and - instead of grabbing a knife to show Will the proper technique - he takes the knife and presses the handle to Will's hand, then curls his own carefully over the back of Will's hand. It's a light touch, not forward in the way so often assumed, but it is guiding. Hannibal carefully takes Will's other hand and shows him the proper position to brace his fingers in so as to ensure he doesn't cut himself. "I would instruct you to start vertically were you not using your non-dominant hand, but for safety concerns, begin horizontally."

The knife slices through the skin of the shallot like the vegetable hadn't even been there. And while Hannibal can do this quickly, he purposefully keeps his hand slow so Will can learn the positioning of his hands. Despite what Will might think, Hannibal doesn't actually wish him injured. "Following that, thin vertical slices lengthwise."

He's glad that Hannibal sees fit to take up instruction again, glad that they're moving into the realm of the practical. Will is going to try and push the former sour conversation from his mind. He's helpless as he is, right now. If has any chance to ensure that those he doesn't wish to die, don't, he'll have to prove his commitment and earn Hannibal's trust and favor. It will take time and will be quite the undertaking.

Will's personal quest begins now, both of them wading into this new dynamic, wary, but wanting. Once more, Hannibal enters his space, larger body not quite touching save for an arm against his and a hand that comes to take his own, comes to place the knife's handle back into his grasp. Normally such closeness would have Will unraveling in some way, whether from nerves or the strange longing that's running under his skin. This time, there's a peculiar fondness for Hannibal taking the time to show him a glimpse into the culinary world, despite the lack of it's usual state of grandeur. They may be striving to be equals, but there is something achingly familiar about Hannibal assuming the role of a mentor or teacher again. It has Will letting go of some of this tension, lowering some of his guards.

When they finish mincing the shallot together, Will realizes he hadn't even absorbed the information regarding the technique used, lost in his own musings.

"Sorry," he starts softly, chiding himself. "Was lost in my head there for a moment." He gives a little shake, as if trying to come refocus himself.
Hannibal guides Will's hand in the careful, measured movements. Lengthwise cuts first, then showing him the safe way to keep all cuts together as the shallot is turned for proper mincing. The pieces that fall off into a neat pile are small and fragrant in their own way, at least to Hannibal, who approves of the scent. They'll be simple to sauté in the sauce itself. And perhaps it is his own fault that he misses Will's absence. His voice remains quiet and instructional as he finishes off the first shallot and the knife stills. It's only when he feels Will's hand under his own shift and grip the knife more consciously that he realizes Will had not been entirely present in the explanation.

Any exasperation dies before it can begin, as Will is quick to apologize. Hannibal merely regards him in silence over Will's shoulder, still so close he could easily close the distance between them and offer different points of contact. He doesn't. The thought is there but he's careful to keep this focused on smoothing over the earlier tension.

"It's quite all right. Would you like me to show you again?" Hannibal asks simply, not chiding Will for his inattention. He merely reaffirms his touch upon Will's hand, ready to guide him through the same motion again if Will so wishes him to.

Will isn't berated for his lapse in concentration, Hannibal choosing to simply offer to re-show him the motions.

"Yeah... Please," he responds politely, clearing his throat and trying to remain present in this scene of atypical domesticity. Of course, he's obliged, but Will's eyes are not completely on the mincing that is taking place. Instead, his gaze roams between the gleaming edge of the blade and to their connected hands. If he took half a step back--

Taking a chance, Will shifts slightly backward, pressing himself closer into Hannibal's warmth. He's anticipating disapproval of some kind, for Hannibal to think that he is trying to manipulate him, so Will stutters out, "I'm not ah--" He struggles with his words. "I just want to."

Will has been instructed to initiate touch, but it's still a difficult pill to swallow - not so much the actual act, but what follows after, the comprehension of his actions. Despite the tendril of uncertainty in winding in his mind, Will remains where he is at.

"You think people like us... get to have a happy ending?" It's a question that has been in his peripheral since pondering the potential of a future with Hannibal. Until Molly and Walter, Will hadn't held much hope for having a peaceful existence. It had been disingenuous and selfish, playing House with his premade family. However bland it might have been, it was nice while it lasted.

The sudden contact is not unwelcome, though it does take Hannibal briefly by surprise. He stills his hand upon Will's, for he's quite certain that Will isn't paying attention once more, though perhaps he cannot fault him this time. After the tense moment before, this movement is calculated and Hannibal considers its authenticity. It's entirely possible Will is trying to ease the earlier tension, but before Hannibal can allow himself to go too far down that particular trail of thought, Will's stuttering draws him back. He doesn't articulate his point well, granted, but Hannibal regards him in a curious silence before he merely nods.

He's willing to give Will the benefit of the doubt in this moment. And Hannibal isn't quite so selfless that he's willing to decline contact, even with his anger present yet carefully dismissed.

"Very well. And yes, I do." Hannibal's answer is simple, like there could be only one. Mindful of Will's injuries and watchful for signs of claustrophobia at being caged against the counter, Hannibal closes the distance between them. It's barely there, unobtrusive, and done in an attempt to comfort
Will, though Hannibal doesn't miss the irony of Will seeking contact after his previous behavior. Kindly, he declines comment.

Instead Hannibal stands close, Will's back pressed along his chest - though he angles himself ever so slightly off-center, covering for his own injuries - and he tightens his hold on Will's hand, an attempt to bring his focus to the blade once more.

"I lived quite comfortably for many years, as you well know. So much so that my reputation afforded me certain privileges. Dining with the head of the Behavioral Analysis Unit, for instance. Working alongside the FBI." He doesn't have to tell Will that doing so was purely prideful; Will already knows. "Though admittedly, I would not have pursued that particular avenue with quite the same interest had it not been for you. But I digress. The point: Perhaps it depends on one's definition of a 'happy ending'. But I do believe it possible. Perhaps harder sought but fully possible."

Will is aware of the fact that he's more or less pinned between Hannibal and the counter, but not uncomfortably so. Perhaps he should feel unsettled, but he knows Hannibal's patience and restraint in this regard are vast. However, it's uniquely intimate, different than the other times they had been close because of the singular presence of the knife. A deceivingly simple, but deadly tool, handled together with ease. When Hannibal's grasp tightens, Will attempts to direct his attention on what's happening, the technical display, a shallot being diced into small cubes, but there's something else happening - at least for the empath.

A shaky exhale comes from slightly parted lips, eyes flutter shut and an eerie calmness falls over Will. The kitchen fades. Reality blurs. His imagination runs wild with the feeling of Hannibal and him wielding a knife together, but not to slice and dice vegetables. No, a far more sinister stage comes to life around him: set in the familiar confines of Hannibal's office where they had sat opposite each other so many times, a faceless thing fighting against them, thrashing atop the desk, but pinned down by antlers. Hannibal is murmuring to him, lilting words of praise, of encouragement, the hint of a smile playing on a serene face, his hand steadying Will's own as they hold a knife over their prey. Together, almost tenderly, they will let the blade--

Now Will is shaking, a fine tremble passing through his body as he struggles between coming back to himself and the twisted fantasy.

It takes Hannibal very little time to realize that once again Will is not entirely in this moment. Will's lack of response means nothing; often silent acceptance is the simplest response to a spoken suggestion. However there is a sudden shift in Will's presence, in the way he holds himself. They are braced together and Hannibal can feel Will's strength against him, and so he notices when Will's focus wanes. He watches as Will exhales and Hannibal tips his head enough to watch curiously as Will's eyes fall closed. At first he wonders if Will is attempting to dissociate but given his continued grip upon the knife, this isn't an attempt to hide. Hannibal merely stills and uses the points of contact between them to connect the dots.

Will is somewhere else in his head. Hannibal feels the trembling when it starts, but he also feels the minute shifts of Will's tendons in his hand as he grips the knife. His grip tightens - far more excessive than is needed for simple meal preparation - and tentative realization dawns. Careful to keep his touch exactly the same, Hannibal watches the subtle play of tells and emotions that twitch across Will's features. He has seen Will in the throes of a hallucination before, though that had been rather extreme. This is soft, and Hannibal suspects he is still present, merely seeing something differently.

Removing someone from a hallucination carries a certain risk, but seeing as Hannibal has Will carefully caged, his hand still guiding the knife, he decides it's a risk he can undertake. He can stop
Will from hurting himself if it's a violent shift to reality, true. But more than that, Hannibal's curiosity has been piqued. He bends his head down just enough to put his mouth level with Will's ear, though takes careful steps to make his voice as smooth as possible. He doesn't wish to violently pull Will back. In this, Hannibal is merely curious.

"Will... tell me. What do you see?"

As usual, it's difficult to for the illusion to fall away in a clean, easy fashion. His imagination has never been so kind. Will wants to see that smile - he knows if they kill - when they kill - Hannibal will gift him with it. A genuine smile from Hannibal is rare and beautiful. A dark part of Will covets that smile, wants to know he's pleased the older man. Their victim's fear radiates off in waves, battling with the realization of what's coming. They are what's coming. "Together," Will affirms softly, but before anything can be done, before Hannibal's hand can guide his own closer, the scene bursts into flames and with a final shudder Will comes back to himself.

On some level he's aware of the question he's been asked. He can feel Hannibal's steadying warmth, a mouth hovering close to his ear. Will is breathing quicker, mind trying to catch up and process the flash of events.

"We were... In your office," he recalls, eyes blinking open, coming to focus on what they were supposed to be doing. "Holding a knife similar to this... But we were going to--" Will stops. Somehow the truth is frightening to him.

Despite his earlier admittance and knowledge of his own urge to hunt again with Hannibal, fantasizing about it twice in one day has Will fraying at the seams. He doesn't want to be like this, does he? He suspects that reality cares very little about his sensibilities.

Will's breaths are quick, bordering on panicked, though to his credit, he seems grounded. His return to the present doesn't come with a flailing blade, doesn't come with Will recoiling and cursing, scrambling to get away. He merely shudders, his breath catching, and he's back, though worse for wear. Hannibal's curiosity burns, though he does have his suspicions. Still, he keeps himself steady, hardly daring to move lest a movement set Will off. He can smell Will's fear lingering under the surface and it's a heady scent, sharp and bitter but all the better for it, but it makes him stay his hand, his voice, until he's certain Will is stable. Or at least stable enough.

Hannibal listens silently and while Will doesn't fully piece together his slip in reality, Hannibal can draw enough from Will's fear and from their earlier conversation to fill in the gaps. He's left pleasantly surprised and somewhat hopeful. Will is afraid, yes, but he'd been fantasizing about killing. Who, Hannibal doesn't know. Unless Will's desires have shifted towards another attempt at his life, he doesn't care who. Instead Hannibal merely regards his companion and then carefully moves to remove Will's fingers from the knife, careful so as to not to alarm him.

"Tell me what you need," Hannibal instructs calmly, his voice unwavering and strong, a port for Will in the storm. "If you don't wish to talk about it, we won't. But I would suggest you take a moment to sit down, and decide if you would feel more centered with my touch or without." Physical touch is often a strong grounding point but Hannibal is uncertain if his touch would be welcome right now.

Will's fingers uncurl from the handle of the knife and it's placed a good deal away from him, cutting board pushed further back, meal prep forgotten. Probably for the best. He can't even fault Hannibal for it. Encephalitis or not, being reckless or impulsive at times is something Will has been known for. He's fairly certain that he's moved past his own desire to kill Hannibal now. Can't live with him, can't
live without him, Bedelia had surmised, but she had turned out to be wrong, because Will certainly can live with Hannibal and is doing so. He has no one else.

His clammy hand reaches out for Hannibal's, not willing to give up the contact just yet. Without much thought, Will goes a step further, placing the palm of Hannibal's hand against his stomach, right over his 'smile.' Will's own rests atop, holding firmly. He just wants to feel secure, but even in this almost embrace he's still reeling. His head falls forward and he tries to sort himself out, push the violence down, but it's clinging to him like something sticky and viscous.

"Need?" Will repeats the word back, voice a little raspy. What a concept, confessing his needs to the devil. "Being around you affects my mind. Need to get used to it again." He chuckles derisively all of a sudden. "I seek comfort from the very person that incites the violence I'm afraid of."

They made quite the pair.

Will's impulsiveness knows no boundaries at the best of times, so his sudden change of pace - while unexpected - doesn't come as a huge surprise. Instead Hannibal merely looks down at where Will has caught his hand, pressing it low against his abdomen where Hannibal had marked him so many years ago. He cannot feel the lines of the scar under Will's shirt, but he feels the drive behind Will's impulsiveness and, after a moment of indecision, Hannibal carefully presses his hand to Will's abdomen, negating the need for Will to hold it there.

He hadn't been anticipating a hallucination, hadn't prepared for the possibility. So he finds himself exceedingly careful as he considers what can be done. Will is right, after all. Hannibal has always had an obvious presence. It bleeds out into the room like mixed shadows. In the past, Hannibal had noticed his guests subtly picking up on his mood. When he had been irritated, irritation around him had risen. His presence has always been commanding and infectious - one thing he'd always tried to keep in mind. He wonders, briefly, if his time in the hospital had dulled his control. Frowning at the thought, Hannibal carefully presses down on Will's abdomen, easing Will back a step to settle against his chest.

His very own canary in the coal mine: Ex-Special Agent Will Graham. How fitting.

"I would not see you compromised, Will. If it is any comfort, keep in mind I will not ask anything of you that you are not willing to give. That includes... what you likely saw. I would ask that you sit down. If you would have me there too, that's fine. Allow me to lower the heat on the stove and then we can sit on the couch. You seem... unsteady."

The increase in pressure against his stomach eases Will and he presses against the hand, wanting to feel the touch more, needing to feel the tension. He resists just slightly when Hannibal seeks to have him settle back onto his chest for support. It only lasts for a few seconds before he allows himself to indulge in such a thing, sighing, his hand falling away.

He listens to the assurances. Nothing new there. Compromised. Unsteady. It sounded like the Will Graham from the past coming to make a pathetic re-appearance. He had been steady before, away from Hannibal's influence when the monster had been locked away. He'd even been decent while only teaching. Now, though... he feels stretched and rough, like a painting that's cracking and peeling, all the while Hannibal observes and picks up his pieces, trying his best to preserve the image.

"Would you treat me violently if I asked - if I wanted it?" Will inquires, licking dry lips and finding an edge to hold onto within himself. It's a careless edge, one that's demanding chaos of some kind.
He leans his head back against Hannibal, arching himself a bit, baring his neck.

"Or am I too delicate for such dark desires?"

Hannibal's gaze drops almost immediately to Will's exposed throat. He has been called a great many things - monster, demon, unfeeling, insane - but despite all the titles and the attempts to dehumanize, Hannibal is still human, still driven by certain cues and body language. Perhaps with some he would be able to resist, but with Will Graham, his defenses will perhaps always be lowered.

Will leans against him, drinking in the support while recklessly attempting to fight it in his mind. Hannibal can feel the conflict. Will presses back against him, but he also resists, torn perhaps between what he wants and what he feels he should want. It's an uncomfortable place to be, and as such, is also one for Hannibal, who is well aware how lightly he needs to tread. He'd not been aware Will's hallucinations had continued, but he detects no inflammation on him. In this, he believes it is merely Will. No infection, just mild psychosis and stress. But the way it manifests is still worthy of concern. Will baring his throat, the tempting offer, both dangerous.

Silently, Hannibal lets out a slow breath and shifts, lowering the shoulder Will's head has tipped back against, easing his position.

"There is control in violence," Hannibal replies carefully after a long moment. "Some, perhaps, would be too delicate to face it. I am still deciding if you're one of them. Were you less raw, I would have no doubts as to your state of mind, but I do have my concerns. If you find you're craving violence because you believe you need to suffer, that is one thing. If you crave it because you find it grounding, perhaps helpful, that is another."

He may not be able to flesh out what he's exactly aiming for, but Will knows that he can't tolerate Hannibal's placid demeanor right now. He had thought that the domestic act of cooking would help, and maybe it did in ways, or could in the future, but it had started to remind him a little of his previous life.

There was a storm brewing inside of Will - an amalgamation of fury and grief, of fear and attraction. Hannibal was at the center of it all, Will caught within his orbit and he didn't know what to do or say other than to try and crash into the older man - to instigate, to incite some sort of visceral response.

"It's as if there's a scream caught in my throat, a restlessness just below the surface that's driving me mad. An urge to lash out or be lashed. To restrain and be restrained." Will begins slowly, figuring out his words as he goes. He fidgets against Hannibal's hold just to reaffirm that he's actually being held.

"I need you to quiet my mind." He stares at the plain cupboards in front of him afraid to close his eyes, his left hand coming to grip tightly to the edge of the counter. "Please. Do something. Take. Or tell me what to do."

It's more than sexual or physical craving, more than basic desire. Like his neck, Will is exposing himself, both offering and asking in this. It's almost liberating, but thankfully the desperation takes off the edge off the vulnerability.

Grounding then. Hannibal watches as Will begins to slowly unravel at the edges, and despite the danger inherent in the knowledge - that Will could become a danger to himself, let alone to Hannibal - he inwardly marvels at how beautiful Will looks while so shaken. There is beauty in agony,
especially to a man like Hannibal, and he considers merely allowing it for a few seconds before the thought twists in inward reprimand. Will is not his victim any more than he has been and Hannibal can work with grounding, though he allows himself to focus on Will's movements, his mild attempts to feel restrained, his tremors.

Hannibal makes his decision quickly, though doesn't move with haste. He merely keeps his hand fixed upon Will's abdomen. It's safe to keep there, with no injuries to work around. Then he lifts his other hand, mindful of Will's injured shoulder, and Hannibal's right hand comes to rest against the exposed line of Will's throat. He doesn't press, but Will fully knows what his hands are capable of, and the shock of threat should start to ground. Hannibal feels Will's pulse, heavy one second, fluttering the next, and he presses down just enough to feel the tremor through his fingers. He's careful not to cover all branches of blood flow, but he steadily increases the hold on Will's throat until he can feel it. It's restraint, not asphyxiation, though one twitch of his hand could change that. But Hannibal isn't looking to injure Will; he's looking to gather the windswep t pieces of his mind back to where they belong.

"You will select a word," Hannibal instructs quietly, as this is non-negotiable. He feels somewhat breathless with this new revelation, but not so free that he is willing to risk Will's safety. "Something out of the ordinary that will never come up in conversation between us unbidden. Something you will remember. Once you have selected it, say it out loud." No teacups, no time, no Abigail.

Will asked, and true to Hannibal's words, he receives. A firm hand comes to his throat, long fingers wrap around and a sharp inhale follows. His heart rate spikes in response and just the threat of danger has the noise slightly abating in Will's head. He keens into the touch, an invitation - a request - for a little more and Hannibal, ever the gentleman, obliges. Breathing is only slightly restricted, but in this, Will is secure. Hannibal could hurt him, could squeeze hard enough, but he won't. Will knows this.

A word. A safeword, actually. He understands what Hannibal is getting at and it brings color to his cheeks. Were they truly doing this? It's reckless, but their eager bodies move toward the fire, both helpless to the draw. Isn't that how it's always been? A magnetic pull between them, always against their better judgement, against their better reason. However, to indulge brings a sense of brushing up against the divine. It's sacrilegious at best, but Will doesn't care. In this moment, Hannibal is his religion.

"Dahlia," Will finally responds, his own voice sounds slightly foreign to him. Detached and far away, but still wholly his. "Touch it," he instructs next, apparently finding it easier to speak up about what he wants in this type of situation. Will pushes into the hand on his stomach, enough of a hint that Hannibal should know he means under his shirt.

This is not something Hannibal had expected, but somehow now that it's been brought to the surface, he can think of little that makes more sense. Will has always been a fractured man. Brilliant and cunning and vulnerable in his own head until he finds secure footing. Then his vulnerability shatters away like glass. And as Hannibal feels the vibration of Will's soft sound against his hand, he believes the beginning of Will's vulnerability is beginning to fracture once more. He needs security, needs to know where he stands, and he needs to quiet the voices in his head.

This is... something they need to talk about. Normally Hannibal wouldn't dare to entertain the thought without covering all avenues first, but he can feel some of the tension draining under his hand and against his chest. Perhaps Will hadn't known he'd needed this, but he's taking to it well. And with the soft word clear on the air between them - Dahlia - Hannibal nods. "Remember your
word. It is a guaranteed stop. Use it if you need to," he promises. And while he suspects Will had known this (given the flush to his cheeks following Hannibal's request) he says it anyway.

For a moment Hannibal considers denying Will's added request, but until they discuss what this is and what Will requires from him - whether this is to be commonplace or merely situational - he won't push the control. Instead he moves his hand down to untuck the hem of Will's shirt and boldly does as instructed, touching his fingers to warm flesh first before sliding them up. He finds the edge of the scar - his scar - and Hannibal swallows at everything that comes from that simple touch. The heat, the memories, the emotions, and the hunger, but he merely traces his fingers along the gnarled edge, making a mental note to monitor Will's scars for him as he clearly hadn't taken a great level of care with this one. But somehow it heightens the sensation and possession rears under his surface. The moment is not simply intense for Will.

"Lean your head back on my shoulder, arms at your sides. You can make requests, but I will decide if I wish to grant them. Relax, Will," Hannibal adds, and while it comes out firm, his intention is soft. He presses his fingers against Will's scar, hard enough to truly feel it, and resists the urge to lean in closer.

Earlier this morning Will had falsely believed that he couldn't let Hannibal glimpse or touch the scar on his stomach. Now he had commanded it, made his desire known and rolled over. He tenses as his shirt is pulled loose, the fabric pulled away, granting Hannibal's other hand entry. The touch is intimate. Curious. Gentle. Will struggles against the stimuli - both wanting it to stop and continue, in wanting to pull away and push into it. A sound leaves his mouth - a whine, of all things - and he clamps his mouth shut after hearing it. Even in this, there's room for shame, but it doesn't take away, if anything, it only adds.

It's wound debridement. Hannibal's touch is necessary, but each motion brings hurt with it. He doesn't want to go back to that night of betrayal, of discovering Alana lying broken on the sidewalk, of the fear he felt drawing his gun and wandering inside, not knowing what scene awaited him. Hannibal's face, etched with sadness as he--

Will's first instinct is to resist when instructions are murmured to him. He does lean his head back, but his hand remains gripping the counter.

"Are you going to make me?" Given what he wants, it's not the wisest of things to say. At any moment Hannibal could choose to leave him stranded if he's too much of a hassle. Still, he needs to know if Hannibal is willing.

Hannibal doesn't have the benefit of Will's empathy, but he does have knowledge of Will. He wishes, for a brief moment, that he could read the true intent in that soft whine. It's an achingly raw sound, but it is beautiful, music to Hannibal's ears even as he feels Will struggle, perhaps because of it. It does draw him up short, makes him wonder at what Will can handle, but he doesn't remove his hand. Will doesn't whisper his word, so Hannibal has no inclination to stop. His touch only reaffirms and he moves his hand until the length of Will's scar is pressed along his hand, from fingers to palm, overly smooth compared to the surrounding skin. Hannibal presses against it, pressing Will back against him to ground him.

But Will's resistance draws him up short. For a moment, he considers their position. To some degree, Will wants to be forced, but perhaps he also wants to know that he has his own say in this. It's a delicate line to walk without talking about this first.

"I could. Alternately, I could simply stop," he says easily, though wonders for a moment if
abandoning Will right now would be far worse than indulging him. Hannibal's hand briefly tightens along the length of Will's throat, enough that the skin around his hand pales, but he keeps a careful eye on Will's breathing.

"To make you, I would have to take my hand away." He presses harder on Will's scar, showing him exactly which hand he would have to move. "Are you sure you want that? I told you what I expect from you, Will. I will not repeat myself."

Will's hand falls from the counter and to his side. The action is done out of acceptance rather than defeat. He may be curious about the prospect of Hannibal taking, may be intrigued just how far they could twist and push each other, but Will isn't foolish enough to think now is necessarily the best time for that. For better or worse, they are in a relationship and compromises must be made. Rules have been set out for him - if he wants something specific, he must ask, Hannibal will force nothing.

"Don't... Stop," Will whispers aloud, body leaning more into Hannibal. His hands fidget by his side, wanting to reach out and grasp something. It's more difficult than he'd anticipated to stand still and simply allow Hannibal's ministrations. He's torn between trying to focus on the tightness around his neck or the touch on his stomach. He feels restless, but beginning to be reigned in.

"Please, please..." he begs, but Will isn't sure if it's a continuation of his earlier statement or if he wants something else. He feels a low thrum of arousal, but it doesn't strike him with need like it had earlier.

Will's hand drops down slowly but it does as Hannibal had ordered, Will's arms settling at his sides. He doesn't move, doesn't try to fidget with his shirt, doesn't slide his hands in his pockets. Instead he remains as still as he can, restless but obedient, and Hannibal feels a small thread of satisfaction slide through him. They've stepped into these assumed roles without preparation, but they're slowly feeling their way through it. He has enough faith in himself to avoid injuring Will by accident, though he's beginning to suspect that might be something Will is going to push for once they talk about this. Hannibal will deal with it then. For now, his grip upon Will's throat eases and his thumb just barely strokes over the pounding pulse in Will's throat.

"Good," Hannibal murmurs, pleased. There's a distant ache in his own body he only half-focuses on, something centered around his core. Supporting Will's weight should be simple, and in many ways it is, but Hannibal has to keep his own current (irritating) limitations in mind as well. In a few minutes he'll have to turn the stove down. Between the stew Will had requested and Will himself, Hannibal's priorities are simple.

"Very good."

There's a soft curl of something header in Will's scent, but it's muted. Arousal, yes, but in this, Hannibal has no intent to push. This is solely because Will needs it. Still, Hannibal doesn't resist taking in a slow breath of Will's scent. He smells distantly of the alcohol of the last few weeks still working its way out through his pores, and he smells of medication and injury, but underneath it all is the same raw, unique scent that is all Will Graham.

Under Will's shirt, the pressure of Hannibal's hand eases, but he idles by stroking over part of the scar, feeling its edges and basking in the physical mark upon Will's skin.

"Stay with me in this present moment. Focus on all points of contact," Hannibal says, and the hand on Will's throat slides up higher. It's more dangerous now, Hannibal's hand fixed where Will's pulse is strong, and when he presses down this time, it's with the careful intent to partially restrict Will's
breathing. To focus him. "I want you aware of every breath. Focus on my hands. My voice. In this, you must trust me. I will quiet your mind if you allow it."

He's not prepared for the flare of warmth that Hannibal's praise brings to him. Will fights against the urge to smile, it seems an inappropriate time to do so, although he imagines the other man would say otherwise. He supposes that he hasn't felt accomplished or good about himself in quite some time. Although he may have stopped the Red Dragon, with Hannibal's help, of course, it hadn't been nice and neat. Hadn't he just swapped one killer for another?

When he hears Hannibal smell him, Will feels a strange jittery laugh want to come out. Did you just smell me? Now, he's just curious what Hannibal detects on him. He has no cologne with or without a ship on the bottle, he hasn't really paid much attention or concern about his looks or scent. He hasn't wanted to let himself care if he looked particularly good because there was only one other person who saw him.

His hips squirm a little, wanting to take in every touch Hannibal pays to his scar. Will listens, eyes closing and cutting off visual stimulation to better concentrate on tactile and auditory. An instinctual panic rises up when he feels the grip move and then tighten around his throat, his airflow being reduced. Will jerks once, but then remains still, save for the slightest press into the other man's hands. He does trust Hannibal and that realization is perhaps more frightening than the possibility of being choked.

He makes what sounds like an appreciative noise. Right now he's here, in the present, in Hannibal's arms finding a strange sort of shelter. His thoughts converge on each small breath, the resistance his body naturally feels from being restrained, a cultured voice doing unrefined things to him.

The grip that Hannibal has on Will's throat stays consistent. He carefully monitors Will's pulse and does what he can to allow the muscle twitches and small vibrations to not distract him from his task, tempting as they are. Hannibal is, after all, a sadist. Selective, perhaps, and definitely controlled, but seeing Will in gorgeous duress is temptation unlike much Hannibal has seen. His instinct to squeeze tighter is feral in nature. Part of him wants to merely deny Will air altogether, to watch him struggle, and to see how long he would keep his hands in place. But those urges are muted, a mere passing thought, vastly overshadowed by the awe Hannibal feels in the face of Will allowing him to do this. Of Will trusting him.

He will not shatter that trust. And he doesn't. Instead Hannibal holds Will close, tracing the edges of the scar upon Will's abdomen carefully, from one pointed edge to the next. All the while, he restricts Will's air and speaks to him. Soft praises here and there, and words in languages he knows well that Will doesn't know, simply because it affords him the freedom to say things Will would not allow him to now. He keeps his companion trapped against his chest, yet soothes him just the same. And when Hannibal finally deems that Will's shoulders have lost their rock-hard edge and that he seems slightly less likely to fall apart at the seams, he finally allows his touch to merely linger.

"You've done exactly what I asked of you, Will. You've done well. If you wish, you may move your hands. Slowly; don't injure your shoulder." Hannibal instructs, and his tight grip on Will's throat eases. It's slow, so that Will can get used to the change without free-falling, and Hannibal strokes his pulse almost reverently, eyeing the beautiful marks from his hand left behind. They likely won't bruise; he hadn't squeezed hard enough, but they will heat with the rush of blood.

"How do you feel? Take your time. I will accept nothing but the truth."
He struggles every once in awhile, just the slightest pull against the hold, a poignant reminder that Hannibal does have him. After a few times, Will ceases, giving in and letting the dust in his mind settle. He may not have suitable answers for the questions that plague him, the future may be shrouded in uncertainty, but here and now, Hannibal can be his anchor. Foreign words are murmured to him - comforting, sweet sounding almost - all things that he probably couldn't tolerate if he understood their meaning. Will thinks he hears Italian, maybe Hannibal's native tongue of Lithuanian. From the doctor's mouth, the exotic words are a type of caress themselves, wrapping around himself.

After a handful of minutes, Will detects the pressure retracting around his neck gradually. New instructions are given and he wiggles his fingers, forms loose fists and takes in deeper inhalations of air. This experiment, of sorts, was coming to an end. At the question of how he's feeling, the empath is in no hurry to give a reply. He knows the answer 'better' doesn't cut it, doesn't fully describe it. His eyes open and he's greeted with the familiar kitchen - back to real life.

"Mitigated," Will settles with and rolls his neck to each side, stretching muscles, testing for soreness. "And you?"

As Will comes back to himself, Hannibal keeps a watchful eye on him. He tests Will's subtle movements, searching for a flare of discomfort or for damage done. He knows his hand had been steady, but he's also well aware that he's spent the last three years in a psychiatric facility. He isn't so bold as to believe that he has made it away unscathed. There will be pitfalls, damage done. The drugs alone had been a problem closer to the Fall. Mood swings, mild hallucinations, and viciously uncomfortable detox, but he had hidden that much from Will, who hadn't wanted to see. Now he's doing better, but he's ever watchful over himself. Intense flares of anger he keeps in check, and intent to do damage falls under the same heading.

Truly, there is evidence that Will shouldn't trust him. Especially not at this point, when the two of them are still recovering, still fragile, still capable of so much violence. And yet here he is, secure against Hannibal's chest, safe in his arms, trusting Hannibal to keep him from injury. Hannibal thinks, for a split second, that this had not merely been an exercise in control and trust for Will. It's humbling, this unexpected gift. Will's trust, even if the other man may not see it as such.

"Privileged," is the word Hannibal settles on after a pause, slowly sliding his hand down from Will's neck to instead settle carefully on his injured shoulder. He doesn't press; his touch is merely warm and solid. And while he is reluctant to draw back in his entirety, this is something that does need discussion. But... later. Will is going to need some care first. Hannibal gives the scar a final stroke before he starts to ease his hand away. He will not overload Will.

"Surprised, perhaps, but not unpleasantly so. You may stay as you are for as long as you need. Then I would ask you to tell me what you require from me." In this, Hannibal phrases it as a suggestion, not a command. The intensity has passed, but the last thing he wants is for Will to gather himself together in his own pride and risk a crash.

He's not sure what this all means, or where they are going with it. Will believes that this won't be the last time they partake in it (whatever 'it' could be classified as). His current state is proof of the benefits of opening himself up to Hannibal - of trusting him. No duplicity. No more games. They had both agreed on such. As dangerous as Hannibal may be, evidence strongly suggests that Hannibal is in love with him and will not gravely harm him. Be that as it may, the problem lies in successfully navigating Hannibal, in their makeshift life they have together. Before, he found the potential knowledge of his own importance empowering (Hannibal had just answered with privileged), it was
- perhaps still is - tempting to use it against Hannibal in some way, but deception and power plays are exhausting.

"That's reasonable," Will responds, palms coming to rub at the sides of his legs, getting himself ready for movement, ready for the impending disconnect from Hannibal. More communication - specific communication on this - is on their docket, but before he can do that, he'll have to sort himself out better. He has no clear picture of his needs presently and Will's unsure of what he's exactly comfortable with revealing at the moment, too. Personally knowing is one thing, admitting and asking is another.

"I'll have to think on it."

With that said, he pulls away from Hannibal and goes to the sink, washing his hands and then returning to his earlier task. He feels more at ease, the intense images and feelings dulled and just a lingering memory, the scream in his throat quiet for now. The knife is just a knife and Will Graham is still a marked man cooking with Hannibal Lector in their kitchen.

There is much they need to talk about, but Hannibal accepts Will's answer for what it is. He'll think on it. True, Will has never been the most responsible man when it comes to his own health, but Hannibal will allow him the time he needs to search through himself. He can only imagine what Will is thinking, discovering this about himself in a fit of desperation. While Hannibal is fascinated and a part of him wants to push, to edge Will out of his comfort zone, the impulse is old and out of place. He ignores it. He is... unwilling to risk this. Not in a way that truly matters. Right now, Hannibal knows that his only goal aside from keeping them both alive and out of the FBI's hands is attempting to regain Will's shattered trust.

Their joint effort in the kitchen goes well after that. With Will's help (and gentle instruction) the next few hours pass comfortably. The stew - when it is finished - is flavorful. A recipe Hannibal had once made, save he'd used lungs instead of simpler cuts, but it turns out well. He talks about the dish itself - a shade of the way things once had been - and merely stands to wash the dishes and save the leftovers once they're finished.

He checks Will's wounds that evening, and it's slightly less clinical than it had been before, but he doesn't push. He merely settles on safe conversational topics as he cleans and dresses the incision to Will's shoulder and tests the movement he has. It's healing well.

Much to Hannibal's relief, while there are no more surprises like the one in the kitchen, the air between them has shifted. It's tentative but he notes that Will seems less closed off and Hannibal needs to walk on eggshells far less. The next few days pass comfortably, each settling into this new routine. Will helps him cook sometimes, but other times Hannibal merely directs him to a book or another task in order to not risk Will's shoulder. It's comfortable, if different. And through it all, Hannibal doesn't push the issue, doesn't try to remind Will about what had happened in the kitchen. It's a thought that burns curiosity through his mind every evening but in this, he's determined to let Will make his choice.

Chapter End Notes

Merry's tumblr!
Dapperscript's tumblr!
Hannibal glances back mildly, and while he can't see Will properly like this, the steadiness in his tone speaks for itself. While he's made a point to avoid mentioning what had transpired a week ago, suddenly it seems pertinent again. "Would it give you the control you desire? How captivating you are... a desire to control and be controlled. Even now I am wholly unable to predict you."

A week after Will's near-breakdown in the kitchen, after dinner has been eaten and dishes washed, Hannibal tells Will he wants to check on his healing once more. It takes little time to get Will situated upstairs. There are a few rooms in the house Hannibal found them, and while he'd taken the master bedroom (for Will had seemed far more comfortable in something less opulent) he's made a point to always check Will's injuries in a smaller guest bedroom. He refuses to be so bold as to invite Will into his own room, and he won't invade the only room in the house that strictly belongs to Will. The third room is comfortable neutral ground, and Hannibal allows Will to situate himself on the bed as he wishes before he gets to work, sitting beside Will.

His fingers are light and quick, checking the tight scar upon Will's cheek first. The muscles have knitted together, and while the scar remaining will forever be unsightly (as far as society is concerned, anyway) Will can always hide it under his beard. Hannibal palpates around the scar, careful not to touch it directly, and he's pleased at the progress. Will's shoulder, however, has recovered enough that it draws a slightly pleased hum from Hannibal's throat. It's not yet fully scarred, but what scabs remain are deep and will likely fall off in time.

"You're doing well. While the scar will likely feel restrictive for quite some time, I believe - if you're
careful - you can start doing more than conservative physiotherapy. I'll walk you through a few exercises I'd like you to start, and I would ask that you start to massage the scar as often as you can stand. It will be uncomfortable, but it will relax the tissue so it won't be quite as restrictive. I would recommend a moisturizer instead of simply using soap in the shower. Scar tissue can be very fickle.”

Life goes on and it does get easier in ways for Will. They are at least a step or two above civil now, conversing mostly about mundane topics, safe topics. Will has accepted that the questions that float up to his consciousness are not always worth giving voice to. Resisting curiosity remains a constant in his dealings with Hannibal. The polite may be maddening, but subjects that may involve or lead back to people like Alana and Molly are risky and ridden with grief. Having tasks has helped Will feel more connected to the situation, to their life... There's a newfound enjoyment in cooking with Hannibal, in learning and applying himself. Strange for two killers to be living together peacefully, Will thinks. They are surely a dark fairy tale in the making, their ending unknown.

At night, he remembers the look and feel of twinned wrist scars, thinks on their evening in the kitchen, of a murder constructed, of Hannibal's sweet controlled voice, a consistent grasp on his throat, of exploratory fingers stroking his smile--

Will may have surrendered, may have obeyed and kept his hands by his side, but it was Hannibal who had first given into what he needed. Will didn't realize it then, he'd foolishly thought Hannibal had been calling the shots, but anything Hannibal does is a response to his anticipated needs. It's an epiphany that has been sitting with him for a few days now, one that he feels many things about.  

His shirt is off, he is seated on a chair as Hannibal finishes looking him over. It's well received news that he can begin light physio. Healing had been holding Will back and proved to be a laborious annoying affair. At this point he'd normally rise and slip on the roomy shirt and head his own way. Instead, Will stands up and takes a step toward Hannibal.

"Take your shirt off," he says plainly. "Going to take a look at you." He means the gunshot wound, yes, but this is also a test for Will who is curious about his attraction and how far Hannibal will let him go.

Hannibal is expecting their routine to follow the same path it has for the past two months. He checks Will's injuries, he either gives recommendations or takes time to clean them or administer what little care they need, Will listens and dresses (at first with Hannibal's help and then by himself) and Will leaves for his room. It's a detached routine that has warmed slightly since Will's request to speak more, but Hannibal is still expecting more of the same. He's already carefully leaning back to sit up straight on the bed, his mind fixed upon what exercises would be best to regain full range of motion and strength, when Will stands up. This isn't necessarily a shock; Will often gets up to walk away for privacy while getting redressed. But this evening it does come as a surprise because Will takes a step closer.

Will's command comes just as Hannibal looks up at him, politely curious, and while he doesn't allow himself to look shocked, there is a telling pause in which his expression goes carefully blank. The expression of a man who hasn't quite decided on a reaction. Hannibal remains still save for the smallest of twitches of one hand, an impulse he forgets to tamp down. And while he regards Will in a curious silence for a few seconds, he is... intrigued. Will has made a pointed effort to not ask about Hannibal's injuries. It's an immediate shift in control and he wonders briefly if that hadn't been Will's intention.

The prospect of exposing the extent of his vulnerability leaves a bitter taste on Hannibal's tongue, but Will's careful enunciation tells him this isn't merely concern. This is... something else. And Hannibal
can't help his curiosity.

"I see. Of course." The hand that had twitched before finally moves over and the other joins it, Hannibal casually unbuttoning his cuffs before moving to work on his collar. Buttoned shirts have been far easier on him than the alternatives Will enjoys, and Hannibal makes quick work of them, carefully shrugging his shirt off of his shoulders and pausing only to fold it before setting it aside.

The reason for Hannibal's tentative movements as of late becomes immediately apparent. The bullet wound itself is ragged looking, as it had entered in through his back and out through his abdomen, the skin around the exit wound torn and dark. It's closed over by now, but there is still deep, dark bruising from the hole down to the waistband of his slacks, and the same thing is apparent on his back, though Will can't yet see that.

"You don't need to concern yourself," Hannibal says mildly, but the wound likely speaks for itself. "It will heal properly in time."

Will's demand effectively stirs up Hannibal's curiosity. He can see it flicker across the seated man's features and it may just mirror his own. Ridiculously, the urge to help unbutton Hannibal's shirt pops up, but he promptly stamps it out. To Will, that kind of familiarity or closeness would be more intimidating than a hand around his neck. But of course Hannibal manages just fine and button by button, the older man is one step closer to becoming half-undressed like Will is.

He makes no effort to hide his eyes as that travel across now exposed skin. The torso before him is distinctly masculine, defined shoulders, prominent collarbones, lightly muscled arms, greying chest chair and then comes the results of the Dragon's opening attack - a gunshot wound marred abdomen. It's unsightly, yes, still very much in the throes of healing, but in its reveal Will realizes something far uglier.

"Yes, time. The great healer of all," Will remarks with a note of bitterness, lips curving downward as he backs up.

"How often have you pushed yourself so you could spare me some form of discomfort? How often have you hid your pain away from me?" He quizzes, clearly displeased at how injured Hannibal remains - how bad it still looks. "I'd say you should know best, but we both know you can be more than a little foolish when it comes to me."

He's pissed off thinking of Hannibal going out to town by himself - without Will's knowledge - of the potential risk of something medically going wrong. How would Will have even found out? Will would have been lost. Abandoned. He's pissed because he should have known better, should have been more helpful, especially in the beginning. Hannibal shouldn't have allowed him to be so petty. It's far easier to mask the guilt and fear of losing Hannibal with irritation, so Will glares down with disapproval.

Will's frown doesn't necessarily come as a surprise to Hannibal, but he finds himself idly curious about the cause. He doesn't look down at himself; he's been treating his own wounds for long enough to know exactly what they look like. He knows he'd been lucky. To be shot through the abdomen was a death sentence without medical aide. Death commonly occurred in minutes, or following sepsis, hours to a few days later. Dolarhyde's bullet, however, had been aimed at a slow death. He had never intended the shot to kill Hannibal. Merely make him suffer. Perhaps part of it had been simple dramatics. To shatter the wine bottle, to set his stage. For whatever reason, the round that had pierced him had done damage to Hannibal's muscles, but had missed puncturing anything vital. Sepsis had still been a concern, as had figuring out whether more damage had been
done; just because organs hadn't been punctured didn't mean they hadn't been nicked. But Hannibal had instructed Chiyoh those first few days, hazy with pain and fever, and the drugs he had instructed her to get had done their job, as had her quick, delicate hands under his instruction.

The first week had been touch and go, and Hannibal knows he owes his life to Chiyoh. To her steadiness and skill, and her willingness to open the exit wound a little more than it had been. Even now, though it's hidden by the dark, mottled bruises under the wound, there is an incision connected to the wound, closed over now. Chiyoh saving his life once again.

Will's immediate displeasure is still curious. Hannibal has since dismissed the dangers of the wound. Were he going to die by this particular wound, he would have by now, and lingering on what could have been has no place in good fortune. Still, he carefully watches Will's expression, hands braced on the bed, making no move to cover the injury from Will's gaze. He's not ashamed, even as bitterness bleeds into Will's voice. The reason is quickly evident and Hannibal only barely lifts his chin in understanding.

"Ah. As I said, there is no need for concern. The shot was not aimed to kill, but for suffering. And while his execution was perhaps amateurish in his petulance, he did what he had set out to. Unfortunate for him that he had not aimed for a fatal wound."

Hannibal sounds unconcerned because he is. He has been left to dwell endlessly on teacups and time. There's no use concerning himself with a dead man's motives beyond occasional irritation when the wounds remind him of his limitations. But clearly Will does not share that same viewpoint. Hannibal finds himself wondering if Will's anger is truly anger, or if it's covering for guilt. His tone indicates the former, but his words indicate the latter. Truly a curious man.

"But if those questions were not rhetorical... I believe the answer should be evident." Will hadn't known about Hannibal's pain, and it's clear by looking at the injury that it has to be painful. Of course he'd been hiding it. "In the off chance it's not, I have pushed myself often. And yet I remain. You didn't need to concern yourself with my pain; I was and am capable. But yes, Will. When it comes to you... well. You have always been a blind spot, as you well know."

Of course Hannibal downplays his concern which only adds to the list of things that annoy Will. It'd be far easier if he didn't care, if he wasn't travelling down the slippery slope of guilt mixed with apprehension over the possibility of losing Hannibal. It's a weakness, yet another vulnerability, and it's a heavy weight that sits in the bottom of his stomach. At first, Will hadn't thought about it, obviously stuck trying to come to grips with what had all transpired, caught up in all of his own grief and confusion. Now, though? Now it pisses him off because needing Hannibal is one thing he struggles with, but the thought of losing him... after everything they have been through is like being doused with ice water. It seems like the worst imaginable outcome - the kind that Hannibal's idea of God would take a perversely delight in.

"Capable?" Will scoffs, hands clenching into fists by his side before he relaxes them a moment later, some agitation fading. The word 'capable' surely describes Hannibal Lecter to a tee. Will raises his hands to touch, but seems uncertain on his destination for a few seconds before coming to rest them on Hannibal's shoulders, gripping tightly. Will moves closer, forcing the seated man to spread his legs so he can slot himself between them. The fact that they are shirtless, his own scar pretty much in Hannibal's field of vision matters not. "Careless," Will states, looking down at Hannibal, restrained emotion evident in his voice.

"Your life's not just yours anymore, do you hear me?" He's shaking slightly, fingernails digging into shoulders. Will resists the urge to shake Hannibal, but only just.
There's more to be said, it's all he can manage for now.

The play of emotion comes as a surprise, though a curious one. Hannibal is expecting unease, perhaps discomfort, and definitely anger, but the level of the latter far outweighs his expectations. Fitting, perhaps, that Will continues to surprise him even after these years. Hannibal accepts it, and while he knows he could refute Will's accusations easily, he chooses not to. Instead he merely regards the other man and tries to limit his outward interest. Will is not a rat in a maze; he is fascinating and ever so surprising. Hannibal merely keeps his hands where they are on the edge of the bed but he does spread his legs when silently prompted, and he allows Will's hands to come to rest on his shoulders. It's painful merely because of the press of nails so close to the mild cuts across his back from where the ocean had demanded her pound of flesh against the rocks. Hannibal had spared Will that detail, and unless Will looks, he plans on keeping it silent.

He's far more occupied with Will after all. Will's empathy is a driving force and Hannibal can see desperation and anger and - if he's not mistaken - fear in Will's eyes, only one of which he's expecting. He's keeping himself contained, but the delicate shake to Will's body speaks for itself. He considers this, considers the possibility that Will could care, and finds it as unexpected as it is humbling. Hannibal glances down, silently affording Will his point.

"I do," he agrees, and while he doesn't apologize, the sound is laced in his tone. "But you must give me some credit, Will. I know my limitations. I know what we needed. And you were unfit to be called upon." Hannibal carefully sidesteps the fact that Will had been far more capable than himself. Will's mental state has always been a consideration. "I managed. I disguised myself and used crutches while out. It's also worthy to note we are no longer in Baltimore. The people here were more than happy to help. I pushed myself, but I was never going to risk serious injury. Especially not with you to return to."

Hannibal lifts one of his hands then, just enough to set it on the sharp line of Will's hip. It's a gentle touch, reserved, but it speaks of a care that Hannibal has been careful to keep unsaid.

"In the future, would you like me to discuss necessary outings with you?"

Entirely rational and reasonable, Hannibal's words do very little to ease the tension within Will. Capable. Right. Of course. It's not as if he had expected Hannibal to not take proper precautions - it wasn't about disguises or letting Will know about future outings - it was Will coming to a more thorough understanding of everything Hannibal had been putting his body through to save Will from any measure of discomfort. He would have liked to think that, even in his earlier state of malaise, he would have helped at least a little if called on, but they will never know now. It's a petty desire to want to pull away from Hannibal's touch, and he ignores it.

"I had believed that needing you was perhaps the hardest truth to reconcile with myself," Will muses aloud, directing his eyes to the wall behind them. "Turns out the idea of losing you may be it instead." He shakes his head, caught between frustration and wanting to laugh at himself from the sheer ridiculousness of it all. Hannibal Lecter has taken from him, changed him, marked him and yet he has given more than Will would like to ever credit him with.

Eyes flit back downward - over what little he can see over Hannibal's shoulders - and his eyebrows draw in tightly. Will takes a step back, jerking the older man with a muttered, "Stand up and show me your back."

He should not be surprised, and yet once again Hannibal finds himself going silent, surprised by
Will's words. They're musing and distant, almost bitter with frustration, and they catch Hannibal entirely off guard for a fraction of a second. He had been under the impression Will had merely been irritated with him for putting them at risk, or for risking further injury. He had not quite connected the dots - until now - that Will had been afraid of losing him, and it's enough to make Hannibal go still, almost unnaturally so. He's caught, brow lightly furrowed and hand still on Will's hip, because in all his plans, in all his dreams, he had never expected that to be an admission. "Will..." the word is a thought with no context, a protest Hannibal has nothing to add to. He goes silent.

Perhaps he has been a little too blase about this interaction. The thought of misjudging Will's distress in such a way is humbling yet again.

So caught in his own thoughts is he that Hannibal fails to notice when Will looks back down. He feels the shift of Will's muscles and a quick glance shows him Will's frown. He doesn't need to wonder long. Will is quick to make his demand and Hannibal merely looks at him for a second before he braces both hands on the bed and carefully rises. It's the same action he's been doing since the beginning, but even he knows he looks more vulnerable with the visible wounds. It's not something he wants Will to think of while looking at him. But in this, aware he's already upset Will more than he'd intended, Hannibal sends Will a final look and then does as told, turning around to show Will his back.

The bullet wound is smaller in back, but it looks far less healed, the bruising darker, the edges reddened. Hannibal can't reach his back as easily, nor can he reach the scrapes along his upper back. Most are healed and scarred over by now, but one or two still look a little raw. His only consolation is that the ocean had not thought to slam him against the rocks a little lower. While Hannibal would be glad to be rid of the Verger brand, the pain would have been maddening. The flesh had never quite recovered, the brand tight and thick. Medical care had not been Alana's top priority, after all.

Hannibal obeys, the following motions slow and controlled as he eases himself into a standing position. Will feels like a disapproving parent in this situation, stiff, displeasure spilling out of every pore as he waits for the unhappy reveal. But this isn't a poor grade on one of Walter's report cards, it's Hannibal doing as he's been told to - turning around and allowing Will to glimpse something unsightly.

What shocks him isn't the mostly closed over gashes from the rocks, or the less healed entry wound - clearly Will could have helped, can help now - no, it's the Verger brand, stark and unforgiving on Hannibal's lower back... As if Hannibal had been no better than livestock, just another pig being sent to slaughter, except that hadn't ended well for Mason when the proposed meal had barred its claws and teeth and had fought back. If Hannibal was to be anyone's victim, he would be Will's. However, the empath thinks it goes both ways - after everything they've been through, it'd only be fitting.

Will had not been aware that the branding had occurred during their brief stay at Muskrat Farm, not that he he had allowed himself much time to dwell on the circumstance after the fact. He had wanted to lock that part (namely Hannibal) away, had gleaned only the basics from Alana about the events and she had got the hint to not be overly forthcoming. After he woke in his bed, he knew something had to give, something had to change because he hadn't been ready to simply run away with Hannibal, thus his rejection had followed. Even now, Will wouldn't have ever thought himself as the type who could run away, but apparently murder and a deathwish was a catalyst for such a thing to come to fruition.

He feels many things about the brand - disgust and anger toward Mason, a pang of sympathy knowing how difficult it surely is for a man like Hannibal to have such a hideous mark from an equally hideous perpetrator.
"I didn't know," Will remarks quietly, his hand coming to the scarred brand, tips of his fingers swiping across VERGER, as if he could smear the name away. "Our bodies only tell half the stories, if that."

The curious thing about Will Graham is that Hannibal cannot predict him with any sort of accuracy. Small inklings here and there, borne from a knowledge of psychology, yes, perhaps a few moments where he can facilitate conversation by gently prodding the right area, but ultimately Will is beyond prediction. Once he had been malleable. That is no longer the case. So when Hannibal stands and silently shows Will his back, he's not entirely certain what the reaction will be, and as such, a small tensing of his muscles is evident, but otherwise Hannibal remains silent and still. Will could react in many ways; Hannibal himself has only vaguely seen the ugly brand upon his back, and only in the reflection of a mirror, and he can't begin to predict Will's reaction.

The touch, therefore, is a surprise. Hannibal twitches subtly, but it's proof enough he'd expected the reaction to be far more violent than a light touch. He's quiet for another aching moment and then he merely turns his head enough so that he can half-see Will in his peripheral vision.

"Had you known that evening, it might have changed your mind. Swayed your resolve," he explains slowly, each word measured and careful; he's uncertain how Will is going to respond and he doesn't want to incite violence lest Will injure himself again. "I chose to stay silent. I didn't want you to stay with me out of a sense of guilt. I've told you, Will. My wish is for you to be genuine. Whatever form that might take. You needn't concern yourself with the scar."

He doesn't call it a brand simply because voicing it aloud, he fears, will draw Will's attention even more. Instead he shifts, carefully rolling his shoulders. Will's touch is at once dull and hypersensitive depending on his positioning. The brand had deadened sensory nerves while alighting ones nearby.

"I view it as a reminder. What I have given up and what lengths I am willing to go to for you. Perhaps it is not your name, nor was it your doing, but that is your mark, Will. Mason sought to humiliate, but he merely made my resolve to free you that much stronger."

Would the knowledge have swayed his decision on that fateful morning? Will's unsure, but doesn't wish to think on it. While it may have been interesting to postulate what could have happened, if he would have chosen a different path, teacups don't gather themselves up - not for him and certainly not for them. He knows this all too well.

Once again, as it seems to be a part of Hannibal's agenda, he's told not to be concerned, like his care is simply an inconvenient state to find himself in. A flash of agitation sparks up; Will would love if he wasn't concerned with the scars and wounds that riddled Hannibal's body. Unfortunately, his caring isn't attached to a switch he can just flick off. He bites back the retort that threatens to come out, choosing to let Hannibal finish.

When the end is reached, Will's palm covers the brand, eyes narrowing as he works through the insinuation. His mark. Another one.

"You sound like a martyr, Hannibal," Will replies evenly, his hand leaving the brand to to grasp onto Hannibal's waist. He presses in closer, fits his chest against the wounded skin of Hannibal's back and rests his uninjured cheek against a shoulder blade. "What wouldn't you do for me, I wonder?"

The press of Will's hand against the brand draws the faintest of sounds from Hannibal's throat. It's almost nothing, merely a slight hitch to his exhale, but considering who it comes from, it means quite
a lot. The touch burns in places and feels deadened in others. But that it's Will's touch means far more than Hannibal can say. Part of him expects Will to form claws, to rake his nails over the raised edges, but Will's touch is soft, possessive, were Hannibal to give it a descriptor. He stays still and waits, and is only somewhat surprised when Will's hand settles on his waist and he feels the length of Will's torso move up against him.

It burns and overwhelms in equal measure but Hannibal only closes his eyes and bows his head, feeling the slightly rough press of Will's cheek against his back and knowing this is important. Will has touched him before, but never like this. Never with possession and never with the softly contemplative tone. Hannibal once again finds himself feeling like the man with a finch perched cautiously on his finger, wary of moving lest he scare it away.

"There is very little I wouldn't do for you, as you must be aware by now," he says softly, and after a moment's consideration, Hannibal moves his arm enough that the inside of his forearm presses against the hand on his waist. "But I'd hesitate to call myself a martyr. I would rather not die; I admit, I am selfish when it comes to your company. Not a martyr, but I am willing to withstand a great deal for you."

It's easier to touch Hannibal, granted it only occurs when they're talking about serious subject matter. The idea of a gentle touch given while passing by is still out of the question. There is to be no sweet doting between them; Will isn't sure he has anything like that left within him. He used to tuck a child into bed, used to kiss an adoring wife goodnight. Now his body embraces a twisted reflection of himself, his hands twitch at remembered violence. However, it had been far worse to hold back and not touch. Will has learned his lesson in that regard. He doesn't want to put himself into the compromising position of when he'd been rutting against Hannibal like an unruly dog in the kitchen. Will can't let himself get pent up or touch starved to that point again, so he allows himself to reach out when he wants to - most of the time, anyway.

This contact right now is probably not the wisest, but maybe Will wants to test Hannibal's recklessness and put it out on display for the two of them to look at.

"Would you kneel for me? Lick my feet?" It's a half-whispered challenge, tinged with curiosity. Will doesn't know if he would even want that to happen, but there it is, out between them. Although, the thought of Hannibal dressed in one of his customary fine suits and getting to his knees, dust and grime be damned... It holds a certain appeal to it, just for the wrongness of it, and it's one that encourages Will to kiss up a mostly healed laceration. "You're going to make a depraved man out of me," he murmurs upon finishing.

Will's touch alone is enough to draw Hannibal's attention, to focus his thoughts in on the points of contact. This is dangerous, though not for the ways Will probably believes. This is dangerous because it has the capacity to tempt Hannibal past previously drawn lines. He has every plan to let Will come to him, to let Will make the choices that matter in this, but he can't deny his own temptation. He can't deny how simple it would be to turn and find out just how Will Graham tastes, to catch his lips in a kiss that might never happen. Hannibal won't force it, and he truly is content if this is all that ever happens. But the pull of Will's care is difficult to ignore.

Something made even more intense at the unexpected press of lips to his back, closer to his shoulder. Hannibal goes very still with a soft, bitten-off sound of surprise and he watches his own temptation take on a new form. He shoves it down too, for his own hedonism and impulsiveness has no place in something he wishes to be entirely in Will's hands. Even so, he carefully swallows down a lick of his temptation and focuses instead on the question, though Hannibal already knows the answer. He's
quiet for a few moments, more to compose himself than for any other reason, and then he slides his hand up to set over Will's, giving it a squeeze.

"Yes," Hannibal says, enunciating the word properly, then wetting his lips as if curious how it tastes. "Yes, I would kneel for you. Would lick your feet. Do you want me to kneel for you, Will?"

Hannibal glances back mildly, and while he can't see Will properly like this, the steadiness in his tone speaks for itself. While he's made a point to avoid mentioning what had transpired a week ago, suddenly it seems pertinent again. "Would it give you the control you desire? How captivating you are... a desire to control and be controlled. Even now I am wholly unable to predict you."

He can feel the minute movements of Hannibal, hear the quiet sound his touch has evoked, and it's a heady mix to have power like this, to be discussing it in such frank terms. Will's heartbeat picks up in response to the answer Hannibal gives, clear concise words, no ambiguity present and he's suddenly off kilter with where this could be going. Not in the literal sense because he can easily envision Hannibal doing the very action here in this room, but if Will gets off on it (in any sense)... Is he ready to face that?

He wants to step closer to the fire, to keep playing and daring, but things are spiraling into unsettling territory. Hannibal's observation that he both wants to be controlled and in control, does that sum him up nice and neat? It appears to be that way, at any rate. His hand leaves Hannibal's waist, quickly latching onto the older man's hair instead and growling out, "Face forward," and Will facilitates that process by jerking Hannibal's head unkindly.

Will can't stand to see that face, doesn't want to risk any amount of eye contact, not when he feels a great torrential mix of desire and conflict. He's not supposed to be aroused by prospects such as kneeling and domination. He takes a large breath, and then another, his grip eases on Hannibal's hair.

"You wind me up so goddamn much, how do you manage it?"

Other people, normal people, respond to outside stimuli in predictable ways. If A happens, B is the result. There are a few variables to account for - emotional range and maturity, pain threshold, intelligence, and many more - but people generally fit into neat little boxes, uninteresting. Cattle in their pens.

Then there's Will Graham. Hannibal aches to predict him, to unwind the way his clever mind works, and yet the surprise remains a thrill. Introducing stimuli A rarely results in a simple B for Will. Hannibal finds himself lucky if the results remain within the alphabet itself. And that unpredictability - that brilliance - has drawn him in like a moth to a flame since that first meeting.

He is truly taken by this broken, beautiful, spiraling creature, wanting to protect and learn and rend apart in equal measures. This, Hannibal thinks, falls into the final category. He can hear Will's breathing, can feel his pulse, and Hannibal senses the moment Will realizes that perhaps he has once again stepped in too deep, underestimated the sheer scope of Hannibal's affection. His obsession. Despite this, instead of backing down, instead of drawing back, Hannibal instead finds Will's hand gone from under his own. Before he has time to wonder, Will's fingers tangle in his hair and a sharp, sweet ache draws him up short.

Will's command (for it could be seen as nothing else) sends a rush of heat through him, but the tug to his hair has his breath hitching. It also has him obeying, allowing Will this moment. Hannibal could wrest control back at any point, and Will knows that. It's important because he knows it. Hannibal is
physically stronger, taller, and he has experience in swiftly ending life. And yet... Hannibal merely
faces ahead, head slightly bowed to feel the sweetness of Will's show of force. He's mesmerizing like
this, even if Hannibal can't see him. He can still smell him. Can still hear him. Will Graham has
always been a feast for the senses.

"I listen. I see what you have hidden for so long that perhaps not even you are aware of its
existence," Hannibal says simply, though his tone remains slightly tight until Will's grip eases. He
hadn't been complaining. "I wind you up only because your need to repress yourself borders on
pathological. It might surprise you to know that I've no need to employ mind games. As I promised.
No, dear Will. I merely see your desires, your needs, and instead of locking you away, or kicking
you down," the slight against Jack Crawford is clear, "I say yes. Within reason," Hannibal adds,
because while he aches to push, to see where this will go, he also knows how fragile Will still is.
How much he needs. And as Hannibal speaks, he makes a point to look forward. He's curious. How
is Will going to respond to a command working? Much more a command against Hannibal Lecter.

"Tell me, Will. How does control feel?"

It's both humbling and intriguing to know that he is, in this context, effectively getting away with
being rude to Hannibal. It's not Will's actual aim, just that his demands (orders?) have not been polite
in the least bit. Despite this, Hannibal has complied gracefully with each one, although with a bit
more of a response at the hair yanking. Will isn't sure if it's a positive reaction, but he thinks that it is.
If Will wants to control and be controlled, perhaps Hannibal is both a sadist and masochist when it
involves him. At this point, nothing would truly be that shocking.

Hannibal is giving him this, allowing this shift in the power dynamic and it is a slippery slope. Will
feels trapped, despite fully knowing that he isn't. He can leave anytime he wants, he can put a stop to
this and walk out of the room. No game is being played, except perhaps within himself and of his
own doing. He doesn't normally prefer self-delusion - repression - but at the same time, there's doors
Will doesn't open, a darkness he doesn't choose to breach. Expectantly, it's these closed doors that
Hannibal wishes him to walk through. Nothing would delight the good doctor more, Will thinks.

He tries to consider it rationally. He wouldn't be alone, Hannibal would surely not let him stray too
far or lose himself. The shift of Hannibal's head has Will refocusing on his hand still buried between
slightly silvering hair. Hannibal is now looking forward. Will hasn't forgotten what his last order had
been - to face forward - and Hannibal is making a pointed effort to ensure Will knows that it's being
obeyed. The point is only emphasized by the question that follows - how does control feel?

A careful exhale and then he murmurs, "Like a dangerous seduction." Will's fingers grip more firmly
in Hannibal's hair, pulling his head back and elongating Hannibal's neck in the process. It's a pretty
image, one Will wants to view from the front, so he indulges his whim, taking half a step back to
stroll in front of Hannibal, his hand firmly fixed in the hair still. It's a striking picture - Hannibal's
back arched ever so slightly, bruised and healing, but compliant for him.

"What does this feel like for you?"

His blood is circulating, he's breathing, but it's not enough. Will moves closer because it's what his
body is screaming for. Hannibal's heat, his scent, Will craves it. His lips skim along the slightly
protruding ridge of a collarbone, but he resists the urge to lick or suck, at least.

They are walking an edged line, the delicate curl of the blade sharp under their feet, waiting for the
barest uncertainty to justify cutting deep, and yet Hannibal feels no need to stop this just yet. There
are many ways to share intimacy and some are more powerful than others. Some would share a kiss,
and someday Hannibal will draw Will in close and do just that, if he's allowed. But there is so much between them, so many years, so many half-truths, and so, so much betrayal and bitterness that any kiss could sour in an instant. This is so much more fitting. An exercise in trust, in control, in boundaries. Actions speaking louder than words. He's done much to shatter Will's trust, but in these two extremes - dominance and submission - he can work at building it up once more if Will so allows.

He considers Will's words and finds them apt. Perhaps this is a seduction, but in more ways than merely sexual. Hannibal is seducing Will's very nature. Tempting that exquisite darkness. He almost smiles before the tangle of Will's fingers in his hair pull tight again and Hannibal draws in a slightly sharper breath before letting it out, arching slightly against the pressure to his neck. His throat is bared and there's no subtlety around that concept, but it still sends heat through him. As does the knowledge that he would gladly bare his throat for Will even without the control. Will is the only person he would consider doing it for.

His attention is split between Will's question and the way Will steps in front of him the next moment, fingers still tight in his hair. It's thrilling, the bite of pain sparking heat under Will's touch. And while Hannibal's eyes almost close at the brush of Will's lips, he recalls the command at the last second and refocuses, still looking ahead even if the urge to close his eyes is tempting.

"Many things," Hannibal says finally, though his voice is rougher due to the angle of his throat. "Fitting, that it should be by your hands. Thrilling for the same reason. Tempting. And in a sense, like absolution. I have no complaints," he adds, with the faintest twitch of a smile, "You needn't stay your hand. You're not hurting me. Though if you wish to, you may." It's at least a subtle confirmation of Will's suspicions regarding sadism and masochism. For Will, Hannibal can be a great many things.

A shudder follows Hannibal's answer. All of a sudden it feels too hot, too intense. Too much to take, too much to know and feel. Will's heart is galloping in his chest, his hand is now shaking. There's a shadow being cast on him, just a sliver of the darkness that wants to escape and be given freedom to roam and play. He could hurt Hannibal. Not kill, those fantasies were done with, they had no place in his mind anymore, but to hurt - to be allowed permission, be granted that much trust over another human's livelihood, over Hannibal. Would he bite? Scratch? Choke? No, think about something else--

Fitting. Thrilling. Tempting. The answers he receive echo in his mind. It's all too evident he's not ready for this, not ready to take it further and Will is pulling away from Hannibal's chest, his hand letting go of fine strands of hair, and reaching out to take Hannibal's own hand instead and bringing it to his neck.

"Make it quiet," he rasps out. An order, yes, but right now, more than anything, Will needs Hannibal to take control and be an anchor again. "Make it go away. For now."

For now, because Will isn't naive enough to think he's done with exploring this darkness.

Like this, it's difficult to see Will's expression but Hannibal doesn't have to. He doesn't need to see Will to know him. He can feel the control shaking apart in the tremble of Will's hand, can hear the slight unsteadiness to his breathing. For a moment, Hannibal imagines he can feel that curl of darkness dormant within Will rear its head, but he already knows this will need to end. It's only a matter of time before Will pulls back, and - sure enough - he feels the grip in his hair ease as Will steps back. To his credit he doesn't look panicked, as Hannibal had expected. He merely looks desperate, his eyes over-bright, fearful of himself, what he's capable of, but knowing that Hannibal
can help. It's that surety, the not-quite-request that makes Hannibal move.

His fingers, already spanning Will's neck, tighten ever so slightly. He presses his thumb to Will's carotid artery, careful to keep that touch a mere caress as he expertly grips Will's neck with the full span of his hand. It's not a grip to restrict air, not one to restrict blood flow, not yet. Instead it's possessive, reassuring for all its danger, and Hannibal sheds his submission easily, stepping into the role that Will needs him to take.

"For now," Hannibal agrees, "though we will talk about this, Will. We need to."

He leaves the statement to hang there for a moment, to ensure its impact, and then he carefully steps around Will and lowers himself to the bed, sitting sideways along the edge. He gives Will the smallest of tugs as he looks pointedly at the space in front of him. "Sit down. Face away from me, but remain close. Close your eyes, and keep them closed, but only once you're settled."

Hannibal's hand wraps around his neck, a promise of forthcoming care and concern and Will feels calmness start to trickle into his frantic body through that small point of contact. He wants to utter out thanks, but no, politeness still doesn't fit in this charged moment between them. He surely reeks of desperation, but Hannibal allows this concession, adapts to what Will needs with only the promise that this will be talked about at a later point. This. What was this anyway? An exploration into the darker parts of Will's psyche? Hannibal taking delight in Will's wicked desires? It all sounds troublesome, but there can be no denying or forgetting what has transpired between them.

When he receives instructions, Will doesn't feel graceful nor poised when he obeys. He shuffles over to the bed, faces away, and sits. He wants to see Hannibal though and suddenly the thought of not being able to has panic spiking up. Blinking rapidly, Will remains as he is for a few seconds, debating with himself, before he jerks into action, re-positioning himself so that he can face the other man.

"Not like that," Will mumbles out, licking his lips nervously.

Honestly, Hannibal doesn't want Will facing away. He's gorgeous like this, shaken and uncertain and slowly becoming himself with every lurching move forwards. Yet his penchant for avoiding eye contact is one Hannibal knows well and he merely wants to spare Will the panic. It's the plan, anyway. But after Will has obeyed and sat himself down, Hannibal feels the sudden spike in his pulse. Both curious and cautious, he hesitates and draws his hand away. He has no wish to hurt Will, and while there had been no Dahlia, Hannibal is leery until Will suddenly shifts around to face him, looking nervous.

His explanation is welcome and Hannibal considers him for a moment before he nods, accepting. "Traditionally you would be required to ask for permission, but as we've not discussed this beyond these moments... very well, Will. I want you stable." Hannibal reaches out again, settling his hand once more on the line of Will's throat. "If keeping your eyes open would help, you may," he adds, filing that information away. He'll need to ask in the future, to ascertain whether Will needs distance and control or a softer approach. Seeing as the latter seems to be the option for now, Hannibal keeps his hand low, carefully increasing pressure until he can feel Will's pulse under his hand. It's tight enough to give Will a slightly lightheaded calmness without risking injury. Hannibal allows him to focus on that sensation for a few seconds before he pauses to give Will time to come back to himself. Only then does he lift his free hand to gently card his fingers back through Will's hair. He doesn't grip. Not yet. But he makes a point to almost do so, testing the reaction.
It's not quite an admonishment, but Will still feels like he's fallen short somehow. He doesn't know much about this type of thing, but there are rules, customs surely, but he is off doing whatever impulses fire across his synapses. Disappointing Hannibal, perceived or otherwise, has the empath noticing the distinct discomfort that it brings. Nevertheless, Will is permitted to have his way and Hannibal's hand comes back to his throat and he observes that classic face watching him.

Fingers clench, the pressure increases and Will gives an appreciative sound in response. His own hands come to rest on Hannibal's thighs, fidgeting slightly against the soft fabric. Hannibal meets his gaze, his expression appears that of a careful construction, but that makes sense to Will. Choking is a dangerous activity to dabble in. Hannibal must be exceedingly careful in what he does. Lips part and eventually Will does close his eyes, calmness starting to set in.

When Hannibal's influence extends into his hair, Will practically groans. His scalp has always been rather sensitive and today is no exception. A bit like a cat, he nuzzles into the loose grip, wanting it to get tighter, giving a stilted nod to indicate as much.

Watching Will slide from the quaking nerves of being overwhelmed to his current state is mesmerizing. There is so much Hannibal wants to think about. Will's leaning towards dominance hadn't been expected, but in retrospect it isn't truly a surprise. Power takes many forms and this one is delicate and heady. He'd been fine exerting his control until the casual mention of hurting Hannibal, and then something had shifted. Hannibal doesn't think it had been a negative reaction, merely a powerful one. Powerful, like the thought of taking life. Powerful, like it had been so tempting that Will had perhaps scared himself. He'll think on it more later, muse over every second of interaction, but for this moment, Hannibal's attention is completely on Will.

He's careful, reading Will's pulse and his breaths precisely until Will's eyes finally slide closed - Hannibal's silent cue that he's reaching the place he'd needed. He's pleased, but even more pleased at the reaction he gets from his touch in Will's hair. It's immediate, enough to get Hannibal to lift his chin, reserved and in control but rapt with attention. And when he sees that nod, Hannibal merely hums a small sound of acknowledgement and eases Will in closer by his throat, though carefully. He darts a quick look to where Will's palms rest hot upon his thighs and then he moves, reaffirming his touch in Will's hair. Then he curls his fingers into a slow fist, a steadily increasing pressure that is equal parts fascinated and careful.

"Don't move your hands," Hannibal instructs, voice firm but warm. "Just focus on my touch. On my voice. You're doing well. Exactly as I asked. You're to tell me if it's too much." Hannibal tightens his grip in Will's hair until he feels it's just bordering on 'too much'. He carefully relaxes his hold on Will's throat, not wanting to overwhelm him, but he does keep his hand there, palm warm.

Will's steadily coming down, finding his way back to shore and away from a depth that he merely looked at, didn't even sink into, but just that peek had been enough. For now. He's not even worried about the impending conversation. All they have is time in this house, time to test and talk, to touch and become more tangled, because they are getting very tangled now, intricately wound up and Will doesn't know where the thread that binds them begins. Would it even be a thread? Perhaps razor wire would be more appropriate.

He'd been almost clutching onto Hannibal's thighs, so Will tries to relax his fingers at the instruction. His eyes flutter underneath his eyelids as the tension on his hair increases. Lips part at the hand easing its grip on his neck, at the uninhibited flow of air into his lungs. His scalp tingles, there's an undercurrent of an ache, but nothing unmanageable. Will lolls his head ever so slightly to each side to feel his hair pull in the delicious grip.
A soft moan slips out between his lips and his fingers rub unconsciously against Hannibal's warm legs. Goosebumps pop up on his arms, a shiver goes down his spine, and Will Graham is caught up in whirlwind of sensory input that is both arousing and calming.

"More," he breathes out, shifting closer to Hannibal, making himself available.

Safe, his hand comfortably tight in Will's hair, Hannibal allows himself the freedom to look, to study. Will has always been expressive but seeing him like this is something beyond even what Hannibal is used to. He looks calmer, at ease, with a low thread of desire running through him that Hannibal could still scent even were it not visibly obvious. It's dangerous, tempting, especially with Will's careful touches to his legs, but Hannibal won't take advantage of this. He's rapt, hearing Will's soft sounds, watching the peace and desire war on his face. Hannibal aches to kiss him, but he carefully tucks the urge away. This is something other than mere affection. Trust is difficult to foster; he doesn't take this for granted.

"All right. I'm going to push, Will. Push your tolerance," Hannibal says, his fingers stroking down the line of Will's throat, soothing, almost petting. "I won't hurt you. But you know your word if it becomes too much." He pauses only long enough to ensure the words have sunk through the layers of relaxation before Hannibal carefully tips Will's head back. He's slow and cautious, but bit by bit he increases the pressure of his hold in Will's hair, working to the point of pain, but not beyond. He doesn't tug, he merely holds, easing Will slowly to the edge of where he can handle it.

His goal isn't to hurt, or even to test Will's limits. He knows there's an edge, a careful edge where sharper pain fades into a soothing calm. The metaphorical grip of a kitten's nape, aimed to soothe. He's striving for that peace, to see Will's expression twist in an uncertain pain before relaxing into the serene calm of being held safely close to the edge without fear of tipping over.

Will is frayed seams and poorly patched holes, but he trusts Hannibal at least in his this. The older man's touch and voice are beacons of light, perhaps the way his home used to be. Could Hannibal become his home - a place to rest his weary head and find himself safe and content? (It's already starting, really). They've danced around each other for years, each playing their own game, each in their own head, guarded, but allowing vague glimpses of their true nature, just the mildest of flirtations. Now their masks have been removed, but Will can't or doesn't often look too deeply at Hannibal. It's difficult to accept everything that he sees there.

The unveiling of 'more' is done delicately. Little by little, Will's head is pulled back, Hannibal's hand tightening deliciously in his hair, a sting accompanying the motion. His breath shudders, his own fingers spread out. His neck is now bared and their positions reversed from a few minutes earlier. It makes him think back to Hannibal's mouth tearing flesh from Dolarhyde's throat, of him biting a piece of Cordell's cheek off. The Dragon had bit the wives, the mothers...

"Hannibal..." Will can hardly recognize his voice, tone low, but airy. "Will you bite me?"

When Will's breath stutters, Hannibal stills his hand but keeps the pressure steady. This, he's willing to bet, is Will's limit, and once it's been reached, Hannibal leans back just enough to get a good look at Will Graham. He's breathing harder, the flicker of his pulse visible in the extended line of his throat. The slight flush to his skin is becoming and Hannibal silently drinks in every flicker of emotion that passes over Will's face. He's beautiful like this, floating on a calm only he can see. Hannibal may be the one securing it, but it's Will's peace. His bliss. It belongs solely to Will, and Hannibal has no desire to interrupt something so personal. His reward is merely the look on Will's
So he finds himself honestly surprised when Will speaks his name. Hannibal blinks and his posture straightens. He looks from Will's face all the way down to the gnarled scar smiling back at him, but he doesn't see anything that could be causing Will undue stress. So he's even more surprised when Will makes his request. Hannibal stills, and just for a second, his grip in Will's hair relaxes.

Of everything Hannibal had been expecting, this hadn't made the list.

He's too careful to let his shock show for more than a second, but the request throws him. Tempts him. He glances at the long line of Will's throat and swallows silently. He's never been one to bite, never been so gauche as to leave identifying marks behind on his kills. They hadn't deserved anything so personal. Dolarhyde had been the exception. He'd not been killing. He'd been hunting, with Will at his side.

But this isn't killing or hunting. This is a low request, simming and dangerous. It's so tempting that Hannibal can feel it slide a knot cleanly into his throat. How fitting that once again, it's Will Graham shoving him close to the edge. Hannibal wets his lips.

"That... that would not be wise, Will." He replies, but his voice is tellingly low. "Teeth are far more intimate than a hand at your throat. I don't want to do something you're not positive you want..."

Trailing off, Hannibal goes silent for a long moment, his eyes again on Will's throat. He's not going to say anything else, but the question wells up despite his leanings. He's curious. Hannibal's curiosity has always been a problem.

"But... you did ask. If you're sure - and only if you're sure - ... where would you like me to bite you?"

Will hadn't expected for such a thing to cross his mind, let alone to ask for it. To want it. Hickies were one thing, made by simple persistent suction... a kiss would have been, undoubtedly, more acceptable, but that's not what he craves. Biting is something infinitely more violent; he'd lectured on biting patterns, studied their pictures, for Christ sake. Sexual predators bit. He'd very intentionally avoided being that kind of lover in bed, ever careful to not emulate any behavior that could remotely be considered violent.

The Chesapeake Ripper had never bitten. Had Hannibal Lecter, as a man who undoubtedly had more partners than Will, been passionate enough to bite while in between the sheets, even just a nip? Will hopes it's a no, but that's from an ugly possessive side of himself. A part that is quick to remember that Alana has known Hannibal in a way that he has yet to be introduced to. Funny how his jealousy has no shame or logic for Will is both uncomfortable about sexual interaction with Hannibal, yet would be jealous of Alana's experiences. Perhaps he really is just this petty.

He knows his request is only being considered because he's asked. Hannibal likely sees it as a gamble, that he's being reckless. The first reply is telling. Unwise. That's definitely one word for it. Will knows he's skipping a few steps ahead in their increasing closeness and shaking up their pieced together order. Will also knows Hannibal wants to, wants to taste his skin any way that he can and that he's been waiting for years to have an invitation to do so.

Will's eyes flutter open and he exhales slowly, thinking on his answer. He knows the location he desires is on his neck, but would that come across as tacky? Will decides to risk it.

"Side of my neck," he responds in an almost whisper and the empath goes a step further, hands finding their way to Hannibal's forearms, holding there as he helps himself to straddle the older man's face.
"Give me a mark. Please." Will tilts his head to the side. Surely, after this it will be enough, he’ll be sated.

Dangerous. This entire endeavor is dangerous. Will is being reckless, yes, but he's not the one giving serious consideration to the correct response even though Hannibal knows that 'no' is the only response that should suffice. That particular knowledge is only compounded by the way Will opens his eyes and moves his hands - directly against what Hannibal had told him to do. Had they already talked about this and set certain rules, Hannibal knows he'd have denied Will based on that alone. But this - whatever this is - has been undefined. It's open ended. Will has the right to move as he wishes even if his actions are reckless and... tempting.

Hannibal draws in a breath he means to be steady but it winds up pointed and sharp, his grip in Will's hair easing when Will not only gives him a location but goes as far as to move closer, straddling his lap. It turns an already stunned moment into a charged one, a current running through him as he looks up at Will, thoughtful. He should deny this any further power. Should nip this in the bud, as Will is still compromised. But this... Will close, his heat overpowering, the long line of his throat tilted off-center as he willingly bares his throat to a man who had ripped one out only a few months ago... this is tempting in a way it shouldn't be.

The 'please' is the final nail in the coffin. Hannibal closes his eyes with a soft exhale, one that is laced with desire just as much as defeat. And, slowly, Hannibal allows his hands to fall back down, leaving Will's hair and his neck. Instead one hand settles on Will's hip and the other drops down to the exposed line of Will's neck. "Reckless as always," Hannibal murmurs, though he sounds both fond and breathless.

"Don't think this will become habit, Will. We will need to discuss this."

Yet already Hannibal's careful, pressing two fingers to Will's pulse to silently mark out where it will be safest. Desire curls through him like smoke from a fire and despite his posture, he's affected, his own pulse quicker, his breaths a little heavier. Hannibal makes his choice, bracing his hand carefully behind Will's shoulder to keep him from harm as he leans in, pressing his lips to the side of Will's neck - a final warning, perhaps. One that goes unheeded. And with a soft, punched-out sound, Hannibal follows Will's request, lips and teeth closing over a safe patch of over-warm skin. And, perhaps more for his sake than for Will's, Hannibal goes slowly, starting with barely any pressure before biting down steadily slower. By the time he's biting hard enough to bruise Will's skin, the hand on Will's hip is already tight enough to bruise. This is heady and dangerous, his senses full of Will Graham and everything that entails. The urge to push, to bite him until he bleeds, is almost overpowering. But while he's allowing this, he refuses to truly injure Will.

Hannibal may be enticed by the prospect, but Will still isn't one hundred percent certain he will receive. Hannibal is obviously skilled at holding back, a master at playing the long game and the profiler has copious amounts of evidence demonstrating just that. Will is being awfully forward and pushy now with moving himself into the other man's lap. It's an act of blatant disobedience, thus he thought he should tack on a 'please.' All of his marks had been against his will, given to him in moments of terror; he's determined to have one that isn't.

This is bold. Pressed up close against Hannibal, Will cannot hope to keep his obvious arousal hidden. In this moment, with his neck exposed and waiting, he cares not. Hannibal holds him, one hand to his hip, the other feeling out his neck. It would seem that yes, he is being given this - a bite from Hannibal Lecter.

When lips first meet his skin Will makes a soft whine. It's needy and anxious and reminds him a bit
of an over excited pup, but perhaps that's what he is in this moment. The tender touch doesn't last, teeth are introduced, just the slightest of pressures until that, too, changes into something more forceful. Will's breathing is ragged, his body is shaking, instinct screaming at him to pull away from the sharp pain, but he resists. He balls his hands into fists in his lap, trying to keep himself from reaching out. In his dreams he's seen Hannibal bite and tear from the Dragon's throat, spilling blood. He sees the image clearly in his head now. It only serves to illustrate the point that the man he's currently wrapped up in, that he's all but courting, is dangerous and Will Graham is hopelessly, desperately, caught up in him. It takes him a moment to realize he's murmuring Hannibal's name aloud in a litany.

Hannibal feels momentarily drunk on sensation, intoxicated by Will's presence in ways he's powerless to avoid. While Will doesn't grab at him, belatedly obeying rules he's already broken, he's already fully ensnared Hannibal beyond his understanding. This close, Hannibal's senses are awash in the heady scent of Will's arousal, so sharp he can practically taste it on the air, and he's not unaffected by it. Will is too close, seated on his lap, lines of heat and temptation that Hannibal is going to deny with more difficulty than he cares to admit. Except this. Except his teeth sinking against Will's skin, bruising deeply in a way that will undoubtedly leave a superficial mark behind. He can feel Will's fluttering pulse against his bottom lip, can hear the breathy sounds, his own name on Will's lips like benediction in a way that sends heat racing through him.

This should be it. Any further and he'll risk crossing into truly dangerous territory. He can already feel the line of Will's arousal against him - part of the reason his fingers are so tight on Will's hip, to keep him from moving - and there's no disguising his own, with Will so close. But even as he considers drawing back, he knows this isn't what Will had been asking for. He'd not only asked Hannibal to bite him. He'd asked him to mark him, and he suspects it's not something superficial Will is after. In some ways, perhaps, this is Will wrestling control back.

So he pushes, carefully. His free hand moves up to cup Will's cheek, gentle, almost achingly soft in comparison to the harsh press of his teeth. Slowly Hannibal winds his fingers once more into Will's hair, but not to pull. It's softer, soothing, and he allows himself a slightly rougher sound. It has to be clean, and so he makes certain it is. An increase of pressure, slightly sharper, and Hannibal is rewarded with the burst of salt and copper against his tongue. Will isn't bleeding a lot, merely enough to break the skin, but it sends a dangerous heat racing through him. One that comes close to shattering his control.

It's too much. It's reckless, impulsive, and it's a mistake, but one he holds for a few seconds longer before he forces himself to ease up in the pressure of his teeth, then carefully draws back. His teeth are tinged even in the low light and he's breathing hard, lips curled into something that could arguably be called a snarl. And then Hannibal moves, stretching his free hand out for the first aid kid on the side table, one he keeps there in the event of Will slipping a stitch.

He has a sterilizing wipe against the wound in seconds. It's crude, likely damaging the tissue, but this is what Will had asked for. Hannibal keeps his fingers in Will's hair, soothing still to counteract the rougher movements.

"You need to rest," Hannibal says, his tone brokering no argument. In his own way, far more reserved, he sounds about as wrecked as Will, the thin veneer of his control compromised. "I won't do this again unless we discuss this plainly beforehand, but I want you rested. This," he says, careful as he cleans Will's wound, "Will likely scar." Despite himself, he can't help the curl of pleasure at the thought.
Need dictates that he should try and seek friction and lewdly thrust against Hannibal in any way possible, but Will does not. Can't, really, as the grip on his waist is unrelenting. He's not alone in being aroused, he's practically sitting against the proof. Not grinding is for the best because already the sensations are almost too much. Overwhelming and keenly sharp like the teeth that, blissfully, do not show him mercy.

Will Graham is a man that doesn't want mercy. A part of him may desire this stimulation, may enjoy this flirtation with violence, but there's no denying that he feels like he ought to be punished as well. His list of crimes is long and not all toward or involving Hannibal, but he certainly feels remorse over his impromptu deathwish, feels guilty that Hannibal had to push himself and play the dutiful caregiver while Will simply brooded.

The bite goes on. A hand touches his face sweetly then moves into his unruly hair, still deceptively tender, and for a moment Will thinks he might honest to God cry. He doesn't want, doesn't deserve--Thankfully, the next instant the bite intensifies and he gasps loudly, a groan following in its wake and he's fairly certain his skin has been broken. It's good, it reflects his insides now.

Without warning, the pressure stops and Hannibal pulls away. Will blinks his eyes open, not even aware when he'd closed them. Hannibal looks wanton, teeth reddened slightly and Will is taken back by the sight, speechless by what's happened. The feel of a cool wipe coming to his neck has him frowning, the smell of alcohol not welcome as it wafts into up his nostrils. Will nods at the instruction. Rest. And communication. He could do that.

He's in a bit of a daze when he asks, "Tasty?"

It's literally a taste of what could be. A promise of a possible future where Will has reconciled with his demons, where he asks and wants in equal measure. Which is precisely why Hannibal stops, and why he immediately labels his actions as reckless, as going too far. Not for Will's sake - though he does wonder at Will's stability following something like this - but for his own. Hannibal's control isn't endless. His grip on control is viciously important, and he'd intentionally thrown himself towards the edge on the basis of nothing more than the soft plea from Will's lips to spur him into it. Will Graham is infinitely more dangerous than even he knows.

Hannibal can't lift him off his lap; his injuries are deeper, compromising his strength, but he compromises by gently bracing his arm behind Will's back before easing him back. He's careful not to shove, but Hannibal makes a point to put some distance between them, though physically it's the last thing he desires. The taste of Will's blood is like sin on his teeth but he can't bring himself to regret that much. He merely takes his time in cleaning the area around his own mark on Will's neck before reaching back to the first aid kit. His hands are just closing on a gauze pad and ointment when Will's question comes and Hannibal pauses.

"As always. You are a continual vice. One I fear I have... overindulged in here." Biting had not been in the cards, yet the memory has marked him nearly as visibly as his teeth on Will's neck. Hannibal has never been permitted to bite like that before, not without the intention to kill. He's quiet as he bandages up Will's neck and then hesitates momentarily before he eases himself back onto his feet. "Rest, Will. Normally I wouldn't think of leaving, but my presence may serve as an unwelcome distraction." Hannibal hasn't forgotten the need for contact following intensity like this, but in this moment, he deems it unwise.

"That said... if you find yourself unsteady after this, I would ask that you come to me. I can at least offer stability."
Will understands why he's being ushered off Hannibal's lap, but it still feels like a display of rejection. Right now that may be the hardest feeling to reconcile with himself, or at least what he's choosing to focus on. Hannibal plans on leaving him, on creating space between them and the profiler doesn't particularly want that, but he won't speak up on it. The older man hadn't even been able to answer his question directly. (Tasty?) Will suspects it's Hannibal who may be more shaken than he is. At least for now.

So, Will is docile and lets the newly acquired wound be tended for. It aches, feels like a recently discovered bruise that one is drawn to pressing on in order to validate its existence, but Will refrains knowing that he would get chided for it. "Alright, sure," he says back agreeably and reaches for his shirt, pulling it on as Hannibal leaves the spare bedroom. He's left to his own devices and now that he's alone, he does bring a hand up to the bandage. Hannibal's mark because he'd wanted it, asked for it. Will waits for a few minutes before leaving the bedroom to go to the bathroom so he can see it.

He pushes down thoughts of Abigail when she had been similarly bandaged from the wound to her neck. No. This wasn't like Garrett Jacob Hobbs trying to kill his daughter. This act of savagery was between equals, or at least as close as Hannibal and Will had been to that before. Will smiles at himself in the mirror. Today had been a good day.

Chapter End Notes

Merry's tumblr!
Dapperscript's tumblr!
Reciprocity

Chapter Summary

"You know, while you were indisposed, I took up my therapy with Dr. Du Maurier," Will begins casually, taking them on a tangent that he knows Hannibal can't turn down. "We discussed the idea of, 'if you play, you pay'. Referring to you, of course." Will tilts his head to the side just a fraction, surely bringing attention back to the bandages in the process. "I fully expect that if I play, I won't remain unscathed. That's how it's worked in the past. The only thing different now are my eyes being wide open and watching you with great interest, Hannibal." Will smiles.

Chapter Notes

Ta-da! Update. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal waits that evening for any sign of Will. He'd meant what he'd said; while he had insisted upon distance between them - on taking time to properly calm down and let Will think - had Will shown up, he would have gladly welcomed him. To his mutual relief and disappointment, Will doesn't come. Hannibal listens through distracted bouts of mindfulness, and he lingers around the house instead of going outside to walk. There's a deep restlessness under his skin that has no outlet, but he makes a point to give Will his space. In this, he won't compromise. Instead he focuses on his own thoughts as the sky outside fades to a spilled orange.

As night creeps up on the house, the sky unveiling a blanket of glittering stars without light pollution, Hannibal merely goes through his own routine, checking the doors and windows, tending to his own injuries, and then retiring for the evening. He reads far later into the night than usual, feeling restless and perhaps mildly concerned, but when he finally decides he can't keep vigilant any longer, Hannibal reluctantly settles down to sleep. He's impressed, though. Will Graham is either foolish or made of stronger material than Hannibal had assumed. One thought is very clear though: they need to discuss this.

Hannibal decides that sooner is preferable to later. He's given Will over a week to think, to mull this over, and it had merely led to another charged moment between them. Perhaps this conversation is unwelcome, but he'd come so close to willingly crossing his own set boundaries and he refuses to do
anything that will put Will in jeopardy. No duplicity. This is important. So in the morning, though Hannibal doesn't necessarily feel rested, he goes about his routine in relative silence, checks to see what supplies they're getting low on, and then simply makes coffee. Breakfast, he fears, will merely sit like lead in Will's stomach.

Only when the coffee is made does Hannibal make his way upstairs to Will's room. He doesn't enter; he merely reaches out and knocks, knuckles light upon the wood.

"Will. Coffee is ready. If you are amenable, I believe we should talk. Take your time." It's a warning, merely so Will won't feel ambushed, but a warning nonetheless. Hannibal draws in a slow breath to center himself and then turns, making his way back downstairs to wait at the table.

Will keeps to himself the remainder of the evening. Perhaps he's being a little cruel in withholding his company, but the time alone allows him to appreciate Hannibal better, to reflect on their intimate moment in peace and relive the memories with a sharper clarity. He's not really alone, Hannibal's touch lingers on his neck, sore and bandaged up, but completely there and Will is enraptured by it. He's more than confident by Hannibal's reaction that it's the first bite of its kind to be given.

He doesn't get much sleep, his mind swirling with thoughts and questions. Lack of sleep due to his own conscious pondering is acceptable to Will. It's the nightmares that bother him, waking up with his heart pounding and body drenched in sweat. Those types of nights are more rare here - only maybe once or twice a week now. When Hannibal knocks, Will is laying on his back staring up at the bland ceiling. Time to talk about things. Their conversation is to take place over coffee apparently, in the kitchen - another stage that has hosted a few heated exchanges.

"I'll be down in a few minutes," he calls out and with a yawn, Will forces himself out of his bed. He's clad only in a t-shirt and boxer briefs and he decides to take a calculated risk and not put on pants. If this was his home too, he could be in his underwear, surely.

Padding to the bathroom, Will splashes some cold water on his face, does his business and rolls on some antiperspirant before making his way to the kitchen. A steaming mug of coffee awaits him at the table and Will runs a hand through messy curls before seating himself. "Here I am," he comments wryly, reaching out for his own mug and taking a sip. This would prove to be interesting. He only felt a little nervous, but nothing could be done about it. He has to bite the bullet and work through these things with Hannibal.

Will's state of dress is the second thing Hannibal notices when his companion walks into the kitchen. The first, tellingly, is the bandage at his neck. A stark reminder in white over how he'd come so close to casting aside his own rules and boundaries. A dangerous reminder, truly, yet one that sparks no danger in Hannibal's chest, merely a flicker of curiosity and sentiment. Will's posture speaks for itself; he apparently feels no shame regarding the injury which settles something in Hannibal's own posture. No remnants of any visible breakdown, then. It's a good sign. Still, Hannibal is careful as he lifts his coffee, sipping at it to inject a pointed pause as he quickly takes in Will's lack of pants. He's not so rude as to linger, but it is... a surprise, if nothing else.

Hannibal allows it. His own clothes are simple for him, yet perhaps a little more carefully donned. He's wearing a slate gray dress shirt, the collar buttoned save for the final one, and dark slacks, socks, and shoes. There's no need to dress finely, but it serves as a distinct barrier. Hannibal has always viewed clothing as a statement. A punctuation point to a conversation without need for words, a whispered sentence, sometimes a threat. In this, the statement is simple: distance, business, yet his posture is slightly more welcoming. He has no desire to alienate Will entirely.
"Good morning, Will," Hannibal greets, and his voice, while nothing like the raw rasp of the day before, is warm. This is important; they need to discuss this, but there's no reason to pin Will down clinically to get his answers. "How are you feeling?" The 'after yesterday' is left unsaid, but heavily implied.

Unlike himself, Hannibal is a bit more dressed than usual. It's not a three piece suit by any means (thankfully), but Will wonders who it's for - armor to keep Hannibal safe or to send a pointed message to Will? Both perhaps. Will's lips curve into a thoughtful frown as he takes a slow sip of his coffee. They are both regarding each other warily, but under the guise of politeness - no outright staring allowed. That would be rude.

Will huffs a little at the question, sardonic grin coming to take over his mouth. "Oh, I'm just peachy," Will responds cheekily. "You know, hiding out in Canada with my dangerous not-quite-lover." He takes a moment to pause, eyebrows raising at his own admission. Lover? He swallows, sits with the word, considers it. Sure, why not? Things were heading that way, that much was for certain. His body seemed to be discovering what it found stimulating and arousing and Hannibal was in the top of that list.

"Learning new and interesting things about myself every day, such as, I get off on the thought that you could seriously hurt me. I both want to wreck and be wrecked by you. Surprise! Didn't sleep last night, kept replaying everything in my mind while my hand stroked the bandage, like it was some prized memento. At least I didn't have to go rub one off in the shower thinking about you last night, so that's a bonus... All in all, It's been a great."

Hannibal's expression remains fixed even at Will's little slip. It takes a great amount of effort; Will isn't the only one surprised. But Hannibal merely regards him with a detached sort of curiosity. Will isn't an experiment. Hannibal doesn't look at him like one, but he does make a concentrated effort to keep a tight grasp on his control, mostly in a vague, irritated attempt to make up for his failings the day before. And Will, intractable and tying as ever, immediately set out to make his efforts obsolete.

His only consolation is that he hadn't been reaching for his drink at the time of Will's admission. He surely would have frozen in place. As it is, Hannibal lifts his chin and regards Will carefully, looking both like he's expecting to deflect an attack or like he's considering the merits of provoking one. Will Graham has always pushed him to behave outside the norm, and this is no different. His insouciant admission is equal parts becoming and frustrating. Hannibal folds his hands atop the table and allows himself the barest twitch of his lips in a smile that closely resembles the ones he had given Will near the beginning of their very chaotic relationship. It was, arguably, the time Hannibal had felt most in control of the situation.

"As blunt and tactless as ever, I see," Hannibal finally says, and he's unable to help the curl of amusement in his tone. Will's attitude is as infectious as his admission had been. Even now, Hannibal fights back the urge to shift in his seat, his gaze lingering for a second too long on the bandage at Will's throat. Then he simply meets Will's gaze again, or the general area.

"I suppose there was never going to be another way to have this conversation. Very well. You're aware of what I'm capable of, and I feel it's important to issue the reminder that despite the last few months, I am a cruel man, Will. You are my exception, not my rule. That said, I don't wish to harm you unless you specifically ask for it." Again, his gaze lingers on the bandage on Will's neck. Hannibal draws himself up marginally straighter. "And I'm afraid wrecking me and desiring the same for yourself isn't the same as outlining clear boundaries, though I've no objections to either. Perhaps it would be simplest to start by defining what you're comfortable with and go from there."
To Hannibal's credit, he remains composed in the face of Will's brashness. Just a slight quirk of his lips indicate he's amused by some sentiment Will has brought up. Will would normally find this to be an accomplishment, but now it hardly matters.

Being blunt and tactless, as Hannibal had called it, feels like a safer way of approaching this all. Will doesn't mean to treat the subject matter with sarcasm or scorn, but he doesn't know if he can simply converse about these darker matters over coffee as though they were casually discussing the weather. There used to be a mind state he possessed while engaging in 'therapy' with Hannibal, two bodies sitting across from each other not unlike how they are now, but Will doesn't currently feel equipped to handle the verbal back and forth. Not about these intimate affairs that cast a shadow.

And good Lord, he's sitting in his boxers while Hannibal sees fit to deliver his warnings and whatnot. You are my exception, not my rule. Yes, of course. He's the one that was allowed to get away, allowed to live. Hannibal seeks for them to create order and rules to play by, to have Will 'list off' what he wants as if he's sat in his room coming up with such a thing.

"You know, while you were indisposed, I took up my therapy with Dr. Du Maurier," Will begins casually, taking them on a tangent that he knows Hannibal can't turn down. "We discussed the idea of, 'if you play, you pay'. Referring to you, of course." Will tilts his head to the side just a fraction, surely bringing attention back to the bandages in the process. "I fully expect that if I play, I won't remain unscathed. That's how it's worked in the past. The only thing different now are my eyes being wide open and watching you with great interest, Hannibal." Will smiles.

In truth, getting a solid answer from Will had likely never been on the table, but Hannibal still finds himself curious at this new tangent Will carves out for himself. It's a clear diversion from the topic at hand, but Will is right: Hannibal can't turn it down. "We discussed the idea of, 'if you play, you pay'. Referring to you, of course." Will tilts his head to the side just a fraction, surely bringing attention back to the bandages in the process. "I fully expect that if I play, I won't remain unscathed. That's how it's worked in the past. The only thing different now are my eyes being wide open and watching you with great interest, Hannibal." Will smiles.

She's a good psychiatrist though, her insight with Will enough to prompt Hannibal into a reluctant dip of his head, acknowledgement. She hadn't been mistaken, and he finds himself pleased she had brought Will's attention back to him. Pleased and curious. He listens intently, weighing Will's words carefully. The implication is clear.

"Dr. Du Maurier is an insightful woman. She has a fair point. But I'm afraid in her haste, she dismissed important variables. She's not mistaken: you have paid, and dearly. But painting you with the same brush reserved for Jack and Alana and Dr. Du Maurier herself is no longer accurate."

It once had been. Once, Hannibal had seen Will as interesting, but fleeting. How wrong he had been.

"And your eyes wide open with interest - while flattering - is not the only thing that's different, Will." Hannibal regards the stark white of the bandage on Will's neck for a moment, remembering the unique thrill of having Will so close, so intimate. Of having his blood blooming under Hannibal's teeth and his soft moans in his ear. He glances back at Will then, noting his smile, and offers a fraction of his own in return. Will knows how deeply Hannibal's obsession runs, though Hannibal has never come out and said it. The unspoken shift in their relationship is what has changed.

"I wouldn't kill you." He pauses then, just for a fraction of a second, like there's an unless... hidden in there somewhere, but moves on smoothly. "But it's exceedingly reckless to freely hand me a blank slate. Limits are important, Will. There is a clear difference between mild asphyxiation and taking a scalpel to your skin." Hannibal pointedly allows his eyebrows to lift just a fraction, to emphasize his
earlier statement: he's a cruel man.

"You've had a week to think. Consider it an order if you must."

At the very least, Will receives a hint of a smile, but Hannibal won't be dropping this topic, that much is clear as he steers their conversation back to where he wishes it to remain. He does raise a good point, in the realm of this - whatever this may be - a blank slate is far too dangerous. Will will have to give him something.

"I'll try..." Will concedes uncomfortably, pushing his mug around on the table. "Well, I don't want to lose any body parts. I'd like to keep all my fingers and toes... Ears." He clears his throat, a hand coming to rub at his mouth at the memory of coughing up Abigail's ear and he can't hide the wince that flashes over his face. It's not something he often thinks about and for good reason. "No more scars on my face either." Will's face is something he's sensitive about. He's not exactly a vain man by any means, but the face is the first place a stranger likely looks at, and he already has accrued a few prolific marks that garner enough attention as is. While not as dramatic or bloody as his abdominal wound, there had been such a distinct terror experienced from Hannibal's saw blade and the touch of Cordell's scalpel. His death had felt imminent during those incidents. Yes, Will Graham could do without gaining any more scars on his face.

"Nothing that would require stitches either, at least not for a while," Will reasons. Healing is tedious business, he'd like to avoid having to worry about taking it easy in order to not rip stitches out. "I obviously like the choking, hair pulling. I assume I'd be okay with restraints to some degree, sensory deprivation... Most roughness depending on the context." Will fidgets until he forces himself to take another drink and he clasps the mug tightly.

"I'd also like you to uh, initiate more touching. You know, like you used to."

Loath as Hannibal is to displace Will's air of control, this is necessary. He wants no uncertainty in this matter, and he wants verbal confirmation for his own sake, for when his mind inevitably begins to wander. Will likely has no idea the sway he holds over Hannibal (though Hannibal somewhat bitterly wonders how he could miss it even now), but he doesn't have to know. And as Hannibal watches Will's fidgeting start, watches him push his mug around, he focuses all of his attention on Will, rapt. It's telling body language, and Hannibal is ready as Will begins to carefully feel out his terms, like he's walking in complete darkness with only his hands to guide him.

No amputations of any sort. Hannibal isn't offended at the implication: Will is smart to include it even if he hadn't harbored the thought. He much prefers this man intact, as recent events might suggest. The addition of no marks to the face is mildly interesting, but Hannibal still files it away. A quick glance over Will's face, noting the faded scars and his more recent, jarring acquisition makes that one simple to determine the reasoning behind. Hannibal nods. Incrementally the tighter line of his shoulders start to ease; he appreciates Will speaking despite his discomfort. And while he does seem briefly thoughtful over that little addition - at least not for awhile - he nods again. No true damage. He's glad they're on the same page in this instance.

He listens to the rest of Will's list, noting small questions of his own, but he politely waits for Will to finish before lifting his own mug to his lips for a careful sip. When he sets it down again, his expression is mildly curious but there's more warmth there than before.

"You would prefer I not treat you like you're fragile enough to shatter at my touch," Hannibal interprets. "Very well. Also, I have no interest in doing you great harm. No scars to your face, no injuries requiring stitches." It's a confirmation, just so Will knows he's been heard. "I'll ask you to
extrapolate on the rest, but take a moment to breathe. In return, I ask the same limits. When we're both healed, I've no qualms with injuries requiring stitches provided you allow me to teach you proper form and pressure and safety. I merely ask that you avoid my hands and my face. Anything identifiable in public."

Hannibal considers his words for a moment, looking at Will thoughtfully. "I imagine we will dictate more as we think of it, and as we heal. For instance, at present I would ask that you avoid the gunshot wound, and do what you can to minimize sudden movements that could compromise it. In the future, that limit will drop. But that said, I have no qualms in giving you control. In seeing you inflict pain at your whim. It suits you."

Overall, Will doesn't think this is the strangest conversation that they have had. It's a necessary evil, drawing a few lines in the sand for each other. It could be viewed as a consideration even. He isn't surprised about the specifics Hannibal brings up. It makes sense to avoid hands and faces, makes sense to not jar the bullet wound any further which makes him wonder if he'd gone too far yesterday with sitting in Hannibal's lap. If he hadn't been left with evidence, Will would almost think he had imagined the entire scenario all together. Sitting in Hannibal's lap. The thought strikes him as more bizarre than asking to be bitten.

"It suits you. They have come a long way for such a sentiment like that to not startle Will. Sure, fundamentally, it still does. Will may acknowledge his wickedness, dip his toe into it, skip a rock across the surface, but he doesn't delight in it, not like Hannibal. I don't have your appetite. Will isn't entirely sure that that isn't still true in ways. He's working toward acceptance, but it's coming from a place of defeat. Barriers may be coming down, but it wasn't what Will had wanted when he'd agreed to bait the Dragon.

"As far as extrapolating my answers for you, I don't know how helpful I can be," Will admits ruefully. "I haven't done much - haven't done anything like this before." He is admitting his lack of experience with a small shrug. Logically he knows that what they are discussing can be sexual and nonsexual in its application, but it's difficult to see the divide because of how intensely his feelings and thoughts seem to be surrounding Hannibal.

Hannibal isn't particularly surprised by Will's admission. It stands to reason that this is new. Will Graham had been a deceptively careful man before; he'd likely avoided any fleeting push of darkness for fear of what could have happened. To a man who had spent countless hours in the minds of killers, one small misstep could have been a dangerous trigger. It had, of course, been what Hannibal had been counting on all those years ago. Something he makes a point not to mention out of respect.

Instead he merely regards Will as he lifts his mug to his lips once more, using it as a natural pause in conversation to give Will time to collect his thoughts once more. When he sets the coffee back down, Hannibal's tone is more open, engaging. The difficult part of the conversation is over for the most part. "I hadn't expected you to have done this before. One reason I admit I was insistent on having this conversation: it's simple to lose oneself in this if not careful, and I would rather know when to stop - or stop you - than need to piece you back together following an incident. These activities can be grounding, can be freeing, but they rely heavily on trust. They can be... shall we say rather emotionally raw at times. Which was my main concern," Hannibal adds simply. Will had asked not to be coddled.

"I expect nothing from you, sexually," Hannibal goes on, folding his hands atop the table simply, like this is perfectly acceptable to just come out and say. For him, it is. "In fact I would encourage you to put it from your mind. Drawing enjoyment from our activities is acceptable but I absolve you
of any obligation right now. This - our... relationship - is complex. Unsteady. And I have no desire to push you where you are unwilling to go. As I told you. But, on the subject of what you are comfortable with," he continues smoothly, pointedly leaving no blatant room for argument, "Some questions to prompt thought: how far are you comfortable with the asphyxiation going? To the point of leaving bruises on your neck? To the point of losing consciousness? Or simply to that light, unhurried sensation? And when you spoke of 'most roughness', I am assuming you meant manhandling and not being struck."

At the phrasing of piecing him back together, Will wonders how many times he can fall apart and lose himself before he remains too broken to be gathered back up. Parts of himself fade away, truths he used to hold close warp and Will doesn't feel whole. Is such a thing possible for a man like him who has always hidden aspects of himself and been the freak? He won't be saved, there's no redemption arc for him. All Will has is his frayed edges and his desperation. The lines continue to blur and he holds onto Hannibal like a life preserver anyway.

Is he relieved that sex is apparently off the table? Will Graham doesn't know. He has urges, like any other human, but he has no idea how to go about them. It seems strange to think that he's more comfortable with being bitten than a kiss. He wants the latter, but asking for it... No.

"Bruises are fine. I don't know about passing out. Perhaps only just," Will answers a bit distractedly, mind already zipping forward to asking, "Do you want to strike me, Hannibal?" He glances at the man sitting across from him, curiosity etched over his features. Will is more interested than he'd like to be about such a thing. Would it be a slap or an actual punch? Does love translate through those more violent actions as well? Does Hannibal only want to give Will pain that he also finds pleasurable, or something else, perhaps a gamut of sensations?

Interesting. A nibble on the line, as it were, Will is carefully reserved but Hannibal notes the change in his tone, in how quickly he'd rushed ahead to get to the topic he'd found intriguing. The question, as it so happens, isn't if Hannibal wants to strike Will. It's if Will suddenly finds himself wanting to be struck. Hannibal regards him carefully and though his own curiosity is muted, it's still clear in his expression. "I want to see every side of you. Every angle. Perhaps someday that would equate to striking you, within reason. I have no desire to hurt you needlessly." Pain for the sake of pain is for lesser men, and Will Graham is not a lesser man. "The pain I would inflict has purpose. To ground or shock, to occupy your mind. Perhaps one day when you've healed suitably, the option will open."

He allows himself to imagine it only for a moment before he carefully tucks it away. Later. "The issue, of course, is that a strike to the face is most common, but we've no wish to leave you more scars there. I have no problem with it should you wish to, however," he adds, with the faintest curl of a smile. "Provided the injuries heal before I would need to make an appearance outside of wherever we happen to be staying, you are more than welcome to strike me in turn. One could argue it might even be cathartic."

Hannibal is carefully testing the waters just as Will is, observing his reaction as much as he is listening and filing away what Will is saying. "To give yourself control again."

Purpose. Intent. There would be no meaningless pain, no actions taken simply from the desire to enact them. There's some small measure of comfort from that. It remains true to Will's formed concept of the kind of man Hannibal is - that nothing is done without thought or intent behind it. The degree of calculation may vary, however, and Will knows he greatly influences that, that he increases the likelihood of Hannibal being reckless. This is his design, it would seem.
"I've fantasized about killing you with my hands, you know this," Will murmurs, his own eyes glancing down at his fingers wrapped around his mug. "I don't know how I feel about flirting with danger like that." What he means is, he's afraid of not being able to stop himself. Hannibal should, on all accounts, be able to prevent any major harm, but still there's anger and hurt that, even after all these years, frightens him. Opening the floodgates, as it were, is a risk Will doesn't know if he's ready to take.

"Maybe I'd like to know some specifics of what you'd like to do or have done to you?" Blatant conversation change, but Will feels that it's within his right to do so. He's being more forthcoming than he had anticipated.

The reminder of Will's old fantasies is sharp and briefly heated, nothing more than a quick slice at Hannibal's control but it is nothing if not effective. He allows himself to remember Will's frustration, the brimming darkness that had been spilling out into his very being before he'd locked it tightly away once more, afraid of his own impulses. It's reckless to even consider allowing Will to poke at the closed lid again, but Hannibal will always be reckless when it comes to Will. He has no desire to die, would likely be able to stop any attempt were it to go too far, but he can't deny a silent lick of pleasure at the thought of Will's fixation. To a man like Hannibal, it's nothing but flattery.

"Duly noted. It would, of course, be your decision. But I do trust your self-restraint. This last attempt on our lives," the cliffside, though Hannibal decides to lean heavily upon ambiguity to spare Will the discomfort, "has likely put those desires into better perspective."

Hannibal allows a heavier silence to follow, merely so his words can find their mark. Then, chin lifting, he swiftly allows Will his change in topic, picking it up with far greater ease than his companion had.

"But, as per your statement, your company alone is more than sufficient. In this, I have no qualms in following your lead. I'd like you. In whatever capacity you are willing to allow. But that said," Hannibal continues, aware that Will is likely looking for even ground, "I enjoy giving you commands and having them followed. Using my hands and body to restrain you, yes, but also simple words. When you're more comfortable with the idea, leaving you to a task with the understanding you will remain in the proper headspace, though that will take time and trust."

It's a long-term goal, perhaps. One that gives Hannibal a mild thrill. The idea of a simple command being able to soothe Will's mind is tempting, but not strictly in the way Will has been implying. Hannibal's impulses are not entirely based in control, or sex. For him, care is also on the list.

"I like restricting your air, and I will admit a selfish desire to leave marks, though only if and when you permit. Nails, if it would be preferable. As for what I would enjoy done to me... I enjoy pain by your hand, Will. I doubt - barring the limits we've already discussed - you could do something to me that I would not enjoy. My submission isn't about losing myself in the feeling, but rather in giving you the control and being permitted to watch you as you are."

If his hands were to enclose around Hannibal's neck, or if he were strike him in the face, would Will see Hannibal or his mind's creation of the black wendigo? Will doesn't know and that's what he finds unsettling. He doesn't want to kill Hannibal, no, not the man who makes him coffee and cares so diligently, but that smarmy sick creature? There would be a certain appeal to killing that beast, to putting it down, even if only in symbolism.

Effortlessly, Hannibal closes one topic and shifts to the other prompt after a suitable amount of silence has passed. The answer starts with the straightforward admission of just him and in any
capacity... It burns color into his cheeks and Will takes to looking at the grain of the wood on the surface of the table. He will never understand how he has caught and kept Hannibal's eye all these years. Being the object of such passionate devotion, while flattering, ultimately has Will fearing for the inevitable waning that most likely will come to pass. Sure, he's Hannibal's prized trophy now, treated with a sense of reverence and awe, but when the novelty wears off, what then? Will is not as cultured or interesting, he would have no spot in the circles Hannibal used to dwell in. Hannibal is used the opera and dinner parties. Will likes his solitude, dogs and fishing. Maybe all that binds them is their dark desires... So, little by little Hannibal will feast and indulge in him while Will, helpless, is left praying to a God who doesn't listen for him to remain intriguing enough to stay in Hannibal's good graces.

The more Hannibal talks, the more an undefined want fills Will. Greedily, his thoughts slurp up Hannibal's words and images of possible activities bloom in his mind. He already has had a taste of certain things and it's enough to build a baseline for his fantasies to spring from. It takes him a moment to realize Hannibal has finished talking and Will has been tapping his fingers against the table. He stops, licks his lips and shakes his head at himself.

"If I ever begin to bore you... If you ever lose your fixation," Will starts in a strained, tight voice. "I don't think I could bear it." He pushes his chair back and walks his empty mug to the sink. He places it down and turns on the tap to rinse the dish. Will is falling, becoming more tangled and this conversation has only emphasized it.

He watches Will stand, but his words linger long after he's gotten to his feet. Hannibal merely observes their impact, uses them to find the cause of Will's nerves, and he finds himself honestly taken aback that Will's distress stems from a belief that this is fleeting. That it's possible Hannibal could lose his fixation. It's laughable, but the tightness to Will's features makes Hannibal remain where he is for a few moments before he silently presses a hand to the table and rises. "What a curious creature you are." Slowly, Hannibal crosses the distance to where Will has set himself, looking compact and small in his vulnerability. The dual desire to crush and nurture flickers minutely behind his eyes, but the latter - as is always the case with Will Graham - wins out. He reaches out and sets his hand on Will's shoulder, touching him as he once had, as Will had asked him to.

"I don't believe you understand just how impossible it is for my fixation to wane, for you to bore me, Will," he says softly, but there's a matter-of-fact tone to his voice that says this isn't mere sentiment. "I am a man of particular tastes. As you well know. I expect nothing but the best - in my personal life and in my companionship - and I will accept nothing less. I hate to be so blunt, but I was very content in my life before meeting you. I worked very hard to remain undetected, to carve a place for myself that none would suspect. And it succeeded. I had the Baltimore high society clamoring for my attention and the FBI wrapped neatly around my finger. Do you really think I would gladly give that up - would suffer my reputation being dragged through the dirt, would suffer the ridicule and treatments at that blasted hospital - for a man I would one day lose interest in?" Hannibal's tone, while still reassuring, has hardened slightly, a bitterness creeping into the words. He has many residual feelings regarding his stay at the hospital, many things he has no desire to divulge to Will. His hand tightens slightly, trapping Will's shoulder in a squeeze that holds a little more power behind
it than simple reassurance would dictate.

"Make no mistakes, Will. You will never bore me."

His tone, while shielded, implies far more. Will's freedom of emotion is important. He wants Will to want to stay with him. But Will leaving has never been on the table. They are tangled, twisted creatures, so tightly snared in each other that separation is impossible.

The reassurance Will receives is based in logic, Hannibal's tone matter-of-fact in its delivery. Even coupled with the comforting touch to his shoulder, it is difficult to let go of long held doubt and belief. Not much has worked out in Will Graham's life, why would this be any different? Pessimism is a dangerous quality to give any amount of attention to, but it takes root in his heart nonetheless. Hannibal has sacrificed a lot for him, the evidence is there, clear as day for anyone to poke at, but is the actual toy ever as sweet as the longing and desire for it? This could very well be the honeymoon stage. Didn't all couples have one?

Will shuts off the tap. He takes a deep breath and stares down at the mug now filled with water.

"Jack... Alana... Molly... Everyone in my life has only wanted or been able to stomach certain versions of me, never the whole person. I don't even know what the complete picture looks like," he sighs, hating the emotion and vulnerability both in his tone and words. It can't be helped, his mouth keeps moving. "I don't want to fall short... I've never been--" 'Enough' goes unsaid.

His hands come to the countertop and he grips tightly, loathe to feel so weak, to be displaying it with no prompting as well.

"Jack sought to violate your mind, selecting only what he found desirable and damning the rest," Hannibal says calmly. He watches as Will shuts the water off but he makes no move to leave. Instead he stays precisely where he is, his tone lower, as reassuring as he can make it without delving into professional territory. "He employed me only to ensure he could rip you apart at his whim and leave someone else to piece your back together. He's unworthy of his place in your thoughts. Alana," Hannibal continues, but his tone edges into careful territory. It's sharp with anger but he makes no overt threats. Not now. Not when Will is already feeling vulnerable. "Perhaps she tried. But she'd never have accepted everything you are. And while I never met Molly, I would imagine she was the same."

He makes a concentrated point to leave his tone free of bitterness at the mention of Will's ex-wife. He wants nothing more than to tear her apart and send her piecemeal back to Jack's doorstep but those thoughts aren't going to help Will right now. And between Hannibal's anger and Will's comfort, the latter wins out.

"Perhaps with me, you fear that if you don't foster the darkness that drew me to you, my interest will wane?" Hannibal considers it, but he hardly needs to dwell for long. He's seen Will bathed in blood, has seen his exultation at destruction, and Will has already expressed a desire to hunt with him. Yet had none of those events happened, nothing would have changed. Hannibal shakes his head and, after a moment, he lifts his hand from Will's shoulder to reach out, carefully turning Will's head so he can cup his cheek with one hand. It's all he does, but he needs Will to hear this.

"My stance has not changed. All I require is your presence. Whether you're just my friend, lover or partner in crime, I care little. Provided you remain with me, I would prefer you as you are. Whatever form that takes. I accept the sides of you even you shy away from, Will. The danger, the darkness,
your impulses... but I accept that you are not only that man. You are so much more than the sum of your parts, dear Will. The only way you could possibly fall short is by leaving."

And he won't. Hannibal will kill him if that day ever comes, though he doesn't relish the thought.

Will doesn't want to think on Jack, Alana or Molly despite Hannibal's conclusions being as apt as ever. They're all people he's undoubtedly disappointed. Will had tried to play the helpful, but unstable special agent, even been foolish enough thinking he could win the beautiful Dr. Bloom over. It's somewhat pathetic now, looking back to the beginning. His time with Molly and Walter... Well, it had been a pipe dream believing that such a soft existence could be for him. In another life, another world, Will likes to think that he could have had something like that. With Abigail too. If anyone else deserves a reprieve, it would have been her.

You fear that if you don't foster the darkness that drew me to you, my interest will wane... Will stiffens, he clenches at the counter harder, knuckles going white. It's no surprise that Hannibal is able to get right to his core fear and elegantly address it. It feels like his words work at something tight and gnarled within him, his distress easing up under their ministration. Will leans into the touch, his face softening, his eyes searching for genuineness, needing this to be the truth. As Hannibal talks, Will lets go of the counter and turns to face him. He thinks - hopes - that there is no deception, that he could be accepted as he is, no strings attached, because what a singular relief that would be. He's worried about the differences between them. But if what Hannibal says is the truth... With little hesitation, he brings his hand to curve around the back of Hannibal's neck and pulls him in.

It's barely a kiss, just his lips brushing against Hannibal's and some sound in his throat. Will has no words as he pulls away.

In this, there is no deception. Hannibal is not a particularly genuine man, not in the way most view the word. He skirts the edges, implying lies instead of securing truths, but not to Will. Not anymore. After all, Will had told him not to lie to him once. Hannibal had taken that command to heart, turning it instead into a challenge. Plausible deniability instead of outright lies. But in this, with Will so cowed and vulnerable, his concerns bleeding through him like a physical manifestation of his worries, Hannibal doesn't lie. He's honest.

Would Will denying himself the thrill of his darkness disappoint him? Yes. But only in the way Will choosing not to partake of Hannibal's kills would have. It's easy to know the darkness exists, to sit beside someone like him, someone who will always understand Hannibal's point of view even if it disgusts him. Pure empathy. It's rare and beautiful, just as Will is. Hannibal doesn't need Will to kill with him, doesn't need him as a shadow once they're healed. The pleasure of his company is truthfully enough. And as Will searches his eyes, Hannibal does what he can to make it clear, carefully deconstructing a few of his walls to allow Will to dip his face beneath the surface. And Will apparently finds what he's looking for.

Hannibal knows, because before he's fully aware of it, Will reaches out to him. Hannibal feels the slide of fingers against his neck and follows them, and he feels the press of Will's lips like time has slowed. It's almost too fleeting, too tentative to be considered a kiss, but it surprises Hannibal more than he cares to admit. The night before, his teeth had been sunk against Will's neck, Will's blood spilling over them, and yet this small action is what threatens to undo him. It's intimate in a way he doesn't expect, and when Will draws back, Hannibal merely looks at him, unguarded for a few seconds. It's enough time for the ferocity of his own emotions to show through. For that split second, he is laid bare and he wants with a ferocity that threatens to steal his very breath away.

And then Hannibal closes his eyes, draws in a careful, steadying breath, and then lets it out, drawing
back. His thumb brushes over the elegant line of Will's cheek, the only physical response he allows himself, and his eyes open again, more controlled, but unquestionably warm.

"Thank you, Will. Just... be aware you're under no obligation."

What he sees reflected back startles him. It clouds over Will's own reaction, overwhelming him. It's raw unfiltered want he observes in Hannibal's face, intense, sharp and demanding. Threatening. Will's eyes widen, he makes a move to step back but the counter is there. Trapped. His fingernails bite into Hannibal's neck - perhaps in warning, but then Hannibal closes his eyes, gathers himself, inhales slowly and composure reappears on the face in front of him. Will relaxes and pushes what he had just seen to the back of his mind. Funny how last week he had egged Hannibal on about taking. Now Will has a clearer understanding of what that could entail.

He may have kissed, may have drawn Hannibal's mouth down to his own, but Will is not ready to face the depth of feelings that he's only glimpsed there. Of course Hannibal had been right to caution him. It's irritating how right the man often is.

"Close your eyes, don't move... Don't do anything." He instructs in a hushed voice.

When Hannibal listens, Will gazes at that face with interest. It's safer to do this without eye contact now. His hand travels from Hannibal's neck, the pads of his fingers trailing across the other man's jawline and to the small scar on his cheek courtesy of Jack. Will licks at his bottom lip. Fidgets. Considers his next move. He straightens, lifts off his heels and kisses the corner of Hannibal's mouth while his hand finds a hold in short hair. Will kisses Hannibal directly on the mouth next. And then again with a bit more force, but still with closed lips. It's an exercise both in desensitization and familiarization. Kissing a man is new, but Will suspects it's which man that is a jolt to his system. Will parts his lips and kisses with more intention, fingers gripping harder and he is left shuddering when he pulls away.

It's a clear reminder of where Will has placed himself and Hannibal files it away. He doesn't miss the overwhelmed expression, nor does he miss the way Will tries to step away only for the counter to trap him in place. It stokes something less acceptable in Hannibal's chest, something that feels like a remnant from his days at the hospital and he makes himself step back, makes himself breathe through it until the power of his presence and the depth of his emotions are not quite so raw. The way Will reacts says it all: he's not ready. He might never be, but Hannibal has already made his peace with that.

There's a half-apology on his lips, at least an acknowledgement that he'd let himself slip, but before it surfaces, Will's posture shifts. Hannibal stills for a moment, caught between caution and curiosity, but in the end he obeys without question. His eyes close and he remains still, curious, but unwilling to dismiss Will's comfort for the sake of a simple inquiry.

In the end, Hannibal isn't necessarily surprised. Will's empathy is a driving force and eye contact makes it difficult. Yet just because Hannibal's eyes are closed doesn't mean he can't hear, or sense Will's movement, or feel the movement of his body. Still, Will's slow, cautious exploration is like fire along his skin. His touch is gentle, but Hannibal remains still, allowing him the freedom of his own exploration. It becomes much more difficult at the soft press of lips and fingers sliding into his hair, and when Will adjusts and kisses him again - gentle at first and then with more intent - Hannibal's breath hitches and it's all he can do to remain still, to not thread his fingers back through Will's hair and draw him in closer to kiss properly.

How telling it is that Hannibal can rend a man open from throat to hip and feel only the mildest
increase in his pulse, his hand steady. Yet this - Will's attention, the feeling of Will kissing him with force - has a tremor in his hands and his pulse quicker in his throat. He forgets himself just for a moment - just in that final kiss - and only begins to return it before he remembers, but it's enough to leave him raw once Will draws back.

"Will..." Hannibal says, but it's more of a breath. Even to his own ears his voice sounds like Will has just spent minutes squeezing his throat raw instead of simply kissing him and pulling his hair. Hannibal swallows. "This is... not a requirement." It sounds weak, but it needs to be said. Full disclosure.

It's such a simple action - a kiss - but it leaves Will shaken. Dazed. Despite the lack of eye contact, he's exposed, left waiting and wanting, even though he's the one calling the shots in this moment. Hannibal had began to kiss him back and he'd both wanted more and less of it, but maybe that's okay. Maybe he's okay.

The words - Hannibal's polite reminder - bring a look of distaste to his features. It's not what he wants to hear (although, logically, he appreciates the sentiment).

"Shut up," Will mumbles out, but there's no force behind his rebuttal. His hand tugs at Hannibal's hair, as if trying to emphasize his point. "You know I want this too." He pulls Hannibal's head down, nuzzles at the clean shaven face, inhales his partner's (yes, that word is acceptable) scent. Arousal curls in his gut.

He peppers kisses over Hannibal's face, down a stretch of throat, and he can detect that normally steady pulse is now erratic, pulling him in more. Will has left the territory of experimenting and entered one ruled by flat out hunger and impulses. It's heady and intoxicating.

"Want to bite you," he rasps out suddenly and then laps at Hannibal's pulse point, waiting for permission.

It's maddening to keep his eyes closed, but Hannibal makes a point to continue following that command, allowing Will his imagined freedom from being known. Hannibal can still see, just in other ways. He can hear the cadence to Will's breaths, can scent the growing arousal and while he makes a point to keep this moment from going too far, he can't deny how tempting it is. Will's fingers are tight in his hair, gripping to that sharp point of pain that sends a small rush of sensation through him, but Will's words are what truly stay with him. You know I want this too. Yes. Hannibal does know. But wanting doesn't always equal giving into that want, and this is as dangerous as it is tempting.

Still, Hannibal remains quiet. He allows Will to direct him and breathes in the slightly sharper scent on Will's skin when they're close enough. He smells of blood, though it's faint, mixed in with everything else that makes up Will's scent. Hannibal allows himself to bask in it, in the closeness, in the faint brush of Will's hair he can feel against his skin and the press of his lips that trail lower until they pause where Hannibal's pulse is quick against his throat. It's the only visceral sign that he's affected save for the slight furrow of emotion on his brow, and it makes sense that Will would stop there, would be transfixed by an honesty Hannibal can't control.

When Will speaks, it isn't a question. It's a declaration of want, and it sends something hot and dark through Hannibal's chest. He feels the press of Will's tongue and it punches a soft breath out of him, want wrapping itself hard around his throat. Had Hannibal not just said he wanted to bask in Will's darkness? That he would allow his own submission for the chance to experience Will as he is? Even so, it's not a good idea, not a safe one, yet Hannibal still only hesitates for a moment before he
reaches up to gently curl his fingers behind Will's neck. He moves him just a little, not even an inch to the side, but the position is safer in the event Will's control fails. And once safety is assured and Hannibal can feel the threat of Will's teeth, he merely tips his head to the side with a soft, indulgent murmur of, "Please."

Will allows his head to be adjusted, not perturbed by Hannibal moving it if it facilitates his wishes. He knows Hannibal wants this, wants him to bite and play. It's encouraging and emboldening to be allowed to do so. Hannibal's words fill his mind, soothing acceptance and understanding that fuels Will. He's nervous still - this is new uncharted land - but his excitement helps keep him focused, keeps pushing himself to go further. So, he will indulge and taste, relish in everything Hannibal willingly offers up.

He first nips, in no real hurry to accomplish a goal in this. He will take little by little, his teeth graze at the sensitive warm skin before nibbling. And then Will sucks and licks at the reddened areas appreciatively. Will's not looking to recreate or copy what Hannibal had marked him with. The empath would rather see a collage of bruises and colors created and left by him - an art piece, as it were. His fingers tighten in Hannibal's hair while his free hand seeks to grasp at the taller man's shirt, fumbling at the buttons near the bottom and somehow managing to undo a few in the process. Will starts to bite in earnest now, not hard enough to break the skin, not yet at least. He's growling, fingers worming their way between the gaps in Hannibal's shirt and grazing skin he hasn't touched before.

With his eyes still closed, Hannibal braces for a bite that doesn't happen, at least not immediately. Instead he's mildly caught off guard by the tease, the pinch of Will's teeth, a promise left unspoken. For a moment he's almost confused, and then he feels the heat of Will's mouth, feels him dragging a bruise to the surface of his skin, and Hannibal's breath hitches in understanding. He doesn't smile, but there's a small lift to the corner of his lips; Will, as always, is full of surprises. Such a blunt man normally, Hannibal had expected him to run in full tilt. And to a degree, he does. With his eyes closed everything else is heightened - the grip to his hair, the fumbling near his waist and the heat of Will's mouth - and he merely allows himself to lean against the counter for support as Will works.

He takes his time against Hannibal's neck, but not with his shirt. For a second, Hannibal considers staying Will's hand, considers just how far Will can go without falling apart later that evening. And then Will's fingers are on his skin, touching, claiming, and taking in his own way, and Hannibal's own hands clench into loose fists as a reminder to stay still. He can feel the pressure against his neck increasing, and when Will's teeth bite down hardest - not hard enough to break the skin, but hard enough to bruise - Hannibal allows himself a small sound, something softer, a pleased hum with a sharper edge, like it had once considered being a snarl instead.

He's breathing harsher now, and Will isn't the only one left affected. Will's soft growls - nearly feral - are music to his ears.

"Will..." Hannibal breathes, and his voice is rougher; he stays where he is, composed, but the muscles under Will's hand are tight. It's clear that remaining visibly unaffected takes a fair bit of self control. "These marks are temporary; they will fade in time. Simple to re-apply if you so desire. I had thought you had something more... permanent in mind. I wear many of your marks, but none by your hand, after all."

Hannibal seeks to spur him on, of course. Why should they stop here? He invites Will to open the door further and let more shadows escape. Who is Will Graham to deny himself the desire of leaving a lasting impression? Of tasting Hannibal's blood? It's time for another act of reciprocity. Fair is fair and Hannibal speaks the truth, no marks have been left from his own hand. It's time to remedy that.
Will wants to remedy that.

"Hannibal..." Will breathes out the name and it's with only the slightest of hesitations, he widens his mouth and clamps down on the bared neck. He hadn't been thinking of how much force to use when he'd bitten off a chunk of Cordell's cheek (surprisingly it hadn't taken that much), but obviously the intent is different here. He doesn't lunge out, doesn't pull back to rip the flesh, just steadily increases the pressure until his teeth break through the layers of epidermis and a copper tasting response makes an appearance. He sucks and laves at the fresh wound before biting down again, keen on leaving more than one bite mark, apparently. He moans unabashedly at the third bloody bite he worships onto Hannibal's skin.

His roaming hand gets brave, moves lower and in the process untucks a side of Hannibal's shirt. It skates across--

An obvious hardness and it's a singularly sobering realization that stops Will's nearly frenzied biting. He pulls away, hands letting go of Hannibal, panting and his mouth bloody and slick with spit. He, too, is aroused. It shouldn't be something shocking to find that Hannibal has an erection, yet Will's body is finding the knowledge terrifying for some reason.

"D-Dahlia," he gasps out, a shudder of unease rippling through him as he takes a few steps away from Hannibal and his body is buzzing with adrenaline and noise, hands squirming by his side until he starts to pull at his bandages around his neck in an attempt to be able to touch at his own mark.

Hannibal pushes. It's not a conscious decision, his mind so wrapped up in everything Will Graham that he fails to realize his own subtle implant of suggestion, but the both of them are riding a reckless high once more and Will accepts the situation immediately, though with a mild hesitation. That brief pause is enough to almost draw Hannibal's attention back, but then Will is moving in close and his teeth press in sharp with a new meaning, one that digs against the bruises he's already left on Hannibal's skin, drawing new ones to the surface and then, sharply, so much more.

The first real bite robs Hannibal of his breath. The pain is sharp, but immediately pleasant, Will tasting his blood, awash in the new sensation. Hannibal can smell the copper on the air, and he can feel the mild slide of blood welling from under Will's lips. Wordlessly his hand reaches back and grips the counter, his knuckles white with the effort to not grab Will and pay him back equally. But the second bite does come as a surprise. Hannibal's breath rushes back to him in the form of a sharp, surprised hiss that fades into something smooth and pleased. Hannibal merely ensures that Will doesn't go for anything he shouldn't, that his teeth don't skirt the pulse in his throat, but the temptation is present. And when the third bite comes - Hannibal's neck bloodied with the smear of Will's lips and teeth, his mind pleasantly abuzz and body aching with an acute desire for this stunning creature before him - he simply sighs, like nothing could please him more.

He's more relaxed, pulse quick. but not in fear, and his senses are drawn entirely to Will's teeth, his lips. His neck will be a mess of color before the day is over and the knowledge leaves him feeling nothing but gratified. Which is why, when Will's hand accidentally brushes against the front of his slacks, it's as much a shock to him as it is to Will. Want surges anew in him but he merely clenches his teeth, fighting it back down. But before he can say anything, Will is drawing back, panting, sounding ragged, but Hannibal hears the word clearly: Dahlia.

Immediately his eyes snap open and the relaxation that had slid through his system dies. Hannibal's gaze sharpens, looking at Will with a new intensity as he steps to the side, putting more space between them. He doesn't take the safe word lightly, and while his gaze lingers on how beautiful Will looks with his lips and chin covered in blood, how he looks like he wants badly, Hannibal merely draws in a deeper breath and holds his hands up so Will can see them, so he knows Hannibal
isn't about to do anything else.

"Will. Will, leave the bandage and tell me what you need," Hannibal says, and while he's still a little breathless, his tone is sharper. "Would you like me to leave?"

Heart racing and Will is frantic, his eyes wide and flitting between Hannibal and the kitchen's entryway. He ought to leave and calm down. Get his bearings. Wash his face off for starters. Get dressed. Stop thinking about Hannibal's blood. Stop wanting-- He needs to get back in control, but it's hard to do when he can smell and taste crimson, when he can look at the other disheveled man who is overwhelming him. He should want to get away from the catalyst to his discomfort, but he wants, God, does he ever want. Even now, whilst bleeding, Hannibal is trying to help him, hands in the air in surrender. It's almost laughable in its predictability. A ragged sound resembling a laugh might pass his lips, but Will isn't sure.

It takes him a beat to process Hannibal's words. Leave his bandages alone? Oh. Apparently he had been trying to unwrap them. Now Will frowns and in a show of disobedience, he decides he'll finish that task anyway and with misdirected frustration he tears off the bandages and lets them fall to the floor. His left hand comes to stroke at the Hannibal's bite mark, finding some small measure of comfort. It's still sore. It's still beautiful.

"I don't know... I don't..." Will mumbles, shaking his head. He's hot, sweaty, on edge and ultimately conflicted. He lost perspective. He got caught up in the moment, was lead astray... tempted.

"I'm going to shower." Decided, he takes his leave on shaky legs, making his way into the bathroom and locking the door. A hand runs through sleep tousled hair and it takes him a good minute to be able to face his reflection in the mirror.

His eyes flick upward and take in his debauched image - flushed cheeks, wild bright eyes, stained lips and chin and of course his prized possession of Hannibal's own lingering mark vivid on his neck. Will shudders, a wave of revulsion washing over him and he barely makes it to the toilet in time to throw up coffee mixed with stomach bile. It wasn't supposed to be like this. In talking, in their sharing, Hannibal had wormed his way further inside of Will's heart and it was all too easy for Will to let sentimentality bring them closer. Words of soothing acceptance and understanding had brought Will's lips to Hannibal's, a slippery slope never had looked so appealing.

Stripping out of his t-shirt and underwear, Will climbs into the shower, pulls the curtain closed and turns only the cold on. He shivers under the rivulets of shocking cold water washing over him, but forces himself to say. He tilts his head back and remains still, eyes tightly pressed shut while sweat and blood are rinsed off of him. He stays there until there is no warmth, no heat left burning inside of him. Will towels himself off slowly and grabs Hannibal's robe that is left hanging on a peg on the door. He's still trembling, teeth chattering as he makes his way out from the bathroom in search of his anchor.

It's too much; Hannibal has pushed him too far. The signs are everywhere in that split second, with Will looking wild and tempted and untethered. Hannibal inwardly curses though he keeps his expression as mild as he possibly can with the same temptation thrumming through his veins. He wants with a particular ache that has not been this advanced before but he merely watches Will like he's become something other, something feral, ready to lunge or run and neither option suits the situation properly. So Hannibal merely stays still, breathing hard, blood staining the collar of his dress shirt without his knowledge or care.

In the end, Will chooses to run, tearing his bandage free and grounding himself with the touch to his
wounds. Then he shakily stutters out something about a shower and Hannibal watches him leave. For a long moment everything is quiet, Hannibal not daring to move lest Will hear and startle further. He hears everything, however, and though the sound of Will's retching draws a grimace to his lips - not out of disgust but out of a kind of sympathy - he doesn't move to check on him. Will needs his distance and Hannibal needs to control the situation again.

He retreats to the upstairs room for the first aid kit as quickly as he's able, and - listening carefully for the sound of the water - he finds the kit and retreats to the other bathroom so that he can treat himself. Hannibal strips his shirt off, soaking the collar in the sink, though he has no real designs to keep the shirt. But when he looks up at himself in the mirror, his eyes are immediately drawn to his neck. His breath catches. Will is... prolific. The bites themselves are bloodied and smeared, the entire side of his neck bloodied or bruised. Hannibal admires the destruction, feeling the burn acutely, and were it up to him, he'd simply leave the marks be. But he doubts the sight of them will assist in grounding Will when he returns. So though he aches to merely dig his fingers against them and give in to his desires, he doesn't. Hannibal knows his time is limited and so he hastens to clean away the blood from his neck and treat the bites.

They're deeper than he'd anticipated, the mark of enthusiasm over skill, and he's certain a few will scar. He'll make sure of it, if he has to. Still, he works silently, washing and disinfecting and admiring the patchwork map of bruises that Will has left of his skin before he reluctantly covers the bites with his own bandages. A few pinpricks of red show through on the white, but Hannibal allows it. It's a reminder even to himself. And once he's treated, he takes great care in fixing his hair and setting right anything Will had knocked askew about his appearance. The last touch is a new dress shirt - red this time - before he makes his way back down into the kitchen.

It's not too long after that the water shuts off. Hannibal listens and waits, and when Will finally makes his reappearance (draped and dwarfed in Hannibal's bathrobe, somehow looking so achingly small despite the fact their sizes aren't so drastically different, save round the shoulders) Hannibal pauses and sends him a mildly curious glance, wary. In the end, the violent shivering makes his decision for him and Hannibal approaches, though slowly. All it takes is a faint touch of his fingers to Will's cheek before Hannibal frowns, an unhappy sound escaping him.

"You're freezing." Immediately Hannibal draws the robe around Will a little tighter, tying it safely before he hesitates once again. The desire to draw Will in and ground him is strong, but he won't. Not until he knows for sure. "...Would you permit me to take care of you, or would you prefer I keep my distance?"

Will doesn't have to search long, Hannibal comes to him, concerned and cautious, but ready to mend and put the pieces back together. It starts with a soft touch to his face and then he secures the robe around him tighter. Will feels used up, thin like paper and ready to tear. His eyes are cast downward, unwilling or unable to look further up in fear of Hannibal's neck firstly, then his eyes. He focuses on the sanguine color of the older man's shirt, wonders if the color was chosen subconsciously or not. When it dawns on him that he has to respond, Will's eyebrows furrow and he swallows, trying to get himself geared up to speak.

"I... It's fine," Will answers in a rough voice, frowning. It probably shouldn't be fine, is the thing, but as dangerous as Hannibal is, he's all Will has. It's Will that takes the next step, inserting himself into Hannibal's space and resting his head against Hannibal's chest, against that red shirt and closing his eyes. The smell of disinfectant is strong, but Will still is able to easily re-imagine both the taste and smell of blood.

"I don't regret what happened," he says with a sigh.
It's the truth. Will may be startled and shaken up by his actions, surprised by the sheer intensity of sensations that sprung up, but he doesn't regret the kissing or the biting and sucking. The desire was there, although Hannibal had certainly encouraged him to go further.

Will had implied his dislike of being treated like something fragile and breakable and even now, Hannibal wars with the concept. But in the end, he decides to err on the side of caution. Will had nearly fallen apart, and he had crashed with a particularly solid impact if the look on his face now is any indication. He looks dangerously worn, beautiful and elegant like finely patterned rice paper, and just as fragile, like all it would take to shatter him is a kind hand on his shoulder. Hannibal isn't about to risk that, his expression cautious and concerned but implying his desire to help from a distance.

He doesn't believe that any of this has been 'fine', but before he can deliver careful admonishment and draw the truth from Will's lips, Will once again surprises him. He makes no warning. One moment he's stood safely apart from Hannibal and the next he's pressed in close, his cheek resting upon Hannibal's chest. It briefly gives him pause, his hands lifted in quick, but blatant indecision before they carefully settle on Will's shoulders, and then slide down to settle on his back. After a moments' indecision, Hannibal goes as far as to hold Will directly, though his touch is feather-light and cautious. "You'll forgive me if I find that difficult to believe," he says carefully. Will is like ice against him, and after a moment, Hannibal carefully sets one hand on Will's hip and shifts, directing him with an extended hand to the sitting room, where he does what he can to lead Will to the couch so they can both sit.

"I believe, in this, I should owe you an apology." He doesn't say the words, not directly. But the implication will be enough. "I should not have pushed as I did."

Will didn't mean to imply that the events - or his reaction to them, rather - had been fine, but in that Hannibal could remain near him. He'd evidently not expressed himself clearly. It feels like too much effort to try and correct the other man so Will says nothing. He shuts his eyes, enjoying Hannibal's arms coming to encircle him. The contrast between their temperatures has Will's affection. "Warm..." He mumbles out into Hannibal's chest.

With a small groan of protest, Will does concede and let himself be guided to the living room and then to the couch. He sits down slowly next to Hannibal, slinking to his side and resting his head on his shoulder. It feels a little like resignation. Will's hands purposefully curl into the longer robe's sleeves, fingers playing with the soft cuffs.

"I wanted to, you knew that," he finally settles on saying. "And anyway, the biting wasn't... the problem."

Will had certainly been stunned by his thorough enjoyment in the activity, hadn't expected it to feel quite so perfect, quite that divine. He couldn't help but feel that another connection had been forming between them, shared by tasting and savoring of each other's blood. It was a gruesome thought.

What had stopped him was his brain catching up with what his hand had wanted to do, with the blatant issue of sexual desire he'd felt at the front of Hannibal's pants. A part of him had wanted to explore, to touch, to undo Hannibal. To make him feel as out of control as Will often felt. Kissing was one thing, granted there was no eye contact. Will had managed it a few times even, but the rest? He'd never thought he would have to struggle with issues of sexuality and identity, but here he was having his own Hannibal-centric crisis.

Will allows himself to be maneuvered and Hannibal takes the small blessing while he can. He merely
guides Will into the living room and leads by example, sitting down and wordlessly extending an arm to invite Will beside him. In mere seconds (much faster than he'd anticipated) Will has settled beside him and Hannibal allows him to find his own comfortable position. He's not expecting Will to lean in against his side, but he's also not surprised, merely eyeing his companion for a fraction of a second before he allows some of the tension to drain from his shoulders. Undoubtedly Will can feel it, and the last thing Hannibal wants to do is inject a low-level feeling of wrong into their interaction through subconscious factors.

Plus there is a rather sizable part of him that - even now, after weeks with Will by his side - can't believe this is real. Not entirely. Sober moment or not, Hannibal continues to wonder just when the drugs will wear off and he'll be brought back into the over-bright cell, memories of Will's touch fading with each subsequent dose. It's a bitter thought that Hannibal merely slides away. If this is a dream, he has no desire to compromise it. And given the way Will continues to surprise him, perhaps this is as real as the grin carved onto Will's abdomen.

So Hannibal refocuses on Will, calming his breathing despite the steady throb along the side of his neck. This moment is Will's alone.

"Just because you hold desire doesn't mean you're ready to fully appreciate it. Or that you're ready to handle the aftermath. I will, of course, endeavor to be more aware." But Will is right. The bites hadn't been the problem. Will had handled them admirably well, had allowed himself his personal desire, losing himself in the sensation. The problem - one that Hannibal is well aware of - had been his own desire. It makes sense that its existence could possibly be... troubling, for Will. Hannibal takes a moment to carefully piece his thoughts together, and then starts again, slower this time.

"I believe I've made myself clear before when indicating that I expect nothing from you. But I feel it prudent to offer a reminder that nothing has changed in that regard." In layman's terms... "Our relationship - regardless of what it may be - never has to be sexual. Our enjoyment is just that. Nothing more." He goes quiet only long enough for Will to be able to soak up the knowledge, and then he goes on, attempting a more open tone. "Would it help you to discuss the reasons behind why you needed to stop?"

Hannibal can't deny a curiosity, after all. And this close, it's rather difficult to resist the urge to gather Will into his arms. He doesn't; if Will desires it, he can come to Hannibal.

They had spoke some about this before - about Hannibal being Will's exception, because even after all their touching, Will still considers himself straight. His world may currently revolve around the other man, but it still feels abnormal to think that Hannibal will be his future, that they will grow old together, for example. When he pictures himself in a romantic setting, it feels natural to see his partner as a female. This is how it's been Will's entire life. The female form is what he finds attractive, both romantically and sexually. He had never been curious about the same sex, no man had caught his attention and yet Hannibal had somehow bewitched him, slipped underneath his skin. The scene on the bluff haunts Will, for him, that was the turning point - their beautiful shared hunt a catalyst, for it was the first time he had truly wanted to kiss Hannibal. Amidst the chaos of the fall, his anger and their wounds, Will had thought the urge wouldn't stay, that it had been a fluke. And yet it hadn't waned, it had blossomed, persisted and complicated things.

"When we first came here, I didn't expect to... Feel attraction to you on all the levels I have been experiencing," Will starts slowly, working out the words carefully. "Whatever I feel toward you transcends my norm. I'm straight. I don't like men, I am fairly ignorant on that sort of thing, actually, but I like you." He gives a bit of a casual shrug of his shoulders.

"The violence... It's been kicking around in my head for a while, in that way it's easier to approach
and accept." He gives a sigh before pushing himself to finish. "It *is* sexual for me. You know that, but I appreciate you trying to play the gentleman. I know you don't expect anything, but I know I will keep wanting something. I just... Don't particularly enjoy being clueless."

There. It was out. Will's apprehension about his lack of experience, about being directionless in what to do or what he wanted. The sexual component of his desire was foreign, uncomfortable, yet he wanted because it was Hannibal.

Truthfully Hannibal doesn't expect Will to be forthcoming. The past few weeks have been slow. Getting Will to speak with him past the cursory update of his pain level and health and daily request for alcohol had taken weeks, and getting Will comfortable with his presence had taken even longer. Hannibal doubts he's there even now, so he expects nothing, already bracing for a silence that he will carefully tailor into comfortable for Will's sake. But instead of needing to adjust himself and find a safe topic of conversation, Will takes the initiative and Hannibal cannot quite hide the way he begins to look at Will before remembering himself. In this, he wants Will feeling free of observation. He merely allows himself to relax, eyes half-closing as he considers Will's words.

It's difficult to keep his expression blank, to merely listen and not react. Hannibal is, after all, a prideful man. The urge to lift his chin or smile his pride at being Will's one notable exception definitely grips at him but he decides against being that uncouth. Instead he studies the window against the far wall, watching as lazy branches from the backyard trees bob and dance in the wind. He quickly wets his lips, thoughtful, before he starts to speak. This conversation somehow feels more important than the one in the kitchen.

"Sexuality is a complicated mixture of physical attraction, subconscious cues, chemicals, and, typically, intimacy. Often it is simple and one never needs to look at it further. But sometimes there are... notable exceptions. A particular feature might trigger the impulse, regardless of gender, and if so, does that negate the assumed label? No. Not unless the individual in question feels it necessary. For instance, I care very little that you are a man, though admittedly none have truly drawn my eye before. My attraction to you was based on your mind, your thoughts, the way you saw the world. Anything more developed naturally."

It's information that doesn't particularly do much save for Hannibal placing them on the same level, attempting to negate some of Will's discomfort. He can't do much in this, but he can do this.

"If this... *is* sexual for you, I would strongly caution you against moving too quickly. Your perceived ignorance is a simple problem with a simple solution, but your comfort with your own desires is another matter entirely. If the thought is distressing - even if it isn't - I would urge you to allow yourself to adapt to your new situation. You're in a state of upheaval, Will, as we talked about before. No foundation under you, and while you trust parts of me, I doubt very much that you feel secure enough - in your surroundings, your mind, and your situation - to explore your own thoughts and desires in a way that won't result in guilt or over-stimulation."

It's starts out as a conversation with Hannibal breaking down sexuality and then sharing that he, too, hasn't been attracted to males. Soon enough it veers into therapy and words of warning. Will is not particularly taken back by the transition. It's Hannibal's prerogative to help him seek clarity in matters such as these - as long as it's in Hannibal's interest, at any rate. Unlike his 'therapy' before, Will believes Hannibal isn't attempting to toy with him. There would be real no reason to do such a thing. His well-being directly affects Hannibal's now.

"Got myself quite the catch with you, huh? Free therapy whenever I want," Will jokes, huffing out a dry chuckle. He turns his head more into Hannibal's shoulder, lips curved slightly upward from
amusement. He knows he's using humor as a defense mechanism because he's just opened up. Lightening the situation or attempting to draw attention away from his response won't work on Hannibal, however - he also knows that.

Nothing has changed, no epiphanies have been had, but Will feels slightly better anyway. He's warming up. He's confessed. The advice he's given is to be careful, give himself time. It's like waiting for a different type of wound to heal which doesn't particularly please him. He's quite done with time and care being the answers for his problems.

"Sure we can't just try some form of desensitization therapy?" Another joke. "Not that I'm saying my distress or aversion is anywhere near the level of a phobia... Obviously."

"Will." Hannibal doesn't need to express himself beyond that one word as he slides a slightly admonishing glance in Will's direction. He understands the need to use humor to cope - it is, after all, one of Will's favored practices, though few would see it that way as he has a very particular sense of humor - but in this, Hannibal merely hopes he has actually listened instead of throwing up barriers to protect himself. His only hint is that Will shifts minutely closer instead of distancing himself, so he tentatively assumes his words have found their unwitting mark.

Hannibal considers Will's need to lighten the intensity of the moment and while he doesn't necessarily join in, he does allow his next comment to edge closer to amusement, if only just. "Yes, that is an option, though I believe under normal circumstances, desensitization is not the desired effect. Perhaps working to normalize your desires would be more apt. But that is likely closely tied into trust and comfort, as I said." Hannibal glances down at Will again, softer now that Will has half-hidden his face against Hannibal's shoulder. It affords him a measure of indulgence he doesn't often have with Will looking at him.

"That said, there is some merit to the suggestion, provided you are aware of your own limits and you stop before you push yourself too far." Will does have a habit of rushing into situations headlong after all, one thing Hannibal needs to watch out for more than he has been. "When you kissed me, you asked me to close my eyes. Lack of eye contact?" Hannibal guesses, sounding genuinely curious.

"Did you find that helpful?"

Hannibal, predictably, is not overly pleased by his use of sarcasm. Will doesn't get chided, however, just his name said in a particular tone. He can handle that. When it comes to him in therapy, Hannibal has likely experienced most of his responses. There was a comforting familiarity in this too. No, he wouldn't be changing therapists.

To his credit, Hannibal actually chooses to grace his suggestion of desensitization with a reply. Will hadn't been expecting that, but he manages to hold back a snort of amusement at being indulged. He really shouldn't be surprised. Hannibal likely is just pleased that he's still talking. After the weeks of drawn out silence and curtness from his part, it's still a little strange to be speaking, especially as candidly as they have been.

"Eyes are the windows to the soul, or so they say," Will muses, voice slightly muffled from the shoulder he's pressed into. "Your soul is quite.... intense when it comes to me, so yeah, it does help... Although it's probably not very roman--" he stops himself when he realizes what he was about to say. Romantic. Good Lord. That was something he didn't want to be thinking about in relation to Hannibal Lecter.
Hannibal allows himself the smallest hum of amusement in response to Will's statement. Yes, when it comes to Will Graham, Hannibal can't quite contain everything he should. It's part of Will's specific influence over him. Hannibal has always prided himself on his control, on his misdirection. He's worn different emotions and personas so completely that they've become second nature to him. So his feelings for Will - intense and all-encompassing as they are - should be easy enough to contain. They're not. It's one reason Hannibal is quite certain he will never tire of Will. No one has ever caught his attention like this before, not enough to compromise him so completely.

Still... Will's near-slip is an immediate reminder. Hannibal is subtle as he draws in a small breath, careful to keep his expression blank. If the mere mention of sentiment is enough to draw Will up so short, he silently makes a note to try and keep a better grip on his control. "It is what it is," Hannibal cuts in smoothly, saving Will from a drawn-out silence where he'd know Hannibal was thinking about what he'd said. This is simple. Plausible deniability. He can't grant Will much, but he can grant him this. "I will endeavor to maintain better control nevertheless. But if closing my eyes gives you some measure of comfort, I'm not against it."

True, perhaps it's not romantic in the strictest sense of the word, but being forced to focus on Will in every way save visually has its own intensity. Its own danger. Will may not wish to open certain doors, not when sexuality is so unsettling to him, but Hannibal has already made peace with his desires. Sexual and otherwise. Surely Will knows. He has to, by now. And yet... Will, for all his brilliance, often misses what is right in front of his face. Particularly if it relates to himself.

"If it's something you're interested in exploring, I have no objections. Again, provided you're mindful of your own limits. If I feel you're losing control, I maintain the right to put a stop to it. But normalizing the differences between myself and your... usual partners... may give you some comfort."

It's as if Hannibal is his dirty little secret - indulged when it suits Will, but then pushed away and shunned when it's inconvenient. Will wonders if the treatment bothers the older man on some level, or if he's just pleased that he gets anything of Will. Hannibal takes it in stride, gracious and patient as ever. As much as Will is grateful that he is not actively pressured, Hannibal's magnanimity is something that irritates him. On some level Will doesn't want to be gifted with accommodation and acceptance. He won't bring this up though because he knows what he wants is unhealthy.

Will straightens, head leaving Hannibal's shoulder, interested in getting a better look at his handiwork from earlier. Hannibal obliges him by carefully unwrapping the bandage. His eyes take in the vivid display of the actual bite marks layered on top of suck-bruises and the lesser bites. It's a pretty display, one that he wants to touch again, either by his mouth or fingers, but he restrains himself. Instead, Will's hand comes to his own neck, fingertips brushing against his own art in a fleeting gesture.

"I'd like to touch you," Will says and then shakes his head at his wording, looking down at his hands as he struggles with his admission. "In that context, I mean. I think it would helpful." He stuffs his fidgeting hands in the robe's pockets.

"Would you... Do the same for me?"

Will is frustrated but in this, Hannibal won't bend. He's willing to drop to his knees on Will's whim, willing to feel the tightened grip of his hand over his own throat, but he won't push. If Hannibal is careful, he and Will have a long partnership ahead of them. He won't risk Will's comfort and safety for his own - or Will's - reckless desires. Which is why, when Will finally eases away from his shoulder, Hannibal briefly tracks his gaze and hesitates only for a second before he reaches up and
silently undoes the bandages at his own neck. The wounds are clean and as much of the antibiotic has soaked in as is going to. One glance at the want reflected in Will's eyes tells him he's made the proper decision.

But perhaps it hadn't been the right one. That one he's determined to save for the second request, and Hannibal frowns thoughtfully as he carefully considers Will's question. A deep heat slides through him unbidden. He's never been a man driven by his own desires before and so the temptation being as strong as it is, as always, is unsettling. Merely Will's influence on him. But he carefully sets that aside as much as he can to give real thought to the suggestion.

"Depending on how far you intend it to go, yes, I would," he finally responds. Heady and thrilling as it would be to watch Will fall apart, he refuses to allow that in the cards. Not when the mere suggestion of Hannibal's desire had sent Will running. This he intends to keep control over.

"From the waist up only. I don't wish to send you back into a panic, Will. Keep in mind, it's likely you'll wind up aroused," if this time follows the normal pattern, anyway, "which is fine. I have no intention of pushing. What you do or don't do in your room after is up to you alone."

Will is caught between indignation - maybe he wouldn't get aroused, awfully presumptuous there, Hannibal - and embarrassment... but history has dictated that yes, arousal will probably come into play. He shifts in his seat, glances around at the familiar tidy room - anywhere rather than the companion at his side.

"Not now," he replies hastily. His earlier disaster in the kitchen is still too fresh in his mind to even consider some extra touching. Just from the casual brushes, almost all initiated by himself, Will has come along a way in his comfort level. This, too, shall pass.

"Let's have breakfast," he announces and stands up, signaling that he's done with talking. A lot has been discussed, he feels moderately proud of himself for managing it.

Chapter End Notes

Merry's tumblr!
Dapperscript's tumblr!
"But yes. I had to destroy it. The farce was insulting, most of all to you. A sickening shade of the man you could be, lulled by complacency. You may hate me as you wish, but how long could you have continued under the act before it unwound you, Will? You are not *that* deceptive, though admittedly, you are quite convincing."

Nothing risque happens over the next few days. There's no biting or kissing, no acts of dominance and submission. No dangerous topics or questions pass between them. They settle more into their life domestic life, a growing, but careful physical closeness can be observed, but they both behave. Will begins light physio with Hannibal on his shoulder, both of their necks are treated and the bruises start to change colors which is also a beautiful process to behold.

A handful of days later, around 11am, both of them are reading on the same couch. Will puts down his book and glances over at Hannibal.

"I'd like to go into the city today. Perhaps this afternoon?" As he's been more involved in their cooking, he's noticed the supplies dwindle and also, he thinks fresh air and exposure to real life would help him. He's been cooped up, feeling a little antsy. Maybe instead of acting out with Hannibal, going out will suffice. "I assume you have fake IDs and some cover story? Care to fill me in?"

It's shockingly easy to fall into domesticity with Will. They're careful as the next few days pass,
initially guarding boundaries and then finally relaxing into something far more comfortable. Much time is taken up with physiotherapy, Hannibal touching Will only as much as he needs to in order to carefully simulate the movements he wants Will to repeat. And while it initially seems difficult, it doesn't take long for Will's stubbornness to raise its head, and then Hannibal is left somewhat indulgently reminding Will when to exercise, and then reminding him to not overdo it. Yet even those moments fade into something rather comfortable. They cook together at least once a day and they share the upkeep of their temporary residence. And in the evenings, though Hannibal has cut back on Will's pain medication by now, he still measures out a safe amount of alcohol before they settle down to read together.

It's not always in the evening that they choose to read together though, as is evidenced by that morning. There's a comfortable silence between them, injuries only slightly complaining and bruises already faded to what would be considered an acceptable level. But when Will sets his book aside, Hannibal only looks over when it's clear Will is waiting to tell him something. Silently, he marks his place and gingerly leans over to set the book down on the coffee table, then turns to give Will his attention. He's not left waiting long.

Hannibal's eyebrows lift, and the look says a lot that he smartly keeps to himself. Yet he can't deny that fresh air and a greater involvement will likely do Will some good. He waits for perhaps a beat too long and then nods, gracious as ever.

"Of course, Will. I'd be thankful for your company. And yes, we have the appropriate identification." He doesn't bother filling Will in over where it had come from. Sufficed to say that money has its influences, and true loyalty is not a gift to take for granted. "As for a cover story, as of yet, there's been no need. I speak Québécois French and thus far, I've had no one ask. It would be simple enough to assume that we are vacationing. Whatever the story we decide on, I'll be able to adjust the documentation as needed. I doubt this will be the place to remain indefinitely."

Oh, right. French. Here in his bubble, Will has almost forgot they were currently residing in the French-speaking province of Quebec. He realizes he'll be pretty much much useless on the language front, relying on Hannibal to translate when necessary. That would certainly prove to be interesting. Not only is he to be dependent on Hannibal's money, but now this too. It can't be helped, so he tries to not overthink it. Just being out and around others should be nice for a change. He's explored a little outside their quaint house, just walking around the grounds. They are on the outskirts, enclosed by trees, no neighbors in sight. It reminds him a little of Wolf Trap, even his place with Molly.

It's cool enough in temperature that heavy coats and scarves wouldn't be amiss. That should take care of their colorful necks. Will's not interested in how the ID was acquired, all that is required for any good forged document is the right payment. Hannibal is obviously a resourceful man, more than likely he had money and aliases stashed away.

"Alright, well, I don't remember French, so you're in charge of making sure I don't embarrass myself too badly."

They leave after a light lunch, Will taking the passenger seat in the vehicle Hannibal has acquired. It's not rented, but it's not new either. It's clean, runs well and is an average model that wouldn't attract attention.

"Never thought I'd be on the run," Will comments, eyes tracking to the scenery outside his window.

Hannibal refrains from telling Will that Quebec is a bilingual province, a small smile lingering almost fondly on his lips. While there are definitely sections of the numerous cities that lean heavily towards
speaking primarily French, it's not unheard of to run across English. They're closer to Quebec City, though safely on the outskirts where it will be simple to blend in but be treated with a modicum of hospitality. It is one benefit to Canada, though Hannibal is very aware how prominently American news features. They'll need to be careful. Thankfully the chill in the air means heavier coats and scarves and identification is made that much more difficult.

Still, he's careful to maintain the same appearance he's had for the past few weeks, though the crutch he'd been forced to use has finally been replaced with a smart-looking cane that he regrettably requires to walk the long distances, particularly with the growing chill in the air. Thankfully Will seems against commenting and, when they head out to the nondescript Ford - the most common brand in the area, much as it pains Hannibal - they do so wrapped warmly. Hannibal opts to drive due to Will's shoulder, and it isn't long before the rural area begins to grow from trees and landscape to paved roads.

"It is far less eventful than you might suspect unless we are unpardonably foolish," Hannibal says simply, trying not to grimace at the scent of the cheap leather around them. It's too cold to roll the windows down and he doesn't want to risk Will's discomfort.

"If Jack believes we survived our abrupt acquaintance with the Atlantic, he's likely looking for us in Mexico by now. I've been making a point to check every now and then, but the matter seems quiet. Not even a word from Miss Lounds. Perhaps the visceral death of one serial killer is not enough to endear the public to the FBI after losing quite a more prolific serial killer in the process." He sounds briefly proud; almost amused. Clearly he's lost no sleep over it. "Best to keep it quiet until it's absolutely necessary. Mass panic, after all, can be quite the unpredictable motivator."

Will figured that Mexico or Cuba would be places that Jack kept a closer eye on. He's not entirely upset that they headed north versus south as he burns easily, doesn't care for the dry heat - although he knows more Spanish than French at any rate. If he had to choose a place to hide away, he thinks somewhere in Europe would be nice, but really anywhere outside the US would do. He hadn't done a lot of travelling in his life.

"No overly expensive wine and truffles this time, hm?" It's a jab at Hannibal and his time in Europe where his fine tastes ultimately enabled Alana and Mason to track Bedelia and him down simply by shop receipts.

"Did you want to be caught? You certainly weren't shy about creating a bit of a mess." He's wondered about Hannibal's thought process concerning that time. "Wanted one last showdown with whoever sought you out?"

"I wanted-" Hannibal begins, but he trails off, which is odd enough for their conversations, never mind the small furrow that settles itself quite comfortably upon his brow. In front of Will, Hannibal has made a point to keep himself visibly free of indecision, both out of respect of not wanting to trouble his companion as well as a hesitance over showing Will weakness. Weakness, after all, can be exploited so beautifully and Will has... a track record. Hannibal is understandably wary.

Yet this particular question does concern Will's history. Had anyone else asked him, Hannibal would have scoffed it off, remained silent, or expressed a more violent displeasure. But Will is the only person who perhaps deserves to know, shameful as the answer may be. His hands, wrapped in softer black leather, settle firmly upon the steering wheel of the car as they drive. "I suppose that's an apt enough summary, yes, though not entirely accurate. I was... reckless. Intentionally so. Quite honestly, I cared very little whether or not someone found me. In a way it was gloating," he adds, acknowledging Will's assumption.
"Living as large as was possible and gloating every day Jack Crawford failed to see again what was right under his nose. But it was more complicated than that."

Hannibal's frown deepens, a minute twitch in his jaw saying everything he doesn't. "In a way, it was also spite and desperation. I wanted to erase all memory of you, and yet you were and have always been under my skin. It started as spite, and then... changed."

Because he'd hoped that Will would find him, would follow the clues left. That perhaps if he made a big enough ripple, Will would feel it even across the ocean. He doesn't say this, but he also knows he doesn't have to. Will is empathic, after all, and also not an idiot.

Hannibal pausing is peculiar enough to warrant Will looking over, intrigued by the momentary hesitation, the slight flicker of emotions as they play over Hannibal's features - indecision and reluctance to delve into an answer, but an answer comes and Will knows why. It's him. Why wouldn't it be? As to not stare, he looks back to his window.

Will listens, considers the explanation and accepts it. They hadn't truly had a chance to talk that much upon being reunited in front of the Botticelli, murderous whimsies getting in the way and all. He had deduced as much, but he still likes hearing it from Hannibal's mouth. Hannibal is not without his faults, gloating and pride undoubtedly a few of them. They also both have their impulsive streaks.

Will can also relate to, at first, trying to shed Hannibal like a second skin. He hadn't been decided on seeking for quite some time, over half a year. Even after he'd physically recovered from the knife wound, Will had tried to carry on, but Hannibal's absence had clung to him, refusing to be ignored, an injury festering on the inside without proper attention paid to it.

So, he had gone, left everything and sailed to find meaning.

"While chasing you, I felt you keenly. Talked with you while on your home estate grounds even,"

Will shares, feeling more inclined to open up after witnessing Hannibal's struggle. His voice is quiet, almost reverent as he recalls the memories. "Chiyoh's prisoner... I don't know if she ever told you, but... I created another monument, a tribute, if you will."

It's a gift that Will thinks to offer him something in return. It's little more than his respect but Hannibal appreciates the discretion just as much as he appreciates the fact that - after he's been silent for some time - Will speaks up. His voice is casual and conversational but it's a clever mask for something deeper. Quid pro quo, Hannibal thinks to himself and tries not to smile. For all the control he tries to exert over their situation, for all the masks he wears, Will is as observant as ever.

Will's admission also has the benefit of calming Hannibal's discomfort. It leaves something warmer and curious curling over Hannibal's mind. Something pleased. Will had spoken to his mere memory. It's an act Hannibal can relate to, though he doesn't say so. He merely nods his understanding, once. Though this time, aware that Will is giving him this gift in return, Hannibal allows himself a small smile of acknowledgement.

One that turns vaguely quizzical. "A monument? No."

Hannibal briefly goes back, thinking of the conversations he's had with Chiyoh over the past few years. Some have been rushed and acute, demanding medical supplies for Will. Others are faded and made hazy by the influence of the medication that had been pounding through his system at the time. He's aware she had written, but even now he can't remember the contents of the letters. All he remembers is refusing to acknowledge Alana's questions regarding them. Yet through it all, he can't
remember Chiyoh mentioning a monument.

"No, I don't believe she did. She informed me you arrived at the estate but I believe her intent was to warn. What about her prisoner, Will?" Hannibal asks, and while his tone does seem mild, there's a slight edge to it.

He knows the man is dead, after all, and Will sounds reverent at the memory. Hannibal can't help his curiosity. There's more to a story he had assumed long dormant. "What did you do?"

Will's eyes close and suddenly he's in the basement again surrounded by creeping snails and pheasant bones underfoot. The smell of spilled blood and decay mix, strong and pungent in his nostrils. Candlelight flickers, shadows dance around him, but right now this is Will Graham's sanctuary. He sees the image in his head and his hands gather the necessary materials to bring it to life. His hands are steady as he works and its construction progresses smoothly. When his tableau is complete, it's with a sense of marvel that he stares back at it. Will knows Hannibal could never set his eyes on the piece, but perhaps this is more for himself. His design.

"I strung him up like one of Buddish's praying angels," Will begins, voice softer in recollection and a bit airy. "Feathers and shards from wine bottles were his wings... His eyes were closed and he was adorned with snails." A short pause, a smile can be heard in his tone. "I made him a praying firefly. Elevated him. Changed him. In life he may have been ugly, but his death held a certain beauty at least."

Eyes blink open and Will licks his lips, straightens in his seat and peers at Hannibal, waiting for his assessment.

It has been years since Hannibal has seen this side of Will Graham, and that he must focus on the road ahead of them instead of the peacefully focused expression on Will's face is nothing short of maddening. He watches in his peripheral vision instead, marveling once more at the unique gifts Will has. He's seen this dance sparingly, but it has always fascinated him. And seeing Will recall his own actions, seeing him relive that moment as he had gazing upon the mounted corpse of Tier in the museum, is oddly satisfying. Not for the first time, Hannibal envies his ability to see these moments in brilliant detail.

Hannibal will never see Will's true design. He has no doubt that his estate will be heavily watched, particularly if Will ever mentioned his actions or his visit to anyone. It's entirely likely that Chiyoh has already cleanly swept it under the rug, so to speak. Yet he listens as Will speaks, managing to envision what he can in his own mind. Will's imagination - always so much more - had clearly done its job. Hannibal is left merely attempting to picture it, but what he can piece together makes him draw a slower, deeper breath edging on the side of reverence.

It's more than the creature had deserved, but Hannibal doesn't allow himself to dwell on that. Instead he dwells on Will's actions. Not on the who of it, but the why.

"Your attempt to understand me," Hannibal guesses, his voice sounding smoother with a deeper, instinctual pleasure. One hunter to another. "Perhaps an apology. To him, to me, perhaps. Such a strange, beautiful creature you are, Will." Hannibal pictures what he can. A frail, broken body strung up high, with tinted glass spilling a fractured array of light across the floor. Beautiful. "I doubt very much that I will ever truly understand you, or hope to predict you."

A pause, then, hands tightening slightly on the wheel: "How did it feel?"
Sharing with Hannibal in this situation is different, yet safe. Hannibal has to keep his eyes mainly focused on the road and Will has to keep his hands to himself. Safe. No chance for indiscretions because Will had been feeling that particular noise in his head starting up again, that urge to go further, the want... Another reason that he thought going out would be a good idea. Perhaps an outing would distract himself, that had been his hope.

That monument had been different than Randall Tier's because it was one entirely of his own creation. There's a sense of pride in his work, a feeling he, of course, never had when looking at another killer's scene, not even the Chesapeake Ripper's tableaus, although they certainly held his eye from an aesthetic point of view.

"I felt like you... Or at least an imitation of you. Creating art from death," Will pauses, scratches at his stubble. "It felt good... Seeing the image in my head and having it come together, piece by piece, all with an eerie sort of calm and accomplishment."

They're rapidly approaching civilization now and Will is unsure if he's pleased or disheartened that this particular conversation will need to come to a stop.

It's the answer Hannibal had wanted, but not necessarily the answer he'd been expecting. That Will says it so freely, sounding slightly reverent, is enough to deepen Hannibal's smile. He knows that feeling, the sense of accomplishment, turning the wretched into art, not unlike carving a shapeless, dirt-ridden stone into a statue. Only worth looking at because of his own hand. He wonders, for a brief moment, how much of the answer is actually Will and how much is Hannibal's own influence reflecting back at him. He's not a narcissist though he is prideful, and he can't deny the idea has merit. To be seen.

"It is satisfying. More so when the kill is by your own hand, but I suppose you did have your own part in it." Chiyoh had been forthcoming. "Regret has no real purpose whilst moving ahead, but I admit... I do wish I'd seen it. Perhaps one day a new inspiration will come to you and I will witness it first hand."

Hannibal allows the statement to hang between them for a moment, weighted and heavy with purpose. If Will never kills again, he'll be disappointed but he will, of course, accept it. But that doesn't mean he doesn't want to see it. The image of Will Graham once again bathed in blood, giving in to his own personal darkness is invigorating in a way nothing else is. Hannibal holds the image in his mind as the countryside transitions into buildings.

They don't go to Quebec City. While selection would undoubtedly be preferable, the crush of crowds is something Hannibal wishes to avoid. He doesn't yet trust Will's tolerance. Instead he takes them to a smaller city on the outskirts, busy enough to offer anonymity yet small enough that Will may withstand it properly. And while he wishes the conversation could stay as it is, Hannibal knows better. He sighs.

"What is it you'd like to get from this trip?"

While Will has admitted to wanting to hunt with Hannibal, nothing had been discussed about what could follow after the kill. No doubt they would have to be extremely careful about such things. Not many serial killers possessed Hannibal's unique flair for the dramatics. He had a certain signature that surely would raise flags in the system. Hannibal expressing interest in seeing one of his creations in the future... That causes a spark of warmth in Will. He recognizes his desire to be recognized and it's an interesting realization to be had. He thinks about the broken heart left in the chapel for him, the artistry and skill required in folding a human being like origami. Could he ever hope to achieve
something as sly and intricate as that?

Now his involvement in the actual death, his manipulation of Chiyoh, that was perhaps his greatest imitation of Hannibal. He'd been curious when he learned of her peril, felt a tug of intrigue and mischief even. Had Will been that close to Hannibal that he'd actually channeled him? Or was it simply from influence and cultivation? Another possibility was that Will had had that aspect in him all along...

He can't inquire, as Hannibal's practical question derails him. "Well, I assume we need groceries and the like," Will answers. "As for myself, maybe some warmer clothing. Long-sleeved shirts. Nothing fancy. That sort of thing."

It's a topic they'll talk about in the future. With the freedom surrounding them, they have nothing but time and each other. The thought fills Hannibal with a deep satisfaction that eases the line of his shoulders slightly, nodding. Loath as he is to drop the earlier topic, it's not one to maintain in public. Later, he promises himself as the city slowly grows around them like a crescendo, cars multiplying and pedestrians walking, some with their heads bowed against the chill and others strolling calmly down the sidewalks like they've faced far worse. Locals, used to the chill in the air, more than likely. He and Will won't fit in precisely, but Hannibal is no stranger to cold, and Will had bore the Baltimore winters fairly well for the fact he'd grown up in the south.

"Would my assumption that you'd prefer to limit your shopping to well-known outlet establishments be correct?" Hannibal asks, and his voice even manages to remain entirely free from judgement. Just because his tastes are grand and expensive doesn't mean he doesn't know what it is to be poor. It's something he pointedly doesn't comment on. Besides, following the hospital, even common retail chains will be a welcome blessing. In this, especially with Will at his side, Hannibal isn't about to be picky. If Will is more comfortable in cheap clothing, he'll make no protest.

While Will may appreciate Hannibal in a finely tailored suit, he hasn't ever been that comfortable in his own skin, let alone any item of clothing with a price tag containing too many numbers on it. Will's interest in fashion for himself is nonexistent, more concerned with function and blending in. In this way, clothing is used like armor. "You know me so well," Will remarks, sarcastically, trying to cover for what he thinks may turn out to be an awkward shopping experience.

In less than ten minutes, they're pulling into a Wal-Mart and Will has to roll his eyes at the large yellow smiley face welcoming them. It's gaudy, but familiar. Vehicle parked, Will paces himself to not rush ahead, so Hannibal can keep up, cane and all. Side by side, they enter the superstore, doors sliding open. The fluorescent lights are jarring and a greeter catches his eye.

"Bonjour."

"(I fucking hate my job. I hate you coming here, it’s pathetic--)

Loath as Hannibal is to step foot in any sort of commercial retail, there is a certain brilliance to it. Countless numbers of people aside, security is lax and nothing truly stands out. It's likely the safest place to get clothing and assorted materials, though he draws the line at produce. There will always
be local businesses, or farmer's markets willing to sell something not swimming in toxins or antibiotics. He's not quite *that* desperate yet, nor does it look like he'll have to be.

Hannibal merely draws his black woolen jacket in tighter around himself and the flat cap on his head is perfect to protect from the wind. Anywhere else perhaps it would come across as a disguise, but here, a mere glance is enough to see people scurrying for their cars or for the building, bundled up so tightly only their eyes are visible, or with their hats so low, they look to be trying to avoid the cameras. This will be a safe endeavor. Yet despite this, Hannibal still makes a point to walk using the cane, though he's less than pleased at the necessity. Will, again to his credit, says nothing and merely accompanies Hannibal to the sliding doors.

Immediately Hannibal's posture eases, his shoulders relaxing. One might say he looks almost _casual_, which is a rarity for him. It's nothing more than a shift in his body language and a slightly more animated way he glances around, but he truly does look like a different person. It's clear this isn't the first time he's blended in so well, and the fact he doesn't immediately break the unfortunate greeter's neck after the passive-aggressive greeting is a testament to the self-control he still has. Hannibal merely sends the individual a look and glances down at the name tag, filing it away. He has no Rolodex here, but he'll remember.

Taking care to dry the bottom of his cane before heading into the store, Hannibal switches to breathing through his mouth and - after a quick look at Will - he reaches over simply and sets his hand on Will's arm. It's hardly more than the mildest of touches, but it says everything.

"I believe the men's section is straight ahead and to the left. I would advise you to focus on me if you're able." This is going to be overwhelming enough as it is.

He hadn't thought the hustle and bustle of real people would get to him quite like this. He may be the perfect definition of an introvert, but Will has always managed to grit his way through socializing and being around people. He hasn't been this sensitive or on edge around strangers since his instability while working Jack's cases paired with his encephalitis (which he feels is understandable). Yet here he is, Will's gaze directed on the store floor in front of him, being pretty much led by Hannibal. A frown is on his face and he's _still_ trying to cast away the revulsion he picked up on -- *(I hate it here. I hate this fucking place. Just leave)* --

Will exhales slowly, bites down on his bottom lip and hopes that he isn't looking too rigid and all together awkward. Drawing attention to them is the last thing he wants. Breathe. Focus on Hannibal. Yes. Those were the instructions he received. The touch is steady. Firm. Like Hannibal. Hannibal is beside him. Hannibal is with him. He's not losing it. He's just empathizing with some unimpressed angry college kid whose part-time job is abysmal. This is child's play compared to getting into the heads of psychopaths.

They do end up in the Men's section, displays of clothing a welcome distraction and Will pulls away when he sees a display of appropriate looking, but plain dress shirts. 100% cotton, button down, collared. They would do. He finds his size, selects a few with a plaid checkered pattern, a couple other solid colors that he pays no attention to. He grabs two packages of white undershirts for sleeping. Hands full, it's a bit of a struggle while wearing the larger winter coat, but Will's determined to get in and out as quickly as possible. With some careful balancing, he even manages to pick up a few pairs of jeans and a pair of soft flannel pajama pants.

Checking out and paying goes smoothly - Hannibal ensures this while Will is his silent companion. It's not until they're back in the Ford, bags in the backseat, that Will lets out a shaky exhale.

"Ridiculous," he mutters. "Being shaken up by a *greeter*, of all people. Not on top of my game,
apparently.

There is a different dynamic like this. Will is unstable, shaken, his empathy misfiring in a way Hannibal had expected, but not fully anticipated. A long-dormant part of him almost wishes to study it, to perhaps orchestrate a scenario where Will is left to his own devices for a minute, to watch how being around people influences him after so long safely sequestered away. It's a nice thought, but one that Hannibal immediately dismisses in favor of merely keeping his hand exactly where it is and staying by Will's side as they walk and retrieve items of clothing he tries not to look at too critically. He merely makes a mental note to wash them as soon he's able, to attempt to strip them of the chemically treated scent. Provided they give Will comfort, he has few complaints.

It isn't long before they check out, though Hannibal does reluctantly insist on a trip to the pharmacy first, the memory of Will's bitten, bleeding neck sharp in his mind's eye. He's uncertain where that will escalate - especially as it's been a week of relative safety- but he's not willing to take any chances. Still, they don't linger long and Hannibal handles payment and casual conversation, his French - though Will has no basis for it - far less accented than his English.

Once they're back in the car, his cane propped in the back seat, Hannibal gingerly leans himself back in the driver's seat and turns his attention over to Will. It's easier to focus on his plain distress than it is to acknowledge that a simple trip of no more than twenty minutes still has enough discomfort going through him to make rest a necessity instead of a requirement. He resists the urge to set a hand over his abdomen; it won't help beyond a psychological need. Instead he focuses on Will.

"Your defenses are down, Will. That's all. You have had only one person for company and you have tailored your empathy to pass me by, perhaps, so as not to get caught up in who and what I am, but you're no longer practiced at shielding yourself from other people." His voice, while somewhat clinical, is still reassuring. "It will take time to get used to people again. And, perhaps fairly, that young man was quite unpleasant."

To anyone else, the comment could have simply been distaste, but Hannibal isn't just anyone. He's not impulsive enough to risk this newfound freedom from Jack's hand, but he can't deny that the urge is strong to rend anyone who unsettles Will so.

He doesn't want to give himself allowances, but Hannibal is right. Will has been out of touch and practice with being around others. Frustrated, he rips off the knitted cap he'd been wearing, running a hand through his curls, messing them up and making them reflect what he feels on the inside. He thinks back to times of hiding out in bathrooms, locking himself away in a stall because he'd been too overwhelmed or overstimulated by the swarms of students at college. That had been over a decade ago. He'd come a long way since then, erected walls and barriers around himself in order to stomach being out in public.

"Be that as it may, it's still irritating. Feels like I'm my younger, more inept self," Will replies, a bit in defeat. It will get better, in time and with practice, but he's not looking forward to having to re-orient himself. He rips off one of his own gloves and reaches over for one of Hannibal's hands, doing the same, divesting the older man of the smooth leather glove so their skin can touch. Their hands are clasped, resting over the emergency brake and Will is looking away. The touch is calming, but not enough. Still, Will remains still and quiet, not daring to ask or take more.

It doesn't escape Hannibal's notice that Will is slowly fraying. It's unsubtle even by his standards, but the violent, quick movements speak of restlessness and Hannibal only watches as Will messes his hair up, and then divests himself of one of his gloves before reaching over to do the same to
Hannibal. The softer leather slides from his fingers but Hannibal merely lifts an eyebrow without comment and allows Will to take his hand, idly noting that direct skin contact seems to help. But given the tension in Will's shoulders and the way he hasn't yet turned back to face Hannibal, it's likely not enough. Yet Will says nothing. Hannibal merely regards him for a moment, contemplative. He'd push, but they're in public and haven't discussed anything since earlier in the week.

But given that Will looks very close to shaking apart, Hannibal merely eyes him and then takes his hand away only for long enough to slip his other glove off. Then, taking Will's hand again, Hannibal gingerly shifts in his seat and reaches out, fingers brushing along the edge of Will's jaw as he gently coaxes Will to at least face him, if not look in his direction.

"What do you need me to do?" Hannibal asks simply, freely taking away Will's choice to refuse in an attempt to make it easier. "You know all you need to do is ask, Will."

Will resists at first, frown deepening on his face, jaw and hand clenching slightly, but he wants the physical connection and comfort that has started to become a staple in his life, so Will gives in and turns to face the other man. His eyes don't quite meet Hannibal's own pair, they don't track higher than past Jack's scar, but he can feel the concern and focus that's directed solely at him. It makes his stomach tie itself into knots.

"Tell me something nice about myself," Will murmurs in answer. "But not in English. I don't want to be able to understand it."

Any language would do, the words wouldn't even have to be the truth, but Hannibal's soothing lilt would be a balm to him, he figures. He's not ready to truly hear or face Hannibal's feelings, that much is evident and has been proven, but he can't help but be curious and want a piece of that intensity. His head ducks into Hannibal's scarf, as close as he can be to that marked up neck. Right now he doesn't care that they're in the middle of a parking lot. He knows Canada is open-minded about this sort of thing - same-sex partnerships - and it's not like anything scandalous is to follow. Will is sure Hannibal will keep them on the straight and narrow.

Hannibal isn't surprised that Will resists, but he is surprised by Will's answer. Not enough to show it, but enough for it to briefly draw him up short. He recovers smoothly and, momentarily searching Will's eyes - even if they don't meet his own - Hannibal has to admit that Will is serious. He's not ready to hear what he's asking for, not in a language he can understand, but Hannibal knows he'll still be able to pick up on the tone, the sentiment, and the request feels somehow more dangerous than Will's teeth had, sunk against his neck.

Yet when Will leans in and carefully presses his face to Hannibal's scarf, hiding himself from view and from the mere suggestion of eye contact, Hannibal considers the request, hesitates only for a moment longer, and then complies. He frees his hand from Will's in order to carefully slide it behind Will's shoulders, his hand bracing against the small of Will's back. It's an intimate position and Hannibal does it solely to avert the gaze of anyone who might be walking by. This close, Will's scent is all-encompassing and heady, though Hannibal can smell the fear on him as he presses his cheek to Will's hair and starts to talk.

He tells Will - his tone rounder, his native tongue - that Will is the only person who's ever been able to undo him so perfectly. That he is dark and beautiful. Intelligence, compassion and cruelty a welcome mix under his skin. His voice is slow, though Hannibal is careful not to allow himself to fall too deeply into the sentiment. His consonants harden then, bitten-off and yet still soft as he switches to German. And in his newly-chosen language, he presses closer to Will and tells him he's never met anyone so perfectly flawed, so engaging, encapsulating everything Hannibal had never known he'd
needed until it was suddenly sitting in front of him. He tells Will of how impressed he'd been upon that first meeting, in Japanese, and when his voice reaches the soft purr of Spanish, it's with an aching counterpoint. He talks of everything he had willingly given up all those years ago and how he still sometimes finds himself wondering if he's dreaming. Yet despite it all Will is right there, giving him more than he'd hoped to dream.

And when Hannibal starts to trail off, finally, his language shifts off into the simple truth: "Je veux être avec toi pour toujours," Hannibal says simply, "Je ne peux pas vivre sans toi."

Layers of clothing and jackets are between them, padding and protection from any true contact, but perhaps it's for the best, another safety measure in this delicate and tense moment that ticks on. Eyelids slide shut and Will lets himself fall under the spell of Hannibal's tongue, words that he knows are not lies, but words he knows he's not ready to accept either. They're a caress, soft in tone, yet rooted in deep felt emotion. Will doesn't know if he can ever let himself connect to all that they are, to all the intricacies and nuances Hannibal possesses.

As the languages flow from one to another, he feels a surge of an emotion he doesn't want to be experiencing. He shakes slightly, squeezes his eyes tighter, trying valiantly to reign himself in. Will can't fall apart from this, he asked for this, for Hannibal to soothe him with sentiment and now he feels the pang of apprehension. This tenderness, this love is going to crush him, it's going to swallow him whole and devour every particle. Oh, God, is he the wounded bird?...

No. Hannibal won't. Can't.

The words stop. Cease. Finally. They end in French and Will feels exposed, naked, despite being more clothed than he has ever been in while in Hannibal's company.

"Enough," Will gasps out, lifting his head, eyes wide and wet. "That's enough." He surges up, dry lips crashing into Hannibal's. This is the only answer he can think to give.

It's too much. These are words Hannibal has spoken in the middle of the night to the very memory of Will, soft things he says under his breath when Will is otherwise occupied. He picks his moments carefully, selecting them with an even greater care than he does his specific cuts of meat, and yet he knows here, now, that his tongue is sharper than his scalpels could ever be. It's far too much, and Will is far too vulnerable, the perfect and quintessential wounded bird. So easy to crush, and so easy to nurture, and Will is the only man capable of making Hannibal choose the latter. But as he speaks, Will doesn't tell him to stop. Hannibal loses himself in the ease, in the security of languages Will doesn't speak and can't understand, and he does what he can to spare Will the raw emotion, but given the gentle shaking under his hands, he knows he's failed even before Will lifts his head.

He's seen Will's expression creased in agony and splashed with blood. He's seen him riding on indulgent pleasure, and yet this moment - his clear vulnerability in the wide, overly-bright blue of his eyes - is what Hannibal thinks truly undoes him. And he knows in the split second before Will speaks that Will is going to kiss him. It's subtle, but it's written into the lines of his body. Ever accommodating, he leans down just enough to make it easier and he closes his eyes the moment Will pushes forwards, remembering his comfort. Yet Hannibal can't quite stem the desperation he himself feels, can't pretend that the press of Will's lips isn't agonizing in how perfect it is. He is a man compromised, torn apart years ago, and Will Graham is as much his absolution as his damnation.

Yet despite it, he finds himself kissing Will back, and properly this time. He kisses him like he matters, half in an attempt to ground him and half in an attempt to make him see. Conflicting emotions, really. Will isn't ready; this is truly a horrible idea, and yet Hannibal has always claimed to
be a selfish man. He lifts his hand to Will's scarred cheek and feels the scrape of his stubble against his hand and his chin. It's different even for him, but he'd long ago accepted that this is what he wants. Will Graham, in any way he's allowed. Hannibal tells himself he'll draw back in a moment, but for this one, he indulges.

It's their first proper kiss, nothing held back, but eyes still shut. Hannibal meets him, lips moving in earnest, albeit with a bit more control than Will's own. Whereas Molly was soft, but persistent, Margot demure and Alana gentle, Hannibal's kissing is confident and sure. It's everything he thought it would be like, for Will has indeed thought on how it would feel to have those lips move against his own, sometimes in waking, sometimes in dreams.

Will hears himself groan and it almost sounds as if he's actually in pain. Perhaps in a way he is. He is afflicted, lanced open by every sharp angle Hannibal contains. Even in Hannibal's caring, Will feels unworthy because in Hannibal's caring it's close to being cherished; it's a wholly unwelcome and foreign experience, one that he simultaneously shies away from and is drawn to.

From their breathing the windows inside have begun to fog. Here in the parking lot, in this car, they are two men learning and discovering each other's mouths. It's a guilty pleasure for Will, one that he doesn't especially feel good about partaking in. He doesn't want to only kiss Hannibal when he is unstable and needy for what kind of message does that send? There's a pathetic undercurrent of resentment in his actions, one that he wants to distract himself from so he purposefully turns rough, nipping at Hannibal's bottom lip hard before taking it into his mouth and sucking at it. Heat has flooded his body, a familiar hunger that wants to thoroughly wreck Hannibal and have him be the one finally uncertain. It's an immature and not fully realized desire, one Will doesn't pride himself in... but there seems to be little room for his pride in this relationship. He's let himself become frazzled and ruled mostly by impulses that fire across synapses, giving into his cravings, crossing the line only to hastily retreat back afterwards. In this, Hannibal has let him get away with it numerous times.

He's getting away with it now because they both know this isn't going to end on a good note. Will has proven this in the past. He proves it now by breaking their kiss with an utterance of, "Fuck" and shaky hands gripping tightly at Hannibal's scarf. He's panting, torn between lust and agitation.

There is a distant solace in the fact that Hannibal had parked far away from the door. Cane or not, there's less foot traffic near the back of the parking lots, and now he's even more grateful for his foresight. But then that sound escapes Will, a deep, wanting, nearly-pained groan and Hannibal dismisses the other cars in the parking lot, the other people who could only feasibly stop by. His entire focus is on Will.

Will, who kisses with a desperation that feels like he's clinging to the brink of death and attempting to fight his way back up. Who clings to him, hands clutching with need, with a desire to bury himself under the weight of Hannibal's words and shake them off with equal violence. He cycles, impulsive, kissing with a deeper need one moment and then surging forward again the next. And with each and every iteration of what Will needs, Hannibal is glad to adapt accordingly. He kisses Will like he's something vicious and beautiful, and again like he's precious, fingers carding through Will's hair with an aching gentleness before Will dashes the sentiment against the rocks as he changes the tone with a bold nip, claiming Hannibal's lips in a way that sparks heat through him and draws a soft breath of a sound from his own throat, unbidden.

He curls his fingers in Will's hair, clenching one moment and stroking the next and he kisses Will back with equal need. But Hannibal knows the score, and he knows this is short-lived. So when he
feels Will begin to tremble under his hands, when the scent of his desire reaches a certain point, Hannibal prepares himself and is ready when Will suddenly breaks the kiss. He doesn't move away, but Hannibal can feel his desperation if only in the death-grip Will has on his scarf. Hannibal himself is not unaffected, his breathing a little harder, lower lip aching with Will's fixation, and he wants nothing more than to close the distance between them, to open Will's lip between his teeth, to drink him down.

But he doesn't. He takes a few moments to reign those desires in lest they show too heavily in his eyes, and when he opens his eyes again, he keeps them cast down, not wanting to overwhelm and yet blatant in his admiration of how kiss-swollen Will's lips look.

"Language," he chides, his voice lower, a little rougher. He wants as well, but not enough to compromise Will. Still, there is more care than he wants to admit in his touch as he strokes his fingers back through Will's hair, his palm upon Will's cheek. It's reminiscent of the way he had held him before carving Will open, perhaps on purpose. Rewriting the worst.

"Too much?" Hannibal finally asks, for while Will hadn't used his safeword, he doesn't want him to reach that point.

Hannibal sounds delightful, changed, voice lower and with a slight rasp. Will has done this, brought this side out. He feels a curl of something in his stomach, one he's slightly taken back from. Maybe it's victory or maybe it's pride. Either way, it's one step closer to undoing Hannibal and that counts for something in Will's book. He wants to push past his own uncertainty to be able to push Hannibal...

"Too much? Maybe not enough... I don't know," Will mumbles out. He presses into the hand on his cheek, taking purposeful slow breaths and trying to calm himself down some. It doesn't really accomplish much. Hannibal's lips have a sheen of saliva on them. Will wants to lick at them. He wants to bite again and that's the most startling urge he's facing right now. They're not in a space where they can go too much further, but still Will is almost dejected to be leaving this charged moment behind.

Desire has replaced most of his earlier turmoil surrounding his brief empathic connection with the stranger. Will doesn't know which state is safer. Both hold their own levels of discomfort and consequences, but as of late the upset regarding his body's cravings is something he's more experienced with.

"Either way, I guess we should get going. Pick up whatever else we need..." His voice doesn't hold much conviction. Will's tongue flicks out to taste Hannibal on his lips and that seems to shake his resolve because immediately after he's sputtering out a, "Goddammit" and all but attacking Hannibal's mouth with his own again.

Not enough. Hannibal is expecting Will's answer to be ambiguous or to confirm that he'd gone too far. He isn't expecting Will's temptation laced beautifully through every word, isn't expecting the way Will leans into his hand as he struggles to regain his control. Hannibal still doesn't let himself look, but he doesn't need to meet Will's eyes to see him. He can feel the heavy beat of Will's heart under his hand, the flutter of his pulse against the wrist of his other hand. Will's lips are swollen and there's an occasional tremor in his jaw that Hannibal wants to taste. He doesn't need to see the desire written in Will's eyes to know he wants. Though it does still catch him off guard that Will seems very aware that he wants. Finally removing the blindfold, as it were.

He's right, though. They should leave, should continue to run errands before their strength wanes.
Hannibal swallows again and nods, though there's no escaping the hunger, almost acidic in his bones. Will Graham will eternally be his weakness, and that is only proven more when the curse gnaws its way into the air and suddenly they're kissing again. Hannibal should be surprised, and it should take him a moment to realize what's happened.

It doesn't. He surges into the kiss, nails pressing gently against Will's scalp as he tilts his head, finding a better angle to lock the shape and feel of Will's lips into his mind. Kissing him is fire - beautiful and deadly in equal measure - and Hannibal only draws him closer. There's little way for them to lose themselves in this, not here, half-twisted in the front two seats of a Ford, with the buckle of a seat belt pressing hard against Hannibal's hip. He can already feel his wounds complaining about the angle and yet he cares little. Instead he gives Will time, to warn him, before his teeth close over Will's lower lip. It's a thrilling threat - that he could bite to bleeding - but he doesn't. He merely takes care to deepen the kiss by increments, attempting to find the edge of Will's limits but not cross over.

It's not enough. It's not enough. It's not enough. The words repeat in Will's head. Restrictive clothing - coats, scarves, sweaters - are barriers. The console between them, the emergency break are awkward objects that don't let him get close enough and cause a frustrated sound to work its way out of the brunet's mouth. He knows there's no way he can crawl into Hannibal's lap. They aren't fucking teenagers, of course. He pulls at the scarf, abandons his hold on the accessory, claws viciously at the coat - all pointless actions that get him nowhere closer to Hannibal's skin. Will doesn't even know what he'd be doing if the expanse of flesh was available to him, but not being able to reach it has him embittered.

Teeth slide over his lip, teeth that have ripped a throat, teeth that have been on his throat and he cries out from pleasure. His hands grip each of Hannibal's thighs, it's all Will can do to stop himself from tearing into threaded fabric, ripping through that barrier like Hannibal had done to so many of his. He's all pent up hormones and vexation, hungry, but with no satisfaction in sight. His scalp tinges from the attention, his own pants are uncomfortably tight. The layers of clothing are now cumbersome and too hot and it's with an anguished displeased huff that he breaks away, this time sliding further away into his own seat and pointedly making an effort to stare at his fogged up window as his hands fumble for his seat belt.

"Okay... That's enough now."

Will Graham is pure animalistic fire, all teeth and claws and instinct that breaks through traditional barriers, driving his base need home. A wolf's song called into the night, feral and snarled, evoking an answering call under Hannibal's skin. This kiss is anything but exploratory. It's bordering on violent. And while Hannibal reflects Will's passion like a mirror, his own desire simmers hotly under the surface. It isn't Hannibal clutching at Will's scarf, or wrenching at the collar of his jacket as though he'd like nothing better than to rip it open and crawl inside. It's Will. This, beautifully, is all Will, and Hannibal marvels at it as he gives in to the sensation, grasping at what he can, knowing this can't go far and yet basking in every second.

His teeth draw a beautiful cry from Will's lips that Hannibal drinks down, and he draws Will closer, his movements rougher, but his touch gentle, controlled. Even in this, with Will's passion a heavy, tempting distraction, Hannibal has Will's limits and Will's comfort in mind. There are lines he won't cross and they change moment to moment. But in this, he gives Will what he wants, what he needs. He tempts Will with the pointed scrape of teeth and feels Will's hands settle on his thighs. His hands curl in Will's hair and he's wrenched closer in response. And when the tension in the car reaches a new height and all Hannibal can taste and sense is Will, that is when something shifts. He almost pushes.
And then Will breathes roughly, the sound frustrated, and he breaks away. Hannibal feels something
darker and selfish curl in his chest, something responding to the taste of Will on his lips and the raw
scrape left behind from Will's stubble. For a moment, he keeps his grip firm, like he's contemplating
whether or not to allow Will to leave. But in the end, reason comes back and Hannibal carefully
releases Will's hair, allows him to retreat. He draws in a deeper, clear breath that does absolutely
nothing to help as the car is saturated with the scent of their mixed arousal, and he gingerly shifts,
settling back in his seat.

The gunshot wound protests the action but Hannibal ignores it. He merely takes a moment to glance
at himself in the rear-view mirror, admiring how red his lips look, and how evidence of Will's
attention is everywhere. As Will pulls himself back together, Hannibal reaches up and carefully
adjusts his collar, smoothing the wrinkles back down. Then he does what he can to fix his scarf,
carefully piecing himself back together. His gloves are last, mostly because he has to reach across
Will's lap to get one, but he's careful even as he pulls them back on. Then he reaches for his seat belt,
breathing slowly in an attempt to calm down.

"Would you like me to take you back and finish the errands another day? I would suggest a slow
reintroduction to being around people. Perhaps," he adds, though somewhat reluctantly, "The animal
shelter would offer some comfort."

For a few brief seconds, the doctor doesn't appear to be letting go, hand still buried in Will's hair. A
flash of fear entwined with arousal shrieks through the empath. What if this is the time Hannibal
seeks to take? But no, Hannibal gets his senses back and relents, hands leaving Will. The heat is still
there, simmering between them, the attraction magnetic in a way that Will tries hard to resist. A part
of him knows that he gave in because of their current situation and the knowledge of its limitations. It
had been safe to give in, so Will had allowed himself to do so.

His heart gives a lurch at the mention of the animal shelter. They hadn't discussed about acquiring a
dog since it was first brought up. Will had wondered if Hannibal had conveniently forgot about the
concession. Apparently not. It's another act of kindness given to him, one that flits through him like a
hummingbird and leaves him caught off guard.

"The animal shelter... please."

The car is started and Will immediately opens his window, the rush of cool crisp air a welcome
introduction to the stifling heat they've produced. He unzips his coat a little, loosens the scarf and
breathes. Thoughts of canine companionship fill Will's head and he tries to ignore the way his mind
wants to fall back to knowing that Hannibal would be allowing such a thing in the future.

The desire to have an animal in the house could not be lower on Hannibal's list; he has no particular
use for dogs. But this is important to Will, and while they've not spoken about it since the first and
only mention, Hannibal has still been thinking about it. Adding a dog is an added complication and
there's no guarantee the animal will be fit to travel if and when they need to leave. There are other
considerations - supply runs, regular exercise, grooming, and the like - and yet it is a simple
concession for Will. Hannibal has no desire to have a dog in the house, but he desires Will's
contentment. If a dog is the price, he will gladly pay it.

He only glances at Will for a moment, fleeting out of the corner of his eye, but that's all he needs.
Will's surprise is evident, followed immediately by something shielded, but genuine. Hannibal
doesn't delve too deep. He merely starts the car and carefully rolls down his own window, the cold
air almost immediately defogging the windshield.
"Of course, Will."

The change in subject and direction gives them both time to come back down. Hannibal turns his focus to the road ahead and allows Will the privacy of his own thoughts. He'd taken the liberty of looking up the location of the closest shelter the last time he'd gone out, and while the drive is long, it gives them both time to calm down.

They arrive at the shelter well before they close and once parked, Hannibal quickly checks that the redness to his face has faded ever so slightly. While he feels no shame in wearing Will's marks, he'd rather avoid the stares right now. Will's healing scar will draw attention enough as it is, but there's little they can do about that, and he doubts stares will linger too long considering the general feeling of this city. Hannibal gets out of the car with a shielded wince, and while he hates that he needs to, he does lean a little heavier upon the cane, though without comment. He wants no pity and he'll not heal properly if he doesn't push through the discomfort.

"Would you like to be on your own, or would you prefer company?"

"Company is fine," Will says and finds that it's actually true. The companionship of Hannibal is something Will hadn't wanted to grow used to and even fond of, but he has. He won't even deny it. Through their conversations, cooking, their revelations and their exploration of each other, Hannibal's hooks have worked their way deeper into Will. Or were they there all along, just waiting for Will to become aware of their presence? Scars have been touched, hands have clutched, marks have been left with teeth, blood tasted and now the frenzied kissing of their mouths... Yes, Will prefers Hannibal by his side.

Their visit to the animal shelter goes smoothly. Will ignores any and all eyes, Hannibal explains their situation and a volunteer shows them to where the dogs are held. Will is in his element, a happy warmth ever present in his eyes as he greets each dog, getting down onto his knees and murmuring sweet affections to them. They won't be leaving with one today, but still he smiles, pets them, soaks up their affection, his face and hands being licked profusely. He has a few ideas of a potential dog for them he plans on discussing it with Hannibal later as it would be a mutual decision.

When they return to the vehicle Will is still smiling, albeit a smaller one. "Thank you," he says genuinely, looking over to the driver's seat, to Hannibal. "I know it's not your thing... I know it's for me."

The shelter is a measure of Hannibal's patience but he doesn't fault Will his need. While Hannibal can't say the outing isn't irritating, it's worth it for the look of genuine content on Will's face. Hannibal sets himself up as a steady guardian against those who would try and speak with Will. A few volunteers come by during the visit and Hannibal grabs their attention smoothly, distracting them from Will, who kneels on the ground and soaks up the attention like it's the last he'll ever get. The volunteers are at least polite, even more so when they learn they can lapse into French and carry on a conversation in their native tongue. Hannibal learns about the adoption process and makes silent mental notes over what will need to be done if Will opts for a dog from the shelter. Though he holds little interest in the topics they discuss, he has enough knowledge about their city to weave fond - false - memories of past visits and trips to the University one of the girls just so happens to attend.

He can read the bracelet around her wrist despite it being upside-down, but the topic has found its mark. They talk candidly for a while, and the few times one of the volunteers seems to notice Will, Hannibal merely draws her back into different topics. By the end of the trip, they are quite certain that he and Will are romantic partners, and Hannibal makes no move to convince them otherwise. He merely says the goodbye for both Will and himself, and serves as a careful guard on the way back to
the car.

Hannibal isn't as drained as he is tired by the time they're once again seated in the vehicle. The stench of *dog* clings to Will like a second skin and Hannibal is torn between finding it offensive and merely accepting it as a necessity.

"Yes," he confirms, because there's no use in denying that this trip had solely been for Will. "It is. And you are welcome, Will. If visits like this calm you, I have few qualms about making them more regular. At least until you inevitably bring a dog into the house."

Hannibal's response is another scrap of evidence showing just how far he's willing to go to accommodate Will. It isn't new by any means, but it still sits uneasy with Will, so much so that he closes his eyes and says nothing in return. What is he to say? A dog would make him happy, it would be a little piece from the old Will Graham's life, one that Hannibal is at least okay with, or can at least tolerate. The familiarity would be more than welcome in this new life they are creating. Together.

"Home," Will states, clearly done with the outing for today. He doesn't know if he would call it a success, it could have gone better, but it could have gone a lot worse too. Small steps. Or something like that. The profiler has a lot to think on - his apparent flimsy control of his empathy, the heated make-out session, visiting the animal shelter... He would do that at home, though. Not here, not next to Hannibal.

*Home.* They have a home together now, don't they? It's a strange notion. Almost disturbing. Their farmhouse might have started out as a means to hideout, one that he dwelt in, but didn't feel like he belonged... Over time, however, it had started to feel like a home, a place that offered Will a sanctuary from the world. Not that he wants to necessarily *hide* from the world, for that surely is no way to live, but having a safe space is more than appreciated.

The drive back to the farmhouse seems longer this time around, but Hannibal feels no need to complain. Will is silent at his side, appearing to be lost in thought, and for a moment it's like nothing has changed. Hannibal is merely driving him to a crime scene; Will holds the same introspective expression, his brow almost furrowed against whatever his thoughts are. It's a relaxing image, though one that falls apart slightly at the sight of the angry red gash upon his face. Not for the first time, Hannibal wishes they had ravaged Dolarhyde more than they had. It had been a hunt more than a kill, but given how many injuries Will had sustained, he would have liked to have killed him slowly.

When they arrive back at the farmhouse - a temporary safe house, perhaps, but one that seems to draw a slightly relieved expression across Will's gaze, one that makes Hannibal wonder - he silently tells Will to make his way inside, brokering no argument. Then, needing to lean ever heavily upon the cane, Hannibal gathers the bags up and glances around, a quick check that everything is as they left it. He's not surprised that it is and, satisfied, he makes his way back into the house. He takes off his hat, scarf and gloves which he folds carefully into the pockets of the jacket he slips off to hang up by the door. Though he could likely use its assistance even now, he props his cane up and makes an effort to appear unaffected as he sets about putting the medical supplies away in the upstairs guest room.

He doesn't take a proper break until after he's separated Will's clothes out to wash properly, and the first load is in the washing machine. Only then does Hannibal make his way back downstairs - leaning perhaps a little heavily on the railing of the stairs - and locates Will.

"Is there anything you need at this time?"
If the bags were heavy, Will would have offered to help, but apparently old habits are hard to break and Hannibal seems all too willing to carry them himself. Will had been given a key to the house - a show of trust - so he goes on ahead and unlocks the wooden front door. The familiar scent of home hits his nose and Will is glad and relieved to be back. He hurries to shed all the extra layers, hangs up his coat, but doesn't bother with folding the scarf, just shoves it with his gloves and hat onto the shelf in the closet and moves out of the entryway to allow Hannibal space.

He glances around at the recognizable space. *Home.* His home with Hannibal. Will rolls his eyes at himself, not a fan of the thought. In a small act of petty defiance, he gets a glass of water from the tap in the kitchen instead of the filtered water that's in the fridge. Will can hear Hannibal doing something with his clothes - most likely removing the tags and sorting them to be washed, because heaven forbid they were worn without being washed first--

With a jolt, Will realizes he's been standing, lost in his thoughts and that's how Hannibal finds him. Of course that question would be asked. If he *needs* anything.

"I need you leave me alone," is what comes out and Will somehow manages to keep his face neutral as he breezes past the older man to go to his room. Will it hurt? Was that his intention? Will doesn't know. He's been too much of himself today, from sharing about his firefly tribute and with Hannibal all but coming to his rescue in the store. The soothing foreign words told to him, their goddamn needy kissing, Hannibal taking him to the animal shelter... He has issues with each one, despite knowing that all Hannibal had done was *oblige* him.

Goddammit. He slams the door to his room. His room in *their* home. He has no plans on cooking with Hannibal tonight.

It's a clear testament to Hannibal's fatigue that he doesn't immediately see the change in Will's posture. His mind is elsewhere - upon Will, of course, for Will Graham has had a permanent place in his thoughts since they'd first met - but also on his own injuries and whether or not small tasks can be put off until after he's rested. It's a bitter thought, one that dances close to petulance. Hannibal has had three years to stagnate in a cell, but even in that time, when he had been allowed, he had done what he could to maintain himself. Dolarhyde's final gift is a greater insult than Alana's attempt at subjugating him. Hannibal can find grace even in humiliation, but weakness is not something he handles well.

His thoughts, therefore, are worryingly split. So when Will's voice comes out, harsh and cold despite the blank expression, Hannibal draws up short and straightens, a small furrow settling on his brow. The tonal shift catches him by surprise and while he bites back the urge to stop Will and ask what had happened, he can't quite shield the confusion as Will strides past him. Only then does Hannibal note the tightness to his posture and the set to his jaw. It's stubbornness and frustration, true, but he's uncertain where the root cause has stemmed from. The drive back had been comfortable, and yet... this.

Hannibal allows himself to frown when he hears the slam of the door (which is quite impossible to take any other way) and wonders, vaguely, if the pendulum had swung fully in the other direction without his knowledge. It's a frustrating thought, one that draws a sigh from his lips, but Hannibal accepts it as a momentary madness that he will observe. For now, though he's still somewhat exhausted, he goes to the fridge to idly look through it and see what could be made for dinner.

He focuses on preparation - washing vegetables and crushing spices and marinating the meat properly - and he gives Will adequate time to settle, by his estimation. It's over an hour later when Hannibal dares to make the trek to Will's room (after switching out the laundry). Still, he observes the
proper boundaries, lifting a hand to Will's closed door in a small, polite knock. This is Will's space, and Hannibal has not shattered that boundary.

"Will. Would you like to assist with dinner?"

He tries to read, but ends up going over the same paragraph three times and advancing nowhere. Will tries a different book, but has the same result. With a frustrated sigh, he flops back on his bed and shuts his eyes. He wants to step out into the stream, see a clear blue sky and talk with Abigail, but he can't focus. Instead, his mind feels like treating himself to images of Molly in the hospital, or Molly *changed* (murdered) with mirror shards covering her mouth and eyes. Christ. He had turned out to be such a disappointment and a horrible thing to be introduced into their lives. He had almost got them both killed, but still he wonders how they are coping. Hadn't he promised 'till death do us part, devoted years to them and in the span of weeks, thrown it all away. Hannibal had worked quickly, hadn't he? Bedelia had said that Hannibal had been confident that he could take them away, and she was right. God, he hopes that Molly and Walter think he's dead because if they could see him now...

The thoughts of building a home with Hannibal are why they are on his mind. The dogs, too, had sparked memories of his old canine friends. Hannibal had called his previous life a farce, but he'd been happy, hadn't he? He'd been mostly at peace. Haunted, yes, but happy. Surely... Perhaps he should have fought harder. Resisted.

So, when Hannibal comes knocking, cordially asking and inviting him to cook, Will doesn't have to think on his answer. "No." Straight to the point. He's still sticking with his earlier sentiment of wanting to be left alone. When he hears Hannibal retreat, only then does Will get off the bed, grabbing a new change of clothing so he won't be covered in dog hair. It's then he realizes why he'd be changing, *who* he'd be changing for, that Will snorts and throws the clean clothing back on his bed. Let him smell like dogs. Let him offend Hannibal's senses.

He storms to the bathroom, does his business, and when he faces the mirror Will's reflection looks back at him despondent. Who is he to jump from the arms of Molly to Hannibal? To expect and want and need human connection and care? To delight in Hannibal cherishing him, to indulge and then push away the same man who has killed those he'd *loved*. What a snake he is. Cunning to slither his way and win over devotion and affection. Abigail. Beverly. Molly. Walter.

He punches his face in the mirror with his right hand. Will ignores the ache in his shoulder, clenches his sore fist anyway, brings it back and then strikes the unyielding surface again. And again. The pain is deserved, it's not enough for what he's done, what he's *doing*. Will knuckles are bloody and only when he hears the bathroom door open does he still. He'd apparently not locked it.

The answer is worrying, but Hannibal accepts it easily. Will has a right to his own personal space and while Hannibal does suspect this sudden separation, he's not willing to risk what he's carefully built by forcing his suspicion on Will. Instead he merely waits for a moment, gathering his concerns to set aside, and just turns around and makes his way back downstairs. In his wake, he hears Will's door open and idly listens as Will crosses the hallway. His footsteps hollow then and Hannibal reasons he's retreated to the bathroom, walking on the tile, which is when he draws his attention away from the minute sounds of Will's presence in the house. Hannibal may be able to hear most everything in his immediate vicinity but that doesn't mean he has any desire to completely invade Will's privacy.

Instead he turns to the washed vegetables he'd left on the counter and selects one of the kitchen knives. The blade reflects the lights above him and Hannibal wastes no time in getting to work. He's set to lose himself in the mindlessness of the task, the weight of the blade and the glint of the edge as
it strikes against the cutting board. What he isn't expecting is the sudden rattle from upstairs. His hand stills and Hannibal looks up, frowning. That had sounded like... had Will punched the wall? No.

But then the sound happens again, and again and the sound is far too sharp to be the wall. Hannibal sets the knife down on the counter immediately and races upstairs as fast as he's able. There is no shatter - mirrors are exceptionally difficult to break with a fist when made well, as the one in the bathroom is - but that doesn't mean it isn't dangerous. Perhaps he takes the stairs too quickly, but Hannibal ignores that. To his credit, he does attempt to say, "Will?" Outside the door, but his voice is interrupted by another strike and Hannibal takes the risk, opening the bathroom door.

Will freezes and Hannibal's gaze is immediately drawn to Will's hand. It's already bloodied, and there are streaks on the mirror from each impact. Hannibal's concern wars with frustration when he notes which arm Will had used and without a warning, he crosses the space between them and reaches out.

In this, he refuses to hedge and wonder; Will's health has never been up for debate.

"Was this necessary?" He asks - no, he demands - as his hand closes over Will's good shoulder and Hannibal wrenches him back from the mirror. Immediately his free hand reaches out and he takes Will's forearm, his touch tentative as there's no guarantee Will hasn't broken something, but still firm.

"There are better ways to express frustration than risking a broken wrist."

Although Hannibal crowds him, yanking him back and away, Will's eyes remain on the bloodied mirror. He watches the image of Hannibal beginning the typical Mother Hen routine, cradling his forearm and no doubt surveying his newly created injuries. Probably looks worse than it is. Of course it wasn't smart to use his dominant hand, nor the arm that had just healed enough for physio. Then again, Will doesn't feel very smart right now. Choosing Hannibal couldn't be considered smart, his mind reasons.

"Necessary? No," Will replies blandly, relaxing his fist, fingers slowly straightening out, curious if he's broken anything. His hand shakes, it throbs, but seems functional. He not a doctor, though. Thankfully for him, his current admirer is! The thought amuses him.

"Going to patch me up, Dr. Lecter? Won't be good as new, but I'm sure I'll be passable." The frustration and endorphins are surely dampening his pain and he feels just careless and petty enough to try and struggle away from Hannibal's grasp. He doesn't plan on making this easy.

Hannibal's grip is firm, but mindful of Will's injuries and any other injuries he might have sustained in the last few hours. He has no way of knowing what Will has been doing, and while he believes this is the only injury Will has sustained, he's not ready to bet on it. He eyes Will's hand critically, feeling the grind of tendon under his hands as Will flexes his hand. Hannibal studies the way his fingers move and extend and, while he's not entirely certain - as an x-ray is the most viable diagnostic tool - he thinks Will has avoided a fracture. His knuckles are bruised and bloody and his hand will undoubtedly need tending and ice, and there's no telling what damage Will has done to his shoulder, but at least he's likely avoided a break.

At least for that moment. Hannibal is expecting Will to be difficult; anger is rarely rational and whatever has Will so tightly wrapped around himself isn't going to be gentle. Yet Will suddenly starting to struggle is enough to get Hannibal's attention. Immediately his expression shutters and a true thread of annoyance works its way through him.

"Will," he warns, and his voice is edging on sharp as he keeps his grip steady while trying to allay any damage being done to Will's shoulder.
In the end, thinking mainly of the delicate healing in the muscles supporting Will's shoulder and how simple it will be to ruin weeks of work, Hannibal decides not to allow this to get past a certain point. It's inelegant and heavy handed and later, perhaps, he will need to express regret. But for that moment he makes a small, frustrated sound and then moves quickly. He's behind Will in seconds, one arm forcing its way against Will's neck as Hannibal drops the affected arm and takes Will's left instead. He's quick (but relatively gentle) as he pulls it behind Will's back and exerts just enough pressure to make it uncomfortable, but not painful. And, mindful of Will's cheek, Hannibal turns them both and shoves Will against the wall face-first, though his arm saves Will's face from further damage.

"Whatever this is, work it out now," Hannibal says, impatient, clipped. "If you need to lash out at someone, lash out in my direction. Injuring yourself is pointless - reckless - and you've likely just added another week or two to your healing."

He can hear the irritation as Hannibal says only his name in warning and Will lives for it at this moment. Why not fan that flame of agitation in Hannibal? Why not act out and disappoint him? It has to be hardcoded into his DNA, or at least a learned behavior of his. On a grand level he's disappointed most of his social ties at this point, Hannibal might as well be added to the list.

As he's maneuvered into the hold, Will huffs out a derisive laugh. Hannibal is seeking to contain his fury, limit further injury. It's the most forward Hannibal has ever been with him and it's occurring in the bathroom of all places. Will has been trained in how to escape holds like these, but he doesn't really care to attempt to get away. After all, Hannibal is his sole audience member, who else would bear witness to his pathetic theatrics if not Hannibal?

Now, the words said to him are what do Will in. No, he doesn't want to physically lash out at Hannibal, he wants to be reckless with himself, punish himself, take some sort of action, even if it's a stupid action like punching a mirror.

"You can fuck right off with telling me what to do," Will hisses out. His voice is high and bordering on hysterics. "Going to come in here and play both doctor and caregiver with me, when you're the one who fucking messed it all up to begin with!" He's futilely struggling against Hannibal, mostly in a subconscious effort to feel the restraint (even now, especially now, he longs to feel secure).

"Why couldn't you let me be happy? I was happy! Who cares if some of it may have been delusional! If you fucking loved me why couldn't you leave me be? You just had to destroy, didn't you? Couldn't resist it!" Will only stops when he's hiccuping over his words and he feels angry hot tears running down his face.

Crying can be a beautiful show of emotion, but right now Will feels ugly. Wretched. He doesn't want to be having a breakdown, his chest heaving, sobbing. He's working himself up into quite the state, almost to a panic attack and breathing rapidly and shallow. He'd rather ignore Hannibal than open up and show this weakness and his longing for a life he's left behind.

Hannibal's jaw sets in a mirror of his irritation and he keeps his arm tight as Will struggles. It's futile. Will could lash out, true, could use his feet to break Hannibal's hold, but Will is not the only man with formal training. Hannibal's stance is aimed to be immovable. Were Will to elbow him in the side, perhaps that would do the job, but Hannibal's counting on Will's injuries to forestall that. That, and what remains of his sense of honor. And true to form, Will doesn't lash out, though he does struggle fitfully. Hannibal's lips form a moue of distaste as he works to keep Will from injuring himself further. It's exhausting, but this is one area he won't compromise in, and so he holds Will tight, presses him hard against the wall, shoving up to take some of the balance away from Will's
stance. It's around that time that Will's struggles turn verbal. Hannibal stills.

They have pointedly avoided mentioning what Hannibal has never said. He cares for Will, but he's made a careful point to never use the word 'love', not even in his other languages. Hearing Will use it as an accusation tightens Hannibal's jaw, but he merely holds securely and allows Will's frustration and accusations to wash over him. In truth, he'd expected something like this to happen. He merely hadn't expected it after a few months. If anything, he'd anticipated a breakdown within the first few weeks. He's prepared, but only just, though the building scent of salt on the air - tears - almost draws him up short. Almost.

Instead he allows Will to struggle, to wear himself out, and when his impetuousness and rudeness give way to the first spill of his tears, Hannibal merely holds him securely. He only allows Will purchase against the ground again when Will's tears have become physical, his body wracked with sobs. Hannibal can feel the fall of tears against his forearm. It is unmistakably beautiful, to see Will in duress. Yet even Hannibal knows this isn't the state he wants Will in. So he eases up on his hold on Will's arm, not wanting to risk injury, though his hold is still secure and his voice is low but firm. He doubts Will wants to be coddled.

"I have told you, Will. I am not a good man."

It's said simply, for in this, Hannibal has warned him. "Nor have I ever claimed to be. I am selfish and I am possessive, and I saw through your 'happiness' the instant you attempted to use it against me. Even then, so cunning, without even realizing. You were never happy. Not with them. To shield yourself, to play the doting husband - a man you aren't - and immerse yourself. The veritable cuckoo in the nest." Hannibal's tone is neither goading or cutting. It merely is. He doesn't wipe away Will's tears, allowing them to flow freely, but he does carefully press closer, boxing Will's body in, offering situational security even in this.

"But yes. I had to destroy it. The farce was insulting, most of all to you. A sickening shade of the man you could be, lulled by complacency. You may hate me as you wish, but how long could you have continued under the act before it unwound you, Will? You are not that deceptive, though admittedly, you are quite convincing."

Even as Will crumbles, Hannibal remains with him, a steadying and unyielding presence. Hannibal has him. He's not pushed away or scorned, although the rebuttal is, of course, not meant to be comforting. It doesn't soothe Will; if anything, the words are sandpaper, the truth grating across him and scouring him raw. The reply does quiet his sobbing, so Will is, on some level, appreciative.

He remembers hearing a quote about if you love something set it free. Obviously that isn't true in this case. He's never truly been free from Hannibal - certainly not when he was wrongly imprisoned, not when Hannibal himself was locked away and not now when they are sharing each other's space so closely. Hannibal in some form, be it dreams, memories or influence, persisted. Endured. Lingered.

"I wish I could hate you," is all Will manages to spit out, but he gives a broken laugh at how pathetic he sounds, both in the sentiment and tone. He should hate this man. This killer. This destructive force that refuses to relent, that can't let him go. He's steadily moving into exhaustion from the emotional outbursts, the anger draining away.

"Let me go. I won't hurt myself," he croaks. Will wants a drink. Something to dull him, to take off the edge, but first he needs to not be pinned to the wall. Likely, his hand will need to be tended to before alcohol is entertained as well.
"I know you do." Hannibal has no doubt that Will wishes he could hate him. To hate him would be simple. The rest of the world has vilified him in some measurable way, and to follow the herd would spare Will the pain of venturing onto a separate path. Of breaking new ground and risking the bite and tear of the unknown. But it's clear in the fact that Will doesn't lash out, and the way he starts to relax against the wall that he doesn't hate Hannibal. His sobs quiet in time but Hannibal feels their absence sharply, for Will's emotions shutter. Second by agonizing second, Will starts to shut down and Hannibal merely holds him through it. His grip is tight until Will's request comes in and only then does Hannibal consider it. He's quiet and still for a moment, and then he relents, carefully drawing his forearm away from Will's neck, taking his words as an act of faith.

"That remains to be seen. You've done enough to yourself as it is." Hannibal draws back then, carefully easing Will's left hand down and taking a step back, though he takes care to assess his own impact on Will's left shoulder. The muscles feel weak from overuse under his fingers, but uninjured. The same cannot be said for Will's other shoulder, which Hannibal carefully rests his hands on. No stitches have ripped, but he can already feel a slight swelling around the infraspinatus and at least two of the other rotator cuff muscles. It will need ice, but Will's hand will need much more. Hannibal reaches down to carefully take his hand, studying the bleeding knuckles, and sighs, clipped. "Come with me. I'll see to your hand; it's not optional. Wait for me in the guest room, please."

Back to business as usual, then. Hannibal allows his gaze to linger for a quick moment and then he turns on his heel and strides out of the room. He makes his way back downstairs, keeping note of Will's positioning in the house lest he do something reckless. In minutes he has a physiotherapist's ice pack in his hand, with velcro straps to assist it in positioning. It's crude and it smells of chemicals but it's still effective. Hannibal takes that, a glass of water, and a Tramadol with him upstairs to where he'd instructed Will to wait. Wordlessly he passes over the pill and the water, though his expression is still clinical, hiding the very real irritation still present within. Without further ado, Hannibal takes the first aid kit, sits on the bed beside Will, and removes one of the alcohol wipes.

"Hold the ice pack to your shoulder, if you will. I'll secure it in a moment. Hold still," is the final warning before he takes Will's hand in his own, carefully, and starts to clean his knuckles.

Eventually Will is released from the hold, Hannibal letting go and easing himself back. He's shivering, physical and emotional pain mixing with the new found space between them. Will's head is bowed as Hannibal takes on the clinical role of assessing his injuries, first his shoulder, then his hand. When instructions are given, Will says nothing as there is nothing to say. He'll listen. Obey. What other choice does he have? Hannibal may not have been able to stop him from being self-destructive, but he'll certainly do his best to minimize the damage. When he's alone, his uninjured hand splashes cool water on his face, washing away the evidence of tears and mucus. He doesn't bother washing his bloodied hand. With one last glance to the dirtied streaked mirror, Will leaves the bathroom and slowly makes his way to the guest room.

There may have been many more incidences of platonic wound care taking place here, but the guest room would always be known as the location where Hannibal bit him, where, before that, Will had played around with domination. The sting of the alcohol has Will focusing on watching Hannibal begin his clean-up
"You'll pick up my pieces every time, won't you? Put Humpty Dumpty back together again."

Hannibal declines answer initially, though he has no need to. He's perfectly capable of carrying on a conversation while he works, but he has no desire to congratulate Will for his recklessness. Instead he merely focuses on Will's knuckles, carefully cleaning the swollen skin as he works Will's fingers in a slow, careful fashion to test the tendon movement. Nothing feels loose or impeded. With luck this is merely bruising and swelling and nothing more sinister, like a chipped bone. Canada has health care facilities, but Hannibal would prefer to avoid them if at all possible. It's only free to citizens and besides, the fewer paper trails they leave, the better.

The wound doesn't require stitches, though. There are no deep gashes, merely shallow cuts. Were Hannibal to hazard a guess, he'd assume they were from the fine etchings in the mirror - uneven lines perfect to create smaller wounds. Mostly Will's knuckles are red from his constant impacts and the smeared blood. The injury looks less severe once Hannibal has wiped the blood away and looked at it properly, though it likely won't feel good any time soon. Foolish, reckless man...

"I have no desire to see you shattered and broken," Hannibal answers finally, flatly, after he allows the silence to stretch into the realm of uncomfortable. "If you take that to mean I desire to put you back together again, then yes. I will strive to pick up your pieces every time. I don't fault you your weakness," Hannibal adds, glancing up at Will for only a moment before he looks back at his hand, reaching for the first aid kit once more, "I fault you your willingness to injure yourself. Self-harm takes many forms, Will. Seeking pain to punish yourself can be done safely - albeit the underlying cause should be treated in time - but you elected to ignore that option." Antibiotic cream is next, though Hannibal takes the time to manipulate Will's hand without the blood obscuring his vision. Likely not broken. He hopes.

Will is met with silence as Hannibal efficiently works, the smell of alcohol and blood blends creating an unpleasant mix. His entire hand throbs, although most of the hurt is centered at his knuckles, but Will's face is blank and he gives no pained sounds to indicate his discomfort. He doesn't need to, the injury speaks for itself. It's not severe, Will hadn't really had that much time to do great harm, nor the strength as he's likely lost muscle mass from lack of use during its healing. No doubt more frustration awaits him after this, more downtime, limited range of motion and no more physio for a while. No, none of this was necessary, but the breakdown was inevitable and maybe it would serve to be cathartic in time.

When Hannibal speaks, Will only half-listens until the end, until Hannibal brings up the particular option of punishment being done in a safe manner. He's interested, yet infuriated by the very notion. Hannibal speaking about safety, Hannibal's fucking concern. It's all kinds of amusing that this doctor caring for him is a cannibal, would have Will hunt with him, yet wants him safe and sane. It's comical, if anything. Baffling, too.

A cream is gently rubbed onto the split skin and Will resists pushing into the soft touch, not wanting to risk anymore of Hannibal's ire, at least not yet. It's tempting, but he's burnt out, exhausted by the emotional display, so he behaves.

"When I choose to talk about this all... I need you to try and be objective," Will implores cautiously. "For my sake. You know, keep your own disgust and disdain at bay. I know it's not fair to ask it, but I need you to try or I can't talk to you."
Bit by bit the fight bleeds out of Will. Hannibal watches it like a sigh, leaving Will's expression blank but his shoulders heavy. Will seems to listen but he remains silent, allowing Hannibal to carefully spread the cream over his knuckles before reaching again for the kit. He settles on a careful gauze instead of the individually-wrapped bandages. Convenient as they are, the traditional methods are sometimes better, and the gauze will allow for more swelling if it's required. He takes it, allowing Will's hand to rest upon his knee, and carefully angles his hand before wrapping Will's injury, moving from the base of his knuckles to his wrist. It's quite a lot, but the wrist needs to be stabilized, just in case.

Still, Hannibal isn't so distracted that he misses Will's soft, plaintive request. He allows the words to wash over him and while his irritation doesn't fade, he does consider the words. He's been striving to be impartial during their time together. Today has been one of the first times he's truly let his displeasure show, but he can't fault Will the request. Irritated as he is, Hannibal is still adept at dealing with mental health. His irritation, while appropriate, will only be a hindrance.

He sighs, slowly, and with it, he lets some of the tension drain from his own shoulders. It's not gone, but his mask is more firmly in place and his voice, when he answers, is more level, holding a little more warmth. It's familiar but not doting, as he believes is appropriate.

"You are permitted to make those requests, Will. If you require objectivity, I will, of course, acquiesce. I'm not disgusted, nor do I hold disdain. I am, admittedly, frustrated, but at myself for letting you reach this point, as well as at those who brought you here to begin with." It's the truth. Hannibal isn't disgusted at Will. He's not pleased, but Will hadn't accused him of that. He'd promised not to lie; he hadn't promised to offer the truth without prompting. "I would like for you to talk to me about what caused this. But I'm also aware that I am perhaps part of the cause. If you wish me to be objective, you have my word."

One of Will's eyebrows rises marginally in disbelief. A flicker of tension ripples through his body and he licks at his lips, preparing himself to launch into his dialogue.

"You hold contempt for Molly. For my prior life. The one you labelled as a farce. I know you would like nothing more than to wipe them from existence, Hannibal. You've already tried," he answers a bit testily, voice louder in his passions being roused. Will sits up straighter, his hand clenching the ice pack a little more tightly as he works through his response.

"They didn't bring me here to this point. If anything, you and I are the co-conspirators," Will continues, casting his eyes at the wall and staring ahead, no longer wishing to observe Hannibal's care toward his injury. "Is it their fault for being duped by who and what I presented to them? I inserted myself into their life. It's what I wanted at the time. It's what a part of me still wants, as loathe as you may be to hear that." A sigh follows, but he barrels on, committed to admitting the why of his frustrations.

"Here, with you... It's beginning to feel like a home and I can't help but contrast and think back to the last home I created. I can't help but worry about them and know that I've disappointed them." Will stops and lifts his now bandaged hand from Hannibal's knee, glancing down at it.

Will needs Hannibal to be impartial, to be objective, and while his words are perfectly placed to rile Hannibal into anger, he carefully dismisses the emotion and instead focuses on Will. He allows Will anger - against himself, against Hannibal - and removes his hand from Will's once the gauze has been carefully taped in place. Only then does Hannibal fold his hands over his own lap and regard Will carefully. He makes a point to keep his expression free of hostility, though Molly's mention - as always - nearly curls his lip.
"My thoughts on the matter are irrelevant when it comes to you, Will," he says, and just like that it's like they're back in Hannibal's office amidst comfortable chairs, with wine boldly set on the arms beside them. Hannibal a calm, steady rock for Will's eccentricities and Will a winding river, calm at its end but wild under the wrong influence. "I have long ago accepted my feelings on the matter. Yours are still in flux, which is why you find yourself unstable. That the lure of a simple life tempts you doesn't come as a surprise to me. Given your history, there must be comfort in a lack of expectation. Perhaps, for a time, you would even be content. But often times when one attempts to hand-pick the qualities they showcase in order to further a relationship - be it friendship or romantic in nature - those qualities begin to sour as the repressed sides rebel. Perhaps it would have taken weeks, perhaps months. Perhaps it could have been a decade. But your simplicity would have failed." Hannibal merely regards Will casually. "Dwelling on suspected emotions without being able to verify them directly is a recipe for anxiety, Will. Perhaps if Molly knew you lived, she would be disappointed," Hannibal says, managing to keep his contempt away from her name. He's professional even here.

"But perhaps she would also see the underlying cause. Maybe she is simply an adult, who knows where and when to move on. You will never know for certain. Dwelling will only pull you lower."

True to his word, Hannibal slides back into his professional role with no discernible distaste on his features. Will's aware that attempting what he's asking for is no easy feat, but as usual, Hannibal rises to the challenge. These topics and feelings directly involve Hannibal. If it wasn't for the older man Will would have never sought out such a drastically different lifestyle, would have never found them and took solace in their home and its solitude. Meeting Hannibal had been a cataclysmic life altering event and those Will was involved with, by proxy, had also been affected by it. He was a marked man, after all.

Will knows he's being neurotic in choosing to let his thoughts rest on those from his former life. On Molly. Walter. Jack. Even Alana at times. Yes, thinking on suspected emotions. If he lets himself be caught up in their grasp, he will only go lower. Hannibal is right, but maybe lower is where Will deserves to go. Depression is a slippery slope and common sense matters little when he feels grief and regret envelope him, when he feels guilt and shame.

Hannibal gives Molly her due credit. She'd always been understanding and forgiving - too much so really, perhaps she'd be able to understand a little and not fault Will too much for his abysmal failure as a husband and a stepfather. The only reply he gives to show that he's indeed listening is a nod. "I don't think I am up for more therapy, actually," Will murmurs, turning to face Hannibal, face still blotchy, expression full of yearning and guilt.

"Kiss me." He's looking for a distraction, a bandaid for his broken heart.

Will's response comes as no real surprise; what he wants often seems to change once he fully grasps the full measure of what he's asked for and this is no different. He withdraws, but at least he'd listened. Hannibal can see the acknowledgement in his eyes even though they're downcast, and when Will finally turns back to him, expression clouded and compromised, Hannibal knows what Will is going to ask before even he seems to.

In the end, it isn't really a request. It's desperate and guilty and yearning, a plea hidden under the guise of a demand, and Hannibal merely regards Will in silence for a few long moments. Then he simply reaches out for Will's bandaged hand and, giving him the time to ready himself for the touch, takes it and draws it close. Hannibal presses a kiss to the back of the gauze over Will's knuckles, and then another lower, against the backs of his fingers. It's fleeting, no more than a small brush, but
though the urge to draw in close and give Will what he's demanded is tempting, Hannibal knows better. "No," he says gently, attempting to use his tone to soften the blow.

"Not when you are moments from shattering. Later, if you still desire it, but right now you need rest. Come," Hannibal adds, and he carefully gets up onto his feet, though far slower than he'd like. He takes a moment to reach out to gently ease the ice pack away from Will's shoulder and then guides it down to gingerly rest on the back of Will's hand.

"You are to cycle. ten minutes on your hand, ten minutes on your shoulder, until you fall asleep. Which you can do in your room or right here, if you'd prefer. The choice is yours and I won't linger. As always, your room is yours."

His demand is meet with silence, Hannibal considering him and likely not finding the situation adequate for him to agree to it. Will is too frayed and uneven, barely contained and grasping at straws. Hannibal won't risk it, but he will risk turning him down. Will knows it. The doctor is sweet with taking his injured hand and brushing a kiss against his knuckles and fingers. And there, yes, he's rejected with a 'No' being told to him. A 'fuck you' is on the tip of his tongue, but Will resists and lets Hannibal explain himself even though Will understands - he really does, but he doesn't like it, doesn't give a shit about him being unstable because he wants what he wants.

He stands and brushes past Hannibal.

"My room, and I'm not hungry for dinner," he answers stiffly and leaves Hannibal. He stalks to his room, wounded pride and wounded hand and heart. He awkwardly strips off his shirt and jeans, cursing his useless hand and kicking the clothing to the corner of his room. Will flicks off the light and climbs into bed, holding the ice pack to his hand, glancing to the digital clock, mostly intending to follow the instructions, but he falls asleep before ten minutes pass.

The evening, to Hannibal's displeasure, passes silently. Will's statement against being hungry enough for dinner holds firm and so while he prepares food enough for two, only his serving is eaten in the end. He saves the rest to reheat later, cleans up the kitchen, and retires to the couch with a book until he can no longer put off going to bed. His sleep, once he's settled, is restless. Despite his exhaustion - from the walking and lifting and controlling Will's movements - his sleep is broken, fractured, and he wakes in the morning far later than he'd intended with a deeper, unpleasant ache through his core.

Chapter End Notes

Merry's tumblr!
Dapperscript's tumblr!
Chapter Summary

"The fireflies..." He starts, but then a slight crease works it's way between his eyebrows as if he's unsure where his train of thought is heading. "They're quite interesting as when they're larvae their bioluminescence warns predators, but as adults it's to attract and communicate with mates... Flashing and glowing, their lights like an array of tiny stars amidst the backdrop of the night." He gives a contemplative sigh, easily able to recall their image back at the estate. "Guess it was the opposite for us, as my darkness was what attracted you."

Chapter Notes

Early update, yeah! And... ehhh heh... *nervous laugh* Decided to just bump rating to explicit too.
Oh, and made this a part of a series now because I'll be posting one shots/Will-centric drabbles coming up (there's just one at the moment). Give it a read if you feel interested :D

It's compulsion more than anything that gets Hannibal up that morning. He rises, goes about his morning routine - blessedly with a shower - and makes his way downstairs once dressed to start coffee and put together a quick breakfast. He takes his time, leaving ample opportunity for Will to make his way downstairs, but Hannibal hardly hears him stir.

While he does put it off as long as he can, Will missing two meals isn't something he's prepared to
allow. So, leaving the eggs - a simple, light frittata - to warm, Hannibal turns and makes his way upstairs to Will's bedroom. Not bothering to wait, he lifts his hand and knocks thrice on the door, sharply. Will needs rest, yes, but he also needs food.

"Will. Breakfast is ready. You need to eat."

Will's rest is not fitful, he sleeps lightly and wakes up frequently from jolting his shoulder or rolling over onto his hand. He has dreams that turn into nightmares, real memories that morph into nebulous dark scenes that hold danger and death for those unlucky enough to be involved. Sometimes it's the Red Dragon lurking, others it's Hannibal pursuing with a feral snarl plastered onto his face. It's worse when it's Will himself killing, usually to the horror of Jack or Molly watching his crime.

When a knock interrupts his dozing, Will grumbles and blinks bleary eyes open. A few seconds later his mind processes what's been said and his eyes narrow as he scratches at his facial growth.

"Not interested," is muttered out loud enough for Hannibal to hear and if anything else is said, he blatantly ignores it, turning to bury his head in his pillow and escape from reality.

Eventually Hannibal leaves him be and Will spends his day entirely cooped up in his room save for one trip to the bathroom to relieve himself. The mirror had been cleaned off, no evidence remaining of his brash failed fight with the object. He's refused all three meals of the day, an all encompassing malaise getting him by. He has no desire to eat or drink or care for himself, really. The ice pack was discarded to the floor and he's ripped off the gauze surrounding his hand, the first aid supplies littered there as well. Will wishes to be left to his melancholy. Hannibal has a strict rule of letting him have his privacy, but he's slightly curious how long he can get away with this for.

The answer to Will's musing is complicated, for when Will sends him off in the morning, Hannibal considers simply pushing his way in and pulling Will out, protests be damned. But he's careful to remind himself that this is Will's space, one he has taken great lengths not to infringe upon. Though it sets something sour in his stomach, he decides, frowning, that unless Will insists on an entire day without eating, he will allow this... petulance to continue.

Hannibal busies himself with cleaning the bathroom after that morning and - once again - carefully gathers the food Will had not eaten and stores it in the fridge for later, though doing so sets a wry twist to Hannibal's lips. Food is one of his particular vices, albeit a carefully managed one, and Will shoving his efforts aside burns far more than Will likely knows. But Hannibal dismisses his own thoughts on the matter easily and merely goes about his day. He cooks, he rests (taking his troubled sleep and weakness into account), and he checks on Will throughout the day. But each time he's met with silence or with childishness that slowly builds over time.

That evening Hannibal decides to compromise when Will doesn't come down for dinner. Instead he breaks one of his own rules and, jaw tight, walks up the stairs and doesn't say a word. He reaches over to open Will's door without preamble, but only enough that he can reach an arm inside and set the bowl of stew down on the table nearby, along with a glass of water. He closes the door soon after, but not before issuing the only warning he plans on giving.

"I expect you downstairs in the morning. Your protest has been duly noted, but if your health suffers, I have no choice but to take your care into my own hands. Goodnight, Will," Hannibal adds as he turns away and makes his way back off to the kitchen to clean up. He has brief plans to read and then to adjourn upstairs, but his thoughts are occupied only by Will. Stubborn creature that he is.
The gloom that takes Will Graham is one of a debilitating nature. It adds a heaviness, a persistent fatigue lingering despite napping on and off throughout the day. His hunger is nonexistent and his petulance grows as seen through his interactions with Hannibal when he comes knocking. He knows hiding in his room won't solve anything nor will giving into his grief, but he does so anyway. It pulls him down into the sludge of his mind, a murky place where his shame burns strong and regret eats away at him.

Will stares at the ceiling until the image begins to blur and his eyes water. It's been far too easy to give into his desires and impulses. Yes, he's struggled, restrained himself at times, but looking back, their intimacy has skyrocketed into uncharted territories over the last few weeks. Between the stroking of scars, the mild choking, the biting, the kissing... God. A part of him chastises himself for not having resisted more. Just because he's chosen Hannibal, it doesn't mean he has to indulge like he has been.

Is this really going to be Will Graham's life? Can he allow this place to become a home with Hannibal? How does he make peace with those he has abandoned? It seems entirely too exhausting to think or talk about. More than anything, Will wishes right now that he hadn't been called in to work the Hobbs' case, that Hannibal and he wouldn't have been fated to meet. Will ought to have remained as an antisocial teacher and Hannibal as the high class predator, two men never to cross paths let alone mesh like they had. Much, much less blood would have been spilled. He never wanted any of it. He never wanted to be special.

When his door is opened, Will is almost roused into some action, but Hannibal is quick. A bowl of food and glass of water are set down and he says his peace before he's gone again. Will stares at the sustenance a few minutes before turning away and ignoring the meal. He's still not interested in eating.

In the morning, he refuses to come down. He smells, his hand aches, his shoulder aches, he aches and it's entirely what he deserves.

Hannibal's warning is not one he gives lightly, and when he wakes the next morning to find that Will has not roused from his bed, Hannibal is neither pleased nor is he surprised. Will's stubborn nature borders on pathological at times, and yet Hannibal still gives him time enough to change his mind. He waits until coffee has been made and breakfast is waiting, and he takes the time to eat his own, but when it's clear Will has not heeded the warning, Hannibal's jaw sets and he sighs. No choice, then. Loath as he is to invade Will's space, it has become crucial. He only hopes this will one day be forgiven in some way and that his progress with Will has not just shattered.

He rises, bringing Will's plate with him, though he doubts Will's willingness to eat will return any time soon. And though he is silent outside of Will's door, the scent of uneaten food and Will's general malaise is clear. Depression has a particular scent, albeit subtle. It's heavier, settling in the senses like a cloying sourness, and he is wholly not surprised to find the scent permeates. Hannibal draws himself together and then simply moves, opening Will's door without preamble. He doesn't hesitate to walk inside, setting the new plate down on the table while eyeing the old one, and then he looks over to where Will has wound himself, looking very small and very low. Hannibal spares him only a cursory thought of something akin to regret and then he moves.

Hands quick, he steps over to Will's bed and draws the blankets from his body, making a note to wash his bedding as soon as possible. Then he reaches over for a cursory check of Will's forehead. No discernible fever at least, though his hand does look worse (and is now unbound. Of course it is.) and Hannibal's frown is mild but displeased.

"I do regret the need to invade your space," he tells Will as he reaches down to slide a hand under
him and pull him upright, “But I'm afraid it's quite necessary. Your space is your own provided you have taken care of yourself. As you have waived that right, it's now my job to ensure it. Get up, or I will be forced to make you."

It's another night filled with restless dreaming and waking often. He had began to lightly snooze when blankets are wrenched away from him and Will's foggy mind quickly sorts itself out as he comes back to full consciousness. He's hauled up into a seated position and looks at Hannibal, half amused and half annoyed. From the warning sent his way, it's apparent that he's reached the end of his moping and Mother Hen Hannibal is here to sort him out and whip him back into shape.

He doesn't exactly want to be petty, but Will does feels like being difficult, feels like pushing Hannibal and aggravating him even more. (Because maybe, just maybe, if he becomes too much of a burden, Hannibal will cast him aside and be done with him and Will is destructive enough to think that that is what he is deserving of).

"Good morning to you, too," Will mutters, yawning, but doesn't make to get up. He stares defiantly at the open door. His left hand comes to his face to pick away sleep from his eyes.

Hannibal leaves the statement lingering for a moment, his tone pointed and brokering no argument. He's willing to humor certain aspects of Will's self-destruction, within reason, but refusing to eat, drink, bathe, and care for his injuries is far too much. He merely looks down at Will pointedly, noting the flicker of impudence in Will's gaze as he gives his curt answer. Hannibal draws in a deeper, steadying breath for a moment, allowing Will exactly to the inward count of ten. When he doesn't move, Hannibal reads into it what he must and nods slowly, displeased, but not surprised.

"Very well," is all he says.

His own injuries won't thank him for this, but Hannibal has the benefit of recuperative sleep and single-minded focus. He bends down expeditiously and, careful not to jostle Will's injured shoulder, he swiftly pulls him up and out of bed. It's more inertia than it is strength, and the wound through his abdomen aches sharply as he loops an arm around Will and pulls him to his feet. He'd lift him fully were he physically able to do so, and he considers taking that risk when he takes note of how uncooperative his companion seems to be, but he'll try things easily for now.

"Walk. I won't hesitate to carry you. You're bathing," he adds, pointedly. "I suggest you decide very quickly whether this is something you wish to accomplish under your own power or not." And, as if to emphasize this, Hannibal takes only a moment to ensure Will is secure at his side and then takes off for the bathroom across the hall, with or without Will's cooperation.

At first it appears to be a standoff with Hannibal looking down at him (most likely in disappointment) and Will staring idly ahead, but then, after a small frame of time, Hannibal takes action and Will is all but dragged out of the bed and to his feet. Despite his desire to be difficult, Will isn't completely ridiculous nor too far gone that he doesn't stand on his own, albeit leaning against Hannibal some. Limbs shaky, adjusting to being upright, Will does at least listen to the 'command' of walk, it just seems easier to be ushered along to the bathroom at this point.

Toilet seat down, Hannibal deposits Will there, a makeshift chair while he begins the process of drawing a bath. Will says nothing, showing only mild interest as he watches the older of them fuss with the temperature of the water. He's told to strip, and after a moment of consideration, Will stands and does just that, sliding his boxer briefs down, his nudity seeming like a clinical necessity. His despondency outweighs any potential shame or embarrassment as he climbs into the bath and sits,
drawing his knees up to his chest and wrapping his one good arm around them.

He does nothing else, makes no move to wash himself, clearly indicating that he's only half-cooperating in this scenario of putting Humpty-Dumpty back together again.

At heart, though long abandoned, Hannibal is still a doctor. Of psychiatry, of medicine, it hardly matters; in Will's case, both are a benefit. He merely draws the bath, not trusting Will to stand on his own in the shower without attempting something reckless. He doesn't believe Will's tactical retreat into his own mind will end with a severe attempt on his life, or on Hannibal's. But in this, Will is rebelling the only way he knows how. He's pushing back. Much like he had when Hannibal had first brought them here; he had held himself away from Hannibal, isolating himself, refusing to speak, though at least he'd consented to eat and bathe at that point. This feels far too much like Will intentionally taking a step back. Though whether it's to punish himself or to punish Hannibal, not even he knows.

Once the bath is drawn, Hannibal merely orders Will to strip, clinical. He is, after all, a doctor, and this isn't the first time he's seen Will nude. He'd needed to free him of his ice-cold clothes directly following their fall. In this, there is nothing sexual, and so Hannibal waits until Will has at least climbed into the bathtub to act. Though irritated with this change in their standing, Hannibal merely resigns himself to this new reality. Though carefully, he drops down to his knees, expression blank. He takes a moment to unbutton his cuffs and roll his sleeves up, and then reaches out for a wash cloth he'd set out before. The soap is simple - unscented - and Hannibal's movements are strictly clinical as he gets to work. His touch is light, mindful of Will's injuries, and he avoids Will's recently-wrenched shoulder altogether at first.

"Is there anything I should know regarding this step backwards?" Hannibal asks, though he doesn't expect an answer. Just because Will is silent doesn't mean he needs to be. "Or perhaps, more accurately, anything you are willing to disclose to me? Or is this simply a rebellion? Something you can look back on to assuage your conscience over your choice?" He hasn't forgotten Will's admission, after all. And as his hand slides up under Will's neck, Hannibal is careful around the lingering wound from his own teeth, which still draws his attention as much as it had when he created it.

Not even Will is petty enough to deny the luxurious feeling of being submerged in the hot water. He relaxes into it, muscles soothed despite his negative mood. He does shift his attention when Hannibal gets to his knees. Will can't help but recall when Hannibal had offered to do this for him days ago, or was it a week? Two weeks? Time seemed to blur for him, going slow and fast depending on how he measured it. Apparently the opportunity had still come of his own doing, intentional or not. Will's frown deepens as he observes Hannibal rolling up his sleeves, preparing to tackle this 'problem' with practicality.

He sighs, fighting against enjoying the care and tactile sensations as he's effectively cleaned. Soap froths up, delicate bubbles pooling around his knees and Will has the urge to destroy the picture by splashing water at them. As he listens, he tenderly dips his injured hand, hissing slightly as the hot water burns. Tongue flicking out to wet his lips, Will considers what he all he could say in response. He does feel like talking, although not about what's bothering him. Instead, he slithers...

"It was that old psychiatrist of yours who told me that you loved me," Will brings up.

Will's hand looks less swollen than it had, but the bruises have stretched and spread out, bleeding a dark purple stain all over his knuckles towards the back of his hand. That the swelling has gone
down does speak in favor of no broken bones, but Hannibal distantly notes it and makes a mental point to treat Will's hand once more. If the hot water is enough to draw a hiss out of him, the injuries need to be cleaned again.

Hannibal doesn't miss the fact that Will is slightly more animated in the water. It's a boon. While he's clearly trying to remain indifferent, hot water soothes many of life's problems, with a particular emphasis on muscle pain due to tension. Hannibal watches Will start to relax and he sees the slight flick of Will's tongue and then looks away. He knows Will is going to talk, and so he turns his attention once more to carefully reaching around to wash Will's back, all the way over to his injured shoulder. There, Hannibal's touch is light and careful, his focus sharper. Even when Will speaks, he only hesitates for a split second before simply returning to work.

"Very rude of her," he says calmly, as he'd suspected as much. That doesn't mean he enjoys the knowledge. He now knows for certain who he has to thank for Will's difficulties in accepting this information.

"Discussing a patient with another. A breach of ethics at best, but I doubt either of you cared at that point. Were you surprised?" Hannibal asks, because Bedelia's name has been on his list since she had boldly visited Will in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. He knows she will die. But Will's thoughts on this matter are not easy to predict. He'd been making no secret of his affections; one could accuse him of having been blatant. But that doesn't mean Will had noticed.

Will straightens his legs out in the bath tub, sliding himself back slightly as he stretches out. He's careful as to not create too much movement lest he splash Hannibal. While perhaps tempting on some level, Will doesn't relish in being more difficult than he already is and has been. On a physical level, the washing and attention has lightened his mood.

Bedelia du Maurier has always been an interesting subject for him. While locked up she had been his saving grace, like an angel had descended down to deliver him a life changing message. Her few whispered words had sustained him like a scripture. Had meant so much to him. Then the serpent of a woman had gone waltzing off to Europe with Hannibal playing the role of his wife and getting away unscathed. Will had quite a lot of thoughts on that particular issue.

After he got guilt tripped into helping Jack, Will had sought her out because she brought him closer to Hannibal. She was cunning and manipulative like Dr. Lecter. Held a certain charm that resonated with him. She didn't shy away from the unpleasantries of intricate situations.

"Mm, she was all poetic about it, you'd have been impressed," Will replies, pointedly ignoring the question directed his way - what he had felt about it. "Something like, 'could he daily feel a stab of hunger for you, but find nourishment at the sight of you'." Abruptly, Will turns and catches Hannibal's hand, though the washcloth separates true touch.

"Was she my replacement?" Will's eyes are narrowed, a flicker of jealousy sparks and it’s one that he can't quite push down quick enough.

Bedelia had been a brilliant asset in Hannibal's grand dance with the FBI, cunning and manipulative, aware when she'd been beaten and poised through it all. Hannibal had admired her sense of grace under pressure and her willingness to save her own skin. An admirable quality at its heart, yet over time, Hannibal's appreciation for her actions had declined. This, though not the final nail in her coffin, is an added incentive to one day pay her a visit. Preferably when she is least expecting it.

Hannibal hums a soft, thoughtful sound in the back of his throat at Will's account. The words were
poetic, and they were accurate, but there was a small thread of irritation at the mere thought that Will had needed to be told. True, his empathy seems guarded in certain areas, but Hannibal's affections had been blatant. The thought simmers in the back of his mind, more overpowering than he'd intended, as Will's sudden grab for his hand does come as a mild surprise. He stills, and he feels Will's fingers through the warmth of the washcloth, a safe separation. The jealous look in Will's eyes settles something in his chest, however. Hannibal considers the question.

"Perhaps as an act of spite, a part of me considered it. But no." Hannibal says simply and, balancing on his knees, he reaches out with his free hand to just barely trace the edge of Will's jaw with his thumb. Like he's testing the edge of a knife. "And she was aware. Dr. Du Maurier is a shrewd woman. With her own muted darkness. She made... an error," Hannibal says delicately, though the small curl of a smile on his lips says it all for him, that perhaps it was not entirely her fault. "And required assistance. I guarded her secrets, and in turn, she guarded those I chose to allow her to know. She made the simplest cover, though I doubt that she had any idea just what she had agreed to when we fled. I was..." Hannibal wets his lips, thoughtful as he glances at Will.

"As we have discussed, I was perhaps more reckless than not. I believe she eventually began to suspect she would not survive me, and she was correct. I fully intended to kill her. Mason's men merely... put that thought on hold."

Likely, Hannibal sees and appreciates the flicker of jealousy. Will doesn't really care to conceal it. In this, there's still a level of recklessness that remains, his tongue loose, his mental faculties not interested in being offended or too guarded. Just like the touch given to his face - he doesn't pull away, he just accepts the small gesture, pathetically liking it.

He doesn't know their whole story, doesn't know all the brushstrokes that created the complicated picture of Hannibal and Bedelia, but he knows he doesn't want that picture to remain. Will has his own reasons for wanting Bedelia's demise. Namely that she hadn't paid enough for all the playing she'd been involved in. No, not nearly enough.

So when he says, "I want her to die... Want to kill her with you," he delivers the statements plainly, if not a bit coldly. Will Graham isn't above holding grudges over certain things - things that get under his skin - like her subtle jabs, for instance, that she got to be behind the veil with Hannibal while he remained on the other

While Hannibal's ire remains regarding Will's self-destructive tendencies, there is a particular ease to his shoulders as he watches the play of emotion cross Will's eyes. It's subtle and dark, something distinctly colder and sharper and all the more beautiful for it. He wonders for a moment what has prompted it, and then decides that it doesn't matter. That it exists at all is stunning. For all his irritation, this is still beautiful to him.

But not quite as beautiful as what Will says, his voice low and calm and cold. Hannibal feels something hot settle in his chest and bleed out warmly into his limbs, something rather akin to a darker side of affection. He regards Will in silence and wonders - not for the first time - where Will's rage stems from. But as this is one of the first times Will has been open with him in over twenty-four hours, Hannibal merely considers his request and then nods once, simply.

"Very well. You have your own reasons for wishing her dead. Perhaps as many as I. I will not be so selfish as to deny you your due." Hannibal offers the smallest of smiles in response. He's not confident in this tonal shift enough to risk breathing praises at his companion, but he can at least support it. "Tell me. Why would you see her dead?"
Will lets go of Hannibal's hand, fearing that the prolonged contact might be too much for what he will say. What he might admit. Although he suspects him talking candidly means more to Hannibal than the physical contact does. He catches the twitch of a smile on Hannibal's face and... it pleases him. Even now, amidst his somber mood of defeatist feelings, pleasing Hannibal gives him some relief.

"If you play, you pay... And she hasn't paid, has she?" Will asks, stretching his neck out and giving a small sigh. "And, she may have taunted me regarding you." Will looks down at the water that has turned somewhat cloudy from the soap. "That she had been behind the veil with you while I had been simply on the other side."

His words are short. He can remember her smug delivery of the statement and it burns sour in his mouth. Yes. She would eat her words. And maybe herself too.

It's very soft and as polite as he can make it, but Hannibal does scoff at the mere implication, lips forming a moue of distaste at the very idea.

"Far more petty a woman than I would have assumed. How... inelegant." With his hand freed, Hannibal allows Will a small reprieve where he can feel his bitterness freely before he goes back to work, though softer. Less clinical and more caring, perhaps to illustrate the very real difference between Will and Bedelia. While he had opted to assist her in washing her hair, the action had been neither sexual nor intimate. It had been a clear threat, a reminder that she had willfully allowed him so close, and that his touch could turn deadly at any moment. He'd enjoyed her being afraid. This, here, his hand carefully tilting Will's jaw up so he can wash the line of his throat with a careful elegance around the bite wound... this is much different.

"I was aware she was jealous of my interest in you. I would caution you against taking her seriously. Particularly because that account is laughable at best." Hannibal allows a small, wry smile to land on his lips as he reaches down into the water and lifts Will's injured hand, studying the patchwork of bruises on the back of it. He's even more careful when he washes around the wounds.

"She believed she understood me. Admired my boldness, enjoyed the gambit. But in Florence, she was close to a liability. She killed a man. Well..." Hannibal tips his head to the side, in silent acquiescence, "Admittedly the fatal wound was mine. An ice pick into the brain. But he was quite alive when she pulled it free. She would have turned on me at her earliest convenience. She merely glimpsed behind the veil and nearly fell apart. But you, dear Will... no, you glimpsed it, studied, and stepped beyond it merely because you could. Quite frankly, it has always been you."

Will likes the careful attention Hannibal gives to him, the actions now a little softer, less detached than before. He allows himself to be manipulated and moved into more accessible positions depending on where Hannibal chooses to wash. His eyes close briefly when his throat is elongated, the cloth gliding across the lingering bite mark. He feels more like he's allowing the care now than simply tolerating it being done to him. His hand aches dully and he resists pressing it into Hannibal's own hand to feel the pain anew.

These types of reassurance Will also likes, although he won't say as much. He wants to be special - the exception - but also knows that it's that very status that had him marked and catching Hannibal's eye before any blade had. How much of his desire to be unique can be attributed to being human and how much has developed because of their twisted dependency? Will doesn't know. Probably doesn't want to know either, but they are both jealous men when it comes down to it. It brings him a dark delight to hear Hannibal's displeasure and refutation of Bedelia's assertion. Hearing of the ice pick debacle, Will wonders if he would ever want to know the entirety to Hannibal's European vacation.
Perhaps one day.

*It has always been you.* Therein lies the problem because Hannibal has never been able to let him go due to it. Will had honestly tried, or been deluded enough to attempt such a thing... And it had, in the end, fallen apart of his own volition. It's that choice that he struggles with now because a part of Will Graham still wants to be society's definition of a 'good man.'

"Admittedly, it's easier to be angry at myself than you," he says, regarding Hannibal seriously. "Or at least express it."

"Such coping is not unheard of," Hannibal says calmly. Despite his earlier irritation and the hesitance over this new truce, he is careful to keep his voice steady. He's not forgotten Will's request for him to remain objective and he doesn't plan on inserting his own agenda into this. Not when Will is still so vulnerable. Instead Hannibal's actions turn more thoughtful, including the way he continues washing Will, though he limits himself to what he can see. With Will responding more, he's hesitant to push any further boundaries. So in the end, with Will's back and torso washed, Hannibal considers the situation and then offers the cloth to Will pointedly, though he does reach for the shampoo just the same.

"Get your hair wet, if you would," he instructs, and waits until the base has been set before working the shampoo through Will's hair.

"In situations of sudden change when the blame is shared - equally or unequally - between two or more parties, particularly if the foundation is unsteady, redirecting anger and blame upon yourself is common. I am guilty of the same, albeit in my own way." He makes a vague gesture to his position, on his knees, leaning perhaps a little heavily against the side of the tub. It burns to even point out the problem, but Will deserves to know he's not alone in his punishment.

"In my case, it's unsafe for me to express myself. Not for me, but for you. You are not entirely stable as of this moment, nor would I expect you to be. And I would like to state clearly that you have done nothing wrong. But three years does take its own mental toll." Hannibal allows himself a vague half-smile, somewhat wry, but at least honest. His fingers take great care to work at Will's hair; he does remember Will seems to feel comforted by it.

"The reverse, however, is simpler. If you're angry at me, you've every right to be, and I won't fault you for expressing that anger. I can handle what you need to say, or what you need to do. My only problem arises when you injure yourself. Understandable as it is, I would prefer you were direct with me. No duplicity, remember?"

He decides that he will both help and participate, Will taking the wash cloth and scrubbing between his legs and then down the limbs with little to no apparent distress. The washing and bathing is simply practical, a means to an end. He won't be allowed to leave until he's gone through the necessary steps of getting clean. Wringing out the cloth, he sets in on the side of the bath before dipping his head into the water. While submerged, he risks looking to Hannibal, eyes narrowed in thought. It's only a few seconds of a connection before he sits back up, eyes shut as the water streams down his face, not particularly caring to tilt his head back to stop the dripping.

When Hannibal begins to lather shampoo in his hair, Will exhales slowly, further tension draining out of him. As easy as it was to slid into his malaise, now that he's 'up' and interacting, it remains harder to maintain the same level of despondency. Although, as emotional and impulsive as he may be, Will, at heart, is a survivor. His instinct is to carry on, not roll over and give up.
While he is curious about what Hannibal feels the need to punish himself for, Will won't ask. He'd get no answer as evident by Hannibal's own admission. It's not the first time Hannibal has invited his anger nor will it be the last. In this, Will is allowed a great deal of leeway. As long as it isn't himself he's being destructive toward.

"I think I'm mourning the loss of an identity. I used to be a good man. Or went through the motions of one, at any rate."

"You are still a good man," Hannibal replies simply, working his fingers in small circles to massage through the curls atop Will's head, taking silent pleasure in being allowed to do such a thing for his companion. He has no doubt this truce will shatter again in time but for now, he chooses to merely enjoy Will responding to him once again.

"You and I once discussed the nature of good and evil. You cited evil as destructive. I believe in that instance you also spoke about giving up the notions of good and evil for behaviorism. Human beings are complex creatures that seek to simplify those apart from themselves. A man who cheats and steals, but also gives generously to charity and assists those less fortunate. Is he good? Is he evil? Do his good deeds somehow outweigh the bad? And whose job is it to judge?"

Hannibal allows the questions to trail off. They're not exactly rhetorical, nor do they need to be answered. Philosophy is unique in that it needs no real answers, only questions. The nature of the beast, so to speak.

"That said... the concept of morality and good versus evil is heavily ingrained into society. You are mourning a preconceived label, perhaps, or at least the shift in variables regarding yourself. You are the same man that you were before. You're merely allowing a side of yourself that you had forced into silence, to rear its head and consider its surroundings. I assume you remember how it felt to kill Tier. Was it the same as the way you felt killing Francis? Or have you evolved even while attempting to repress that side of yourself?"

Will gives a content hum of approval and contentment from the soothing actions against his scalp. He moves his head slightly, minute movements to elicit a different sensation. He considers Hannibal's words and almost wants to chuckle at remembering how he'd tried to play the behaviorism card, getting lost in his own deceit, in wanting to please two masters. Yes, good and evil were not as black and white, and he likely wasn't simply a bad man now, but Will didn't know where that left him.

"It felt familiar, but different," Will begins, eyes fluttering shut in memory as both scenes replay and overlap each other. He goes through them, comparing and contrasting the details that catch his attention. Both had produced the same fight or flight response - adrenaline bursting through him, bringing everything into a sharper focus, yet he hadn't been afraid; he'd felt alive. Both held a certain righteousness to the kill in ridding the world of an evil, but…

"Killing the Dragon... Well, it was more personal. More satisfying in the end. I had more reason to want his death." It wasn't about the Jacobi's and the Leeds', nor the attack on Molly and Walter, although those were factors. Yes, Will had sipped on wine while Dolarhyde had been setting up his camera to film Hannibal's death... but it wasn't until Hannibal had sprung into action - on his behalf - that Will had been certain that he actually didn't want the older man to die, felt certain that nothing would please him more than raining destruction on the Great Red Dragon. Together. So, they had.

"Killing with you was much more intense. A high I've been chasing after in my dreams." Will's eyes open and focus on Hannibal.
Hannibal watches Will casually as Will's eyes slide shut. He doesn't need to be empathic to know where his companion's thoughts have gone, to see the focus slowly carving into his face like a fine blade, to see the flickers of memory in the vague movements of his eyes past his eyelids. Hannibal leaves Will to it in silence, though he can't help but admire the picture Will makes. The heavy focus and the steadying breaths of remembering a kill. Hannibal has been in that situation before and he can't fault Will his memories. So, respectful of their sanctity, he remains quiet until Will gives him an answer and allows himself the smallest of smiles. Killing with Will had, in fact, been much more satisfying than Hannibal had begun to expect.

"As we grow - in mind and in body - we evolve. Some aspects will remain, some preferences, but tastes slowly develop. In this case, a first kill - in your case, Garrett Jacob Hobbs, unless there have been others - will not hold the same feeling as the last. Some lose their taste, others continue to chase the high of their first. But others adapt and evolve and grow. You," Hannibal says calmly, and a slower smile curls on his lips when he notes Will looking at him, "Have adapted. Have grown. You will never stop evolving, Will. Over time you will find your own personal taste, your method. You've studied the literature," he adds, almost amused, "You made a career out of it. You know the evolution."

"And with great interest you'll observe my evolution, my growth... and likely continue to shape me too, whether it's deliberate or not," Will answers, a sense of calm and rightness settling over him following his statement.

"My design... By now, it's clear that I won't be free from your influence." His good shoulder gives a small shrug. It's the truth and right now Will doesn't feel like lying to himself.

He casts his eyes down to his own hands that are submerged in the water, and as outlandish as it may seem to be alright with being clay under Hannibal's hands, Will knows he can be. Will be. This time, he's cognizant and willing. This time Hannibal won't be influencing him because he's merely curious or for his own amusement. It's a gamble. They're a gamble, but this is where he's found himself. He's fought, resisted, turned a blind eye, been naive... but Hannibal and his insufferable draw has remained. An inescapable destiny.

"Nor will I be free from yours. Though I sought to deny it, you have changed me. Perhaps we shall see in time if it's for the better." Mutual change and adaptation, finding their stride together... Hannibal can think of little he enjoys the idea of more. There will be pitfalls; Will is going to pull back and surge ahead until his emotions have regulated, until he feels safe in his current surroundings and Hannibal doesn't doubt this. He'll need to be vigilant, to keep Will from injuring himself further, but perhaps it can be done. This moment alone shows promise.

"For now, I would ask that you focus on finishing here and returning to your room in order to eat. Preferably while I redo the bandages for your hand and check your shoulder again." Hannibal gingerly leans back and eyes Will for a moment, and then he braces his elbows against the tub and rises from the floor. It's nowhere near as smooth as it would have been before, but he manages. And after a moment he offers Will his hand. "If you'd stand, I'll turn the shower on and you can finish on your own."

From circumstances, both of their own making and not, they both have been changed. Altered, both subtly and significant, marked in various ways, on their flesh and in their bones. It was a truth Will had to accept because it wasn't going away. Once more, he does as he's told, taking Hannibal's hand and being helped to his feet. A truce has been made between them, a tentative olive branch that Will will cease his destruction for now. It's been exhausting to shut himself up, had felt like a slow poison
seeping through his system and he was now ready to pull the IV out.

The shower is started, curtains drawn, and he's left to his own devices as the water drains around his feet. Head tilted back, shampoo rinses off his hair and Will sighs, as he brings his good hand up to scratch at his scalp, where Hannibal's hands had been only moments ago. He stands there, in no hurry to leave yet, safe in this simple task. When he's thoroughly pruned, Will gets out, drying himself and returning back to his room lower half wrapped in a towel.

Alone in his room, he's already seen Hannibal's presence - his clothes and discarded bandages have been picked up and the bed's been stripped. Will feels a flash of guilt, but he can't help it now - what's done is done. He busies himself with eating the plate that had been brought up for him this morning, shoveling cut up pieces of fruit in his mouth, appetite starting to finally make an appearance. Once finished, dressed save for a shirt, Will pads into the guest bedroom where Hannibal is waiting to look at his injuries.

"Time to play doctor again. Shall we?" His tone isn't nearly as sarcastic as his words. He's trying for a casual joke, but missing the mark. Will takes a seat on the bed, his swollen hand placed on his knee.

It takes the entire time Will is safely standing in the shower to do what he's been unable to do the last few days. Though he feels somewhat guilty for invading Will's room, the state of it is sub-par and so he takes his time in stripping the bedding to be washed and gathering the clothes from the floor, as well as the bloodied bandages. He takes the previous night's food downstairs to toss and stops long enough to put the bedding in the washing machine to start later on in the day, then makes his way back upstairs to Will's room to put new bedding on. The tasks are mindless even if they are a little difficult with his limitations but he completes them easily enough.

He retreats to the guest bedroom then in order to get the bandages and supplies ready for when Will arrives. And when he does - looking much more settled in his own skin than he had before - Hannibal merely offers Will a small lift of his eyebrow in response to the statement before gesturing for Will to sit. Gracefully, Hannibal sits beside him and reaches out to take Will's hand, carefully testing the bend of his wrist and the flexion of his fingers. He feels stiff - undoubtedly a response to the swelling - but there's no grinding or anything to suggest greater injuries. His knuckles look like they're a breath away from bleeding again with the scabs having softened in the shower, but Hannibal merely reaches again for the ointment, judging the wounds to be clean enough.

"It is indeed time to play doctor again. I trust you will humor me and keep the bandages on this time."

It's not necessarily a slight, just Hannibal expressing his hope. He applies the ointment over Will's knuckles and then reaches for the gauze once more in order to re-bind Will's hand the way he had before. It's careful, and he secures the edges through Will's fingers so as to keep the gauze stable, finishing it expertly with another wrapping of tape around Will's wrist. Only then does he set the tape aside and reach over for Will's shoulder, much more gentle.

"How stiff is your shoulder, and does it hurt to move it? It may be in your best interest to bind it again for a few days just to be safe."

Will watches as Hannibal tends to him yet again, motions careful and clinical, but Will knows where it comes from - a place of stubborn refusal to let Will remain all too broken. For a man who he has labeled as destructive, Hannibal has been entirely too caring these past few months. Most of it is a practical necessity, but it's apparent the older man does go above and beyond that, as seen in their
conversations, as seen in Hannibal not pushing or taking and his patience and tolerance for Will's antics.

Once more, his hand is bandaged, the unsightly swelling and scabs covered up. He casts a look to his shoulder, moves it slightly.

"Maybe bind it - better safe than sorry." As loathe as he is to perhaps need it, Will isn't particularly fond of messing up his shoulder any more than it is. What he feels now isn't permanent and he doesn't want any lasting damage.

"You really would take care of me no matter how often I fall off the shelf, wouldn't you?" Will asks, but the answer is evident, has been proven to him quite clearly by now. Hannibal will allow him space and time to brood and process, but he is not allowed to self-destruct.

"You mentioned last night... That there were safer ways I could be punished if I felt like I needed that. Would you facilitate that, then?"

Nodding once, Hannibal eyes Will's shoulder for a moment to look it over, building a proper plan before he gets to work. While binding the entire shoulder would likely work better, he doesn't want to risk feelings of claustrophobia. So instead Hannibal takes Will's old sling - carefully tucked away against the bed - and bends his arm to the proper point against his chest before latching it. It isn't nearly as restrictive as a full binding, though Hannibal does pause to carefully and quickly wrap a measure of gauze around the shoulder itself to stabilize it. If Will needs to escape it, he can do so, but it will at least take him time in this case.

"I would take care of you, yes," Hannibal says, though he suspects Will's question to be rhetorical. It doesn't hurt to have it confirmed, however. He does want Will to know that even acts of self-destruction won't make him pull away, or change his mind. He's dealt with far worse from many more people. "And if punishing yourself is something you actively wish to seek, yes. I can facilitate that. But with the caveat that you speak to me regarding why you wish to when those feelings emerge. I will not belittle you, nor allow you to do so to yourself. But if you desire the ability to lash out at something in anger, that is simple to cater to. As is the ability to hurt yourself with no lasting damage."

Hannibal draws back only once the sling has been carefully tied in place, and he takes a few moments to test Will's reduced range of movement before nodding, satisfied. "I have treated many patients who turned to self-harm from feelings of worthlessness or a desire to be punished. Treating the underlying cause is always the goal, but in those cases where they needed to be weaned off of dangerous habits - like cutting or beating themselves - instructing them to turn to cold water or ice cubes was often a safe alternative. Submerging hands in cold water, or holding an ice cube in your palm. It hurts, but it does no lasting damage."

Will is glad that Hannibal has opted to go with the sling, not entirely liking the traditional and probably safer idea of binding it completely. He won't be able to do much, no chopping up vegetables, but he very much doubts that Hannibal wants him using sharp knives in the near future, not that Will can blame him. Are ice cubes and cold water in his future? Perhaps some of the relief or release is from seeing visual evidence of the damage caused. He doesn't bring this up. His messed up hand had provided him a small measure of accomplishment, because at least he had done something, taken control and acted.

"Yeah, that's fair," Will mumbles to show he's heard. He stands to his feet, not wanting to remain dormant and laze around any longer. His unhindered hand comes to Hannibal's collar, fingers pulling
at the fabric to better see the marks.

"If we want to keep doing that, we'll need to select easier places to hide them." Hannibal had bit harder, but Will had bit enthusiastically and more than once. He licks his lips, fingertips grazing across bite marks, before he clutches onto the collar and simply looks up, seemingly at a loss of what to do.

The shift in focus from the bed to Will's hand on Hannibal's collar perhaps tells him far more than he needs to know. He knows the psychology behind self harm, of course, and he knows the same behind masochism and sadism. Hannibal suspects Will is capable of all three, though in moderation. He doesn't rise when Will does and instead allows Will to pull his collar down low enough to expose the bites along his neck. They're pink around the edges, and the flesh close to each is bruised in a wonderful bouquet of colors. It will heal, but it will also likely scar just as the one on Will's neck. Hannibal doesn't need to guess that perhaps seeing physical evidence thrills Will as much as it does him.

"Indeed," Hannibal says, his tone lightly amused, though the look on Will's face is anything but amusing. He looks lost, like he's struggling to come to terms with something. Hannibal goes thoughtfully silent for a moment and then reaches up to lightly brush his hand over the one on his collar, glancing mildly at his own bite mark left behind. "I assume that you wish to leave more marks. I'm amenable, of course, but I wonder why the idea appeals to you so much. Does it serve as an outlet for your anger?"

"My anger? In a way," Will replies, feeling out his words. He's vocally expressed his anger only a few times. Hannibal of course just took it, but nothing had felt better following the outbursts. It hadn't unburdened Will. The things he was angry about didn't require apologies or comforting, they were unchanging truths that he had to accept because, in the end and against his better judgement, he had chosen Hannibal. This was his life, and it would be shared with someone who had brought much tragedy and pain to him. Biting had felt intimate and dangerous, he doesn't think he had been angry at the time, but Will supposes there's always an undercurrent of anger within him.

"Although, I think it also touches on the desire to possess you." He swallows, the admission apparently taking something out of him. "Marks of ownership, if you will." The empath takes a deep breath before adding on, "It defies the rational part of my brain, but I've found myself jealous of Bedelia, Alana even... I don't know what we will or won't do, how far this will go, but I hate the thought of another having touched you, having been with you." Will's hand lets go of the wrinkled collar, working his fingers to grip tightly at Hannibal's hair, pulling his head back in the process and making sure he's focused only on him. "Never again, Hannibal. You're mine." His tone is dead serious, eyes narrowed in their conviction.

Is it unkind to make Will come to his own conclusions? Possibly. Anger, Hannibal knows, does hold a certain sway over Will's life, but he also knows it hadn't been the driving force behind the bites. He almost feels contrite at guiding Will like this; old habits do die hard. Guiding Will around his own mind - allowing him to learn his own secrets - has always come naturally, and this is no different. Hannibal watches, his attention flickering between the bite on Will's neck and the deeply contemplative look on Will's face as he speaks, reasoning it out. And when he comes to the conclusion Hannibal had partly suspected, Hannibal merely lifts his chin slightly, pleased. His eyes narrow and he regards Will calmly, filing everything away carefully to go over later.

But before he can say anything - to comment on Will's words one way or another - Will's fingers slide into his hair and grip tightly, forcing his head back. Hannibal only draws in a slightly sharper
breath of surprise, the sharper pain doing just what Will had intended. He focuses on Will and only on him, expression wavering between reverence and the smallest flicker of pain. He could hide it, but Hannibal is curious. Will is, after all, always surprising him. But the response to Will's possessiveness is simple. "Of course, Will. I am yours. A phrase I fear has become overused, perhaps, but no less true. I also find your jealousy flattering, though I will tell you that it's not necessary. Alana was a placeholder for who I couldn't have." Hannibal allows that to sink in for a moment, making no effort at subtlety. "And I was never intimate with Bedelia."

"Placeholder?" Will scoffs, anger heard in his tone and written on his face. "Who's fault was it that I was locked up in the loony bin?" It's out before he can think better of it. Those had been the darkest times of his life. Times where he'd actually doubted his own sanity, believing he'd lost it just enough to fulfill Hobbs' desire and kill Abigail. Times that involved dealing with the buffoon of a shrink in Chilton, times where he had to stop himself from yelling and shaking Dr. Bloom when he saw her look of sympathy because she had seriously thought he had shattered (was that worse than Jack thinking he was an intelligent psychopath all along?). Times that had him desperate enough to come to an arrangement with Beverly... With Matthew.

Even if he hadn't been convicted, Will doubts anything would have transpired between them. He'd still been getting over Alana and fairly naive to Hannibal's affection, if that word could even be used. He's shaking slightly, cheeks flushed from the rush of memory.

"Now I'm pissed," he says, but it's obvious enough. Will jerks Hannibal's head further back, holding tight as he leans in, with clear intent. He pulls Hannibal's bottom lip into his mouth and bites hard to draw blood, sucking and licking at the small wound before releasing both Hannibal's hair and lip and taking a step back.

"Sometimes I forget what you've all done because there's so goddamn much of it."

The tone is enough to make Will's immediate shift obvious, though Hannibal merely regards him with thinly veiled curiosity. He is admittedly a little concerned that this rush of sudden anger will only serve to injure Will's shoulder further, but Hannibal isn't willing to interrupt Will's memories to answer his rhetorical question. Instead Hannibal focuses on the minute flickers of emotion on Will's face, the ghosts and fire warring for dominance behind his eyes. For its severity, it's still quite stunning, and Hannibal fights to urge to reach up and touch Will, endlessly fascinated by this man even after so many years.

The tightened grip in his hair stings, but not quite as much as the strain it introduces to his wound as Will jerks him ever so slightly off balance. One hand moves back to brace himself on the bed, and Hannibal merely watches as Will suddenly looms in closer. He closes his eyes merely because Will had asked him to before. Whether or not this is a kiss or a bite, the same principle applies. So when Will's teeth close sharply over his lip and sink in, Hannibal merely allows the sharp bite of pain and drifts on it and the draw of Will's lips. It's a violent kiss, almost too sparse to even be called a kiss, but Hannibal allows himself a soft hiss just the same. It's not a sound he needs to make, but he's idly curious how his companion will respond to visible or audible pain cues.

He had shown signs of sadism that night on the bluff, regarding Hannibal's collapse with a rapt fascination. Hannibal is curious despite it all.

When Will withdraws, it's with a drag of sharp teeth and the immediate taste of his own blood in his mouth. The bite isn't deep, though it is impressively double-sided. Hannibal takes a moment to stabilize himself from his hair suddenly being released and he prods the gash with his own tongue, tasting blood and feeling a drop of it beading against his lower lip. He reaches up to brush it away.
"You have every right to be upset," he says finally, rubbing absently at his throat but making no move to fix his hair. "I did not particularly enjoy the necessity of it either, though I acknowledge your suffering was far greater. But it was vastly preferable to killing you, even then. My first mistake. Though one I find myself unable to regret. You being alive," he clarifies calmly, "not your incarceration. For that, I believe you are owed... something. Though what, I'm not certain. Something that would help you cope."

Will's glaring, heartbeat elevated from both the surge of emotions and their brief violent kiss, if it could be that called that. As disheveled as Hannibal may look, hair mused, collar crooked and lip bleeding, he's calm when he speaks and makes no move to straighten anything out. He'd made a sound, one Will had barely caught, just the slightest of hisses and that had been enough to tease him, tempt him. He wants to undo this man. Mess him up still. Will wants him falling apart. Loud. Vocal. Desperate. His eyes flit away and he goes far enough to shift his body toward the door as well, but Will remains. He hasn't often acknowledged these particular feelings.

Much to his own dismay, Hannibal's words draw him back and he's turning, stepping closer, sighing at himself. Blue eyes come to rest on the seated man's mouth, or more specifically his bottom lip. Hand unsteady, his index finger runs against the wet lip, pressing purposely on the small gash before pushing his finger inside of Hannibal's mouth. Will doesn't stop until his knuckle disappears and he rubs curiously at Hannibal's tongue. He cocks his head to the side, mock confidence, daring Hannibal to stop him.

Will's gaze practically radiates hunger, tempting and dangerous because of it. He's still vulnerable despite his confidence, still cycling and reckless, yet the sight of Will's gaze darkening is a covert whisper against Hannibal's senses. Perhaps this is simply what they are to be until they're once again stable. Until Will is stable. Perhaps they will argue and clash, will simmer and ignore, and will come back together again with renewed vigor. An endless cycle, an ouroboros, shrinking over time, but still cyclic and constant. Hannibal finds he's not surprised, and when Will turns to him and steps closer, he merely considers what Will could have in mind and shifts ever so slightly on the bed to accommodate him.

Yet not even Hannibal is properly prepared for Will's decision. The press of Will's finger to the gash stings but the pain is simple to enjoy. What comes as a shock is Will easing his finger into Hannibal's mouth. The taste of chemically treated water and soap mixes with Hannibal's blood and Will's own unique taste. It's bold, and it's entirely reckless when one takes into account just who and what Hannibal is, but he wonders perhaps if that's not part of the appeal. Thoughtfully, he allows Will his exploration even though it does feel intimate and invasive, though not in a negative way. Merely brash, as Hannibal is used to with Will. Even if it were less pleasant, Hannibal doubts he'd stop Will. The look he's sent - confident, daring, belligerent - is enough to stay his hand, but not the rest of him.

Glancing up to Will's face, but avoiding his eyes, Hannibal allows Will his control, allows himself to enjoy the slight prickle of sensation along his spine from the intimacy. But it isn't long before Hannibal carefully closes his teeth around Will's finger, feeling the shift in tendon and not biting, but his grip isn't feather-light. It's a reminder. That Hannibal is capable of great violence, has committed acts many would find atrocious with his teeth alone. Yet he's allowing Will this moment. And after a second, Hannibal eases the bite without drawing blood. He presses his tongue to the calloused pad of Will's finger and, though even he knows it's too far, he closes his lips around the digit. Reckless, the pair of them.

Will's intrusion is allowed, Hannibal's mouth predictably warm and wet as Will explores it. There's a
propensity for this to turn sexual very easily. Will's not lost on the insinuation, nor the increasing intimacy of it, but right now he's taking in little details like Hannibal being lower than him, like Hannibal accepting it, the way his face looks... When he's met with a reply - teeth scraping their 'hello' against his finger - Will's mouth falls open, a sharp intake of breath following and he stills and waits to see what will come of it. His other hand twitches, wanting to reach out, but unable to do so because of it being bound. It's aggravating, but a consequence he endures.

The unyielding bite relents as Hannibal begins to lightly suck on his finger. It brings about a shuddering breath from Will. He comes closer, legs pressed against Hannibal's knees. Will is being pushed by his own longing and curiosity. His middle finger forces his way into the compliant mouth and Will moves both digits further in before sliding them out. And then back in. There can be no mistaking what the motions represent and it holds a sense of power and eroticism that Will hasn't ever experienced before. He's breathing faster, eyes locked on the obscene image they are creating.

"You'd suck me, wouldn't you?" Will gravels out. "Just like this." He thrusts another finger into Hannibal's mouth for emphasis.

This is skirting the edge of what Hannibal should allow, yet Will Graham always has been the one man guaranteed to test his control. It's reckless and ill-adviced; Will launching into the kissing in the car had been safe as it could go nowhere with the console between them, and Hannibal's own rules. This situation is much more intimate; there is no other way to look at this. This is just straight intimacy with a sexual edge, though admittedly a tame one. Hannibal allows it only because it is tame, though Will's reactions are not. He watches closely as Will's breathing hitches, as he lets out a shuddering breath. He feels the tension in the air and indulges Will silently in allowing a second finger into his mouth.

Will is the one to push it further, to mime something very different, and Hannibal embraces the twist of heat low in his stomach as he looks up at Will, steady and accepting and knowing. When the third finger joins, Hannibal merely hums a soft sound of confirmation, as though he has no plans on doing so anytime soon, he would if Will asked. It's a heady feeling, to see Will's responses, to scent his desire. It's also difficult to hold himself back. Hannibal sucks lightly, merely a hint of what it could be, for while he's willing to humor this, he isn't ready to push it beyond. Which is, admittedly, somewhat troublesome. Hannibal has always enjoyed using his mouth, and Will's reactions are thrilling. It is tempting.

His question is met with a hum and he feels the answering vibrations against his fingers. Will's lips quirk into a brief pleased smile at Hannibal's response. This is vulgar, but Hannibal remains unflappable as ever, seated and compliant as Will's fingers fuck into his mouth in a slow pace. As much as his body may want, he won't ask or demand the real thing, this isn't about the destination, but the experience. And it is quite the invigorating experience, rooted in enticing power and tinged with arousal.

But it's not meant to last, no, because there's still anger brewing in Will, recalled emotions from the time spent locked up threatening to spill over. If he pushed his fingers a little further in, just another inch or two, he'd be at the back of Hannibal's mouth, close to his throat-- It sparks the recovered memory of a tube being fed into his own (following a decapitated ear) - a grievance Will now seeks revenge for. His face falls into a cold blankness as he shoves his fingers further in with the clear intent of gagging Hannibal. Predictably, coughing and convulsions follow the rude gesture and Will hisses out, "Doesn't feel so good, does it?" After a few seconds he relents, withdrawing his spit slick fingers and stepping back. Hannibal looks more undone than Will has seen in a long while. Satisfaction fills him as he wipes his wet fingers against his pants.
When Will's expression suddenly shutters, going cool and distant, there is an immediate warning that streaks through Hannibal, telling him to retreat. Yet despite it, he is far more curious than he is alarmed, though it is a vague feeling. He could pull back - and he does consider it - or he could see where this sudden shift will lead. His response is merely a slight furrow to his brow, curious and wary, and then suddenly Will is pushing his fingers in deeper and pressing pointedly. The reaction takes a second; Hannibal can fight against gagging slightly. But the direct pressure intended to choke him does precisely what Will had desired. He gags, making to pull back, but not surprised when Will makes that impossible. This is a punishment in and of itself. The humiliation of it, perhaps, is the worst, leaving him coughing uncomfortably.

It doesn't last as long as it could, though Will is in no way intending to be gentle. When his fingers finally retreat, Hannibal coughs anew, grimacing slightly at the effort it takes on his injuries. His eyes are watering and his face is predictably a little flushed, but he makes no effort to hide it. He merely swallows a few times to settle himself back down to a comfortable level, and while a fissure of anger is indeed under the surface, Hannibal does little more than let out a softer, rougher sound of something very close to amusement. He smiles, though it's little more than a wry cut to his lips, and it isn't long before he looks up at Will again, pointed, perhaps a little bitter but also proud.

Despite it all, he still has to hand it to Will. It had been cruel. Sadism does run in his veins. Hannibal files it away.

"I suppose that is little more than I deserved," he finally says, his voice a little unsteady, a little rough from the press of Will's fingers. "Much as I would like to fault you for it, I can't. Or shouldn't, at least. No, Will," Hannibal adds, meeting his eyes directly. "It doesn't feel good. Am I to assume that was in response to the tube?"

After the coughing, a curious smile is sent his way. One that holds an inkling of pride. Will is unsure if he likes that expression or not. If he wants to make the doctor change it. He probably shouldn't be surprised that something like this evokes such a feeling in Hannibal. Hannibal has always been interested in seeing what lengths Will would go to, just how far he would climb or fall, depending on the situation. He has shown a new side of himself, an undoubtedly meaner side. Hannibal also has always been keen to learn new tidbits about Will. This has been enlightening for them both. For such a small action it had been purposeful in its intent. It had hit its mark and proven a point. Will, too, can be a cruel man; he can and will lash out against not only himself, but at Hannibal. It hadn't been his plan, but even the best plans can fall to the side.

"Over time I assume I'll be able to forgive you for a great deal of things," Will states, his voice less hostile, but still with a noticeable edge. "But I don't think I'll ever forgive you for her."

He could probably move past the encephalitis, the framing, Beverly's death, the attempts on Jack's life, the Europe fiasco, Hannibal pointing the Dragon toward his family, but Abigail Hobbs? No. That's where Will drew the line. She had been both pure and dark, but she had lit Will's life up nonetheless. So much hope had surrounded her - the one he saved - that perhaps they could be family one day.

"You didn't..." His voice breaks, dread stripping him of any lingering boldness. "Feed her to any of us, did you? You didn't..." This is something he hasn't let himself think on, because yes, he'd been fed an ear, but what about the rest of her?

Her. Abigail Hobbs. Hannibal's mouth closes with a small click of his teeth, for even he is aware that this particular topic is volatile. One misstep and he could have Will at his throat for an entirely
different reason and as much as he'd not mind it, he knows it would complicate things. Will doesn't want him dead and Hannibal would prefer to keep it that way. Abigail Hobbs' memory threatens the careful truce between them, and Hannibal's expression sobering registers that. It's respectful in the wake of her mention, but then it closes off the further into his own mind Will gets. Hannibal merely watches him, curious but leery.

Call him jaded; Hannibal has merely learned this particular lesson. Will Graham is a cruel man in more ways than he seems to know. They fit.

But Hannibal isn't so cruel as to bait Will with lies. He reaches up slowly to brush the moisture from his eyes from Will's earlier cruelty, and does the same for his lips, pulling himself slowly back together. He even pauses to carefully fix his hair first, putting himself back together as Will's confidence fails.

"No. No, I didn't feed her to you, aside from the obvious. And I don't blame for your bitterness. You have every right to hate me for her." For using her to implicate Will, not for killing her. He doesn't say this. "But perhaps this is not the best topic of conversation. If you've no other discomfort or indignity you wish to subject me to, I would ask that you accompany me downstairs for painkillers and plenty of water."

Slowly, but steadily, Will watches Hannibal piece himself back together, his outward image returning to a more composed picture. Will doesn't care for his handiwork to be fixed or straightened out, he'd prefer Hannibal to stay unkempt and altered - as long as it was his own doing, but Will's too tense to say anything. When he's told 'no,' relief floods into him, both his face and posture relaxing. Just the thought of any one of them - Jack, Alana, Hannibal or himself - eating Abigail was enough to make him ill. He'd purposely not asked, had mostly avoided the topic of Abigail, really, but Will had to know. And now he does.

He gives a half-nod, muttering out a, "Mm" sound in response. It's all he can say on the matter. Water and pain meds... It's an out he's willing to take. Will walks to the door, but looks over his good shoulder to comment, "I liked you better before... When you looked messed up." With a small shrug, he leaves the guest room. Let Hannibal do what he wants with that shared information.

In the kitchen, he gets his own water, but waits for Hannibal to arrange whatever dose he sees fit. The glass is half drained by time the doctor joins him. This is home, whether he's okay with it or not.

Just like that the situation is diffused, though the lingering tension seems to fall over them both like a fine layer of ash: harmless but visible. Hannibal studies the look on Will's face as he leaves the room, and his parting comment lingers in Hannibal's mind long after he's gotten to his feet. It's interesting to note, though not something he's particularly shocked to hear. Will's shown a particular enjoyment in alterning Hannibal's appearance, from the bites to the pointed tugs at his hair, to the way he seems to find Hannibal's straightened collar a personal affront. It's not enough to make Hannibal consider lessening his own grooming, but he silently files the knowledge away and it lingers in his thoughts through the rest of the day.

It's somewhat uncomfortable. Will's extended hiatus upstairs had thrown off their usual routine, and Hannibal takes greater care as he completes his own tasks that day. He assists Will in medicating and directs him to the couch to rest before the vertigo from the medication sets in. Will has his books, but Hannibal focuses on the house that day, allowing Will his own space while still puttingtering nearby in the event he needs Hannibal for something.

In the end, while there is a definite tension and uncertainty lingering under the surface, they don't
cross boundaries again. Will reads and Hannibal busies himself with chores and with cooking (and making sure Will eats these meals) and they edge around careful conversation. Abigail isn't mentioned, nor is Will's moment of cruelty, though Hannibal does believe he catches Will looking at him thoughtfully a few times. In turn, he periodically checks the bindings on Will's arm, testing his circulation and pain level every two hours. By the time the evening has darkened the night sky and the moon has risen brightly in counterpart, Hannibal allows himself a few ounces of wine and permits Will a few fingers of whiskey before they make their respective ways to their rooms for bed.

Hannibal's room - while not nearly as ornate as the old one - is well furnished. It suits him, with darker woods and bedding despite the brighter walls. It's large, the obvious master bedroom in the house, yet it still seems modest compared to the luxuries Hannibal had been used to. He doesn't mind; it suits his needs. This place is likely temporary, and for a temporary safehouse in the middle of Quebec, it's comfortable. A large window is spilling moonlight onto the sheets by the time Hannibal finally retires for the evening. After completing his routine and changing into softer sleep pants, he merely settles in bed and reaches over to turn on the lamp nearby to get in a little reading before bed. Though by the time his door creeps open a few hours later, his lamp is off, and he's already settled in to get some sleep.

Although Hannibal is hesitant around him, it's not nearly as cautious or tense as it had been in the beginning. Will accepts the medication and relocates to the living room where he digs back into the dystopian world presented in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It's easy to lose himself in the novel and to cast aside the past few days.

Behaving is a manageable course of action to take. He eats, drinks plenty of fluids and lets Hannibal fuss over his shoulder. Life doesn't stop because Will had a meltdown and the day goes by with no issues rising between them, but this is par for the course. Intensity ebbs and flows, Will acts out, pushes, presses in - gets his fix of Hannibal - and then things settle between them. Perhaps in a way he's a junkie with Hannibal his drug of choice. It's a precarious addiction.

He hopes the whiskey will help ease the passage of sleep, but when Will lays down, he's met with restlessness. Granted, he spent the last day and a half in bed, but it's still aggravating to be failing at falling asleep... He thinks about Hannibal's bitten lip, glassy brown eyes and tousled hair (stop that). He thinks about the past few weeks and the routine they had started to build, how things had become comfortable (it should be odd, shouldn't it?) He thinks about the dogs (God, how was he to pick just one?). He thinks about his old dogs (no, don't go there).

When the digital numbers change to 2:05 he gives a groan of frustration and flings off his blankets, slipping out of bed. If he can't sleep, Hannibal shouldn't get to either. He's always been told to seek him out for anything, and right now Will needs to talk until he gets sleepy. The sling having been removed before bed, Will is clad in an undershirt and boxers as he pads out of his room and down the hall. He's surprisingly not that nervous about what he's setting out to do, most likely still a little blunted by everything, but Will will take it gladly. He gives a soft knock before helping himself to the door knob and letting himself in.

The sound of sheets rustling has Will pausing in the doorframe, eyes darting to a moonlit Hannibal who is regarding him curiously.

"Can't sleep, thought I'd have some company until I can," he explains and forces himself to complete his journey, coming to the large bed and climbing on top of the comforter, choosing to lay down on his back and look up at the ceiling. He gives a slow exhale. If he treats this like it's not a big deal, Hannibal likely will follow suit.
The sound of footsteps alone has Hannibal shaking off whatever sleep had begun to descend over him. He's silent for a moment, aware but not yet alert as the footsteps don't register as a threat. But at the sound of a knock, Hannibal shifts just in time for the door to open and he looks over at Will standing in the doorway. He quickly shakes off the remnants of his own sleep, drawing in a deeper breath to fully bring himself out of it, but he doesn't ask why Will is there. Will is quick to supply the information, and Hannibal can't help the way a response doesn't immediately come to mind.

This is uncharted territory; Will has never sought him out like this. Has never so much as entered Hannibal's room. That he's doing so unbidden doesn't bother him, but Hannibal is curious how it's affecting Will. Even so, considering the tenuous truce between them, Hannibal reaches up to very briefly rub at his own face, as if to wipe away the last vestiges of sleep. Will is correct; Hannibal follows his lead. The casual approach to the way his companion settles on the opposite side of the bed has Hannibal gingerly easing himself up into a more reclined position.

"I see," he finally says, and while his voice is a little rough with sleep, he doesn't seem bothered. He hadn't been lying; Will's presence is welcome at any point in time, even if it draws Hannibal out of sleep. "I imagine you slept your fair share while you were in your room. It makes sense that you're finding it difficult. But of course, you're welcome here. Would you like the lamp on?" He offers, as while the moonlight does offer its fair share of illumination, it could be taken as more intimate with the lights off. Hannibal also wonders vaguely if he should find a shirt to put on; the pressure of fabric against his wounds is not always comfortable in the evenings, but Will's comfort far outshines his own.

As much as he may be curious to look at the recently woken up Hannibal, Will keeps his eyes glued to the ceiling. This middle of the night get-together is new for them. He stretches out, settling himself more while his still-bandaged hand comes to rest on his abdomen.

"No, this is fine. The moonlight is nice anyway," Will responds truthfully. Sliding into this new situation should feel awkward, but for once, Will doesn't pay too much attention to his nerves. Whether it's out of acceptance or apathy, Will doesn't know. Maybe it's a mix of the two.

"Tell me something I don't know about you," Will implores, wanting to both hear Hannibal talk and know him more. Hannibal has, for most of their relationship, been private about himself, but Will wishes for that to change. He doesn't care about favorites or trivial facts of that nature. He's sure Hannibal won't be paltry as to mention such things. Will feels like he has exposed much to the man lying beside him, some from his own mouth and other insights deduced through Hannibal's careful observation and manipulation of himself.

Slowly Hannibal allows himself to relax back against the headboard of the bed. He dislikes the necessity of leaning against it, but it's easiest on his injuries to cater to them. With the need to turn the lamp off dismissed, he allows himself a mild glance in Will's direction, taking in the surprisingly relaxed posture. There is little tension radiating from him and Hannibal silently matches his reactions. He may not be an empath in the same way Will is, but he's not about to take chances while entering into new territory like this. Admittedly the situation is surprisingly relaxed for being so new and, after a few curious moments in which Hannibal idly wonders what Will intends to do, he allows himself to relax further, his eyes sliding closed in mild contemplation.

The request isn't an odd one, but it does briefly draw Hannibal up short. Not because he doesn't want to comply, but because over the years, it has become somewhat muddled as to what he has told Will and what he hasn't. Three years in a psychiatric hospital - living primarily in his own mind - complicates his recollection. He can't count the conversations he'd relived or created with Will's
memory, and he doubts something superficial will appease Will for long. Hannibal considers his answer in silence, and then sighs softly.

"I'm not certain what Chiyoh told you when you visited my estate," he prefaces, the phrase 'my estate' casual, like being a Count is not something of note, "So perhaps telling you something about my history risks crossing the lines of what you already know. Yet something personal also risks edging into the territory of what happened once I admitted regret over your incarceration. So perhaps you should decide which is safer. What would you like to know, Will?"

A flicker of irritation crosses Will's face at not being immediately granted what he's asked for. It's an immature response, but Will's patience is not nearly as vast as Hannibal's own. Whims make themselves known and if Will decides to act on them, he looks for that heady sense of accompanying gratification that follows - at least in things that concern Hannibal. That's how many of their interactions have transpired, at any rate. Admittedly, playing any sort of long game isn't his style as seen in the shifting allegiances and in warning Hannibal. He hadn't known who's 'man' he really was back then, but Will had wanted Hannibal to escape. He hadn't been ready to run off with him, no, but he'd not wanted Hannibal captured, or worse: killed. Fingertips tap idly against his scar, their range of motion restricted from the bandages. Even then, his anger and hurt had not been severe enough for Will to let the Devil escape.

"Whichever. I don't feel particularly volatile right now," he answers simply, resting the back of his uninjured hand against his forehead. It's probably not much of a consolation to Hannibal, however. Will has proven to be erratic and unpredictable at the best of times.

"Be safe if you want, I don't care. I'd just... like to hear you talk. Tell me a story if you'd prefer - fact or fiction - your choice." Will sighs, closing his eyes in preparation for letting himself become lost in Hannibal's voice.

Thoughtful, Hannibal glances down at Will again and takes a moment to admire the picture he makes. It's safe with Will's eyes closed, and Hannibal allows himself the privilege of admiring the way Will looks bathed in the moonlight. His features are sharp and pale in places while others are cast dark with shadow. It's stunning, and even sluggish with sleep, Hannibal feels the familiar itch in his fingers to find a pencil and a sketchbook. Will has graced his pages many times from memory, but never from model, and Hannibal can't deny that particular temptation. But later, perhaps, assuming this is not the last time Will seeks him out in the evening. Selfishly, Hannibal hopes it's not, though he's still not entirely certain what to expect from this.

But he decides not to tarry any longer. After a thoughtful moment, he settles on something more relaxing, even though the memories edge on the sharp side of bittersweet.

"You explored the grounds around the estate when you visited, I assume," he begins, and Hannibal draws a slower, steadier breath as he turns his gaze to the ceiling, thoughtful and relaxed, willing his own relaxation to thread through Will's buzzing thoughts. "Though it may come as some surprise considering my usual tastes, I was quite fond of the forest surrounding the estate while in my youth. I would explore daily, sometimes alone, and oft with my younger sister. I became very familiar with the grounds. With the trees, the forested hills, the cliff-sides, and the streams. I believe you would have enjoyed them as they were, before the grounds fell into more disarray. Chiyoh is a wonderful woman, though I doubt very much she was able to maintain the grounds as they once were. Even so, I must admit that visiting your home in Wolf Trap did bring back a few of those latent memories. I would not be adverse to walking the forest come warmer weather. I am... not particularly fond of the cold."
Memories of blood red on white snow are still all encompassing after all. Hannibal doesn't mention this. Certain instances are better left unsaid. But this is common ground, at least. He knows Will's fascination with rivers and streams, with the forest.

"Even in disarray, it held an eerie beauty," Will finally remarks, thinking on the lushness of the thick trees he'd once found himself wandering through and later hiding among. It had been a somber time climbing over that rusted gate and dropping onto the dilapidated Lecter estate. Leaves had crunched under his boots as he explored the one place Hannibal could never return to. His mind floats back to the statue and the gathering of fireflies. It had almost seemed like a scene that shouldn't have belonged.

"The fireflies..." He starts, but then a slight crease works it's way between his eyebrows as if he's unsure where his train of thought is heading. "They're quite interesting as when they're larvae their bioluminescence warns predators, but as adults it's to attract and communicate with mates... Flashing and glowing, their lights like an array of tiny stars amidst the backdrop of the night." He gives a contemplative sigh, easily able to recall their image back at the estate. "Guess it was the opposite for us, as my darkness was what attracted you."

Hannibal finds himself nodding; the old estate had once held an eerie beauty before it had been tainted for him forever. He has no desire to return to that place. Part of him wonders why he'd chosen to tell Will this, but the answer is simple: because it's difficult. After their conversation earlier, with Will struggling through the reminder of the daughter who - as far as he's concerned - is long dead and gone, Hannibal airing something difficult in turn had seemed fitting. Just. He fights back the array of memories with a slow, steady breath and they leave with his exhale. This far away from the estate, he can shove them away just like other memories that attempt to cut deep.

Even so, Hannibal can't really resist a sidelong glance at Will once the fireflies are mentioned. He's silent for a moment, contemplative, and then he nods again. "I must admit, your darkness drew me in like a Siren's song, tempting and beautiful in its own right. Not even the fireflies could compare." Hannibal's lips tug into the smallest of smiles. "It is a heady feeling, to be known. Even to have the possibility of being known. Of having another able to understand. I have found many people somewhat like myself over the years. Margot and Tier to name two. But while freeing them from themselves was a reassuring endeavor, neither of them lacked the understanding. They were my clients, and I their therapist. The possibility for true friendship had not been an option. Until you."

He hasn't said anything about Hannibal's admission regarding the voiced desire to walk in the outdoors amidst nicer weather. Will understands that he's implying that they could do this together. He's not opposed or offended by the idea. On the contrary, it could be both an interesting and perhaps an enjoyable activity for them to do. Hannibal's choice to bring up memories concerning his childhood home strikes him as a peculiar and telling decision that Will doesn't take lightly. An act of reciprocity, perhaps because of Will's earlier emotional displays. It couldn't have been easy, but he has no plans to bring it up. Trying to picture Hannibal surrounded by nature, Will's lips twitch up in a smile that he allows to remain. He'd rather think on the wind rustling through the trees and Hannibal by his side than their shared darkness, but...

"It's certainly an overwhelming feeling," Will concedes. To be known. Seen. He had cited friendship to Jack as the reason for his warning phone call, because when it came down to it, Hannibal had been both a better and closer friend than Jack Crawford. Will didn't use the term often... Friend. Despite the deception, through the pain, Hannibal had still remained the singular person who knew him the best. They were undoubtedly more than mere friends now, but Will has no idea what term
he'd use to sum them up.

They continue to talk, Will asking noninvasive questions and Hannibal obliging him. He's given in and crawled under the sheets and comforter after half an hour had passed and Hannibal had pointed out kindly that he was more than welcome to. Now tired, a yawn slips out as Will turns to face Hannibal, shifting closer to the warm frame. His eyes are still closed as he gives a sleepy content sound. He's relaxed, but making an effort to keep talking because he's surely not staying and falling asleep here. "Want to see you in something like jeans and a t-shirt one day," Will murmurs. "Think you'd do that for me?"

While the conversation starts out somewhat wary, it doesn't take long for it to settle into something comfortable. Hannibal allows Will his questions, speaking idly about safer topics following the first. Cooking, composition, what languages he actually speaks (though he summarizes when he finds Will looking slightly incredulous), and his actual interest in psychiatry. The latter topic takes time, Hannibal explaining his interest in the human mind when it works properly, not like the minds of the cattle he has no qualms in slaughtering. It's a topic he's passionate about, though he manages to keep his actions small and his tone casual at first, and then warmer once he notes the heaviness in Will's body.

It isn't much longer until Will has crawled under the sheets on Hannibal's invite. While Will seems to be fooling himself about what this is, Hannibal has no such misgivings. He waits until Will has settled against the sheets and then finally eases himself back down to lay back on the bed. His muscles thank him for it as they no longer need to hold him up and he settles back against the sheets, though his focus is once again on Will. Slowly but surely, Will is relaxing, his expression open in a way Hannibal hasn't been permitted to see before. He's stunning in the moonlight, muscles and expression relaxed, body heavier with sleep. He looks vulnerable in a different way. Trusting. And once again, Hannibal feels only the desire to nurture, not to destroy.

Will Graham truly will be the death of him one day.

He reaches out once Will has shifted so close there's barely space between Will's body and Hannibal's arm, and he does nothing but carefully touch Will's face, impulsive and feather-light. He indulges in little more than a single stroke of his fingers back through Will's hair, and he smiles just wide enough for the scab on his lip from Will's bite to threaten further damage. This is something he already enjoys. Perhaps in time Will could learn to enjoy it as well. "Were it anyone else asking, no. For you? Yes. You will find in time that there are a great many things I would do for you, Will. A more casual appearance someday is a small concession." It's said softer, fondly, his voice a little lower as Will is clearly fighting against falling asleep. He'd draw him in closer were it welcome, but he won't push too far, not even in this. "I admit, I can't decide if your fixation with seeing me casual or undone is flattering or not."

Safe conversation has lulled Will into a much less inhibited state. It's actually almost a rare treat to be able to hear Hannibal share about varied subjects. In the process Will is offered a look at the thoughts and opinions of a man he truly is, still, curious about. He's also vaguely aware how nice it is to have a warm body close to him. He's grown accustomed to not sleeping alone, thus it's not an unreasonable observation... (oh fine, the who most likely has something to do with it too).

The touch paid to him is fleeting and by the time he's about to lean into it, it disappears all together. He lets his mind wander to the image of Hannibal dressed in a plain colored t-shirt, a nice leather belt accenting a pair of fitted jeans (he's not cruel enough to imagine him in anything grungy or ill-fitting). Will laughs lightly, nose scrunching up a little. Maybe a polo shirt instead so he could have someone
buttons and a collar still - baby steps, after all.

"You're handsome no matter what you wear." It seems obvious to Will, like any well known fact, so it comes out of his mouth with no thought, no fretting involved. Whether Hannibal was in a three-piece suit or prison uniform, he was a good looking man who had a certain poise to him, an unmistakable presence that commanded at least a second if not third glance. Not traditionally handsome perhaps, but a blend of exotic and old world... And Will had to be tired if he was trying to figure out Hannibal's attractiveness. "And... Fairly certain flattered is the... uhh, right answer?" Will yawns before adding on. "Think about you too much... What I want to do. I have a problem, doctor." It's a fairly lame joke.

Will won't be awake for much longer. It's written heavily into the lines of his body, into the relaxed openness of his face. Bit by bit he's falling asleep, and while this won't be the first time Hannibal has seen him asleep, it will be the first time it has been with no danger and no pretense between them. Will keeps yawning and Hannibal breathes a little deeper to fight a few instances of the same away, particularly because he feels Will would draw far too much amusement from it and drag himself from the comfortable warmth of rest. Hannibal merely watches him struggle to remain awake, even as his voice takes a warmer edge, his consonants shurring and almost fading into something vaguely resembling an accent. Hannibal smiles to himself, remembering Will speak of his childhood in Louisiana and he wonders vaguely if Will's accent reappears while he's exhausted, as Hannibal's does. Though his tends to thicken; it's always present.

He's distracted by the comfortable picture Will makes, so much so that he very nearly misses the slightly slurred admission. At first the words don't register because they seem impossible given who's speaking, but eventually he realizes that Will has just said that. Eyebrows lifting in a mix of incredulity, amusement, and pride, Hannibal watches Will sink closer to sleep. It's not something he'd been expecting to hear, but it's not something he's willing to dismiss either. It's insight, though he does wonder if Will is going to regret his admission in the morning. Time will tell in that regard. "Thank you, Will. I'll keep that in mind," Hannibal says softly, amused but allowing his tone to stay mild as he listens to Will's additions.

Slowly, careful of his own injuries, Hannibal eases slightly onto his side for a moment simply to make it that much easier to reach out once more. He takes a moment to again indulge himself, fingers carding through Will's hair before his palm comes to rest along the angle of Will's jaw. This time he lingers, allowing Will to draw comfort from the touch. "Though I would not call my presence in your thoughts a problem. Merely reciprocal, as you are just as ingrained in mine." He trails off for a second, and then, his voice richer in his own language, Hannibal switches to Lithuanian, gently urging Will to allow himself to sleep. He knows Will well enough to know that were he to hear the words in English, he'd resist. Will Graham is a stubborn man.

The pull of sleep is strong, but Will tries to hold off. Again, he's touched, the physical intimacy welcomed and he gives a pleased sigh, nuzzling into the hand that first strokes through his hair and then cups his face. It's far too nice. In this moment he feels safe and looked after, it's something Will doesn't particularly wants to abandon for sleep. Not yet. He'll cling onto wakefulness for a few more minutes.

The answer has him feeling warm with satisfaction. Reciprocal. Yes, many things were mutual like that. He was not alone in his obsession. When sweet foreign words offer their verbal caress, Will sighs again. He wants... He doesn't know what he wants, but his body is heavy and lazy, the bed is more than comfortable and Hannibal is close - caring. Normally, to accept care comes with a sharp edge of something else, but in his freer state, he can simply drink it up. Savor it. So, that's what Will
does, moving closer to Hannibal, their bodies touching underneath the blankets. He carefully places his arm around Hannibal's waist - half in ownership, half because it's what his body is familiar with. "You sure this isn't a dream," he mumbles. "But, then again--" A yawn interrupts. "We're never like this in my dreams."

Within minutes, sleep takes him and Will stays near Hannibal.

Hannibal goes very still following his soft bid for Will to sleep. It's subtle; he doesn't tense, merely stops moving for a moment, as Will has once again surprised him. Under the safety of the blankets over them, and under the softer sheets, Will has reached out to wrap an arm around him. It comes as a surprise, particularly as it seems instinctual. For a second, though he feels bitter at the thought, he considers removing Will's arm simply because Will could react negatively in the morning. This is just as dangerous a game as Will's fingers in his mouth had been earlier, though in a different way. Yet one glance shows him that Will is already minutes from sleep, his arm a heavy, solid warmth that strikes Hannibal in how grounding it seems. He's much more accustomed to the female form, more tactile and less possessive, and yet this feels right.

Selfishly, Hannibal makes his decision. He looks at Will, watching the slow relaxation as he drifts closer to sleep, and he allows himself to relax as well, his free hand lifting just enough to barely graze the sides of Will's fingers. It's acceptance. Will's arm isn't pressing against his wounds, and quite frankly, Hannibal feels far more content than he'd expected to. His pleasure is evident in his eyes more than on his smile, for he deems it safer, and he merely hums a soft sound of confirmation. "This isn't a dream," Hannibal says softly. And he watches as Will's body slowly relaxes over the next few minutes. "Good night, Will," he adds, softer, once Will is asleep at his side.

Slowly Hannibal takes his own hand back and takes a moment to get settled. It's an interesting sensation, having a body so close to him again, yet his senses are settled with Will's presence. Hannibal watches him for as long as he dares, silently locking the sight away. And while it takes him longer to get to sleep than it had for Will, when he finally drifts back off to sleep, it's to the comfort of a pleasantly dreamless night.

Will is taken by a peaceful sleep, one where he does not wake and moves very little and no jostling his sore shoulder or hand that are still healing. Dreams and nightmares do not arise and when the morning light filters into the room, Will is pressing himself instinctively closer to the body he's spooning. It takes him longer than he'd like to realize just who he is pressed up close to. It's not Molly; it's not his wife. Hannibal is shirtless and Will's is curled around his form, his chest against a masculine bare back, his pelvis snug against the round of Hannibal's ass. And his body is despicable because he's been cursed with morning wood. His arm is laid casually across Hannibal's torso, for all intents and purposes, he's cuddling him, holding him.

Shit. Will's thrumming with panic and arousal, eyes wide and staring at the unmarked expanse of skin underneath Hannibal's neck. He remembers coming to Hannibal's room to talk in the middle of the night, but it hadn't been for this. He'd have never chosen to share a bed and sleep next to Hannibal if he'd been fully alert and himself. He knows Hannibal wakes before he does so there's no way the other man isn't awake and oblivious to his condition. He likely chose to not rise, not wanting to risk waking him - being polite. There is no delicate escape he can take in this. "Don't fucking move. Don't talk. Don't do anything," he intones in a low voice. It's the same instructions he'd given in the kitchen the first time he'd kissed Hannibal, but Will knows this will be worse. Far worse.

But he'd rather indulge the pull of desire than face the reality that he'd felt comfortable and secure enough to go to Hannibal's bed in the first place. With a bitten off moan, he pushes into Hannibal,
rubs against him shamelessly as his hand comes to hold hard onto his hip to keep him still. "Hann--" but Will stops himself, mouth moving to the nearest shoulder and biting down on the warm muscle there. He's determined to not put on any show.

Hannibal is a light sleeper, something that has been beneficial over the years. So it comes as a surprise to him when he wakes up that morning from a comforting sea of black and his first realization is that Will is still in his bed. And not only that, but Will has fitted himself along Hannibal's back in the middle of the night. Very still and quite hazy from a comfortable sleep, Hannibal frowns to himself and immediately attempts to pinpoint the moment he'd rolled onto his side to allow such a thing, but the memories aren't there. He doesn't remember moving to accommodate Will, and that alone alarming. He remembers Will draping an arm over him, but that's all. One moment it had been comfortable warmth, and the next he'd woken up in the slowly growing light from the open curtains. He doesn't remember anything in between. And while waking up like this doesn't bother him - it is, in fact, an interesting feeling to be on the receiving end of such attention - Hannibal's mind is otherwise occupied.

On one hand, he suspects there's little way he can ease himself out of the situation without waking Will, thus there will likely be an uncomfortable talk - at least as far as Will is concerned - once they're both awake. On the other hand, there is a more... delicate problem. One Hannibal can feel pressing firmly against him through Will's shorts, and one he takes great care not to move against lest he accidentally push Will further than he's willing to allow. The scent alone is far more tempting than is advisable. So Hannibal falls into a careful silence, listening to the softer breaths that he can feel in warm puffs against his shoulder. It would be blissful were he not so concerned with Will waking. And while it does take some time - the sun is higher in the sky, though not yet fully high enough to ease into something beyond vibrant pinks and oranges - Will wakes before too long.

His panic is immediate and Hannibal decides to merely allow him his privacy. He says nothing, makes no move to reassure. In this, though it's frustrating, he is willing to allow Will to pretend this hadn't happened. Ultimately it seems safer. So when Will's voice breaks through the mild fog of Hannibal's thoughts, his tone firm and pointed, Hannibal is once again surprised, and then immediately curious. There is a small tickle of warning in the back of his mind, but he relents, remaining exactly as he is. Though Will's commands risk losing their hold when Hannibal hears that soft moan and feels Will begin to move. He tenses, and he's already drawing in a sharp breath to stop Will - for his own sake, as this seems like a supremely reckless idea - but the command filters back through at the same time as Will's hand tightens painfully on his hip. Hannibal swallows and lets out the breath slowly at first, and then sharper at the feeling of Will's teeth sinking in against his shoulder. It sparks something hot through him, though the entire situation seems to do the same. And while Will's command does seem important, Hannibal would be remiss if he merely let this slide without attempting to ensure this isn't a mere whim. He draws in another breath, this time with the actual intent to interject, to say something.

Will's hold leaves Hannibal's hip and he shifts back to allow enough room for his hand to creep in-between them and tug the fabric down, freeing his erection. He only has use of his left hand, so it will be somewhat awkward, but he'll make do. Another bite comes as his hand wraps around and strokes loosely. He doesn't want to be noisy in this, doesn't want to be expressive despite the sounds that are there, ready to come out.

He closes his eyes, unable to bear looking at the body he's using, the person he's getting off on. It's entirely wrong, but for all its wrongness, Will is losing himself in it. He kisses the bite marks, licks at whatever he can get his mouth near and jerks his hips forward all the while moving his hand furiously. He doesn't even bother trying to think about someone else, because right now, it's
Will doesn't care now. He lets himself pant, he scoots up a little, supporting himself on his other elbow (not the smartest decision, but he can ignore the ache) because right now he knows he also wants to tease. His mouth hovers over Hannibal's ear and Will moans unabashedly as he presses his cock against the dip in Hannibal's lower back. He growls out, "Going to come all over you, Hannibal.... Going to make you a mess." Will's hand resumes its frantic pace, ignoring the slight uncomfortable chaffing, and quickly he's crying out as he does, indeed, do as he had just proclaimed: shooting his release against Hannibal's back, over the brand. The empath is shuddering, body buzzing with pleasure as he rolls away collapsing onto his back and giving his injured arm a break.

There is no stopping Will. Or, no, perhaps that isn't accurate. Hannibal could stop him, but right at this moment he doubts that stopping would be less damaging to Will's emotional state than allowing him to continue. It's an agonizing measure in Hannibal's own patience, though, to be so close to Will and yet be denied the sight of him, relying on his other senses and wishing he could shut those off as well. He's not immune to temptation, and the mere scent of Will's desire thick on the air between them is enough to have heat pooling low in his stomach. Yet still he doesn't move, his hands clenched silently - one in the leg of his pants and the other against the sheets as Will takes this even further. Hannibal hears a rustle of fabric and then the telltale sound of a hand on flesh.

He closes his eyes against the rush of desire, teeth clenching as he steadies himself. Will is blatant. While he starts out reserved, something seems to tip the scale before long and his soft sounds - once muffled by the throbbing bite to Hannibal's shoulder - come out anew. Then unabashedly as Will leans in closer, making no move to hide himself, vocal and close and dragging invisible claws over the inside of Hannibal's chest, turning his breathing slightly ragged to match. It's a dizzying swirl of his senses from there. The sounds Will makes are honest and damning, and the smell of him is intoxicating. But little compares to the stab of arousal that rends through him when Will makes him a promise and is quick to fulfill it.

The sound of Will's voice shattered in pleasure is one that comes close to undoing him, and Hannibal worries for that split moment between seconds that if he'd not been injured, the temptation might have been too great. As it is, the wet heat that spreads over his skin is dizzying enough on its own, but Hannibal is intimately aware of the location of the brand etched into his skin. That Will has chosen that location draws a sound from him, both blessed and agonized and every possible iteration between. There's a fine tremor working its way through his body when Will collapses back onto the bed, though its reason is simple: with everything that he is, he's fighting the urge to turn around and kiss and bite at Will's lips until his blood stains the sheets.

Hannibal takes a long few moments to reign himself slowly back in, though there's nothing he can do for his own arousal, nor for Will's adornment. He simply breathes until his muscles relax enough to not tremble with the effort to stay still, but there's definitely no way to get the scent of Will out of his senses. Even when he washes it away, the scent will remain, and Hannibal has to wonder if this had been intentional. Hannibal swallows, and when he speaks, his voice sounds rougher than it had even the day before. "Good morning, Will. I see your fixation with seeing me less than composed has not changed." Another breath, though it does nothing to steady himself. "You're welcome to stay as long as you require, but I do believe I should shower."

He's not the only one trying to calm himself down. From the somewhat labored breathing his bed partner is going through, Will knows he has been successful in working up Hannibal. Yes, there's a smug sense of satisfaction that comes from that knowledge. Having the ability to evoke such a strong reaction pleases Will. Hannibal can exert his restraint and try to remain composed, but the profiler...
will continue to throw stones to cause ripples. No words pass between them, but even he can smell the distinct scent of sweat and lingering arousal (he's uncertain how he feels about it, choosing to breathe through his mouth instead). As much as he may want to look at his latest piece of handiwork, Will resists and lays boneless as his heart rate calms down and the haze of his post-orgasm dissipates.

Hannibal speaks up first and the comment about his certain fixation has Will's jaw clenching. It strikes him that Hannibal is amused by it on some level and that's not what Will wants to think on right now. He tucks his dick back in his boxers and sits up, swinging his legs over the side. He's had enough time in Hannibal's room.

"You're not to get off unless I give you explicit permission," Will asserts suddenly. This is him trying his influence out and Will's not above using sex. He has no idea if Hannibal was going to do such a thing, but he wants the culmination of pleasure denied to the man. "Can you do that for me?" He uses this phrase with purpose, uses himself with intent. There'd been times where Will had been receptive to Hannibal taking, but Hannibal had his rules, so now Will is going to make him pay. You play, you pay. He may have shown neediness and vulnerability, but he plans on having the upper hand in this and Hannibal will let him. He plans on enjoying it fully.

Of all the responses Hannibal is expecting, Will's firm, almost immediate command had not made the list. It hits him low, a curl of control snatched away from him in a way that should be unpleasant, but Hannibal surprises even himself by the pulse of heat that shoots through him at the denial. It's as interesting as it is maddening, because with two sentences, Will has effectively wrested control back into his corner. Hannibal's room is awash in the scent of Will's desire, his skin painted with the evidence of it. It is a heady, cloying scent that he won't be able to escape from - though truthfully he has no desire to escape from it - and while Hannibal's mastery over his own desire is far more absolute than most, Will is already threatening its end.

Hannibal falls silent for a few pointed seconds, and then he gingerly eases himself up into a seated position, eyes closed as he fights down the nearly overwhelming desire to simply dismiss Will's command. He feels somewhat petulant, somewhat bitter - for all intents and purposes, Will has used him in this moment - and yet he cannot fault Will this. So instead he draws in a steadying breath, finds the last remaining shred of his control, and nods. "Yes. I can." He doesn't sound particularly pleased about it, (though the concept appeals in ways Hannibal will need to look at closely later, and his tone is annoyingly breathless) but he accepts it.

There is a small curl of desire to turn the tables on Will, to get even, but it's a threadbare retort and goes nowhere. Hannibal merely takes more time to center himself and then gets up onto his feet. He makes no move to hide himself; he feels no shame in his own desire, and the evidence of it is plain given the shapeless nature of the pants he wears. But as per Will's instructions, he'll do nothing. "If you've any requests for breakfast, let me know downstairs. If you'll excuse me," Hannibal says, clearly attempting to keep control over his tone. He sends Will the smallest of nods, still not really looking at him, and then turns to make his way into the en suite in the room, giving Will the privacy to leave as he wishes.

Hannibal agrees like Will knows he would. There's a sick pleasure from denying something so intimate and primal to him. Unhealthy, perhaps, but their relationship has never been normal to begin with. This truly is just par for the course. Will had thought he only had himself to barter with, but turns out he has this, too. It would be a new undertaking, but he will guard this power and control viciously. He says nothing as Hannibal retreats to the attached bathroom. He's said his peace.

Will could also shower, but he decides against it. He doesn't even bother changing out of the items
he's slept in. He's surely being vindictive because he plans on letting the smell of his deed cling to 
him and bother Hannibal for a good while. He doesn't want to deal with the elephant in the room - 
that he'd sought Hannibal out in the wee hours of the morning and had subsequently fallen asleep 
in his bed. It sits uncomfortably with him, telling of a truth that they were, indeed, growing steadily 
closer. Hormonal responses - physical cravings - he could let himself chalk it up to biological needs. 
He'd push back the concerns of who he was attracted to. From his actions yesterday (his fingers in 
Hannibal's mouth) and today (jerking off against Hannibal)... the desire wasn't going anywhere, 
wasn't going away. Sexual identity, labels... Will had enough to worry about than to allow himself to 
get caught up in it. Undoubtedly, the distress of it all will pop up again at some point, but for now, he 
is choosing to not mull over it.

When Hannibal returns to the kitchen, Will is waiting for him, seated at the table like a cat who's just 
had his fill of cream

It takes a fine measure of control to limit himself to living in this precise moment instead of lingering 
over what had just happened, but Hannibal manages. His shower is quick and methodical because 
it's simpler than lingering over the remembered sounds of Will's cries or the motion of the bed as his 
hand had moved over his flesh. Desire still settles low in Hannibal's stomach and he allows himself 
to acknowledge it in a distant, curious fashion. He has desires and enjoys sex, yes, but Hannibal has 
never been a man who allows any impulse to drive his actions. He doesn't need to kill, but he enjoys 
it. He doesn't need sex, but again, he finds it enjoyable. The tightening of his throat, the craving he's 
fighting back is a sensation he's not felt for decades, not since he was in his youth and much more 
reckless and impulsive.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that - once again - Will is the harbinger of the collapse of his self-
control. It's poetic in a way. Will Graham, reckless and impulsive in his own skin, has begun to 
thread those same impulses under Hannibal's skin just as Hannibal has eased Will's darkness out into 
the open. Both of them have been affected by the other; it's fitting that this is happening. 
Unfortunately that doesn't make the curl of desire any less, and Hannibal allows himself a moment to 
press his forehead to the cool tile of the shower, eyes closed and the rushing water providing a 
mindful focus.

It's mere minutes until he's done and dressed, though he only permits himself to leave the shower 
once his control has been pinned in place. From there, he follows his normal routine to the letter, 
posture stiff and jaw set.

Is he angry with Will? No. Not really. If anything, Hannibal finds himself impressed with Will's 
boldness, his manipulation and his cunning. One artist able to admire another's work, even if it has 
personally inconvenienced them.

No, he's frustrated with himself, with his own control, or lack thereof. He prides himself on being 
unshakable and calm, and with nothing more than reckless abandon and impulsiveness, Will had 
almost brought his walls down. The danger, he decides, in letting someone get as close as Will has. 
Hannibal frowns thoughtfully to himself once he's shaved and brushed his teeth, and he makes his 
way down into the kitchen. Admittedly, he is... distracted. But that distraction grows exponentially 
when he steps foot in the kitchen and a wall of that same heady scent makes him visibly falter. Oh... 
yes. Hannibal is proud of Will. He's also annoyed.

"I see," he says flatly, blatantly outing the fact that he knows what Will is doing. The look he levels 
his companion with is grudgingly impressed. "Very well then. Have you decided what you want for 
breakfast?"
The slight hesitation to Hannibal and then the following look has Will feeling full of gratification. And secure in his position. It's perhaps a precarious throne to seat himself on, but Will will attempt to stay upright. As with most of their interactions when Will attempts such ploys, Hannibal could topple things quite easily - but he won't. Will knows this. Hannibal does too. Although, Hannibal has warned him about limits to his patience...

At the question, Will deliberately licks his lips and watches Hannibal closely - avoiding direct eye contact, yes, but taking him in with a blatant interest. "How about you impress me? Feel up to the culinary challenge?" Will generally prefers things like cereal or oatmeal, but when he has allowed Hannibal to cook breakfast for him, the other man has held himself back and kept things simple, but tasty. "Maybe I'll let you feed me a bite." Eyebrow raised, a subtle grin follows. He's being cheeky... and liking it.

Hannibal very carefully bites back a soft retort that, when it comes to Will's palate, impressing him doesn't often take much. He dismisses the comment as his own frustration and Will's obvious amusement and unenthusiastically decides that Will is owed this. For all the times Hannibal had carefully worked him up in the past - to anger, to violence, to recklessness - this is overdue. He takes another steadying breath (through his mouth, though that doesn't help much) and walks into the kitchen, his posture stiff but expression thoughtful. "You're incorrigible. But yes; if that's your wish, I can impress you."

He pointedly doesn't mention Will's offer to let Hannibal feed him; a few retorts come to mind and none of them are particularly appropriate for the situation. Instead he makes his way over to the fridge and looks through it quickly, compiling a mental list of what he could put together. Will is likely expecting something extravagant, and he could easily do it. But elegance and extravagance are not the only ways to impress someone. Decision made, he takes a step back in order to locate a saucepan and fills it partway with water before setting it on the stove, turning up the heat to boil. "Would you care to assist, or would you rather... enjoy your morning?" Hannibal asks, though with a delicate enunciation that implies he's not at all talking about the morning itself. He has no doubt Will is basking in his difficulty.

Nothing quite can match the pure delight and thrill of Hannibal obeying him. It's heady and tempting and Will, for once, just lets himself enjoy it and not overthink. It doesn't take much to impress Will Graham, but he's curious as to what the man will come up with now that Will has given him the go ahead. Will, pointedly, has never asked to be impressed before either. It should prove interesting to see how it all plays out.

At the question, Will stands and closes the distance between them. He slots himself against Hannibal's back, much like they had been earlier and his left arm just loosely wraps around Hannibal's midriff in an almost backwards hug. "I think you should surprise me." With his answer given, he lets go of Hannibal and waltzes out of the kitchen to leave him to his cooking.

The kitchen is strong with Will's scent. It's the one consistent thought that returns to Hannibal after Will has drawn away and left the kitchen. The physical memory of Will up against his back - a clear reminder of what Will had done that morning and very, very intentional - is enough to leave him aching once more, but Hannibal allows himself to study these impulses deeper now that he has another task to focus on. His hands work quickly as he halves sweet potatoes to add to the pot and goes to retrieve the staples of eggs, milk, and flour.

It takes him a few moments to pinpoint where his frustration stems from. Hannibal's desires are clear and present but their origin is less obvious. While yes, the desire for sex is there, it's only marginally
greater than it had been before Will's impertinent little stunt. No, the thickness to his throat and the heaviness of his pulse and the carnal grip of something hot and sharp in his middle is not entirely selfish. It's possessive.

The realization strikes him and he allows himself to consider it. While the wrench thrown into Hannibal's plans is unfortunate, his true issue with control comes with not being able to see Will, to touch him. To be responsible for his pleasure instead of not even a true witness to it. It is part of the problem, Hannibal thinks. The rest is simple, but this one facet is different. Feeling the evidence of Will's pleasure but not being able to see or participate had undone his control like it had been planned. Hannibal isn't entirely certain it is wise to inform Will of this fact.

Instead he works. By the time he's allowed his thoughts to drift back into the realm of normalcy, he's already mixing the batter together. A simple dish, likely unexpected, but this seems fitting. Sweet potato pancakes, a dish from Louisiana. Something he believes he recalls Will mentioning to him once, perhaps near the beginning of their professional relationship. A stray comment, yes, but Hannibal had made a point to remember it.

He works in relative silence, but he works quickly. Pancakes aren't necessarily labor-intensive. Mashing the sweet potato is the most grueling part, and even that is calming. Hannibal takes a half an hour or so to finish breakfast and then an extra few minutes to make it presentable. He has standards. And by the time the table is set, the pancakes are aesthetically pleasing, garnished with sliced strawberries and assorted fruit. Hannibal steps over to the doorway. "Will? Breakfast is ready."

Not wanting to spoil the surprise of what breakfast will be, Will spends his time away from the kitchen. He heads up to the bathroom, does his business and washes up. He considers his reflection in the mirror that, only a few days ago, had been streaked with his blood. Will places his bandaged hand against it, palm pressed lightly, like he had done on the other side of Hannibal Lecter's cell. It had been months since they had been divided like that. They had spent three years apart, but on their first meeting electricity still had sparked between them - it had been as clear as an oncoming storm brewing in the nearby distance. When he and Molly had been discussing about him leaving to help Jack, had a part of himself hoped, even then, that he'd be able to glimpse Hannibal again? (Oh, probably).

In his room, he decides that he might as well change. If he were to stay in his sleep things, it would remind of him off his recent pity party. Will chooses from his recent purchases, a dark navy blue button-down shirt tucked into jeans. Fastening the button is a bit of a bitch, but Will feels more like himself in this attire. He has this vague memory of mentioning to Hannibal about a desire to see him in casual wear. The memory threatens to bring a flush to his cheeks so Will busies himself making his bed and tidying his things before reading. He doesn't want to think of sleepy conversions and limbs lining up underneath sheets, of falling asleep and waking up next to Hannibal.

When he's summoned, he places the book down and makes his way to the kitchen. Will is able to identify what breakfast is before he enters the room and it has him slowing his pace. Will surveys the table with a chagrined expression. "You remembered..." He mumbles, eyebrows drawing in slightly. The thoughtful action of cooking a dish from Will's past has his earlier bravado taking a backseat as Will sits. He doesn't dig in until Hannibal has joined him at the table. After he swallows his first mouthful, Will quirks a small, but genuine smile. "Impressive."

Every now and then Hannibal allows himself to gamble, to guess, and in this instance, he believes he's bet on the right horse, as it were. He watches as Will walks over - thankfully dressed more than he had been, though the scent is still lingering - and he keeps his expression politely blank when he
sees Will slow down. There is no gloating, no visible pride. He merely watches as the cut of Will's shoulders dips ever so slightly in chagrin and makes a small gesture to the table with one hand. Satisfying as allowing himself to dwell on the pride of being right would be, Hannibal doesn't wish to alienate Will or taint this moment. Instead he merely nods. "I did. I do remember most of our conversations, and I remember you expressing a fonder memory regarding these. I looked up the recipe soon after." And fine-tuned it, of course. What good is artistry if one can't embellish?

Hannibal joins Will at the table in time, though not before pouring coffee for them both. Pancakes, admittedly, are not Hannibal's typical breakfast of choice, but he's well aware that Will enjoys the simpler things. And despite the flurry of uncertainty and the rush of frustration and endorphin from earlier that morning, it's all made well worth it by the small, genuine smile that lands on Will's lips following his first bite. Hannibal smiles at him, small but also pleased and warm, and he ducks his head in a partial nod. "I'm pleased they meet with your approval. Please," Hannibal says simply, gesturing again to Will's plate to give him permission to focus on the food. Giving him permission to look away. Hannibal knows very well that Will losing his bravado will likely make him grasp for control somewhere, so he has no qualms in giving Will time to recollect himself.

Hannibal's choice could perhaps be considered sweet, but that line of thinking has Will feeling perturbed. So, instead he focuses on eating the sweet potato pancakes adorned with pieces of fresh fruit. It's delicious, the base recipe obviously altered a bit, but if Will is being honest, these taste much better than the pancakes of his past. He says nothing else as he eats. The shift in his mood says enough - Hannibal has caught him off guard and Will doesn't ask to be fed.
Lie

Chapter Summary

He's complex and volatile, unstable in the worst way, and yet Hannibal merely views him with fondness even now. He's resigned to this, and all it entails. A life with Will Graham is surely better than a life without. It will never be boring.

Chapter Notes

Sorry not sorry!
♥ @ my Hannibal who helped me edit this chapter. :3 We hope you enjoy it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The rest of the week is a mix of Will taking it easy on his arm and him acting out - mostly seen in teasing Hannibal. It's a new dynamic, one in which Will reaches out, touches, but pulls away seconds later. They're fleeting points of contact, a brush of Will's hand or crowding into Hannibal's space, but never remaining close. There's nothing overly intimate, no kissing, no being held. No comforting. He doesn't come to Hannibal's room and he doesn't bring up anything volatile. Once, Will takes Hannibal's hand, places it on his throat only to say, "Miss this?" and then walk away. Thankfully the feeling of empowerment outweighs the slight yearning that persists because, as much as Will may want to deny it, he does miss Hannibal touching him.

They still cook together and Will does nothing else self-destructive - other than perhaps indulging in this pattern of behavior he's adopted. Thus far he's only received disapproving looks. His hand is stiff, but healed, and his shoulder only twinges occasionally. It's been nearly a week since Will had crept into Hannibal's room, but he finds himself lingering outside the older man's door, his mind not quite made up yet. He's wearing even less than the first time, only in his boxers, and when he hears Hannibal call his name, Will steels himself and the decision is made for him. He saunters in.

The week is a fine lesson in self control, and though it's not a particularly pleasant one perhaps it's necessary. The extreme highs and lows of their cohabitation have evened out for now, though at the cost of making any real progress. Hannibal doesn't fault Will his new fixation, though he believes he knows why this new game of his is so attractive. Will requires stability and structure; Hannibal doesn't fault him his attempt at making his own. He faults the way Will has shut everything else out. Exploring one's sexuality can be healthy. Latching onto it to avoid dealing with everything else that
needs to be dealt with is not. But this is perhaps Will's unique way of making headway. As the week progresses, Hannibal decides to allow it, though Will's brazen attitude serves only to entice and frustrate in equal measure.

Exploring the elements of Will's mixed dominance and submission had been safe and arguably non-sexual, though it had rarely ended up in that way. Hannibal is less secure in the face of this new reality. Violence and stability he understands. A man in the grips of a sexual crisis free-falling after losing everything in his life he'd built his old foundations on, is not. He can intellectually understand, but Will's teasing and flirtation still continue to catch him off guard. Still, Hannibal doesn't admonish Will for these actions. If this is how he's chosen to cope, he chooses to allow it.

That said, he still understands that there are still some things Will won't allow himself - be it through his pride or an imagined fault - and so when Hannibal hears Will shuffling around outside his bedroom door late in the evening, he distantly notes it. Then, when Will neither comes inside nor walks away, Hannibal silently closes his book, draws a steadying breath, and pauses only long enough to pull a shirt on, uncomfortable as it is. Reclining as casually as he can, he merely calls Will's name quietly. There's a pause and then his door opens and Hannibal immediately notes Will's state of dress with a sharp mixture of desire and resignation. "Good evening, Will," he says simply, his tone casual in an attempt to foster a more open environment. "Do you need something?"

"Hello, again," Will says pleasantly enough in greeting as he walks into the dimly lit room. He's left his indecision at the door and slipped into a version of himself where he's in control, where he delights in playing this tantalizing game with Hannibal. This will be different than the subtle touches; he's letting himself into the lion's den, but Will can't help but be pulled in. The week had been fun, but it hadn't been satisfying like the morning after when he had... He stops at the foot of the bed. "I thought we'd talk. I know how you don't like it when I hold things in." Will smiles, but there's no warmth behind it, only focused intent. He climbs onto the bed, crawling on his hands and knees - making a show of it - until he's straddling Hannibal. "You'll be good and keep your hands to yourself, won't you?"

He slots his head next to Hannibal's, mouth hovering over the doctor's ear. "But first, I'd like you to tell me how your week has been. Has it been hard to not touch me?" He whispers hotly, letting his breath graze over skin. Just from their proximity and his own words, Will has started to feel a slick heat pool in his stomach. His hands rest on Hannibal's shoulders, gripping tightly. Will has taken to this new role well. Perhaps too well. Hannibal watches him approach and inwardly redoubles his effort on his control for he knows where this will end. He knows why Will is here, and he knows that he will not be permitted to touch. Not in the ways he wants to. Before, he'd have resisted anyway for fear of pushing Will too far, but having Will wrest his control away pointedly makes it difficult to maintain his earlier resolve. And sure enough, Hannibal watches Will crawl onto the bed and come closer, moving to straddle his lap with a tempting twist to his movements that draws Hannibal's gaze immediately. Though he knows this is a simple game, the physical response is the same. Hannibal catalogs the prickle of awareness and the lower lick of heat that settles against him like Will does.

"You know I will be," he says, his tone perhaps a little more clipped, but he means it. He won't touch. If this offers Will the comfort he needs, Hannibal will grant him this. Even if it leaves him merely shivering at Will's proximity and the low whisper of his voice so close, it's still Will's attention and Hannibal is grateful for it. "And you know how my week has been. I've not touched you, and I've not touched myself, as per your instructions. The former has been difficult. The latter only so on occasion. Is this another exercise, Will?" Hannibal asks, polite but somewhat distant - for his own
sake. "Am I permitted to touch you?"

Will likes hearing Hannibal's distress, although there's no petulance and no guilt-tripping in it. Hannibal is precise with his answer and it's the kind of answer that somewhat irritates Will because he wants to hear more frustration, but he's denied. Well, he can up the ante then, no problem.

He settles back so Hannibal can watch him. "You want to touch me, Hannibal? Tell me... Where would you?" Will's eyes are wide, pupils blown as he brings his index finger to rest on his bottom lip. "Here?" He lets his fingers slide slowly down his jaw and then to the side of his neck. "Or maybe here? No..." He breathes out an almost laugh. "Lower perhaps, somewhere you haven't touched before?" Will watches the light and shadows on Hannibal's face as his fingers mime walking down his shoulder and journey across a collarbone before continuing lower, cutting a path down his sternum. He crosses the scar, but stops at his bellybutton. "You didn't say please, so no, I don't think so." Will licks at his lips, the tiny tremor that follows his words makes it all too apparent that he's heavily invested in this moment.

Will is truly radiant like this. The light filtering in through the window is less, as the moon has waned in the sky over the last few days, but Hannibal's senses are sharp and the picture Will makes bathed in moonlight is worth pushing his vision that much further. He regrets having turned the lamp off before Will had stopped outside his door now. As radiant as Will is in the moonlight, Hannibal wishes he could see him as intended. But this is safer and much like that first night; Will seems empowered in darkness and Hannibal has no desire to dissuade him. Listening to Will's voice - heated and filled with an easy confidence that Hannibal finds very attractive - is agony in its own right. Hannibal already knows he's not permitted to touch.

Instead he watches as Will's fingers slide down. Over his lip, his neck, across the elegant slant of his clavicle that Hannibal aches to one day sink his teeth into. This will lead nowhere and yet he drinks in what Will allows. At least in this instance, despite the darkness, he is being permitted to look. He aches to touch, but he carefully keeps his palms flat on the bed, pressing down as a reminder to keep his hands where they are instead of reaching for the sharp cut of Will's hipbone to grip. It's difficult, particularly as Will's hand slides down lower. Hannibal still doesn't touch, though a slightly wry, slightly amused smile does land on his lips before long. "You know I would touch you everywhere you have touched tonight. And you also know I would go no further. Tell me, Will. Would you like me to ask? To beg you for the privilege of touching you?"

It doesn't come out sarcastic because it's not; the question is real. Hannibal swallows after it, a simple movement of his throat that is blatant given the shadows playing over their bodies. He looks at Will with reverence, drinking in the sight of him carefully. Already he feels desire, and it's evident in the weaker tone of his voice. Only someone who knows what he normally sounds like would notice the difference, so Hannibal has few doubts Will's ego will take notice.

Will has never been a seducer, never used his body to tempt and tease another with such conviction, but here he is trying to do so anyway. He's observed, glimpsed through enough pairs of eyes to come to a basic understanding of the psychology behind it, but his imagination is what really helps in this, coloring the picture more fully and filling in any blanks. Knowing Hannibal is his greatest asset. Being desired to this degree is both new and intoxicating. It encourages Will to manipulate Hannibal's longing and try his patience even more... It's quite the experience for Will, one that he needs to be careful not to fall too deeply into lest he lose himself.

Hannibal is warm and sturdy and he knows that the man beneath him is drinking in any and all details he can see in the limited lighting. Will's heart is beating steady and goosebumps are beginning
to form along his arms from the amount of flesh he has exposed. He wants to be touched; he's missed the contact more than he'd like to admit, but he doesn't want to give in. Not yet.

"What do you think?" Will breathes out, mirth sparking in his eyes. "Let me hear you beg." His voice is soft and low. He moves his hand up, deliberately letting his thumb drag over the scar across his abdomen as he waits to be obliged.

Were it anyone else, Hannibal wouldn't give in. He seriously considers whether or not he will oblige Will. He is admittedly a prideful man and those base instincts have not failed him. He doesn't beg. Not directly. In the past, he'd merely affected his smile, carefully grabbed the thread of reluctance in whoever he'd spoken to, and delicately manipulated his way around it. And, in the rare instances he had still been denied, they had simply made his Rolodex for casual perusal at a later date.

But not Will. Will Graham is vastly different. Hannibal's merely attempting to decide which he values more: his pride, or Will's favor. The decision, while reluctant and grating over his nerves like steel wool, is not difficult. Perhaps it should be, but Will has always been granted special favor in his mind. The decision burns enough to likely register in the slight clench of the muscles in his jaw, but Hannibal is also not a man to tarry once he's made a decision. Self-destructive as Will's behavior is becoming and frustrating as this new game he's found to play is, it's still Will. Still Will's attention. And still Will focused on him, without the hesitation and self-loathing that had permeated their interactions up until this point. If Hannibal's pride is the toll, it is one he will gladly pay.

Hannibal watches Will touch the scar - his scar - and the urge to trace it properly, to one day taste it if Will allows, threatens to rob him of his breath. "Please, Will," he finally says, and while the words are simple, his tone isn't. It's rough and unfinished around the edges. "You needn't lose your control; guide my hand - within reason - if it suits you better, but I would like to touch you again."

A shiver is elicited from Hannibal's words, Will affected by both the tone and the message. He'll surely replay this scene later. In this moment, Hannibal is, again, on his knees for him. He would not do this for just anyone - Will knows this. He doesn't miss the addition of 'within reason' thrown his way and he stamps down the slight flicker of irritation. Thinking on limitations doesn't please him, Hannibal trying to look out for him when Will just wants to push and push... He could do without the caring, thank you very much, but he's not petty enough to mention it right now.

Perhaps to prove a point - that he won't simply listen to instructions - Will takes both of Hannibal's wrists, raising the obedient man's hands and placing them in his hair. Hannibal gets the hint and winds his fingers into the unruly strands. He, more than Hannibal, is looking quite shaggy now. Molly would have shaken her head at seeing the length of his hair. Predictably, he pulls his head against the grip, taking in the strain and heart fluttering quicker from it.

Will sighs, eyes slipping shut and without thought, he murmurs, "I've missed this." The admission has Will's resolve crumbling, his eyes snap open as his hands fly out to grasp the back of the headboard, grasping tightly as he grinds into Hannibal, shifting closer, his mouth at the other man's ear again. "Touch me. Everywhere. Make me feel it." Desperation. Hunger. An order - but will it be obeyed? Suddenly the earlier rules don't seem important, but Hannibal touching him is.

For a split second, Hannibal is almost certain he will be denied, but then a flicker of something passes Will's eyes and hands are on his wrists, lifting them to Will's hair where he doesn't need to be told what to do. With a soft breath that sounds almost reverent, Hannibal curls his fingers in Will's hair and indulges himself in a second to merely enjoy the sensation. His hands form into careful fists
and he allows Will to lean forward, granting him the sharp bite of predictable pain that is likely safest to him. Hannibal merely watches him, rapt, something easing in his chest as he's permitted to look and touch for the first time in over a week. Will isn't the only one who's missed this, though Hannibal makes a point to keep his expression from drifting into less-acceptable territories. Will doesn't seem to want soft or adoring; he wants something simple.

So simple, it seems, that he's willing to risk Hannibal's rules. Will gripping the headboard is one thing, but not even Hannibal can hold back a sound - a sharper hiss on an inhale of surprise - when Will grinds down against him. It's reckless and sudden, and for all that it does feel good, it's not something Hannibal is willing to permit, even if the temptation of it is nearly overwhelming. But given that he's been permitted to touch, Hannibal is quick to rectify it. He reaches down quickly, reluctantly abandoning Will's hair in favor of gripping his hips. And though he aches to draw Will closer, instead he tightens his hold enough to hurt and eases Will's hips up just until there's no direct contact.

But that doesn't mean he doesn't touch. "If that's what you want," Hannibal says, his voice rough on a promise as he slides one of his hands up Will's side and then scratches down to the jut of his hip. It's not enough to break the skin, hardly enough to welt, but he knows Will is going to feel this. And as he does so, he turns his head just enough to ghost his lips over the mostly-healed bite mark on Will's neck. "I've missed this too. Though I doubt that comes as a surprise to you."

Will isn’t happy at his hips being stilled, despite the pleasure from the insistent grip holding him. He doesn't bother struggling against it, because Hannibal is talking to him, an affirmation that he will be obliged. And he, nails scraping down his side, bringing a sense of relief, but it's not enough. The scratching had only held a hint of pain, his skin lighting up with a lingering burn. Knuckles white from his hold on the headboard, Will arcs his neck into the soft mouth that is there. Will Hannibal-- Does he ask for-- No.

It's an internal struggle because Will wantswantswants, but is stuck in his frustration of having given in. He had thought that he would last longer, have the last laugh again and parade out after proving some point... but that all seems so ludicrous to him now. "Please--" His voice shakes; he shakes. His body is thrumming with tension. Will curses under his breath and the vulgarity is enough to push him into action, letting go of the headboard in exchange for his hands finding their way into Hannibal's hair and yanking. "More, come on," he urges impatiently, like a man in search of a tempting drunkenness that's almost within reach.

In these moments, Will is a dog chained, straining against his leash - Hannibal's hand - and aching for more than he can get. Hannibal feels the tremors in Will's body, can feel the pounding of his pulse through the press of his lips to Will's neck and he knows that Will aches, that he wants. But he also knows he won't let Will make a decision he'll come to regret - or worse, resent - in time. So Hannibal merely keeps his grip tight and fights back the urge he has to draw blood with his teeth, his voice instead sharper but still with an edge of control. "I know, Will; trust me," he soothes, with a pointed scrape of his teeth over Will's throat.

But even his control is threatened when Will's fingers bury in his hair and pull, hard. Hannibal draws in a sharper breath, unchecked with surprise, and a thrill races up his spine, threatening to loosen his hold on Will. He doesn't. He only grips tighter, aware that in the morning, Will is going to be wearing a wreath of fingerprint bruises over the sharp, elegant cut of his hip. Hannibal can't bring himself to be anything but pleased that it'll be his mark, even if Will's injuries will heal in time.

He can oblige him in this, though. This time when his hand finds Will's skin, he presses in harder
with his nails. Hannibal does as asked; he touches Will everywhere he can allow himself to, and this pass starts from the line of his clavicle then down Will's chest. One of his nails pointedly catches on a nipple, both to ensure this particular touch is felt and to study the response. There's nothing clinical about it, though; he presses his hand over the welts left behind, warming the skin and making the sting burn hotter as he presses a series of biting kisses down the length of Will's throat. Violence seems to be easier to handle where Will is concerned.

As much as he may trust Hannibal, Will remembers the conversion surrounding the need for his sexual desires and the newness of his current partner's gender to normalize. Hannibal had told him he'd only touch above the waist and the empath isn't particularly pleased at remembering it now. Teeth distract him from those thoughts and a whine follows. He wants more, craving a sharper sensation, longing for another mark, but the skin at his neck remains intact and it's maddening.

Will's demand is met with a thorough exploration of his chest, nails scraping against his skin, bringing out labored breathing, his chest heaving as his hold remains fairly firm in Hannibal's hair. As a nipple is grazed he squirms, gasping, unsure if he likes the particular attention, but caught off guard by it nonetheless. The situation seems urgent, fragile, like at any moment it may tip over and come crashing down around him. Will pulls Hannibal's head back up, leaning forward to connect their mouths, the kiss rough and wet and he takes .

He wants to continue taking, wants to devour Hannibal, to burn up in this intensity and lose himself to it fully. But at the same turn, Will wants Hannibal to ravage, to leave him raw and used up, to leave nothing behind. It's a tumultuous war inside of him, one where he's unsure of which urge will win out in the end. He moans into the kiss, one hand leaving Hannibal's hair to run down an arm and squeeze appreciatively at a bicep before dropping to the hem of Hannibal's shirt. Breaking away from the kiss, Will mumbles out, "Off? Can I?"

Will is responsive in a way Hannibal never would have expected, but after the last week he can neither fault Will nor curb his own response. Going from no contact to only contact has his own focus blurring at the edges, but his previously defined lines remain clear. That Will had taken his own personal liberties a week ago doesn't mean Hannibal can touch as he sees fit. Though he aches to know what Will looks like in those throes of pleasure, aches to be the direct cause, he won't push those boundaries now. One day, given Will's responses, he will be able to. And as he's made clear, Will Graham is a man worth waiting for in any capacity.

But that doesn't mean Hannibal isn't affected. He is. His breathing is rough and on the edge of ragged, Will's fingers buried in his hair and yanking far past the point of pain. It twists and curls through him roughly, blurring the lines between pleasure and pain, and when Will leans in to kiss him, Hannibal meets him with the same roughness. Will's sharp gasp lingers between them and Hannibal's nails make another pass over Will's skin, flooding him with the sharp, tactile sensation as they kiss. It's possessive, his touch, Will's fingers in his hair, the rough kiss, and the scrape of teeth between them that almost makes Hannibal reconsider his hand on Will's hip. But no, difficult as it is, one of them needs to remember.

It doesn't mean he's any less affected when the kiss breaks, his breathing rough and every impulse merely to pull Will back down and take . Thin control stops him, but he considers resenting it until Will's request makes it past the haze of desire. Hannibal begins to glance down in an attempt to see what Will is asking, but the other hand in his hair stops him. In the end he merely feels the warmth of Will's hand and, after a moment, he makes a soft sound of affirmation. "Yes. Yes, you can take it off." He considers adding that Will should be careful but he dismisses the notion; neither of them are truly in a position to care.
Request approved, Will lets go of Hannibal's hair to begin tugging off the shirt. His hands are shaking - he's never undressed another man before. Hannibal helps him, momentarily releasing his hold on his hip so Will can slip the piece of clothing off completely. He doesn't toss it to the floor (if it had been his, that's where it would have gone). Instead, he drops it next to them. The task is accomplished and a shirtless Hannibal awaits him.

Will fights to hold back a displeased sound when Hannibal's hand returns to his hip, assuming he'll need to keep Will at bay (he's not wrong). Will's eyes look over the newly revealed expanse of skin before he reaches out to touch. His hands smooth down a flat chest, fingers curiously finding their way through the swath of graying hair there. This may be new, but this is Hannibal, and so Will pushes past his uncertainty and lets his nails drag down hard, mimicking Hannibal's earlier actions. He wants so much, but has no road map, no direction.

Out of frustration, he tries to rut against the other man, but is mostly unable to do so from the grip on his waist. He knows this won't go anywhere and it's perhaps that knowledge that's catching up with him, bringing agitation with it. "Why don't you just fuck me and we can get it over with, or would you prefer it the other way around?" He's being vulgar, lashing out, but the moment is spiraling out of control. Will's hands grasp at Hannibal's shoulders, nails digging in. "You want to. You want to know how I'd sound, how I'd look. How I'd feel."

They're both being reckless, to a certain degree. Will's desperation is written all over his face and Hannibal doesn't have to mimic Will's empathy to know he's struggling with more than his desire. There's anger and hopelessness and loss, his foundation uneven, and he's found an outlet in the form of sex, only to be denied. His movements are frantic and edged with frustration but Hannibal allows them, reluctant to deny Will everything lest he hide himself away once more. It's a delicate balance, this. He assists Will in getting his shirt off and complies under Will's searching touch, but he doesn't miss the brief flicker of uncertainty in his companion's eyes. It's far more important than anything else - his hand keeping Will's hips still, the curve of his body, and the forced exploration under Will's hand - and yet the scratch of Will's nails is sudden and sharp and Hannibal grunts, tensing under his hand. There will be marks later, welts for sure, possibly blood, and the sting settles low and tempting in Hannibal's stomach. But already he can sense the situation devolving. Will's frustration is palpable.

Despite his surprise over the claw of Will's nails, Hannibal still holds him firm and he's not at all surprised when Will's tone sharpens, lashing out like the whip it's intended to be. The words find their mark, sparking irritation and desire in equal measure; Hannibal would like little more than to do just that - to have Will in any way he's allowed - but not like this. Not when Will is fractured and broken and looking for something easy he can discard later.

The bite of Will's nails into his shoulders drags a shiver through him, but Hannibal takes a careful second to reign himself back in and consider his response. The impulse to simply gather Will in his arms is present, but the last thing Hannibal wants to do is weaponize affection. But showing him the reality of his request, forcing his hand? It's not something Hannibal enjoys, but in this case, it seems necessary. Drawing a slow breath, he sends Will a level look and then suddenly moves.

He is careful to brace Will's injured arm and he will undoubtedly feel the effects of his actions in the morning, but with a swift twist of his torso, he flips them. It's almost elegant in its simplicity, speaking of far more training than Hannibal has ever claimed to possess. One moment Will is straddling him, and the next Hannibal has him pinned. He presses Will's thighs further apart and gathers his good hand quickly to pin above his head on the pillow. It's an immediately suggestive position, and Hannibal has made escape next to impossible.
This is a lesson. He levels Will with a look. "Yes. I do want to. I've made no secret of this over the last few weeks. And one day if you allow it, I will have you. Or allow you to have me. Is that what you want right now, Will? Truly?"

Abruptly, he's flipped over, Hannibal asserting his control in this situation and Will's pressed down into the bed by Hannibal's larger form. Will doesn't struggle too much, just pushes back to feel that alluring resistance that has him usually so enraptured. Now, though, there's an undercurrent of worry. His arm is pinned above his head and it's a provocative position to find himself in. Will doesn't think Hannibal will take, though. Even so, his body is aware of the possible danger he's in. He can't help but be aware.

"I don't know," Will grinds out. He's not willing to admit that his bluff is being called, so instead he'll lie through his teeth. "Sure, why not? Let's do it." It's exactly the kind of reasoning that isn't convincing at all. His free hand winds into Hannibal's hair, pulls tightly as his hips jut upward with purpose. His hand is mostly healed, a little stiff, but he ignores the discomfort. Dealing with Hannibal is generally an exercise in discomfort on some level anyhow. "You can feel how much I want it... How much I want you," he murmurs, just a slight quiver present in his voice. It's a shade of the truth. He wants, but not specifically sex. They're both aware of that fact, too.

He's not a fan of deluding himself and Will's defiance melts out of him a moment later and he's sighing, eyes darting to the window - not being able to handle seeing Hannibal. He doesn't especially want the contact to end, he likes the tight feeling of compression, feeling secure and restricted. This past week he'd been so uninhibited, able to do whatever he wanted and free from restraints, but now he feels a longing for the exact opposite.

It's immediately apparent that Will isn't ready. He wants; he's stunning in his desire, the feel of his skin and heat stirring something impulsive in Hannibal's chest when it mixes with the scent of sex on the air. But he doesn't push, not further than this. Even in this, Hannibal keeps his expression fixed - want but control. He wants Will to doubt just for a moment, but not so much that he'll panic, and it's clear he's found his mark. Will wants; he rolls his hips upwards in a way that has Hannibal pressing him down harder against the bed, pinning his good arm down, but Will's hesitance is clear. His voice shakes and his earlier confidence seems fractured. Oh, he tries to bluff, but Hannibal doesn't buy it. And as he looks down at Will like he's capable of looking right through him, he feels Will begin to lose his earlier defiance. It's subtle, but Hannibal can feel it.

"I can feel how much you want it, yes. But the it in question is not me," he finally says. Will's fingers in his hair feel intense, but Hannibal's tone is steady. He wants this man; Will could easily feel the evidence of it were he to shift slightly, but Hannibal stays precisely where he is. Despite his injuries, he's still stronger than Will, and he has both height and weight to his advantage. If he doesn't want Will to move, he won't. And right now, Hannibal wants him still. "You want an excuse. You want simplicity. Sex is simple. Or are you going to argue that you do want me?" Hannibal adds, a curl to his tone that implies something disbelieving.

He considers his position and then decides that if he's going to insist on this lesson, he won't pull his punches. Bracing himself on his elbow to both bring them closer and to ensure he doesn't injure Will's other arm, Hannibal reaches up for the hand in his hair and presses against the fine carpal bones in Will's hand. It's simple to pull his hand away and Hannibal carefully eases Will's arm up until he can grip both of his wrists over to wedge under Will's bad shoulder. He'll prove a point, but he won't injure this man. Not seriously. Once satisfied, Hannibal merely reaches for Will's face, carefully but firmly forcing Will to look back in his direction. "Tell me, then," he says, pointedly meeting Will's eyes. "If
you're ready, then look me in the eye and tell me you are. And don't lie to me. I will be very disappointed."

Predictably, Hannibal sees through his weak lines, sees through him. Will is not surprised or displeased by it. He'd surely not be attracted to him if the man was easily duped. It was Hannibal's sharp mind that first stood out to him and then gradually caught his focus. He'd be a fool to want it any other way. He lets his other hand be pinned and held above his head. This action is to prove a point that Will knows has been coming - to complete the picture. A pillow is stuffed underneath his shoulder - heaven forbid he's further injured or uncomfortable. Will almost snorts at the action, but somehow holds himself back.

What he definitely doesn't like is his head being forced to turn and and his eyes staring into Hannibal's steady, knowing pair. Will glares, eyes narrowing. "Fuck off," he spits out. "We might as well just do it, or are you waiting for me to fall in love with you? Because it's not going to happen. You may occupy my mind, may excite my body, but I'm never giving you my heart."

He's found his earlier defiance and weaponized it. If he can't get his way - even if he may not be ready for it - Will has no plans on going down without a fight. This should hurt. Wound. It's his aim, anyway. He can think about Hannibal, he can lust, but Will is going to fiercely guard his heart from now on. It's the last remaining defense he has.

The glower is fierce, but not nearly as fierce as the words. Hannibal has years of masks to fall back on, and in that split second he finds himself rather grateful for the practice. It's really quite impressive, the feeling that wrenches through Hannibal's chest at the sheer conviction behind Will's words. So adept at spinning words in multiple languages is Hannibal that he finds himself almost proud for the way Will abandons all hope at continuing this charade and lunges metaphorically for Hannibal's throat. He may have Will pinned, but Will is not declawed. His weapons are much more sophisticated and he lashes out elegantly, leaving a wound in its wake that festers at first contact.

Hannibal merely lifts his chin, expression carefully blank. It's too careful, yet the alternative isn't an option. He simply searches Will's expression slowly and knows that while he can mask his expression, his eyes are another matter altogether. Will is going to see the ache; Hannibal silently hopes he takes pleasure in it. Dismissive pain is hardly worth the effort if one doesn't relish it afterwards. He'll sculpt a refined monster out of Will Graham yet.

"Language," Hannibal tuts, and even his voice seems too controlled to be possible. He remains exactly where he is, making a silent but obvious point that he still has Will pinned and not even Will's words will grant him freedom unless it's necessary. "I thought better of you, Will. It would be foolish to wait for you to fall in love; I don't need your heart." It's not a lie. He wants it, but he's not been lying to Will all this time. Someday Will is going to be surprised to realize just how infrequently Hannibal actually lies. "I mean what I've been telling you. If you decide this isn't what you want, that's that. I require your company. Nothing more. You whoring yourself out for benefits has never been an option." Hannibal offers Will the smallest of smiles and merely leans down. He presses a chaste kiss to Will's lips - almost mocking - and then he's gone.

Hannibal releases Will's wrists and rolls off of him, sitting up. He reaches up to fix what he can of his hair before abandoning it; Will prefers it disheveled as it is. "My hesitance in this is that you're not ready for it, and you're self-destructive enough that you won't admit it. I am many things, Will, but I am not a rapist." His mastery over Will's mind could perhaps be argued, but it had been a necessity.

He's rewarded with a mask of indifference sliding into place, but injury is carried in Hannibal's eyes,
reflected back for Will to both savor and appreciate. Hannibal wants all of him, of course. Mind, body, heart. Will knows this. It may not be required, but the best case scenario is that their feelings become more closely aligned. Logically, it would make sense - if they're to spend their remaining days together, being on the same page would definitely help.

As much as Will may want to give a few select retorts, he bites his tongue. He will let Hannibal say what he wants to say. Will has already delivered his blow. When he hears the word *whore*, however, Will's expression darkens. A cold smile and mockery of a kiss only piss him off further. This night has gone nothing like he had expected.

Then he's abandoned, wrists let go, Hannibal's body no longer pressing against him and the heat loss has Will shuddering. He feels somewhat like he's free-falling. Will blinks up at the ceiling, wondering if he's misstepped and if so, how badly. Where do things go from here? Fuck. He has no idea. His comeback had felt satisfactory, deserved at the time, but likely it won't be forgotten and has now driven a wedge in between them. Time will show exactly how much damage he's truly done.

With a frustrated sigh he rolls over onto his belly, letting the scent of Hannibal surround him as he nuzzles into the pillow. "Am I to be relegated to jerking myself off while thinking of you then?" Will asks bitterly, turning on his side to face Hannibal. Christ. He's pathetic, angry and still longing.

Faulting Will for the sentiment behind his words is unwise. Had he phrased it plainly, perhaps it would have stung, but it wouldn't have brought this wall down. But Will's words had been aimed to hurt. Hannibal is proud, but that doesn't negate the twisted burn of Will's words, nor the low thrum of bitterness and anger that curl through his chest. Fitting, Hannibal decides, that the press of Will's nails down his chest had bled. It's faint, but he finds it a fitting injury for the words that had followed soon after.

Even so, bitter or not, Hannibal is aware that leaving Will as he is isn't a safe idea. Will is too twisted within himself, too fragile. So while the urge to stand and excuse himself to the guest bedroom for the evening is nearly overwhelming, Hannibal fights that instinct and instead makes himself remain where he is. He does silently retrieve his shirt from the bed beside them and he turns his attention away from Will, allowing his companion to come to terms with the new chill and the distance between them. It's more than just physical this time; the distance is partly emotional. Hannibal will never truly be able to shake Will from his system, to cast him aside. He'd tried once, and he'd failed. But that doesn't mean he can't take a step back. Silently he pulls his shirt back on, willing to withstand the physical sting against his wounds.

"Yes. If that's your desire," Hannibal says when Will has finally settled. Hannibal doesn't look at him. He merely eases himself back down on the bed and, after a brief moment, he reaches down for the blanket and silently draws it up and over Will's mostly-bare form. He's hurt, but he's not been driven to cruelty. Not yet. Will's comfort is still important. He still cares, though by times he hates the reality of it. "You knew I was never going to permit anything further. You are free to touch yourself as you see fit. To my image, or to another. I can't stop you."

He's going to leave it there, but Hannibal is agitated. He can scent Will's desire plainly, but it's more than just that. Will's entire reason for being in his bed had been pretense and Hannibal is well aware of it. The problem is that he doubts Will is. "Though I would like to make one fact known to you. You don't need an excuse to come to me, Will. Frustrating or not, I do enjoy your company. If you want contact or companionship, merely come to me. I would prefer you ask so you aren't given the chance to lie to yourself, but I'm well aware that's a struggle." Hannibal casts Will a small look then, simply because speaking the words without even minimal eye contact feels cold even to Hannibal. "You are welcome in my bed, sex or not. Simply keep that in mind."
Despite being in the same room, the distance between them is vast. Will feels the absence of closeness profoundly, as if his body is missing something vital, like a limb. He doesn't think he's done irreparable damage, but the wound he's left with Hannibal will surely linger. The space dampens his earlier arousal slightly; rejection also helps out. Will is in no mood to scamper off to touch himself or worse, do the dirty deed here. (No. Not again). He's unhinged, rudderless, and has no clear course on what to do or where to go from here, but has he ever been equipped with such a thing to begin with?

Likely afraid of what he'll do if left alone, Hannibal joins him back on the bed. Will can't even bring himself to be offended at the notion. There remains a substantial amount of room between them and as blankets are pulled up over him, Will gives a long suffering sigh. He's welcome to seek, but he ought to own up to the real reasons why. Still, the politeness of the wording gets to him. Like he could bring himself to come to Hannibal's bed completely of sound mind... He sees enough of him already, why would he ever need to?

Will says nothing as he climbs out of the bed, but surprises himself as he doesn't leave. Instead, he heads to the attached bathroom. Door closed, Will goes to the sink to splash cool water on his face. The mirror lets him see Hannibal's marks left on his torso - they're shallow, but a slight sting is present as the water drips down onto his chest. He can't help but tilt his head to the side to get a better look at the bite on his neck. It's fading and he wonders if he specifically asked, whether Hannibal would have bitten him again. "Get a hold of yourself, Graham," Will mutters under his breath. That's definitely not what he needs to think about right now. Mostly dried off, he exits the bathroom and with resignation he gets back into the bed.

Will tells himself he's too tired to care. He lays on his stomach, head facing away as his closest hand creeps across the distance to simply rest on Hannibal's hair. The scent of the older man clings to the pillow and Will tells Hannibal, "This is the last time I'm sleeping here," but he doesn't believe it.

When Will rises, Hannibal is certain that he has plans to leave the room. So it comes as a mild surprise to him when Will merely walks into the en suite and closes the door behind him. Hannibal regards the closed door in silence, listening carefully. Admittedly, it is somewhat paranoid to be expecting to hear another dull thud or the shattering of glass, but he'd not put such self-destruction past Will at this point. Thankfully he merely hears running water and a soft sound that is likely Will speaking, though he makes no effort to figure out the words. Instead he merely rises and takes a moment to fix the lay of the sheets and the pillows on his bed, making it more presentable.

He's already back in bed when Will exits the bathroom and Hannibal merely watches the resigned lay of his shoulders as Will joins him. It does come as a surprise, but not a great one. For all the bitterness between them, Hannibal cannot fault Will his need for closeness. The hand that rests on his hair speaks enough and Hannibal merely considers his movements carefully before he eases himself onto his side. He doesn't do much more than rearrange the blankets over Will. But this time he settles his hand lightly upon Will's back, a point of contact. Will has indeed driven a wedge between them, but it's nothing Hannibal hasn't been expecting. Will doesn't need to love him. He merely needs to stay.

Hannibal isn't petty enough to deny Will contact when he clearly needs it. "Very well. You've no obligation one way or the other," he replies simply. Though one glance at Will's posture - distant but shaken apart - softens Hannibal's ire just enough. "If that's the case, I would ask to hold you. You needn't face me, nor look at me if you'd rather not. But I would be remiss were I not to ask."

He's allowed to slip back into bed with no pointed comments being made which is true to Hannibal’s
nature. Again, he’s welcomed, blankets being settled over him. The request has Will caught off guard. He hadn’t expected the hand on his lower back either, but, in the end, Hannibal isn’t petty to withhold all that much. Will knows this and despite his verbal attack, Hannibal will still care. And care. And care... On some level it’s infuriating. He shouldn’t be allowed to lash out and then be comforted, but here, living together, it seems like they play by their own twisted rules. Hannibal has never conformed to conventional ways of doing things.

With a measure of self-loathing and defeat, Will shuffles into Hannibal's space. (This, too, is starting to feel a bit like home). He tucks his head against Hannibal's chest, not wanting to see anything for experiencing would be enough. He squeezes his eyes shut and sighs. "Tight," he instructs in a hushed tone. "Hold me tightly." Because Will needs to feel compact and pressed together and not like he does right now - watery and threatening to bleed out. He hadn’t been expecting the distance and rejection to shake him up so.

Their dynamic is unbalanced, but then, it always has been. Will shouldn’t be allowed to lash out and then find comfort, true, but Hannibal has already rewritten the rules between them. He'd rewritten them the moment he'd dropped to his knees in the snow in front of Jack Crawford. He's tried on multiple occasions to bleed Will from his system to no avail. So why continue to fight it? Making Will his focus at the cost of his own self is unhealthy, but their dynamic has never been healthy. Not in the textbook definition of the term. So while he aches from Will's words and a thread of irritation winds its way around him, Hannibal merely waits, ready to move away or to accept Will's presence regardless.

When Will turns to him, Hannibal moves. He eases onto his back again and reaches out, allowing Will to hide against his chest. For Will's sake, he doesn't comment; he stays pointedly silent. His companion will undoubtedly be bracing for something snide, or something carrying the judgement he feels towards himself, and while Will does perhaps deserve it, Hannibal won't taint this moment. Instead he merely does as he's told, wrapping his arm around Will and pulling him in closely, tightly. He's careful of Will's arm, but otherwise Hannibal merely makes a point to hold him securely, to the point that it could be argued that Will wouldn't be able to draw back even if he wanted to. If he needs to feel controlled, or secure, or trapped, Hannibal won't deny him. He merely presses his chin to Will's hair and holds him.

Hannibal's arms encircle him, holding tightly like he had asked and with no comments sent his way. Will's sheltered, it's familiar, but it hurts and he doesn't think it's the good kind of pain. It's not the sting from teeth or the scrape of nails, nor the throb from swollen knuckles. It's not a gash ripping into his guts or a stab wound. Physical pain is much easier to understand and cope with. There's visual evidence to prove its existence, there's stitches and the smell of disinfectant that follow. There's steps to take to manage injury, a pill to swallow to ease it the ache. This, though? This sits uncomfortably with Will, he can't pinpoint the exact origin and has no method of treating it.

"I'm..." But he doesn't finish. Can't allow himself to finish. Was 'sorry' going to be the next word? An apology after he's the one who has woven this web he's currently twisted in? It's cheap and pitiable. No, he's not going to apologize.

Instead he asks, "Am I parasitic now?" Will feels like it, feels like he will just take and take...

It's a difficult question to answer. Were Hannibal less fond of Will, perhaps he would have agreed immediately. The temptation is there, a bitter twist that feels petty and leaves a sour taste in his mouth at the very thought. But classifying Will's actions so simply is as unkind to him as it is to Hannibal. So after a long few seconds of silence in which he allows Will to stew in his concern (admittedly not
the kindest response) and in which he seriously considers the question, Hannibal finally sighs and merely tightens his hold. He presses his fingertips into the solid line of the hip he can reach and presses in, partly to ground himself and partly to give Will something easier to focus on.

"No. No, you're not parasitic. You're unstable, and you're opportunistic out of necessity. But you're not parasitic." Will keeps taking, yes, but not out of greed. His desire is more self-contained and selfish. He's self-destructive, pushing boundaries and lashing out, attempting to metaphorically throw himself at a veritable brick wall with the goal to either knock it down or shatter himself upon it. This is a finer tactic to try and get Hannibal to leave him than he'd been using before, but at its base, it's the same thing. Will has no idea where he stands. He lacks foundation. He lacks boundaries. And he finds it far easier to punish himself than face up to the choices he's made. Hannibal closes his eyes. "I'll not say you aren't skirting the line by times. But you lack the necessary markers of a truly dependent personality disorder. I've sat across from truly parasitic individuals before, Will. There's a marked difference."

Silence meets his question. Either Hannibal is seriously thinking over his reply or he means for Will to sit with his misery for a while. He deserves the latter, but the insistent touch to his already sore hip has Will thinking that it's actually a bit of both. Hannibal will not be outright cruel, but he's not going to fawn or bend over backwards for him either. Not now. The increase in pressure has Will settling down, at least physically, the slight twinge a welcome distraction. Hannibal knows what he finds comfort in, after all.

He's told no, but described as unstable and opportunistic. Is that really that much better, his unhelpful mind asks. Will's past behavior has been manipulative, deplorable at best, but Hannibal has mostly allowed it - within reason. He knows he has cause, reasons why a man in his mid-thirties would act out in such an immature way, but it doesn't help. Nothing can help because it's only through Will accepting and forgiving himself that he will be able to move forward. For now, round and round he goes.

"You sure I'm worth all this trouble?" It's another question that he's not sure he wants to hear the answer to.

For a moment Hannibal considers a larger answer, something aimed to put Will's mind at ease. Telling him that he's the only one who could be worth such trouble, finding some form of reassurance to soothe Will's pride. But as soon as the thoughts arrive, Hannibal dismisses them. He won't give Will platitudes because Will would never accept them. In this, his answer must be simple, so Hannibal keeps it as simple as he can. He merely strokes his thumb over Will's hip, pressing into the already-forming bruises to administer a little more pain, something to settle Will down further. "Yes. I'm sure."

He bends down just enough to press his lips to Will's hair. It's not even a full kiss, merely a softer pressure and Hannibal's presence, but it speaks for him. He breathes in Will's scent, though the power of it is edged in bitterness still. It will fade in time; Hannibal's wounds will heal and in time, the memory of Will's words will fade into a careful scar. "Sleep, Will," Hannibal urges simply. "If you wish, we may speak again in the morning."

At the uncomplicated answer, Will sighs. He hadn't been fishing for compliments or declarations of affection, so in that way he's content. He closes his eyes, exhaustion, thankfully, pulling at him. From the heightened emotions and brash admissions, Will wants to sleep, have the curtain close on this night and suffer no encore. Is this particular act over, or will he reprise his role in the morning? Will doesn't even know which version of him will be there when he wakes up. Maybe he'll feel full of
himself and be flirty, or perhaps he will seek isolation and lick his wounds, denying his companionship to Hannibal.

At the suggestion of sleep, Will nods, head likely shifting against his own scratches on Hannibal's chest. "I was probably lying," Will murmurs, working his arm around Hannibal's midriff, careful of the gun wound a few inches lower. He could be referring to either of his definitive sounding statements of the night - the one regarding his heart or the one concerning not sleeping here again. The empath yawns, knowing Hannibal likely will not ask.

Bit by bit, Will sinks into the security he's being offered. They've both shown their hands tonight, both acted recklessly, and there's no doubt that there will be a fallout. Will might withdraw or regroup, and Hannibal can already feel the insufferable ache to his injuries from the sudden twist of his body earlier. Holding Will close isn't helping, for that matter, but this is non-negotiable. For all his cruelty, Will still deserves something solid. Of the two of them, Hannibal is most firmly grounded, and sufficed to say, he has rather broad shoulders. Will can shake him, perhaps, but he can't break him. Not so simply.

Hannibal allows Will to pick his final position, pressed closer than he had been that first evening. Hannibal's arms are tight around Will, though his grip does ease to something less crushing and more supportive. He loosens his grip on Will's hip, satisfied that the bruises will remain for days following, and instead he merely rests his hand there. He's careful when he smooths the blankets over them, pulling them up high enough that Will could burrow into them were he so inclined. But despite this, Will is right: Hannibal doesn't ask what he means when he mentions that he was probably lying. At this point, it hardly matters. Will is always welcome regardless of where Hannibal happens to be, and if Will only permits Hannibal his mind and his body, it will be more than he had expected to begin with. He has no wish to force this; whatever form Will takes once he drags himself from his sharpened cocoon will be perfect. Hannibal merely hums a soft sound, showing he's heard, and he allows his other hand to drop to his side, resting over the one Will has draped over him.

It will take him some time to sleep given what has happened, but Hannibal needs very little. In this, as always, Will is his main concern. He'll hold him securely at least until he falls asleep.

It should be stranger to both acknowledge and allow himself to fall asleep in Hannibal's arms - in his bed - but exhaustion trumps Will's pride. For all he the touching and teasing over the past week, they haven't been close. Even in their heated exchange of kissing and scratching, there had been something distinctly lacking. For as close as they are now - sharing a bed, with Will pressed into Hannibal's chest and Hannibal holding him tightly - there's remains a distance between them. This is merely a détente, a cooling off period for them. He doesn't want to crave that particular closeness, that all consuming intimacy where he willingly bares himself, but he does. Will does crave it. That intimacy had been present when they'd killed Dolaryhde. There also had been glimpses of it amidst their shared bites, he'd believed.

Will isn't sure if his games and lying are him breaking his own rules. It doesn't look good, at any rate. No duplicity is what he'd laid out and yet... Blankets being settled around him has Will dropping his train of thought. Sleep. Yes. Let it all go. Will tries to breathe slow and deep, closes his eyes, and hopes that his weariness will claim him. Eventually it does and Will's consciousness leaves him. It's a reprieve.

But it doesn't last, because a nightmare takes shape, one in which Hannibal is sitting on an exquisite chair formed of antlers amidst the corpses of Alana, Molly, Walter and Jack. Their lifeless bodies are strewn on the floor, limbs twisted, eyes open, but seeing nothing. Blood spurts from their gashed
throats, covering the floor in a flood of spreading crimson. The nightmare-version of Hannibal quirks a small smile at him, head tilted to the side in consideration. "I did this for you; now you will have no other distractions, Will," he states benignly, as if this had been a simple courtesy.

Will wakes, drenched in sweat and bolting upright as he pants and blinks the vestiges of the dream away. He's shaking, hands pushing away at the blankets, hot and uncomfortable.

It takes Hannibal some time to follow Will into sleep, as he'd expected. Will's mind has always been overactive while his subconscious takes over, but Hannibal's mind tends to follow suit while he's still awake. He holds Will securely until the man is asleep and only when he's positive Will's breaths are rhythmic enough that he won't wake at the slightest movement does Hannibal carefully ease his touch. He stays silent, though allows himself to study Will in sleep, moving his hand from his hip up to curl through Will's hair just once before he returns the touch to its previous position. His sentiment for this man is... compromising. Hannibal knows his life would have been far simpler without Will Graham in it. Yet his urge to 'fix' this particular problem has long eased.

He's complex and volatile, unstable in the worst way, and yet Hannibal merely views him with fondness even now. He's resigned to this, and all it entails. A life with Will Graham is surely better than a life without. It will never be boring.

Hannibal doesn't register it when he falls asleep. His dreams have never been vibrant in the way Will's have been. Nightmares for him are a rarity - or at least they had been before the asylum. He dreams of snow sometimes. Of red on white, of a deep, biting cold, and wakes feeling ravenous and afraid until the memories ease. But this night is like most; Hannibal doesn't dream. He merely sleeps lightly, comforted by Will's presence despite it all. Yet Will's nightmare does make him stir, does bring his consciousness closer to waking. And when Will suddenly near-gasps and jerks upright, Hannibal is awake and alert immediately.

Will is caked in a sour sweat; he reeks of fear, yet the scent is not unpleasant. Hannibal watches him shake, almost uncomprehending for a moment, and he allows Will this sudden separation, moving his arm back cautiously. Hannibal merely regards him in silence for a long few moments and then he turns in bed to reach out, turning the lamp beside his bed on. Slowly he sits up, distantly noting that the shirt he's wearing is damp with Will's sweat, but he's not upset by this. Merely concerned. "Will?" He asks, his voice rougher with sleep but still gentle with concern. "It was a nightmare. Whatever it was. You're safe."

He hadn't had a nightmare for quite some time, so Will figures it was due. Still, like most of his thoughts, they are not tasty and not something he enjoys experiencing. Would he ever be free of antlers and the faces of corpses staring back at him? Surely the answer is no if he sticks with Hannibal. Even now it feels like the echo of the stag's hooves are following him at times. His overactive imagination paired with Hannibal seasons his nightmares with a certain flavor - darker and sharper than the ones he had had whilst sleeping next to Molly. What he wouldn't give to simply suffer through an old dream about Hobbs' dead form.

Will rubs at his face, exhaling loudly as he tries to gather his senses about him. He squints against the sudden emergence of the light before shuffling himself off the bed, limbs jerky. "Gonna dry off," he mumbles and he's caught looking between the attached bathroom and the bedroom door. He could take his leave, go to the other bathroom down the hall and then even to his own bedroom after, but does he want to? Will chooses the closer option, nearly stumbling into the bathroom and forgoing the light switch. He towels himself off, starting at his face, his hair and then moving down to his chest and arms. He cups his palm under the faucet and takes a sip of cool water.
Safe. He was safe. They were all safe. For now.

With another towel in hand, he leaves the bathroom and, like he had so many times before, he places it down over the sweat soaked imprint he's left behind. "Sorry..." He lays down on top of the towel and resigns himself to stare at a fixed point on the ceiling.

Hannibal is silent as Will leaves the bed, his hands visibly trembling in the light from the lamp. Were he a lesser man, perhaps he would have mentioned it, but he allows Will this moment of dignity as he retreats from the bed. The bed smells sour with fear and Hannibal casts the dampened sheets a passive look, making a mental note to change them in the morning. He watches as Will retreats to the bathroom and tries to ignore the little spark of surprise he feels when he realizes Will hadn't made to go for the door. He's coming back then, supposedly, and Hannibal merely reaches up to lightly rub at his face, tired and concerned, but allowing Will this moment of privacy.

He returns with a towel, looking more ragged than before. Hannibal merely reaches out to carefully secure the towel in place and he waits for Will to once again settle down. And only Will is again laying down does Hannibal reach over to turn off the light again. He eases himself back down on the bed, finding his earlier position, but he can almost hear Will's mind whirring like an overworked engine. He sighs. "You have no need to be sorry. I had not forgotten your penchant for nightmares, Will. I made my offer while fully informed." He falls silent only long enough for that statement to sink in, and then looks over at Will, studying the tangle of his hair, the open vulnerability he sees in the dark. "If you like, I can change the sheets now if you'd be more comfortable. And would you like to talk about your nightmare? Of course, I understand if you'd prefer not to. I could assist you in a less stressful sleep."

Thankfully, Hannibal says nothing about him returning with a towel or his disheveled appearance. The other man has seen him in various stages of disarray and unraveling (some of his own doing such as the seizures), so the shaky clammy mess Will Graham is now can hardly be that much of a surprise. "Change the sheets? No, I'm used to sleeping on a towel, it'll be just like old times for me," Will remarks, straining to sound more put together. Despite his words, he can't seem to hit the self-deprecating edge. Even in the dark, he feels Hannibal watching him, observing him, but Will says nothing. He keeps his eyes open, not quite willing the risk of closing them, lest the images of his dream come out to make an appearance.

At the invitation to share about his nightmare, Will's initial reaction is to snort. It sounds like therapy to him, but he'd be remiss to not acknowledge that talking with Hannibal, in the past, has helped him. "Okay, sure," he agrees, clearing his throat and resting his wrist on his forehead as he continues to stare at the ceiling. "You were there, sitting on a rather intriguing chair made out of antlers..." His voice holds little emotion, Will's just sticking to the facts. "At your feet, were the unmoving bodies of Molly, Walter, Alana and Jack. Their throats had been slashed. They were bleeding out." Will takes a steadying breath, refusing to let the feelings take him as he rushes to finish. "You told me that you had done it for me... So I wouldn't have any further distractions."

Hannibal carefully doesn't comment on Will's old sleeping habits. Even half-asleep (albeit slowly waking to match Will's level of alertness) he knows how to be delicate. When to comment and when to leave well enough alone. In this, he's willing to allow Will to make his own choices. After a nightmare, conversation can be difficult, but without it, there's never an indication as to what has occurred and truth be told, Hannibal isn't expecting Will to allow him the insight. Which is why he can't quite hide the look of surprise when Will merely agrees. Either he's too tired to argue, or the nightmare had indeed been that bad. Again, delicately, Hannibal merely nods, signaling that Will can
The actual nightmare reads uncomfortably like thoughts Hannibal has had in the past. The mental hospital had left him with time aplenty on his hands and drugs enough to induce the oddest of hallucinations. He doesn't share this. However the chair of antlers is an interesting touch, waking him further with the unique symbolism, one he dwells on long after Will has finished. Hannibal remains quiet in thought, though he makes a point to shift ever so slightly, to create some sound to puncture the tension bleeding from Will's frame. "Antlers play an interesting role in symbolism of dreams. I admit, it is seen as a rather inexact science. Freud was... perhaps overenthusiastic. But certain meanings remain. If I'm recalling correctly, antlers are often a symbol for masculinity, or sexuality. Though I believe in our case, something far more simple may be at play. Cassie Boyle," Hannibal says simply, with a small tip of his head in Will's direction. To him, this is simple. He doesn't know about Will's hallucinations. In all their time in therapy, Will had not mentioned the stag.

"But I digress. I killed those you hold dear, citing I had done so in your name? Admittedly... I can understand the choice of your subconscious, though I will not kill Molly and Walter. I believe I've given you my word in that." He says nothing about Jack and Alana. Will already knows his stance on this. "Do you feel as though your previous relationships are holding you back, Will? While it was my image in your dreams, it was still ultimately your subconscious. You feel torn between what was and what is."

It's difficult to always remember what he's shared over the years with Hannibal, being that some of their conversations haven't truly taken place because they've occurred within Will's own mind. But he knows he's not told the doctor about his imagination's apparent stag fixation. He's not entirely certain he even understands all of what the ravenstag symbolizes, but yes, it made his appearance around the time of Cassie Boyle and the majestic creature has haunted him ever since. One day he may tell Hannibal of this specific ailment, but not tonight. He will keep his stag as a secret, for now. It's still a relief to hear that Hannibal has no designs on his former family's life. Some tension eases out of him and he rolls toward his bed partner, perhaps showing some favor because of it. Questions posed to him, Will considers his previous relationships. "I'm holding myself back, if anything. Worrying about what they think of me, when I most likely will never face any of them again," he says softly, a note of sadness in his voice. Upon getting into the police vehicle with Hannibal, he still hadn't thought it was a suicide mission. After all, he'd told Jack and Molly and Walter that he would see them after he had dealt with the Dragon. Granted, it hadn't been a very wise or safe plan, but at the time it was the best he could manage. "I can't help but think of myself as a great disappointment. I'd rather they all think I'm dead, but I suppose that is just a coward's way out."

Will's response makes sense, though Hannibal keeps his own expression muted when Will turns to face him. He doesn't need Will's empathy to know this is important and while the light between them is faint given the waning moon, he won't risk Will reading sentiment that doesn't exist behind his eyes. He would gladly see Molly and Walter dead, just as he would see Jack and Alana under the same fate. But while Jack and Alana may one day be allowed under his knife, Hannibal has not forgotten that if he lays a hand on Will's old family, he loses Will. It's irritating but he will respect that. It doesn't mean he has to enjoy the reality, however, and he doesn't. Instead he merely focuses on Will, musing over the struggles he's posed out loud.

"It doesn't come as a surprise to me. You've always stretched yourself thin, Will. You take on too much for fear of disappointing those you deem close, though I'll not insult you by guessing the origin." Hannibal has his theories, but they will remain theories. Right now, Will's demons are his concern, and stepping back into the role he'd once enjoyed. Perhaps he can no longer ethically be
Will's psychiatrist, but he'd made his bed many years ago. He will handle the consequences as they come. "That you'd rather they think you dead also comes as no surprise. To be fair, I find myself favoring the same thought. It would be simple to merely disappear. To abandon the consequences of our actions and start anew. But it's clear that these concerns are with you. Consciously or otherwise. I told you once that it doesn't do to imagine the emotions of another person. Anxiety enjoys the unknown, and it's an endless cycle. Regardless of whether you are holding yourself back, or your memories are, you're still suffering the same effects either way." Again Hannibal allows himself to trail off, to give Will time to digest this information. And while Hannibal doesn't make the gesture overt, he does ease a little and shifts his arm. It's a silent offer to resume the earlier position if Will so wishes, but vague enough to easily be ignored.

"You will need to come to terms with your new reality. While you may view me as the blade of a guillotine looming over your neck, I do consider us equals. You're merely unstable. That doesn't make you less. And as such, you have a say in what happens. Which is why your family will live. I would not offer this to anyone else."

Hannibal's ability to secure and channel a neutral blankness of sorts has always been something that Will appreciates. It happened most frequently at the start of their friendship, when Will was blinded and being duped, but even now Will has observed Hannibal repressing his own emotions for his sake. Likely, if he looked hard enough into those brown eyes and searched, Will would find shreds of those squashed down emotions. While it's perhaps not the healthiest of options - repressing the expression of emotions and all - it is something Will welcomes. He can barely handle his own nebulous feelings, let alone Hannibal's right now. Their trip to the city demonstrated just how much of his own barriers had deteriorated. Hannibal is being courteous and Will accepts this.

Will listens to Hannibal and finds himself to be less hostile than he'd assume he would be whilst engaging in talk therapy again with his old psychiatrist. It helps that Hannibal seeks to not patronize him nor cut him down. What he's told makes sense. A lot of his anguish has been cyclical in nature, feeling bad for presumed slights and disappointments, and then feeling bad about feeling bad. He had no real way to learn what Molly - or any of them - truly thought or felt. If he continued punishing himself, it would be endless. Pointless, too. He'd flagellate himself until what...? Will doesn’t know, but the proposed use of ice cubes will likely not be enough. When he lets himself dwell on his proposed failures, the gravity of his despair was as vast as the ocean they had plummeted into.

He catches the subtle invitation and Will shifts closer, tucking himself next to Hannibal, back to the welcoming monster. He feels the slightly sweat-dampened bed shirt against him and wrinkles his nose. "Sorry for sweating all over you... I'm not being a very gracious bed partner this evening," Will comments, his tone lighter than before. He's not interested in a response to his apology, so he continues. "Likely, you'll become my family one day while they steadily fade into the backdrop of who I used to be... In time, they'll be but a distant memory." The realization is heavy, but not necessarily burdensome. At least not in this moment. He is the only one that can stay Hannibal Lecter's hand. It's both a bewildering and humbling belief to accept.

Will licks his lips as he shimmies himself upward a foot, propping himself up on his elbow to gaze down into Hannibal's face. "Softly," he murmurs the instruction out and it becomes evident a moment later that he's referring to kissing as he guides his mouth down to brush it briefly against Hannibal's own. "Kiss me softly," he repeats, his breath ghosting over the older man's lips. There's to be no urgency or desperation, no teeth or blood. His other hand rises and steady fingers caress Hannibal's cheek. "Like you love me," he adds on in a whisper. "Like it's a tender sweet thing... Just this once, lie to me." Will kisses Hannibal again, the faintest of touches and he lets himself be soft because it's will be just this once.
Hannibal is genuinely but pleasantly surprised when Will eases himself back into their shared space, finding his position against Hannibal's chest again with relative ease. He apologizes offhandedly but Hannibal doesn't bother commenting on it; it's hardly worth acknowledging. Even in therapy they had spoken about Will's nightmares. That the younger man is sometimes wracked with panic and night sweats and fitful in his sleep doesn't bother Hannibal. He requires less sleep than most and can make it up by dozing if absolutely necessary. Not to mention Hannibal had been a doctor. He's seen and experienced it all. And what he hadn't experienced as a doctor, he'd actively sought out with his kills. Sweat doesn't bother him. He can no more fault Will that than a child crying or an animal shedding. It's part of him.

Instead he merely curls an arm around Will loosely, aware that perhaps Will doesn't want to feel restrained right this second, given his nightmare. They're talking candidly, and while Will has decided to remain mostly silent, Hannibal can see him thinking. He can see the line of Will's shoulders slowly easing, his stress fading in the wake of genuine assistance. When he does speak, the prospect of the future he names sends a thrill of warmth through Hannibal but it, like the rest of his emotions, he carefully tucks away out of sight. One day perhaps that will be true. Will may settle into this new life and turn his attention to Hannibal. Stop seeking reassurance from the specters of his past and start seeking it closer to home. It's a calming thought, one that is apparently shared, for Will eases himself up not long after and looks down at him. There's an ease in his expression, one that Hannibal regards curiously.

His questions fade at that first kiss. Hannibal doesn't have to ask what 'softly' means now, though Will explains it. For a brief moment he considers correcting Will. The urge to do so rushes forward but he immediately quells it. Will doesn't want to know. Not for sure. Not yet. At least not said out loud. But the soft press of lips that follows Will's request offers Hannibal another avenue, gives him permission. He doesn't squander it. Instead Hannibal merely slides his hand up and cups Will's jaw, his thumb brushing against the alternating softness of Will's cheek and the roughness of his beard. He kisses Will back tenderly, and while he's careful to regulate how much truth he allows into this encounter, he doesn't hold himself in check nearly as much.

Hannibal kisses him softly, a slow press of lips, softer kisses that break apart slowly before he kisses Will again, drawing him in closer. One day he hopes to do this without pretense, without Will believing it a lie. It's a delicate balance to simulate; that he's allowing Will's request, but not drowning him in a rush of emotion. He merely kisses him, one hand cupping his cheek, the other alternating between trailing over the line of Will's side (mindful of the scratches left behind) and gently threading through his hair. He makes no attempt to switch their positions, makes no attempt to hurry, to change this delicate exchange. In this moment, Will has asked to feel loved, and Hannibal cannot deny him.

Will's own hand falls away from Hannibal's face, finding its way to the pillow underneath the other man's head and clutching onto it for purchase. He sighs as Hannibal kisses him back and although it's soft, tender like he's requested, there's a sharpness that pierces. There's an ache, a thread of distress laced underneath each kiss that begins and ends with them. In this, their intents are aligned, each giving and taking. Equals. This is similar in how he used to kiss Molly, but there's marked differences. Hannibal's lips are thinner, his face a bit scratchy from stubble and he's perhaps more controlled - which, truly, is no surprise.

A sound of contentment is made as Hannibal's fingers stroke through slightly damp hair. There's no pulling, no pain and as much as Will may want to believe Hannibal is incapable of being genuinely tender, he knows that isn't the case - Hannibal has only hurt him when Will has requested or needed it. There are far too many incidents showing him caring in various degrees, but that truth clashes with Will's image of Hannibal being merely a monster. This is yet another truth he has to reconcile.
He may have prefaced this with the presumption that Hannibal would have to be deceiving to pull it off, but this, right now, feels more real than Will can possibly fathom. His pulse has jumped and a tremor works its way through his body that has him pulling away with a gasp. He feels breathless, although he shouldn't be. His lips tingle and up this close and in the dark he can't read Hannibal well. "You... You really do love me, don't you?" It's a question, but he knows it should be said as a statement. Will's voice is rough with emotion that he's trying to keep at bay.

No more duplicity. It had been the deal. No double-crossing, no lying, no secrets. So far, Hannibal has held true to two out of the three. He has not double-crossed Will, has not lied to him in the strictest sense. He hasn't actively made a point to change Will's beliefs on certain topics, so perhaps a lie of omission could be argued, but he's not intentionally lied to Will. In many cases, Will simply hasn't asked. But secrets are another matter, a grey area. He has one, but this is another. While he's made no secret of it that he cares about Will - that it could be argued he loves him (though the word feels remarkably inadequate for the depth of Hannibal's sentiment) - Will hasn't directly attempted to ask him.

But he does this time. The kiss, soft and sweet, eventually gets away from Hannibal without his permission. He strokes Will's hair and brushes his thumb over Will's cheek with his other hand. And bit by bit, Hannibal's full grip on his control eases. The kiss changes, deepens without intensifying. It's tender and focused, Will the only being - living or deceased - that Hannibal cares about in this moment. For just those few seconds, Will truly is the center of his universe. A god to a mere acolyte. Hardly equals, yet somehow it's all they can be. And for whatever reason, be it Hannibal's lapse in control or Will's eyes finally - finally - opening, Will understands.

He pulls back with a gasp like he's been drowning and suddenly granted air. Hannibal's breathing is perhaps rougher than it should be, his pulse affected, but when he slides his hand down to gently press against Will's neck - little more than a reassuring touch - Hannibal can feel Will's pulse quick under his palm. There's a light tremor under Will's skin, and his voice, when he manages to finally force it free, is rough. But his words are worse, so rough they're raw, making Hannibal fall silent under Will's close focus.

For a moment, he considers merely kissing Will again, or skirting around the question. But the problem is that... this had been a question. Not a statement, not something to overlook. Will has finally asked. And while Hannibal isn't entirely certain he's ready to know, he had promised. He sighs softly and leans in just enough to press a kiss to Will's forehead. Absolution, comfort, whatever Will chooses to interpret it as. "Yes." A clear answer. No riddles. No prose. Simply fact. "I've made no secret of it. And you may choose to ignore it if you must."

Will has brought up the topic of love before, but never sought to have Bedelia's assertion confirmed by the man he has ran off with. Their night had started off with him behaving badly, taunting and teasing and then getting caught up in the dance of it all. He'd had his bluff called, verbally lashed out in retaliation, yet crawled back to cuddle and make amends of some kind. Then there had been Will's nightmare, perhaps not the most disturbing he's had, but certainly the most personal, yet Hannibal had offered to talk him through it, had given his promise to not hurt Molly and Walter again. Most poignantly, Will had asked to be loved, for how else could one really interpret his request... And Hannibal had, like before, offered Will a rare gift that he hadn't been prepared for. Their mouths had moved slowly, but with insistence, both searching and finding and Will had truly felt loved. Cherished even. He couldn't help but ask, needing to hear it directly, needing it plainly stated between them, but was a 'yes' enough?
No. Will wants more, wants it all. Why would he settle? "Tell me it, Hannibal," he urges, bending down to brush his lips across the man beneath him. "Tell me." He’s feels a little drunk, despite no whisky in his system for hours. He’s dizzy and lulled into an engaging warmth he wants to continue reaching out to.

In truth, Hannibal is expecting Will to dismiss the claim. Or, if not dismiss it, at least regard it uncomfortably and set it aside to circle like a new threat at a later time. He's not expecting Will to receive it and look both thoughtful and suddenly full of a different kind of need, a different desperation. Hannibal rakes his gaze over Will's expression in the dark, his eyes far more adjusted. He can see the pinch of need, the hesitation, and the moment that Will realizes that for this moment - this silent, secret space that is theirs and theirs alone - he wants more.

Perhaps it isn't wise to oblige him, when Will is truly so unstable. What he wants now he might not want in the morning. But Hannibal is not nearly the selfless man he can pretend to be around Will. The request is simple and one he wishes to make known. Despite how weak the words feel, if Will wants them, in this, he has no complaints. Instead he accepts Will's kiss and once again lifts his hand up, delicately cupping Will's cheek and guiding him down into another kiss. Hannibal holds it, allows himself an indulgent moment to realize the feel of Will's lips, rough and warm and entirely Will. And when he breaks the kiss, it's merely to once again card his fingers back through the slight dampness of Will's hair, seeking the contentment the action seems to bring.

"'Love' seems so inadequate a word compared to the truth of it. I have given and taken, submitted and, yes, killed, all in your name. But I won't deny you your certainty." His fingers curl, not enough to grip or tug, but as an increased intensity as he regards this man in the dark. Equals. "I love you, Will. And all that entails. Violence, darkness, nightmares," Hannibal adds, with a brief glance towards the still-damp spot against his own shirt. "All of you."

He is met with a kiss, Hannibal's hand pulling him downward and Will is more than fine with this course of action. He knows he will get an answer, knows Hannibal will yet again oblige him. His heart is pounding away in his chest, anticipation mixing with a strange intoxicating dizziness. Will kisses back, a little more enthusiastically than before, but still with a degree of softness. When their mouths part, the hand moves through his hair again and Will makes a sound of satisfaction.

To hear the confession from Hannibal's mouth, with his own choice of words and in a soft yet certain tone... Will has to steel himself, clenching his jaw as he breathes through his nostrils, trying to get himself back under control. He's silent, the words 'all of you' echo in his mind, poignant and resonating. He believes Hannibal. "Okay," Will sighs because he has no other words in this moment. He settles back down, resting his head next to Hannibal's and closing his eyes. Hannibal loves all of him. It's a terrifying thought, that somehow still feels right.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Always love to hear what you guys think/liked etc. :D
Find me at tumblr: merrythought
Equals

Chapter Summary

The nip at his lip only encourages him to touch, his hands wandering over what skin he can easily reach. Will wants to learn each curve, become familiar with the flex of muscle and memorize how his skin feels sliding against Hannibal's. These aren't new urges by any means, but they are now being fully realized and acknowledged. "Hannibal," Will sighs when the kiss breaks. He's almost breathless. "Feels so good... You feel good." It's the first time he's admitted such a thing in words, but saying the truth is freeing and right now Will feels safe to let go and jump in.

Chapter Notes

Split the next chapter into two parts so ch10 wouldn't be as huge (it's still like 23k?) so you get the introduction into a pretty damn sexy/intense night... :]
Oh, after this chapter, things get a bit more dark? But we like that, right? Right... Edit: There's also two Will-focused drabbles related to this chapter if you check out the series thing. Give 'em a read if you're interested. :3 Thank you!

There are no games and taunts over the next few weeks, their eventful night seeming to have brokered a tentative measure of peace between them. Because Will is not actively teasing, there's a drop in how often they touch, yet a few times per week he comes to Hannibal's bed. Sometimes they sleep with limbs wrapped around each other and other times he wants space between them. If Will has a nightmare, there's a 50/50 chance he shares it with Hannibal if they happen to be sharing a bed. He tends to have a drink or two in him on the nights he chooses to not sleep alone. Courtesy of taking care of himself in the shower, Will ensures that he keeps himself in check. The empath only lets them kiss in the dark and the exchanges are brief and restrained - no teeth and no heat. Whenever he puts a stop to it, it's with a sigh and a longing for more that he ignores as he turns away.

They don't talk about declarations of love or violence. They do talk about the few dogs that caught Will's eye at the shelter and they take a few more trips into the city to narrow down their choices.
Hannibal stays close to him as they make their way through crowds and slowly Will adjusts to other people on their outings. They cook together and Will is mostly complacent. Things are hovering in a safe grey zone, but they both know it won't last.

The weather turns colder, heavy snow blanketing everything. This seems to only encourage Will to tromp outside and explore. He likes the familiar chill, the bite of the cold against his face and then the rush of warmth as he comes back inside. Comes back home. Amidst barren trees and alone, sometimes he sees the stag regard him with a look Will could only describe as curious. When he hears the sound of footsteps approaching, Will turns around and is genuinely surprised to see Hannibal all bundled up and braving the elements. "Thought you didn’t like the cold," Will says in way of a greeting as he makes his way over to the older man.

Living as equals adds a decided edge to Hannibal's interactions with Will, particularly over the following weeks. It's peaceful, complacent, but with an undercurrent that states it is likely temporary. Hannibal is unused to freely showing his cards; true, he'd done so in the weeks leading up to that eventful evening where Will finally seemed to understand his position in their new, tentative relationship. But the difference following that evening is that Will now knows this is the case. It seems to lend him slightly more confidence to act. They start cooking together again, Will sometimes making requests, or pointedly taking out the cutting board before Hannibal has decided what's for dinner. By times they share a bed, though Hannibal doesn't fail to notice the hint of alcohol on Will's breath more often than not. It's not what he'd prefer, but he's willing to allow it for Will's presence. And as he'd said, he never once complains about Will's nightmares, regardless of the state of the bed following them. He merely offers conversation (which Will sometimes allows) and assists where he's able.

They fall into a tentative truce, not unlike before. Hannibal's hesitance merely comes from the fact that Will is now fully aware of the extent of his sentiment, and the fact that he has markedly less control over the situation than before. In some cases this is unsettling, but in most, he finds it fascinating how Will is taking to the new change in power. Power suits him. For all his uncertainty, he's slowly beginning to find his footing. And while this truce won't last indefinitely, Hannibal enjoys the domesticity of it.

But beyond even that, Will's injuries reach a point where Hannibal once again takes an active role as his physician. He guides Will through strengthening exercises, and tests his range of motion every few days. Bit by bit, Will's strength is returning, his shoulder seeming stiff (and it will one day be arthritic, Hannibal is certain) but movement is coming easier to him. But it's not merely Will undergoing recovery. Hannibal hasn't neglected his own, but his own recovery has taken time. He's been careful with exercises and rest, careful with strengthening, but as it becomes easier, he pushes harder. There are days his body protests heavily and he eases back, but bit by bit, his own strength returns.

He works at building his strength back when Will is otherwise occupied. Some days Will wakes in Hannibal's bed after he's already gone out to run - at least while the weather still permits. Neither of them acknowledge it. As the snow begins to worsen, Hannibal works in his room, or alternately in the living area when Will goes out to explore. He seems to enjoy the cold and Hannibal silently decides to allow him to enjoy it by himself most days.

It's been over a month since that evening where Will had asked him to kiss him like he loved him. Most of the sharp aches through Hannibal's core are gone, his muscles strengthened. He's nearly fully recovered, but for some residual aches and pains, and while he does still bring the cane with him while he and Will go on outings, he no longer needs it. It's merely for cover by this point. The return to normalcy feels thrilling, pushes his energy level beyond, to what it had been before his
incarceration. And, perhaps vainly, Hannibal is glad to have his true body back, minus some new scars. He's still a prideful man, and the return to normalcy settles him.

That day it's bitingly cold outside. Will has been outside for awhile, and while the sight of the snow does give Hannibal pause (as it always does) he makes his decision easily. He dresses warmly in his longer woolen coat, not annoyingly bulky but still warm. Scarf, hat, and gloves are necessary, but Hannibal dons them mechanically before he steps outside. The wind, blessedly, is not blowing hard, but the day is crisp and cold, the snow crunching in protest under every step. It's loud enough to apparently alert Will, who stands out brilliantly against the blanket of white. Hannibal smiles behind the scarf, and he's pleased when Will turns to see him and immediately walks over. Gone are the days he hesitates. At least for now. "Admittedly, I am less fond of it than the alternative, but I'll not sequester myself away all winter. You seem to enjoy it," Hannibal adds, looking Will over silently. He seems alive in cold weather, enjoying it as opposed to bearing it. It's endearing. "How is your shoulder?"

They stand together, their shoulders almost touching as Will gazes across the landscape. The trees are bare, but their branches are frosted with snow. It reminds him of Wolf Trap. It reminds him of his place with Molly and Walter, too, but that reminder brings him less of an uncomfortable ache than it did before. For his own sanity, Will has begun to gradually accept this new circumstance. He's made his choice and now he has to accept the consequences - Hannibal, of course, had been right. Some days it's an ongoing struggle and he drinks a little more than he ought to, other days he seems fine and goes along with the flow of their domesticity.

"There's a certain calmness to winter that I like," Will admits with a small shrug of his shoulders. "Everything is slowed down, suspended almost. It's harsh, but beautiful if one takes the time to look instead of grumbling about driving conditions." He gives a wry chuckle, gloved hand coming to brush wavy hair off of his forehead. He's chosen to not wear a hat of any kind, liking the bite of the crisp air. It's not cold enough to risk frostbite and his hair has grown long enough that it covers most of his ears, anyway. "Shoulder's fine." He's about to ask about Hannibal's state of health, but he knows already. Sharing a bed, tucked close and arm wrapped around a torso, Will has been able to observe Hannibal's progress. A certain softness has given way to the emergence of lean muscle, Hannibal obviously exercising on his own. Will, on the other hand, hasn't cared much about his own physical prowess save for the physio on his shoulder and and going for walks to clear his head.

He shifts closer so their arms are aligned and touching. He feels safe in these types of connections. Restraint is his best friend in dealing with Hannibal. He had been volatile when he'd pushed and given in into the violence of their earlier interactions. The biting. The choking. The blood. If he were to partake in it all again, would it ever be enough? The fact that most of the incidents always seemed to turn sexual also troubled him because he was well aware of Hannibal's rules. Still, Will wasn't exactly satisfied with how they dealt with it all. "I've been holding myself back," Will says. "As much as I enjoy the peace, I know it's not quite genuine."

Hannibal turns his attention silently to the land surrounding their property. Will's footprints stand out as faint shadows against the white, sometimes grey, sometimes an icier blue, but otherwise the landscape seems unmarked. Will's presence at his shoulder offers its own comfort, an almost camaraderie as he stares out at the snow. As always, there is a small twist in his stomach; once, perhaps, it had been an inescapable trauma, and perhaps there would be those to argue it still remains. But Hannibal has mastery over many things in his life, and the trauma has faded. Rarely he is plagued by nightmares, and returning to the old house has never been an option; it is arguably the one place in the world Hannibal will never go again, regardless of reason. But comparatively, the snow is white and blinding and calm, not stained red, and there's no howling blizzard to disorient and
Through Will's eyes, perhaps, Hannibal can see the merits of the snow. He still isn't overly fond of it, but the isolation does bring a sense of peace. Or perhaps that's merely his companion. Hannibal almost smiles; how would Will feel to know his very presence is inadvertently giving comfort? The thought amuses him, though not enough to draw his attention away from Will, who moves a step closer and brings their arms together. Hannibal's fingers - wrapped in the same soft leather from before - brush over Will's side in a fleeting gesture of acknowledgement. "I don't hate the snow. And I concede to your points. You're quite right. There is a peace to the landscape. A blank slate, of sorts. Calm, but deceptively so."

He's not only talking about the snow and it's clear. If Will misses the point behind the comment, Hannibal's slanted glance says it for him. It takes him only a second to drop the pretense. "In what ways have you been holding yourself back? Or perhaps a more appropriate question: How would you change the current arrangement to be more comfortable for you?"

Will doesn't know what the stark whiteness and cool of winter reminds Hannibal of. He's curious, yes. Hannibal had specifically mentioned not being overly fond of the cold their first night spent talking in bed together. It had been something Hannibal had chosen to share so it stood to reason that it meant something, of course. Will could ask. He'd get an answer, but perhaps he will wait to see if, in time, Hannibal will bring it up again. All they have is time, there's no rush to unearth their secrets. A deception. One they've both been taking part in and acting out. There's been a truth behind their actions still, it hasn't all been cordial politeness and skirting around each other, no, but they've been careful and safe. "Comfortable?" Will echoes the word back, amused. He glances down at his hiking boots. "Things have been too comfortable, if anything." He shuffles his feet, kicking some snow forward in the process. "Doesn't feel entirely honest." Will sighs, casting a look to Hannibal. "But I know you're simply following my lead."

"I am." There's no need to pretend otherwise. There's no need to lie to Will, particularly when the truth is so apparent. Even if Hannibal hadn't been attempting to break down the walls of deception between them, he'd have had no reason to lie. He watches as Will's breath clouds in front of him on the air, each breath grandiose, a statement. Comparatively, it's a struggle to ascertain when Hannibal is doing the same. Fitting, perhaps, given their current topic of conversation. Hannibal closely considers his responses as he turns his full attention to Will, watching him mildly. "But that doesn't imply a lack of honesty. What you receive from me is truth, insofar as you are ready to see it."

It's nothing he hasn't implied before. This doesn't count as duplicity. He's being honest. He's merely... softening the edges, removing parts that don't quite fit, and tempering the rest like overheated steel, ready to mold into whatever shape Will allows. "Frankly, Will, what you can and can't handle changes frequently. As is normal for one in your position," Hannibal adds, kindly. "I follow your lead to avoid pushing you into situations you're uncomfortable with. It doesn't concern me, though I suspect it does bother you..." Obvious. If it didn't, they wouldn't be having this conversation.

"Let me rephrase: I don't feel entirely honest," Will clarifies, shoving his hands in coat pockets as to not be caught fidgeting. He feels his own restlessness creeping up as he's daring to rock the boat and open the door to once again glimpse at his own darkness. He says nothing as his mind flits through avenues of conversation to take. He could open up and confess what he's missed - the flirtation of violence, the sting of certain sensations. He could ask Hannibal how best to temper his desires without ignoring them completely and yet...
He takes a detour. His imagination ever willing to transport him back into the vivid recollection of a dream spent amidst the snow conversing with Hannibal. "Come here," Will urges and his hands are removed from coat pockets as he leads Hannibal over to a nearby tree and he gently pushes him against it. He crowds against Hannibal. He feels more alive just at the thought of sharing this. "After I was released, I had a dream of giving you your reckoning. Like now, it was winter. You were tied to a tree," Will begins, voice almost sensuous as pleasure curls through him. "Curiously, you were speaking about love and recognizing your beloved whilst there was a noose around your neck, ropes tightening around your chest as--" He stops, not wanting to mention the ravenstag. As if a demonstration was needed, Will brings both hands to Hannibal's neck and presses firmly. "You've been so good, haven't you? Playing nicely with me."

As Hannibal watches, something rises within Will. It's subtle at first, nothing more than a flicker of nerves and a change in the set of his gaze, but with Will, Hannibal has learned to treat every mild shift as if it were a declaration. He searches Will's expression and finds many things. Confusion, frustration, longing, that familiar darkness, and something sharply interested. The latter grows and Hannibal finds himself suddenly curious. The snow doesn't melt away, nor does that small twist of unease at seeing it, but the sudden request has Hannibal relenting without argument. He remains silent, though his expression is mildly curious as he steps after Will, heading to a tree approximately halfway between the house and the surrounding forest. Hannibal eyes it dismissively, though Will apparently sees something worthwhile in it, as he backs Hannibal up against the chilled bark and reaches out, trapping him there.

He could free himself with ease were he to wish it, but Hannibal is intrigued. Will hasn't been so bold in weeks, and the twist of unease in his chest at his current situation is vastly overshadowed by Will's proximity. Gentle, needy, or violent, Will's presence is a balm on Hannibal's senses.

Hannibal doesn't bother looking at the tree; his attention is on Will. On the sudden clarity in his eyes, the dark curl of something familiar and beautiful. The fledgling's wings, as it were. Though he cannot deny his own sharpened interest at what Will chooses to divulge: A glimpse into his mind. He bites back the need to ask Will about what he'd almost said and instead he feels the press of Will's hands against his neck through the scarf. Immediately Hannibal deems the contact too muted and he reaches up impatiently to pull at the scarf until it unwinds, leaving Will's hands to press harder against his throat, his own gaze heated at the implication. "Yes. Though I would assume you desire more than 'nice' at present," Hannibal says, his voice slightly rough under Will's grip. "How remarkable you were even then, Will. Perhaps consciously you were unaware of the depth of your desire to kill me, of my desires for you, but your subconscious... truly remarkable."

In the dream, Will hadn't paid much attention to Hannibal's beguiling words. Potential. Beloved. Expressing love... It had been flowery nonsense to him, considered as bait that he'd chosen to ignore. He'd simply whistled and watched as the ropes tightened around Hannibal at first, then the pitiful creature, until a torrent of blood had erupted forth. It had been beautiful then. Had felt so right. So righteous.

The scarf being pulled off to allow him access has Will's eyes widening in recognition. Wounds healed, Hannibal can easily turn the tables at any time. Will is keenly aware if he had wanted to seriously hurt or kill the man he's currently pinning, his window of opportunity had been in the early weeks when the gunshot wound was still fresh. But Hannibal will remain because Hannibal, too, likes this and is curious where it will go. As with most things Will does, he has no endgame, no plan set out, he just wants to do a bit of reenactment, wants to see a flush to Hannibal's cheeks and wants to press closer and squeeze--
"Remarkable. "Mm, you called me a cunning boy, didn't you?" Will asks, eyes narrowing slightly, his hands twitch and grip a little harder. He likes the praise. Hannibal has been reserved with such niceties as of late. "Am I your cunning boy, then?" He asks lowly, pulling Hannibal's face down a few inches so his mouth can hover against the jaw of the taller man.

True, Hannibal's hand pulling at his scarf is an act of impatience, but the second it unwinds with seemingly no effort, he can see that the other, hidden meaning in the gesture has hit its mark. Will's eyes widen so mildly that were Hannibal not looking for it directly, even he would have missed it. There's a flicker of realization, of understanding, and Hannibal feels Will's grip shift, as if he's reaffirming his stance, as if he's cementing his choice. They both know that Hannibal is permitting this. That were Will to try and kill him, Hannibal is now strong enough to make that very, very difficult. Yet Hannibal doesn't draw back and Will soon makes his choice.

His hands tighten on Hannibal's throat, pressing the way he'd been taught. There's no risk to the hyoid bone, no danger to every artery, but enough to restrict circulation and to do the same to airflow. The air outside is cold, thin, making it easier to breathe, but Will's grip is already sharp and perfect. A warm, violent counterpoint to the chill in the air that has the faintest twitch of a smile tugging at Hannibal's lips. The crisp air is refreshing, but perhaps even more refreshing is the feeling of the masks slowly sliding free. Domesticity has its place, as does complacency. But the edge of something darker is in Will's eyes, drawing the same from Hannibal. It's thrilling.

"You are," Hannibal says, and the pressure to his throat has his voice skewed, yet somehow it still sounds fond. "My remarkable, cunning, clever boy. You remembered," he adds, lifting one of his hands to trace the paled edges of his own throat under Will's hands. More praise, that Will has remembered the proper position of his hands. "I'm impressed."

When it had become apparent that choking was a thing for them, Hannibal had taken on the role of a mentor, instructing him on safe technique. At the time, Will hadn't said much, feeling incredulous about the matter - that this act of violence was being treated like a simple cooking lesson. But he'd observed and they had practiced for a good ten minutes until Hannibal was satisfied that Will seemed to more than grasp the fundamentals. Will may have not had his hands spread along Hannibal's neck in quite some time, but he hasn't forgotten.

It feels good, though. Having Hannibal consenting to this is a natural high and Will can't help but admire how he looks pressed into the tree (by his body), black leather gloves gripping tightly onto the column of a neck and just the slightest traces of physical distress present on Hannibal's face. It's exhilarating and Will doesn't know how they have went this long without indulging in it. He licks his lips and smiles at the approval. The words fill him with an expansive warmth and he kisses along Hannibal's jaw to the corner of his mouth. "Do you know what your cunning boy wants?" He nips at Hannibal's chin, just the slightest drag of teeth. "Another mark, but this time where no one can see." Will exhales shakily, excited at the prospect. "Later tonight, what do you say?" His grip lessens and he licks up Hannibal's cheek.

There is a definite thrill in reliving one of Will's dreams - nightmares? - so intimately. There is no noose around Hannibal's neck, but Will's hands are a skilled substitute, easing blood flow and oxygen with an inherent skill that Hannibal will praise Will for later. Yet perhaps the greatest thrill is the look on Will's face, rapt with the power being gifted to him and nearly drunk off of the way Hannibal must look. The cold alone slows circulation, though it also serves as a bit of a distraction. Still, it's not long before Hannibal finds he's able to hear his own pulse, and not long after that where the slightly lightheaded feeling follows. Through it all, Hannibal is as rapt with Will as Will seems to
be with him, and he basks in Will's attention - in the faint kisses and scrapes of teeth.

But it's Will's words that truly get his attention. Hannibal stills at the thought, vivid and tempting. The thought of putting another mark on Will's skin has him feeling lightheaded anew, so he almost misses it when Will's hands ease. His throat doesn't. The cold hits him again immediately, and Hannibal feels the sounds around him begin to refocus. He wishes for a moment he had a mirror so as to admire the handprints undoubtedly left behind on his throat, but Hannibal doesn't dwell long. Instead he feels the cold air on the sudden wetness of his cheek and the look in his eyes darkens blatantly with his own desire. Hannibal wets his lips simply, but his breathing is rough. Whether it's from Will's suggestion or his hands doesn't matter at this point. "If you wish another mark, I would be pleased to oblige. Temporary?" Hannibal asks with a calmness that he doesn't truly feel. "Or permanent?" He punctuates this with a touch to the bite mark he'd left behind on Will's neck, buried under his coat.

Hannibal is shaken, but only just. His breathing is ragged, definitely as a result of the choking, but possibly in small part from his suggestion. Will can sense the titillation that his words have brought forth, he can see it clearly written on Hannibal's features and in his eyes. He has lit a match, created a flame that they both will carry and equally covet. They both want; they both desire. They're equals in this.

Will removes his hands and there are imprints left in their wake - an unspoken claim. He wants to leave more, whether by his hands or mouth, he wants Hannibal to be changed. By now, usually, Will would be turning reckless, chasing arousal and fighting for satisfaction, but not today. Today, Will manages to hold himself back and present a mostly composed version of himself.

"Why would I want something temporary, I'm yours, am I not?" Head tilted to the side, an eyebrow arched playfully and Will backs away with a smile. This is distinctly different than the teasing of before. This is a flirtation and a promise wrapped up in one. He has no plans to taunt, to dart forward, steal a touch and then be smugly satisfied when he pulls away. "Let's go in, have something hot to drink." He turns toward their home, but waits to walk back with Hannibal. (As partners)

To say that Hannibal is surprised would be an understatement, but it's a pleasant experience. Thus far in their interactions, Will has been reckless, impulsive. He wants, and then he pushes, and then he begins to lose himself until it's Hannibal who has to force them both to pull back to a safe level. But not this time. Hannibal has already resigned himself to it, carefully easing control back, particularly after so long without the gentle thread of violence between them. He's been supplementing with exercise, with rebuilding his strength, but it can't sustain him like Will's touch. A pithy university meal compared to a feast.

But it isn't him who pulls back first. More than that, Hannibal still feels visibly tempted and shaken when Will draws back, and the realization is tantalizing. For one of the first times between them, Will has exerted his control and kept it, and Hannibal is torn between pride and something much simpler and base. That conflict is still present at Will's flirtation, a light, playful tease that threatens to undo him at the implication alone. Will is his. Hannibal doubts Will has even so much as implied that before, and the way Hannibal watches him darkens with satisfaction. He swallows, and glorifies in the ache to his throat.

Equals, he reminds himself, and decides Will fits that assessment quite well. Hannibal draws a careful, steadying breath, and then leans away from the tree, almost missing the frigid press against his back, even if he can hear the bark catching on the wool of his coat. "My cunning boy indeed," Hannibal muses, his voice still rough but warm with pride. He steps over to Will and is again mildly
surprised to find that Will waits for him, but the walk back to the house is companionable. Hannibal doesn't re-wrap his scarf, idly curious as to whether or not there will be bruises later. If not, there's a simple fix to that.

But for that moment, Hannibal merely reaches out to get the door, gesturing Will in first, and then follows suit, carefully removing his winter clothes and snow-covered shoes before walking to the kettle to get a start on the hot drinks Will had suggested.

There's a familiar rush of warmth upon entering their home that has Will sighing in contentment. Layer by layer, they each remove their winter wear. Will lets Hannibal take care of drink preparation, following him into the kitchen and watching him with interest. Or, more specifically, trying to catch glances at that neck he had been squeezing mere minutes ago. To date, it had been the hardest he'd choked the older man. Will doesn't think his composure is a facade, at least he hopes it isn't one. He assumes he's simply adjusted to their situation and has a better grasp on things. Oh, he'll likely slip up again, but now he's seen a few ways of living with Hannibal. He's been disconnected and dismissive, been unstable and grasping for too much and then he's played it safe. Now there's this.

Hannibal wasn't difficult to live with by any means. He was very good to Will, quite accommodating, patient, helpful, but that was all difficult to accept at times. Will wasn't used to being the one to dictate things, not that Molly was overbearing, but her being a single mom had him bending to fit into their way of doing things - as it should have been. Will had been happy to adjust for them, to fit in because he was the outsider joining them. And now Hannibal and he are a family of sorts.

"You wrote to me before Jack came knocking and suggested that I stay away. Was that a game, or did a part of you actually think that would be better for me?" Will asks abruptly as Hannibal places a mug of coffee down for him. Seems his curiosity has taken hold again.

Hannibal busies himself with the task delegated to him, silently impressed at Will's tact. A mere suggestion of a hot drink, leaving it to stew as Hannibal had stepped over to him, and then he'd taken his time in slipping off his outerwear. Hannibal had stepped over to the task gladly, but with full knowledge that he had permitted the subtle manipulation. Will is still learning, and the thought leaves something warm and proud in Hannibal's chest as he works. It's a simple task made only marginally more difficult by the distracting ache to his throat. In the cold, it had been difficult to ascertain the damage, but now that they're inside, the ache is a pleasant one, though greater than Hannibal had expected. Endorphin, and a distinct lack of fear from the amygdala, no doubt. Hannibal swallows and enjoys the ache.

He's not expecting Will's question when he sets his coffee - prepared as he likes it - in front of Will, but that doesn't mean he doesn't answer. Instead Hannibal merely regards Will in contemplative silence before retrieving his own mug of coffee. He pulls out his chair and sits down with none of the tentative movement of the last few months, his core significantly stronger than it had been. Perhaps it will never be where it was, but he's satisfied with the recovery.

"Yes," Hannibal answers after a pointed pause, sipping at his own coffee and enjoying the spread of warmth and the added ache to his throat. His voice is slightly stronger after a few sips of coffee, though Will's damage is still audible. "Or both, should I say. I was unaware you had received the missive. Though I'd rather not dwell on those days." He'd sent Will countless letters in those three years, though less as the months had dragged on. In truth, Hannibal can't remember them all. A few had been written under heavy medication and he hopes those had never made it to Will, caught in Jack's controlling grasp. "Still... I see no harm in answering. A part of it was a game. A vague hope
that perhaps the article and the warning would be enough to drag you from your retirement. Though I do admit, there was a part of me left disappointed when I saw you. Don't mistake that," Hannibal adds idly, glancing at Will, "I was pleased. But perhaps a part of me held hope you would finally put your needs before Jack's."

It is sadly still one of Will's main issues. One reason Hannibal finds himself so pleased regarding Will's manipulation. "I was never going to remain in the asylum. My escape was always going to happen. The only variable was whether you would be accompanying me or not. Up until then, I'd begun to suspect not. In retrospect, perhaps it was foolish to assume you could stay away. We are conjoined, I believe you said once? It's accurate."

After the trials, Will had told Jack to hold any letters from 'Dr. Lecter,' not at all in the mood to read fanciful words written out in pretentious calligraphy. Then nearly a year later, predictably, Will had become curious and OK'ed them being passed along to him. Granted, they were pre-read by Jack which both irritated and embarrassed Will. He assumed he didn't even get them all, Jack deciding what Will could and could not handle. Alone, late at night and with a few fingers of whiskey in his body, he would read the letters, hear Hannibal's voice and afterward, close his eyes and picture the man himself, but only for a few seconds before he tossed the letter into the fire. It had allowed him the faintest of connections with Hannibal, because, try as he might, Will never could fully let him go.

Will looks across at his partner, Hannibal's neck visibly altered and both of them drinking coffee politely, like nothing out of the ordinary had just taken place less than ten minutes ago. Well, ordinary for other people, because for them, choking was probably just a form of foreplay, really. He had suspected that the answer would be both. Hannibal has never been a fan of Jack's methods, though if it hadn't been for Jack pushing him so hard they would have never met and continued meeting. Of course Hannibal knew that if he did get roped into helping, Will would eventually wander on over. How could he resist?

He wants to ask if Hannibal would have sought him out if he had escaped. And how would that have looked, for Hannibal to come knocking at his doorstep? Would he have flashed a charming smile and wooed his wife for an invite to their dinner table claiming to be an old FBI friend? Or would Hannibal have ripped that life to shreds and created a suitable work of art for Will to stumble onto, horrified and helpless?

The word *conjoined* has Will leaving his private thoughts and blinking a bit before taking a sip. "You and I are a lot of things," he agrees slowly. He likes that Hannibal has chosen to use one of his words. Much has been said between them, yet Will still feels like there is a lot more to know about Hannibal. Perhaps that's why he decides to bluntly ask, "Have you ever been in love before?"

For a few seconds, Will retreats into his own head and Hannibal merely watches him, intrigued. He wonders at Will's thoughts, at what causes the flicker of muted distress behind his eyes, but it is as fetching now as it had been before, caused by Hannibal's hand. Like watching his own personal performance, Hannibal sips at his coffee and regards Will fondly, watching the thoughts flicker behind his eyes even if he's not entirely certain of the cause. And when Will comes back to him, it's with a slight hitch, like he's only just realized he'd gone off on his own. He reinstates himself smoothly with the practiced ease of a man used to feigning his own mental stability.

Hannibal's smile is faint but present as Will agrees with him. Though a new light of interest flickers at the question. It's sudden and jarring and it's only because it's *Will* asking that Hannibal even considers answering. Even then, while he doesn't laugh, the amusement is obvious in his eyes. "Romantically," Hannibal clarifies, though he knows he doesn't need to. It just feels like an important
distinction. His mirth is almost palpable. "Do you feel such inclination towards cattle roaming the countryside? No."

He allows himself a soft chuckle then, like the idea is laughable at best. Truthfully it is. Will is one of a kind in more ways than one. "You are the first, and the only. I have felt a familial love before. Infrequently, but on occasion. But no, Will. I've never been in love before. Nor did I have any desire for it. So you can imagine my irritation when it became clear to me that you were beyond anything I had experienced. It was and is quite inconvenient, though I'd not change it now."

This isn't the type of conversation Will would have thought himself to be having with Hannibal Lecter, that much is for certain. As soon as the question leaves his lips, he worries for a moment that he will be scorned, laughed at, and although Hannibal is clearly amused, he answers, albeit with a chuckle midway through. Will's not surprised by the admission that he is, truly, the first, nor is he offended that the feelings are considered to be inconvenient. Romantic love seems below Hannibal in a way and his answer only illustrates that point; most people are simply meat to Hannibal. Will, naturally, doesn't share that sentiment, not that he has had much experience in romantic love, but he’s experienced it more often than Hannibal.

"Inconvenient, huh? Yeah, that's definitely one word for it," Will replies easily. It should be awkward or uncomfortable to be discussing love in such frank terms, but the truth of it has settled with Will since that fateful night of tender kissing. Hannibal loves him and Will both feels and believes it now. "It's been quite the journey to end up here and together." He had a feeling that they weren't close to being done either, still traveling toward some unknown destination, but this time together. Will quirks a half-smile at Hannibal. "I won't lie, it is flattering."

Hannibal's sentiment for Will has always been inconvenient. He can still remember the sleepless nights, the push and pull between common sense and something sinister and dark that had eventually won out. He had willingly flirted with the very idea of Will Graham, dangling his truth just out of arm's reach to further his own pride and ego, to delve deep into the investigation around him, yet the moment he'd realized Will would one day learn his secret, Hannibal should have killed him. He'd known it. Had agonized over it even then, stretching it out until he could no longer wait, and even then, he’d not been able to kill Will. He'd framed him instead (buying himself nothing but a little more time and much more suspicion in the process). The logical thing would have been to kill him. But as Hannibal had learned and is still learning, love - sentiment, fondness, whatever one wishes it called - has a way of defying logic.

Even now, willingly baring his throat to a man who has admitted to wanting to kill him multiple times is reckless. Yet Hannibal had felt no fear. The danger of getting in too deep, perhaps, but he is committed now and sees no reason to change. And if the smile Will sends his way is any indication, Hannibal believes he's leaning in the same direction. Vicious words of never giving Hannibal his heart or not, they have settled into something unique and filled with possibilities. This conversation confirms it. Hannibal would never have gifted another with the same information. "Of course it is. Though others never believed it of you, you are a vain man, Will. It is well hidden, but not to me. Your pride is becoming, and quite well-earned. You have done what no other could. You were right; you did change me. I suppose we'll see if it was for the better, in time."

Will has changed Hannibal, yes. Humanized him in a way, won his heart, plagued his mind, but even Will doesn't know if it's for the best in the end. Love is certainly a weakness; it inspires and ruins in equal force. Love often gives, then snatch away. Molly had taken a chance and loved him and look how that had turned out for her. Hannibal would have had a much easier life if Will hadn't
came along and caught his eye. Will would have struggled, but survived because thriving had never been an option for him. The sheer collateral damage left in their wake, because of their profoundly unhealthy relationship in those days... It's still difficult to stomach. He was the first domino, their meeting a catalyst for the rest to topple over... and many did topple over.

He finishes up his coffee, thinking on vanity and pride. They're attributes he'd never normally apply to himself. Most people take one look at him and judge him on his unruly hair, the fact that he doesn't shave often, the lackluster attire and his less than pleasant social skills. Will doesn't particularly care about his appearance or the first impressions he makes, he's not proud in that respect, but... There is a curl of satisfaction from his accomplishment. His achievement. "I used to think of your devotion as a curse," Will admits ruefully. "Now, I rather like it." Face calm, his eyes tell of a perverse delight in possessing the heart of Hannibal Lecter.

Slowly, bit by bit, Will has been re-emerging from his shell. Hannibal has seen the evidence of it over the last few weeks. Ever since that night, when Will had asked him directly about love, something had shifted. His hesitance has eased, and he's no longer suffering from passivity. He'd merely followed in Hannibal's dominant structure, both of them careful, but Will had been healing behind that mask. Perhaps he still isn't certain of his footing, but as Hannibal watches the calm look on his face and the miles of emotion carefully regulated in his eyes, he feels something shift. Will's achievement outside, his control, not necessarily violent but still curious, observant, and now this. The same expression as before, with more satisfaction coiling behind his gaze like a particularly content snake. It's enough to make the cup of coffee hesitate only for a fraction of a second before Hannibal once again lifts it to his lips.

From Hannibal, it's as blatant as if he'd done a visible double take. Because to his mutual surprise and pleasure, Will Graham is sitting beside him for one of the first times since Hannibal had carved the grin into his abdomen. In those few split seconds, he's not a fraction of the man like he has been. He's present, aware, and confident. The same man who had asked to resume therapy, taking control of his own situation. Only this time Hannibal sees no reason for deception. He's... wary. Will had tricked him before. But Hannibal doubts he's doing the same now.

He sips at his coffee again, much more leisurely than Will, and focuses on the ache in his throat, thoughtful. Once again, Will has surprised him, but Hannibal decides to keep that to himself. To observe it. He doubts this is a farce, but best to be safe. "Admittedly I am quite biased in saying so, but you should like it. You have what no other has possessed. And because of it, you are afforded certain guaranties. I will kill those who try and do you harm," Hannibal adds idly, like this is normal. To him, it is. And he's already proven it. Bleeding out, with risk of heavy internal damage, he had still attacked Dolarhyde for daring to touch what was his.

Perhaps he'd been reckless to go for his gun as he had then, but that Will Graham had been backed into a corner. The surprise attack - a knife crudely stabbed above his jaw - had changed things. Oh, to be able to glimpse the rage that must have surely flashed on Hannibal's face... Will thrown out of the house, the Dragon advancing on him again, and Hannibal had been spurred into action. Their partnership had truly begun then, two hunters and their mutual enemy. Their prey. And they had been deadly and in sync in a way that Will has longed for since.

"You already have," Will points out with a small smile to his lips. Hannibal would do it again. Would kill for him. To protect him, and, most likely, if Will simply wanted it. He has to swallow down his excitement at the prospect. Refocus. "Or we have. I suppose one would would count that as a joint effort." He rises and walks his mug over to the sink placing it down and saying, "Thanks for the coffee, Hannibal." As he walks past the still seated man, Will reaches out and deliberately
runs his hand through Hannibal's hair before yanking and then releasing. "I'll see you later." He takes his leave, knowing he needs a bit of time to himself, but he can't resist looking over his shoulder before he exits the kitchen.

He heads to his room, distracts himself with reading for an hour, then tidies. They eat leftovers because even they retain some normal family traits. Their conversation is peaceful, Will asking Hannibal about potential recipes they can try. They don't speak about their night plans and Will neglects a drink later in the evening. This is deliberate and he's sure Hannibal knows why. Will showers, but for the first time it's with the intention of being clean and presentable for someone. He takes his time, letting the hot water wash away what physical tension it can.

Will's boldness lingers in Hannibal's mind throughout the rest of the day. The flash of excitement at the reminder of what they had achieved together; two predators perfectly in sync without more than a glance shared between them. The brief expression of something akin to longing - likely a hidden desire to revisit those memories, or create new ones. The deliberate brush of Will's fingers through hair that is beginning to regain its earlier length, followed by the immediate pull that had hitched Hannibal's breathing. And then the clear exit, interrupted only by a telling glance over his shoulder that Hannibal had turned to meet.

Their routine has sharpened and settled over the last few weeks, but the prospect of that evening seems to linger as the moments crawl on. Hannibal allows himself to think on it, and he reads Will's distraction in the occasional hitch in his movement, or a brief moment in which Hannibal traces Will's gaze to his lips. They're not alone in their interest, but nor are they blinded by mutual need. It's as much an exercise in control as it is a flirtation and Hannibal enjoys reading the control in Will's actions. Their conversation is calm and relaxing, engaging in the way Hannibal has only ever found in Will. Dinner is a simple affair, and while they take their usual places in the evening, retiring to their respective books by lamplight, Hannibal doesn't miss that Will forgoes his usual drink. It gives him pause, nearly enough to be visible, but instead he merely relaxes and enjoys the unspoken statement. Will wants to be present for this.

Will retreats upstairs for a shower and Hannibal lingers downstairs only as long as it takes to tidy up and check the doors and windows, as always. The snow outside serves as extra light, moonlight illuminating the forest. Hannibal spares it a quick look simply to be safe, then retires upstairs to take a quick shower of his own. His is clinical, but Will's is deliberate, the water still running when Hannibal is finished. He spares the thought a small smile and then simply goes to bed, pulling on the soft pants he typically wears to bed - particularly now that the weather has gotten colder - but foregoes the shirt. It's as deliberate as Will's shower. Will showcasing his desire and Hannibal the strength Will wants given what he's asked for.

He has no qualms in waiting for Will, merely reclining comfortably now that he can do so without fuss. And, perhaps as a final deliberate act, Hannibal turns down the sheets on the side of the bed now solely reserved for Will. He's welcome here.

He considers shaving, but decides to forgo it in the end. It's perhaps a silly thought that pushes him toward the decision, but Will doesn't want to let Hannibal touch or kiss another smooth face. No, he'll be masculine here too, his more than a week growth possibly grating, rough, like his edges, because why not? It suits Will, suits what he's asked for. He chooses to slip a plain grey t-shirt on mostly because he wants Hannibal to undress him, or at least one piece of clothing. He'll have to ask, and despite how intimate they have been, how far he's gone (masturbating against Hannibal's back, Christ), it would be a new thrill, a new experience...
When Will knocks against the half open door, he's calmer than he thought he would be. He's not here out of desperation or guilt, he's going to Hannibal because he wants to. There's no dulling of his senses by alcohol, Will is completely present, his gait steady as he walks into the room basked in moonlight. He immediately notices that Hannibal is shirtless and that the his side of the bed is waiting for him. It's been awhile since he's seen this much skin, Hannibal keeping a shirt on when Will has slunk in before - probably for his benefit. From what he can glimpse, it's quite apparent that the older man has been working out regularly, the softness from injury and recovery giving way to tone and definition. The observation stirs up something, reminds him of just how dangerous Hannibal is, of how Hannibal willingly submits, but could stop him. He wets his lips unconsciously.

Will climbs on to the bed, but does not get under the sheets for that would be counterproductive. He slides in next to Hannibal, making no attempt to hide his wandering eyes. "Giving me something new to look at," he teases lightly. He's forward in his desire, the palm of Will's hand feeling out the firmness of his partner's abdominal muscles before skating up an arm. It's clear he appreciates what has been bared to him.

The re-emergence of Will's confidence adds a pleasing layer back onto their interactions. While Hannibal has no doubt that Will's focus will fade, that he'll hesitate again in the future, for now he enjoys this side of him. Slowly Will's uncertainty has been fading, more time between his losses of control. He's heading in the right direction, and barring immediately after his murder of Randall Tier, Hannibal doubts he's ever seen Will so himself. Save perhaps killing The Dragon, though that particular moment had been hard-fought and it's unfair to compare that moment of realization with any other. So Will's confidence - his posture, the ease in his shoulders, and the way his gaze rakes over Hannibal's body like a physical touch - is satisfying to note. It draws the smallest of smirks to Hannibal's lips. One that widens at the quick flick of Will's tongue. They are both prideful at heart.

"You refrained from drinking," Hannibal offers as Will climbs onto the bed beside him. He's not expecting Will to reach out and touch him immediately, but he's not surprised either. Hannibal makes a small sound, little more than a hum of satisfaction, and reaches up to cup Will's cheek, his beard slightly softened by the heat of his shower and his hair still damp, but pleasantly so. Hannibal strokes his fingers back through it, enjoying the sensation. "You may consider it conditioning if you wish, though it was not my full intent."

Hannibal doesn't explain what the intent actually was, choosing instead to look Will over appreciatively. And as Will's hand slides up his arm, testing the power in it, Hannibal catches it with his free hand and simply brings Will's it up to his lips, pressing a kiss to his knuckles. They've been avoiding intensity as of late, but Hannibal has been working to fit small gestures in on occasion. Though the simplicity of it is ruined as he moves Will's hand back down to his throat, to draw attention to the bruising that has already started to form, previously hidden by the collar of the shirt he'd changed into following the trip outside. "I caught sight of it a few minutes ago. Truly impressive."

He doesn't have to explain why he's skipped out on a drink - they both know why. Will hasn't needed it for a while now. No, coming to Hannibal's bed may have felt like an ordeal the first handful of times and the liquid courage had helped, but all the subsequent times after that had been for his pride. It was never easy to seek out comfort and companionship from Hannibal, but Will has mostly moved on from chiding himself over it. He wants to have all his senses about him, to be alert and fully present in this night. Nothing less is acceptable.

Will makes an amused sound at the kiss brushed to his knuckles, reminded of the attempt to break the ice those many months ago on the couch. He has come a long way since then, since being shaken
and undone by such a simple gesture. Until today, they've both been reserved, but their touching certainly hadn't been cold or detached in nature. Now Will is seeking again, asking, and he's going to receive. Hands move to a colored throat, Will shifts closer to examine it. "I had a good teacher," he remarks, pleased. He doesn't often compliment Hannibal. "I imagine there's a great deal you can teach me." Purposely vague, accompanied by a tilt of his head.

Will gives a brief parting squeeze to the bruised neck before grasping onto Hannibal's hand. "But first, I want you take off my shirt," He instructs simply, watching Hannibal curiously. This is new territory for them. While he may be in charge of stating his needs and wants, Hannibal has proven himself to be more than capable to withhold and stop if he feels Will isn't ready or genuine in his requests. How he presents is important. It all depends on him. He brings the hand to hem of his shirt at his hip, waiting.

The compliment is unexpected but Hannibal silently files it away, lifting his chin both in pride and so Will can see the blend of colors under his skin. The moonlight is bright outside, and while they're on the second floor of the house, the snow reflects it still. With the blinds open, the room is cast in a silver light, and Hannibal is altogether too familiar with how fetching bruises look under the light of the moon. Almost as thrilling as blood. And almost as thrilling as Will leaning in so close, and his implication that sets something warm and intent inside. There is a lot he can teach Will, and while the comment had been left vague, the possibilities are endless.

Hannibal sets them aside to think on later. Right now, Will grabs his attention quite easily as he takes Hannibal's hand and guides it down, issuing his instruction. Hannibal does pause, studying Will's expression carefully as his fingers brush the hem of Will's shirt. This is new territory; Will has never asked this of him before, either arriving shirtless or hastily removing it himself. There's a reason for this, and Hannibal can guess it. He considers Will, the picture he makes, the certainty in his voice and his eyes, and he makes his decision. It would be difficult to leave a mark where no one could see it without access to places unseen.

He's slow; if Will had wanted this done quickly, he'd have done it himself. Hannibal presses his palm to Will's hip, working his fingers under the hem of Will's shirt and sliding his hand up. It's almost blatant for him, touching skin still warm and damp from the shower more than he is Will's shirt, but it works the same. Hannibal drops his free hand to do the same thing, and only when Will's abdomen and the scar is visible does he reach up to work Will's arms through the fabric. He isn't ready to risk lifting Will's arms over his head quite yet, as while his shoulder is healing well, he's not been quite as diligent with pushing himself as Hannibal has.

From there, it takes no time to slide Will's shirt off. Hannibal takes it silently and smooths it out before folding it over the headboard. Unnecessary perhaps, but Hannibal values control. And now he allows himself to look Will over, his skin pale in the moonlight, a veritable canvas for the marks he's been promised. He settles one of his hands on Will's hip again. "Have you decided what else you'd like me to do?" Hannibal inquires, lifting his free hand to again card through Will's hair, gripping it just enough to feel.

So far Will is in the clear, Hannibal doesn't seem to be shutting down his request. Yes, Hannibal has bathed him out of necessity, got down to his knees and rolled up shirt sleeves to do so, but this is far more intimate. Will has asked for this specifically, Will has guided Hannibal's hand to start the process. It's all done with no words exchanged, slowly, the movements precise and Will is rapt watching it all take place. It's a layer taken away, stripped off and folded nicely - of course.

His lips part at the question. His fantasies have evolved, became more detailed and explicit since the
first time he ever touched himself and thought of Hannibal. Will's time spent in the shower alone has let his imagination be unconstrained. He still holds apprehension about some of the logistics of same-sex relations, yes, but most of his basic concerns have melted into curiosity and longing by now. A hand tugging on his hair and Will's excitement bleeds through, a bitten off, "Oh, God " comes out of his mouth, voice higher than he'd like. He's embarrassed by the slip. It's been far too long since Hannibal has handled him with any sort of roughness. He wants. Hannibal is here, next to him, asking. He wants so much. Too much - it's difficult to locate where to even start.

"Your mouth," Will finally says following a shaky exhale. He's looking blatantly at Hannibal's mouth, wanting to be kissed, wanting to be kissed and bitten everywhere. He lets both of his hands run down Hannibal's chest, eager to touch. "All over me."

Will's reaction is gorgeous and raw, and it does its part to tell Hannibal where Will currently stands. While erring on the side of caution had been a safe idea, he wonders idly if he shouldn't have been intermittently rough with Will over the last few weeks. He'd been trying to avoid the spikes and crashes of Will's emotional state, to bring him to a comfortable normal. To stabilize him. But now, listening to the sheer excitement and need in those gasped words, he makes a mental note to be careful. He has no desire to deny Will what he wants, but he does have a desire to control it, to ensure it's safe and that Will doesn't accidentally push himself too far. To be sure Hannibal doesn't push him too far. There's no denying the rough curl of desire in his own chest; he'll need to watch that as well.

Hannibal carefully pulls Will's hair, a steady pressure, re-learning this particular strength and Will's limits by the flickers of emotion across his face. And when the request comes, Hannibal draws in a slow, careful breath to steady himself, fighting back the desire to take. It's been a long month, and Will's blunt need stirs a dangerous fire he'll need to manage. Thankfully, he'll have no qualms with that. "That can be done. Though next time perhaps I should tell you to ask for it," Hannibal muses thoughtfully, playing with Will's control. It's a simple tug at the rope, not meant to unearth him, merely to remind him that Hannibal also holds control.

But he doesn't make Will wait. Carefully, hand still tight in Will's hair, Hannibal draws him in closer and leans in, meeting Will's lips in a maddeningly chaste kiss. He takes his time; they both want and that is precisely why he makes himself go slowly. It would be so simple to lose themselves in this. So Hannibal works up to it, his grip firm in Will's hair as he kisses him, slowly deepening it, but only until the point where Hannibal's teeth catch pointedly on Will's lower lip. It's intended to be sharp. It won't break the skin, but it's a sudden reminder of what Will is asking for, and one that Hannibal delights in. He bites Will's lip to the point of pain, and then breaks the contact, moving down to the corner of Will's jaw. The scratch of Will's beard adds an odd but interesting dynamic to this, and after a moments' consideration, Hannibal decides he likes it. It's a pointed reminder that this is Will Graham. All hard edges and hidden darkness. And it makes it all the sweeter when he scrapes his teeth just under Will's jaw.

The hand in his hair tightens its hold and Will lets himself fully enjoy the increase in tension. He watches Hannibal with widening eyes, sensing the restraint the older man is needing to employ in this moment. He's wants to cajole Hannibal, to encourage him to let go and take - to go ahead - give him permission - but Will knows they're not at that point. Not yet, but hopefully one day. Soon. In the beginning, he had been bothered by the notion of having to ask, but not so much anymore. Too much energy had been expended fighting it. He would ask right now, but Hannibal is moving quickly enough that Will doesn't have to.

The kiss is unhurried, languid, and very much dizzying. It takes a great amount of willpower for the
empath to not be impatient and to let Hannibal go at his own pace and for himself to simply match it. The hint of teeth has Will shuddering, his hands stroking along his partner's sides before raking nails down. They have been close over these past few weeks, but not like this. This is raw grasping need that they are indulging in, but unlike that eventful night that had started this shift, Will feels more contained. He isn't here to taunt and tease. He's here to receive, but he's also here to give.

The nip at his lip only encourages him to touch, his hands wandering over what skin he can easily reach. Will wants to learn each curve, become familiar with the flex of muscle and memorize how his skin feels sliding against Hannibal's. These aren't new urges by any means, but they are now being fully realized and acknowledged. "Hannibal," Will sighs when the kiss breaks. He's almost breathless. "Feels so good... You feel good." It's the first time he's admitted such a thing in words, but saying the truth is freeing and right now Will feels safe to let go and jump in.

The bite of Will's nails is sharp and sweet, dragging a rougher sound from Hannibal's throat. Before, perhaps, he would have cautioned Will against it, citing the lingering injuries and the danger of reopening dangerous wounds. But now, while some scars are hyper-sensitive and others dull, they are just that: Scars. There's still some healing to do, but the danger has passed. Will has allowed him to recover, passing up his opportunity to kill Hannibal while weakened by his injuries, and Hannibal doesn't dismiss that gift lightly. He rolls his shoulders gently into Will's touch when hands start wandering, encouraging Will to do as he sees fit. The unfamiliar angles of a male body have long since settled in Hannibal's mind, and Will's touches imply that he, too, is beginning to lose the uncertain edge. His touches are bolder, his voice sweeter, and he allows himself to be lost so much easier.

His breathless admission has a soft hum of satisfaction escaping Hannibal's throat and he allows his teeth to scrape under Will's jaw again, sharper this time, in reward. "There is nothing wrong with treating you tenderly," he murmurs against Will's skin, ducking his head to press his lips to the faded pink scar of his own bite mark on Will's neck. "But perhaps I should have allowed this by times as well. It settles you." It's not a question, but he does leave the statement open for Will to confirm or deny, though he's already aware of the answer.

Pleasure is a building need, a sensation to chase, greedy by nature. Pain is something far more complicated, triggering fight or flight one moment and surrender the next. There is peace in trusting another that pain will only go so far, and Hannibal doesn't take Will's trust for granted. It's still unstable, on shaking foundation, but it's far more stable than it once was.

Slowly, taking his time, Hannibal kisses his way down Will's throat, scraping skin or biting lightly at a varied pace so that Will can't anticipate each one. It's intended to settle him, but also to stoke the fire. But mostly it's there because Hannibal wants to. He enjoys seeing Will squirm, takes pleasure in his mild discomfort. And as his teeth sink a little harder where Will's neck meets his shoulder, Hannibal presses a hand to his chest and pushes slowly, easing Will back onto the bed in a decidedly possessive fashion.

Being cared for - the shows of sweetness, tenderness - it had been a challenge to allow for Will. Accepting Hannibal's devotion, the love, all of the various manifestations of the obsession hadn't been easy. It was difficult to feel worthy when most of his life Will had been afraid of demons, shunned in various regards and left ultimately disconnecting himself. But Hannibal had given up three years of his affluent life for him, had saved him from Dolarhyde, had treated him, tolerated his coldness, his mood shifts, dealt with the pettiness. He'd been patient, nonjudgmental and always there. He’s here now, worshipful with his mouth and it’s just an introduction, really, but still he feels flush with heat and anticipation.
His confession has Hannibal making a sound, teeth grazing and Will is gratified. Hannibal keeps him guessing, sensations changing from mere kissing to sharp bites. It's a mix of what he's come to enjoy and it has him murmuring in between gasps, "I want it all." It's such a simple, but profound truth. Hannibal may be okay with whatever Will can offer of himself, but Will is not. Will wants everything. He may not feel like he deserves it, but that's up for Hannibal to decide, not him. Violence or tenderness - betrayer or friend - monster or lover - it's all blurred together for Will, the lines inexplicably crossed and tangled. There's been pain in all varieties, but there has also been so much caring - as long as it was Hannibal, it was right.

Will let's himself be pushed down and he feels no trepidation as he tries to pull Hannibal on top of him - or as much as the other man will allow. It's an interesting dynamic - this shared control - although Hannibal unquestionably bears most of the responsibility. His hands bury into silverying strands of hair, but they don't stay there long, wanting to explore places he hasn't touched often or ever. They run down the planes of Hannibal's shoulders, palms flat as he takes in the warmth of the flesh.

There's no reason to deny Will his silent request, so Hannibal allows it. Will's hands curl over his shoulders as Hannibal presses him back, and all it takes is a pointed tug - silent but inquisitive - for Hannibal to give in. He eases the sheets down and draws back, unwilling to hold the bite to Will's neck while he settles. And while he doesn't roll over to rest his weight on Will, he does prop himself up by his side, leaning over him, one arm bracing and the other caging Will in, pressing him back against the mattress.

Very aware that Will had only directly asked for a new mark upon his skin, Hannibal is careful not to overstep the boundaries set in place. But there's little that says they can't work up into this. A bite is simple, though still thrilling. But one earned - teased and hinted at, anticipation and uncertainty rolling into one - is well worth the wait. Plus, though Will has not barred him from this in the past, this is the most free reign he's allowed himself to have, Will's body laid out in welcome, his hands carving hot trails of sensation over Hannibal's shoulders, feeling the strength earned in little more than a month. He catches Will's lips in another kiss, feeling the scratch of his beard as added sensation and can't deny his want to touch.

Hannibal moves his free hand up, cupping Will's jaw with the intention of feeling the rougher scratch of his beard under his hand. It's not new for them, but it is in this context. It's pointed, defining, and Hannibal breaks the kiss with another bite to Will's lower lip, sharper this time, though no less intimate. "You left this intentionally," Hannibal guesses correctly, his voice low as he traces the deep scar hidden under Will's beard. "Was there a reason?"

Will doesn't quite get what he wants - Hannibal on top and pinning him to the bed - but, for now, he accepts whatever Hannibal does choose to give him. He's well aware of his track record, that he often has pushed too far, too fast with their interaction usually ending badly. Will knows Hannibal is treading water carefully, not wanting to misstep and spook Will or over indulge. Will doesn't quite have the words to sum up everything he's feeling, to explain that he's alright with them, that he's okay with a lot of things now.

At the sudden sharper bite to his lip, Will's eyes flutter and he sighs, digging his nails into Hannibal's back appreciatively. As much as he wants to demand Hannibal touch him elsewhere, somewhere new - anywhere new - he refrains. Impatience hasn't worked that well for him in the past. The question has him pausing his exploration. "Felt more like me," Will answers, but it's not quite the whole truth. "And I figured you had touched enough feminine faces." To illustrate his point Will leans up and uses his other cheek to rub against Hannibal's clean shaven face. "Never again..." Will
inhales the unique scent of Hannibal, a scent that he has come to find both comfort and arousal in. "You're mine," he whispers lowly, tracing blunt nails slowly down Hannibal's spine.

It's the answer Hannibal had assumed he'd get, but that doesn't make him any less satisfied to hear it spoken out loud. There are few people capable of making a beard look presentable. It takes a specific bone structure, and careful grooming to maintain the exact style. Will, much to his pleasure, has that exact bone structure. His jaw is strong, and his beard only accentuates his features. Seeing Will without it those first few weeks had been distracting; he'd looked far younger than his years, far more vulnerable. And while he'd enjoyed that sight, this is the Will Graham he knows. Both in appearance and in personality, as is evidenced by the sudden rub of Will's cheek over his own. It draws a soft sound of something akin to amusement from Hannibal's throat, but his focus is drawn quickly to Will's nails, and his words. There's no masking the shiver that works its way through him, nor the soft hiss at the scrape of Will's nails down his spine, over the Verger brand.

Hannibal is proud. It stings, but the pain is pleasant, alighting his nerves perfectly. It's the same pressure and speed he's used on Will in the past, and the implication leaves an added note of satisfaction behind on top of the pain, and on top of what Will had said. "Yes," he breathes. There's no reason to argue. He has been Will's since the moment they met, regardless of how viciously he had fought for his autonomy. "I am. I prefer you like this," Hannibal adds, with a final stroke of his hand over Will's cheek. Then he drops it, sliding his fingers down the line of Will's throat - taking note of his pulse as he passes - and curling his fingers to carefully scratch over the swell of Will's pectorals. Nothing he hasn't done before, save for the way Hannibal ducks his head to coax a smaller mark onto Will's clavicle with his teeth.

He presses harder with his nails to draw Will's attention to his hand. "I believe you said you wanted my mouth everywhere. I would like to oblige, within reason. Is there anything you wish to avoid?" It seems both a safe and an important question. This, after all, is Will's request.

Despite being in the same boat regarding each other being the outlier concerning sexuality, Hannibal hadn't come across as uneasy during their few brief conversations. Although Will figures that if the doctor had held any concern, he'd surely not have been that forward, not wanting to put Will through more stress. Hannibal had also not seemed put off by the differences Will surely possessed in comparison to past partners - he'd touched him with a steady hand, hadn't hesitated in consoling or kissing.

In the beginning of their relationship, Will had struggled to come to terms with the foreign attraction. The contrast between Hannibal and Molly had been glaring, or at least it had seemed like that. But, Will had known that it wasn't the outer appearance that shook him up at much as it was the identity - of who Hannibal was and what Hannibal had all done - to him and to others. It defied logic and common sense, but for Will, being completely seen and accepted had allowed him to connect far deeper to Hannibal than any other person. And it was that connection had slowly enraptured him, enticing and tempting him in ways he couldn't refuse. Will was done fighting it.

He's touched, scratched down his chest and Will's head falls to the pillow, back arching off the mattress. A quick bite at his collarbone and he lets himself make whatever sounds want to come out of his mouth. In this, he'll let himself be as expressive as he knows Hannibal delights in. There's no room for shame as the rush of sensations and heat overtake any possible self-doubt. The sting of nails has Will blinking in a daze, trying to focus on the question asked of him. "Anywhere, everywhere," Will confirms, it's exceedingly difficult to think of something he doesn't want at this point. "Please, Hannibal." A plea for more and trust that he will be taken care of in this.
Will is intoxicating even at the worst of times, and this is nowhere close. Aware of the steadiness of his own hand and the desire to give Will what he needs without stepping too far, Hannibal watches, rapt, as Will arches against the sheets. It curls something hot through him, makes him swallow past bruising still made by Will's hands, and Hannibal drinks the moment in. This isn't the same man he'd gone over the cliff with. Will has evolved since then, has been changed and helped along the way. He's fought and given in, has been both productive and repressed, and yet it's all culminated in this: him arching under Hannibal, his voice dazed and wanting. Hannibal can think of little sweeter.

The danger isn't whether Will wants this or not, it's in how far he's willing to go. Reluctant as Hannibal is to draw back, he knows he'll have to. But right now, at this second, he has no qualms in indulging his companion. And with a soft hum that is somehow both amusement and reassurance, Hannibal gives Will what he wants.

His mouth is hot on Will's clavicle, tracing the solid line to the meat of Will's injured shoulder. He lingers, presses a kiss to the scars already forming, but allows the moment to stretch on, allows Will to realize how much power he is currently granting Hannibal by merely letting him move undeterred. He could reopen Will's wounds. But he won't. Instead he merely moves back inwards, replacing his mouth with his hand as his thumb strokes at the scar on Will's shoulder. He's unhurried, breathing in the scent of Will's skin, warm from the shower, and accented with the growing scent of desire. It's rich this close, heady, and Hannibal delights in it as he eases back to trail his hand down Will's chest, purposefully catching the nail of his thumb over Will's nipple. He's comfortable with the idea of being attracted to Will; he'd been through that confusion before. Now it's merely a matter of figuring out what feels good for him, and learning the limits of how far he can push.

And perhaps indulgently, the first push he wants to test is simple. He glances up at Will only once to ensure he's not changed his mind and then lowers his mouth to his other nipple, laving it with his tongue before taking it between his teeth. Bold, blatant, and yet something he's been aching to do.

Hannibal's mouth does move, but the location - his previously injured shoulder - has Will twitching slightly at first. Touch along the new scar is much more sensitive than the smile on his belly. Molly had purposefully avoided any of his scars, so this particular sensation is new. Different, especially since this is Hannibal's mouth, not the stroke of fingers. There's a whisper of a threat, but Will had told Hannibal to not do anything that would need stitches, so he knows he won't be re-injured. Will takes deep breaths as he lays and allows Hannibal to move at his leisure. Oh, it's not an easy thing to do. Before, Will was all about rushing, desperate to get as much as he could before it would be snatched away because he knew that undoubtedly he'd falter and want to escape.

But he tries, one hand falling to his side and grasping onto the sheets as the other returns home to Hannibal's hair, rubbing at his scalp and pulling gently as if in encouraging. That gentleness turns into a surprised tug as a nail scrapes along his nipple and Will exhales a shaky, "Strange" under his breath. It only gets stranger as Hannibal's mouth descends on the other and Will squirms against the wet heat. It's slightly ticklish, more odd, and he tenses as he tries to sort it all out. He doesn't get far because when teeth are introduced, the sharpness is jolting and he yelps despite himself. A moment later he huffs out a half-laugh, his hand relaxing again. "It's sensitive," Will comments. "Not necessarily bad, though."

Hannibal files small notes away in the back of his mind as he goes. Will's slight hesitance at his interest in the deep scarring at the front of Will's shoulder, the way Will's hand falls to the sheets instead of intentionally rushing as he once had, and the slide of Will's fingers through his hair. The sensation is pleasant and encouraging, and Hannibal allows himself a soft hum for no reason other than to let Will know he approves of this. Including the tug he feels when Will is introduced to new
sensations. He seems almost uncertain at the heat of Hannibal's mouth, like this isn't something he's used to. Admittedly Hannibal isn't either but he has the benefit of his medical knowledge to fall back on; he knows how to alight Will's nerves, though whether pleasantly or not is up to Will to decide.

Regardless, he does appreciate Will's feedback, taking a moment to soothe the bite before drawing back, his lips curled in the faintest of smirks. "I will keep that in mind." He takes a moment to duck his head again, enough to feel the slight tug at his hair, and breathes out his satisfaction at the mild sting. "You may pull. Or guide me as you see fit. Though it will be my choice whether or not I allow it." It's the only warning Hannibal gives before he moves.

But this time he doesn't just move down further. In one fluid motion, he rolls onto his knees, choosing to straddle Will's thighs, bringing them closer together, but in a way that Hannibal still controls. It's calculated, keeping Will pinned with mere positioning instead of simply presence, but it does have its practical purposes: Namely that now he can reach Will's torso with greater ease. Though Hannibal does stop for only a second, his hand trailing down from Will's chest to the longer line of his abdomen, his thumb just barely tracing the edge of Will's scar. He looks stunning like this, with moonlight staining his skin pale and his hair dark and slightly damp against the pillow. Hannibal doesn't bother hiding the way he looks at Will, rapt with awe. "Forgive me for being indelicate, but you are stunning," he says softly, hardly a breath. He presses a kiss to the center of Will's chest, just in the hollow under his ribs. "Beautiful."

As much as Will is torn between wanting to take back some control and allowing Hannibal to have his way, he decides, for now, to give into his curiosity. He'll observe where Hannibal chooses to touch, how he touches, because Will will surely have a turn later. This is still new to him and having somewhat of a guideline will be helpful. He's been mentally compiling a list of such things.

Will's hand abandons Hannibal's hair as the larger man moves without warning into a position where he's both above him and straddling his thighs. This is dangerous and thrilling because Hannibal has never pinned him before in this context. Will's chest heaves in excitement, breathing roughly and grasping at the sheets. Like this, his arousal is evident, a small wet patch also present on tenting boxers. Will watches Hannibal, licks his lips as a hand travels down his chest and a shiver is elicited by the pad a thumb barely running along his most defining scar. Stunning. Will's head turns to the side, he clenches his jaw as his heart flutters. It's difficult to hear. Beautiful. That isn't any easier. He's never felt or believed such things about himself. Average height, average build. Will Graham is twitchy. Difficult. Unstable. Shabby. He's used to those labels and descriptors, but stunning and beautiful? No. "Please just bite more," Will pleads, wanting to move on.

There is very little hidden from Hannibal's senses like this, Will a long line of need and sensation under him. Yet unlike times before, despite the desire etched into every corner of his being, despite the way he is hard and wanting, he has yet to lash out, or to draw back. There are no reckless requests or movements, Will's hips obediently still in a way that sends another spark of desire hot through Hannibal's stomach, pooling low. Will is desperate and yet maintaining his control, and it is easily one of the most shattering images of decadence Hannibal has ever seen. It twists at his own control, makes him suddenly and altogether too aware of his own desire, but he allows that to fade into a comfortable background noise when he notes Will's reaction to his words.

He looks away, his jaw clenching as if he'd been injured, and Hannibal curiously tests another, watching rapt as Will responds. He's uncomfortable, shaken, and Hannibal's design is to push further. He won't. But the desire is there. He silently files this knowledge away: He can use his
words - soft notes of praise - as a barbed lash to Will's mind. One day he will flay him open, bare the parts of him that reject the idea of his own worth, but not now. For now, he merely sends Will a knowing look but acquiesces; this isn't therapy. This is exploration. "Of course," Hannibal promises simply, and leans down again.

He's careful not to settle his weight against Will's hips, careful not to give him a point of contact, but that doesn't mean Hannibal can so easily ignore his arousal. It has been a long few weeks of following Will's casual command, whether or not Will is aware. It is... tempting. But again, Hannibal does as asked. He kisses lower, slow and careful given how close muscle is to flesh. But it isn't until he reaches the space just above the scar, leaning closer to the right side of Will's abdomen, where Hannibal's knife had dug in dangerously deep that he stops. It's there that he bites, so close to the edge of the scar that he can feel it against his lower lip, and while he doesn't break the skin, it's not the gentle nip from before. It's intentional, pointed. "Have you decided?" Hannibal asks, not bothering to lift his lips away from Will's abdomen. "Where you would like your mark?"

Will has shown his hand, that such praises on his appearance rend him uncomfortable and at a loss. Hannibal is a man that would love nothing more to push on this bruise, to exploit and see him squirm at his mercy, all from mere words and sentiment; Will knows this, but Hannibal, thankfully, holds himself back. It's a small concession, but one that Will is grateful for. He hadn't been prepared to receive such a verbal caress. It had caught him off guard.

Hannibal is close, but all too wary. Will is given no true satisfaction, his own site of need of ignored completely. He sits half-up, perched on his elbows to be able to watch as a mouth kisses lower and lower until nearly reaching his scar. He trembles, but has no time to get his bearings as he's given what he's asked for: Teeth biting him sharply, much harder than before. Will cries out, a mix of surprise and pain. He wantswantswants.

The question has him exhaling loudly. He's going to push now and take a risk. He's been more than good, after all. "My inner thigh," he answers, and his tone is more steady. Hannibal had said no touching below the waist and he knows what he'd been referring to, but what about below that? Will has other locations if this is shot down, but he knows Hannibal doesn't particularly like saying no, fearful of him taking offense and feeling rejected.

Hannibal closes his eyes against Will's cry of pain, drinking it in as silently as he can. It rends him nearly breathless, stoking more than just sexual desire within him. After all, despite his sentiment for Will, he's still a sadist, though he had never quite drawn this type of pleasure from sounds of pain before. It's heady, intoxicating, settling the darker edge to their interactions. But Hannibal stops the desire there, not truly wishing to hurt Will. Sweet as his cry had been, he prefers the mix of pleasure in Will's voice, and it's then that he draws back to ask his question.

And true to form, he's not expecting the answer. While his surprise isn't immediately apparent, Hannibal does hesitate, his brow furrowing as he looks at Will, at the need written so beautifully across his body. He doesn't like denying Will, but he still needs to think on this, his thumb stroking the edge of Will's scar and the slight indents left from his teeth. He's made his rules apparent: Nothing below the waist. But Will has taken from that what Hannibal had intended: His legs had never been part of that deal. It is... bordering on too intimate, and Hannibal does wonder if perhaps it's too much, but the picture Will makes is argument in and of itself.

He's silent, searching Will's expression, registering the steadiness of his voice. And only when he's past the point of seriously considering the suggestion does he drop his gaze. There's no mistaking how hard Will is and the sight sets something dangerous alight in Hannibal's chest. But below that,
his legs are pale and Hannibal knows precisely the point he wants to bite. The only issue is whether he'll allow himself. He swallows, and it's clear he's mostly made his decision; he wants. "I won't make it a point to ask this often, but given what you're asking... are you certain? I will allow it, but the flesh there is quite sensitive. Quite delicate. It will hurt."

Their eyes lock, Will remains resolute in his request while Hannibal likely searches for signs of approaching unravelling or unease. He can hear himself breathe, measured intakes that he concentrates on keeping even. The brush of a thumb across both the indents left behind and against his scar briefly threatens Will's composure as evident in the slight hitch to his breathing. Hannibal is seriously weighing the options of this particular demand, if it would be wise to indulge Will in this. (But have they ever been wise?)

The silence stretches on, and only when Hannibal looks lower and across the obvious straining in his boxers does Will think he’s overreached. But then the gaze drops even lower to his currently trapped legs and confidence rushes in. Oh yes, Hannibal wants to ravish this untouched and hidden away skin. "There's degrees of hurt in most things involving you," Will responds reasonably, but there's a note of an antsy need now that it's been confirmed that he can have what he wants. "I doubt it would be meaningful if there wasn't." Pleasure and pain. Anger and kindness. These things blurred for Will and the blending was intriguing and addicting in itself.

While Hannibal doesn't respond aloud, the satisfaction at Will's answer is clear in the way he looks up to briefly meet Will's eyes before looking down again. He could draw this out, and he will, but there's no need to play with the edge of Will's control. He considers it, but ultimately dismisses it; later, perhaps, he will truly test Will's limits, but this is far too tentative to risk more than Will has asked for. Hannibal merely presses a kiss to the bite mark left above Will's scar and then eases himself down on the bed.

There's plenty of room, but he still takes a moment to situate himself, considering just how intimate this will be. "Remember your safe word," he reminds Will calmly, though he has no doubt that Will can handle the pain. What he might not be able to handle is the positioning; it will leave him vulnerable, at Hannibal's mercy, and this will undoubtedly be more sexual than Will is perhaps used to. Unless they count that morning over a month ago, where Will had taken and issued his own command. But in this, Hannibal will err on the side of caution.

Slowly, Hannibal guides Will into the position he requires: Slightly higher up on the bed, his knees first bent and then legs carefully spread as Hannibal kneels between them. Like this, there's no disguising the rush of desire, nor the soft sound Hannibal makes because of it. Will is truly a sight to behold, and Hannibal slides his hands carefully over Will's thighs, testing the muscle as he eases his right leg back down. It would be simple to merely lift Will's hips from the bed, but it seems impersonal, somehow. So instead Hannibal eases himself down, allowing Will's left leg to hook over his shoulder as he turns his head to press a kiss to solid, corded muscle.

The temptation is far greater like this. The scent alone is dizzying, the air thick with arousal and something decidedly headier and masculine that Hannibal isn't used to. But it doesn't stop him from trailing kisses from the bend of Will's knee to his inner thigh, where Hannibal stops. It will hurt, but the idea of Will marked so intimately is thrilling. And once there, he doesn't make Will wait longer. Hannibal merely casts him a final look and then scrapes his teeth over the skin, selecting a spot that draws the greatest response before slowly, carefully sinking his teeth against sensitive skin.

While no reply is given, Will knows Hannibal is pleased by his answer. How could he not be?
Hannibal is the one who had introduced his particular brand of caring - interest coupled with curiosity that has both alienated and saved Will, precise hands that have tended to him over the years, but have also held his head still while seizing. Hannibal has familiarized him with a fierce devotion that rivals common sense that he hasn't been able to truly escape from. Dahlia only frees Will from a specific instant. In all other matters, Will is bound to this man - but so is Hannibal.

He is pliable, allowing Hannibal to move him as he wishes. Will's pulse has picked up, he's never had Hannibal between his legs and the kneeling only adds to the excitement. A quiet sound comes, almost too soft that Will had thought he imagined it, but no, it was from Hannibal. A snarky comment is on the tip of his tongue - *something you like down there?* - but he resists. Will makes his own sound of contentment at the slide of Hannibal's hand, and the sound turns into a bit of whine when the position shifts to his left leg going over Hannibal's shoulder.

Will can't bear to look, his head falling back to the pillow and staring out at the moon that hangs behind clouds. The brush of a mouth is tantalizing and already Will is fighting to hold still. It almost tickles, but mostly the softness is a tease. But then lips reach their apparent destination and teeth grazing elicits Will tensing in anticipation. When the bite comes, he curses under his breath, body going rigid and eyes squeezing shut. Hannibal does not relent and Will is breathing harshly, caught between moaning and making pained sounds. This site is much more sensitive. Both intense and exquisite, it has Will clawing at the bed, hips jerking minutely.

The soft curse is music to Hannibal's ears. Much as he often reprimands Will for his language, in this instance, Hannibal feels it's earned. Will's flesh is overly-warm against his lips, between his teeth, and each perfect shift of muscle under his lips cements Will's dilemma. Pleasure or pain. In this moment, a sudden rush of both, and Hannibal isn't done. Will hadn't merely told him to bite; Will had told him to *mark*, and unless he whimpers his word of choice, Hannibal will see to it that he's given what he'd asked for.

He bites Will's inner thigh - softer, paler skin - much the same way he had Will's neck. Listening to the harsh breaths and the sound of Will's nails sliding over the sheets, Hannibal bites nearly to the point of Will's threshold, and then waits. He slides one of his hands from Will's thigh up to his hip, curling his fingers there to keep Will pinned in exactly the position Hannibal wants him. He won't break Will, but he will control this moment. And bit by bit - judging Will's threshold by the ratio of harsh breaths and moans to pained whines - Hannibal bites harder until Will's edging too close to full-pain. There will be deep bruising later, beautiful and blooming, but that's not what Hannibal wants. Not all of it.

So he pushes, sliding his hand from Will's hip, up what he can reach of his torso. But ultimately Hannibal traces Will's arm down to his hand, freeing Will's fingers from the sheets to offer Will his own hand to grip as tightly as he needs to. And only once Will has that grounding does Hannibal push it the rest of the way. With a sound that is both moan and growl - feral in nature - Hannibal's teeth break Will's skin. The sudden hint of copper on his tongue is welcome and Hannibal merely bites harder, working this particular injury to the point where it will heal well, but will leave a scar behind. His scar - one of many more he plans to make.

Much like their earlier silence, the bite continues on and Will feels suspended in his moment, overwhelmed, but not powerless. He can end this whenever he wishes, but he won't. He has an end goal and he will not give in until it's accomplished. Will's hip is pushed down to the mattress. It's only a mild distraction from the increasing pain he feels radiating from his thigh. He shakes, straining against the sharpness. Instinct screams at him to pull away, to evoke the power that a single word holds, but Will doesn't. He remains vocal, falling further into Hannibal's clutches and as expressive
The hand on his waist moves and Will is vaguely confused at what Hannibal is exactly seeking - it's his hand, apparently. It's a show of care, an offer of support that Will accepts, interlocking his fingers with Hannibal's own. Will holds tightly and lets himself feel and be connected to Hannibal. For Will, this act of Hannibal simply holding his hand is perhaps more poignant than the agony of the bite and the forming of another lasting scar. Of course, it has an edge of hurt - it coaxes out a deep ache. This destructive man, in the midst of a searingly intimate and violent moment, managed to be thoughtful, had sought to ground him. Will bites down hard on his lip at the surge of emotion that realization brings. It's almost too much, is almost worth the use of Dahlia.

An anguished sob rips its way out of Will's mouth when Hannibal's teeth pierce his skin. Will shudders, grips frantically at Hannibal's hand and his eyes snap open. The moon greets him, its luminous face breaking through the heavy clouds. He moans out Hannibal's name and can't help but think of how blood looks black in the moonlight.

Unaware of the surge of emotion his actions had spiked, Hannibal allows Will's grip to tighten on his hand. It's so tight it aches, sending tension radiating through Hannibal's tendons, but he merely squeezes Will's hand back, a reminder that in this moment he is grounded, and safe despite the violence. Hannibal no longer wants to hurt Will needlessly, no longer delights in seeing him suffer without reason. True, his expression is beautiful in anguish, but there are many ways to evoke that look on Will's face that don't involve breaking pieces of this man off bit by bit and wearing him down. This is a fine example - the violence must be agonizing; Hannibal's teeth are already red, blood staining his lips - but Will isn't losing himself. He's trusting, and that realization is perhaps more potent than the cocktail of endorphin rushing through him.

They are both so hard it aches at this point, but Hannibal's focus isn't on himself. Not in such a fashion. No, his world has narrowed down to the crushing, frantic grip at his hand, Will's anguish cry, and the hot rush of blood over his tongue. There is a faint desire to bite harder, to remove all doubt that this mark will scar beautifully, but Will can only handle so much. Hannibal waits only until the pulse of blood is enough that the wound will begin to clean itself out and then, reluctantly, he eases the pressure to the bite. He grips Will's hand, but his thumb also strokes along the edge of it, a warning that he's about to move. And he does, slowly easing his teeth from Will's skin and watching blood well up in its wake as he looks down to admire the mark left behind.

Will isn't the only one breathing raggedly. He pauses to press a kiss to the bleeding wound, and when he draws back from that, his voice sounds far rougher than it had when Will's hands had been wrapped around his throat. "You did well, Will. Very well; I'm proud." Hannibal catches a drop of blood with his tongue, saving it from staining the sheets, but he forces himself to move after that, looking up at the utterly debauched picture Will makes and well aware how he must look in turn. Blood does look black in the moonlight, and it's still wet and hot on Hannibal's lips. An intoxicating metallic rush of a taste unique to Will Graham.

Will had asked for this and Hannibal had obeyed. It hurts, his body shakes, strains to hold still, but he remains and breathes harshly through it. He stares out the window, at the moon's glow that's a stark contrast to the inky night sky. He holds Hannibal's hand and tries to picture the mark that will be left from the doctor's clean work. It will be worth it. This, like his neck, had been his choice. It is empowering to be able to choose and consent to pain, to have Hannibal listen and oblige him.

When the force lessens and teeth begin to draw back, Will sighs, eyelids fluttering at the flood of relief. The feel of air hitting his wet, reddened skin, has a shiver crawling over his body. Will relaxes
his hold marginally, blood rushing back into his cold hand. He barely registers the kiss being being pressed to the wound, the softness being overshadowed by the throb of pain. He finally does turn away from the window when Hannibal moves to get a better look at him and his leg is placed gently down on the bed.

Hannibal's rough voice praising him coupled with the sight of that bloody mouth has Will springing into action. He scrabbles upward, dropping Hannibal's hand in favor of placing both of his own hands on Hannibal's face and yanking him into a messy kiss, one where he licks at and inside Hannibal's mouth, tongue seeking his own blood.

Will is a wonder like this, a picture Hannibal silently locks away in his mind to put to paper at a later date. Dark shading for blood, pooling in the line left behind by Hannibal's teeth. Harsh shadows to outline the moonlight. And nothing more than the most visceral expression of mixed desire and savagery than Hannibal has ever seen carved into Will's face. He looks completely undone, debauched, the tension of pain in his shoulders, the trembling muscles of his abdomen. Yet his eyes are alight with desire, and Hannibal doesn't need to meet Will's eyes to read his intention. In a sense, Hannibal believes he knows Will's actions before Will does, and he makes a point to settle the other man's leg back down on the bed the mere second before Will acts.

His hand is cold, circulation returning to it now that Will's grip isn't so tight, and yet all Hannibal can do is catch himself with it as Will shoves himself up and grabs. He pulls Hannibal in and Hannibal manages to catch himself instead of risking the drag of his body against Will's, but only just. There is no subtlety here, no grace. Just hunger. Will kisses to own and Hannibal responds in kind, meeting the kiss with equal fervor and a deeply satisfied ferocity. Before, the scratch of Will's beard had been unfamiliar but welcome. Now it's exactly what he needs to feel, an answering roughness, the sharpness of Will's teeth and the heat of his tongue. Hannibal allows him this, allows Will to steal his own blood back, allows him to taste how intoxicating he is.

Hannibal pushes him back again, not breaking the kiss. He pushes until Will's back has once again hit the bed and he allows himself to drop to his forearms, bracing himself above Will, pinning him in place. He's careful not to push beyond this, but he doesn't hesitate to wind a hand in Will's hair firmly, gripping to feel the familiar slide between his fingers, to feel Will strain to deepen the kiss, answering his efforts with a sound low in his throat, reminiscent of the same growl as before. Everything about Will Graham is intoxicating and tempting.

Saliva mixes with blood, creating a smear along his mouth and between their lips as they give and take. There is no concern for technique or sensuality, just a raw need that Hannibal allows to take place and this delights Will. Will can taste himself, taste the unique metallic tang of his blood, and it's entirely different than sucking a droplet of red away after a prick or a paper cut to one's finger. He licks at Hannibal's teeth, letting his tongue slide against the sharp point of canines.

Hannibal is dangerous.

And Will is growing to realize just how much he loves that fact.

Once more, he's pushed and then pinned to the bed. Will's hands move along Hannibal's trapezius muscle then down to the latissimus dorsi, alternating between kneading and scraping his nails along skin. One palm covers the Verger brand, flattening against ridged and gnarled skin. His mark. Between the possessive sound Hannibal makes and the hand in his hair, Will is awash with insistent desire, begging for attention. It's then he wonders if Hannibal had been abiding by the command he had issued a month ago - to not touch himself. He has to ask.
Will breaks away from the kiss, eyes searching Hannibal's face, his hands coming to the waist of the man on top of him. He wants to pull down or push up, but he knows how that ends. "Have you..." His voice is low, but quizzically soft and he struggles with finding his wording. "Have you obeyed me, all this while?"

The line between them is blurred, a sharp point softened. Hannibal is well aware that he needs to draw back before this is locked into something Will isn't ready for, yet he cannot deny his need to claim further. He's not a man ruled by his desire - for violence or for sex - and yet this has surpassed his expectations for both. The taste of blood between them, shared, Will kissing him with a deeper hunger; every second of it burns through him, the fire only stoked higher by the way Will's hands flatten over his neck and shoulders, down his back. Every scrape of nails has him kissing deeper, and he will be mildly ashamed to admit how much he's lost himself in this later. But this is a gift Will has given, and Hannibal may be controlled, but he's not immune.

So though Will breaking away from the kiss leaves him aching to lean in again, it's for the best. Hannibal merely takes a moment to attempt to control his breathing, eyes closing at the press of Will's hands over the brand on his back. They soon move to his waist and pause. It's a pointed hesitation, one with weight behind it, and Hannibal opens his eyes to look down at Will, still breathing heavily, admiring the slight stain of black-red-blood upon Will's lips in the moonlight.

But the question is like a physical blow. Not unpleasant, but the reminder of the month-long command has his breath hitching audibly. Will doesn't need to explain; he can only be talking about one thing. Hannibal looks down at him, weighing his answer, testing the admission on his tongue. He won't lie. Can't lie, not to Will. But he's well aware the rush of power his words hold. He wants to see that power spark hot behind Will's eyes. "Does the possibility thrill you? That you might have that level of control over me?" He asks, his own voice lower, matching Will's tone. "That you merely need to issue a command and it will be followed?" He trails off, leaving the words hanging for a moment before he meets Will's eyes. "Yes. I have."

As soon as he hears Hannibal's breath catch, Will knows. He risks eye contact because he wants to see how Hannibal deals with the admission. Hannibal is a proud man, yes, but Will also knows that, when possible, Hannibal finds it to be satisfying to obey him; it's tantalizing to watch Will assert his control. But this command had come from a petty place and at the time he'd meant it to be taken as a punishment.

The question that's directed at him - if he'd be thrilled - has Will licking his bottom lip in a deliberate show that yes, it does thrill him. Even though he'd been more than unfair, Hannibal had listened and the order had been obeyed. It's difficult to imagine the resolve it would take, for Will has been rather frequent in the pleasuring of himself while in the shower. "Good," Will replies, a smile coming to his lips. "Then I think we ought to do something about that, don't you?" He rubs at the brand slowly before a fingertip traces just outside of it, going around in a circle.

The command had been petty, a parting shot to assert control following a situation which had none. Yet despite it, Hannibal had simply chosen to use it as a lesson, as a guarantee of sorts. Will is allowed to issue commands, small or grand, and while it is entirely Hannibal's choice whether or not those commands are followed, he will gladly do them. And the reason is simple: The look on Will's face when he knows. It's full of power, a sudden shift of it, and despite the fact that their lips are still red with blood and Will's thigh carries a clear open wound, Hannibal suspects he is not fully in control now. Not that he minds; Will is stunning regardless.

And in truth, Hannibal is sorely tempted. The violence has knocked him slightly off-center.
Everything is marginally tilted, from morals to desires. The touch to the brand has Hannibal breathing out sharply, caught between the dichotomy of cauterized numbness and hypersensitivity. Beyond Will, no one has ever touched the brand. Hannibal had staunchly denied treatment not by his own hand, seeing no reason to give the 'doctors' more reason to slide needles into his veins. So the touch has his grip in Will's hair tightening slightly, the fingers of his other hand curling silently in the sheets. "I believe what I want - in this case - is irrelevant, Will. It was your order, was it not? But the rules still stand," he adds, and even his voice sounds rougher with frustration over it.

From the response he received those many months ago with touching the brand, Will is aware that it remains a sensitive spot for Hannibal. Pulling any reaction from Hannibal has Will feeling accomplished, even if it's just a shudder of a breath. He feels proud, elated. "Of course," Will replies with ease, and he gently slides his hands to the front to push at Hannibal's shoulders, signaling for the older man to give him space and Hannibal, ever the gentleman, lets go of his hair and relents. Will doesn't feel rejected and he's not running away; he may want to Hannibal to touch more, but he's not brash enough to go demanding it. Anyway, he has an idea.

"I'm going to touch myself, Hannibal," Will declares simply, sliding out of the bed. He strides with purpose over to the window, the brush of fabric against the bite is agitating, but nonetheless it serves as a lovely reminder of what just took place. Will leans against the window, the glass pane cold against his back, but refreshing at the same time. Although he's never done this before - playing the seducer - he plans on putting on a show. "You're welcome to touch yourself, but maybe you'd rather watch?" His eyebrow arches just a little as he brings his hand to the waistband of his boxers, thumb hooking under the elastic. "You're also welcome to come over here and touch," Will murmurs and he tugs slightly downward, the fabric edging lower a few inches and exposing his pelvis and hip bones more. "Anything," he adds because yes, if Hannibal wants to remain resolute, Will will test him.
"Perhaps. Though a collar serves no purpose but to declare ownership. I have made no secret of whose name is on my tag. But a collar without a leash and a firm hand will do nothing to tame the creature wearing it. Collar a wolf and it's merely a wolf with a collar. It will not lay at your feet and whine for scraps. A collar will not stay its hunger in the face of convenience. Do not presume your hand is steady and your leash attached, Will."

Chapter Notes

Big round of applause for Dapperscript editing this whole chapter by herself, woo hoo n.n! ♥
Enjoy some smut, some tension, some feels...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Hesitating only a moment at the press of Will's hands, Hannibal studies the open expression on Will's face before he relents. He releases his grip on Will's hair reluctantly and carefully rolls off of him at Will's prompting, cautiously curious but confident this isn't Will running away. He looks centered, calm, but still with that deep need written all across his body. Hannibal simply watches as Will slides to the edge of the bed and gets up, but his announcement knots something in Hannibal's chest, a hot streak of want coursing through him. It is no secret he wants Will - that he has for years. He expects this to be like it was before. To be told to turn away, or to have Will held just out of arm's reach, so the reality of the situation catches him off guard.
Will is allowing him to watch this time, and giving him permission to touch himself. These are likely not mutually exclusive, though it seems almost phrased like it, and while Hannibal does want, the decision isn't difficult. Of everything they've done, what had been most maddening had been feeling Will against him without being able to touch him, or see him. He plans to rectify that now. Something tells him that looking away at this point would be seen as rejection. In this, Will is ready. Hannibal has no doubt. Though Will's final offer - that Hannibal can touch him - is enough to drag a rougher breath from him, one that forms around Will's name like a prayer.

Perhaps Will isn't used to seducing another, but he's doing so with ease. Hannibal swallows and sits up, his attention rapt on Will. He looks stunning, backlit against the moon's glow. His body is both light and harsh shadows, and the image again burns into his mind. He aches to touch - himself, or Will, at this point - but he's not willing to take his eyes off of Will, to stop looking at every inch of skin on display. The shadows that outline Will's musculature, and the dark, bloodied stain against his inner thigh, already slowly trailing blood down his leg. Hannibal makes a silent note to treat the wound as soon as he's able, but then his attention is once more on Will and there is no disguising the desire in his own eyes, nor the tenting of his pants as he looks at Will.

"You have been thinking this past month," Hannibal muses, sounding breathless. "This is bold for you, Will." Bold and beautiful. Just like Will.

Will has Hannibal's undivided attention on him, the man clearly captivated by the scene playing out. He hadn't been expecting it. Will knows this and it makes it all the sweeter. He doesn't want to disappoint, but he's mostly too far gone to be filled with much self-doubt; arousal allows him to be far braver in this than Will would have thought himself capable of. He eases the waistband lower, his other hand coming to adjust his cock to be vertical and flush against his lower belly as just the tip is exposed, peeking out from his boxers.

"Yeah, I have been thinking," Will confirms. "Have you, Hannibal?"

Will brings his hand to his neck, letting fingertips ghost over that scar fondly. He then strokes down his neck, down his clavicle and then over a dusky nipple - illustrating that he's been paying attention. He twitches at the still unfamiliar sensation. Will goes further, his other hand finally giving him some relief as he presses it against his trapped erection as he pinches his nipple, breath hitching at the twinge of pain mixed with the slight pleasurable attention lower.

Despite the danger inherent in this, how easy it would be to misstep and throw Will into a situation he's not ready for, Hannibal can't help the faintest twitch of a smile. There's nothing amusing about this, not in the strictest sense; it's a smile of pride, of admiration. As rapt as he is, Hannibal is still a man well versed in manipulation, yet Will has raised it to an art form. It's mesmerizing to watch him work, caught between the intellectual and his own lust, which ultimately is winning out. Will's body is his manipulation and Hannibal doesn't care enough to distance himself. He's fixated, gaze heated as it drags over Will's lithe form like a physical touch. Yet he doesn't miss the fact that the moon has cast him in full glow while backlighting Will; even with Will Graham on full display, Hannibal is the one under this particular spotlight. It's as impressive as it is symbolic.

"You know I have been. Though perhaps not as decisively as you." Hannibal's voice is low and overly cautious, like he's afraid to startle Will out of his current boldness. He'd argue that he can't be blamed. Will's touch is pointed, gravitating to every place Hannibal has touched him, mapping out constellations across his own skin. From the raised edges of the bite on his neck, down to the nipple Hannibal had paid such close attention to. He watches, rapt, tempted to drop his gaze to what he'd caught only a glimpse of, but Will's display is designed to be enjoyed, not rushed. Hannibal wets his
lips, perhaps more thrilled by the lingering taste of blood on his tongue. And when Will's free hand
drops down, he decides staying still - creating distance - is no longer an option.

He stands from the bed and crosses the distance to the window Will has pressed himself against.
Without touching it, Hannibal can feel the chill radiating from it, but it has nothing on the heat from
Will's skin. He does nothing but watch for a second, swallowing down the urge to do something
reckless at the sight of Will's cock pressed so firmly against his hand. Then he simply raises his own
hand, cupping Will's cheek to turn his head so he can catch his lips in a kiss, capturing his lower lip
to clean the remnants of blood from it with his tongue.

"You are horrible for my control," Hannibal murmurs against his lips, his hand dropping to Will's
throat, stroking the scar Will had traced before.

As much as he may want to press Hannibal to tell him what he's thought about, Will isn't particularly
interested in a verbal dance. Will could open up and share, dangle his words like squirming bait, but
with Hannibal's eyes raking over his skin, it hardly seems important at this point in time. He has
Hannibal fully enraptured and it's a powerful feeling to be desired and wanted, yet he knows
Hannibal will be careful, cautious - he has to be. This is new ground they're stepping onto - Will
letting Hannibal be involved in his pleasure and despite him initiating this - allowing it - Will is still
riddled with a degree of uncertainty.

A spark of pride at luring Hannibal flashes in Will's eyes as the man strides over. He can see
Hannibal looking where he won't allow himself to touch and Will gives himself a little squeeze to
show that yes, I see what you want. He can't do much more than that as his face is maneuvered into a
kiss, a tongue coming to swipe at the swapped blood. At the comment, Will chuckles, breathless. He
feels breathless far too often after kissing Hannibal.

"I wanted you over here anyway," he says. "Don't take your eyes off of me..." He drops his voice as
he makes an effort to flick his eyes downward. Both hands are at the band of his boxers and he
presses his neck into Hannibal's hand as he slides the fabric lower, exposing himself completely.

Every moment with Will is a measure in control. In capturing it, pinning it, and using it to keep their
interactions safe. Will may be drunk on his own desire and confident because of it, but there are
small tells that Hannibal can still pick up on, and he cements them in his mind, leashing himself to
keep his touch safe and his desire restrained. When the desire fades and Will is left in the familiar
walls of his own mind, Hannibal wants no lingering doubt or uncertainty that he'd gone too far. The
issue in this endeavor is Will himself. The way his hand squeezes his cock when he knows Hannibal
is looking (enough to draw a hitched breath from Hannibal's throat, like he'd been the one touched),
the way he issues his commands lowly, expecting them to be followed, and the way he frees himself
from his boxers after telling Hannibal to watch.

Desire flares hot and violent, and Hannibal's exhale is so tight when it forms Will's name that it's
almost a growl. Hannibal's free hand settles on the glass behind them, the cold a sudden shock of
sensation to draw him back from what feels like the edge of desire. It would be so simple to fall off,
to allow himself to cross a few lines, but before the thought has even settled, it's already been
dismissed. Hannibal watches, aching to touch, to taste, his breathing rougher as he settles into Will's
space. He does as told: he doesn't take his eyes off of Will.

Nor does he take his hands from his skin. Leaning against the window, Hannibal curls his free hand
behind Will's back, placing it pointedly low, the chill from his palm seeping into the warmth of Will's
skin as a stark contrast, a reminder that Hannibal is present and aware, watching. Will's pulse beats
steady under his other hand and after only a moments' consideration, Hannibal tightens his hold,
slowly pressing Will back against the window as he leans in, voice low but gaze drinking in every second of what Will wants him to see.

"Why would I want to?" His thumb brushes over Will's pulse, pointedly. "May I get in behind you? I wish to hold you while I watch you."

His heart is beating wildly in his chest. This is new. Thrilling. Nerve wrecking, but Will won't stop. Can't stop. He's exposed himself to Hannibal, asked Hannibal to watch - no demanded it - and now he's being indulged. The intent focus is both flattering and maddening, he has power, the decisions rest in his hands. His boxers are only tugged low enough that his cock and balls are free, Will not seeing the point in ridding himself of the article of clothing completely. There's a part of him that enjoys the slight restriction of the fabric. Being completely naked seems like it would be going too far. It's not a step he wants to take yet.

The question has him pausing for a moment, but he sees no problem with the positional change. Will shuffles forward as best as he can with his underwear still around his thighs and Hannibal swiftly takes his place against the window. Will is not subtle in the least as he leans up against the the half-clothed man, his back against Hannibal's chest and he makes a pointed effort to rub his ass slowly against Hannibal's own telling hardness. The sleep pants are soft against him, but there's an obvious heat there and a soft moan leaves his lips at the insinuation of it all.

Hannibal is aroused by him. Wants him. The evidence is there, Will is shamelessly grinding against it. In the beginning this had been too much, but now he's intrigued. Emboldened by the fact. He most likely won't be be allowed to continue, one or both of Hannibal's hands will come to hips to still him, surely.

His head dips back, resting against Hannibal's shoulder and he breathes out an amused, "Going to stop me?"

It takes no time to change position once Hannibal's request is registered. Will pauses but immediately agrees, moving to make room and Hannibal neatly fills the space left behind. The window has been slightly warmed by Will's skin, but it's still cold compared to the rest of the room, and compared to Hannibal's own skin. It's enough to distract him, to draw a sharper breath from his throat. While the room may be warm, the window is still being cooled by the icy wind outside the house, a sensory reminder of the ideal position they find themselves in beyond the obvious. Outside the wind has picked up, warning of an oncoming storm, blowing the lightest of powdered snow in small circular squalls. Yet Hannibal and Will remain safe inside.

For a moment, Hannibal considers their position - more out of a desire to distance himself enough to regain his control than anything else - but Will derails the attempt almost immediately. There's no disguising the rough sound he makes, clipped and almost startled as Will presses back against him. For that split second, Hannibal forgets himself, his grip tightening involuntarily on Will's throat, and his other arm wrapping tightly around Will. His palm splays almost possessively over the grin cut into Will's abdomen, nails pressed against the sensitive flesh almost dangerously.

"Will," Hannibal grinds out, a visceral sound that is equal parts pleasure and danger coiled into a complicated blend.

When he catches himself, his hand twitches on Will's scar, physical proof that he's torn between allowing this or stopping Will. Hannibal groans softly, just the softest of breaths, and as Will's head comes to rest on his shoulder, his voice curled in amusement, Hannibal bends down enough to bite the crux of Will's neck and shoulder. It's sharp, unannounced, and he holds it long enough to work
out some of the frustration boiling inside. While it doesn't break the skin, it's in no way gentle, and Hannibal's touch is heavy with reluctance when he slides his hand over to Will's hip, gripping him tightly. Only then does he let go, breath hot against Will's skin.

"I would rather not. But... yes." He swallows, and the hand on Will's throat slowly adjusts, moving lower, spanning wide the way he had taught Will. And as he speaks, Hannibal begins to squeeze. "This is not about me, Will. This is about you. Reckless as you are..."

Will cares little for what the weather's doing outside. The only thing he's interested in is what's occurring between these four walls, with them being the subject matter. He's caught in this blistering moment of pushing boundaries and pushing forward. His lewd movement is rewarded with constriction increasing around his throat and an arm wrapping around his torso and nails biting into his skin. His name growled out sounds divine - Will can hear the frustration, the longing and a threat in just the one syllable. It's fascinating. It's also something he wants to continue drawing out--

But an abrupt bite to the juncture between his neck and shoulder has Will stumbling in his ministrations and uttering out a, "Fuck " in surprise. It stings and he immediately glances down, trying in vain to look at the mark at his thigh. He can see blood seeping slowly into the cotton of his boxers and this has him staring at the dark splotch in a bit of a stupor. Blood used to be be alarming, a distasteful sight signaling the need to look inside a killer's mind or worse, his own. He'd had plenty of nightmares and hallucinations of him losing control and ending up splattered, but this isn't one of those times.

When his hips are once again stilled, Will comes back to the present. Hannibal's hand positions itself with intent on his throat and Will is spurred into action, chest heaving as he lets his fingers curl around the base of his cock. He grips loosely, stroking up, a relieved moan working out of his mouth. It hadn't been that long since he's done this, but with Hannibal holding and choking him and bites burning over his skin, the sensation in undoubtedly much sweeter. Will's hips attempt to jerk forward, seeking the friction from the movement.

The bite is both reprimand and a frantic bid for his own control, and it accomplishes both of these goals perfectly. Will jolts under Hannibal's teeth, under his hands, trapped in Hannibal's embrace, and his curse shatters some of the tension that had been growing between them. Hannibal holds the bite until Will's hips stutter to a stop, until he feels more in control of himself, and only then does he draw back, still obeying, his eyes still on Will, but he can feel Will's sudden uncertainty. Will has fumbled his own control, dropping it neatly into Hannibal's hand. But instead of lording it over the younger man, instead of yanking the leash and renegotiating the terms, Hannibal presses a kiss to the reddened skin where his teeth had pressed.

"Language."

His hand curls around Will's throat with refocused intent, and Will's voice breaks sweetly on a moan, his hand moving loosely over his cock in a way that sparks heat low in Hannibal's stomach. He wants, but he wants to see Will fall apart far more. Wants to know what he looks like wrapped in pleasure, wants to feel Will clutching at him so hard it risks injury when he can no longer stand it. His own desire is inconsequential, regardless of how pressing it feels. This is what Hannibal wants. And when Will's hips twitch against his hand, Hannibal considers only for a moment before he slides his hand up and down Will's side, tracing the edges of the abdominal scar.

"Good. Much better," Hannibal praises lowly, keeping a steady pressure at Will's throat to only just take the edge off of his breathing. His fingers press in ever so slightly harder, curling, careful not to push too far, but aiming to make him feel safely light, to increase the intensity of sensation. Hannibal
may not be able to touch Will directly; he may not be ready for it. But there are many ways to have a 
hand in Will's pleasure, and this feels the most fitting, given the deep bruising on his own throat. 
Hannibal hums a soft note of satisfaction as he watches, hungry with his own desire, yet transfixed 
by the pass of Will's hand and the hammering pulse against his palm.

"Tighten your hold, Will. You wished to show me? Show me. My beautiful, reckless boy. Impulsive 
and daring to a fault." His voice is still low, strained with his own want, but warm just the same, and 
his breath his hot against Will's ear as he sucks the lobe carefully between his teeth.

"Will you trust me with this?" He wants to know, curious, as he flexes the hand on Will's throat. "If 
it gets to be too much, tap my arm three times."

In the shower, he had the privacy to take his time and indulge himself. Will had a selection of 
fantasies and depending on his mood, he'd select whichever suited him best. He'd had a lot of time to 
think on various things, such as wondering how Hannibal's hand would feel touching his dick, or 
how Hannibal might look on his knees sucking him off. Sometimes their positions were reversed, but 
those were less common and left him feeling shaky and uncertain afterward. Despite nothing of that 
nature taking place now, Will still feels like he's burning up, sensations overloading him, but still, he 
doesn't fall. Hannibal has him. (He's safe.)

His hips are allowed to thrust forward and he does so, unabashedly. The approval has Will's eyelids 
slipping shut, his lips wanting to quirk into a pleased smile, but he holds himself back as best as he 
can. He doesn't particularly want to be smiling during this. Smiling seems romantic, and he doesn't 
want to be taking part in any sort of romance. No, Will is going to be selfish, seek his own 
gratification and Hannibal will assist in this. That is the arrangement that they've carved out for each 
other. (He's in control.)

My beautiful, reckless boy... Will groans and obeys, fingers clenching around his cock and gasping at 
the jolt that goes through his body. Later, he may admonish himself for feeling such a thrill from 
Hannibal's use of the possessive 'my,' but not now. A mouth, hot and distracting, is on his ear, and 
Will's eyebrows furrow as he tries to focus on Hannibal's words. He nods, just the slightest 
movement of his head. He doesn't know why he'd ever want this to stop. Hannibal's gripping his 
throat, his airflow slightly constricted, reminding him of danger. His hand pumps up and down his 
length, twisting every so slightly for a varied sensation. His hips move on their own accord and 
pleasure pools low in his gut. He won't last long, not with their version of foreplay and Hannibal 
stroking his scar. (He's still in control - isn't he?)

A nod. Yes. Yes, Will trusts him with this. It's all the consent that Hannibal needs to carefully but 
steadily push harder. Will is stunning like this, his head leaning against Hannibal's shoulder, pulse 
pounding under Hannibal's palm. Hannibal kisses him, lips brushing Will's ear, then down below it, 
skirting the edges of his own fingers wrapped around Will's throat and carefully tightening in small 
increments. But as thrilling a sensation as Will's pulse under his hand is, Hannibal has no desire to 
disobey Will's earlier comment. (Don't take your eyes off of me.) He has no plans to. Will's body is 
tight and tense, chasing the pleasure he's been aching for.

He's a sight to behold. Hannibal's interest in the male form has never been quite so rapt as it is now. 
Before he could appreciate aesthetics, spending most of his time entranced by the violence he could 
spill onto every body, by what artistry he could evoke. But this is different. This is thrilling in a 
different way, sexuality seeping thick and hot over his senses. He wants this man, wants his mind, 
wants his body, and yes, wants his heart regardless if it's being freely offered. Yet in this he won't 
take. He merely observes, desire curling tight inside as Will's hand tightens - as Hannibal had
instructed - and Will's gasps and moans are like blades slicing through the tissues and sinew of his own control. He won't lose it; there are still rules, but Will's voice raised in desperation, in a pleasure he's never been allowed to witness is far more dangerous to his control.

Hannibal doesn't need the slightly desperate edge to Will's voice to know he's getting close. The heavy scent of sex is intoxicating, and Will's rhythm has lost a bit of its edge. His sounds are more desperate, and Hannibal can see the glisten of moisture he aches to taste beading at the tip of Will's swollen cock, hastily spread around by his hand. He won't last long now and Hannibal swallows down the nearly blinding rush of desire.

"Three taps," he reminds Will, his own voice low and rough as he presses a kiss to the swell of his shoulder, feeling the frantic work of muscle under his lips. "And trust me. Deep breath."

It's all the warning Hannibal gives. He wraps his arm tight around Will's torso, hand braced and splayed over his chest, holding him securely. He finds Will's nipple again and pinches it bordering on cruelly to force a gasp into Will's lungs. And once it's caught, Hannibal tightens his hold on Will's throat. It's careful, intended to do no lasting damage, but Hannibal's grip is suddenly firm. Will's circulation will continue. But until Hannibal relents or Will taps out, he won't be allowed to breathe.

"Show me, Will," Hannibal urges, "I wish to see you."

Hannibal's mouth pressing kisses onto his skin is only on the edge of Will's awareness. The hand on his neck, along his abdomen, and his own moving furiously are ruling his senses. He is single minded in this pursuit, forgetting about all the frustration and uncertainty of before. It doesn't matter if Hannibal won't touch directly, Hannibal is watching him. This is as sexually intimate as they have ever been and it's completely exhilarating.

Nipple painfully pinched, Will does take a large inhale. It's then that his breathing is cut off. His hand slows, and a moment later he panics. His eyes snap open. He can't breathe. His body struggles against the restriction, but that sensual voice encouraging him has Will relenting a few seconds later. He trusts. He does. He resumes touching, his hand speeding up over his cock, hard and leaking, his impending climax buzzes in his ears. He loses himself. (Show me, show me.) Will shakes, his muscles tense and his eyes widen--

His orgasm is like nothing he's experienced before and the extreme rush takes him by surprise. Unable to breathe, his brain deprived of oxygen-rich blood and the buildup of carbon dioxide has served to both increase and intensify the pleasure. Will's dick pulsates, coating his hand in a familiar sticky wetness. He feels strangely euphoric, relieved, basking in a womb of warmth as he sags against Hannibal. His hand lets go and hangs limply by his side.

Hannibal is aware of the potential for fallout, for Will's panic to override his mind, but while he's aware of it, he refuses to err on this side of caution. This entire encounter has been nothing but visceral, intense. Will doesn't want to be coddled. He doesn't want soft words or touches; he wants bloodied marks, wants a controlled pain, and he wants a beautifully selfish pleasure by his own hand. Will's panic when Hannibal's hand closes enough to cut off his air says it all. He stills, surprised, and the spike of adrenaline is one Hannibal can scent between them. In those few perfect seconds before he soothes him, Will is afraid. Will is forced to remember who Hannibal is, and what he is. He's forced to remember what his hands have done, how many lives they've ended, and just who he had freely let in behind him. Whom he had allowed to hold him, and put a hand to his throat.

The rush of Will's mingled trust and fear is unlike anything else. It's power as Hannibal has never felt it, beyond death, beyond sex. He could crush, could squeeze, but he chooses not to. And barring
those few immediate seconds of panic, Will seems to realize the same thing. He trusts, desperate, frantic, and while his voice has been cut off and deep red bruises will bloom in the morning, his hand flies over himself, his desperation shifting and changing, and Hannibal watches every moment. He braces Will as he tenses, as his muscles shake, and he holds him securely. Will isn't allowed to make a single move Hannibal hasn't permitted him to.

When Will's pleasure crests and he seizes almost violently in the safety of Hannibal's arms, Hannibal's attention is rapt. If he's granted only this sight every day for the rest of his life - Will's expression creased in agonized bliss - he will never tire of it. He speaks, but in languages that aren't English, his voice low and rough, his tone filled with pride. He tells Will everything he can't in this moment, and through it all, Will's pulse is hard against Hannibal's palm. It's no longer as rapid, his heart attempting to compensate for the lack of oxygen. As transfixed by Will's pleasure as he is, Hannibal is still mindful of Will's pulse, of the look on his face, of how dazed he appears. And only when Will sags back against him does Hannibal move.

He removes his hand slowly, mindful of reintroducing air too quickly, and his palm runs soothingly over Will's throat. His lips press to the arch of Will's throat, almost in thanks, and he switches to English simply to tell Will, "You did so well. Just as I asked," and then carefully takes control once again. Hannibal reaches down and loops his arms under Will, gathering him in close and then up into his arms like he weighs nothing. Saving Will from the walk, he carries him to the bed where he carefully lays him out, indulging himself only as long as it takes to press a kiss to Will's forehead.

"I would like to tend to your wounds, clean you up, but I must leave for a moment to do so. Will you allow me?"

As the haze of his climax starts to slowly clear and Hannibal's grip eases, Will has the distinct realization that he hadn't been in control at all. It's settles over his shaky limbs like a blanket. It should probably bother him that he'd so willingly allowed Hannibal to slide in and take back control, but it doesn't. What is more startlingly is how Will had surrendered and let Hannibal choke him to the point of cutting off his breath. Yes, they had discussed it previously and Will had said he was okay with it up until the point of passing out, but it was still his first time going that far. Overall, he is in a daze from it, body trying to find its equilibrium again. He's vaguely aware of erotic asphyxiation being a paraphilia and yet again, this is something Will hadn't thought he'd ever need to apply to himself. But there's no denying how phenomenal his orgasm had felt, and what better way to try out something potentially harmful than with a doctor by his side?

It's when he hears English, that Will clues into the fact that Hannibal had been speaking something else when he'd been coming all over his hand. (And he's aware what lapsing into another language is all about). On some level, the praise irritates him because it hadn't been his intent to do as Hannibal had asked. To add insult to injury, Hannibal sees fit to lift him and carry him over to the bed like some useless little wife. Will wants to be indignant, he truly does, but still, he feels so good. He says nothing on the matter.

He blinks at Hannibal before glancing down at his sullied hand. His boxers are still tangled around his thighs, his dick is softening and wet and he feels like a mess with very little dignity. "Knock yourself out," Will mumbles in reply, not particularly interested in being overly nice right now.

While Will's response is the picture of disgruntled, Hannibal merely accepts it for the permission it is. He says nothing else, doesn't even smile. He merely looks at Will again, soaking in the picture he makes like a man gifted a glimpse of God himself, and then he steps back away from the bed and turns. His own desire is painful, and his control is clinging only by the edges, but the spark of power
of violence - had helped. It had been a different kind of release, emotional and visceral and strong, and he feels more in control of himself now than he had been with Will grinding back against him.

Hannibal takes only as long as is necessary. He retreats to the guest room instead of the en suite in his own room simply for the ease of the medical supplies. Then he steps across the hall into the bathroom. Running the water in the sink until it’s comfortably warm, Hannibal quickly picks out the necessary supplies and within the span of two minutes, he's made his way back to his room, where Will is still settled, sprawled out on the sheets, looking carved from alabaster itself under the heavy glow of the moon. Swallowing back a surge of emotion that has no place in the slightly tighter lines of Will's body (he's clearly realized by now that he'd never really had the control in this exchange; he'd forfeited it the moment he'd allowed Hannibal behind him) Hannibal joins him on the bed. Still silent, Hannibal brings the warm washcloth to Will's dominant hand, taking the time to carefully clean Will's palm. He takes far too much time for such a simple task, but he feels it important to allow Will a moment of comfort following something so violent. Then he merely presses the cloth to Will's hand and lets go, easing his hands back down to carefully move Will's leg to the side. "If you would, finish cleaning yourself off," Hannibal instructs delicately, briefly eyeing Will's soft cock with a definite twist of desire in his eyes, but then his gaze simply drops to Will's thigh. Hannibal Eyes the bite, and how the fabric from Will's boxers has pressed against it, staining it with blood. He makes a small sound - something akin to disapproval, though not at Will - and reaches to divest Will of them, though hesitates just as he's touched the waistband.

"May I?" Hannibal asks politely, sounding more himself with every passing second. "I would like to clean the mark, but these are in the way."

No reply is given as Hannibal takes his leave, not that Will is expecting one, really. Will scoots up into a sitting position as best he can. He's in a bit of a stupor, caught between the inconvenient assumption that he'd been calling the shots when he'd told Hannibal to watch and the obvious truth that he'd allowed Hannibal to take back control. Does it bother him? (A bit). Does it matter? (He doesn't know). He glances at the window, watching the beginnings of a winter storm brewing. He can relate. In his mind, Will can easily recreate the debauched image: himself in Hannibal clutches, leaning into him, wanton and baring his throat. Hannibal choking him, murmuring exultations in a foreign tongue. He shakes his head, the picture dissolving. That’s enough of that.

Will really doesn't have much time to stew as Hannibal returns with the necessary supplies and joins him on the bed. The bastard looks self-satisfied as he takes a warm washcloth and proceeds to spend far too much time cleaning his hand off. Will says nothing until Hannibal gives him the cloth.

"What? Don't want to wash my dick off too? You were all eager to carry me over here after like some goddamn woman." He's being crude, but it feels safer to verbally act out a little. He's bared a private part of himself to Hannibal and now Will feels that familiar uncomfortable state of vulnerability.

Despite his statement, Will does as was requested, quick and thorough in cleaning himself. When Hannibal chooses to be stupidly polite about his boxers, Will shoots him a pointed look. He tosses the washcloth at Hannibal's lap and slips his own boxers off - because yes, he can handle that task all on his own. It's not done as fluidly as Will would have liked, but he's eventually victorious after squirming around and he chucks the stained fabric to the floor. He lays back down, not wanting to watch the medical side of the next actions take place.

"There's a fair number of cases of individuals dying from autoerotic asphyxiation gone wrong," Will says conversationally. "Sure it was a good idea to introduce that to me?"
The look Will is given following his comment is mild, but even the glance makes it very clear that Hannibal is less than enthusiastic regarding Will's turn of phrase. Hannibal merely purses his lips in mild displeasure but otherwise remains silent. He understands where the comments are coming from; Will's posture - so open and pliant before - has curled inwards again. He's defensive, perhaps aware of his vulnerability, of his own actions. Hannibal silently admonishes himself for leaving, for giving Will time enough in his own head to examine what had transpired between them. That is the ultimate problem with a man like Will Graham: he thinks too much.

Will tossing the soiled washcloth at him nears a line crossed, particularly considering where it lands. Hannibal draws in a slow breath to maintain his own control but simply takes the warm cloth and sets it aside on the bedside table, to be cleaned later. The same cannot be said for Will's boxers, though Hannibal decides that he cannot fault Will his acting out. Instead he merely watches it with mild exasperation and when Will looks away to allow him access to the bite wound he'd asked for, Hannibal doesn't question it. He simply opens one of the wipes and gets to work, careful to clean dried blood from Will's leg, and to clean the edges of the wound itself. It has bled nicely, flushing the wound out the way Hannibal had intended.

Will's voice provides a distraction for them both, though Hannibal doesn't take his eyes from the bite wound he's cleaning.

"I am confident in my abilities," he replies simply, almost dismissively. "I've already given you my word that you will come to no harm. Your limits began at losing consciousness; I didn't allow it to get that far. Given the scope of my rules, and your command, it seemed appropriate. Did you find it unpleasant?" Hannibal asks, and he sends Will a small look then, curious. But under the curiosity - perhaps too deep to see - is a casual smugness. He knows. He's merely giving Will an excuse if he needs one. And he suspects Will knows this.

Unlike the delicate cleaning of his hand, wounds being taken care of are easier to handle for Will. He says nothing, closing his eyes as he feels the cool wetness of a wipe come to his skin. He shivers a little, but holds himself still as Hannibal cleanses dried blood and then the actual bite injury. Will may be naked, one leg spread and yet he knows Hannibal's propriety will keep everything safe and clinical... Yet, he knows the touch isn't all that clinical. No, it may be based in logic - the knowledge that injuries should be tended to - but the actions come from a place of caring. Love.

"You know I enjoyed it," Will starts, but his voice has taken on a slight note of amusement at Hannibal's assumption. Hannibal had assumed he would never try on his own. "But I wasn't talking about your skill. Auto erotic. When the person does it to themselves, alone. You know, they hang themselves up from their closet or what have you and beat off." At this, he is cheeky enough to prop himself on his elbows to look down at Hannibal, an eyebrow lifted. What now, doctor?

It's minute, barely a flicker of expression, but Hannibal does pause. Were it anyone else, it could easily be written off, but considering the man responsible, it's a clear indicator that he simply hadn't anticipated that particular response. He's quick in recovering, but not quick enough. Will's amusement is nearly palpable and Hannibal merely looks up at him for a second, silently handing him credit for knocking him slightly off-kilter, and then he returns to the wound he's attending. "I would hope that you would use your better judgement in such matters. Follow certain rules. Never use something more than your hand to restrict your breathing. Deaths from autoerotic asphyxiation are easily avoidable."

Hannibal finally brushes the wipe over the bite itself, then sets it back on its packaging, red and bloodied, the wound bleeding freshly but sluggishly. He moves to apply an ointment to promote
healing, and then takes another strip of gauze to carefully cover the injury as he had the one on Will's neck. And while Will's positioning - his nudity - does serve a rather deep distraction, Hannibal is as clinical as he's able given the circumstances.

"If it's something you wish to explore in your own time, I will, of course teach you how to properly position your hand. Never constrict the trachea; that is, perhaps, the most important rule. Though I would strongly caution you against attempting it without my knowledge."

Catching Hannibal off guard is a nice feeling. A curl of a petty satisfaction slithers into Will. The show of surprise doesn't last long, Hannibal recovering easily, of course, but Will had caught it nonetheless. Presently, Will doesn't feel that reckless. He has no desire to attempt to rig himself up somewhere, whack off and attempt to chase the feeling. But dangling the possibility of himself doing such a thing is rewarding enough. Hannibal tries to be practical about it, offering to teach, giving advice and it's far too amusing in its own right.

Still, he wants to push Hannibal a little further (isn't that always the case?), to see what other flickers of emotion he can arouse. He sits up to allow himself a better position to watch how Hannibal responds. His wound has been tended to, the caring doctor ever diligent to patch him back up.

"What would you do if you found me hanging lifeless, I wonder?" He poses the question in a light tone, not at all suited for the subject matter. Will's eyes are bright, but his expression remains neutral. "You'd be truly alone. Again."

Hannibal is willing to humor Will in many areas. They have carefully explored fractured facets of Will's personality in depth in the past, and while their footing is tentative and uncertain these days, they have touched on a few more. New ones, like the budding antlers of a yearling. Soft, velvet-encased desire for violence, for intimacy, for a particular darkness shunned by the prime of society. In time, with careful instruction, the velvet will fall and the antlers will form cruel points. Fractured personality will reform and sharpen, and Will's becoming will progress.

But with each careful prod at the velvet there is an unspoken knowledge that certain topics are considered dangerous. Hannibal doesn't mention Abigail Hobbs, doesn't mention his desire to see Molly bloated and collecting blowflies in a swamp. And Will doesn't mention his theories regarding Mischa. Nor does he hint at leaving.

While the topic has been broached cautiously, and while Hannibal had been subtle in his responses, Will is no fool. Will has every freedom in the world here, with Hannibal. The one exception is his presence. Hannibal has implied quite heavily that if Will ever attempts to leave - truly leave - he will not do so alive. It has remained unspoken, content to rest as a matter that will never come to pass. And Hannibal had assumed that Will was not quite reckless enough to attempt to taunt a sleeping beast.

He had assumed incorrectly.

The words are like a physical blow, and Hannibal reacts like he's been struck. It's subtle, barely a flicker of his eyelashes or a squint of his eyes, the slightest curl of his lip in something that might have been a snarl on another man, but to a man as impassive as Hannibal Lecter, it's blatant. The comment is pointed and curved, aimed to cut, and Hannibal looks at Will in complete, absolute silence. This one is unlike the others. Hannibal, even while silent, makes a point to shift, to pose questions with his gaze, to speak mildly in his body language. In this moment, he doesn't move. Something shutters, and the earlier warmth behind his eyes vanishes into something markedly cold and very, very dangerous.
He watches Will, unblinking. Then he swallows and slowly draws away, leaving Will's thigh bandaged as he methodically packs away all the materials he'd used. It's surgical in its care.

"Perhaps I would be," he finally says. And while his voice seems almost light, there's no depth to it. "Though you assume much to think there is a place you could go where I would not follow."

The kit closes with a sharp snap and Hannibal gets up onto his feet to set it on the dresser across from them. Then he simply pulls open one of the drawers, locates a pair of boxers, and tosses them back to Will on the bed.

"Were you to consider such a thing one day, I would advise you to remember who you would be leaving behind. I am not truly alone so long as your memory exists in the minds of others."

He has played with other people's lives before, most notably Beverly, Chilton, Chiyoh and had quite the effect... but never his own. Not like this - threatening Hannibal with an erotic suicide of sorts. Will remembers Hannibal's unspoken promise. It had never been needed to be said aloud; Will had been able to see the possessiveness easily enough. Will is not allowed to leave. Hannibal would not allow such a thing to be tolerated. In a way, this offers Will a great deal of relief. Hannibal has staked out his claim. The expectations are bluntly set out for Will - his company, in any capacity and anything else is extra... Anything else. And Will has given a lot. A lot more than Hannibal had anticipated and hoped for, at any rate. He's let Hannibal dine on a few appetizers at the very least, sample his lust. He's kissed and been kissed, bit and been bitten. He's shown himself all too willing to be pinned down to a bed and choked.

But Will's question has frozen over Hannibal. He sees him flinch, his eyes narrow slightly and it speaks volumes. From someone like Hannibal, these minute reactions are practically shouting. Will had, incorrectly, thought he'd get irritation back as a response, just a run of the mill 'Will Graham being his usual foolish self'. As Hannibal replies, voice as detached as his movements as he packs up the supplies, Will realizes that Hannibal is angry. For a brief moment, Will can't help but flip the question around and apply it to himself - what he'd do if Hannibal were to die. Surely he wasn't deranged enough to want or have to follow. They weren't a Romeo and Juliet tragedy. But Will remembers confessing his worry regarding Hannibal losing interest in him. (I don't think I could bear it.) At the time it had been a terribly sobering realization. Now, it sits uncomfortably with him.

Underwear is thrown at him and Will feels a bit numb as he gets off the bed to slip them on easier. They're at least a size too big, but undeniably soft and made of a finer material than Will is used to. The threat that follows should shake him up, and it probably does underneath it all or will later, but Will joins Hannibal back on the bed and smiles a little.

"Yes, there's my monster showing his teeth for me." There's a sick fascination that he feels toward Hannibal, an admiration that he'd go that far to destroy.

Hannibal's movements are mechanical. He walks like he's been disconnected. While his body moves with the same grace always afforded to him, it's clear that each shift of his body, every step, every turn, is carefully being planned out. He lets nothing slip that he doesn't wish to be seen following his shock over Will's words. And now that they're out - strung up like the noose Will has so vividly painted around his own neck - Hannibal eyes them with an air of apathy he doesn't feel. Will is right. He's angry. But beyond that, in that split second, he's almost reckless.

Will being reckless is a simple matter. He pushes and he pulls, he tests, and he punches mirrors to injure himself. Hannibal being reckless is dangerous. Will wears his curious carved smile and the gash upon his forehead from Hannibal's lapses in control. People commonly die to his whims, but far
more die under the weight of his irrationality. And in the second between breaths where Will stands to slide on his boxers and the moment Hannibal eventually returns to the bed, he thinks of Chiyoh and her marksman skills, and the many bullseyes on the many people in Will Graham's former life.

He's silent as he pulls on a thin sweater - perhaps the greatest display of his mood yet - and eases back into bed, noting the drops of Will's blood on the sheets dispassionately. He offers Will no other clothing and while the urge to turn away from him lingers, Hannibal merely lays on his back, leaving space open beside him for Will to fill. He does so shortly, smiling of all things, and Hannibal is both embittered and grudgingly proud at the realization that Will wants to see this.

Eventually, however, the former wins out. His glance at Will is so cold it's almost hurt. "My sentiment for you is inconvenient," he says simply. "Do not mistake it for weakness. Your monster has more than teeth, Will. I am not collared, and I am not declawed. Tread carefully. And know there are simpler, safer ways to draw my ire."

He doesn't miss the meaning of Hannibal choosing to pull on a sweater. Apparently the older man is done baring his skin to Will. It doesn't hurt, although it does entertain Will in some fashion, once again reminded that Hannibal can be all too human at times. He will seek to punish Will in small ways as well - never as cruel as Will has been, of course. No, it will be subtle, with cold glances and small adjustments that get the point across effectively.

"When have you ever known me to be safe? Case in point, I'm in bed with a cannibal," Will blandly replies. He's been living with a murderer and a cannibal for months now, cooking with him, being cared for, all the while steadily becoming more acclimatized to this new life of theirs. He doesn't often think of Hannibal as that in his mind, lest he be reminded of Chilton's trademarked phrase 'Hannibal the Cannibal'. To Will, Hannibal was much more than a mere cannibal, psychopath or serial killer. Society's labels couldn't sum him up; Hannibal wouldn't be put in a box. Hannibal was an antagonistic force, a destructive whirlwind that caught far too many unaware and left disaster in his wake. He wore elegance and controlled calm like one of his finely tailored suits - all too eager to charm and all too quick to easily throw it all to the wind and become the ultimate predator without a moment's hesitation. How could Will not be enthralled that he had, somehow, captivated this monster?

Will shifts closer, turning to his side and fitting his body next to Hannibal's as he admires the other man's sharp profile. It's difficult to say how long this particular choice will sour Hannibal's mood for. Will is not particularly adept at assessing how deep his words cut, for Hannibal may initially react, but he keeps any wounds guarded after the fact.

"Oh, I think you have a collar on," Will murmurs, tucking his head into Hannibal's shoulder so he's closer to the other man's ear. "Love is a collar." Hannibal wouldn't kill Molly or Walter. Hannibal wouldn't kill him. To Will, this is enough to make that assertion.

Hannibal is silent as Will joins him on the bed, sliding neatly into the space left for him with an ease that Hannibal considers being bitter about. The urge is dismissed as soon as the thought crosses his mind; he is not a petty man, not in the way most are. He will not actively shut Will Graham out of his life for convenience's sake, not even for a few moments. Creating extra layers, creating a careful distance is one thing. Turning away and leaving Will to sleep alone after having Hannibal's hand around his throat, dipping into violence, is another. Hannibal is not so petty a man as to ignore the need for care. His words aside, Will had allowed him something important. That Will has once again fought back with his words alone should say something, should speak of a pattern. It's something Hannibal will look at later.
For now, he allows Will to move closer and then stills at his words. He muses over them, thoughtful, and considers the deep collar of bruises around his own throat. Fitting, perhaps, for the conversation. Hannibal is silent for a long few moments and then he merely reaches down and pulls the sheets up over Will. He's livid, Will's words an open wound, and the desire to rend and destroy is poised so close to his surface. Yet he merely draws the sheets around Will and settles back, closing his eyes and easing his arm aside so that if Will wants to move closer, he'll be allowed.

Collared indeed. "Perhaps. Though a collar serves no purpose but to declare ownership. I have made no secret of whose name is on my tag. But a collar without a leash and a firm hand will do nothing to tame the creature wearing it. Collar a wolf and it's merely a wolf with a collar. It will not lay at your feet and whine for scraps. A collar will not stay its hunger in the face of convenience. Do not presume your hand is steady and your leash attached, Will."

Will considers a moment whether he wants to be closer to Hannibal when he's in this particular state. Although, really, a few inches between them wouldn't likely make much of a difference if Hannibal sought to truly lash out at him. So, Will obliges and slots himself in close to his monster. Why not? He'd said it himself - he's not a safe man. He'll play with this animal, dart across lines and pull his hand back from a snarling mouth - hopefully in time to not get bit too hard. Unlike the past, he hasn't got himself maimed badly.

He thinks of the analogy. He certainly doesn't want Hannibal as any sort of pet, oh, no. Hannibal is much too majestic of a predator to be a simple dog at Will's side. It's true Will doesn't want Hannibal unleashed and rabid, he doesn't want to see Hannibal kill those that Will harbors lingering sentiments for... But, to be able to direct this weapon, control this violent storm? To point his finger at a target, symbolically utter, 'Kill' and have Hannibal do his bidding? It's a scintillating thought. A powerful thought and it has its hooks in Will's mind now.

"Oh, no, I don't want you tame, Hannibal," Will murmurs, his hand placed low on the older man's stomach, fingers rubbing slightly as he drops his voice purposefully low. "I want blood dripping from your mouth. With a snarl, I want to see you rip out another throat." Will closes the distance between his mouth and Hannibal's ear. "Wear my collar, yes, but be dangerous. It's much more interesting that way."

Yes, a declawed or tamed Hannibal would certainly not be interesting for Will.

Hannibal does not expect Will's proximity, but he doesn't dismiss it either. Will curls in closer, but the motion is not in apology or manipulation. It's a simple hedged bet, one that Hannibal can see the outline of without being fully aware of the contents. His muscles remain stiff with anger despite his open posture. A perfect paradox. Welcoming posture, yet nothing but a bitter chill upon arrival. Yet despite this, despite the curl of real anger cold and frigid in Hannibal's stomach, he waits for Will to settle against him and then curls his arm around his shoulders. His hand settles on Will's hip, though it is pointedly over the blankets drawn over them both. Hannibal will not shut Will out, but he has no desire to humor Will's impertinence. He is content to lapse into silence and, ultimately, sleep.

So Will once again catches Hannibal off guard. His eyes are closed, but when Will's hand settles low on his stomach, they open and fixate immediately on the touch. Hannibal's jaw tenses, but he says nothing, his attention splitting between Will's touch - carefully poised and gentle - and his words - low and dark and sharp. The anger remains, though while it thrums under the surface, he allows himself the presence of mind to explore Will's posture, to properly examine his voice. He isn't a man attempting to claw his way deeper into Hannibal's limits. No, something he's said has caught Will Graham again. And given Will's words, Hannibal can hazard a guess.
Hannibal eyes Will's hand in silence. Then he slowly draws a breath that Will undoubtedly feels, and he turns his attention to the man himself. And as he does so, he gathers the anger in silence to set it aside. It doesn't leave, but there is a time and a place for his ire, and Hannibal is unwilling to blind himself to this curious turn of Will's based solely on Will overstepping his boundaries. When he releases the breath, his muscles have relaxed slightly and he turns his full attention on his companion. On what he is saying. And the words set something different alight in his chest. Instead of ice, it's hot, a low, liquid fire.

The memory of their kill - of Dolarhyde's blood on his lips and flesh tearing under his teeth - rushes to Hannibal's mind. The way Will had looked, feral and bloodied and controlled. Will's hand on his stomach holds a different meaning now, and the low voice in his ear elicits a small shiver. He's still angry, and he will ensure Will is well aware. But this seems more important. Will rarely comes to him.

"...I see. Yet again you surprise me. You wish me to proudly bear your name. To wear your colors." Hannibal says slowly, and while his voice is still clipped, it's lost its chill. He sounds curious. "And while I wear your collar, you wish me to... what? Kill? Or kill under your name?"

Through the sweater, Will can feel the warmth of Hannibal's skin, the flat plane of rigid muscles and when Hannibal relaxes with a louder than normal exhale, Will's lips form into a victorious smile. He has won in this. His hand strokes lower, fingers taking in the soft thin material of the sweater as he moves across the jut of a hip bone before sliding across to the other one.

Witnessing Hannibal struggle between his lingering anger and curiosity is heady. Will has done this, brought out this conflict and tugged it upward to the surface for them both to observe. Hannibal, naturally, can't deny him in this, not when Will is whispering such dark heated words. They haven't really talked openly about murder and violence, about their shared kill. Until now. Hannibal has stayed true to his word, he doesn't expect Will to share his appetite, but Will has brought this up on his own. Hannibal won't forget this, Will is sure of that.

"Hannibal..." From Will's mouth it's almost a plea. His voice is soft, but edged with a pressing desire. His hand snakes underneath the sweater, finds the scar of the bullet hole and strokes at it reverently. His eyes close. It had felt good to see Hannibal shot and bleeding - vulnerable for once - but Will had ultimately been consumed by the sight of Hannibal coming to his aid... Fighting for him. Of Hannibal tearing out a throat.

"Both. My monster would kill for me, wouldn't he? And you'd love it if I watched. Tell me, Hannibal... Tell me how that would feel for you." His fingers travel lower, the tips rubbing underneath the waistband of sleep pants. Will is breathing a little quicker, a sadistic excitement floating up. He feels a curl of arousal, but it also has him pushing down a wave of nausea.

It comes as only a mild surprise that Will is bold even once he's been sated. Hannibal silently files this away, though he is somewhat distracted by Will's hand. A firm weight, no hesitation, merely trailing over the thin fabric Hannibal had pulled on in anger. He doesn't regret doing so, but he cannot deny his own curiosity as that touch slides lower. It's enough to make him tense, to draw his attention sharply to just how low Will's hand will venture, but Will stops just shy of too low. It's still a purposeful touch, a slow slide from hip to hip, and Hannibal's breathing eases to something slow and measured. He wets his lips, unaware of doing so, and there is no denying the flicker of a wince when Will's hand slides under the fabric, stroking the gnarled scar. The wince is not one of pain.

"Will," Hannibal says, in part distracted, but also in warning. His voice is steady, but somewhat breathless. The violent switch - from frigid anger to a lascivious heat borne from Will's touch - is
almost dizzying. But nothing prepares him for Will's words. Hannibal draws in a sharper breath, audible in the quiet of the room, like the sharp crack of a whip.

They have carefully avoided this particular topic. Will had mentioned his darkness once, a possible desire to kill again one day, but barring that moment, it has remained unspoken. To hear it now brings a rush of sensation to the forefront, and Hannibal closes his eyes against the spike of heat the idea draws out.

He has never taken sexual gratification from his kills before. He has taken power, yes, but a deep, dark, thrilling sensation. A butcher feels no arousal in slaughtering cattle for the masses. It's simple power. Yet Will's coaxing, his audible desire has that changing. The arousal that had left him earlier following Will's statement comes back, but Hannibal makes no move to do anything. He considers Will's request (his command) and wets his lips again.

"Thrilling," he says, after a pointed silence. Behind his eyes, he sees Cassie Boyle impaled, on display in Will's classroom back in Baltimore. He remembers the thrill of hearing Will's words, at the mere hint of being seen. And then the setting changes, and he can feel Will's eyes on him as her blood spills hot over his gloves and one of her lungs inflates in his hand before he sections it out.

"It would feel like temptation. Like danger. To be seen so intimately... it would feel right. I have preformed for you many times before, Will," Hannibal reminds him, softly, "every kill. To let you see. You merely saw my finished work. I."

But despite the low thrum of arousal already warm in his stomach, Will's touch sliding lower breaks the haze of the images in his mind. Hannibal's eyes snap open and he makes a small sound, reaching down with his free hand to just barely touch Will's wrist. He doesn't grab to stop him, but his touch is pure caution.

"Will," he says, and his voice is rough once more. He swallows. "You are not obligated in any way."

He's heard his name said in warning often, but this situation is vastly different. This is Will ushering Hannibal down a path of his choosing and it's one that the older man wants to follow after him. The bait he's dangling gives Will control (he thinks). Hannibal's initial response to his words - the louder exhale - pleases Will. He is being a cunning boy now, luring Hannibal away from his anger into his own twisted fantasy. It's undoubtedly become sexual for them, Will's not alone in this (now). This isn't new to him, but it's only ever been indulged whilst being in the shower and it's never been shared before.

Killing, for the Ripper, had always been a private affair. It also had never been a sexual thing either. It had been about power. The acquisition of meat and artistry left behind. Hannibal likely never thought he'd be watched and observed in the act. For as often as Will has gone into his own mind and reacted killings, it was never the same as watching the life life leave someone's body. True, Will's seen Hannibal, seen the darkness and he's glimpsed at the montages left behind - even taught classes on them. He participated in the murder of Dolarhyde and witnessed a primal savagery in Hannibal - likely not too similar to his previous killings. Savagery could often be messy.

A thrill. A temptation. Danger. Right. Hannibal's answers are all things that stoke Will's desire.

When a hand comes to grab onto his own, Will protests with, "I want to" and shakes his hand away from Hannibal's. Right now, high on the thought of Hannibal spilling blood, Will is forward. He doesn't care that he'd been previously uncertain about this. He longs to undo Hannibal, fluster the normally unflappable man and to coax whatever responses he can.
Will presses a kiss underneath Hannibal's ear and repeats, "I want to. Let me." He does want and he will push himself to get over any of his qualms.

His hand worms its way first underneath the pants and then further into boxers. Wiry hair meets him and then an obvious hardness nestled amidst it. A sound of exclamation works its way out of his mouth.

"You're actually hard," he comments. It's a stupid observation, but this is Will's first time with a hand down a man's pants, so he feels like he can have some leeway. "I'm glad."

With a deep inhale, he lets his fingers touch the silky heat, quickly learning that Hannibal has foreskin and smoothing it down a moment later. His fingertips brush over the exposed tip of Hannibal's cock, index finger sliding over the slit curiously.

"I want to see you snarling and covered in blood. I want to see you violent and unforgiving." Will shudders, his fingers wrapping around as best as he can and squeezing. "It would turn me on so much, Hannibal," he confesses. And he grinds his pelvis forward, enough that Hannibal can tell he's actually half-hard from this conversation alone.

This is dangerous. Hannibal quickly fights his way through the sharp curve of desire - Will's own metaphorical knife sliding over his skin, not slicing, but threatening - and issues his warning. There is a very real possibility that Will isn't ready, and Hannibal makes an effort to remind him. But it takes almost no time for Will to shake his concern off, to draw his hand back and then refocus, his voice a low curl of temptation, dark and firm against the skin just below Hannibal's ear. I want to. Let me. The words strike their mark, hit him low, for they're words Hannibal had never expected to hear from Will in these regards. He's made strict rules against moving before Will is ready, in keeping his hands to himself. He will not touch Will unless he's certain. But while making his own rules, he hadn't taken Will touching him into account.

Hannibal listens for the slightest hitch of hesitation in Will's voice, but finds none. In this one moment in time, Will is certain, and after wrestling with his own certainty, Hannibal allows his hand to fall away. This is dangerous, but it also offers Will control of the situation. Right now, he believes Will needs that, and so he merely nods and takes a deeper breath when Will's hand moves with renewed purpose. His pulse quickens and he's aware Will is in the proper position to notice, but he feels no shame in his desire for this man. Frustrating and belligerent as Will Graham can be, Hannibal had made his decision many years ago.

Will's touch is curious but bold, and the muscles in Hannibal's abdomen twitch at the first slide of his fingers. Will explores, and Hannibal's free hand silently clenches in the sheets outside of Will's line of sight, a tether to keep himself controlled so that Will is allowed to learn at his own speed. He doesn't mock Will his comment - yes, he's hard; he knows what Will looks like in the throes of violence, and now in the throes of pleasure, and it has been over a month - merely nods, his breath hitching slightly as curious fingers smooth down his foreskin. He has never been particularly vocal in bed, but he has never had his walls so cleanly stripped away. There is no pretense, not anymore. Will knows of his sentiment, and he has seen Hannibal kill. Love and death. There is nothing to hide, and the sensation sends something hot through his veins even before Will speaks.

"You will," Hannibal promises, on a rough exhale, fighting to keep still. He had never hoped to find himself like this, and the reality is dizzying. Will has never touched another man before, but it hardly matters. What matters is that it's Will. Will's hand squeezing his cock, testing its weight. And Will pressing forward to grind against his hip with an admission that has Hannibal hesitating only for a second before his hand tightens on Will's hip. He pulls Will in closer, feeling his heat, and this time doesn't pull Will away. He hasn't denied Will one kind of intimacy; perhaps he doesn't need to deny
"If you wish to see it, you will. You take pleasure in my violence. In my savagery," Hannibal breathes, his voice not steady but still low and warm. "In what I feel when my actions are for you."

It's what this boils down to; Hannibal is not so blind that he doesn't see it; he'd merely been unaware of the depth of Will's fixation until now. His fingers grip tightly at Will's hip, enough to hurt, but not to damage.

"One could argue my savagery even in kills that were not particularly savage. Murder tips the scale for most. I was not snarling and covered in blood when I killed Cassie Boyle. She was a means to an end. A test, and one you passed beautifully. I was entranced. But when I killed her, it was not particularly savage." He trails off, just long enough to make a point, and then wets his lips. "But when I tore the Verger estate to the ground to get to you, it was."

Thus far, Will has only been able to elicit shudders or hitches in breath from Hannibal. It's a start, but Will wants more. Hannibal remains frustratingly composed, his body still under Will's intimate exploration. He can't tell if his words or his touch have more of an impact on the older man. Will doesn't know which he hopes is the case. Perhaps it doesn't matter whether it's his hand or voiced desires that chip away at the restraint, as long as he makes headway.

On the subject of savagery and Cassie Boyle, Will's mind treats him with flickers of images depicting the dichotomy of Tier's crime scenes and the various carefully constructed copycat killings Hannibal had taken part of. Randall Tier was perhaps Will's first close - intimate - brush with savagery. There was, of course, a beauty in being meticulous, in the subtler strokes and controlled ending of someone's life. He may be able to imagine and envision the careful actions of some killers - yes, Hannibal included - but Will's darkness truly blossomed in that tense moment of arterial spray from Abigail's neck and the ringing in his ears after he squeezed the trigger numerous times and made a daughter fatherless. Splattered in blood and shaking, Hannibal had calmly observed the beginning of his design. The rush of violence, of blood, was what currently delighted Will, whether or not that remained the case... Only time could tell.

Will wishes he had been conscious at Muskrat Farm to witness Hannibal's revenge. Would seeing Hannibal rend and tear for him have changed that prolific morning after? Probably not. Will wasn't in the correct space to fully appreciate such a spectacle. He'd likely have taken to judging Hannibal.

That was the past, what Will wants to focus on is the now and hopefully near future. He slips his hand out, shrugging off Hannibal's hold on his hip to sit up and crawl on top of Hannibal. It's no secret that he is going after what was denied to him earlier - grinding against each other. Will straddles Hannibal's hips and rocks against an answering hardness before draping himself over Hannibal's chest and kissing at his jaw. His hands mess up the pinned man's hair purposefully, tugging at it and pulling.

"If you're quiet, I'll stop touching you," Will warns, breathlessly. "You either make sounds or you talk. That's the deal, Hannibal." Will yanks Hannibal's head back, exposing a bruised neck and lets just the tip of his tongue trace along the colors for a few seconds. "Let me hear you." He may be sloppy in his thrusting, but he's nothing of not passionate in it.

Savagery has its place, particularly between them. Before Will, Hannibal's design had been absolute. Savagery had been something for other men, lesser men, creatures of habit, slaves to their own instincts. Hannibal had hardly given it a thought until Will had crashed into his life, full of heat and intrigue and the aching ability to see. Only then had Hannibal given in, though not of his own desire.
No, Will has pushed him, has tested him, calling his bluff and forcing his hand. With Will Graham's collar looped firmly around his throat, Hannibal had been driven to an aching savagery time and time again, and all under Will's name. It's fitting, then, that Will should be pushing again. Should be pressing himself against Hannibal's boundaries with selfish abandon. And it is completely unsurprising that Hannibal allows it. This is what Will has always done to him, after all.

Even so, Will's sudden change in position is not expected. Hannibal bites back a sound when Will's hand retreats, but before he can consider whether to be disappointed or relieved, Will eases up onto his knees and pointedly straddles his hips. Hannibal draws in a deeper breath, almost anticipatory, and he is not disappointed when Will suddenly and pointedly grinds down against him. Muscles tensing, head tipping back on the pillow, Hannibal's breath hitches at the slow slide of sensation. It's unfamiliar, a solid heat against his own, and yet it speaks of a greater intimacy. One that threatens to rob him of breath. And as Will leans down and his lips find Hannibal's jaw, Hannibal hesitates only for a moment before setting one of his hands on Will's back and the other along the tightening muscle of his closest thigh, feeling the tense and shift of muscle as Will pushes for what he'd been denied before, as well as the rough edge of tape from the gauze.

"Will," Hannibal breathes, rough and fractured, as much a warning now as it had been before. He wants, and regardless of Will's insistence, that want is still dangerous. He won't shove him away; Hannibal is not a selfless man, and Will's actions are clear, his seduction intentional. He's aware of what he's doing. There is no hesitation in the sharp roll of his hips. And when Will's hands pointedly mess up Hannibal's hair, the message could not be clearer. Will doesn't need to issue his threat, though it sparks a deeper hunger within, drawing a rougher sound from his throat that deepens against his will when Will jerks his head back, exposing his throat - bruised and marked and scarred in three places by Will's teeth.

Will wants to hear him; Hannibal is at a loss for a split second on how to proceed. But at a sharp thrust that allows Hannibal to feel Will's heat, and the weight of him so perfectly, he makes up his mind.

"Were... were you ever permitted to see the crime scene report for Muskrat Farm, Will?" Hannibal asks, an agonizing tension working its way through him with every shift of Will's hips. He's breathless, focused on the long line of Will's back.

"You speak of your desire to witness me violent, unforgiving, covered in blood. A shame, then, that you were not present as I carried you out, and through the snow. I left effigies of our tormentor behind made from the bodies of his own men. Left you countless sacrifices. Took good Cordell's face for daring to touch yours."

Hannibal is a lovely image of restrained strength and masculinity. As much as Will may want to divest him of the sweater and have that skin bared to him once more, that particular action seems like too much work. Instead, he revels in the heat and friction of his movements, the low simmering desire that's stoked by this simple primal urge. Will may be used to distinctly feminine cries of pleasure, sweet gasps and the like, but right now his ears strain to pick up any and all of Hannibal's sounds - the slight hitches of breathing, a louder inhale or exhale. He has the bizarre thought that he wants to unravel the mysteries of this body beneath him, to explore and learn of what pleases Hannibal, of where and how to touch. In this instance, Hannibal is a new lover and like all new lovers, their bodies await discovery. But Will knows that this is a fleeting thought and now is not the time for such a notion.

Will can't help but notice Hannibal repeat himself. It's just one word, but for someone as collected and fluid as Hannibal is, any hiccup or variance is quite the tell. Will's mouth stills and he presses it
lightly against Hannibal's throat. His hips lose a little of their focused rhythm, but Will tries his best to keep moving. Concerning the crime scene photos, not wanting to glimpse at anymore blood and gore, Will had refused to see them at the time. He'd gone through the necessary song and dance, was interviewed, gave his statements, but at that point Will had felt both numb and still bewildered by Hannibal turning himself in. It had been all too evident that he was good and ready to leave this exhausting life behind. Jack hadn't even seemed surprised when Will had told him he was moving away.

But Hannibal hadn't been a chapter in Will's life easily closed and forgotten. No. their story was not done and as Will listens to Hannibal spin him a beautiful tale, each word has his own shadows delighting in the destruction that Hannibal had reigned down on Mason's men. At the mention of Cordell's ironic treatment, Will chuckles in satisfaction, all too pleased. He can still vividly recall the slice of the scalpel, his body locked in itself, unable to move, but the pain searing as blood bubbled to the surface. Facing the possibility of death, while certainly not favorable, hadn't truly bothered Will. However, that it was Mason wanting to wear his face that had been enraging. It seems like Hannibal had shared that sentiment. He doubts Hannibal had bothered to do anything special with the other nameless victims. Their brutal slaughter would have surely sufficed. Muskrat Farm hadn't deserved anything other than to be littered with corpses.

With intent, Will rubs his cheek along Hannibal's jaw and then up against a cheek.

"Fond of this face, are you?" It's said lightly, a bit of a tease, but Will is truly enthralled by both the retelling of the event and Hannibal's actions. "And you'd do it again, wouldn't you? Swoop in and lay waste to those who would dare touch me?" Will pointedly doesn't mention rescuing or saving.

With the window vast along the wall - curtains open, making no move to trap excess heat - and the wind starting to batter against it from the outside, there is a mild chill in the bedroom. It's faint, just barely enough to feel, but its presence makes the press of Will's lips to Hannibal's throat feel hot, sensual. A slide that could end horribly given how Will is poised, and yet Hannibal trusts that Will wants to wrest his control back far more than he wants to injure. Every roll of Will's hips is a tempting slide. The layers between them hardly matter, nor does the hitched, slightly uncertain rhythm. It's Will, his hands buried in Hannibal's hair, forcing his head back, his lips on Hannibal's throat, and every muscle in his body tensed and poised towards his own goal. It would seem almost selfish, save for the pointed pauses, Will's concentrated effort to keep himself silent so that he can hear Hannibal.

It's not selfish. Perhaps Will is chasing his own pleasure, but his desire to find it is second to his need to see . It's a powerful thought. To be desired - even if only in this moment - by the man pushing at both of their boundaries. A shiver cuts up Hannibal's spine and down his arms as Will's rhythm falters, and Hannibal's hands tighten. He's uncertain if he's permitted to move or if this moment is Will's, but every drag of Will's hips is pure temptation, settling a molten heat in his stomach, his breathing deeper. And of course, to top it off, Will's voice cuts through the haze of desire, a reminder to not allow himself to fall silent. He feels the rough scratch of Will's facial hair against his cheek and his breath hitches again, audibly, his hands bruising against Will's back and his thigh.

"Yes," Hannibal breathes, and the word is almost growled. A confirmation not only of Hannibal's fondness for Will, but the lengths he's still willing to go for him. "And those who would bar you from me. As those men did. Seven, by my memory, in the main hallway. Perhaps more. My focus was not on numbers, merely obstacles to you." Hannibal's hand shifts along Will's thigh, and it's clear his desire to move is nearly blinding. "They were unprepared. They had guns, knives, and numbers, and I tore them apart. With their own knives, with a claw hammer I had acquired, with... with my teeth. My only goal was to get to you. Will," Hannibal cuts off, his tone tense, almost
pleading but not precisely. Will can undoubtedly feel how hard he is, as well as the tensing of his muscles, his conscious effort to allow Will control.

"May I move?" This pointed friction is maddening. Yet it's also Will's specific design, and Hannibal isn't certain which he wants more: to allow Will his control, or to wrest it away. He's unused to being at another's whims like this.

Hannibal's hair is silky in between Will's fingers and he holds tightly, an anchor for this moment that spirals further into an unknown murky, dark depth. Will shakes as Hannibal feeds him another tasty morsel, another detail to fill in the picture - numbers change, weapons... the use of teeth. (And yes, Hannibal slips once more, another pause and repetition in his speaking and Will is elated by it).

There's no mistaking that Will is completely hard again, an arousal fuelled by violence and power, by the knowledge that his collar, even then, was around Hannibal's neck.

Likely, Hannibal has never been in this position before, unmoving and willingly letting another dictate the activities and pace. The self-control being exerted is impressive, no doubt and Will wishes to see more of it.

"No. Be good for me Hannibal, and stay still," Will soothes and a chaste kiss is pressed to Jack's scar. Sometimes he forgets that Hannibal's little vacation in Europe had left him scars, although he hasn't seen all of them, he's sure. "I'll take care of you."

It's a phrase that, if said at any other moment, would cause Will to falter, but now? Now, Will does want to take care and lavish attention on this man - his monster - and praise him for a job well done. He may not have been able to appreciate and approve of it at the time, but he will now. With a final yank to Hannibal's hair, Will releases his hold and pushes back, sitting up and sliding lower on Hannibal's thighs. His hands skim over the noticeable bulge in the fabric.

"Beg me to touch you," Will issues the challenge, looking down at Hannibal who is entirely too clothed for this, but bathed in the soft glow of the moon and his... For a brief moment Will wants to be tender. He wants to slowly strip Hannibal of each item of clothing, leaving kisses in his wake. He wants to test intimacy that's not grounded in violence. He wants--

The urges are at complete odds with the most recent dominant desires and Will bites his lip in indecision. He still feels the roar of violence, the sweet caress of darkness, but it's been tamed.

A rough sound - frustration and pleasure and acceptance all rolled into one - escapes Hannibal's throat as Will clearly denies his request. It's odd, in a sense, the distant satisfaction he feels at allowing Will to control even the simplest of movements. It is entirely at odds with Hannibal's nature; he wants to move. Wants to flip them and watch Will fall apart again were he allowed to do so. He wants to slide his hands to Will's thighs, his ass, to guide his grinding and lift his own hips to take control. Yet Will effectively denies him, sparking desire and an acute, restless frustration that Hannibal finds intellectually fascinating and physically maddening. His muscles tense for a moment, as if he is considering disobeying anyway, but he reigns the urge in. As badly as he wants to move, to wrest control back from Will, he wants to see what he does with it even more.

Again, Hannibal's voice rakes across Will's name, frustrated but accepting. He remains still, well aware that this is too dangerous to risk changing Will's terms. Will is nervous but not reluctant - an important distinction - but Hannibal will not force his hand. Instead he merely focuses on following the command, though his attention falters visibly at the kiss, and at Will's words. They are... unexpectedly tender, enough to draw a small furrow to Hannibal's brow. It remains present even as Will yanks his hair - prompting a small, near-silent sound at the immediate sting - and draws back.
This time, Hannibal stays silent, curious even as he gingerly stretches his neck and then refocuses on Will.

The tone has changed. Hannibal is uncertain when the key had shifted in Will's symphony, but it is clear. Will sits back on his thighs, moving almost beyond Hannibal's reach, but the brush of Will's hands over him has his curiosity halving. He is still curious, still aware that something has changed. He's merely uncertain *why*. But Will's touch and his request eclipse the rest of his curiosity. Hannibal's lips press thin in indecision. For a moment, his pride surfaces; he has never been a man to beg. But almost as soon as the thought hits him, it dies.

He has never been a man to *beg before*. But Will has already changed him. He knows with clarity that were Will to ask him to kneel, he would. With the same ease that he would comply if Will asked him to kill. Some of the tension ebbs out of his muscles, replaced by the heat of this request, and in the rapt, almost intimate expression settling on Will's face.

"Will," Hannibal breathes, his tone rough with want and with his earlier tension. He feels breathless, and allows that to be heard, for Will and Will alone. "Please. I want... I ask you to touch me. If it pleases you, and if you would permit me pleasure by your hand."

Will doesn't know if Hannibal will submit to him and not move, not truly touch back. The initial sound Hannibal makes in response is lovely, but could go either way. He's wound up Hannibal, it's plain to see and Hannibal is the type of man that wants to both reciprocate and prefers to be in control. That was his norm. *Before*. They both know this, but curiosity seems to win out in the end. Hannibal doesn't move because Hannibal wants to see what will come next. It's also not lost on either of them that this is likely the longest Will has been alright in exerting control.

Despite Will's warring interests, of which he's sure Hannibal has caught something of, the man beneath him hasn't forgotten the command. This isn't new, no. Will has made Hannibal beg once before and it had been an initial success (although that night had rapidly fallen apart afterward). The words used may be somewhat ridiculous - certainly nothing Will would expect to follow after such a request - but in Hannibal's breathless submission they sound divine.

"Only you could manage to beg and be pretentious at the same time, Hannibal," Will replies with a bit of a sigh, but there's fondness in his exasperation. How could there not be? Hannibal has given in, albeit with amusing phrasing in his reply. It reminds Will of the older man's handwriting, ostentatious and somewhat out of place in the real world, but very true to outward image Hannibal put forth. But this isn't an image being presented to Will, this is Hannibal allowing Will to *see* this side of himself. Experience it. Will feels a little awed.

His hands come to the waistband of Hannibal's sleep pants and Will isn't graceful as he works them and the underwear lower, Hannibal assisting by lifting his hips. They've swapped positions from earlier, Hannibal's cock now exposed and Will looks at it curiously. Will has no plans on pulling his punches, but he feels in less of a rush than before. He leans forward, his mouth coming to Hannibal's scar where he kisses it.

"Remember what I said, don't be quiet," Will murmurs and his hands slide up Hannibal's sides as he lets his mouth wander and trail kisses across Hannibal's stomach.

Pretentious. Hannibal cannot deny part of that, though he would argue there is nothing false in the plea. Given what Will had likely been expecting, he cannot fault him the comment. Through his desire, and his frustration, Hannibal still manages to find a hint of a smile. It's a mere twitch of his lips and a soft breath of answering amusement, almost lazy given the circumstances.
"You would not be satisfied with something simple," he explains, his tone still breathless but also fond.

Whatever this shift between them is, Hannibal is willing to explore it. "And if I am to beg, it will be tailored to you." He trails off; he has no desire to simply recite words with no meaning. Pretentious or not, he'd asked for precisely what he'd wanted: For Will's touch, yes, but also for his favor, for Will to find his own pleasure in the task as well.

Which is precisely what he seems to be doing. Hannibal falls silent as Will's hands move to the waistband of his pants and, following a nonverbal command, Hannibal lifts his hips to assist Will in getting them down. He breathes deeper at the sensation of the cooler air against him, his cock heavy and thick, wet at its head, foreskin already partly pulled back from Will's slow grind. But instead of glancing down at himself, or moving beyond Will's silent command, Hannibal merely watches Will. He's rapt, though not looking for favor; he knows he has everything to be proud of. No, he's careful to watch Will for signs that he's changed his mind, or that he's second-guessing himself. And while he seems curious, there's no overt sign of panic, or uncertainty. Hannibal watches until he can't; until Will has leaned down to slowly push the fabric of his sweater up, bunching it enough to hide his task from view. But while he can't see what Will is doing, he feels the press of Will's lips to his scar and his breath draws in sharply.

It doesn't hurt; it's over-sensitive, but what sparks the sound is not the sensation, but the intimacy behind it. He had been expecting Will's focus to remain on desire, on sex. Simple, uncomplicated, and exploratory. This... this is something different, and Hannibal's hand moves of its own accord, burying in Will's hair but not to tug or guide. Merely to touch, to stroke his fingers through it approvingly. Will's reminder nearly catches him off guard though.

"Yes... yes, of course. I remember." He'd almost forgotten, rapt with attention, and as Will's lips trail over his skin, he finds the earlier topic doesn't fit. He's not certain what to say. For a few seconds, Will has done the impossible. He's made Hannibal Lecter speechless.

He'd been prepared for Will's hand. He hadn't been prepared for this intimacy. For Will's exploration, his kisses soft yet prompting small twitches from Hannibal's muscles. Betraying how much this in particular is affecting him.

"I'm... I am afraid you have me at a loss," he finally says, sounding just shy of awed. Will would not respond positively to anything he wants to say. "Explaining that night suddenly doesn't seem appropriate. Asking you to leave your mark behind does."

Nothing with Hannibal would be simple. Yes, his choice of phrasing may have struck Will as odd, but it was true to Hannibal's character. Will didn't want cliches, in this, he wanted Hannibal as he was - fanciful words and all. There was more implied in his reply than begging for mere attention or relief. No, Hannibal wanted it to only happen if it pleased Will.

And it does please him.

He makes a sound of contentment as a hand works its way into his hair, not pulling because Will doesn't need that right now, but just present. It's different, but wholly nice. "I'm already leaving a mark behind," Will whispers against Hannibal's stomach, the words out before he has a chance to even consider their meaning. Not all marks have physical manifestations, although, that's what they have been focusing on - the bites, the scars, the bruises. All easily seen and a perfect example of cause and effect. But what cannot be seen, those changes, that particular brand of a mark, is what Will is embarking on. He has no guiding light in this, but it matters not. He'll wade into this stream and see where it takes him.
He rubs his cheek against Hannibal's abdomen, a bit like a cat. He wants to lose himself in this man's skin, the heat, for his body to learn and memorize every dip and curve of the partner beneath him until Will knows him as well as he knows himself. Hannibal is both monster and human, but more importantly, Hannibal is his. Will kisses up from his bellybutton, but as he reaches a bunched-up sweater, he growls. He's done with this piece of clothing hindering him.

Will sits back once more and makes to divest Hannibal of the sweater, stating, "Let me see you." Hannibal helps more than Will does in tugging off the the article of clothing, but eventually Hannibal's torso is free again of clothing. This is the most he's ever seen of Hannibal bared to him. Will takes Hannibal's hands, he laces their fingers and he pushes Hannibal's arms above his head as Will leans down. Chest to chest, they're pressed together and Will only rolls his hips slightly.

"Tell me it," he mumbles in between kisses. There has only been one sentiment he's asked for in the past and it's been over a month since he's heard it fall from Hannibal's lips.

_I'm already leaving a mark behind._ Hannibal is already still, but his focus rises, and then immediately settles at those words. There's no mistaking Will's meaning, and he has no desire to fight the truth of it in his own mind. He merely breathes out a long, shallow breath and some of the tension drains out of him. He still wants; his limbs are still heavy with desire and frustration, but those six words have cut through the sexual desire and the weeks of need, right through to his core. Will is right, of course. He has left many marks in the past - some good, some bad, some with entire rooms in his memory palace dedicated to crumbling floors and violence - but of all the great marks Will has left behind, there is none so grand or dangerous as the one he is currently leaving. His imprint, his control.

Once, Hannibal had sought to fight it. To wrest back his own autonomy, to fight for his right to freedom, to exist as his own separate entity. He had left Will his grin in rage. But things are different now. The snow had worn through the knees of his slacks that evening outside Will's house, and in that moment, with his hands behind his head, he had made the conscious decision. His life was no longer most important. Not when compared to Will's.

But knowing that Will is aware is both humbling and it would be frightening, were Hannibal prone to humoring such emotions. He's not. Instead his touch softens in Will's hair and he strokes his encouragement through the dark, damp strands, shivering at the sensation of Will's beard upon his skin, but tracking every movement even without sight. It's tender and open, and Hannibal is caught. A part of him wonders at how violently Will is going to rebound after this. How badly he'll recoil. Yet he is not selfless enough to deny this, despite the future. And when Will's voice breaks on a growl and he draws back to give his command, Hannibal doesn't hesitate.

His hands are quicker than Will's, though his movements are stilted with Will sitting on his thighs. Still, Hannibal works the sweater off and sets it aside, making no move to attempt to catch it when it half-slips from the bed. His focus is on Will, and on the intent look on his face. Fingers lace with his and there is a moment when Hannibal considers resisting simply to see what would happen. He doesn't. He won't risk this. And as Will pushes his arms up, pinning them above his head pointedly, Hannibal doesn't resist. He merely allows Will to direct him, submits to Will's own specific design, and allows him the control he had wrested away earlier.

Will's hips move, and the friction - the press of his own boxers against his skin, masking him from Will's own heat - draws a soft moan from his throat. But more than the friction, the sound escapes due to Will's request. There is no denying what Will wants, and while he wishes to touch Will's face, to trace his scars and slide his fingers again through his hair, he can't. Instead he squeezes Will's hands and tilts his head just enough that he can press an answering kiss to Will's cheek, then to his jaw, and finally to the corner of his lips. He doesn't dare push this tentative intimacy too far. This is
the longest it has lasted.

"It is something that hardly needs to be said." Hannibal's voice is intimate, whispered against Will's skin. "When so much of who I am and what I have done makes it blatant. The words cannot possibly convey the sentiment. But if you wish them, they are yours. I love you, Will. And I am honored to wear your mark. Inside and out."

The submission isn't so much Will hoarding his position of power as it is them being equals and sharing roles. He didn't truly understand until this moment. It should seem more awkward or bizarre to slide between the two extremes - but this is their own dynamic they're feeling out and it's full of shades of grey for them. This is their design, it would seem. They both wish to dominate and be dominated, as long as it's the other involved. No one else would do.

Hannibal is right. It may not need to be said, but Will wants to hear it, longs for the admission because it's one that he never thought he'd believe or even yearn for. But, oh, he does. His monster loves him. Hannibal accepts him. Sees him. And for once, Will is allowed to be himself - reckless, flawed, impulsive, violent and now this. He may fracture from the jolt he feels when Hannibal finishes speaking, the silence only punctuated by his quick breathing. Will's heart beats wildly in his chest as the mirror in his mind splinters to a scene of him glancing down to see the ice beneath his boots begin to crack as he walks further onto the frozen landscape and he's going to surely fall...

But maybe that's fine too. He had thought he couldn't be saved, but Hannibal had proven him wrong. Will had pointedly stated that he would never give his heart away, and yet....

Maybe this was inevitable. He was already so wrapped up in Hannibal, not only in their domestic life here, but their history and the prospect of their future. And now, the future didn't seem so murky to Will. And while Hannibal, the ever composed and calculating bastard he could be, had managed to embrace it all, Will held back. Had it accomplished anything, other than to provide himself with a measure of safety, one last thing to dangle out of Hannibal's grasp? (He doesn't know)

Will tries to kiss Hannibal again, but he breaks away a moment later with an anguished half-cry, hands gripping tightly onto Hannibal's own. "You're going to undo me, but maybe... maybe that's what I need." With that said, Will begins kissing down Hannibal's neck.

Hannibal's pulse is quick for him, but through every pause following a beat, with their chests pressed together - all hot skin and sharp, solid angles - Hannibal can plainly register two or three of Will's. His heart races like he's running, and perhaps he is, in a sense. Running towards Hannibal, or running away from him. Either way, regardless of which way the pendulum swings, always running. This close, Hannibal can see the fissures stretching under Will's skin like worn stone, and bit by bit, water - Hannibal's influence - drips along those fissures and as they freeze and solidify, Will is slowly pulled further and further apart. He is beautiful in his control, in his desperation. It's a glimpse in time, a snapshot that will not remain, yet Hannibal regards it - regards Will - with all the warmth he dares.

His desire - sex itself - is secondary to this. To the dry press of Will's palms against his own. So rough and callused, at sharp odds to Hannibal's hands, which are softer. Long passed are the days his skin had threatened to crack from over-washing his hands. The only calluses that remain are those built up under his blades and the press of his pencils. But Will has the hands of an angler, of a mechanic. Hands to fix and create in different ways. Hands with strength that is still surprising. Will is surprising. Looking so frail by times in his oversized shirts, yet built so powerfully. It's obvious, the power in his core as he pins Hannibal down, knowing - trusting - that Hannibal won't move. And he doesn't. He merely studies Will's body, feeling his strength, watching the play of silver light over
his hair, and the sharp lines of his face, and when Will leans in to kiss him, Hannibal doesn't hesitate to respond.

Perhaps Will would have been able to stand a rough kiss. The clash of teeth, the threat of blood. But that is not what this kiss is. It's tender, Hannibal opening to Will's whims completely, the slow slide of tongues, and the barest hint of a suck to Will's lower lip before Will draws back with an agonized sound. Like Hannibal had just dug his nails into Will's very spine and ripped it free of his skin. He sounds fractured when he speaks, and the grip on Hannibal's hands is tight enough to ache. He merely responds in kind, stroking his thumbs over the edge of Will's hands, his breathing a little rougher.

"Undo you... as you have undone me. Both unwound and aching. Only I will not leave you unwound, Will."

Hannibal draws in a deeper breath, one that shifts Will's very position, his weight nothing to Hannibal's strength. Yet he merely leans his head back on an exhale, baring his throat willingly and focusing on each press of Will's lips.

"Nor will I wind you again in my image. No... what emerges at the end - the shape you take - will be entirely your doing." For perhaps the first time in Will's life. "I will suggest. I will assist. I will stabilize. But I will not force. I will see you in your own image, my beautiful boy."

Right. He's not alone in being undone by one another, being defeated, exposed, but ultimately seen and recognized. Changed - inside and out - yes, that too. Hannibal isn't the only destructive force. The introduction of him into the former psychiatrist's life had Will startling the beast awake, so to speak. He had caught his eye and shook up everything in the process. Who knows how long their world around them would have remained peaceful if they hadn't been brought together by Jack and Alana. Was it fate that had them meeting with pictures of dead girls resembling Abigail hanging on a board behind them? Will is starting to think so, not that he'd ever admit it.

Hannibal was his cataclysmic event. The meteor striking the Earth.

...I will not leave you unwound, Will. It wouldn't be like the the time he'd been left on a the doctor's kitchen floor bleeding out, desperately clutching the open gash on his abdomen. Will can still recall the sick slide of panic that came over him at the thought never see Hannibal again. He remembers thinking, 'is this really how it's going to end?' It shouldn't have overshadowed the agony of his injury, but for a brief moment, it had. Hannibal had judged him and deemed the betrayal too grand and both the disappointment and hurt radiating off of him had felt sharp like the knife and almost as daunting as echoing footsteps.

But Hannibal continues talking and Will tries his best to let that image go, to let it sink back into the depths of his mind. A part of him still feels slightly wary that Hannibal could ever drop his manipulative ways and just let him be, but he has months of proof depicting such a thing. Hannibal isn't here to play with him, but what is Will's intention with Hannibal? Is Hannibal safe from him? It's a disturbing question and one he doesn't want to dwell on.

It's far easier to kiss and lick at Hannibal's neck, so Will focuses on that. He'll leave the thoughts for later and indulge in the corporeal.

"Don't call me beautiful," Will mutters, but his voice lacks any real agitation.

He's not precisely bothered by the sentiment at the moment, but he feels like he has to say *something* in response. Will lets go of Hannibal, righting himself back up to let his hands touch a bare chest.
There's a smattering of chest hair, it's different and his fingers take in the coarseness with a bit of a wry expression on his face. His palms slide across pectorals, again taking in the gender differences. It isn't as shocking as he had originally expected it to be. Will actually finds himself liking Hannibal's body, the strength that's there. Hannibal clearly takes good care of himself and Will appreciates the efforts with his eyes raking over what he can see, including the face that watches him closely.

"Never really let myself notice before, but you are handsome," Will comments suddenly. He flushes immediately afterward, his head ducking down at his bluntness. To push past it, his right hand drops to Hannibal's cock and he re-familiarizes himself with it, his fingers running along the tip, working foreskin down once more before wrapping around the base and stroking upward.

What else could he have said in that instant, when it is achingly true? Hannibal has always found Will particularly striking in the light of the moon, though perhaps he is biased in his interest. Seeing Will caked in blood, black in the moonlight, had been one of the most perfect images Hannibal had ever seen. He's recreated it on paper before, coveting each memory. His sketchbook is filled with this beautiful man who doesn't wish the description. Hannibal doesn't retract it, doesn't acknowledge he's heard. He merely focuses on the press of Will's lips until Will's restlessness gets the better of him. And when Hannibal is suddenly allowed to move, he considers it, but the desire is quickly overshadowed by Will's hands moving down, exploring the rise of his chest and a physical form he is unused to. Will lingers on the coarseness of his chest hair and Hannibal absently considers shaving it as Will seems to, but he dismisses the idea immediately. For the same reason that Will doesn't wish to kiss him without his beard: He wants him consciously aware that this is nothing he has experienced before.

Hannibal watches him closely. He is a prideful man; his ego needs no stroking. Yet Will's expression - wry yet transfixed - speaks for itself. And then Will speaks for himself, and Hannibal's eyebrows lift ever so slightly in approval. The smile he had been carefully containing twitches free - just the barest quirk to his lips, but it is obvious - and he drinks in Will's embarrassment following the statement. Hannibal needs no praises; he is well aware that he is attractive. Yet hearing it from Will goes beyond a simple stroking of ego. It spreads a curious warmth through him.

"I will not fault you that; you had no desire to notice until recently. Though I do find myself pleased you've come to that conclusion."

It's mild, but Hannibal cannot fully contain the lazy pride in his voice. It hardly matters; Will is well aware who he is dealing with. Hannibal has always been hedonistic.

But before Hannibal can say more, Will's nature once again gets the better of him. Caught in an emotion he's less than fond of, he redirects his focus immediately. Hesitation and uncertainty are dashed against the rocks in the face of his mild embarrassment, in the need to pin down his own control. So his hand drops, and Hannibal is not prepared for the sensation of Will's fingers brushing against his cock. He twitches, his muscles betraying a surprise he doesn't vocalize immediately. But when Will's hand curls around him and strokes, Hannibal allows himself a soft, indulgent groan of Will's name merely because he knows Will wants it. His arms are off the pillow, hands already moving to reach for Will when Hannibal remembers how purposefully Will had pinned them down. He remembers being told not to move, and - though there is no proof this counts - he fights with himself for only a moment before pressing his arms back again, keeping them where Will had intended.

"Am I permitted to move, Will?" Hannibal asks, both a question and a reminder of the power Will has over him, regardless of his moment of transparency. He is not above stroking Will's ego. "I would like to touch you." The thought - not even overtly sexual - sends a frisson of pleasure through
him, responding to Will's fingers wrapped around him. The look he sends Will is almost lazy with desire. A stark contrast to how hard his cock is, how visibly he needs more. But Hannibal has no plans of asking; he will take his pleasure only if Will wishes it. He suspects that Will enjoys how long he's gone without it on nothing but a casual command.

As with most things he's confessed to Hannibal, commenting about his attractiveness isn't one that Will had thought he'd ever say. He could try and blame it on the intimacy that they had been sharing over the past hours, but Will knows it's more than that. In the past, Will hadn't particularly paid attention to men in that way. Upon his first visits, Will had summed up Hannibal Lecter's physical appearance as 'pretentious, expensive and well groomed' and had left it at that. Now, after months spent next to this man, slowly acknowledging and accepting their mutual desire, Hannibal has become attractive to Will. It's still strange to want a man, but for Will, Hannibal transcends gender. Yet... Would Will ever want to hold Hannibal's hand in public? Kiss him? His musings are interrupted, because of course the bastard would have to give a reply to his comment. He sounds smug, but why shouldn't he? Will isn't often forthcoming about such things; instead, he offers crumbs in comparison to the older man.

But Hannibal groaning his name has Will forgetting all about the arrogance he had more or less encouraged. Since that morning when he came over Hannibal's back and stated that Hannibal couldn't get off without Will's explicit permission, he's had Hannibal at his mercy. Over the last month it's lingered in Will's mind, a hot curl of control, and he can't wait to have Hannibal ask tonight.

Will surprises himself once again with his answer, "Yeah. I want you to touch me."

He lets his eyes flick up to catch Hannibal's for a moment before he re-focuses them on the task his hand is concentrating on - jerking off Hannibal in a firm grip. He knows Hannibal would remain still for him. Likely that is the reason why Will decides that it's fine for Hannibal to move. Hannibal has been good for him, so Hannibal's allowed. But to push it - because why wouldn't he - Will's free hand comes to his own crotch, fumbling with freeing his dick and pulling it out through the fly.

"Want you touch me here," Will adds on. It's another challenge issued.

Will isn't the only one left surprised by his answer. Hannibal stills for a moment, or at least as much as he's able while silently locking the sensation of Will's touch away in his mind. He'd been expecting to be denied. Will has been operating on little more than pendulum logic as of late. From violence to care, from submission to control. It's wild as he fights for his own stability, his own foundation, and Hannibal can usually keep up with the shifts and impulses. In many ways, he delights that he cannot predict this man, despite the inherent danger Will's unpredictability holds. Yet this shift visibly catches him off guard for a fraction of a second too long. Long enough to show that Will has surprised him.

A lesser man would blame it on the firm grip of Will's hand and his strokes, the haze of desire and need. Hannibal is not a lesser man. Will has surprised him merely because he's Will, and once the freedom fully registers, Hannibal moves his arms back down and immediately reaches a hand out to curl in Will's hair. He grips, but not tightly, merely holding, using the sensation for balance as his hips fight against twitching. He is allowed to touch, but not to move, and Will's steady strokes are maddening, making his breath hitch and his eyes nearly close before remembering that Will had wanted him to look before. Yet it is difficult. Being the sole focus of Will's attention is humbling.

In the back of his mind, he studies the way Will touches him, learning Will's own preferences. With no other experience to draw on, it would only make sense to use what he likes. Actions familiar to
his hand. But before Hannibal's focus can zero in solely on sensation, before he can begin to lose himself in it, he finds himself hesitating once again. Will's request had not been finished. And as he looks down and watches as Will bares himself once again, Hannibal's breath hitches audibly. It's in pleasure, yes, but also in something bordering on uncertainty.

The request goes straight to his cock and he muffles a small groan. He is not a vocal man in bed, no, but he suspects that Will might one day be his exception. The issue is Will's request. He had made his rules clear before, and he is not so ruled by his own desire that he's willing to cast aside his caution. Hannibal swallows and refocuses on Will. His gaze is suddenly clear, intense, not held back by his own pleasure, which has faded into the background. No, he's considering this, and because of that, he's adamant as he looks for any uncertainty, any cracks in Will's wall. He can hear the challenge in Will's voice, but he's not willing to rise to it if Will isn't ready. He wants, but that doesn't mean he's thought this through.

...or does it. It's been over a month since Will had taken his pleasure and given Hannibal his command. He's bold enough to touch Hannibal, bold enough to kiss him, to explore his body, and to stroke himself with Hannibal watching - and choking - him. Perhaps he has thought about this.

Hannibal wets his lips and frees his hand from Will's hair, lowering it to place over the one Will has wrapped around him.

"You will stop me if that changes," Hannibal instructs clearly. His tone is final. And only when he's positive Will has fully understood does he glance down, hesitate once again, and then he moves his other hand.

He's not tentative in his touch, though the reality pushes him dangerously close to finding his own pleasure without Will's explicit permission. His fingers trace the glans, feeling the heat and weight of Will's cock, similar, yet so different from his own. He wraps his hand around it, mimicking Will's touch at first before tightening it. Just enough that there is no doubt Hannibal is the one touching him, stroking him slowly from root to tip, and smearing his slick around Will's slit.

"Is this acceptable?"

He's caught Hannibal off guard - both in allowing him to touch and at the indicated location - but this has usually been Will's prerogative. At least it's been a reoccurring theme for them since toppling off a bluff together. When it came to Hannibal, Will was someone his father would have labelled as a genuine 'shit disturber.' He really can’t help it. Frankly, Hannibal's normally nonchalant and unflappable demeanor just invites it. It often pisses Will off. So, yeah, when he’s able to cause him to falter or stumble, it’s enjoyed and seen as an accomplishment. Although, when it involves sex, Hannibal's control slipping amounts to slight hesitations and a few sentences restarted, but it’s delicious to Will.

He knows Hannibal wants to touch him there. The sound he makes is evidence enough. Hannibal is battling against his little rule - nothing below the waist - but this has been Will's prerogative. At least it's been a reoccurring theme for them since toppling off a bluff together. When it came to Hannibal, Will was someone his father would have labelled as a genuine 'shit disturber.' He really can’t help it. Frankly, Hannibal's normally nonchalant and unflappable demeanor just invites it. It often pisses Will off. So, yeah, when he’s able to cause him to falter or stumble, it’s enjoyed and seen as an accomplishment. Although, when it involves sex, Hannibal's control slipping amounts to slight hesitations and a few sentences restarted, but it’s delicious to Will.

But why would it? He's fantasized about Hannibal touching him for weeks now and when he's finally obliged in it, Will strains into the first exploration of Hannibal's fingers along his cock. He bites his lip as he noticeably fidgets, his hips jerking forward on their own accord. It takes him a moment to remember what he was doing before and his own hand resumes, squeezing Hannibal's cock appreciatively.
"More than acceptable." He gives a half-choked off laugh (that damn phrasing again). The laugh turns into a moan that Will suddenly feels self-conscious about it, eyebrows drawing in. But why should he be? There's no one to judge him. Sure, he'll probably feed Hannibal's ego, but what does that really matter? Pride has little room to be a thing after Will had let himself go while he'd been jerking himself off. Now that it's Hannibal's touch, the feelings are immediately intensified.

Will makes a decision and throws caution to the wind, groaning out, "Fuck, Hannibal. Yeah..." He's breathing harsh, body tense from the onslaught of pleasure and Will tightens his grip on Hannibal's cock, wanting the other man to feel it with him.

Will's reactions have always been electric. The flinch or jolt of surprise at a simple touch in the past, how expressive he'd been, his trembling and shaking, all of it. Will Graham doesn't react halfway, and so Hannibal isn't surprised by Will's reaction to this. No, far from it: he's enthralled by it, by the way Will squirms and the way his hips move of their own accord, pressing the heat of his cock into the stroke of Hannibal's hand. Touch is always a very personal thing and foreign touch even more so. Hannibal may be more contained, more controlled, but he still feels the intensity Will is feeling, still wants to lift his own hips, but Will's command had been clear. So instead his breath hitches, muscles tensing as Will's hand starts moving again with renewed purpose, but despite the awe that this is happening, Hannibal's focus is caught and captured by the man still straddling him.

Will is a vision. Hair still damp, the light shine of sweat, muscles and angles highlighted by the moon spilling its light in through the window. Outside the wind has picked up further; there will be a storm before long. But Hannibal looks up at Will like part of him hardly believes this is real. He's caught Will in his mind, his memories and fantasies and sweeping halls of his memory palace for so many years and yet this had never seemed a possibility. So to be gifted it now, to see the tremble in Will's muscles, to hear the moan drawn out by his hand, Hannibal is caught between the desire to destroy and the desire to care. The latter is the only option. He doesn't feel pride at drawing the sound out of Will (though he unquestionably will in time) but rather awe that he's being gifted this. His sentiment for Will is no illusion and even as that groaned curse drops from Will's lips, Hannibal merely looks at him like he's never seen someone so worthy of his attention.

"Language," he admonishes softly, though it sounds far too fond even to his ears, far too breathless, for Will's hand around him is moving. But after a moment, Hannibal merely reaches up with the hand Will had knocked away.

"Come here," he says, and the my beautiful boy is heard in every way save verbally. He touches it into Will's hair as he gently urges him closer, making Will lean over him, forcing him to brace an arm against the bed and leave some space between their hips. But as soon as Will is close enough, Hannibal leans up and kisses him. His grip tightens in Will's hair - a sharp shock, because he's aware that too much tenderness will drive Will away - but the kiss is deep and full, and Hannibal's touch doesn't falter.

His touch is steady, first cementing the sensation of Will's cock in his hand - for it is different, but Hannibal had long ago come to terms with his desire for this man - before almost giving Will what he wants. He's desperate, if the speed of his own strokes are any indication, and it's becoming increasingly difficult not to disobey the order to remain still. But Hannibal strokes him slower, fuller, with languid twists of his wrist and special attention to the wetness at Will's tip - coating his fingers and sparking the real desire to taste - definitely part of what Will has shown him he likes, but with Hannibal's pointed touch. Hannibal strokes him with the intent to make him feel every second, and he kisses him to feel the scratch of Will's beard, to be that much closer to the sounds he makes. To
the scent of him - of them both - and Will's blatant pleasure that makes Hannibal's cock throb and forces an answering groan from his own throat.

The reprimand causes Will's lips to twitch into a brief smirk, bemused at the comment. He has a sudden flare of curiosity about how it would sound to have Hannibal curse. Maybe someday he'd prod the older man into doing so - it could be a little performance for Will. There's something wholly intriguing and satisfying about someone like Hannibal cussing. It was along the same vein as Will's apparent fascination and desire to see Hannibal in disarray. Oh, yes, he wanted Hannibal's hair to be messed up, cheeks flushed, eyes wide and disgraceful language falling from his mouth - brought on by Will, of course.

He doesn't have much time to think on it as Hannibal's other hand is in his hair and pulling Will closer. He adjusts accordingly, bracing himself as best as he can. It's apparent that they're going to kiss, but before their mouths connect, there's a sharp yank to his hair and Will's sound of surprise is swallowed up by the oncoming kiss... And it's astonishing for Will to realize how familiar it feels to be kissing Hannibal like this. Slowly but surely Hannibal has begun to eclipse Molly, his particular brand of sensuality and touch overshadowing his former wife's. Hannibal's methodology is a mixture of sharp and gentle, pulling and pushing yet soothing the sting after and Will knows he is steadily becoming addicted to the confusing variance.

Their eyes meet, their hands move and Will is completely present in his heated moment of connection. He's flushed, moaning and gasping as their lips seek and find. He can feel the slide of sweat down his back, but he doesn't care. Hannibal's hand moves tantalizingly slow and normally this would aggravate Will, but right now? It's almost perfect. Let Hannibal undo him. Let him be devoured in this.

He breaks away from the kiss to murmur, "You'd better ask to come, Hannibal." Will's voice doesn't sound particularly in control, nor is his hand. His movements are jerky, but fast. His concentration is slipping, but he's adamant on wanting to make Hannibal climax.

"I want you to come for me," Will urges in a whisper.

This close, sharing breath, feeling the scratch of Will's beard along his chin and knowing it will be leaving marks for the morning, Hannibal can almost feel the collar tightening around his throat. Much as Will's hands had outside. Only this time the leash is heavily wound around Will's hands, pulling and tugging to keep Hannibal well and truly snared. Thankfully it's where he wants to be, and as they kiss, as Hannibal's control chips away bit by bit - far more than he had ever assumed would be possible even under Will's touch - he knows he will face the repercussions of his choice to touch Will, whatever they may be. This moment and the memories therein are worth whatever fallout will result, and so he is not as careful as he kisses Will, tender one moment - little more than a chaste slide of lips - and then deeper, open-mouthed, tasting Will's pleasure, his moans, his gasps, his desperation. Sometimes muffled by his lips, sometimes escaping between them, drowning out the softer breaths and moans from Hannibal's lips.

He wants this drawn out, years of desire coalescing into a nearly violent swirl of want. He wants to see Will lost in pleasure by his hand, wants to see him sweetly broken, to hear his sounds long and loud. But despite Hannibal's desire to see this last, he's aware it won't be possible. The reality is far too arousing, and the last month has done what Will had intended: driven him to need. His focus is on Will, on the heavy weight of his cock, on exactly what makes the younger man squirm and on the way his breath hitches when he twists his wrist just so. Yet under it all is his own desperation, and as the kiss breaks and Will's reminder registers, Hannibal feels the shock of heat like a knife. Fitting
analogy perhaps, but no less accurate.

"Will," he breathes, and there is no disguising the roughness of his voice, the tension, the way he is clearly attempting to maintain his control and quickly failing, particularly as Will's strokes devolve into something he cannot predict. "Will, slow... slow down."

He has the words on his tongue, a desire to draw this out. But then Will's voice drops to a whisper against his lips and Hannibal groans, sudden and sharp. The only thing that keeps him from immediately complying is his grip in Will's hair and the previous reminder. He hisses Will's name like a word he would chide Will himself for saying, and his hips twitch of their own accord. His grip tightens in Will's hair and his lip curls, almost in a snarl. A desire to remain present, a bid for some control after Will has suddenly pushed him so close to the edge (which is something he'll study in depth later). Hannibal draws back enough to look at Will, allowing him to see, for he suspects this is what Will wants.

"May I?" He wets his lips, breaths rough, as close to desperate as Will has ever seen him, save maybe that night on the bluff. "Please, Will, may I come?"

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No, Will doesn't want to slow down. Will wants to have Hannibal make a nice mess all over himself. Will wants to know what Hannibal's face looks like when his pleasure peaks, what he'll sound like. Will wants his hand covered in the proof of Hannibal's gratification - one that he's entirely responsible for. Will wants to see the entire filthy act play out like a movie and have individual images, like crime scene photos, be committed it to his memory. Let this all leave a lasting mark, let it color his mind and stain him. He's been changed and it hadn't even required any direct coercion on Hannibal's part.

Patience had truly undone him. Hannibal had waited and Will had come, seeking him out of his own volition and full of his own dark desires that he had shared like a tasty desert between lovers. Would their violent delights bring about a violent end for themselves as it had for Romeo and Juliet? Time would tell and likely, there would be violent ends for many others before themselves. (This thrills Will more than he's able to admit.)

Control has passed between them, each taking on the role and enjoying how the other shows it off. Dominance and control may have slipped from Will's fingers for Hannibal to catch and gather up like sand, but Hannibal hasn't let him fall nor has he hoarded it over Will. Despite Will dangling his life and angering his partner, talks of collars and savagery have united them. They’re not quite naked, but he feels seen in a way that goes further than mere flesh.

And it's beautifully feral, seeing Hannibal edge ever closer and registering that he'll need to ask permission. Will doesn't feel in control, he's barely keeping it together as Hannibal's own hand moves unhurriedly, but nevertheless he’s the gatekeeper for Hannibal's own orgasm. When the question is asked a second time - *Please, Will, may I come* - Will holds Hannibal's eyes for a few seconds before giving a curt nod.

"Yeah... yeah, you're allowed," Will grits out. "Come for me."

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There is a heady thrill in the knowledge that Will could say *no*. He won't; Will looks far more desperate than even Hannibal does, and it is clear in those few strained seconds of desperation that Will wants to see him. But the thought of Will having control in such a way appeals far more than expected. There are dozens of reasons why, and all of them too complicated to rationalize right at this moment. He'll think on it later, as once the words fall from Hannibal's lips, a strained plea, his attention is fixated on Will. The answer doesn't matter, nor does Will's uncertain grip on control.
What matters is the way Will looks at him, the way his eyes - almost crystal in the moonlight - meet Hannibal's. He shivers, breathing shallow, stumbling over Will's name once as if seeking absolution.

The permission rips the wall down, his expression tighter, intense, and he makes a careful point to hold Will's gaze even as Will's hand moves furiously, not seeming hindered by how slick his fingers are now. He wants. Whatever panic he may feel later is carefully buried; he wants Hannibal to come, and Hannibal wishes to fulfill that desire for him.

His breathing is rough, heavy enough that with the slight curl of his lip, it sounds - and looks - like a snarl. The tension is coiled under the surface, precome thickening over Will's hand. And when Will's voice - sandpaper over gravel - grits out that final command, Hannibal finally allows himself this exquisite pleasure by Will's hand. Immediately he moves, his hand dropping from Will's hair to the sheets, where his grip is instant and cruel, tight enough that the corded muscle in his forearm stands out in stark contrast in the moonlight. His other hand presses upwards, pressing Will's cock against his abdomen, Hannibal's hand against it but not risking a stroke for the next few seconds. His pulse pounds, his senses sharpen, and with a final, desperate glance at Will, Hannibal's hips arch and he comes with a deep groan of Will's name, almost violent for the first immediate crash of pleasure, and then bordering on desperate for the subsequent ones.

That it has been over a month since Will's imposed ban is painfully evident. He shakes in pleasure, almost dizzying with its intensity, and yet through it all - every single pulse and twitch as he comes thick and hot all over Will's hand - his eyes do not close, nor does he look away from Will.

His hand is still shaking when Hannibal frees his it from the sheets and reaches up anew. Even now his muscles are twitching, pleasure still thrumming, and yet his priority is clear. He curls his fingers behind Will's neck, nails pressing against skin, and his voice is rough with a lazy, almost drunken pleasure when he speaks.

"And now... Now I believe it is your turn, my beautiful, cunning boy." Hannibal's other hand is steady when he curls it back around Will's cock. His strokes are slow at first, just for long enough for Will to likely believe this is what Hannibal intends. And then they're not. They're quick, purposeful, with the pointed flick of his wrist, Hannibal reading everything he can in Will's pleasure, his posture, and he is stunning. "One day, if you permit it, I will discover your taste," he promises, low, his voice a clear vow.

"Nothing will please me more than seeing you fall apart for me, Will. Show me."

The sound of his name accompanies the crescendo of Hannibal's pleasure. Will doesn't look away from that face, caught up in the almost furious expression of exquisite bliss and simultaneous relief. The cock in his hand pulsates and he feels the spurting of hot release coat his hand and wrist; it's not dissimilar to what he's used to in relation to touching himself (granted the shower was far more convenient for cleanup purposes). But it doesn't disgust Will, doesn't turn him off. It is what he wanted, after all.

Will definitely isn't disappointed by the display, his eyes engrossed and taking in every detail he can make out. Hannibal watches him back, equally intent if not more so. They're uniquely conjoined in this, their eyes locked onto each other and something in Will's stomach clenches nervously. (He's vaguely aware that they have taken several leaps and bounds forward, effectively spitting on the rules and the careful maneuvering around each other over the past few weeks - he has no idea what tomorrow holds for them)

His turn now... and Will's eyelids flutter as Hannibal begins touching him again, hand moving languidly and he strains into the contact. At the mention of Hannibal tasting him, Will's eyes track to
the older man's mouth. He's unsure if he means an actual blowjob or his come... but both options offer a particular interesting avenue to pursue. He's definitely fantasized about the former, but the latter without the oral sex having been performed prior is just plain dirty. Of course, Will delights in this thought. Hannibal may not be able to taste his flesh save for the biting, licking and kissing, but he could certainly do that too.

There's a flash of indignation at Hannibal's next words regarding falling apart for him. Will instinctively wants to rebel and give some retort that he isn't fucking interested in doing that... but the irritation dissipates far too quickly, replaced by the sick realization that maybe a part of him does, just in fact, want to. Like he has done so many times before, Hannibal will take care of him afterward. He'd be safe... He eagerly rocks into Hannibal's hand that has sped up, he's so close--

Show me. He heard those words earlier tonight and now he will show Hannibal something new. Eyes glinting, Will brings his soiled hand to his stomach, hovering above his smile. Will might be wearing a look of utter depravity as he smears Hannibal's come across the scar. A few seconds later, Will Graham lets himself fall apart for Hannibal, coming wetly into his hand with a desperate and rather loud moan, head falling back and eyes closing.

Aftershocks pulse and Hannibal feels each and every one, but his attention is no longer on himself. It's on Will. On the way Will's gaze drops to his lips when Hannibal mentions tasting, on the heat in his eyes that says he's thought about that before. On the pleasure he can see coiling beautifully in Will's body, the rough breathing, the desperation, and even that flash of indignation that melts away into something complicated that should prompt Hannibal to slow down, to assess it. But he doesn't. He can see how close Will is, can smell the heavy blanket of arousal over the room, and he wants to see him fall apart by his hand. Wants to look at Will properly as he comes. And Hannibal doesn't find himself disappointed.

In fact, he finds himself aching and almost wincing at a sudden lance of oversensitive pleasure. Because after his request - show me - Will draws back with purpose. He is beautiful this close, flushed yet pale in the moonlight, but Hannibal's attention is drawn down, down to the way Will's hand moves. He's bold, blatant, and as Hannibal watches, he smears the slickness of Hannibal's own release across the white scar cut into his skin and Hannibal draws in a sharp breath, Will's name almost sounding punched out of him. The image cements itself in his mind and the desire to suddenly turn and press Will to the bed - to get his mouth over Will's scar and make him feel it anew is almost blinding in its dual violence and need. But before he can, he hears Will's voice and notes his desperation and Hannibal merely channels that violence and desire into this, into the way Will's voice breaks on a loud moan, the way his head tips back in bliss, and the way his release spills hot and wet across Hannibal's hand.

He is stunning like this, almost agonized in his pleasure. Hannibal strokes him through it, murmuring soft praises in languages with harder consonants to mask what they are. Hannibal sets his free hand on Will's chest, feeling the hammering of his heartbeat, supporting his weight as Will shivers and twitches through his second orgasm. And when Will's muscles begin to relax, Hannibal merely draws his hand away and shifts, carefully easing Will off of him to settle at his side with a soft murmur of, "very good."

And in Will's haze, the second before Hannibal forces himself to move, he regards his companion in silence, studying the picture he makes. Then he lifts his wet hand to his lips and presses the pad of his thumb against his lower lip, leaving Will's scent and taste behind to savor for the mere second before he licks it off. He gifts himself no more, merely a taste, but it's enough to know he won't be satisfied with just a taste now.
With Will's flavor heavy on his tongue, Hannibal slowly rises from bed with a vague promise to return shortly, and he does. He walks to the bathroom where he reluctantly cleans himself off, clinical and methodical, for Will is his main priority. Again, by the time he returns to Will on the bed, his pants righted and limbs heavy with lingering pleasure, he settles in beside him and reaches for Will's hand first, cleaning the remnants of his release from Will's fingers with slow, warm strokes. And this time, he doesn't shy away from pressing the cloth lower, cleaning Will free of his release. He purposefully takes his time, so by the time he turns it upon Will's scar, his scent has already settled and mixed in, possessive and dark and perfect. Hannibal breathes it in slowly even as he leaves Will's skin clean and warm, and while a shower would not be remiss in that moment, Hannibal sets the idea aside for the morning.

He merely gathers the cloths in his hands and rises to set them aside to be cleaned later, then returns to the bed, where Will has been silent and drifting, but not looking shocked or ashamed following his decision. Hannibal spares him a glance, fond but uncertain, wondering just what this will mean for the following day, but the thought settles before it can hook its claws in. He simply slides back into bed and reaches out, ushering Will closer into his space as he draws the blankets over them both.

"Sleep, Will," Hannibal urges, and leaves the rest unsaid, for he knows it would not be welcome. He will deal with the morning when it happens, not before.

Chapter End Notes

:D? Look at our boys finally wanking off together, woo hoo!
Balance

Chapter Summary

Will had used the word lover, yes, but hearing Hannibal apply it to all of his past sexual relations unnerves Will. Hannibal hadn't loved any of them because Hannibal only loved him. Will answers this with his nails digging into the older man's back. "You were a liar, not a lover," Will says finally, resisting as best as he can to not thrust into his hand. "Undoubtedly you read your former partners well, playing the part of a dutiful lover - exceeding expectations, naturally." Will's lips brush a series of kisses up to Hannibal's ear - two can play at that game. He whispers back, "But I know what you really want, and I bet no one has ever offered that to you."

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT: Starting from this update forward, updates will be occurring bi-weekly (every two weeks). As the next chapters are fairly lengthy, like 30,000+ words this allows us more time to edit them and make sure that we stay ahead. We also started writing another story, this time with a fucked up dark!Will & conflicted!Hannibal pre Mizumono run away plot that we nicknamed the Dirty Fuckers 'verse so we'll post that at some point (probably when we're finished it unless you beg Dapperscript to let me)
♥ As always enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sleep comes easily wrapped around Hannibal. Will dreams that he's walking next to the ravenstag in some unknown city, illuminated by the moon and the occasional streetlight. He has his hand petting jet black feathers possessively, the two of them in stride for once. There's no need for a manifestation of a collar - he knows this magnificent beast is his. Equally, he belongs to it. Like he had imagined in Tier's case, Will knows what they are doing (hunting together). He knows the command that's going to come out of his mouth the instant he spots their prey.

"Kill." A split second later, his beast - his monster - takes off in a spectacular charge. Will watches,
hands in the pockets of a wool coat as antlers puncture flesh, hooves kick up and trample. Screams of terror ring out. Will watches the scene, rapt. His hands twitch in his coat pocket. His heartbeat is steady, but his eyes are wide. Will watches the stag become drenched in blood. Black on black. He smiles. The blood drips.

He wakes alone in bed, half-hard and breathing quickly. Sitting up, the smell of blood and violence clings to his nostrils. It takes him a moment to fully shake off his dream. Will glances over to where Hannibal had been lying behind him; his hand reaches out a moment later to touch the pillow almost fondly. No warmth remains. Hannibal has been up for awhile, then. Will is unsure how he feels, so he doesn't bother searching his thoughts. He gets out of bed, the unfamiliar brush of soft fabric has him looking down. Right. He's wearing Hannibal's boxers.

He could shower. He could even shower in Hannibal's en suite bathroom if he wanted, but Will decides to forgo that plan. He opts to wander over to the large closest. Will browses through the vast selection of tailored button-down shirts, his fingers curiously brushing up against the fabrics. He ends up selecting a teal shirt that he likes the feel of. Maybe it will bring out his eyes or some shit. Will doesn't really know much about fashion, but seeing Hannibal's expression would be a treat, especially seeing that after last night, Will is not exactly clean.

He slips it on, buttoning it up halfway before rolling up the longer sleeves to his elbows. Will goes to the attached bathroom to look at himself in the mirror. His neck is colorful, his hair a mess. Seeing him in Hannibal's clothes is odd, but he kind of likes the strangeness of it. What would it be like to wear Hannibal-approved clothing? To have his measurements taken in order to eventually be wrapped up in a perfectly-fitted suit... with Hannibal by his side? He gives himself an incredulous look and before he leaves, Will splashes water on his face.

Hannibal is in the kitchen, fiddling with coffee at the counter and the empath comes up behind him, arms encircling his waist carefully as to not get in the way.

"Morning," he says casually. The best way to start off the day would be to throw Hannibal off. He knows the older one is expecting a grand backlash of sorts and Will doesn't plan on giving it to him.

Over an hour before Will stirs that morning, Hannibal wakes, disoriented at first until Will's presence and the memories it holds rush back to him. Distantly Hannibal can hear the sound of howling wind, the faint rattling of the windows and creaking protest of the house under the onslaught of wind. The storm has hit with striking brutality and he takes a moment to look at the window, noting how bright it looks despite the slowly-abating darkness. Yet despite the chill in the air, the thought of moving seems almost cruel. Will is curled close, his expression lax in sleep, undaunted, uncomplicated, and Hannibal looks at him openly since he can. His hand lazily raises as he blinks sleep from his eyes, and he does little more than card his fingers carefully through Will's hair. He doesn't want to get up.

He does in the end, prematurely judging Will's response to their impulsiveness the night before as negative. It seems to be the theme. Tenderness - Hannibal slipping and forgetting to restrain his sentiment - often seems to be too much for Will, who reacts adversely, fighting back stubbornly. He's expecting much the same thing when Will wakes, and so his eventual decision to leave the room is simply to save Will the pressure of immediately discussing this. They must; after breaking so many rules, last night had changed things. Rules need to be reworked, and boundaries carefully nudged to find proper positioning. But Hannibal will do that when Will seeks him out, and not before. He's anticipating days, not hours.

Silently, reluctantly, Hannibal eases himself away from Will on the bed, though makes a point to carefully tuck the blankets in around him, trapping as much heat as he can. Then he merely selects a fresh change of his own clothes, gathers the dirtied clothing from the night before, and silently slips
from the room. He showers in the other bathroom to give Will time to sleep, and when he's finished, he dresses in dark slacks and a grey button-down that he doesn't bother buttoning all the way. The bruises upon his own throat are lurid and stunning as he looks at himself in the mirror to shave, and he finds himself touching them serenely long after he's finished his routine and made his way downstairs to start breakfast and coffee.

Routine is important, after all. While Hannibal doesn't regret what had happened, he does fear Will is going to. So for Will's sake, he ensures the morning routine has not been altered.

So caught up in his own thoughts is he that Hannibal doesn't register Will's presence consciously. He's aware of movement, of the sounds upstairs, but his focus is on the coffee, what to make for breakfast, and the lingering memories of Will's expression in bliss. So when arms slip around him from behind, Hannibal tenses immediately but just as quickly that tension eases. He recognizes Will's touch, his voice, and his... scent.

Hannibal breathes in deeply, though admittedly as subtly as he can with Will so close. He's stunned enough that Will has opted to remain accepting regarding his personal space, much less voluntarily speaking with him. But when Hannibal pointedly looks back over his shoulder at Will and breathes in again, less subtle this time, he finds exactly what he'd assumed: Will smells like heat and sex, yes, but Will also smells like him. He hadn't showered. The thought streaks a low heat through him, but beyond even that is the fact that when he catches sight of the color adorning Will's torso, it is rather... familiar.

"Good morning, Will," Hannibal says lowly, clearly cautious but not willing to sound rude. "I see you were able to locate my closet." And wear part of it, he adds silently, distantly aware that Will has likely permanently settled his scent into that particular shirt. Hannibal can't bring himself to be properly irritated. Or irritated in general. He is admittedly transfixed. "If you would like clothing more to your taste in the future, you need only say, though I doubt we could cater to those whims this morning. The storm," he adds, by way of explanation before he turns back to the coffee.

"Did you sleep well?"

Hannibal smelling him, while not overly blatant, is still picked up on by Will. After all, he'd been counting on it and therefore he'd not showered on purpose. He's a mix of sweat and sex and yet it's overlaid with the crispness of Hannibal's dry cleaned shirt. Will hadn't realized truly how sensitive Hannibal's sense of smell was until he had put two and two together and figured out that Hannibal had smelled Freddie on him. It had been proven again by Chiyoh's admission of Hannibal burning things for her to try and identify, and yet again when, even with a clear barrier and a good bit of space between them, the doctor had been able to pick out distinct scents.

Will knows Hannibal hadn't been expecting the proximity nor the appearance of one of his shirts. He catches Hannibal's eyes as he takes in what he can see from his position.

"Wanted to wear you this morning," Will replies simply. It has multiple meanings; he'll see if Hannibal cares to explore them or not. "Slept well, thanks." He taps his fingers against Hannibal's stomach before deciding to go through with it and place a kiss on the back of Hannibal's neck, above his collar. He brushes the faintest of kisses there before blatantly inhaling the older man's scent - mainly picking up aftershave and shampoo.

"But I assume you want to discuss last night's turn of events," Will says as he unwraps his arms from Hannibal's waist and takes his seat at the table. He's certain that Hannibal is not expecting him to be assertive and bring it up, but Will has decided that he'll attempt to keep on surprising Hannibal and be one step ahead of him for once. It would be another new dynamic to explore, maybe even a game.
The multiple meanings are not lost on Hannibal, and he is not yet familiar enough with Will's affection to claim to be unaffected. In truth, Hannibal had not been expecting this. He had been expecting Will to trip, to withdraw, to firmly close the gates down as he had every time in the past. Sexuality doesn't seem to be Will's weakness, but affection does. So this makes absolutely no sense. Hannibal is not foolish enough to believe this hasn't been carefully calculated, to believe that Will isn't playing a game of his own, but he finds himself painfully intrigued and tellingly distracted by not only Will's proximity, but his actions.

Will has, in effect, thrown him quite beautifully. And when lips press against his neck, Hannibal stills in honest surprise and he would have to be deaf to miss the pointed inhale of his scent. It sets a low heat through him, confused and wary but wanting. This has to be intentional, though the underlying drive behind it still remains to be seen. Yet despite his caution, Hannibal cannot claim to be adverse. He drops one of his hands down from his task and reaches back just enough to lay it over Will's hip for a small squeeze.

And yet again Will surprises him. This time, though he does mourn the loss of Will's touch, Hannibal turns to watch him step back to the table. He's transfixed; Will's attire is pointedly lacking, save for the appearance of the teal shirt that does wonders to bring out his eyes and the fine tones of his hair. The shirt is long on him, somewhat loose, though Will fills it out better than Hannibal had been anticipating. He looks decadent as he sits, his confidence fetching. He does what he'd said; he wears Hannibal: his clothing, and his scent, and the wild tangle of his hair that speak of the night before. Hannibal is not surprised to find Will's appearance so pointedly manipulative; he is surprised that Will is the one to bring up the night before. He stills only for a moment, considers this, and then turns back around.

"Yes. I do." Hannibal doesn't voice his surprise that Will is the one bringing him up. "One moment." He takes the time necessary to finish making the coffee and prepares it as he knows Will enjoys. Then he carries both cups back to the table, setting Will's down first before taking a seat with his own. Even as he sits, his attention is on Will, on the sight he makes in his clothes, even though Hannibal knows he will need to iron the shirt later - if he is ever able to get the distracting scent out (and assuming he wants to).

"We were reckless last night. I should have reinforced the boundaries previously set. Yet I don't regret what happened. I merely wonder how you view what happened. And what... your feelings are on the matter. If we need to re-evaluate the terms."

Hannibal won't be hurried into the conversation, won't be rushed away from their coffee preparation. Routines are important, after all. Heaven forbid they talk and don't have coffee in the morning. Will is quite fine biding his time, watching Hannibal work and considering him. Will is going against what's been his norm and, while Hannibal hasn't called it out, he's surely expecting something. Oh, if only Hannibal could see what Will's mind is working out, the gears turning. He doesn't have it all planned out yet, but he knows what he wants to.

"We were reckless last night. I should have reinforced the boundaries previously set. Yet I don't regret what happened. I merely wonder how you view what happened. And what... your feelings are on the matter. If we need to re-evaluate the terms."

Cups of hot coffee are placed down, Hannibal takes his seat and it begins. He takes a sip and listens. Nothing he hasn't expected - blahblahblah boundaries, terms, feelings. Cup placed down, Will's index finger strokes over the handle, from the top to bottom and then in reverse. It's almost sexual and definitely not his usual nervous tapping or fidgeting so he's curious as to Hannibal's reaction.

"I view it as... We were sexual and I enjoyed myself," Will answers with a slight shrug. It's the truth, although he's simplifying it greatly. Obviously Hannibal had enjoyed himself too.
"You know, I showed you mine, you eventually showed me yours." Yes, a shit eating grin quirks up on Will's face. How could he not make a joke like that? "And, I feel..." Slight distaste is evident in his tone, but least he's answering... "Like it was inevitable. It could have been nicer and neater--" he almost laughs for it had been quite a sticky wet time overall. "If we had been able to discuss it beforehand, but stumbling into it seems par for the course when it relates to me."

It sounds simple from Will's lips, but Hannibal's expression remains casually distant. He has no doubt Will can see beyond that; he's become rather adept at reading the minuscule flickers of true emotion beyond the mask. Hannibal doesn't disillusion himself that Will can't see the hint of suspicion and concern that mix with the very real curiosity and confusion brought on by Will's casual response. Will Graham has never been a particularly casual man, not without hidden motive. Hannibal is well aware that the last time Will had adopted this air, he had been partially content to watch Hannibal bleed out on the ground, and that the time before that, it had been an attempt to manipulate him. And most notably, before even that, he had been working so brilliantly alongside Jack Crawford.

He's suspicious. Yet he cannot fully deny his pleasure at hearing the words aloud. His gaze silently tracks the almost sexual brush of Will's fingers over the handle of his cup and Hannibal's attention lingers for perhaps a moment too long before he again looks up at Will and leans back in his chair. He's impressed, honestly. Will's mask of familiarity and wry humor suits him well. Were it not for the shared history, Hannibal would have been taken in quite immediately.

And what does it say that he's still not entirely certain that Will isn't being genuine? Likely that the control Hannibal holds in his hand is perhaps not as absolute as he'd like to believe.

When it comes down to it, Hannibal decides, this is what he'd wanted. Will may be working at something behind the scenes, but in doing so, he is doing exactly what Hannibal had been convinced he'd have to push for, for weeks, before Will would give in. Whatever Will's motive, he's not about to cast this chance aside. Just like that, some of the tension drains from Hannibal's shoulders, and he even spares Will the hint of a smile.

"A somewhat base explanation, perhaps, but not untrue. Admittedly, I expected more... resistance. But I'm not complaining. Merely cautious. I had hoped to avoid 'stumbling into it', as you so succinctly put. As I have said, you're under no obligation, and I have no desire to push you outside your limits."

No desire he intends to act on, perhaps. Hannibal doesn't say that aloud.

"That said, given your response, is this something you feel comfortable revisiting? You seem to enjoy the... results." Hannibal adds, as delicately as he can, with a pointed nod to the shirt Will's wearing and everything it covers. It's clear: he knows Will had foregone a shower on purpose, if just for the low thread of desire now a constant in the back of Hannibal's mind. "Both immediately afterwards and leading into the following day."

Will's track record for this sort of thing is abysmal to say the least. He's generally been all over the place, daring to push forward, but jerking away after. Repercussions are much more of a familiar occurrence to Hannibal than acceptance is. Still, Hannibal keeps his caution and suspicion under wraps. But as much as Hannibal may preach about Will not being under any obligation to engage in romantic or sexual activities, it's no secret that Hannibal wants it. Will had managed to get Hannibal to break a rule that had held for months. The accomplishment leaves a sense of wonderful smugness in Will. Hannibal's control and composure are not absolute. Will knows this now. And now they have both partook of the forbidden fruit, so to speak... Likely, they won't be taking steps back, at least not in Will's mind because how would that work out now? He's had Hannibal's hands nearly all
over him now, and it had been...

Well, Hannibal is right. Will had liked it all... They both had. Case and point, Will had gotten off twice in one night. They'd kissed more than they ever had in the past, their hands had touched and explored more thoroughly. He had gained another mark - this time in a much more intimate place. He'd been choked to the point of oxygen being cut off (and thus gifted an incredible orgasm in the process). Of course, their hands on each other's cocks, moving with intent to get the other off...That had been a fairly significant highlight.

But it had been more than acts of lust and desire that had transpired last night. Will's not in denial over that little fact, but will they speak about kisses and care? Of longing glances shared? Or of the talks of collars and violence? Quite a lot had passed between them, much unspoken and Will doesn't know how to process it all.

Will takes another drink of his coffee.

And then another.

"You know that I do," Will states, staring down at the dark liquid. Hannibal's pupils had been blown last night, large and completely transfixed on him. Will had let himself experience the devotion first hand... and yes, it had threatened to undo him. It had shaken him up, but he'd survived.

"It was quite..." He searches for a word that can summarize and comes up with, "Intense." Will skims middle finger around the rim of the cup. It's a little more difficult to admit this to Hannibal vocally, but he'd been there first hand to witness the proof.

"So, yeah, I'd like to revisit it, as you put it."

While sexual boundaries are important, they are not the only boundaries to keep in mind. Yet when it comes down to it, they are also the simplest to enforce. Hannibal holds no shame in his desires, sexual or otherwise, for this man. He is not a man to feel shame, period. Yet he cannot deny a particular hesitance in what else he could mention. They had not simply crossed sexual lines. Hannibal had pushed beyond in another way, guided by Will's gentled touches and desire to be close, by his need in that moment to fight beyond the violence in what Hannibal had been saying and see the underlying emotion. Even now, with long hours in which he’d thought about it, Hannibal isn't certain this is something he should mention. Sexual boundaries are simple to talk about. Emotional ones are not. Not when the two involved are the both of them.

Hannibal watches, casual on the outside but rapt on the inside, as Will seems to briefly struggle with something. His coffee is his distraction and Hannibal lifts his own cup to his lips merely to be seen as otherwise engaged, to ease pressure from Will's shoulders. His focus is firm. And while he believes he can detect heat in Will's scent - past the heady mix of desire and sex still pawing incessantly at the back of Hannibal's mind - Will remains pointedly silent until he turns once again to his coffee. When he finally speaks, he's cautious. He speaks like he's selecting the words from an assortment in front of him, looking for the ripest, with juice that will stain.

"Then we shall." Hannibal says simply and quickly, to ensure Will isn't left waiting for an answer. With that said, he finds he can spare a few seconds longer to properly put together his own line of questioning. There is much to talk about, and he doubts Will is going to enjoy most of it. Yet he's not willing to stay his concerns when they hold such importance.

"I would caution you to allow what we did last night to become more commonplace before going too much further. I have no qualms in mild exploration provided it's discussed first. But you are prone to
pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone." Hannibal doesn't add that Will is prone to bouts of stubbornness but the look he sends him contains it politely implied.

"And as of the... intensity," Hannibal adds, slower, and it's clear that in this case, he is a man cautiously testing the thickness of the ice before stepping onto it. "Was there anything we did last night you didn't enjoy? Or anything you found... perhaps too intense? Sexual or otherwise."

Hannibal's adoration, calling Will beautiful, the way he'd drawn Will down to kiss him... all viable possibilities. He doesn't want to push Will beyond what he will readily accept.

Will keeps his head bowed, eyes staring down at his coffee. He tries to remember when Hannibal had learned how he took his coffee. Will can't even recall ever telling the man that he preferred simply two sugar. Years ago, when he had foolishly believed Hannibal was both a friend and doctor who had his best interests at heart, he must have observed Will's preference. How naive he'd been back then, shortsighted, showing up to visit a friend and drink his coffee, opening up... It doesn't do to linger on past hurts, but honestly... he has to work on picking better friends. He'd reached into a hat and selected Hannibal Lecter of all people. They've both pulled the wool over each other's eyes, but that first betrayal had hurt and broken him in a way the knife slashing through his insides hadn't. Will pushes the coffee away, a mild frown on his face as he tries to leave that train of thought behind.

Discretion is suggested to him - that they grow more comfortable with the steps they have taken already before biting off more than he can chew, because Will's aware that he's the one that this message is for. He's the one who gets spooked. It still leaves a sour taste in his mouth. He wants to be indignant and prove to Hannibal that he's in this - that he can match Hannibal in accepting and embracing all of this. Yet, history paints a different story, but perhaps that part of his history is a closed book now and a new chapter has begun, one where Will is more aligned with his own desires...

He's been given a chance to list any possible activities or sentiments that he's not fond of. Will could mention being called beautiful, being picked up and deposited on the bed like a woman, yet he hesitates to bring them up. What he had found most overwhelming was how he had felt touching Hannibal, how he had longed to explore and worship the older man's skin. It had been more than a mere sexual craving - it had been about a connection. He'd been the one, in the end, who was tender - kissing Hannibal's scar, undressing him... He'd asked for Hannibal to say it again. Will's rap sheet was long, his offenses many.

And yet when he glances up to Hannibal, a degree of calmness settles over him. "Like I said last night, I want it all."

There. Let Hannibal deal with that as he sees fit.

Hannibal has given Will an out. He watches with a casual interest as Will's gaze moves to the coffee in front of him, as if seeking answers within. What he finds there must not sit properly with him, for it doesn't take him long to frown and push the cup away. Hannibal watches him curiously, but despite his curiosity, he resists the urge to ask. There's a slightly drawn expression on Will's face - while shielded - that he recognizes as something he doesn't want to poke. The dormant urge is there. To poke, to irritate, to study this man at his best and manufacture his worst. But those impulses are long quenched and now Will's distress merely draws Hannibal's attention, not the desire to act upon it.

Instead he simply leaves Will to his thoughts. He lifts his own cup to his lips and sips at the coffee, allowing the scent and the flavor to briefly cleanse his senses of the heady aroma Will is currently
wearing - much more pleasant and potent than his thankfully long-gone and very unfortunate aftershave. His attention remains on Will, looking for any break that he might need to repair, but Will is simply frowning, looking caught between contemplation and something Hannibal can't quite identify. When Will speaks - if he speaks - he hopes to read it on Will's tone, for the expression on his face is too mixed to properly ascertain emotion.

He does pick out a small flare of something softer before Will speaks, however. It distracts him from a particularly loud howl of wind outside, one that has Hannibal holding his cup ever so slightly closer as if to ward off the chill. And then he doesn't care at all about the storm outside. His attention is caught by Will.

Hannibal blinks, and that alone is unguarded enough to show that Will's answer has surprised him. For a moment he hesitates, contemplative, and then he, too, gently eases his coffee aside so that nothing distracts him from Will. He looks calm enough for this to be legitimate. Honestly, Hannibal finds himself shocked just how genuine Will seems at the moment. He had not been expecting this.

"...I see." It's said merely to stall for time. Hannibal remembers the context in which Will had said that. It had been directly related to his tenderness. He doubts that is accidental. "Very well. Though I expect you to tell me if that changes. I am... not adverse. And I would ask that you be upfront with me if there's something you require of me. I am cautious in this, Will. I will not insist you ask every time. But I need to be certain I'm not overstepping your boundaries."

As if to prove that he isn't going to be shaken up by his former distress, Will reaches out, clasps the cup of coffee and takes another drink. It's a deliberate show. And yes, it's just the way he likes it. Hannibal may be dangerous, but he's ever so obliging, wrapped around Will's comfort and preferences. Hannibal knows the way Will likes his coffee. He cooks to his tastes. He's quick in casting his gaze away when needed and holds his tongue. Hannibal can tell when the tenderness becomes too much and he should switch to yanking hair instead. He's apt in breaking down Will's barriers by means of kissing. He's helped Will gradually acclimatize to the public on their outings, easily stepping in when needed and deflecting unwanted attention. He's tended to every wound, self-inflicted or not. This man sitting across from him knows him and for all that Hannibal caters and shows Will unwavering patience, predicting and adjusting when he can... Hannibal can still not see everything.

"I require that you trust me," Will replies and meets Hannibal's eyes briefly, moving his other hand across the table, palm upturned and waiting for Hannibal take it. It's a show of good will; it's also a manipulation.

"Or at least trust that, in the end, I'll always do what I want." His smile widens, his eyes glint. Will is speaking the truth. He is a man ruled by sparking impulses and he's allowed to run freely. He has no wife and child to care for, he doesn't need to behave for Jack or Alana now. Will has Hannibal, who proves time and time again that he will pick up pieces and protect him. They have their own morality and it's one which Will is discovering and planning on feeling out.

The collar is firmly affixed, Hannibal's sentiment - his love - is now a feature that enables Will.

When is manipulation at its finest? When it's said in simpering tones, blinding its target to the true nature behind the words? A farmer leading an animal to slaughter. Or when the target is fully aware of it and yet chooses to allow it anyway? Hannibal is not an idiot, and Will is well aware of this. Yet he also knows what he can expect from Hannibal. So when Will speaks, his voice firm, Hannibal briefly meets his eyes with a careful impassive mask. Trust is not something that Hannibal holds in droves. But before he can even consider saying so, Will's hand reaches over the top of the table and
settles, clearly beckoning, and Hannibal casts it a silent look, the faintest hint of a smile in his eyes. 

He's impressed. But he's not impressed with Will's sentiment. It's somewhat wry, granted, but Hannibal still finds himself proud of Will's skilled manipulation. He's learned well.

Silently, after only a moment’s pause, Hannibal reaches his hand out and sets it over Will's, fingers curling around the back in the smallest of squeezes. He knows precisely what this is, and despite the mild bitterness at the fact Will is attempting it at all, he truly is impressed. He is also suspicious. But that suspicion he carefully tucks away to monitor when it feels more grounded in reality. For now, he regards Will carefully, admiring his smile, and the low thread of control in his eyes. He is a man who knows he holds all the cards and he is truly stunning in his manipulation.

"I trust that you will do what you want," Hannibal finally says, after a pointed pause so that Will can feel the weight in the statement. He doesn't trust Will. Not completely, and certainly not after Will has been so skilled at manipulation in the past. But he does trust in Will's selfishness and his instability. They will keep Will by his side. "And I trust that you suspect how hard you can pull and how far you can go before my collar becomes unbearable."

They both know this is no longer merely a conversation about sexual boundaries. Hannibal is suspicious, but his suspicions are lazy, and he's aware they could be unfounded. His only proof is Will's hand willingly in his own. A hand he squeezes again, stroking his thumb over the delicate skin of Will's inner-wrist.

Will's hand is not immediately grasped. All actions and words must be considered. Hannibal is not one to blindly do anything, no. Will is certain Hannibal has no idea what he's thinking about in the back of his mind, but Hannibal is wary, and with good reason to be so. From a seed planted last night, black tendrils have sprouted forth. They curl and dance in Will's mind, creeping through his thoughts, warping his desires and whispering of dark things. He's a little afraid to close his eyes, for what images are awaiting him? What gifts from his overactive imagination? Will knows what he wants, it's just a matter of figuring out how to bring it to fruition. But he will. He's Hannibal's cunning boy, after all.

His hand is taken and Will tilts his head in acknowledgement. He remembers the first time he had attempted to reach out for Hannibal's hand but stopped halfway, unable to complete the task. Now, he'd reached the full way and simply waited, fully knowing that Hannibal would reciprocate. They have come far. This will be a fun game, he thinks, and it's been oh so very long since one has been played, hasn't it? This time they are on even ground, or the closest to it. Eye to eye and both aware, for Hannibal most certainly is. Will is sure of it and it thrills him. Blue eyes gleam as he listens to Hannibal give a suitable - and safe - response.

Will finishes his coffee. He does know how far he can push - or at least he thinks he does. He'll find out soon enough if he's mistaken.

"Will you shower with me?" He asks. A beat later he adds, "I'd like you to." Best to phrase it that way. Hannibal will like it better.

The request is unexpected, and it draws Hannibal up short. He merely blinks, too slow to show proper surprise, but it's clear he hadn't been expecting Will to take the conversation in the direction it had gone in. Though the temptation is there, he finds himself leaning back in his seat ever so slightly. He doesn't let go of Will's hand, but he does put more distance between them. It's clear in that moment that he intends to decline the offer, both for the sake of allowing Will to process what had happened the night before, and because he'd taken a quick shower not a few hours ago. But before
he can so much as open his mouth to decline, Will adds on to the request and Hannibal frowns.

It's mild, the barest turn of the corner of his lips and furrow to his brow, and it very quickly softens into something neutral, and then indulgent. Will Graham is learning; Hannibal can hear himself in that request, in the old requests he had once given Will through countless appointments ("I would like you to tell me..." "I would ask that you join me..."). It is manipulation at its finest, parsed and altered to fit Will's cadence, and Hannibal finds himself nodding once before he's even made the decision himself. While he is wary of Will's manipulation, he cannot turn a blind eye to such a clear homage.

"Of course you would," he says simply, and the weight in his voice shows that he knows. "I will, yes."

Even so, he takes the time to finish his own coffee without drinking it too quickly, then takes his hand back. He stands, taking both of their cups to the sink to wash later, and then he rolls his shoulders in a quick stretch, working out a mild ache from the residual tension following the evening before. Hot water will undoubtedly assist with that. "Do you enjoy distracting me, Will?" Hannibal asks mildly, conversational even though he already knows the answer. With one hand close to Will's back - hovering but not touching - he opts to guide the way back upstairs. If they're to shower, it will be in the en suite bathroom, where there is more room for two.

"Not that I am adverse to the statement. You look and smell exquisite - the color makes your eyes striking. But I am curious if this is what I should expect from the new side of our relationship." He spares Will a slightly amused glance as he leads the way to the stairs and ushers Will up, though his gaze drops to the bandage on Will's thigh, approving. "A different sort of marking, as it were."

The change in posture is noted by Will - Hannibal sitting up straighter, a small distance put between them in the process. But Will's admission that he wants it is what will change Hannibal's mind. As long as his requests are reasonable and he remains composed (at least for him) Hannibal likely will acquiesce. He's seen it in the past and he sees it now. The downward turn of the other man's lips smooths out as Hannibal nods and accepts Will's terms. When he agrees, Will smiles and replies with an, "Alright." Just like that, they'll be moving forward into another intimate activity.

He lets Hannibal take his time, apparently in no rush to be hurried along into their shower. It's obvious that Hannibal had already showered and shaved, but Will doesn't care. A part of him just wants to be touching Hannibal's skin, to have him exposed again. It's a somewhat uncomfortable urge and Will doesn't say any of it, just content to hold Hannibal's hand for now and satisfied that he's, once more, getting what he wants. His eyes focus on the point of contact on the table, and it's funny how he used to be so afraid of touching Hannibal, and now here he was, inviting Hannibal to shower with him.

_Do you enjoy distracting me, Will?_ This time Will is taken back by the question posed to him. He chuckles quietly to himself, following suit and standing up. He likes the fact that Hannibal apparently wants to play as well. Before he can reply, Hannibal has more to say (of course). He lets himself be led up the stairs, listening and finding amusement that he'd been apparently right about the color of shirt and his eyes - maybe there's hope yet for his fashion skills. "I do in fact enjoy it," Will replies pleasantly enough, but he hardly needs to answer as they both know.

When they arrive in the bedroom, Will can't help but take a few seconds longer to let his eyes linger on the bed and then the window. Less than ten hours ago they were up against that window, Will being choked and jerking off... The two of them kissing and touching in that bed, learning each other. And now they're going to shower together. Upon entering the bathroom, Will crowds into Hannibal's space and his hands come to the collar of his shirt. He begins working on undoing the small buttons one by one.
"As for what to expect... where's the fun in telling you?" When he reaches the waistline, Will tugs the tucked shirt from Hannibal's slacks and finishes the job. The fingers of his right hand skim up the exposed column of flesh, from Hannibal's bellybutton to his collarbone before he returns to business and removes the shirt.

Observing some niceties, once the two of them step into the bedroom, Hannibal pointedly does not mention the way Will slows. He doesn't need to look to see where Will's attention has landed, but he does so anyway, glancing at his companion out of the corner of his eye and admiring the expression on his face. It holds no regret, no uncertainty, and despite the suspicion Hannibal still holds regarding this situation, some of the tension eases from his shoulders. Will has no way of knowing he's being observed; his reaction is genuine, and the pleasant hunger he can make out in Will's eyes tells him everything he could have wanted to know. He leads the way into the bathroom with a surer step, and while he does find himself surprised when Will suddenly steps in close - pushing him up close to the vanity because Hannibal has no reason to deny Will his control - he merely regards him fondly and allows him this.

Will's fingers are as quick as they can be on the buttons of Hannibal's dress shirt, though he does make a point to undo the cuffs himself for simplicity's sake. Even so, not even Hannibal is unaware of the intimacy of the moment, his amusement shifting carefully to something warmer as he watches Will attend to him. And when his shirt is laid bare, he draws in a slow breath as Will's hand trails up along his skin, intimate and unhurried in a way that has Hannibal's posture easing further. "I suspect that even were you to tell me what you anticipate, you would still wind up surprising me. Perhaps the both of us," he comments, as he allows Will to slide the shirt from his shoulders. For a moment, Hannibal considers granting Will the same consideration, but his plans change the next moment.

There is a certain vulnerability inherent in nudity for most people, and while he has never felt it, he is aware of its existence. He is also well aware that Will has always been the one in a greater state of undress between them. It's a small consideration, but after a moment, Hannibal's hands drop to his belt. He's casual as he undoes it, careful not to crease the leather, and then turns his attention to his slacks.

"I have never been able to entirely predict you, despite all my efforts. Your mind is familiar, yet an enigma still. Perhaps as it should be." As Hannibal speaks, he leans back against the vanity and undoes his slacks, sliding both them and his boxers down without haste, and then takes a moment once he's nude to carefully fold the slacks. He takes his shirt from Will's hands and does the same; even like this he refuses to show a lack of regard for his belongings.

Once his clothes have been set aside, Hannibal steps away for a moment to turn on the water, comfortable in his state of dress despite the tight line of the Verger brand permanently etched into his back, and the slightly gnarled scars against his back from shielding Will's body from the rocks directly after their fall. They are all Will's marks - as well as the entry wound of Dolarhyde's bullet - and Hannibal feels no shame in baring them to him. This is an attempt to give Will some control back, after all. And when the water is running, Hannibal finally turns back to Will and eyes his shirt.

"May I? Or would you prefer to do the honors?"

Strange how certain activities that one normally takes for granted can be deceptively intimate. Will's has had his mouth on Hannibal's skin, has had his hand on his dick and yet this act of unbuttoning Hannibal's dress shirt is something vastly different in its intimacy. Thankfully, his hands do not shake. Will truly doesn't know what to expect of his incipient sexuality and what it means for their relationship, but he imagines Hannibal is correct in assuming that, were he to give an answer, Will
would undoubtedly do something entirely else, anyhow. Will knows Hannibal can't be expecting what's been growing in his mind.

Will watches Hannibal start the rest of the undressing task. He's not irritated that Hannibal takes it upon himself. Despite what he's touched, Will doesn't know if he could manage those next few steps with the same sense of calmness. But he does watch as Hannibal's sure hands undo the belt and pull it free from the loops. He could be choked by that belt. Hit with it. It could be used as a restraint. He's seen pictures of all three of those activities, but namely their aftermath. A slight blush comes to his cheeks, but he's not exactly embarrassed by the thoughts, just more surprised by them. He wonders if Hannibal knows how often he surprises himself. Hannibal is not alone in being unable to predict his whims; Will catches himself off guard far too often.

As pants and boxers are pulled down with no preamble, Will does cast his eyes away as to not be completely leering at Hannibal. He lets out a soft amused snort at Hannibal folding each item of clothing, but it's really par for the course so Will doesn't comment on it. As with the more permanent marks on Hannibal's skin - the brand, scars, a healed over bullet hole - there's also more colorful evidence of yesterday such as faint bruising on Hannibal's neck (although Will is much more decorated with evidence of their passion). This is the first time Hannibal has been completely naked, but he seems to not be bothered in the least. He turns the shower and then regards Will, asking if he may return the favor.

It seems appropriate for Hannibal to be the one to remove the shirt. He's dressed in Hannibal, smells like a mix of him and shared pleasure... let Hannibal make him naked. Will closes the distance between them and takes Hannibal's right wrist, lifting his hand and placing it on his chest.

"You can take everything off," Will answers, his voice lower than he'd like. There's the shirt, yes, but also his boxers and the bandage on his thigh.

There is a brief moment - when Hannibal loops his belt into a safe bind so as to hang it without creasing the leather - that Will's scent changes. It's mild, and overshadowed by the already heady mix in the room, but Hannibal does take notice of it. A quick glance offers him the sight of Will's skin flushed with something, but Hannibal merely files the knowledge away to revisit at a later date. After sharing so much and this tentative truce, he's unwilling to push. From there, he undresses at his leisure, and when Will answers his request not merely by speaking, but by closing the space between them, Hannibal is rapt. Will takes his wrist, guiding his hand over to press pointedly against his chest, but Hannibal isn't expecting the rest of Will's allowances.

Unbidden, he drops his gaze. And while he does glance at Will's boxers, his attention is quickly caught by the bandage from the night before. The picture Will makes like this is stunning and Hannibal is almost reluctant to disturb it. But the warmth seeping through the shirt is clear and as impressive as the color is on Will, Hannibal finds himself tellingly impatient for the sight from the night before. To see the mark on Will's neck clearly, and to see the bruises on his throat properly.

Hannibal lifts his hands to the collar of the shirt Will is wearing and one by one, he undoes the buttons. True, he's practiced enough that he doesn't need to go slowly but this is an indulgence. He takes his time. This close, the heat of Will's skin and the scent he'd not washed away is just shy of overpowering, yet Hannibal merely basks in the task, allowing whisper-soft touches to Will's skin every time he moves one button lower. And when the shirt finally lays parted, Hannibal merely moves his attention to Will's right arm, working the sleeve down and off before doing the same to his left. Once again, he pauses to fold the shirt, though makes no move to step back as he does so. The scent is almost dizzying, and when the shirt is properly folded with the other, Hannibal merely slides one hand up and brushes his fingers admiringly over the collar of bruises on Will's throat.
"You wear it well," he says, and there's warmth in his voice as he applies just enough pressure for the bruises to blanch under his fingertips. But in this, he doesn't linger as long. He merely satisfies himself and then runs his hands down Will's sides - pointedly avoiding the scar simply because it holds too much temptation - and takes equal care in easing his boxers down. Instead of letting them drop to the floor, however, Hannibal makes a point to meet Will's eyes for a moment and then eases himself down. The bathroom tile is cold on his knees but he pays it little mind, easing the fabric down Will's legs and assisting him in stepping out of it. Only then does he turn his attention to the bandage, glancing up at Will every now and then. He takes great care in not disturbing the scab that has already started forming and admires the intimate imprint of his own teeth and the beautiful mottled bruising surrounding the wound. For a moment he allows himself to merely stare, and then leans in to press a kiss close to the edge of the wound.

It's impulsive, and perhaps reckless all things considered, but he doesn't regret it. And only when he draws away does he begin to rise again. He had claimed once, many weeks ago, that were Will to tell him to get on his knees, he would. This is mere proof of that, and perhaps an acknowledgement that he had wrested control away from Will the night before. Acknowledgement, not apology.

Nothing is said while Hannibal's nimble fingers begin unbuttoning his shirt. Will watches the task and feels the feather light brush of fingers against his skin. Somehow he holds himself back from trembling, but it's right there, wanting to be released and ripple across the entirety of his body. He's trying his best to keep his breathing even, but it's difficult and it takes conscious thought on his part. Hannibal is naked before him and he looks far too reverent doing such a simple thing, but Will can relate - he can empathize with the feeling of being utterly rapt about his partner for he's now experienced such a thing himself.

But this simple thing, these actions, are working toward a poignant outcome, one where they will both be naked and bared to each other. Months ago, such a state would be unheard of, especially with no alcohol or raging desperation from his part in the mix. He raises his arms slightly to help Hannibal divest him of the shirt. Of course it's folded and it joins the other growing pile of clothing. Fingers come to the adornment of bruises at his neck and Will inhales a little louder than before. Touch doesn't linger, but the compliment does. (He can still recall the particular way Hannibal had called him beautiful, the sound of his voice...)

The last barrier remains and Hannibal is slow as he begins the removal of Will's boxers. Their eyes meet briefly and it's Will's turn to be surprised by Hannibal now as he lowers himself to his knees. Will holds himself still, but only just. Thankfully, his legs know what to do and step out of his boxers when prompted to do so. Delicately, the bandage is peeled off and Hannibal's eyes flicker upward occasionally, catching Will's. He doesn't want to be so caught up in this image, but he can't help it. It borders on erotic and should be pushing him over the edge with Hannibal far too close to his crotch, but a kiss is placed near the tender spot and Will fully understands that this - whatever it is - is more than desire and lust.

It's more than affection and caring.

It's devotion.

(Love...?)

Still, he's half-hard by the time Hannibal stands. He's not ashamed of it - Will doesn't have any great urge to do anything about it. He just accepts it as it is and he gives a small shrug before leading the way into the shower. As he's the one that needs to get clean, Will stands under the spray, head tilted back as the water wets his hair and streams down his body. His eyes are closed and he knows Hannibal is watching him closely. A small smile is on his face at the thought. He'll have his turn to
drink in Hannibal's wet form soon enough.

"Wash my hair?" Will asks, stepping to the side to allow the water to better reach Hannibal as he smooths back sopping hair from his forehead before looking at his partner.

There is great pleasure to be taken from this moment, though it goes beyond something merely physical. Intimacy and vulnerability without the driving force of sex is something Hannibal has known of, but never experienced before. It's clear from the way Will shifts, the way his muscles are just shy of trembling, and from the awed, stunned expression that is so achingly open that he's never allowed himself this either. Fitting then, that they are each others' firsts given how elegantly they have suffered intimacy and vulnerability at each others' hands in the past. This is unhurried, with no great guillotine hovering above their heads, no countdown to an explosion forcing their hands. This is merely them, reverent, and Hannibal setting his leash in Will's hand willingly after having stretched its reach the night before.

When he rises again, he notes Will's state of arousal but doesn't linger; intimacy and sexuality often cross wires and Will seems content to allow himself the former. It's dangerous; intimacy is a double-edged sword, so easy to forget limits and risk a grievous injury, but Hannibal merely watches Will, rapt, as he steps into the shower. Initially he makes no move to follow, simply admiring the picture Will makes. His hair is beautifully dark as the water weighs it down, and there are no injuries - no sodden clothing dragging Will back into the ocean - for him to be distracted by now. It's a healing sight, in a sense, and only when Will steps aside and looks back at him does Hannibal finally acquiesce and join him.

The water is just shy of hot and it's infinitely soothing, somehow made more enjoyable given the fitful howling of wind outside of the house. Hannibal's gaze is like a physical touch as he admires the way Will looks like this, but he's careful not to lose himself in the intimacy. Not completely. Dahlia is still a possibility, and Hannibal knows how quickly Will Graham can go from relaxed to overwhelmed. Still, when prompted, he merely spares Will another glance and then reaches for the shampoo, working enough onto his palm to wet it before he reaches over and carefully cards his fingers back through Will's hair.

"Of course, Will. Gladly."

Hannibal means it, as well. He looks pleased as he steps under the spray, reaching up only briefly with his free hand to ease the worst away from his eyes. Then he merely takes his time in working his fingers through Will's hair, building up a lather. He's neither rushed or rough, his touch resembling a massage far more than anything else as he focuses on Will's comfort, his relaxation. He allows himself to look pleased, but Hannibal is careful not to lose himself beyond that. Will's empathy hardly needs direct eye contact when the emotion slides through the room like a particularly rich scent. Hannibal doesn't wish to overwhelm him, even as his fingers work the shampoo into a lather and he admires the expression on Will's face. He knows what Will looks like in sexual pleasure; now he has every intention to see what he looks like under intimacy, with someone else caring for him.

Will has been bathed by Hannibal before, he's also had his hair washed, but this time, he has orchestrated it into happening, completely aware and complicit. He wants this and it should probably feel stranger, for as close as he was with Molly, they never had showered or bathed together - Walter came first and Will had never had a problem with that. Unlike the moment in the bath following Will's meltdown, Hannibal is pleased with him and it's something Will takes pride in. Basks in, even. Hannibal's hands rub shampoo in, the care all too evident even in this simple task. Will keeps his
eyes closed, relaxed as Hannibal works it into a suitable lather. No words have to be said, both men finding enjoyment in this honest yet intimate activity.

Hannibal gently prompts Will to go back under the spray and the shampoo is rinsed while fingers gently massage his scalp. Will's hair is quite shaggy now and he wonders if it bothers Hannibal who has, at least, got his hair trimmed once. Will is looking wild, on his way to resembling a hippie in a few months. Even with the trim, Hannibal's hair is closer to resembling what it looked like before his incarceration (which Will likes, because longer hair is easier to play with and pull... and it's attractive). He's close to asking Hannibal if he should get a haircut or not, but hands guiding him out of the direct spray distract him. Hannibal squeezes the excess water from his hair and Will opens his eyes, lips turned upward in a smile.

"Thanks."

Will knows he probably doesn't say thank you enough, far too used to Hannibal just taking the lead and his own lack of manners never really coming into effect. But Will feels like trying a little harder, or at least warming up to the idea of trying. His own hands come up to Hannibal's shoulders, and Will pauses for a moment before he resolves to continue, taking half a step closer to Hannibal and pulling him into an embrace.

His not quite flagging erection pokes Hannibal in the hip, and Will actually laughs out a, "Sorry." He doesn't pull away, though, nuzzling into Hannibal's neck.

Hannibal's earlier caution doesn't ease but despite that, his focus on Will is absolute. Will is relaxed, his eyes closed, and there is trust there that Hannibal doubts Will is capable of faking at this moment in time. Perhaps his attitude will change in the next few days; perhaps he will find himself disquieted by his own actions. But despite this, Hannibal allows it to continue. He's selfish, covetous of Will's attention and comfort, and given the events of the evening before, this seems a fitting course of action. His suspicions over Will's ease will remain, but silent, closed gently behind a door in his mind. Currently his attention is caught by more comforting sights, like the lazy, relaxed set of Will's shoulders as Hannibal guides him back under the spray and rinses his hair free of the suds.

There's no hope in disguising the fondness in his eyes, but he's careful not to let it grow too unchecked. He tries, at least, though even he finds himself almost failing when Will thanks him, smiling, looking almost more content than Hannibal has ever seen him. With two notable exceptions: after he'd killed Dolarhyde, and last night. Hannibal is surprised, though pleasantly so, but not nearly as surprised as he is when Will draws in closer. He casually glances at the hands placed on his shoulders before looking back at Will, curious but not discontent. He's expecting a kiss, at most, perhaps for Will's hands to drop to his throat to admire his marks. But he's not expecting the embrace, and he stills, the picture of a man reluctant to startle a finch that has deigned to land upon his finger.

There is intimacy in a kiss, but it's simple to turn it deeper, to edge away from intimacy and deeper into passion. A hug is not the same thing. A hug is startlingly intimate when it's meant, and Hannibal doesn't miss the fact that Will is doing this intentionally.

They have embraced a few times, but in each, betrayal or manipulation had followed. A needle in Will's arm, a knife across his abdomen, Will tipping them both from the top of a cliff... Hannibal tenses almost imperceptibly, but he can read nothing in this to question. Will is achingly sincere, and while he can't help but suspect it, even the suspicion he'd shut away begins to alleviate. Perhaps it is possible that the night before had quieted Will's mind in more ways than they'd expected. Bit by bit, he finds himself relaxing and, with the roughness of Will's facial hair against his neck, Hannibal finally lifts his arms and wraps them lightly around Will, a small smile on his lips as he presses his
cheek to the warm dampness of his hair.

"You needn't apologize, Will," he says softly, trailing one hand down to settle on Will's hip, over the fingerprint bruises already present. He neither keeps Will's hips angled away nor pulls him closer, merely accepting what Will decides.

"Given how long you've gone without, it's not surprising. Plus there is a particular temptation in intimacy, regardless if it is sexual or not. So close to another, the body responds as it will." Hannibal's thumb presses against the dip of Will's hip, just a slightly different sensation. "I find it gratifying. Would you like me to touch you?"

Hannibal doesn't return the hug immediately, body actually tensing in response. Will realizes a beat later why. They may have had their limbs wrapped around each other before, but they haven't actually outright hugged before. Not like this. Not with any sort of affection lacing the actions. Before, Hannibal's embraces were dangerous, Hannibal drawing him in close only to cut him with a blade, or to mock his forgiveness before administering drugs. Then again, Will's hug had been a precursor to throwing them over a cliff so he wasn't all too innocent either.

Mouths have touched, tongues have licked over scars, he's had Hannibal's sex in his hand, and yet this is entirely different. He's come and sought this specifically. Even with the low thrum of arousal present in himself, it hadn't been the catalyst for seeking the embrace.

(What had? Will doesn't...)

But Hannibal loosens up, relaxing, and his arms come up to return the hug. Will sighs, his hands sliding down the wet planes of Hannibal's shoulders. It's different, but nice. Mere months ago, it would have seemed outlandish to believe Hannibal capable of such a thing, but Will knows differently now. Hannibal is capable of love, capable of tenderness and Will is capable of letting himself be given such things. (At least more so now.)

"I didn't go that long, not really. I got off in the shower. You on the other hand..." Will murmurs against Hannibal's neck. But masturbation was never as fulfilling as having a partner, especially one who desired him with gusto and was able to elicit such responses. At times Hannibal's attention had almost felt worshipful. Unbidden, Will wonders if Hannibal had been an attentive lover with Alana too. The thought causes him to clench his jaw. It's pointless to let himself be bothered by the past, but jealousy is hardly a rational emotion.

"Were you an attentive lover with Alana?" Will asks and he can't keep the disdain out of his voice. "Taking what I had wanted... Like a bully on the school yard, Hannibal." And Will rubs against Hannibal, a low groan following.

Regardless of the answer Will gives, Hannibal will be satisfied. For the moment, the familiarity between them is lazy, heavy and comfortable. Hannibal simply breathes through the scratch of Will's stubble against his neck, hardly daring to refer to it as Will nuzzling closer even in his own mind, for fear of him drawing back. He breathes in the scent - the soft undertones of arousal, both old and new, as well as the scent of Will's skin and the shampoo - and leans down just enough to press a kiss to the meat of Will's shoulder, allowing himself a dismissive hum at the mention of the command he had followed for the last month. "It pleased you; my discomfort aside, I would - and will - do it again. That doesn't answer my question, Will."

It's a gentle reminder. If Will chooses to keep this non-sexual, he has no complaints; being this close to him, feeling Will's hands upon his own shoulders is more than enough. But before Will can give
him an answer, Hannibal feels a small thread of tension work its way through Will's body. It's mild, a slight bunching of the muscles of his waist, which Hannibal feels against his inner forearm. For a moment he considers that possibility that the younger man has finally reached the end of his rope, that this is bordering on far too intimate even for something Will had set in motion. He's all set to draw back, to ease Will back and reach for the soap, but he feels the clench of Will's jaw against his neck and then the question swoops in and he's caught off guard once more.

Hannibal stills, both in surprise, as well as in understanding. He finds himself somewhat relieved that Will's face is tucked in against his neck, as Hannibal's lips twitch into a small, knowing smile. Jealousy. An emotion he is quite well versed in himself, yet not one he had assumed Will had any deigns on. Yet there's no disguising the bitter cast to his voice, spoken possessively against Hannibal's neck. Pointedly staying silent as the water warms them both, Hannibal merely casts Will a sidelong glance and turns his head just enough so that his lips press against the shell of Will's ear. He can feel the grind of Will's hips and feels an answering, distant heat pool low in his own stomach but it's faint and easy to ignore. His focus is on Will.

"Given that you had just attempted to have me killed, I feel I owe you no apology." His tone is simply amused. And while his grip does briefly tighten on Will's hip, Hannibal makes his decision simply. This is a 'yes', it's merely nonverbal. Even so, he won't accept that as an answer for long. But for now, it's enough to tease until Will has given a real answer.

"Will you be satisfied with any answer I give you, Will? I doubt it. But yes. I was." Hannibal gathers Will in closer, careful to brace him despite the slightly slippery tile underfoot. And, perhaps to soften the blow, Hannibal moves his hand from Will's hip and encircles his cock with his fingers, though far too loosely to give any kind of satisfaction. It's a pointed brush, aimed to keep Will from being able to grind against him again, a hint of what he'll have once he answers. Hannibal does delight in teasing him. "I am an attentive lover, regardless of partner. Provided an answer is given," he adds pointedly, his voice low in Will's ear.

"Yes or no, Will?"

In asking he's possibly inviting a risky or controversial conversion, but, as per usual, Will must rock the boat (at least a little). Unlike other times, this subject matter is likely not quite as volatile as what he's brought up in the past. It's nowhere near the significance of Molly or matters of giving his heart away...

Nothing could be changed or done about Hannibal's past games. Where Will had crashed and burned, Hannibal had been able to both effortlessly woo Alana Bloom and have his way with her. It irks Will; he's simultaneously jealous that Alana has had sexual experiences with Hannibal (an endeavor he's just now embarking on), and that Hannibal had been intimate with Alana (something he had desired and been denied). It's both confusing and conflicting and he doubts he'd be able to put it all into words.

Despite this, he's still turned on. Hannibal is so very close and Will lets his hands roam over his back. He's also a little frustrated that his mind decided to veer off in such a way and put himself into this predicament. He's not looking for an apology - it would be sentimental drivel - beneath both of them, so when Hannibal sees fit to not give him one, he's more than fine with that. The answer, of course, was yes, Hannibal had been courteous in bed with Alana. How did she like to be touched, Will briefly wonders. Surely not as violently as he prefers. What would it have been like to watch Hannibal read her signs and reflect back the good man she believed him to be? Had there been much of a seduction needed, or had she welcomed the stark contrast of Hannibal after seeing him become a train wreck? Fingers are on him and Will tenses in anticipation, but the touch is barely there - a
blatant teasing. Regardless, Will breathes in sharply.

*I am an attentive lover, regardless of partner.*

Will had used the word lover, yes, but hearing Hannibal apply it to all of his past sexual relations unnerves Will. Hannibal hadn't loved any of them because Hannibal *only* loved him. Will answers this with his nails digging into the older man's back.

"You were a liar, not a lover," Will says finally, resisting as best as he can to not thrust into his hand. "Undoubtedly you read your former partners well, playing the part of a dutiful lover - exceeding expectations, naturally." Will's lips brush a series of kisses up to Hannibal's ear - two can play at that game. He whispers back, "But I know what you really want, and I bet no one has ever offered that to you."

This is a dangerous dance when everything is taken into account. What had started as something gentle, intimate, even loving (on Hannibal's part) has tilted, taken on a specific edge that had not been completely anticipated. Yet despite the tonal shift, Hannibal relaxes into it, accepting the twist from care to jealousy and something mildly dark with ease. This is what he expects from Will, who has vowed to never give him his heart, and who still holds his resentment close to his chest. Yet he craves closeness and intimacy. Two sides of himself ever warring and twisting, and Hannibal can never entirely predict where Will is going to reside. His orbital is a mere guess, and he always finds himself surprised - for better or worse. In this case, Hannibal views the edge to Will's posture as something equally intimate and interesting. His sentiment for Will is not limited to his caring. Hannibal is equally attracted to his darkness.

He's uncertain what he's said to prompt Will into something slightly more violent, but the sudden curl of nails against his back - and scars with varying sensitivities - draws a slightly sharper breath from him. Hannibal pushes down the urge to press back into it, content despite the ache - perhaps because of it. Doled out by Will's hands, pain is as tempting as pleasure. It doesn't take long to figure out the cause of Will's irritation, yet Hannibal merely considers it thoughtfully. Will objects to the word 'lover', and given the flare of jealousy and the possessive cast to Will's voice, it's simple to predict why.

It's still an effective seduction. Will's voice is dark with promise and Hannibal hums out a sound, both thoughtful and approving. His thumb lightly traces up the underside of Will's cock, as if admiring its shape and weight, but he doesn't close his hand around it. Instead he reaches lower, and he finds the rough, raised edges of the healing wound on Will's thigh with his fingers, tracing the edges of it pointedly.

"You're quite right. *This,*" he presses down, not enough to reopen the wound, but enough for Will to feel it, "Is entirely your gift. And how humbling it is to know you gave it freely. Does the word 'lover' upset you, Will? When it's not said with you in mind," Hannibal adds, his voice still low, though with a curl of curiosity, almost amused. He already knows the answer. "How exquisitely cruel. To resist it with one hand and covet it with the other."

It's a dangerous conversation, and one Hannibal intends to push curiously. He allows the statement to hang for a moment and then moves. He's careful not to completely unbalance Will, his arm tight around Will's waist as he pushes him back nearly against the wall. But he keeps him leaned back, off-balance, dependent on Hannibal's arm around his waist and the bite of his nails in Hannibal's skin to stay upright. A little danger, a little uncertainty, precisely what Will had been whispering about. Will is not the only one physically affected by this.

"But you're entirely correct. I was an attentive *partner* to Alana. It would have been discourteous to
act otherwise. Especially considering how badly you had coveted her. To treat her poorly would not have taken anything from you. As was part of my intent."

Transitions like this are not uncommon for them. By now, this is a dance they're familiar with. An activity may start as one thing and then, usually by Will's influence, it deviates. Hannibal allows these transitions, no doubt curiosity the driving force. For as familiar as they are with each other, catching each other by surprise is perhaps a form of foreplay for them. Hannibal's thumb brushes against his dick and Will makes a choked off sound. Once again, it's not enough and no further touch comes. Instead, attention is given to the wound on his inner thigh. He licks at his lips. Will has learned that all gifts come with a price, but what's the cost of him allowing Hannibal to hurt him?

He doesn't answer the question. They both know that 'lover' had bothered Will. Jealousy and possessiveness remain irrational and illogical emotions for Will, a strong force he hasn't had to contend with before - at least not on this level. He can hear a sliver of satisfaction in Hannibal's tone at it. It only irritates him slightly, but that irritation flares and mixes with a spike of distress as Hannibal displaces him, not quite moving him against the wall, but forcing Will to rely on him in order to stay upright. Will's hands scrabble for purchase, but wet skin isn't much help. Will tries to push down his apprehension about this particular shift in their positions. He'll have to trust Hannibal to not let him fall. This is yet another shift and thoughts of Alana evaporate.

(It's unsettling, yes, but, he's keenly aware that this - him in a state of duress - is something Hannibal takes pleasure from, so Will won't fight it because as long as it was from Hannibal...)

He should, though... shouldn't he? He shouldn't play like this.

He could fall.

(And where had that petty part of him that delighted in denying Hannibal go to?)

"Please," is all that Will responds with as he feels suspended in this moment of trust and uncertainty.

Hannibal's arm is like a vice around Will's waist, an immovable bar wrapped securely around him. He's aware of precisely how far he can lean Will back before his feet slip out from underneath him, and he pushes that line nearly to its limit. The reaction is pointed and immediate; Will's scent spikes into something more than his arousal and Hannibal closes his eyes against the rake of nails over his back. With his skin wet, it's entirely possible Will has drawn blood, but given where they are, Hannibal doesn't care. The water will wash it away. He's far more transfixed with Will's reaction, with the micro-movements under his hand. He can feel Will's muscles struggling and fighting to right himself, can feel the distress. But perhaps more surprising than anything, he feels Will's muscles lock in place, and then very reluctantly... relax.

Eyes opening, Hannibal leans back just barely enough to look down at Will, thoughtful and impressed. It's hardly a glance, but his approval is evident. Will has once again surprised him. He's clearly unsettled by the change in position, but not so much that Hannibal feels any pressing desire to stop. Will has his word, and he could say it. In fact, Hannibal pointedly pauses once he has Will secure, sliding his other hand up to where Will is gripping at him in order to carefully position Will's hands higher on his shoulders, giving him something to hold onto. He could easily loop his hands around the back of Hannibal's neck like this, but to do so would compromise his stability momentarily. Still curious, Hannibal waits. But when Will speaks, his lips don't hiss Dahlia.

He says please.
Impressed is not the proper word for what Hannibal feels. His lips lift at the corner and the look he sends Will is both admiring and abstruse. He had asked Will for a simple 'yes' or 'no'. This is far more than he'd expected, and as such he responds immediately. Keeping his arm firm around Will's waist, he allows the other hand to drop down, trailing from the dip of Will's sternum all the way down, over the deep scar across his abdomen. And when he wraps his hand around Will's cock, warm and velvet against his skin, Hannibal doesn't opt to tease. He trails his thumb along the underside of the glans once, a promise, and then secures his hold and begins to stroke.

"I will not let you fall," Hannibal says, though he keeps his tone deceptively light. Will can decide for himself if he believes the statement, though Hannibal has not lied to him outright. Not in a very long time. If ever, arguably. He leans down just enough to press his cheek once more to Will's hair, breathing him in and delighting in how responsive Will is under his touch, with his hand stroking and his voice low in Will's ear. "I admit, I had not taken you as a jealous man. Possessive, yes. But you are stunning in your jealousy, Will. I wonder... what are you jealous of? That I had Alana, or that she had me?" Hannibal makes a low sound, something half-amused, and something bordering on bitter. "Laughable as the sentiment is. She did not have me. Not fully."

Hannibal is a sadist at heart. Hannibal finds enjoyment in the apparent distress and pain of others, but with Will, it's different. There's limits and much restraint has been shown. As seen in the months leading up to this moment, Hannibal has been more caring and accommodating than anything else and pain has always, in some way, been accompanied by a curl of pleasure. It's never just a bite, nails scratching or an unyielding hold, there's always been a kiss or touch to soothe. Will's perhaps behaved like an emotional masochist, making poor decision after poor decision, but before Hannibal, he'd never courted chaos like this. Yet, he's allowing himself to be twisted into this uncomfortable position where he's reliant on Hannibal and, at the same time, asking for pleasure. It's a precarious situation, but it holds a small sense of the unknown which contains a bit of a thrill for him. He's depended on Hannibal, but not like this.

Their eyes meet briefly and Will tries to hold himself as resolutely as he can manage. This is another gift to Hannibal - he's complicit in giving up this control right now, in playing this scene out as it were. If Hannibal will bend for him, perhaps Will, too, can be a little more malleable, a little more comprising. Partner. Lover. Whatever Hannibal is, he's still changing Will, allowing him his time and space to reciprocate and invite as he sees fit. Will doesn't have to be exactly like Hannibal, nor could he, but he will glimpse into that darkness and let his hand brush against it.

After his response, Hannibal doesn't draw anything out, his free hand enclosing on hard flesh and Will shudders in the strong hold. It's a relief and still new, despite Hannibal having touched him last night. Hannibal's hand is larger, but his grip is sturdy and confident. He does trust that Hannibal won't let him fall, at least not in the literal sense because since they've met, Will, at times, has felt like he's unhinged, like he was falling. (Falling from sanity? Reality? Falling to the inevitable? Falling into something?)

Will also hadn't pegged himself as a hugely jealous type, but now he's had far too many incidences of behaving and feeling that way. He doesn't want to to think again of Alana and Hannibal touching and moving against each other, of their mouths kissing, of Alana's undoubtedly softer skin and curves, of her spreading her legs and having Hannibal enter her. The two of them had been physically closer - sexually closer - and it's this that bothers Will, for he wants...

"B-both," Will grits out, voice tense as his body deals with the combination of growing pleasure and unease of the position and his own thoughts. He fights with keeping his eyes open, his imagination offering him both enticing and agitating images of Hannibal and Alana together. Will's nails bite into Hannibal's skin and he tries to thrust into hand touching his cock. "Damn it, I..." Will breaks off,
groaning, turning his head away from Hannibal.

In truth, Hannibal is expecting an answer that never comes. Will's affinity for Alana had not been subtle, and Hannibal's intention in having her had been a direct slight against Will. Proof that he hardly needed to try, that he had the full capacity to take something right out from under Will's nose. It had been petty, but as proud as he'd been of Will for gifting him his scars, he had not enjoyed the experience. Had Will been a lesser man - had he not held Hannibal's favor - the result would have been catastrophic. So here, now, with Will off-balance and uncertain, Alana's memory a raw point in Will's mind, Hannibal is expecting Will to lash out. To claim he's jealous of Hannibal for having had her.

But Will's answer is far more complicated. Hannibal's strokes slow merely for a fraction of a second, his attention caught on the hitched stutter of Will's admission, feeling it like a slice drawn by uneven metal. The sharpness of it is unexpected but pleasant, settling low inside as he brushes a barely-there kiss over Will's wet hair. Not even the sound of the hot water overhead can drown out the roughness in Will's voice. And, perhaps to reward him for his honesty, Hannibal's hand twists over slick skin on random strokes, feeling the tremble in Will's body and humming his satisfaction as Will's nails dig hard against his skin. He doesn't chide Will for moving his hips. Instead, he merely picks up his pace, negating the need. He doesn't want Will to slip, after all. Not this time. He'd made a promise.

"You what, Will?" Hannibal prompts, even as Will groans (such an achingly gorgeous sound that Hannibal knows he'll never tire of) and turns away. For a moment, he considers stopping, for Will's attention - conflicted as it is - is something Hannibal will not compromise on. But in the end, he decides against it. Instead his touch gentles, slowing, though each stroke ends with a twist of Hannibal's wrist, feeling the heat and every detail of Will's cock clearly. And as he does so, he shifts his stabilizing arm just a fraction, just enough to startle Will's focus back to where it should be.

"I ask that you not turn away from me. Not now. I anticipated your jealousy of me. But Alana..." Hannibal's teeth catch the shell of Will's ear just for a second before he softens it into a kiss. There are many directions to go with this, yet the choice is simple. "That is a surprise. Though hardly necessary. She and I were physical. Perhaps she believed she loved me. But I was not truly with her. She was a colleague. Of mild interest. Second best." Hannibal gives Will a pointed stroke, thumb again playing over his slit, spreading the moisture around that is slicker than mere water. There's no mistaking which position Will has always held in his mind.

He's apparently not allowed to look away, Hannibal's hand slowing and the arm supporting him moves which is just enough of a jolt to have Will's attention snapping back. He chooses to close his eyes - possibly an act of passive-aggressiveness. He can easily accept his jealousy of Hannibal for being that intimate with Alana (she's beautiful, intelligent a woman), but the reverse... It's distinctly troublesome in the insinuation.

(Because it implies that Will wants more - wants sex in some form with Hannibal.)

His answer is both an admission and a surprise to Hannibal, the other man replying with words meant to perhaps comfort Will, to downplay Alana's importance, but Will won't have it. He can't have it. Hannibal confirms their physical closeness yet belittles her in the same breath. It doesn't change the fact that they had done what Hannibal and he had not. Images of the two doctors in the throes of passion filter into his mind, their hands touching, grasping, their limbs wrapping around each other, hips moving. Would it have been fucking (fast and needy) or making love (drawn out and sensual)?

Will doesn't want to know.
"You still..." he begins, but is unable to finish his sentence. Will claws at Hannibal, arcs into his touch. A pad of a thumb plays over the tip of his cock and he whines. He's terribly close and it's all a confusing mess. He's never thought or fantasized of flat out sexual intercourse with Hannibal. Handjobs, blowjobs, shameless rutting - sure, but penetration? Still, the irritation burns that Alana has had an experience with Hannibal that he hasn't.

"You still fucked her when you haven't even fucked me yet!" Will finally blurts out, eyes opening in the shock of his own exclamation. Heart hammering away, Will shakes with emotion and a truth that he doesn't want to be facing.

Hannibal's voice is low, and while not particularly pitched to reassure, it is still his intention. This is a revelation he'd not been expecting. Will is a possessive man; that he had coveted Alana in some sense in memory alone comes as no surprise, but Will's jealousy extending beyond that feels carefully edged, like something Hannibal has not properly prepared for. He should err on the side of caution, yet he doesn't. Instead he merely breathes in Will's scent - even now, hardly daring to believe that he can - and he touches him, teasing until Will acquiesces and turns back towards him. Immediately Hannibal's support solidifies itself, and while he does spare Will a curious little curl of a smile at Will's blatant passive-aggression, it's clever enough that Hannibal gives in. His pace speeds up again, palm gliding over straining flesh, learning the shape and feel of Will's sex in his hand as he shakes and trembles, undoubtedly close.

Ducking his head to once again press a kiss to Will's shoulder, Hannibal fully intends to allow him his pleasure. Jealous or not - perhaps because of his jealousy - Will is deserving of a reward. He's started, his touch purposeful, his arm around Will drawing him ever so slightly closer to trap him and make him cling. But before he manages more than that, Will's voice cuts through the haze and Hannibal is caught in how beautifully desperate it sounds. Nails claw at his skin, undoubtedly tearing lines, the pain too-sharp in places where scar tissue has formed, but Hannibal just groans softly through it, focused on Will's trembling, his touch, and his voice, raising and desperate in pleasure.

But he is not expecting what Will says. And by the look of it when Hannibal snaps his attention to Will's face, Will is just as stunned at the admission.

Hannibal's control is not endless, and the implication behind Will's words rakes through him like a physical heat. Will's back will bruise under the sudden force of Hannibal's grip, for he needs that outlet to resist the urge to act. It would be courteous to push now, when Will is so unbalanced, his heart pounding and so achingly close to the edge despite his mild epiphany. Hannibal merely hisses out a sound, like Will has wrapped a hand around him in turn and fights through the pulse of want. It's not even close to dissipated when Hannibal leans in, and his lips press against the pounding pulse point in Will's throat, his hand picking up its pace; he wants Will to find his pleasure just like this.

"...I will one day. If you wish," he promises, his tone low with heat. "Is that something you desire, Will? To be known so intimately?"

Hannibal answers with tightening his arm around Will and a rather telling noise of want made. Embarrassment mixes with arousal and Will almost pulls away from that tantalizing mouth that presses a kiss to his neck. The hand on his cock moves with greater haste and it has Will tensing, trying to fight back his impending climax because he definitely doesn't want to come talking about any of this. Anything but this.

"He can hear the promise in Hannibal's tone and it has him shuddering and holding back some horrible whine - or at least trying to. They've only talked about this once before and it was during a heated exchange with Will nowhere near ready to even consider it. Now, though? Will's jealousy has
inadvertently brought it back up. He knows Hannibal would like to, but he would never take. Will also holds the key to this particular door.

"N-no," Will gasps out, eyes blinking furiously. His protest sounds weak even to him, but he doesn't want to admit that the idea appeals to him on some level. Hannibal and him, closer than they have ever been, at least in the physical sense of the word.... Will is transposed over Alana in the image in the back of his mind, replacing her as she dissipates. It's Hannibal's hands on his hips, steadying him, it's Will's legs spreading and accommodating the older man between his thighs. Hannibal looks down at him, completely focused, but still holding himself back - and Will may have used the word 'fuck,' but he knows Hannibal will treat him gently in this. Will murmurs, "Please" and only then does Hannibal position himself--

That might be the worst realization about the entire matter. Hannibal wants to fuck him, but more than that base urge, Hannibal wants to cherish him, to draw it all out. (Maybe a small part of Will wants that too). But... "I don't..." Will struggles with his words, hips moving on their own and his hands burying into the shorter strands of hair at the back of Hannibal's head. He knows the feel of a bullet, of a knife, but how would it feel to have Hannibal push into him?

When Will comes it's with his entire body nearly convulsing and he bites down hard on his lip to not make a sound. He wears an astounded expression on his face as pleasure floods through him, cock spurting into Hannibal's hand. He tastes copper.

The desire to push is almost violent in its intensity. Will's pulse flutters like a finch's wings under Hannibal's lips, and as much as he aches to care for this man, to have him in any way that Will allows, the impulse to push him, to force Will's hand, to claw the information out of him is almost blinding in its intensity. He presses his lips to Will's pulse to remind himself not to bite, and he secures Will harder as a reminder not to claw. Hannibal is not a base creature, driven by impulse and urges. He's above that. And yet this moment, this second suspended in time, with Will's pulse quick under his lips and his posture radiating embarrassment and arousal and want in equal measure, he nearly forgets himself. Will is clearly trying to hold back, and so Hannibal redoubles his efforts. He won't push, but he won't pull back either.

Will's voice breaks, his breaths harsh, and Hannibal can feel the vibrations of every sound through his lips. The whine - so like when he had rent Will's abdomen open, and yet sweeter because it holds no true pain - his gasping, and his denial - so weak, almost laughable. Every one he feels and every one he covets, selfish as he eclipses Will's mind. The shadow is cast and while Hannibal can't see the images in Will's mind, he can hazard a guess as Will clings harder, as his hands move to Hannibal's hair, gripping and clutching and drawing a lower sound from Hannibal's own throat. Will's hips jerk, and Hannibal matches his rhythm, and when Will's body seizes against him, he leans back just enough to catch the look on Will's face.

He is achingly beautiful in his agonized pleasure. Pleasure from Hannibal's touch, and agony from the rest. He's silent, though the price is blood welling under the way his teeth press into his lip, and Hannibal leans in, licking it away before the shower can claim it. And through it all, through Will's near-violent need and the shock written across his expression, Hannibal eases him through it and breathes him in, basking in this new knowledge like a particularly fine wine.

"I believe you once asked me not to lie to you," he says lowly, in a tone that would be conversational if not for how breathless his own voice is. "I would ask for that same courtesy."

Slowly, aware of how over-sensitive Will's body must be, Hannibal gives Will one final stroke and then eases his hand back, glancing down at it for a mere second. The desire to taste is still strong and
this time Hannibal doesn't hesitate, nor does he make any move to do so secretly. With Will held securely, trembling with the intensity of his orgasm, Hannibal merely presses his thumb to his lips. He allows himself only a taste, one to savor, and it mixes with the hint of copper on his tongue from Will's bitten lip. The water from above washes the rest away, but the taste lingers long after the rest is gone.

Will is in a daze as the few drops of blood are captured by Hannibal's tongue. He's held tightly, securely, and Will feels entirely too good, yet conflicted. He takes shaky unsure breaths; his fingers remain tight in Hannibal's hair as he tries to get himself back under control. Body buzzing pleasantly, Will is gratified and more than content - at least on the physical domain. He vaguely hears Hannibal talk to him - mentioning that he doesn't want to be lied to and if Will had his wits about him, he'd snort at that comment. (It had been a lie, yes, but given the circumstances, Will hardly feels bad about it.)

It takes him longer than he'd like to come back to himself. While clinging onto Hannibal, he is both aghast and intrigued at watching the older man sample some of his release. A thumb coated in his sperm being licked clean should disgust him. It would have before, surely. A part of Will is waiting for that reaction to be the one to win out in his mind, and yet... It has him remembering Hannibal speaking of this very thing the night before. It's dirty, yes, but that makes it all the more appealing as it's Hannibal partaking in such a thing. No, it really doesn't disgust him.

Will has no idea what to say or do. Body now mostly returned to its normal state, Will makes to pull away and put at least a little bit of space between them. He tells himself that he's not running. He has to rinse off, after all. Struggling in the hold, Hannibal takes the hint and eases himself back, making some room for Will, but impatience is rearing its head and while Hannibal loosens his hold, Will wretches away. In the process, his footing becomes unstable and he slips. Panic shoots through him and he blindly flails, seeking something to grasp onto, but Hannibal is quick in coming to the rescue and he both catches and steadies Will.

It's another strike, another cause to be embarrassed over and Will huffs as he tries to right himself with Hannibal's aid.

"I'm fine, I'm fine!" Will gripes, thoroughly disgruntled by what he perceives as a slight against him. Will Graham doesn't like needing to be saved.

The moments following Will's release are arguably vying for top position as Hannibal's favorites. Will Graham is a man wrapped in defenses and barriers to be thrown up haphazardly, and try as he might to predict them, he cannot. He is a man of balance. Barring that, his reactions fail to fall under any one pattern. To indulge - to allow himself to let go - typically results in Will retreating, withdrawing within himself immediately afterwards. An act of fondness must be balanced by an act of distance. Kindness with cruelty. And yet this morning, he'd effectively thrown a wrench into it all. He'd allowed himself openness the night before, and met Hannibal with nothing but the same in the morning. Hannibal still suspects it - still suspects this, in all honesty - but he's unwilling to concern himself with Will's response when he is so achingly open now.

Will's grip in his hair is tight enough to hurt but he pays it no mind, thumb idly brushing the skin of Will's lower back where Hannibal has him braced. He basks in Will's afterglow, soaking up his relaxation, allowing himself the pleasure of witnessing this man at his most open. Every second is one more to store away, and even when Will's breathing begins to even out once more and the trembles and shakes in his body ease, Hannibal still has those moments locked away as his own.

But in this, sadly, it appears that Will's pattern will not break. Admittedly, being so bold as to taste
him may have been too forward, but Will only seems surprised and confused, not disgusted, and not upset. But it's clearly too much. He starts to move, to struggle, and Hannibal reluctantly relents, careful to draw Will up first to negate the treacherous angle he has him held at. Yet Will - perhaps panicked, perhaps impatient, perhaps merely reckless - chooses instead to *wrench* himself away. Predictably, physics is not in his favor. His feet slip on slick tile and he goes down; it's merely Hannibal's reflexes that save him.

He grabs Will's arm with one hand, and locks his arm around Will's waist with the other. It's awkward, a little jarring, and Hannibal cannot help his mild exasperation when he pulls Will back up onto his feet. Anything he'd wished to say - any stray comment about impatience - is smoothed over when Will awkwardly rights himself, irritated with himself, clearly embarrassed. Hannibal is very careful not to smile, though he's unable to fully eclipse the amusement in his eyes.

"Of course, Will," he says simply. "I did tell you I would not let you fall."

He hadn't anticipated Will *testing* that promise, granted, but considering how disgruntled Will looks, Hannibal is willing to absolve him of his need to admit to doing something reckless. Instead, once Will is safely on his feet, Hannibal merely reaches for the soap and for a cloth, lathering it up and pressing it to the edge of Will's clavicle. Hannibal is fully willing to perform this task on his own, but there is a part of him that suspects Will is going to want to take control following his slip.

Pointedly, he does not mention what they'd been talking about before. Despite Will's misstep, the topic still hangs between them. Hannibal is not likely to forget, and Will knows this. Yet in the interest of tact and politeness, Hannibal is willing to allow Will reprieve. For now.

This could have been avoided if he'd been more careful, yes. But Will is frazzled, his admission throwing him off and coupled with a surprising orgasm, he obviously hadn't made the best decision in his knee-jerk reaction to pull away. Hannibal has him, true to the word he had given - Hannibal doesn't let him fall and the echoing of the sentiment back has Will shaking his head, not impressed. Of course Hannibal just loves swooping in and proving himself useful and capable of being relied on.

It's that reliance - his dependence on Hannibal in far too many matters - that still bothers Will. He used to be fiercely independent, moreso because he didn't trust others and it was far easier to keep his life private than attempt to ever reach out. He learned interacting with others wasn't a strength of his. If anything, it was a curse. He remembers confessing that he couldn't connect with the concept of family. The same had been true for friendship. He'd always had colleagues and acquaintances, but the Will Graham of the past hadn't socialized much, at least not with any measure of success. Alana Bloom had, for whatever reason, been someone who'd managed to creep into his life as a friend. She'd been the first in a while to do such a thing, yet her suggestion had brought him to Hannibal Lecter and look where that friendship had veered off into...

Hannibal is right. Will takes the cloth and begins the task of washing himself. He's pointedly careful while moving, not planning on letting himself flounder again. When nothing is brought up of the former topic, Will visibly relaxes, the agitation disappearing and he finds himself enjoying the hot shower once more, muscles smoothed, sweat and come rinsed away. He's been purposely very focused on washing himself, not sparing a look to the partner currently occupying this space with him.

Will does so now and his face softens. There is something inherently vulnerable about nakedness and seeing Hannibal standing there and making a point to allow Will his room (and most of the spray) has Will reaching out. He grasps Hannibal's forearm and urges him to come closer. Hannibal does and Will avoids direct eye contact. He takes the cloth and runs it down Hannibal's arm, starting from
his shoulder. When he reaches Hannibal's wrist he realizes he hasn't even put any soap on it. Hannibal was clean anyhow, so Will pushes past his slight embarrassment. He's only ever washed dogs before; this is completely new. He begins on the other arm, only a mild nervousness present.

Will does as Hannibal had expected and quickly wrests control over his own care back to himself. Amused, though still careful to keep a smile from his lips, Hannibal relents and steps back just enough to allow Will room. His muscles are unsteady and weak, but this time he manages to hold himself upright and Hannibal regards him fondly, watching with idle regret as Will washes away the evidence of the night before. He doesn't touch Will now, allowing him his own autonomy, though he does remain close enough to reach out and steady him once more if need be. And slowly Will relaxes, his bluster and embarrassment fading to something more grudging. Still, Will doesn't turn around, focused on washing himself.

It takes time, but eventually the angle of Will's shoulders eases completely. Hannibal can hazard a guess as to why. Will could be grateful for his silence, or that Hannibal has allowed him time to gather himself together again. But whatever the reason, when Will finally turns back to him, something in his expression softens.

The press of the cloth to his arm is a mild surprise, and while Hannibal does note the absence of soap, he's unwilling to point it out. Instead he merely allows Will this. But more than that, he finds himself reveling in the attention. The act itself isn't what Hannibal finds telling; it's that Will has done it at all. It is both apology and forgiveness in one, and Hannibal smiles - the barest curl of his lips - and merely watches Will. While the admission still hangs between them as clearly as the low line of arousal still stirring within him, they both choose to let it slide for now.

In the end, it's the minute shift in temperature to the water that stays Will's hand, though only because Hannibal cuts in. Will's touch is light on his chest when he eases the cloth away and refocuses the younger man on his own care. Hannibal softens the blow with a kiss to his shoulder and only takes over to wash Will's back for him before the water begins to run lukewarm. He leaves Will to finish on his own, and by the time the water has shut off and Will steps out, Hannibal makes a point to enfold him in a towel, one already around his waist.

The fallout that Hannibal is expecting from their conversation doesn't happen that day. Once again, he's left curious but pleased, though the low thread of suspicion is still in the back of his mind. He doesn't mention Will's admission, and Will is careful not to bring attention to it, or to the topic of Alana, and while the topic is blatant - simply covered with a metaphorical sheet to save it from wear and tear - it's left alone. Instead they fall back into an easy routine, though it's slower and lazier given that there's no way to so much as risk opening a window.

Outside, the storm rages. Howling winds, wet, thick snow that coats the windows on the north side of the house. Hannibal cannot deny his discomfort, but he keeps it silent, and if Will notices the slight hesitation whenever the wind howls at a particular frequency or the way Hannibal pointedly avoids the large picture window, he blessedly stays silent. The world outside is a barren wasteland of white and cold, and so they merely remain inside. Hannibal cooks - for despite the storm, the power remains quite stable - and while he still suspects Will's ease not only with the recent shift in their relationship, but also regarding Hannibal's sentiment, Will's remains relaxed, almost lulled by the storm.

The day is comfortable. They talk, topics safe and non-threatening. Will assists him in cooking. And when the night falls and the storm rages outside all the more, they spend time lounging with their respective books before retiring for the evening. Hannibal glances at Will in silent question, but he hardly needs to ask. They retire to Hannibal's room - quickly becoming their room - and while the
memory of the night before is superimposed on the room at large, they settle just the same. Hannibal is the one to take initiative, drawing Will into his side. Whether it's because of the storm outside or because Will merely craves the same, there's no protest.

Chapter End Notes

Comments/thoughts? :D Next chapter... Ooo, boy... Just you all wait. You're all in for a surprise... :3
His steps are silent with his shoes left on the mat, and Hannibal closes the distance between them easily. He doesn't need to affect his posture, doesn't need to intentionally threaten. The simmering anger does it for him as he backs Will up against the door. He doesn't touch him, but he stares him down blatantly, as he had when he'd first seen Will in the bar. "Or perhaps I have simply come to expect too much from you. No duplicity, I believe you said. A difficult concept, is it?"

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(°_3°) ... But seriously, heed the new chapter tags/warnings. We now have an ending pretty much written for this, but fear not, we have a sequel planned! We just didn't want this getting huge, basically, and where the story goes felt like a good spot to wrap up this installment. Shit gets darker and more disturbing/intimate! :3
Super ♥'s at Dapperscript for being amazing as always and beastmode editing this like a pro.
Find me on tumblr

The storm continues on for a few days and their home is blanketed in a cocoon of white snow. No outings can be made until the roads are cleared, so they are sequestered inside with only each other
as company - which Will doesn't find to be bad by any means. For all the gains and intimate admissions, it's surprisingly not that awkward to transition into this next phase, one in which they are closer. Will prefers to not sleep alone, so he doesn't. He's slept next to Hannibal since the night the storm had begun. Hannibal knows better than to quiz him on it and they definitely don't talk about sex. Will takes it upon himself to shovel as best he can, creating a pathway out to the car and to the garage. He finds the task familiar, a necessity, and less like a chore. He also remembers that Hannibal dislikes the cold. It's the least he can do.

Four days later, the storm has settled and with the roads plowed, Will brings up going into the city. He mentions that he wants to be dropped off at the library for a few hours which isn't out of the norm by any means. He's done this a few times now, it allows him some personal time while Hannibal takes care of picking up groceries and the like. This time, however, he leaves the library before their rendezvous time, texting Hannibal:

*Change of plans, we're having a date tonight. 9pm I'll meet you there. Dress nice. I'll text you the address later.*

He has a route planned out. He knows where he's stopping and why.

At 8:35pm a different Will Graham shows up outside a popular gay bar. This Will Graham had gone to a barber shop earlier and had his facial hair cleaned up. Gone are the sideburns, the wild curls, the sides cut shorter while the top kept longer and slicked back into a 'quiff' (at least that's what he thinks the barber had called it). The word had been completely foreign to Will, but when he'd glimpsed himself in the mirror he'd known he looked good (maybe even chic) and that'd been enough for him. This Will Graham had gone shopping as well, sucked up his pride and explained to the associate that he needed something nice for a date. He’d swapped his cheap plaid button-down shirt and jeans from Walmart with a maroon wool-cashmere blend sweater, a smart grey blazer and dark slim-fit wool trousers. The prices had been exorbitant to him, and Will had to work hard to not gawk at the total when the items were rung up. Briefly he’d wondered what the limit on the credit card Hannibal gave to him was. This Will Graham, with bags of expensive new clothing and even shoes, had gone for fast food after his purchases. He ate and in their washroom, he’d donned his new person suit and left the old remnants behind.

He remembers telling Jack that he was a good fishermen. This would be like fishing, except he was the bait. He’d been the bait before. Hannibal had too. He was fishing for a man, but it couldn’t just be any man, no. It had to be a particular man, someone unsavory, someone that the world would be better without (for as dark as a place Will might be dwelling in, there would always remain a part of him wanting to help and fighting to be good).

Liquid courage will be helpful, so he downs two shots as soon as he arrives. This is unfamiliar territory and he's an intruder. An outsider, for Will doesn't think of himself as gay or bisexual. Besides Hannibal, he's only been attracted to women. Hannibal is his exception in this. Will has to try and push down the feeling of being 'the other,' but he also can't be himself - the unstable introvert who prefers dogs to people. No one would be drawn to that type of man. It's apparently karaoke night and most of the patrons have been focused on that section, but he's noticed a few glances sent his way. His hand fidgets with his phone in the pocket of his coat.

Will pushes off from the bar and goes to the bathroom, needing to gather himself. He wets paper towel with cool water and dabs it on his face before looking in the mirror. He has to channel Hannibal or he won't be able to pull this off. He closes his eyes and recalls the feel of Hannibal's shirt against his skin. He remembers Hannibal going to his knees for him. He thinks of his poise, his confidence, even his scent. He thinks of keen, penetrating eyes - the eyes of a killer. He’ll borrow
Hannibal for this. Will stands up straighter, his face smoothing out.

He's ready.

He leaves the washroom, coat pulled off and draped over his arm. Will emanates a man with charm, and perhaps more tellingly, he radiates intent. It's something the bar's patrons seem to be able to pick up on, a few new looks cast his way. This time, Will meets their eyes searching for the one. His catch. He's able to easy enough dissuade those not fit, just a subtle shake of his head, but then he finds him. His looks aren't important, but in Will's opinion he's decent enough for an older man. What is important is that Will can sense is this fish's voracious desire to exploit, both in business and in the bedroom. This fish delights in being slimy and backhanded whenever he can be - and in getting away with it. He's made of money and believes that money gives him power and cause. His image is carefully constructed to reflect this - the watch, the brand names, how he happily buys drinks for the few boys that crowd around him like leeches all too happy to throw themselves at him if it means free drinks. He likes younger (the naive) - probably younger than Will - but the empath doesn't care.

The man notices the staring and appraises Will, giving him an obvious look over and Will's sees a flicker of curious interest. It's enough of a sign for Will that he strides over, coming up behind his seated prey and whispering into his ear, "Tonight you want someone with experience." His tongue flicks out to lick up the man's ear slowly. "Send these boys away and buy me a drink instead." He senses the flash of indignation, the man's back straightening, but there's also the spark of intrigue. After all, it feels good to be wanted and Will is good bait.

The man complies a moment later, shooing the younger ones away and Will inserts himself next to him. They exchange names. Henri talks about his work, brags, and Will lets himself appear mildly impressed. Will finishes the drink Henri buys him. He catches the time on Henri's watch. It's a few minutes to nine. It's then he feels Hannibal's eyes on him and a shiver creeps over his skin. Will sees him out of the corner of his eye and it's then he spins the stool around to slot himself between Henri's legs. Show time. "You're going to take me out to your car and I'm going to suck you off," Will murmurs, his hands running down the older man's arms.

The days following the start of the storm pass languidly, comfortably. It takes time to shovel the front walkway, the snow deep enough to have been shoved halfway up the door, but Will is the one to handle the shoveling in the end, to which Hannibal is grateful. He assists Will in getting out the door, shoving at it with a braced shoulder to open it bit by bit. It is hardly dignified and Hannibal's attention is withdrawn, but he gets the door open by sheer force of will, and carefully monitors Will's activity as he shovels. It's unquestionably domestic, with hot drinks and a fire lit for Will when he comes back inside each day. And while it takes time, Will eventually manages to shovel a path they can use to get the car out. The plows come the next day, the last of the shoveling is done, and Hannibal thinks nothing of Will's request to go to the city. In truth, Hannibal can understand the need to properly stretch his legs, so while a small voice of doubt lingers, he relents in the end.

Hannibal drops Will off at the library, which in and of itself is not unheard of. The library has become their plan when Will's introversion flares. When attempting to get Will used to being around crowds of people once more, Hannibal had relented and started in the library. It's quiet, the scent of old books seems to calm Will, and so in the last few weeks, whenever Will had found himself overwhelmed while on errands, Hannibal had relented, dropped him off at the library, and continued on. Will had never wandered, and he'd seemed more relaxed upon climbing into the car each time. So Will's request is not out of place. Hannibal merely tells him to be ready by five, watches him disappear through the over-large doors, and drives off.
The errands are monotonous yet quick, Hannibal bundled against the cold. He finds himself relieved Will had asked to be dropped off at the library, as the crowds are atrocious following the storm, but Hannibal manages with ease. Given the time, he has time to drive back to their farmhouse to put the groceries away before he has to pick Will back up, so he does.

It's just as he's pulling his jacket back on to go and retrieve Will that Hannibal's phone buzzes pointedly against his side. Frowning - as only Will has the number, and Will hasn't taken to texting him often - Hannibal quickly slips his phone from his pocket and the small voice of suspicion that has been uneasily dormant in his mind since the night Hannibal had gifted Will his new mark suddenly rears its head anew. The message is simple, but Hannibal's eyes narrow pointedly as he reads it once, and then again, as if doing so could potentially make a difference in what he's seeing. But no, once again, Will Graham has decided to be other. Hannibal's jaw sets, and despite having been given a time, he cannot cast aside his concern. Immediately he pulls up the GPS on his phone and within mere seconds, he has a lock on Will's position. The only thing that stops Hannibal from immediately getting into the car to track him down is that Will is still in town, not too far away from the library.

It's with great reluctance that Hannibal relents, though there's a sick twist of something uncomfortable low in his stomach. A date with Will Graham. A dream once, perhaps. Except... whatever this is with Will - this limbo state they have achieved in which they have been attempting to learn to coexist with each other - is sentimental on Hannibal's part but only selectively sentimental on Will's.

The past week is suddenly very, very vivid in Hannibal's mind. Will's gentleness, his softer touches, the way he'd kept his head down. His proximity, his presence in the evenings, all of it. On anyone else, such a thing would perhaps mark a positive change. But not on Will. And as Hannibal's jaw clenches and he stares down at the phone in silence, he merely draws in a deep breath, holds it, and then sets the device on the counter, text unanswered.

It is entirely possible that Hannibal is wrong. That perhaps this is a legitimate attempt to reach out, but the very thought only makes a bitter smile curl at Hannibal's lips. Even so, he decides to reluctantly give Will the benefit of the doubt. Hannibal does as Will had asked, for even while heavily suspicious and disbelieving, Hannibal has no qualms in dressing appropriately. There are times he misses the indulgence of his wardrobe back in Baltimore, but this is not one of those times. He has tailored suits - Will is the one fond of shopping at Walmart - and he pointedly takes his time in selecting one. He's not fond of surprises, particularly when it comes to Will Graham. They have not been well-received in the past.

No text comes in as Hannibal dresses. He showers, shaves, and selects a dark navy three piece suit with delicate silver checks threaded subtly into the fabric. They're only visible under certain light, but the image is striking. He adjusts the collar on a shirt so dark and deep a crimson it may as well be black and, in the end, forgoes a tie, though tucks one into his pocket to be safe. He checks his phone on occasion, but when he's heard nothing from Will by 8:30, Hannibal sets his jaw against the twist of suspicious anger and moves. He pulls on his long, grey woolen jacket and wool-lined black leather gloves, and makes his way to the car, pulling up the GPS on his phone.

When he carefully parks the car across the street from the ping on the GPS twenty minutes later, Hannibal merely eyes the establishment in incredulous disbelief. The unpleasant twist is once again in his stomach but Hannibal merely triple-checks that this is the right place and then undoes his seatbelt. His disquiet is growing by the minute, and there is a part of him that already suspects what this is.

He steps through the door and is immediately assaulted by the stench of cheap alcohol and too many
bodies. Hannibal's lips merely thin in irritation but he walks to the bar and claims a seat. He can sense a few looks cast in his direction but his eyes are not on the faceless masses swarming around. No, he's looking only for Will, and Hannibal dismisses anyone else who attempts to catch his eye. There are a few attempts to get up and speak with him, but Hannibal quickly and politely cuts them down with a patience he doesn't feel. A quick glance at his watch tells him it's the right time, and another glance towards his phone shows that Will hasn't moved.

The reason for Hannibal's difficulties in locating his reckless companion is quickly explained once he finally catches sight of him. In truth, Hannibal almost passes over the well-dressed man across the bar, seated beside another man. It's merely the shape of the jaw and the familiar presence - one that reminds him of himself - that draws his eye again, and then Hannibal is left both mildly impressed and stunned. Will looks good, true. However, before Hannibal can admire the styled hair and the fitted jacket, he's suddenly very aware of Will's proximity to the other man. As Hannibal watches, Will spins the man to face him and leans in close, and something heavy, thick, and black coils inside Hannibal's chest. He watches - not quite believing - as Will leans in, and while he can't hear the words, he knows the look.

Hannibal is completely silent and still, not a muscle daring to twitch as Will's hands run over the man's arms. The full realization of what this is hits him. He'd suspected it before, but this is as close to confirmation as he needs. For a brief moment, Hannibal considers taking a wine glass from above the counter, smashing it against the scuffed bartop, and driving the sharpened point up and through the man's skull for so much as daring to draw Will's attention, but he forces the urge down bitterly. To his side, a man shivers, and another looks decidedly nervous and Hannibal attempts to reign in the cold rage seeping from him like a long-casting shadow. This, he believes, is exactly what Will had been planning. Silently, pointedly, Hannibal reaches into his pocket and turns off his phone. He has no need to chase Will down now.

Will smiles at Henri. It's been less than ten minutes, but his blatant interest and self-assured attitude have won the business man over completely. Will's always been a good fisherman, after all. From what little he did see of Hannibal, he's dressed quite nicely, although Will is a little surprised to not spot a tie. It doesn't really matter. Hannibal is here (and what an amusing thought that is) and watching. He'd thought about texting the address, but their phones allowed them to track one another and wasn't that more fun? His Monster had come out of his lair to track him down. This is perhaps the beginning of Will's design. Only time will tell.

When Henri reaches out a finger to skim across Will's bottom lip, Will's answers with his very own serpent smile. Small, but delighted. "What a dirty boy you are," Henri replies, chuckling. Will can tell he's pleasantly surprised by the offer. He feels no attraction to this man or any others in this place, for that matter. Will has no curiosity or desire to be close like this, but he leans in and cocks his head to the side playfully. Unlike with Hannibal, Will isn't sexually or emotionally invested in this so it's much easier to play the seducer and remain one step ahead. It's all about reading cues and responding accordingly. A different yet similar mind game. "That's not an answer," Will points out glibly.

Henri, ever the gentleman, moves to help Will slip on his coat. When Will turns around, he catches Hannibal's eyes briefly and his first urge is to wink, but the murderous glower on Hannibal's face causes him to falter for a moment, his shoulders tensing up and doubt filtering in. He freezes. For a brief second he feels the pure rage radiating off of his partner and it's debilitating in its intensity. (He's done this, he's angered Hannibal--)

"What's wrong?" Henri asks, his hands forcibly turning Will around to face him.

Will recovers, the unease vanishing by the time he meets the pair of impatient eyes. "Nothing,
recognized someone, but they're of no concern," Will reassures with a smooth forked tongue. Henri is nothing but a rodent to him, and all Will has to do is bring him to a private place, coil around him tightly then his Monster will do the rest. This is what he needs to focus on. Hannibal had claimed that he would kill anyone who touched him; this was research. Will needed to see it. The idea had been planted and Will's musings and curiosity had fed and cared for it. It's flourished and now here he is orchestrating the final act.

Henri leads the way, his hand firmly and possessively on the small of Will's back. They exit the bar and Will trusts that Hannibal will follow shortly after, trusts that Hannibal will intervene. And oh, it's a powerful feeling to know that he's directing a weapon - pointing his finger and uttering one word: kill. Henri blabs on about meaningless topics on their walk to a nice, but certainly not overly luxurious vehicle. He pushes Will against the driver's door. It's cold, but he doesn't want this man pinning him. "Let me taste that dirty mouth of yours first," he says before smashing his lips against Will's.

His first instinct is to panic because it's all wrong - it's not Hannibal - it's not Molly either. It's revolting. He clutches onto Henri's jacket and barely manages to not push the taller man away as he feebly kisses back. Henri shoves his tongue into Will's mouth while his hands roam over--

But then he sees his Monster stalking up to them and Will is safe, relief filling him up and it's only now that he's getting excited.

The moment Will turns and meets his eyes is satisfying in its intensity. Hannibal is quiet, posture stiff but not overly so. All Will has is the mild set to his jaw and the burning cold in his eyes, and Hannibal watches as he falters immediately. Even across this distance, his empath is ever so observant, and a cold curl of satisfaction works its way through him at seeing Will visibly uncertain. They say nothing, Hannibal merely lifting his chin a fraction, not sparing the man with his arm around Will a second glance at this moment. No, this is for Will. This one look says it quite clearly: I know what you're doing.

Hannibal is no fool. He remembers what Will had said. ("And you'd do it again, wouldn't you? Swoop in and lay waste to those who would dare touch me?") The words replay for him as he stares Will down, cold anger and jealousy warring in his chest like the very storm that had shut the province down for so many days. He has no qualms in killing. Yet Will allowing another to touch him, to openly encourage it, and to do this, all of it - building up Hannibal's trust to allow him to stay at the library unsupervised for the past few weeks, softening his touches at home, spending nights in Hannibal's bed, playing the perfect companion - twists a bitter, cold anger through him. Hannibal does not appreciate being openly and willfully manipulated. He watches in that same, predatory silence as Will's mark spins him back around, and just like that, the tension foolishly leaves Will's shoulders. Hannibal can hear this conversation, and he merely sets his jaw against the spark of anger and allows Will to lead his companion to the door.

Hannibal stands but instead of following Will immediately, he silently fixes his coat and then steps outside, turning the phone in his pocket back on. He watches the general direction that their mark begins to lead Will - off away from the main street, good - and then calmly dials the very bar they'd just left. It's simple to create a stir once the call is answered. Hannibal - speaking French - spins a quick story about having been informed his son - underage as he was - had apparently snuck out to go to the bar in question. He gives a brief description and a heavy implication that he's considering calling the police if he can't find him before midnight, and hangs up with enthusiastic assurances that the staff will check for him.

It gives Hannibal a window of opportunity, and anonymity. As much as his style of dress had stood
out, no one will remember him. Not with the looming threat of the police on the horizon.

He turns his phone off again and, delicately turning his collar up against the cold, Hannibal takes a deep breath and lets it out. Then he moves.

Hannibal walks on pavement when he's able, his steps unchecked initially as he closes the distance Will and his mark have already crossed. It takes Hannibal mere seconds to locate them, watching as they make their way towards a dimly-lit parking lot off the main road. Its location isn't fully ideal, but Hannibal doesn't intend this to take long. He turns and follows at a casual distance, but as he walks, his footsteps quiet. He holds his weight differently and the only sound he makes is a vague whisper against the powdered snow underfoot.

He watches as Will reaches one of the cars and is immediately pressed back against it, and Hannibal's lip twitches in a would-be-snarl. Yet even his step falters in immediate disbelief when Will's mark leans in boldly and kisses him. Hannibal's focus narrows immediately. He watches as clumsy hands paw at Will's clothing, as the man presses him back against the car door, and he sees the telltale twitch of Will's jaw that says he's kissing back, and something coils coldly under Hannibal's skin like shards of ice. There's purpose in his steps as he closes the distance between them and his mind flickers over possibilities. He has a tie in his pocket - it would have been foolish to simply forgo one were this a real date - but the idea of sullying it on this creature sends revulsion through him. No, it's hardly violent enough. Hannibal wants this one afraid, for having dared touch what belongs solely to him.

The man - nameless and already living on borrowed seconds - doesn't see him coming. Will does. Hannibal registers a note of relief in Will's eyes but the twist of cold fury disregards it as unimportant. He'll deal with Will later.

It would be simple to merely grab this man by the neck and snap it. Quick and clean. But that is not entirely Hannibal's choice. Not now. Not as he watches this man deface what is his, bold and assuming, and Will allowing it. Hannibal doesn't strike impassively. He strikes hard, and even as he kicks out at the side of the man's leg and hears a loud, definitive crack, he knows the added violence is to save Will from his ire later.

Hannibal strikes like a predator, and it's nearly a dance. Broken fibula, and the shock and agony draw the man back from Will. Hannibal's gloved hand muffles his scream and he wrenches the man's dominant roaming arm behind his back at such a forceful angle that he rends it useless. And broken. Then and only then does Hannibal silently throw his arm around the mark's neck, pulling tight against the trachea in the way he had once told Will never to do. This isn't harmless exploration, nor is it a lesson. This is murder, and a twisted, cold passion to protect and covet what belongs to him. Hannibal's expression is nearly blank save for the small curl of a snarl and the cold fury in his eyes as the man tries and fails to fight for his life. Hannibal suffocates him slowly, leaning away from the wild grip from the man's one functioning hand, and their mark grabs nothing. Pain and panic are blinding and only when Hannibal feels some of the fight beginning to leech out - only when he feels the man edging closer to unconsciousness - does he suddenly tighten his hold, brace his shoulder, and throw his weight to one side.

The sound and feel of vertebrae snapping is jarring and satisfying, and the man sags immediately in Hannibal's arms with a choked sound that dies as he does. This hadn't been intended to paralyze.

The sudden silence in the parking lot is almost chilling, and while there is a small edge of an old thrill deep in Hannibal's core, it's vastly overshadowed by this reality. He holds the man for a few seconds, and then silently reaches down. Hannibal rummages through his pockets until he finds the man's wallet and keys. After taking both, he allows the dead weight to crumple between them, and then he
silently and pointedly meets Will's eye. "Go back the way you came and turn right at the end of the street. The car is parked there. I expect you to be waiting for me," Hannibal instructs quietly, but his tone leaves no room for argument. Then he turns.

It is achingly simple to locate the homeless on busy city streets. Hannibal doesn't approach the man he finds, huddled against the cold. He merely tosses the wallet and keys near him for when he wakes, and then turns and makes his way back to the car, unlocking it from a distance so that Will is able to climb inside. By the time Hannibal joins him, he's got a slightly tighter grip on his anger, but only just.

It's his Monster he spies, Will's very own collared predator stalking up on them. But in this act Hannibal, too, is avenging angel, bringing down a reckoning. His own form of righteous judgment. Will has selected and sentenced this pathetic man to execution by Hannibal's hand, but even he doesn't know how this will be brought about. Will is aroused and Henri makes a pleased sound as his hand brushes over what he thinks is his doing.

(Oh no, you silly man; that isn't your work at all.)

Hannibal slips up unnoticed and Will makes an excited whine. Then a swift and decisive kick comes and he's freed from Henri's attention as the man crumples before him. A gloved hand doesn't allow screaming or begging to come forth. Will's heart hammers in his chest as he watches, rapt, as Hannibal jerks and also breaks Henri's arm.

(Yes, Henri, that will teach you not to touch what isn't yours.)

Will wipes away the man's spit from his mouth. He may look like he's merely observing, but this is vicarious for Will, too. His hands fidget by his side as he observes Henri being choked. It's entirely different than what Hannibal has done to him, the obvious difference being the technique and Hannibal's cruel eyes, the curl of his lip. All the same, it's absolutely thrilling. Fear and confusion are given off in heady waves. Henri's eyes look to him, pleading for help, for a good Samaritan, but Will is not a good man in this moment. He's a man taken with Hannibal's darkness, with his own darkness, for this, really, is of his design. He has pulled the strings and assembled the players and Hannibal plays the role perfectly. Beautifully. Will wants to kiss Hannibal all over - everywhere - praise him for a job well done--

When Hannibal breaks Henri's neck, Will inhales sharply. The sound is poignant and takes him back to him fantasizing about breaking the wendigo's antlers. Snap. Henri would not have the same fate as Mason, no. It had only lasted a few minutes at best, the rush still loud in Will's ears, yet he is frozen in place staring at the corpse by his shoes. Nice new shoes. Will doesn't even know what makes them nice or expensive. The materials? The brand? When instructions come, Will jolts, wide-blown eyes connecting with Hannibal's.

Caught between being transfixed by the curtains closing and Hannibal's coldness, Will doesn't move immediately. There's an obvious glee to this all for him, yet in the back of his mind he's wary of Hannibal's blatant displeasure toward him. Will takes half a step closer and pets Hannibal's hair, hand smoothing down the longer side softly. It's an action or clear affection and Will aches to be closer and not leave, to connect over this show of power - on both their parts - to celebrate even, but he gives in and obeys. (He knows better than to not to say this point.) Will walks back to the car in a daze, pants too tight, and feet now registering just how stiff the footwear is.

He waits and breathes in the crispness of the night, his pulse slowing, but his erection not really flagging. When he hears the click of the vehicle unlocking, Will climbs inside. Hannibal joins him shortly. Suddenly any of the praises he longs to give seem cheap and out of place. He says nothing,
but does reach out for Hannibal's hand.

This could have been a misplay on his part.

As irate as Hannibal is as he stalks back to the vehicle, he cannot fully hope to ignore what he'd seen. Will Graham in full agency, hardly daring to move a muscle, yet the catalyst that had brought them all to this point. Even angry, Hannibal cannot deny Will's brilliance. The arguably dazed, dark look in his eyes akin to the way Will had looked at him bleeding out on the floor all those months ago. Save this time, rather than curiosity, Will's expression had been transfixed. Awed, aroused, dazed, afraid - all manner of emotions easily interchangeable - and he'd reached out with blown pupils and the heady scent of arousal wrapped around him like a cloak. It had been the only thing that had permitted Hannibal to allow the touch to his hair, and as he joins Will in the car and settles in the driver's seat, he merely closes it with a pointed click that sounds louder than a gunshot in the unnatural silence.

As brilliant as Will Graham had been, this had still been a manipulation. Hannibal silently starts the car without a word, and it's merely the depth of Will's empathy that has him locking the severity of his anger down. He wishes a great many things in that moment, to turn to Will and snarl at him, to reach out with a gloved hand to grab his throat and draw him close, to shove him back against the seat of the car and see him afraid... but he does nothing. His anger is not that Will had ached to see him kill. No, in those regards, Hannibal is not unaffected by the same thrill. There is power in ending life, and the feeling of bone snapping under his hands had been powerful. A heady reminder of what he's capable of. Had the circumstances been different, Hannibal would have been thankful. Yet not in this. He's not angry Will had wanted this. He's angry he had not been consulted. He's angry that Will has once again seen fit to surprise him.

No duplicity.

Bitterness twists hot in his chest and he has one hand on the gear shift when he feels pressure against the back of his glove. Hannibal stills only for a moment, cutting a glance down to where Will's hand remains on the back of his own. He doesn't even move his head to look down. For one, churlish moment, Hannibal considers ignoring it altogether.

Yet he can sense the hesitation from the younger man. Will is veiled in the scent of arousal and Hannibal can see the outline of his erection through the form-fitting fabric of his slacks, but his confidence has eased. Hannibal merely sets his jaw in silence and for a long moment he does nothing. Then he merely turns his hand over. He clasps Will's hand only once, hardly for longer than a few seconds, but he gives one pointed squeeze. It's the only reassurance he plans on giving at this moment. One second for Will to see that even this Hannibal can likely forgive. Then he merely moves Will's hand back to his lap - away from Hannibal, like Will's very presence is unwelcome - and returns his own to the gear shift.

Hannibal drives away, leaving the broken, crumpled body of Will's Design in a heap next to his car. In mere hours, the car will be gone, and Hannibal expects the wallet will be taken and run with, as he had hoped. He isn't worried about leaving the body behind. Muggings are not unheard of in Canada, particularly around these parts. A simple broken neck would be suspicious. Multiple broken bones will lend further weight to the story.

The silence in the car is absolute as Hannibal drives. He doesn't spare Will a glance and he hardly moves except to turn the wheel and signal properly. The silence is so suffocating - intentionally so - that it almost absorbs the sound from the car. Negative sound. An isolation chamber between them merely because Hannibal sees no reason to reward Will for this. He will forgive, in time. His only concern is reigning in the urge to forgive as he once had. With blood.
The drive takes no longer than twenty minutes and when Hannibal finally pulls up in front of the house, he still doesn't spare Will a look. Instead he merely shuts the car off, undoes his seatbelt, and gets out, locking the doors only once Will has followed suit. Without so much as a glance, Hannibal merely pockets the keys and walks towards the door, opening it and stepping through. His only concession during the whole trip home is that he doesn't allow the door to slam shut on Will. He holds it only so long as he needs to for Will to catch up, and then immediately steps inside without waiting any longer.

Silence meets him and for one horrible moment Will thinks Hannibal is going to completely reject his sentimental move and shrug off his hand. He waits. Hannibal glances toward him and Will's about to pull away - better for it to be his choice than be rejected - but a beat later, Hannibal acquiesces. Hannibal flips his gloved hand over - the same hand that had minutes ago muffled Henri's terror - and he gives a curt squeeze to Will's own.

(It's not enough, not nearly enough.)

It's barely a reassurance as a second later Will's own hand is moved to his lap and left there. The message is read loud and clear and Will turns away. This is rejection. Plain and simple. The emergence of shame burns his arousal away and it's a small concession in the end. He sits with the feeling, embittered that his game had turned into something sour and lesser. It'd been almost a week that the idea had permeated his thoughts and desires. He had wanted to witness Hannibal's devotion and to evoke violence - yes, a violence that was done in his name. Their triumph should have been cause for celebration. Will had enjoyed the spectacle immensely and Hannibal got to let the beast out for a bit. Ultimately, he had hunted and Hannibal had been his weapon of his choice.

They both are silent as they begin the drive home. Resentment breeds within Will. Hadn't Hannibal wanted him to embrace his darkness? Delight in wickedness and see Hannibal bring about carnage? Or was Hannibal just angry that Will had maneuvered (manipulated) him into doing it without prior consent or knowledge? (Not so fun, was it, Doctor?) Or was it actually that Will had allowed Henri to touch him? Likely, it was a mix. Will could ask. Maybe he'd get an answer, maybe not, but he feels a frustrated scream caught in his throat again for this wasn't his intent - he doesn't like this fallout. He doesn't want this part of the design. He feels antsy, unhinged and he knows it's entirely of his creation. He has no compass to help him try to navigate Hannibal's behavior.

Hannibal who has been patient and accommodating and far too trusting.

Like a kicked dog, Will follows him into their home after the car is parked - the door being pointedly held only long enough to enable him to squeeze inside. Will makes quick work of his coat, divesting himself of the article and hastily hanging it up. The clothes and hair feel all wrong. He wants to rip them off, but he settles for kicking off the shoes. It's then, in the entryway, that he turns on Hannibal.

"Come on, I know you're mad," Will begins lightly, but gone is his hesitancy, recklessness replacing his earlier vulnerability. (It feels better, safer.) "Furious even... You were such a good boy, though, so predictable." Timed pause. Will licks his lips. "Unlike me. Thought you knew me, Hannibal, getting rusty?"

The silence is going to come to an end. Hannibal is very aware of this as the door shuts firmly behind them, yet he still doesn't turn to spare Will a look. Truly, his reasoning is simple: he's furious, but he's also disappointed. Manipulation is not new between them. Hannibal has been more than guilty of it, of guiding Will down paths of his own choosing, of watching him slowly and beautifully fall apart.
Likewise, Will has manipulated him in the past, digging his nails under Hannibal's skin, lifting it just enough to make room for himself, and hissing his venom both to Hannibal and to Jack Crawford. Neither of them are without sin, yet the bitterness is gnawing and hungry as Hannibal stands in silence and carefully reaches up to begin to ease the long jacket from his shoulders.

Has there been a single moment in the last week - in their last few years - where Will Graham had not been manipulating? Hannibal's jaw sets in silence. Jack, Will's forgiveness, finding him in front of the Primavera, cutting his ties and leaving Hannibal to rot for years, and then finally opting to use him as bait. Hannibal thinks back on this last week - on Will's closeness that night, his insistence in reciprocation, on the shower the next day and the easy comfort they had settled into - and his lips thin. In truth, Hannibal isn't surprised. He can no more fault Will for this than he could a fox finding its way into a hutch of rabbits. Manipulation is as engraved in Will's nature as it is his own.

Except Hannibal has been careful to abide by Will's rules. He draws in a deep, steadying breath against another flare of something cold and unforgiving in his chest, against the memory of Will pressed against the car.

For a moment, Hannibal considers going back to the bar to remove the body, but it is a reckless impulse. The thought tugs at him for only a second, but then he hears the sound of Will removing his jacket and his shoes, and then a pointed breath breaks the silence. Of course. Will Graham is not a man to do the smart thing and stay silent.

Finally, for the first time since he had given Will his instructions, Hannibal turns to face him. While Will had seemed withdrawn - almost shamed - on the drive home, one glance proves that he has once again decided to be reckless. He's no longer hesitant and Hannibal merely gazes at him in silence, distantly noting (rather bitterly) that Will's stylistic change fits him well. His bravery, however, does not. Reckless, impulsive, stubborn. A lamb purposefully boasting its bravery as it strides towards a wolf. Hannibal's jaw sets and after a moment, he simply slides his shoes off and does the same to his coat, hanging it up by the doorway, expression carefully blank.

He has every intent to instruct Will to go to bed, to take time to ease through his own anger so that it doesn't compromise Will's recovery. Hannibal has no desire to set Will back. Anger is a transient emotion, and while it burns now, Hannibal is no more a slave to this emotion than to any. One night to indulge, and then breakfast in the morning. Yet as he turns away from Will - fully intending to merely leave him to his recklessness - Will's stray comment draws him up short. Hannibal stills. It's no question that Will enjoys being called 'boy.' He has made this abundantly clear. Hannibal doesn't object to the same, but this iteration is barbed and condescending. It's purposefully aimed to irritate, to provoke. Hannibal can feel his control begin to fray beautifully and he takes a simple breath and holds it. Yet even as Will opens his mouth to speak again, Hannibal has already resigned himself to his decision. And Will's comment definitely hits its mark. "I must be," he says simply as he turns back and levels Will with a look.

His steps are silent with his shoes left on the mat, and Hannibal closes the distance between them easily. He doesn't need to affect his posture, doesn't need to intentionally threaten. The simmering anger does it for him as he backs Will up against the door. He doesn't touch him, but he stares him down blatantly, as he had when he'd first seen Will in the bar. "Or perhaps I have simply come to expect too much from you. No duplicity, I believe you said. A difficult concept, is it?"

Will Graham truly does not hatch the best of plans. He hadn't been concerned with the details, no, he'd wanted the payoff, to skip ahead to the credits. He'd craved it so desperately - to be indulged, to point and have Hannibal kill for him - that being underhanded seemed the easiest and quickest way to achieve said result. ... But no, that wasn't entirely accurate, was it? (Are you slithering, Will?)
If he was being honest with himself, Will would admit that he had taken a perverse delight in surprising Hannibal, in positioning both of their pieces on the gameboard, as it were. Will's word apparently stood for very little as he had agreed to 'no duplicity' and his little date night could be seen as nothing but an cunning plan on the end. Shame is a feeling usually connected to those in Will's old life - Molly, Walter, Jack. It's now trying to claw away at his shaky resolve and Will is perplexed and frustrated to discover that disappointing Hannibal bothers him more than he'd anticipated. Still, he holds onto the tentative composure he's mustered, daring Hannibal, seeking to provoke something. He'd take anything. This is courting fire, teasing the flames bigger, higher. Will knows this and he should know better. He should take his leave, be smart and pull his hand away from the snapping mouth of the beast. But Will, once again, will prove he's not smart. It hadn't been smart to consult on the Dolarhyde case - Hannibal's letter had been part warning, after all. Will had had numerous times to prove that, for all his potential insight and intelligence, he opted to be reckless far too often. He couldn't let the night end like this, with his obvious blunder and disappointment clinging onto them like an unpleasant layer of sweat. He doesn't want to be washed off and dismissed easily.

He's not expecting Hannibal to simply agree with him, but Hannibal is trying to not take the bait. Will can tell, it's written on Hannibal's face, seen in his detached motions. And those actions become dangerous, Hannibal stepping closer and Will backing up in response. It's a warning - one that Will can't heed. Against the door, his stupid dress socks are getting wet, freshly trampled in melting snow. It provides a small distraction, a tactile sense to keep him grounded.

"How could I resist? You look so cute surprised," Will replies with a small chuckle. "But you did surprise me with the no tie choice - bold move on a first date."

There are many responses to Will's provocation that Hannibal considers as he backs the younger man against the door. He doesn't need to touch him to drive him back. Reckless and bold as Will is, not even he is foolish enough to stand his ground now. He's an empathic man and Hannibal has always kept a close check on the emotions he allows to filter outwards. For that split moment, Hannibal's anger locked away and a cold facade showing in its stead, Hannibal considers letting his presence out. Considers projecting the rage into the room, but he is not so petty nor so cruel as to intentionally overload Will's delicate senses. The thought exists, but he holds it in check. He will loom, he will threaten, but he has no plan to actually compromise Will Graham.

Nor does he have any plans to hurt him. But as Will's back hits the door and he flattens himself against its presumed safety, Hannibal wants to. Were Will properly contrite, he could forgive. Were he to cast his gaze to the ground in submission - even look mildly chastised by his own actions, by Hannibal voicing his blatant lie - they could move on. Instead Will's lips pull into a smile and his voice drips with condescension. Something tightens in Hannibal's chest - he's well aware this is an attempt to provoke, and he has no desire to play into Will's hand - but the moment that accursed word leaves Will's lips, something snaps. Date.

The sound of an impact shoots out between them, muffled by the fact that Hannibal's hand is encased in soft, expensive leather. But it does nothing to soften the blow as he winds his hand back and backhands Will across his face. It's purposeful and dismissive - he doesn't give him the intimacy of an open palm, nor the touch of his skin. Instead Hannibal merely feels the blow and knows the seams of the leather gloves will do the most damage. He watches, impassive, as Will takes the blow, as his head knocks against the door at the force of it, and he feels a small thrill of satisfaction run through him. Just like that, some of his anger eases. Yet as he stands there and watches blood well dark and
crimson against Will's lip, he feels absolutely no contrition. Will looks devastatingly gorgeous like this - bloodied and stunned. Had he thought himself above such a response? Or had this been his goal? Hannibal doesn't care.

"My predilection towards you is inconvenient, William. Were you anyone else..." Hannibal trails off delicately, but the implication is blatantly clear: Will is the only one who would survive this.

"What were you hoping to achieve?" Hannibal goes on. As he speaks, he moves his hand in again and fits it snugly against the rise of Will's throat, forcing his chin to lift in a way that is undoubtedly uncomfortable. The leather creaks softly and through it, Hannibal can feel Will's pulse. "To see that man dead? To test your hold upon my leash? Or perhaps to simply see me kill, for you. Because you orchestrated it. Because you looked out at the sea of sacrifices in that bar and chose him." Hannibal's tone drops, low, dangerous yet almost tender. "Divine judgement. Not simply playing God, but knowing it. Not fit to be tried by law enforcement, no, you had to test your power. Loose your Archangel to kill in your stead. Watch it and know he was yours. Tell me, Will, what had he done?" Hannibal asks, lowly. "And more importantly, how did you feel, watching him die on your command? Powerful?"

His words do the trick. Perhaps it was 'cute' or the mention of their 'date,' Will doesn't know, but his Monster reacts, the beast snaps and Will's hand gets bitten. It's what he wanted, but he hadn't expected to be backhanded. His head collides with the sturdy wooden door and his mouth stings, teeth having cut into his bottom lip. The impact isn't enough to leave him all too dazed, but he'll end up with a bump on the back of his head likely and a swollen lip. Will feels the ridiculous urge to spit the blood out, maybe on Hannibal, maybe on his own clothes, but he holds himself back. It'd certainly be satisfying to see the reaction, but he's not that foolish to spit on Hannibal, not when he's wristed such an already visceral response out of him.

William. Now that does have Will's eyes widening at the use. Hearing his birth name reminds him of his father, but when he was angry or disappointed. So, perhaps it's fitting, for his actions have brought out both feelings in Hannibal. As always, disappointment is harder to stomach. It's always been this way for him. From a young age, disappointment and resentment had frequently been reflected back at him from his father, but Will hadn't understood why. He’d tried to be good, to keep things tidy and behave, but it hadn't seemed to matter. No, it wasn't until later, when he was older, did he put two and two together. It was simple, really: he reminded his father of the wife and mother who had left them and that was enough of an insult to warrant being disappointed at the sight of a troublesome son. Troublesome because Will had not truly fit in with those around him nor did he fit his father's expectations of what a normal son ought to be. Will had been a quiet and sensitive child, he had difficulties with large crowds and was plagued by nightmares. He had been more studious and interested in reading than playing sports or making friends. Eventually they had bonded over his aptitude for fixing things, but he'd grown up knowing he was a pain in the ass and difficult. A disappointment.

He's disappointed Hannibal. He's been completely duplicitous.

(Perhaps the most shocking realization is the inkling that he'd do it again to feel that rush...)

The questions posed to him are appealing - as is the slight strain of head being forced upward. He wants to talk about why he had done it, what he had got out of it, he does. Will wants to share his thoughts and impressions about the whole experience, how he selected Henri and why Henri was the one who had to die by Hannibal's hand. He wants to talk about the thrill and power of witnessing Hannibal snuff out a life, but he's tangled in the past working its way up his throat like bile.

"Why don't you fucking hit me again," Will challenges instead. (His father hadn't outright hit him,
but he had shaken him roughly in order to get Will to snap out of his 'funks' as he had called them, but the physical altercations had been jarring like the backhand. "Let's see how angry you really are, shall we?"

Because Will wants to feel something physical. Needs to. He needs sensations to overpower his memories and the knowledge of disappointing Hannibal. His mouth stings and the back of his head throbs, but it's not enough.

So, Will spits blood on Hannibal's gloved hand.

There's a slight twist to Will's expression, mild, hardly a shadow over his vision, but it's enough that Hannibal tucks that information away. *William* is the man who has disappointed him. *Will* is the one he is fond of, and that distinction has apparently made itself known if the look on Will's face is any indication. His response is little but his eyes widening, but Hannibal can see the bitterness and the curl of something dark and acidic filter though Will's senses even as he lowers his voice to speak. Hannibal cannot read Will's thoughts, has no idea where they've wandered, but he makes a mental note to regulate his use of Will's full name. He has no qualms in using it to break through Will's irreverence, as a shock to his system apparently as jarring as being backhanded. It *upsets* him, though, and while Hannibal feels no remorse, even in this, he will not break Will. The temptation is there, but he won't.

The last time he had felt a curl of anger like this, he had curled that same anger through Will's abdomen with a curved blade and left him holding himself together. It had been foolish to assume Will's rules had applied to him as well. *No duplicity.* Only for Hannibal.

However even as his hand curls under Will's chin, forcing his head back against the door and feeling the fluttering pulse through his glove, Hannibal eyes the blood welling over Will's lip. It's split, yes, but even in anger, he had been careful to split it where no one could see it scar. He has not forgotten Will's limits. Even livid, he will give Will no reason to regress. Will's reckless, *foolish* behavior notwithstanding, Hannibal is still in control. Whether he wants to be is another matter altogether.

A notion that is not only challenged but *spat on* the next second. Hannibal's questions go unanswered as Will's temper flares and he merely watches with an expression that gives away absolutely nothing as blood spatters upon his hand. It's somehow even redder against the dark leather, following the curve of Hannibal's hand to bead at the curve of his wrist before dripping down. A single drop hits the mat under them, and Hannibal lifts his gaze and looks at Will silently. One glance is all it takes; even through the flare of frustration, Hannibal can see Will's desperation, his frayed edges. *Disappointment.* He can't handle disappointment.

For a moment, Hannibal considers merely stepping back and leaving Will to his own devices. The thought is tempting. The only thing that stays his hand is the knowledge that were he to leave, Will would likely wind up hurting himself anew. Either way, Will Graham will hurt. The only question is which one of them will do it.

For a long moment, silence is the only sound between them. Then Hannibal slowly and carefully removes his hand from Will's throat. He reaches down and unbuttons the single glove, taking his time to slide it off one finger at a time. "Three kicks against the door," Hannibal says calmly, his tone giving absolutely nothing away as he carefully folds the glove in on itself, as if to keep more blood from hitting the mat. "That will suffice for *Dahlia.*" The statement hangs for only a second, and then Hannibal moves.

In one, swift movement, he reaches out and wrenches Will away from the door, spinning him around
with enough force to make the man stumble back against his chest, with his back to Hannibal's front. In the same movement, before Will's balance can hope to return, Hannibal reaches up with his still-gloved hand and shoves his folded glove between Will's teeth. He is careful to not shove it too far back; he has no desire to *choke* Will (for he suspects it would only panic him further) but he settles it with purpose and then locks his free arm around Will's throat. In an instant, it's the same position Hannibal had used to kill, his arm tight against Will's throat, his other initially holding the glove in place. "You are to keep the glove between your teeth," he instructs lowly into Will's ear, pressing up against Will's throat and forcing him to strain against the pressure. "You are not to talk. If I ask you a question, you will answer with one tap of your hand against my leg for yes, and two for no. If you talk, or if you drop the glove, this ends, I will be *severely* disappointed, and I will leave you exactly where you are. Do you understand?"

Apparently Will is going to ignore the logical part of his brain, for logic would dictate that *spitting on* Hannibal is *not* something he should have even entertained. But he's done it. He can't see the direct result, but he can see Hannibal's reaction to it, how his eyes flicker down to take in what has just transpired. Will Graham has never been this rude. He's rough around the edges, yes, he's pushy and short, but he's never disrespectful like this. Until now. This could backfire horribly. He's already taken missteps, tripped over his feet, so it wouldn't be too surprising to find that he's, once again, fucked up.

But no, Hannibal *searches* his face and Will is afraid of what the older man will find. Does he see Will trying to run away from the past? From the discomfort and knowledge of disappointing someone? At least with Molly or Jack, Will couldn't see their disappointment, but right now he's experiencing Hannibal's. Does he see that Will is pushing because the alternative seems too uncomfortable to face? Hannibal seems to come to a decision and panic flares up as the hand is withdrawn from his throat and Will thinks he's going to be discarded - and why shouldn't he be? He can hear his father's voice in his head, the familiar exasperated tone, 'son, why you always gotta be -- don't give me those sad eyes, William -- if you could just '...

... If he could be less of something and more of something else. If he could be less emotional, less curious, less weird. More normal, more happy, more sociable.

It felt like the story of his life. He hadn't been the right balance for the FBI, for Jack or for Alana. Maybe in time it would have turned out to be the same with Molly as well.

And now, if he could be less reckless, less deceptive, less of a hypocrite and more stable, more honest.

But Hannibal doesn't leave and before Will can allow himself to feel much relief, instructions are being given. Again, he's not given much time to process the strangeness of the command, but Hannibal has something up his sleeve. Apparently it's him being manhandled, turned around roughly and a folded glove stuffed into his mouth. An arm wraps around his throat and it's not lost on him that this is the position that Henri had died in. Although caught off guard, Will doesn't struggle. Instead, Will listens and this shift is alluring, possibly dangerous, but the restriction and implication is *lovely*. He bites down on the gloves, breathes through his nostrils and his right hand comes to tap Hannibal's leg in understanding.

He'll make it up to Hannibal. He won't kick the door and he won't drop the glove.

The tonal shift carries its own inherent risk. This is not something that they have spoken about recently, but they have talked about this. When discussing boundaries, Hannibal had expressed an interest in giving Will a task to follow and expecting it to be obeyed. While they've not explored this
side of their unique companionship yet, Hannibal has not forgotten Will's rules, nor has he forgotten Will's limits. While his companion seems perfectly content to almost literally spit in the face of Hannibal's ire, Hannibal will not rebound such a thing on Will. Maddening as this man is, his actions are sensible when examined carefully. It doesn't make them pleasant, but Hannibal can at least understand them, albeit with great reluctance.

There is a beat where Will's response is nothing but shock. He stills against Hannibal, undoubtedly registering the position he's in, but instead of tensing or panicking, instead of so much as reaching up to grab at the arm Hannibal has around his throat - which is tight enough to threaten real danger - Will seems to almost immediately accept it. It's further proof behind the way he'd reacted upon coming into the house, but Hannibal's jaw merely sets in silence. He's still angry, but the sudden, violent actions stave off the urge to do real damage. Will has been rude, but he is no longer a viable candidate for Hannibal's table. Not unless he's dining with him.

Hannibal draws a slow breath, feeling Will's muted pulse against his forearm through the layers of clothing. That Hannibal can even feel it is proof as to how hard Will's heart is beating, but as he holds Will, he idly notes the way tension almost seems to draw out of the younger man. He'd not missed Will's near-panic when he'd removed his hand from his throat. This is a final chance. If the glove drops, Hannibal's patience ends. Simple as that. He intends to get answers, and he intends to keep Will grounded. Whether or not Will succeeds in this matter is entirely up to him.

The tap to his leg - one for yes - is a good sign. Hannibal breathes out, and while the anger still licks darkly within his chest he sets it aside. He will not make a mistake because of his own frustration.

"Good." There's no warmth in the praise, for Will has yet to earn it, but Hannibal still draws out the word as proof that this is what he wants. His arm eases across Will's throat, only enough to readjust it so as to restrict his airflow without risking real damage to his trachea. He could startle Will into coughing - the pressure against his throat undoubtedly hurts - but he won't manufacture failure. Hannibal merely guides Will into exactly what he wants. "Up. Stand taller for me, on your toes," he instructs, using the pressure of his arm to assist. Only once Will has complied does Hannibal take a step forward, leaning him ever so slightly off balance. Shades of what he had done in the shower, only Hannibal merely sets his free hand on Will's abdomen - right over the scar - to keep him secure. More danger.

"Yes or no, Will," Hannibal reminds him for the final time. "This entire evening was orchestrated to see if I would kill for you, as I had claimed."

It had been a crude urge to want to be hit, but in his apprehension, Will had done the best he could, clawing for some attention - any attention - even if it was negative. The only thing worse than the fallout of his choices would have been for Hannibal to cast him aside. He's grown far too used to holding Hannibal's favor and to expecting his care and attention whenever he desires it. The idea that Hannibal could feel disgusted or disappointed in him enough to want him out of his sight bothers Will more than he'd like to admit... But this is far, far better than mere pain. This is security, Hannibal setting down rules for him and Will complying.

He obeys, again, standing taller by getting on only the tips of his toes. He can tell this position is going to be uncomfortable to keep, but before he can think much more on it, Hannibal is crowding into him and having him tip slightly forward. It's reminiscent to Hannibal holding him off kilter in the shower and it's distressing in its own way. He doesn't particularly like it. Of course, it's not as uncomfortable or difficult in dealing with silence and disappointment. Hannibal's other arm wraps around his torso, a hand over his scar. It's undoubtedly the closest they've been all day and it helps lessen some of Will's uneasiness.
The answer to the first question should be quite evident, but likely Hannibal wants to see if Will is going to tell the truth or not, or if he's out to stir up more shit, as it were. There's no reason to lie. He doesn't want this to stop, doesn't want to fall and as long as he plays by Hannibal's rules, he won't. Will's hand reaches back again, rests against Hannibal's thigh and he taps once, yes. It had been a deliberate plan. He had known that when the weather improved and the road cleared up, he'd set out to change himself. Better himself. To leave Hannibal waiting for him. Worrying for him. He would go and seek out a villain, someone the world would be better without. He'd trust Hannibal to find him and trust Hannibal's possessiveness to kill his chosen prey.

There is a certain irony in holding Will unbalanced, given what so many have believed of him in the past. Hannibal acknowledges it silently, considers whether or not to mention it, and then merely lets the observation slide through his fingers. He will not risk shattering the sudden safety of Will's mind. Instead he watches in expectant silence as Will complies with his commands. The snow on the mat has melted given the warmth of the house and Will's weight upon it is undoubtedly soaking his socks, yet he hardly spares it a thought as he gets to his toes and holds the position. While the bitterness of the evening still rings true, he cannot deny his satisfaction at seeing his commands followed. Hannibal presses his hand harder to Will's abdomen, over the rich material of his shirt, and when he leans Will forward, he's met with no resistance. Will may not be pleased, but he doesn't argue, and Hannibal holds him securely enough that if he needs to kick out, he can. His own concession.

The tap against his thigh is solid. Once for yes. While he had known Will had done this on purpose, the confirmation settles something in Hannibal's chest. Will's assumption had been correct: he'd been checking that Will would answer honestly. While he's not claimed that lying ends this - for it won't - he has no intention of informing Will of this fact.

Hannibal is silent. He doesn't praise Will for his answer again, but the tight bar of his forearm against Will's throat slides slightly. It's positioned to still restrict his air, but there's less of a crushing press against the front of Will's trachea. The connection is clear: This becomes more comfortable and more personal the more Will obeys. Yet aside from that slight shift, Hannibal doesn't move. He merely regards Will, breathing through his mouth for the combined scent of the dead man's acrid cologne all over Will's skin is enough to set the anger fresh in his chest. "You planned out every moment to the detail. I'm curious to know if you had this in mind when you first asked to be dropped off at the library." Hannibal muses, though this one is not a question. Not one Will has to answer unless he sees fit. "Were that true, it does beg the question of how long this manipulation has been going."

And in this, Hannibal's hand presses harder against Will's abdomen. His fingers move quietly and Will's jacket falls open, the single button undone. "Certainly for the last few days. Possibly for far longer. Tell me, Will," Hannibal says, and his fingers press down against where he knows Will's scar is. This time, it's aimed to hurt, "were you looking to lull me into complacency? To use my affinity for you as a rope, and watch me tie the noose? To deceive me by feigning intimacy?"

He wants Hannibal to hold him tighter, to squeeze more so he can feel the compression, to feel pressed back together, breathing be damned. Maybe with Hannibal wrapped around him, Will won't break apart, his recklessness can be contained instead of flying out in all directions wildly. Yet he can say or do nothing to change the pressure save for holding himself upright and trust that Hannibal has him. There's an edge of danger, Hannibal is a killer after all - Will has seen him in this position and commit the very act this night, but the pressure eases on his neck and breathing becomes less of a struggle.

(The serpent in Will would have him doubt Hannibal, would hiss in in his ear that they were both
deceiving and this was now Hannibal's counterattack - his time for revenge and fun. He'd cast a safety net, promise security, but then leave Will inexplicably trapped and tangled...)

Although not technically a question, Hannibal wondering about whether Will's little plot was in effect before the library drop off is met with Will tapping once. Perhaps this will be his confession, for he may not have been able to express his thoughts properly before, but this manner allows him to do so much easier. Perhaps Hannibal knew - even now, amidst his anger - what he needed. It wouldn't be a surprise.

Fingers undo his jacket, pointedly seeking to have one less layer against the scar on his belly. The next question posed to him has Will straining in indignation. Hannibal thinks their closeness had also been a part of his cunning. It pisses him off as he'd been completely genuine, he'd just done what he wanted, what felt good. For the briefest of moments, Will has the urge to tap once for yes to fuck with Hannibal and twist the imaginary knife. If Hannibal thought he was the type to use affection and intimacy, to whore himself out, why not destroy their peace like Hannibal had done to his prior lives? Grudges and forgiveness are a challenge for Will. As close as they may be now, a part of Will thinks he'll always begrudge Hannibal for his meddling. In Will's mind, Hannibal's obsession and fixation arose first, their claws raking into his flesh and leaving an ache that remained over the years and despite the distance. And now they was in this codependent relationship of sorts. It was a mess; he was a mess.

Will taps twice. No, his show of intimacy hadn't been shrouded in deception, or at least not intentionally.

A single tap. Its existence is not entirely expected, for Hannibal's tone of voice had not been curled around a true question, and yet despite this, Will has answered anyway. Hannibal isn't surprised, but he does note it with interest and silently files this away. Later, once the anger has bled from his mind and parts of their lives return to normal, he will consider the possibility that this could be an effective tool for Will, who so often struggles with voicing his desires and impulses. To hold him firm in a steady headspace and direct questions and statements to him strips him of the need for shame. It's then a simple task. Answering a question with one or two taps. Hannibal muses on it for only a fraction of a second, but it settles comfortably through his anger. To revisit later, then.

He is not expecting the sudden strain against his arm, however. Hannibal isn't overly surprised, but he does immediately gentle the hold around Will's neck, for he has no desire to crush Will's throat whether his rage burns or not. Hannibal's statement - bitter as it had been - has apparently hit its mark. He watches with mild, colder curiosity as Will strains against him, as his brow furrows in something resembling frustration or ire. What he's said has clearly caused distress and Hannibal considers this as he holds Will secure. Yet regardless of what Will's thoughts do in those few seconds following Hannibal's embittered assumptions, when Will's hand falls to his leg once more, he taps not once but twice.

No. The intimacy had not been a deception.

Hannibal doesn't immediately move, though the answer to that question does change something. The cold twist of rage he's been housing since he had first seen Will wrapped around that man does not ease, but it does change. There is a side of him that still doesn't believe it. A side of him that still suspects that Will had used intimacy to lull him into complacency, and yet the thoughts no longer have claws the way they had before. Will's answer has slicked the surface, and the bitterness can no longer grip the way it had before. Will's manipulation still burns, but Hannibal's cutting disappointment begins to ease. He says nothing, but the change shows in the way he holds Will.

He tightens his hold upon Will's throat, but not with his forearm. His hand - still gloved - curls
around Will's throat, and instead of a steady, near-crushing pressure, it is suddenly far more precise and intentional. Hannibal's fingers press just hard enough to bring back the edge of pain, to restrict air and circulation just enough to deepen Will's headspace. It had been failing before, and he wishes to draw Will back into it. Hannibal is still angry - Will has been unquestionably reckless and duplicitous - but the raw edge of honest coldness towards this man has started to ease. "I see." It's the only reaction Will gets. The only phrase that means he's done well to answer. This time when Hannibal leans down to bring his lips close to Will's ear, he grips his shirt and eases it up just enough that he can slide his hand underneath, pressing against Will's scar. "You shot Garret Jacob Hobbs for killing those girls. You killed Randal Tier for attempting to do the same to you. You butchered the Dragon for the families he had killed." Hannibal's fingers trace the edge of Will's scar, his grip tightening minutely. "Tell me... did this one deserve it?"

He's perhaps rewarded with the transition of Hannibal's hand coming to wrap around his throat, the points of contact more familiar and intimate to Will. He would sigh in contentment if it weren't for the leather glove lodged in his mouth still. He can feel the buildup of saliva and he tries his best to swallow some of it down. It's likely a lost cause, for when the foreign object is removed there'll be a mess of spit and blood. Will wouldn't have ever thought he'd like or even be okay with essentially being gagged, but it holds a certain appeal to submit like this. There's a certain level of peace that comes with not being able to talk. Communication has been simplified to yes or no answers on his part, but he's still able to stop it whenever he wishes.

But he won't.

Warm breath caresses his ear and Will shivers in response. Both his body and mind are hyper-aware, in tune and waiting for the next stimulus to be introduced. He believes that his answer has, hopefully, eased some of Hannibal's tension. Already Will feels the slight discomfort of the position he's in, muscles protesting slightly from the prolonged position, but this is perhaps what he deserves. A hand also worms its way under his sweater and the skin on skin contact is both a relief and a hurt. It's not enough, and it's over his scar - a barbed reminder of what happened the last time Will had deceived Hannibal.

When Hannibal speaks, it's of his past violence - the men he's killed and Will's heartbeat quickens. He both wants to push into the finger tracing the scar's journey across his abdomen and lean back against the body that's supporting him. It's a tricky conundrum, one that Will makes a distressed sound from. In the past, he'd have been aghast to realize he was becoming aroused by such a topic - by power and violence - but not now. Now, it just seems inevitable. Although he's playing under Hannibal's rules, they're breaching his darkness together and maybe this is what Will has wanted all along.

He taps once. The bastard deserved it.

The change in subject is pointed, the arrow of the compass pointing back towards the topic Hannibal had broached before. This time is different. While before his question had been bitter with anger, subtly pushing Will to try and shove him out of his comfort zone, this time it's far more delicate. It's careful, with the consideration of a mind not wracked in darkness and rage. Hannibal gently guides Will into the topic again instead of jerking him bodily into it, instead of knocking him verbally off kilter. In this, Hannibal sets the scene and asks his question, and he is interested when he takes note of the fluttering pulse against his fingers. He's just as interested in that soft sound Will makes, though Hannibal tightens his hold on Will's throat as a delicate reminder that while sounds are permitted, speech is not.
He doesn’t need to look at Will to see the arousal writ into his expression. Despite the curl of cologne that has no place in Will's scent, Hannibal can still fight past it and breathe in what he’s truly looking for. It's subtle; it had faded in the wake of Hannibal's disappointment. While his anger has not fully abated, Will's growing arousal is proof that something has shifted between them. It leaves Hannibal once more marveling at Will's ability to pick up on emotions even without making eye contact. His empathy is truly remarkable.

And like a Bloodhound on a trail, Will's empathy had apparently led him right to the man whom Hannibal had killed. Will taps once. Yes. Despite his bitterness over Will's actions, he cannot help his curiosity. He had settled in the bar himself and looked out at the crowd of people and seen little. Granted, Will had been his sole priority. Hannibal can recognize those with similar hobbies by times; Tobias had fit the profile like a glove. There are markers for those with asocial personality disorder, but that is not the same thing as looking at a person and knowing them. Hannibal has no way of knowing how long Will had been at the bar before he'd made his selection, but it couldn't have been that long. That Will is capable of using his empathy as a filter for his darkness is enough to entice.

"He was hand-chosen," Hannibal murmurs, for this offers Will a safety in which to explore his own intentions. Hannibal steadily increases the pressure against Will's scar, forcing a slightly greater strain on the muscles of Will's legs, though he's careful to monitor Will's muscles for signs of seizing. "You made your selection, manipulated his desires, and watched him burn. I wonder how you felt when you saw him. He looked to you as he suffocated, Will. My hands were merely your tool. Did you feel powerful, watching as you ended his life?"

As Hannibal talks softly, Will only becomes more aroused, fitted slacks now a little more than uncomfortable around his crotch. He's sure Hannibal has noticed the state of his body, but Will isn’t ashamed. Not now. Now when he has Hannibal's attention so intently focused on him and he’s reliving the earlier events of the night. He had walked into the bar, with a plan yes, but still unsteady. It wasn't until he had taken on the guise of his Monster, channeled Hannibal Lecter, that Will had found the boldness and calm that was required for this particular hunt. He had glimpsed numerous pairs of eyes, but it was easy enough to filter out those who didn't have what he was looking for - a darkness, yes, but of a certain variety. Smarmy. Oily. The ones that slip through the system in one way or another.

And then there had been Henri. Henri with his money and his desire to not only take but to use and exploit. Will had seen it, closed his eyes and the all too familiar swish of the metronome had cleared everything away.
been beautiful.

Will taps once and he may regret this, but he tries to grind into Hannibal.

While not privy to Will's thoughts, Hannibal is very aware of the effect they have. He can scent the thick note of arousal between them - partly his own, for he is rarely unaffected when Will is like this - but mostly Will's. While the manipulation has left a sour twist between them and Hannibal fully intends to make his displeasure over it known, Will's honesty and obedience have not gone unnoticed. Hannibal watches him as he speaks, noting the slight tremble in Will's legs from being forced to remain on his toes for so long, the fluttering pulse under his fingers, and the gentle shift of muscle under his hand that all speak to Will's current state.

The glove between his teeth has not shifted once. Hannibal can see moisture around the edges and he knows the position must be uncomfortable, but Will has not moved, not complained, and not spoken. There is much that Hannibal needs to think about. The body left behind, where this recklessness has stemmed from, security in the area, and how far he is willing to go for the man gripped tightly in his arms. All very important, but all capable of closer examination later. He has no qualms in keeping Will in this state, but the need to punish him has eased, the balance tipping into the other direction. Hannibal watches him, notes the high flush to Will's cheeks and feels the pounding of his pulse through the glove. From Hannibal's control, yes, but also from the thought of how simple it had been to end the man's life. That has not escaped Hannibal's notice. He takes no sexual pleasure in killing, but he does in Will's enjoyment.

He's already come to a decision by the time Will moves. It's blatant and unexpected, and Hannibal stills as Will grinds back against him, the angle awkward enough that it must strain Will's muscles to do so. For a moment, Hannibal considers merely keeping Will as he is, but barring this moment - and the way it's enough to draw a soft sound from his throat - Will has been obedient. Hannibal sighs softly, tight with exasperation but subtly proud. "As audacious as ever, I see. You're lucky you've been obedient."

Hannibal's grip on Will's throat tightens, almost enough to completely cut his air off the way he had only a few nights ago. Through the resulting shock, he leans back ever so slightly and allows the muscles in Will's calves to stretch again. While he doesn't allow Will to drop down - and in fact urges him to stand taller but to do so while leaning back against his chest completely - Hannibal is quick to take some of Will's weight to ease the strain. Like this, the tenting in Will's fitted slacks is obvious, and Hannibal allows himself a simple hum of appreciation before he loosens his hold enough to allow Will to breathe. "Is it the power that you hold over me that excites you, Will? Or perhaps it was seeing him die by your hand... Would you like to touch yourself, Will? Or perhaps you'd rather I control both your pain and your pleasure tonight. Choose," Hannibal adds lowly. "One tap for your hand. Twice for mine. Nothing if you want to be left like this."

Whether it was him standing at an actual crime scene or staring at a spread of photos, Will has been able to empathize with far too many deranged minds. He still remembers the time when he'd been found grinning like a lunatic, lost in a sexual sadist's pure glee at disfiguring his latest victim. (He also remembers the judgmental looks cast good way by his so called peers). Or the time, earlier on in his criminal justice career, he'd found himself half-hard and horrified from getting in just a little too close with another psychopath's crazy. No, working in the justice field hadn't been fun times, although he'd stuck around because he was doing good. (Jack knew all too well of how that motivated him). He'd hoped he would be a bit more composed when Crawford had sought him out, he'd been older, felt a little more stable, but arguably he'd also dived too deep with Hobbs if the sheer number of nightmares and hallucinations were any indication. Not that Hannibal had made it simple
for his head to remain above water back then.

He may be hard now and may have been during the act, but there is an important distinction to be made for Will. Flat out murder doesn’t excite him. He may be fucked up, a candidate for a few different diagnoses, sure, and his mind never exactly sound, but he didn’t delight in killing. However, Hannibal killing for him? Because of him? Hannibal becoming a predator - perhaps only a shade of his usual self given Will's blatant manipulation - was enough to enthrall Will. It had been completely gratifying in a way he hadn’t been prepared for. His own personalized drug

Obedience is mentioned and Will can't help but think of himself like a dog in the situation. Ironic how he'd been all caught up in Hannibal being collared and here he was, more or less, performing a trick and desperately hoping for both praise and a treat. It may bother him later to submit like this - who's he kidding, it probably will- but for now he doesn't care that he's doing the equivalent of hopping up and down on hind legs for Hannibal.

The hold on his throat tightens and Will instinctively panics a bit, trying to take a deeper inhale through his nostrils. His situation is only made more precarious by Hannibal bending him backward. It's true, the man behind him is now bearing some of his weight, but it's still awkward and his legs shake as they adjust to the change in posture. The hand may relax, but Will can't. His teeth bite down hard on the glove and he can feel saliva slowly pool at the corners of his mouth and creep out.

Questions are launched at him and he gives a huff of annoyance as he can't answer them, Hannibal continuing his talking. Apparently his good behavior is paying off and he can get a treat now - either he can get off with his own hand, or Hannibal can touch him. Immediately, Will is lifting two of his fingers off to tap twice - Hannibal of course - but he pauses. There's the option of being left like this - face flushed and completely turned on, erection uncomfortably contained and ignored. It causes him to falter as he considers the slightly alarming appeal to it. Would seeing him be denied like this appeal to Hannibal's sadism? Does he even deserve pleasure after what he's done?

Will does nothing and for a man like Will Graham who chases after pleasure and gives into his impulses far too often, this is a marked change in his behavior.

It's a simple switch to make, from non-sexual to sexual. Hannibal has no qualms in controlling Will, in regulating the delicate state of his mind through padded cruelty and low conversation, but he can only take cues from Will's body, from the flutter of his pulse and the roughness to his breathing. While they are still careful, still learning each other, Hannibal has connected patterns to Will's behavior. He is content to withstand control - perhaps on some level he craves it, requires the bliss of not being leashed within his own head - but there comes a time in that control where his focus tends to shift. He is as much a hedonist by times as Hannibal is, and his physical discomfort - his arousal - slowly takes priority. With the careful addition to their boundaries - that Hannibal has been directed to touch and that Will seems to welcome it - he's expecting nothing but the same. When Will grinds back against him, Hannibal takes that as the sign that he's beginning to cope on his own, that his need is beginning to outweigh the rest of it.

He gives Will a choice. The third option is not one he expects Will to take, though Hannibal adds it as he will always give Will an out if he needs one. No three kicks, no Dahlia. Like this, Will seems desperate to prove himself, and Hannibal will not give him two options he isn't sure of without giving him the option for nothing.

Will's fingers lift from his leg and Hannibal's touch upon his scar gentles, anticipating the double tap against his thigh. Yet to his honest surprise, Will hesitates. Hannibal glances at him curiously, for he had not expected a hesitation in this.
More so than that, as the seconds pass and the meaning behind the hesitation finally dawns, the tightness to Hannibal's grip eases. Not out of any attempt to punish Will, but simply because he'd not expected this. The silence between them is punctuated only by Will's heavier breaths and the soft squeak of leather between his teeth. Hannibal can feel the pounding of his pulse, and if anything he considers that Will looks harder at having not been touched. This is unprecedented and just for that single moment of surprise, Hannibal is the one left off-kilter.

It takes him a few moments to recover, to switch back onto familiar tracks. There is curiosity present as well as concern. Is Will doing this for him, or has something changed? Given that Will had been going to tap, he suspects very strongly that there is something else behind this decision. For a moment, he considers stopping, considers drawing Will back down to ask him directly, but he dismisses the thought. Getting straight answers from Will Graham can be like attempting to draw blood from a stone. Unless, of course, his mind is otherwise occupied. As it is now.

Hannibal's fingers tighten again, settling back into a comfortable press at Will's throat - a silent signal that he's understood and Will is still being indulged. Yet this time his attention is far more careful. If Will doesn't wish this to be sexual - or wants to draw it out - it requires a broader safety net to fall back on. Hannibal's ungloved fingers curl and he presses his nails to Will's skin, a constellation around the edges of his scar but not touching it directly. Merely five sharp points for Will's focus. "How curious you are. Just when I think I have begun to understand you, you quickly remind me how difficult an endeavor that is. Very well, Will. If you wish to be left like this, I have no complaints." Hannibal wets his lips, thoughtful, for while enthralled by Will's choice, he does need to monitor the reason behind it. And add in new rules.

"Three kicks to the door ends this. If you require a break or to slow down, kick the door once. Silence is now an option, but sparingly. You will still answer my questions by tapping, and you will still not talk." Hannibal waits for a few seconds, just to guarantee that this has sunk in. Then he continues. "Your decision against being touched. Are you attempting to please me?" Hannibal has not forgotten Will's recent fixation on his sadism, and on attempting to give him what no one else has.

The silence that follows Will's aborted tap should perhaps feel awkward, but it's not really. He can feel Hannibal observing him, waiting for the taps that he's expected to give, but when it's obvious that none are coming, Will knows he's surprised Hannibal. He's surprised himself, too. Why wouldn't he want to get off? It's human nature to seek pleasure, he should be jumping on this chance to be sexually intimate after the crushing disappointment of the night... But perhaps Will is seeking a different kind of intimacy, one that would take a longer road and one that speaks of something potentially deeper. Because Will wants to 'talk' more, for once. He doesn't want this to just turn into him getting off and Hannibal leaving him (because he has a feeling that Hannibal wouldn't permit him to touch back. Likely being this close to Will is havoc for the doctor's senses - Henri's smell clinging to him and all.)

Hannibal's highly in-tune sense of smell is something Will has deliberately played around with before. Namely, in not showering after certain activities. He remembers Chiyoh telling him of Hannibal burning various items for her to identify. It had been difficult for Will to imagine Hannibal Lecter as a young man. Even glimpsing the picture that Pazzi had shown him had disgruntled Will. He had known it was ridiculous - it was certainly something he'd never admit aloud - but Will hadn't particularly liked acknowledging that there were different versions of a Hannibal that he didn't know, a Hannibal he wasn't familiar with, for in Will's mind, his Hannibal must surely eclipse all.

The grip around Will's neck increases and he's blinking profusely, eyes wet from the difficulty in breathing. Drool is gathering at the edges of his mouth and sliding down his chin. It's an altogether
uncomfortable position, his calf muscles straining and he can feel the cashmere-wool sweater stick to his back, his hair growing damp from sweat, overheating from the layers he's still wearing and Hannibal's touch. The graze of nails along his belly outlining his scar has a muffled whine escaping his throat.

There's now new rules, and Will likes the simplicity of this activity, of these roles. One tap for yes, two for no, one kick for a break or for things to slow down and three for Dahlia. This is their own little world, one in which trusting Hannibal is paramount, but in return the noise in Will's head quiets insurmountably. *Are you attempting to please me?* The phrasing and insinuation has Will blushing and a little slower to tap once. The word 'attempt' flusters him for Will would obviously rather succeed at the task.

Hannibal feels the change in Will once his instructions are given. This position is not comfortable and indignity is likely a vague concern in Will's mind. Saliva collects at the corners of Will's mouth and drips down despite his best efforts. It's bloodied from the split in his lip but Hannibal merely watches the path it takes, finding the image Will makes like this ever striking. If he cares about the image he presents, he doesn't make it evident; Will's focus is on the task that Hannibal has given him, and that he seems uncaring regarding the rest despite his discomfort has something darker and pleased curling within Hannibal's chest. He simply gives Will his instructions, listens to the soft whine of discomfort that escapes Will like a prayer, and his nails scrape gently over the skin around Will's scar. Despite the discomfort and the pain of the position, Will relaxes against him.

To top it off, while his answer does take awhile - slowed by the growing flush to Will's skin and this addition to their regular dynamic - it is still an answer that pleases Hannibal. He's silent, contemplative, looking down the line of Will's body drawn taught as a bowstring against him. Will's scent is sharper now, sweat coaxed by heat and intimacy and while their victim's scent is sharp all over Will even now, Hannibal does what he can to focus on the rest. On the product in Will's hair, the faint edge of alcohol lingering on Will's skin, on his arousal. All are intoxicating in their own way, but all because they belong to Will. This complex creature Hannibal had so long ago found himself bound to.

They will speak of Will's manipulation later, when the agony of disappointing Hannibal is not a danger to Will's health. For right now, though the anger still simmers and the memory of the man wrapped so intimately around Will has Hannibal wishing to rip him apart all over again, he is content to focus on Will's obedience. "Good. Very good. I want you to focus on only me, Will. My touch. My voice. You will answer my questions honestly. Doing so will please me."

If this is enough to guard against a true breakdown, to keep Will from lashing out to injure himself, Hannibal has no qualms in this. Will's obedience is mesmerizing - even more so given the state of Will's dress. Dressed so powerfully, yet bending at Hannibal's whims. It sends a lick of satisfaction through him, but he doesn't allow that to cloud his priorities. "Are you attempting to punish yourself?"

Told to focus only on Hannibal's touch and his words, Will's eyes slip shut. Without the added visual stimulus, his other senses are much more sharp, hyper aware of the sturdy body half-supporting him, Hannibal's calm breaths... yet Hannibal is the one responsible for bending him into this position, one that is awkward and uncomfortable, but Will doesn't even consider kicking the door. The entire situation is strangely alluring. Far too captivating. Will has never done anything like this before so he doesn't know exactly what to attribute his growing and very persistent arousal to. Is it simply from *who* is showing him attention? (Hannibal is his exception, after all.) Or perhaps reliving the high he had felt watching Hannibal kill for him? (A rush like he had never experienced...) Or maybe the
actual domination is getting to him because there is no other way to look at the picture they are creating. (Does he wish this to happen again? Surely not. Everything in Will's reasonable brain is telling him to not submit - to not be a bitch - but Will ignores that snide voice.) Each reason has its own implications and Will doesn't think he's ready to fully think of them just yet.

So he doesn't. He will let Hannibal orchestrate this scenario and see where it goes. What it possibly means for him or them? Well, that can be left for later. There are far too many cases that - when Hannibal is added into the equation - Will finds himself discovering new, albeit galling aspects of himself. Maybe a part of him gets off on seeing and experiencing Hannibal in control and powerful. (Or maybe a part of him finds peace in submitting to someone he--) Whatever it is, Will does want to please Hannibal in this, to offer something - himself - in sacrifice, to make the sting of his manipulation fade just a little bit.

But the next question - Are you attempting to punish yourself? - isn't one that Will had been expecting. He'd thought Hannibal would perhaps tease him, bring to light how aroused he is (although he's not alone in it, Will can feel an answering hardness against him). Punishment, however, speaks of his psyche and is something Will has dabbled with in the past as seen in him punching the mirror and refusing to eat. He certainly doesn't feel like he deserves an orgasm, probably doesn't deserve Hannibal indulging him at all if Will is being honest. Still, it's difficult to acknowledge it and have it be out in the open.

He taps once. Maybe Hannibal will punish him now.

The question is necessary. While Will may be attempting to please him, there is little that says that is Will's only reason for behaving this way, and Hannibal would be reckless were he not to explore all options. He's not willing to drag Will's mental state high while there is the possibility that he's looking to punish himself just as much as please Hannibal. And as it so happens, Hannibal is left entirely unsurprised by the single tap to his leg. Yes. Will is also attempting to punish himself. Hannibal stills.

His grip on Will doesn't ease. No, he has no desire to draw back all of a sudden, to leave Will reeling and wondering if he'd done something wrong. Hannibal may not be pleased over what Will has done this evening, but not even he is cruel enough to gently coax Will into a safer state of being and then drop him to fend for himself. He's careful to keep his posture exact, to give Will no physical clues that he's even fully registered the information. Instead, with one hand at Will's throat and the other pressed tightly against the sensitive knot of Will's abdominal scar, Hannibal considers the information and looks down at the long, lean line of Will's torso. His slacks are tented still and the scent of his arousal is nearly maddening. For a moment, he considers touching anyway; he has no desire to allow Will to punish himself.

He doesn't. While he won't humor Will's self-destructive tendencies, he has no desire to dismiss Will's choices either. For now, he doesn't want to be touched. Hannibal will not push.

But nor will he allow Will to punish himself. He draws in a careful, steady breath - using his own breaths to subtly reign in Will's breathing - and then he slowly increases his pressure on Will's throat. Hannibal's hand closes firmly, enough to bring Will to a lightheaded space without compromising his consciousness. Suggestible, perhaps, but mostly to guarantee that Will's attention is on him completely. "That is not for you to concern yourself with, Will. I get to decide when you have done something that begs punishment. It is my choice. Not yours. Scratch the thought from your mind," he urges firmly. And as he does, Hannibal allows his thumb a gentle stroke along part of the length of Will's scar. Juxtaposition against the finality of his voice and the tightness of his hand. "Your fears and concerns are mine to bear at present. Clear your mind for me, Beloved. Focus on me and only
The name slips out, lost amidst the sea of commands, but Hannibal injects it with purpose. Will believes himself deserving of punishment. And while Hannibal isn't accepting over what he's done this evening, Will is clearly punishing himself for it. Hannibal has no intention of allowing anyone to punish this man but himself, and only when needed. The word is intended as a reminder. Refocusing Will on the way Hannibal sees him. As it should be. He leans in fractionally and his lips press against the nape of Will's neck. One of the places the bastard hadn't touched. "Would you allow me your burden for now, Will? Trust that I am strong enough for us both?"

Pleasure was often accompanied with a bit of pain, but did punishment have a part to play with them? Growing up, punishments ranged from all of Will's books being confiscated to simple spankings. Early on, his father had learned that the former was what a young Will Graham truly dreaded. He'd never been overly interested in toys, action figures seemed hilariously pointless and static to him (when compared with his own imagination). As money had been tight, used books were far cheaper than most toys anyhow. The worst punishment for Will was him being confined to his room with nothing to occupy his overactive mind. He may not have owned a lot of books, but Will's well loved paperbacks offered him an escape. The mind itself could serve as a prison. He learned that lesson young and it's been proven to him many times since then.

The grip on his throat tightens and Will refocuses, not even aware that he'd been attempting to match Hannibal's measured breathing as best he could manage. There's always a degree of panic that laces the asphyxiation, a base instinct to fight against it - to escape Hannibal's clutches, but as per their custom, Will is able to let the urge pass. He trusts Hannibal and maybe this is a punish-- The words told to him have Will stopping that line of thought. Okay, maybe not then. A soft touch at his scar and Will is shying away from it, as if the gentleness holds an edge of discomfort, of pain.

Beloved. Will visibly jerks and almost falters in his posture. He's never been called that ever. In a dream, amidst the crisp winter landscape, his imagined and trapped Hannibal had spoken about the concept of a beloved. Now that it's applied to him and directly from the man himself, Will is shaken. He bites down harder on the glove, attempting to do as Hannibal has instructed and to only focus on him. (It's difficult, the word floats around in his hazy brain, something foreign, but ultimately welcomed - Beloved; Will wishes to be able to see Hannibal say it again, maybe even look in those eyes...)

But can he truly let go? Push the thoughts of punishment and disappointment aside and let Hannibal take care of him? His leg twitches, a part of him wants to kick the damn door, whether it would be one or three times, not even Will knows. This is too far. Too much. Too intimate--

But he'll try. He'll trust. Will taps yes.

Intimacy has always held the capacity for being a double-edged sword. Hannibal is not so unaware of himself that he doesn't know the way he's used it as a weapon in the past. Soft touches - near apologies - before the bite of a knife. A caress as counterpoint for cruelty. Will has no reason to trust this shift except that Hannibal has asked him to, and so Hannibal doesn't relent or hesitate when
Will's decision is not immediate. He feels the jerk in his arms, feels Will strain against the word 'beloved' like Hannibal has once more slid a blade cleanly through his skin, but Hannibal holds him through it as he had so many years ago. Save this time, he has no intention of merely dropping Will to the floor and watching him bleed.

He feels the twitch in Will's balance and watches one of his legs tense, as if he's considering kicking out. Hannibal waits, for while he has no wish to let Will go when he's in this state, he will if ordered. Intimacy can be a weapon in his hands, and perhaps he considers it for a moment, but ultimately Hannibal's focus isn't on punishment. It's on changing Will's focus. Will is reckless, self-destructive, reticent even to the mildest affection. Hannibal's disappointment over being manipulated is still present. He fully intends to speak to Will about it later, but not when Will is like this. Not when he's desperate for punishment and for Hannibal's approval. The silence during the ride home had been cruel; Hannibal can appreciate that now. At the time, he'd merely been attempting to gather his own control back. Yet there had been a small, petulant side of him issuing his own form of punishment. It's his fault Will is in this mindset. A man with so much empathy... Hannibal's neglect had spoken clearly. It is therefore his job to fix this. And he intends to.

The tap against his leg is almost hesitant, but Hannibal hums a soft sound of praise against Will's skin and the tight press against Will's throat once again eases to allow him breath. Yet as if to make up for the gentleness, Hannibal's nails press harder to the skin above Will's scar and drag upwards just once. It's not enough to break the skin, but it is enough to leave welts behind, particularly against the dampness of Will's skin. Hannibal's touch settles beneath Will's ribs, at the vulnerable curve below them. A sharp reminder that Hannibal still has him, despite the tenderness. "Good. I'm proud of you." To anyone else, the words might seem condescending, but Hannibal says them with purpose. Will's mind is more open to him now, the man himself far more suggestible. He intends to replace the aching guilt with something else.

"I wonder if you are aware how stunning you are like this." Hannibal's voice is low, contemplative. This is... admittedly a risk. Will's desire for comfort - to be told positive things about himself - has been a tenuous request. Sometimes he's able to handle it and other times he shies away. But in this, Hannibal will be careful. A delicate line to skirt. He wants a pleased embarrassment, something subtle but warm instead of withdrawn and combative. "Aching for more, yet wishing to please me. My remarkable boy. Would you permit me to touch you as I wish? Above the waist," he adds, pointedly. He has no desire to go against Will's whims. "Would it be easier if it hurt? Answer both questions. Pause for a count of four between taps so I know."

Breathing becomes marginally easier when the hand eases its grip upon his throat. Will inhales quickly through his nostrils. There's a thrill with the asphyxiation, one that he's not entirely sure should be there. Just over an hour ago he witnessed these hands kill a man - a man that Will had selected, judged and sentenced to death. He's seen Hannibal paralyze a man and yet there's tenderness shown toward him. These hands have washed Will's hair and fixed his coffee, they've left scratch marks and tugged ruthlessly at his hair. Despite everything, Will knows Hannibal won't squeeze too hard or snap the delicate bones in his neck. Heart pounding, a muffled groan is elicited by the sudden sharp sting of nails scraping against his abdomen. Pleasure and pain. Pain with pleasure. These things are synonymous with Hannibal Lecter.

I'm proud of you. He doesn't want the words to hold so much weight, to matter, but they do. Hannibal's recognition and favorable regard matter to Will. Hannibal is all he has, both a compass and lifeline. He's aware that it's unhealthy on some level - multiple levels, most likely. But it's not as if he wants to bring up the topic of co-dependency over dinner. Whatever Hannibal and he are, it transcends norms, goes further than any pedestrian relationship, so when Hannibal tells him he's stunning, a warmth blooms in Will's chest. It's true that Will often balks at praise or compliments, not
wanting to admit how they makes him feel (soft, vulnerable), but the hunger for hearing them always remains.

(Will has a few different things he hungers for)

It's a capricious situation - being completely aroused, but forgoing getting off. Will knows he's mostly doing it for Hannibal, yes, to please him, but he's also curious of just how far he can be pushed in this. He doesn't know how much longer his leg muscles can take the awkward strain, but he'll try his best to not wimp out. Words like stunning and remarkable can sustain him, will sustain him.

*Would you permit me to touch you as I wish?* Will taps once - nothing sounds better than having Hannibal touch him. *Anywhere, everywhere.* It's the same sentiment he felt when they were nearly naked less than a week ago and exploring each other. He craves the attention, he wants to be undone and then put back together. Let Hannibal craft him in this moment. Let him be a work of art.

*Would it be easier if it hurt?* It probably would, but Will doesn't want it to always hurt. He wants the shades and degrees right now, so after a longer pause than necessary, he taps twice for *no*. It's possibly a mistake, because it's a half-lie, but Will is limited in his communication. He'll hope Hannibal understands.

Will's throat will be a landscape of color come morning, bruises carefully coaxed out by Hannibal's hands. He presses and squeezes carefully, knowing precisely what he wants to see. What he wants Will to feel. Every touch is careful and precise, and Hannibal aches to see the patchwork of bruises that will linger on Will's throat with the rising of the sun. In this moment, however, he is caught by Will himself. By the way Will breathes in sharply once allowed, by the groan, and by the way his pleasure is obvious following Hannibal's words of praise. Perhaps a part of him wishes to shy away from them, but with Will's fears and concerns little more than a distant buzz in his mind, Hannibal watches the *true* play of Will's reactions over his face. Not the ones he feels are necessary or proper given the situation, but the ones he genuinely feels. His expression doesn't change, but the way his stance solidifies, the way he sinks deeper into his mind makes it very clear that Hannibal has said something very right. While Hannibal doesn't smile, there is warmth in his eyes.

He focuses his attention upon his own leg as he distantly notes the soft trembling in Will's. He'll be sore come morning undoubtedly, his muscles working hard to do exactly as Hannibal bids him to do. Even as Will taps once - yes, Hannibal can touch him - Hannibal considers how much longer Will can stand before collapsing. As his gloved thumb brushes along the line of Will's pulse, he decides to push it a few more minutes. Will is stronger than he believes and Hannibal intends to show him what he knows to be true.

The second response takes longer to come, and Hannibal does not miss the significance of that. While the answer does surprise him - no, it wouldn't be easier if it hurt - he's not entirely certain that he or Will believe it. To go against a direct response holds some risk, but ultimately Hannibal is the one in control, barring Will's ability to put a stop to all of this. So with the knowledge in mind, Hannibal makes his decision and merely holds Will's throat without exerting much pressure. He can feel the pounding of his pulse through his glove, but his focus is on his other hand, which moves now that he has permission. "Good. Very good. Remember, Beloved. Do not talk, and do not drop the glove. You may make sounds as you wish, provided you do not attempt to speak." Hannibal's hand slides up, palm flat and the sleeve of his suit jacket brushes along Will's skin as his hand comes to rest at the edge of Will's clavicle. "I would urge you not to attempt to move back against me, also. You're likely to make your legs seize in this position. Simply allow me, and remember: One kick for a break."
It's the only reminder Hannibal gives. Will's skin is slightly slick with sweat and warm with arousal under his hand, but if Hannibal minds, he doesn't show it. Instead he leans in enough to press a kiss to Will's nape again, teeth gently scraping the skin as he explores at his leisure. Hannibal is slow and careful, tracing each individual line of Will's ribs for no reason other than it's an odd path not commonly followed, and Will Graham is his focus. He wishes to know this man, to know his reactions, to introduce him to those he can't possibly expect. His hand skirts over Will's last rib and then slides back up his sternum before moving over. He remembers Will's uncertainty regarding contact with his nipples, but he dismisses it as unimportant. Instead he focuses on only one - his other hand still firm on Will's throat to secure him - and traces the skin around it carefully. Hannibal takes his time, touching and rubbing, and when he finally pinches, it's not violent. It's sharp - a sudden change, halfway between pain and pleasure - but his focus is on Will, on Will's reaction. "I believe you told me this was sensitive, last time," Hannibal says, and pinches ever so slightly harder before soothing, his voice lower. "Is it still sensitive, Will?"

The name is said again - Beloved - and Will feels like it could almost be a brand upon his skin, marking him as Hannibal's for the world to see. Hannibal's Beloved - was he truly? It burns at Will's insides, attempting to sear away self-doubt and feelings of unworthiness. It sits uncomfortably heavy, both liberating (for how wonderful to be thought of as such) and a chain (for what is the cost?). He pays no attention to a snide voice in his head that points out that no one really uses that term of endearment - Hannibal never did care to appease the masses, why should this case be any different? He heeds the instructions, jaw clamping down on the glove harder in reinforcement. He won't drop it and he won't speak. Likely it'll be ruined by the end of this. The thought of him spoiling something expensive of Hannibal's pleases Will more than it ought to, but he wants to see his impact. Before you and after you... Will wants to continually be shaking up Hannibal's life, let nothing be still and complacent for the older man. Let Hannibal just try and remain composed, let him be a monolithic statue for Will to throw himself against; even if he can't shift the monument, his offering of blood will stain it, his name painted in splatters of red. Yes, Will is reckless, but while he gravitates around Hannibal, he won't be lost for Hannibal has him.

A kiss is followed up by the slight scrape of teeth at his neck and Will makes a pleased sound. He had never been an extremely vocal bed partner before, but something about Hannibal's touch loosens his tongue and encourages him to be expressive. He can feel the slow slide of sweat from his forehead mingling with saliva at his jaw. Together they are creating quite the debauched visual, one of which he can envision in his mind all too easily. Each rib is traced, something completely nonsexual in nature, but he arcs into the touch, coveting it. Will thinks of the creation story of Adam and Eve. Whereas Adam was born from dust, Eve had been created from Adam's rib. Hannibal and him are made of the same elements - have a similar darkness - yet, like Adam and Eve, they remain uniquely different. Conversely, they would have eaten the forbidden fruit together, both spurring each other on to reach and pluck--

He jolts at the touch to his nipple, not expecting it to be the next place to be granted attention. Will's eyes snap open, blinking against the strange sensation and he's flustered to feel his nipple harden from the attention. He still wants to pull away, a part of him incredulous that this could possibly feel good - he isn't a woman, he--

A pinch has him making a sound, one in which he's not certain is from pleasure or pain. Hannibal remembering his one-off comment equally flusters and flatters Will. Another pinch comes and Will shakes, eyelids blinking quickly as he tries to process the onslaught of odd stimulation. He's impossibly hard from this all and surely reaching his the limits of holding to Hannibal's standards, his legs aching, but this only excites Will further. The question, under more normal circumstances, would aggravate the Hell out of Will and be cause for a, 'you think?' paired with an eyebrow raise.
But Will wants the attention, wants the touch, so he taps once. Yes, it's still sensitive.

Will is a stunning feast for the senses, debauched while fully clothed and made all the sweeter because of it. The heat from their bodies is undoubtedly affecting him, sweat easing the slide of Hannibal's hand and yet he merely breathes in the scent, not surprised to find it pleasant. It's decidedly Will, a thick, heady mix of desperation and arousal that is slowly overshadowing the heavy cologne Will's mark had been wearing. Hannibal encourages it, coaxing Will carefully into this new space, into what he hopes is a more comforting state of mind, the only doctrine Hannibal's whims and his hands. He wishes everything else silent as Will jolts at his touch. Hannibal turns his attention to Will's expression, watching as his eyes open, as his attention is caught by a sensation he still has no idea what to make of. The mixed uncertainty and distress has Hannibal curious regarding the cause, but he doesn't press. Not now.

Instead he pinches the hardened nub and watches as Will struggles to process it. For all the conflicting sensations he feels, his slacks are still obviously tented - perhaps more now than they had been before - and Hannibal silently delights at the sight. Not for the first time, he feels decidedly honored that Will is allowing this. Be it to please him or not, Hannibal enjoys seeing Will caught in this careful state between pain and pleasure, between not enough and too much. And when Will's hand taps his leg once, Hannibal allows himself a small smile. "Good." He has not failed to notice that despite Will's uncertainty over this sensation, he has not made a single move to kick the door. "I am aware your legs are likely burning by now, but I believe you can withstand more. I will not let you go too far. You have my word," Hannibal promises.

He pinches again - harder, edging into pain - and then abruptly lets go, allowing the pain to linger even as he slides his hand lower, over the trembling line of Will's abdomen. He presses his hand warmly to Will's skin, a gentle counterpoint to the throbbing he's undoubtedly set up in his nipple. Hannibal traces the edges of each muscle, running his fingers along their tracks in the direction each of the fibers go under Will's skin, like he is fully capable of seeing beneath his surface. Like he can carefully curl his fingers over them and draw out only the best or worst sensations at his leisure. Hannibal's hand dips lower, tracing Will's abdominal scar almost reverently from one knotted edge to the other. Clean, surgical, and precise, and entirely his. Again he kisses the back of Will's neck, nudging just below the collar of his jacket, where he again scrapes his teeth. Instead of biting - something he had not asked to do - he takes a moment to suck as his hand wanders, coaxing a faint bruise to the surface at first, and then a sharper, deeper one. Just a marked reminder for himself. And as he draws back, murmuring a soft note of praise: "You're doing well. Exactly as I ask." Hannibal's hand pointedly dips lower.

The tips of his fingers brush against the smart leather belt looped through Will's slacks, his palm pressing against the trail of dark hair under Will's navel, leading down into his pants. He pauses only for a second, long enough to allow Will to think on what could happen, and then his hand once again trails up, curling around Will's hip and stroking the dip with his thumb. One day, he will fasten his teeth here and etch another mark into Will's skin. He presses down, just enough to draw a faint bruise to the surface later, and then moves his hand back up to Will's chest, laying the flat of his palm over the abused nipple he'd worked to hardness before. Heat against pain; Hannibal fully intends to give Will a fine mix of sensations. "How does that feel?" He asks, lowly, aware that it doesn't fit the scope of their earlier questions. Yet there are many ways to answer that don't involve tapping. He leans in and eases Will ever so slightly higher just so he can press a kiss to the bite on Will's neck - his bite. "I'm proud of you, Will. If you wish to come tonight, you have more than earned the right. But it will not be here; upstairs, when you're ready."

Will never thought himself this submissive, to bend like he is and feel like he'd prostate himself and
beg for anything, but here he is, proving to himself that maybe, just maybe, there's more to discover about himself. In this night Will is desperate for salvation and Hannibal is his religion, almost a God. It's surely a sacrilegious and absurd metaphor, but doesn't that fit him? He hadn't been able to connect to much in his life - his love of dogs and nature were the few exceptions - but Hannibal had seen him, his light and dark, the many shades of grey, and done what no other had - accepted and cherished the whole picture. Despite his jagged edges, his roughness and jarring colors, Hannibal makes Will feel like a masterpiece.

And that's why he's close to breaking down. He must be.

But no, that's not right. Hannibal believes he can withstand more. So Will does. He'll trust the man who has gutted him both physically and emotionally, whose hands are both gentle and violent. Pain erupts from a more cruel pinch and Will screws his eyes shut. (There's no way he can be crying from this). The hand relents, tenderness being shown to him as it feels over his abdomen in an almost worshipful caress. The change is drastic, almost sharp, and when his smile is addressed, a muffled whine can be heard. Again, a tantalizing mouth comes to his neck with a little show of teeth and Will thinks it's going to bite - he'd welcome it - but no, Hannibal sucks. He takes a quick inhale.

Words of approval have Will feeling lighter, undoubtedly good and it eclipses the discomfort of his muscles. He tenses as Hannibal's hand travels lower - he aches to be touched - to break his fast, as it were, but nothing comes of it. It's both maddening and divine. His God is not forsaking him, no. This isn't him wandering in the desert searching for the promised land. Hannibal is still obeying Will's earlier answer. (There may be tears mixing with sweat.)

His hip is likely given a bruise, but Will accepts it. He imagines his body as a canvas waiting for Hannibal to bring it to life, for Will feels alive in ways he's never experienced before. Palm pressed against the still sore nipple and Will trembles. How does that feel? Will moans his accolades. The thought of being able to finally climax has his resolve shaking, but he pushes past his body's discomfort. His hand rubs against Hannibal's thigh in an appreciative gesture. It's all he can really manage in this position.

There is a fine line between too much and not enough, and Hannibal feels it fast approaching. He gives little thought to his own discomfort - for Will is not the only one hard and aching - but to be able to freely touch and explore Will like this, to see his reactions, to listen to his soft sounds of pleasure and desperation and pain is divine in itself. He's careful and precise, testing Will's limits and registering every sound that Will makes. He searches each one for anything less than optimal, and while Will is desperate and aching, his body trembling on the edge of too much, Hannibal still carefully eases him along. He's watching when the tears finally fall and for a moment his hand slows, almost cautious, but Will isn't shaking apart, isn't panicking, and while he's definitely overwhelmed, his muscles are as relaxed as they can be. He's trusting, and that isn't a state of being that Hannibal intends to squander.

Will's sounds are a symphony to the senses. Hannibal presses his lips to Will's neck again, next to the press of his hand, and murmurs soft praises that are far too low to hear properly, but he doubts Will's focus is anywhere but the comforting blankness of his mind and the soft notes of praise. It's exactly where Hannibal wants him, and he does what he can to keep Will there for as long as he can.

However he still keeps his word. He has no desire to push Will past the point of too much. Will's hand is warm on his thigh, lazy and distant; Hannibal wonders vaguely if he's even aware of doing it. But the second he feels a new tremor in Will's body - something akin to a different muscular tension, he reacts before it can become a problem. Still careful to brace Will properly, Hannibal's hand slowly slides down from his throat and instead he wraps his arm securely around Will's waist. "Easy. I'm not
going anywhere. You've done wonderfully, Will. Relax your legs for me," Hannibal instructs, his voice low and coaxing. He carefully slides Will down an inch, taking the burning pressure from his legs, and then reaffirms his grip around Will's waist as Hannibal presses his cheek to Will's hair, maintaining clear contact. He has no desire to have Will lose this state of mind, but he also won't push him to injury. Delicate balance. "Lean back into me, Will. Let your legs go lax; I've got you."

He does. Hannibal makes a point to support Will's weight, effortless, like he weighs very little. He can still sense the need under Will's skin and he intends to address it, but Will's comfort is important now. His gloved hand grips Will's hip, the bite of leather a different sensation altogether, but he merely holds him steady, giving Will time to recollect himself. And as he holds him, Hannibal turns his attention to what the next step will be. Particularly as Will is so sensitized to touch. The answer is simple, though does require a change in position. "I would like to see to your legs, Will. Upstairs, if you are amenable. If you would like, you may remove the glove now, but if you keep it between your teeth, this continues. Dahlia becomes three knocks on the wall once we are upstairs. The taps remain, save to my shoulder instead. Do you understand? Make your choice."

Hearing more words of praise has Will rapt, oddly lightheaded from how good it feels to know he's done well in this. It ought to feel strange, it really should. For as much as Will pushed himself in the past, he's never clambered for attention and praise. But, Hannibal is, once again, an exception. Will thinks the whiplash of disappointment had primed him for this, paved his way into submitting, for surely he can't normally be like this. Although, Hannibal has, in the past, submitted to him, getting to his knees and even begging... But that was Hannibal and the man was abnormal. Will is... He can't be...

As Hannibal gives him permission to relax, it's a sweet relief, like the first drink of water being given to a parched man. Gradually, Will does so, lowering himself down to the flats of his feet, his muscles sore and weak from holding the prolonged awkward position. It does take further coaxing to get Will to go completely boneless. It reminds him of one of the few seminars he'd attended where they had done a trust building activity. They'd been split into pairs and instructed to fall back and let the other partner catch them. It was comical back then, forcing a fake bond of trust between colleagues, but now...

Hannibal catches him and he's held securely. Will sags into Hannibal, sweaty, hot and dizzy. He lets Hannibal hold him and trusts that whatever follows will also be fine. He has no idea where the night is going and although Hannibal may be the one exerting control, Will has a sneaking suspicion that the man, too, may be a little lost in this. It will be the blind leading the blind, but as long as it's Hannibal, Will is going to follow. He has no one else; all they have is each other.

Will has no clue what Hannibal has in mind when he mentions seeing his legs, but more of Hannibal's attention seems lovely at this point and Will gives a small half-nod. At the prospect of this - whatever fucked up thing they were doing - ending, Will makes sure his teeth are firmly biting down on the glove. He doesn't want this to end for he's scared of comes afterward. (Actual talking, ownership of duplicity, disappointment...) Will taps once to show his understanding.

It takes Will time to fully trust that Hannibal has him, but when his weight sags into Hannibal's arms, he's met with nothing but support and softly murmured praise. This transition isn't going to be simple. The carefully-constructed state of Will's thoughts is dependent on Hannibal's touch, his focus, on his world remaining exactly the same and on Will's thoughts not being given a chance to return, so Hannibal is aware that time is of the essence. Yet beyond even that, so is control. He has Will secure, holding his weight, supporting him and waiting for Will's response. He doesn't doubt that if Will believes him incapable in even one area, this tower of cards will come crashing down. So a delicate,
swift transfer upstairs is likely the safest course of action. Much as he wishes to maintain this state of Will's mind, he does need to check on his legs.

Walking is likely not an option. Hannibal is aware of this and already has a compromise, though one he believes he recalls Will being less than fond of. With any luck, he's deep enough in his own mind that his concerns will ease. And so when Will's hand taps once against Hannibal's thigh and he hears the creak of the leather from Will's very pointed decision, Hannibal nods. "Very well. I'm going to lift you, but I will not drop you."

It's the only warning Hannibal gives. Sliding his free hand out from under Will's shirt, he carefully shifts Will in his arms until he's in the proper position, and then bends down to press his arm behind Will's knees, lifting him up. His focus is on supporting Will's back, on allowing him to stay upright, but when the younger man is secure in his arms, Hannibal merely takes a moment to pointedly lock the front door, and then turns and makes his way up the stairs. He carries Will like he weighs nothing but means everything, his gaze flicking between Will's legs and the look on his face, checking for any kind of uncertainty or panic. That he finds none is a good sign. While he walks steadily, careful not to jostle the man in his arms, he's still quick about making his way to the bedroom.

Hannibal is careful to lay Will back on the bed once they arrive, leaning over him calmly and taking his time to gently arrange Will's legs on the bed. He sets him down where Hannibal himself usually sleeps. Right now, he fully intends to ensure Will does not fall apart, and he has no qualms in situating Will where he'd likely feel safest.

"Very good, Will," Hannibal murmurs, and then he stands. He's quick to undo the button of his suit jacket and he's careful in sliding it from his shoulders, leaving him in the dark shirt and vest beneath. Hannibal merely secures the jacket on the back of a chair - not wanting to leave Will for long - and he slides the tie he'd taken that evening from the jacket's pocket so as not to forget it. For a moment, Hannibal does consider... but in the end, he sets the folded tie on the bedside table. It's well within Will's field of view. If he wants it, he needs only make it obvious. For right now, Hannibal has other priorities.

"Raise your leg for me," Hannibal instructs as he settles on the bed with Will, tapping the leg closest to him. When Will obliges, he's careful in easing Will's leg down over his own thigh, moving his hands under to press against the overworked muscles of Will's calf. "I would prefer your muscles to not seize, and it will be far easier to massage you with your slacks off. Though I am capable of doing it either way. Would you permit me to take them off, Will?" Hannibal asks, pressing his fingers into sore muscles.

Will's not given time to process that he's going to be carried upstairs. He doesn't think he'd agree to such a thing were he to be asked, but walking there certainly would have been a laborious chore. Will's sure Hannibal hasn't forgotten his dislike of this particular activity, being that it had happened not even a week ago, although the distance had been much shorter - simply the journey between the window and the bed. But Hannibal shifts him into whatever position he deems appropriate for the endeavor and bends down with no further comment before scooping him up.

It's absurd that he's allowing this. He's a mess, face wet with tears, sweat and spit. A fucking glove stuffed in his mouth, a persistent boner... And yet Will makes no move to stop any of it. He lets Hannibal take on some obscure Prince Charming role and sweep him off to their-- no, that wasn't right, it was still Hannibal's room. He closes his eyes and wonders vaguely if this is how Hannibal had carried him from Muskrat Farm (oh, probably, the bastard likely couldn't have resisted it, high off his revenge, screwing over Mason and saving his bride). The journey doesn't take long and Will instinctively relaxes once they enter the familiar room.
He's placed down gently - on Hannibal's side of the bed - something Will notes with a distant amuseiment. He feels bewildered, but oddly okay. It's not the same confusion of his dreams or nightmares, he's not alone in this. Will hears the shuffle of fabric, likely Hannibal slipping off the suit jacket. He relaxes his jaw marginally as Hannibal places a tie on the table nearest him. Apparently he had taken one with, but hadn't worn it. Has Hannibal placed it there deliberately to use later? Will doesn't know and has no way of asking.

Hannibal joins him on the bed and Will complies with the order, lifting his right leg. He practically groans at the attention paid to his aching muscles, Hannibal's hands going right to work, fingers expertly massaging. The question of removing his dress pants draws Will up short for he can't reach any part of Hannibal to tap his answer on to. His hands twitch at his sides as agitation filters in. He makes a distressed sound and sits up, shooting Hannibal an annoyed look as he mimes that he couldn't reach Hannibal to properly communicate.

Suddenly it all feels stupid. He's a grown man, why is he here with a leather glove stuffed in his mouth and drooling over himself? The answer is because Hannibal had put it there, effectively quieting his mind as he began this slow seduction of sorts. But in this moment Will doesn't feel safe and put together, not like he had in the entry way. This is the bed that they became lovers in less than a week ago. Equals, both touching and delighting in each other - mostly normal save for the choking, sure. But what the fuck are they doing now? Christ, he’s so messed up to be getting off on this. Will begins to shake, uncertainty and doubt creeping their way up and his hand is halfway to his mouth to remove the glove before it freezes. His reluctance to stop it all only upsets Will more and he forces himself to finish the motion and he tears out the glove, throwing it at Hannibal.

All it takes is one slip - one misstep - to bring this house of cards down. Hannibal has been as careful as he's been able to be, accounting for as much as he possibly can, but this is as new to him as it is to Will. Mistakes are bound to happen, but this particular one is one that Hannibal doesn't notice until the fracture has already manifested itself in Will's mind. It's his own fault. For a few moments, his attention halves. His concern for Will's persistent mental state is present, but it's at war with a more medical concern. There's nothing wrong with being aware of both sides of this equation, but Hannibal's mistake is the moment he forgets himself enough to ask a question, assuming he'd been close enough for Will to reach. His hands are on Will's legs, the soft groans signaling that Will is in a more pleasurable spot, but just for that moment, Hannibal slips. It's so small, something he doesn't even consider, but his mind wanders to the proper way to care for Will's legs, and to the possibility of adding magnesium and potassium to breakfast in the morning, in order to reduce the possibility of Will's muscles seizing.

As it so happens, that mild lapse of concentration is all Will needs to fall apart. Hannibal doesn't notice it until Will has shifted, and by then - even though Hannibal immediately notices the flicker of annoyance and can see the fracture forming - it's far too late. He removes his hands, and immediately says Will's name, attempting to reign him back in, but the blissful state of mind Will has been trapped in has slipped. It makes sense; the transition was never going to be simple to maintain. Yet Hannibal still feels like cursing his own lapse in attention as Will begins to shake, but he freezes in his attempt to reach out for Will when Will's hand lifts to the glove in his mouth.

Will freezes as well. For a moment, Hannibal can see the reluctance, the uncertainty and doubt. It's clear that Will doesn't want to remove the glove, but his foundation has been shaken. When the glove hits his chest - damp and bloodied and marked by Will's teeth - Hannibal isn't surprised, but he's insurmountably irritated with himself. A single lapse. That's all it had taken. One single lapse in his judgement...

Regret has no space here. Not now. For while the glove is a clear signal that this has ended, it merely
It's not *Dahlia*. It's not *leave me alone*. It's Will's doubt creeping in, his safe space fracturing but not fully shattering. Hannibal waits for only a moment, quickly looking up to read what he can in Will's expression, and then he moves.

This is... a risk, to put it mildly, but Will still has his three knocks, and he can now use the word *Dahlia* if he needs to. The safe reaction would be to draw back, to talk, to ask Will what he needs, but Hannibal can see the fractured edges, can see the growing frustration, and he knows inherently that if he leaves Will to his own devices, he's likely going to rebound on himself. So though this pushes the boundaries of Will's clear stop, Hannibal takes a chance.

His hands find Will's shoulders and Hannibal firmly pushes him back. The roles between them have blurred once more; this isn't Hannibal *ordering* Will to comply. This is a request. A physical one, granted, but he still firmly presses Will back against the bed and moves to straddle him, pressing him back against the sheets and bracing Will down firmly. Hannibal is careful to keep his legs pinned; he knows very well what Will would likely do if left to his own choices. Yet even as he pins Will back, he leaves his arms free, going so far as to direct his good one upwards so that the wall is easily in Will's reach, as is one of Hannibal's shoulders for the hand remaining. "Will," Hannibal says insistently, but his tone is softer. He leans down, pressing his lips to the side of Will's neck, both for contact and to give Will an option to not meet his eyes. "Breathe. I apologize; I didn't realize I'd left so much space between us. What do you need?"

Now what? Will hadn't really wanted it to end - whatever it was - he'd just been flustered by the slip up and felt lost. He still feels lost. And frustrated. And way too turned on. Why had he *cried*? Why had he done all this shit to begin with? There's too many questions he doesn't want to look at, let alone figure out an answer for. Everything is fucked up. Messed up. (Like he is.) Ruined? Has he ruined things between them now too? He's a liar. A manipulator. He lied to Molly. To Walter. He lied to Jack. Now he's lied to Hannibal, the person he had made an agreement to *not* play games with. Maybe he's actually the monster.

Will doesn't know what Hannibal will do. He's not expecting to be pushed back onto the bed. He's not expecting Hannibal to move on top of him and be straddling him, pinning him down. Will is frazzled. A live wire. He struggles to get free. Hannibal doesn't budge. A part of him feels relieved. (He likes the restriction, as if Hannibal is holding him together.) Another part feels pissed off. (Wasn't the glove the signal that this was over?)

His name is said and he shudders. Will wants to touch Hannibal. Feel him. Know that he's real. So he wraps his arms around, fingers clutching against the damn vest the man's still wearing. A mouth on his neck is vaguely distracting. Breathe? He's been breathing, albeit a little too quickly. He doesn't think he's having a panic attack. It's hard to always know what to label his lapses into instability as. He had been better before. With Molly. He had been a good man, perhaps a shade of himself, locking away his darkness, but he hadn't killed anyone. Hadn't fucking delighted in some sexual perversion.

Oh, God. His hands are stained with blood. Who is he to judge Henri's perceived crimes as justification for murder? (An eye for an eye, he'd killed killers before, it had seemed just...) He’s just a man with a fucked up empathy disorder. What gives him the right to play God?

*What do you need?* Will makes a pained sound. He claws at Hannibal's back. He thrashes. "Hurt me," Will gasps out. He shakes his head. No, that’s fucked up. "I don't know. M-make it go away." He sounds like a wreck. Maybe he’s finally lost it. "Maybe I'm sick again?" It's a possibility. “Help me, Hannibal.”
Will is shattering, pieces cracking and fragmenting and falling from him in slivers that stab at the slightest touch. The safe response would be to pull back and speak with him, to hold him through whatever episode he's going to find himself in and bring Will mindfully back. Hannibal isn't unpracticed dealing with violent patients, but this is not the same situation. Hannibal has no sedative and, barring that, no desire to hold Will down until he loses consciousness. That had explicitly been one of Will's rules. He'd not wished to pass out. Yet as Will fractures under him, struggling to get free yet finding it next to impossible to move Hannibal now that he's found his purchase, Hannibal does question the intelligence of following that rule. To wipe the slate clean and start from scratch is simpler and cleaner.

But it's not Will's wish. Hannibal situates himself firmly, bracing himself exactly where he is against Will's attempts to throw him off. He's strong - much stronger than he once had been - but Hannibal is still stronger and Will's attempts are weak and fueled by a shattered safe space and sudden panic. He has no way of knowing where Will's thoughts have flown off to, no way of knowing precisely how to pull them back if Will doesn't talk to him. At this moment, talking seems to be the last thing on Will's mind. Yet just as Hannibal is wondering at the intelligence of pinning Will where he is (Will isn't signaling Dahlia but he may not be in a state to remember the word...) Will's hands suddenly move. Hannibal stills, for he can feel Will clutching at his vest, his fingers undoubtedly wrinkling the fabric. It's not much, but it is a signal that Will needs this.

Will answers Hannibal's question with an agonized sound. He sounds feral, wounded, and his hands claw at Hannibal's back in a way that Hannibal decides he can use. The requests are telling as well. All it takes is that shake of Will's head for Hannibal to understand. Will has no idea how to justify what he needs with what he believes he should need; the dissonance has to be deafening.

The issue is how to handle this. Hannibal frowns, allowing himself the barest sound of effort as he ensures that Will's legs are firmly pinned and that he can't wrench his shoulder to damage himself once again. Will can struggle, can feel the strain in his muscles, but Hannibal won't allow him to hurt himself. "Will." His voice is firmer, sharper, and louder. It's aimed to cut through the cacophony in Will's mind. Hannibal frees only one of his hands so that he can reach down and pull at his vest, at his shirt. He slides it up only enough to untuck both and then maneuvers Will's hands down one at a time to press against his skin. The clawing of his nails meeting fabric will only frustrate him, serve to illustrate a distance between them. Will's nails finding his skin will likely help. Hannibal won't permit him to lash out and hurt himself, but redirecting that need for violence is another matter altogether. He silently undoes the first few buttons at his collar.

"Will, listen to me. I want you to use your nails," Hannibal instructs, his tone edged like a command but in this, Will has a choice. "Dahlia is still stop. Three knocks. All the glove means is that has ended." He braces Will firmly and one hand moves to Will's hair, curling in the shorter strands tightly. A delicate balance; Hannibal has no proof this will work, but the psychology is sound. Trauma and panic - fight and flight. Contain the panic - hold Will down - and allow him freedom for the violence. "I'll help you. But you're not wrong, Will. There's nothing to fix."

Before Will can argue, Hannibal curls his fingers tightly in Will's hair and jerks his head closer. His grip is firm, intended to skirt the edges of the pain Will wants so badly. "I get to decide when you have done something deserving of punishment, Will," Hannibal reminds him firmly. "Now... I want you to bite me." Hannibal pulls him closer, pressing Will to the dip between his neck and his shoulder. This isn't a request. "Mark me, Will. Now."

Will's confused at Hannibal's response. The man is pulling up his shirt, loosening the vest and positioning Will's hands so that they have direct contact. Whatever the reasoning is, Will decides to run his hands over Hannibal's shoulder blades, kneading the muscles there for a few seconds before
scraping his nails downward. Hannibal is real. Feels real. The sheer amount of reassurance he feels is almost alarming. Hannibal is warm and solid. Will can feel his weight against him, effectively rendering him useless (Henri had also been useless, completely weak and ineffective to fight against Hannibal.)

How would it feel to die by Hannibal's hands? To be at his mercy, life bleeding out? (He'd only got a taste of it on the kitchen floor.) Henri had felt so much fear, but Will thinks it would be peaceful, too. In that single moment, the connection they'd share, Hannibal's hands giving him a gift - the gift of eternal rest - a lasting quiet. He could be Hannibal's Beloved in death too, let him be embalmed. Let Hannibal set his features, choose the expression he would like to see and insert eye caps. (No more seeing for you, Will - you've seen enough...) He'd suture or wire his mouth closed. Let his blood and fluids be drained and replaced with chemicals. Let him be changed. Sanitized. Preserved. Hannibal would surely construct an illustrious shrine for him. A temple perhaps and like the Aztecs, Hannibal could sacrifice humans to him. Maybe he's a God after all. The doctor's hands would be steady, using a scalpel to cut up from their bellies to their diaphragm and remove their beating heart--

Will, listen to me. Will blinks his eyes open, not even aware he'd closed them. Use his nails. Dahlia means stop. He struggles with the clinging vestiges of his fucked up fantasy, the scent of corpses - the image of him as a corpse and Hannibal preparing him. He feels a hysterical laugh threatening to work its way out of his throat. Not wrong. Not broken? No. That doesn't sound right, but Hannibal is a physician. (Hannibal has lied to you before - Encephalitis ring any bells?)

His hair being firmly yanked has Will's mind scrambling, feeling like an erratic pinball, ricocheting off of every available surface. Plonk! Bling! No, this isn't a game. This is his head. This is a... relationship? Hannibal insists that it's only he that gets to decide punishment. (Okay?) Trust. Yes. He trusts Hannibal.

He shouldn't. He's a lamb in the lion's den, isn't he? (No, you're not pure anymore, Will. You're a beast too.)

He’s instructed to bite - to leave a mark - and Will only now realizes that Hannibal has jerked his mouth close to the dip between his neck and shoulder. He doesn't hesitate. (It’s almost instinct now.) He closes the distance and unlike his first foray into biting, there's no hesitation. It's all desperation, his teeth sinking into the offered up flesh and he moans, his nails digging in hard, ten little crescent indents. He bites. And he bites again. He sucks and licks at the newly created wounds, blood springing forth. There's barely any space between them, but Will needs to be closer. It's not enough.

The sheer blinding scope of Will's thoughts do not - can not - occur to Hannibal. As skilled a psychiatrist as Hannibal is, Will's empathy disorder is unique. Hyper-empathy often manifests as over-sharing, not Will's pathological need to contain himself. Will's abilities are unique and untested. A skilled, violent blend of mental illness and personality disorders that are nearly impossible to reign in. Like a wild horse refusing to be broken, Will's mind races ahead of him, leaving Hannibal to struggle with ropes and reins and ethics as Will spirals in front of him. He has no way of knowing where Will has gone, only that he has gone. For a few moments before he pulls Will back with his name said so sharply, Will's retreated so deeply into his own mind that he's nigh untouchable, yet Hannibal still tries to reach him. Perhaps he does, for the moment he gives Will tactile sensation - the moment he has Will's nails resting against his skin - Will feels and then claws, and Hannibal draws in his next breath sharper, through his teeth. The scrape of Will's nails over the scars on his back is painful, but a pain he has every desire to withstand.

Miraculously - even Hannibal wonders for a moment if this is simply luck on his part - his words appear to be enough to bring Will back. He's not fully present; his mind is elsewhere, but the
attention is halved. And when Hannibal's fingers curl in Will's hair and _jerk_ him closer, Will's focus spirals around, unhinged. For a moment he's no longer in his own head, but looking for purchase. Which is when Hannibal pulls him in close to his skin and gives Will the command. Will doesn't hesitate.

Heat and pain bleed from the contact point of Will's teeth. The first time he'd bitten Hannibal, he'd been uncertain, hesitant, caught up in the desire of making his mark, of tasting his skin, but there's a different drive behind this press of his teeth this time. This is desperation. Hannibal's eyes close. He's not a vocal man, and his tolerance for pain is high, but somehow he suspects that control is not what Will fully needs at this moment. So as Will's teeth sink into his skin hard enough to pinch and then break through, drawing blood, Hannibal shivers and allows himself a low groan. It's not affected for Will's pleasure; it's merely not being held back. Hannibal's grip in Will's hair tightens to the point of pain, but then gentles. He curls his fingers through it, massaging one moment and tugging the next.

Will's nails are bites of pain along his back but Hannibal presses into it, encouraging Will to do as he needs to. Will's violence needs to be redirected somewhere, and Hannibal would vastly prefer his own body to be Will's canvas in this. He bites deep, but not too deeply. And when he bites again, Hannibal hisses in sharply through his teeth, feeling the warm slide of blood begin to drip down his skin until it's caught on Will's tongue. He's greedy, violent, sucking at the wounds (and distantly Hannibal feels a frisson of annoyance that Will hasn't cleaned the taint of that man from his lips yet) and Hannibal allows himself to murmur soft praises as Will clings. The marks will be lurid and angry in the morning, if they aren't when Will chooses to draw back. Hannibal truly cannot bring himself to mind.

"Yes, Will," Hannibal manages, speaking against Will's hair, still damp with sweat. His voice is caught, tense. "Good. Exactly as I asked. Very good." His fingers curl in Will's hair again, keeping him close, keeping him fixated.

This is more than Hannibal's attempt to bleed the violence from Will. This is his attempt to normalize Will's desires. He'd caught the way Will had shaken his head after asking to be hurt. While he can do little to calm Will's spiral, he can focus Will here. On this. On giving him pain because he'd demanded it. And if Hannibal can maintain his control - can freely ask for pain without shame - and maintain his dignity, can find satisfaction in it and still remain himself, can't Will do the same? Are either of them so broken beyond repair for enjoying what they do? "Scratch again, if you would? I'm here, Will. Let me feel you."

Will almost doesn't catch the first soft groan, almost misses that Hannibal is being more vocal for him. Normally the man only gives him subtle reactions, but Will likes these more obvious cues. He wants Hannibal to become an instrument, with each touch given creating a distinct note. He wants to learn Hannibal's body, learn how to pull different sounds and responses from him and become well versed doing so. Will's never been remotely interested in learning another language, but if it was Hannibal Lecter, he would become a fluent scholar. Surely he would study fiercely, until his fingers bled from turning pages.

The grip in his hair varies from one moment to the next, pulling tight, loosening and then fingertips rubbing at his scalp. The variation is divine and keeps him guessing. His nails scrape at Hannibal's back, the copper tang of blood is thick on his tongue. His teeth are slick when he runs his tongue over them. Red on white. Like wine spilled against a stark white tablecloth, he wishes he could be stained in Hannibal, so his outsides reflected the truth of what is inside. (Not a lamb anymore, oh no.)

Hannibal's approval is gratifying, his words a sweet caress. Thoughts of gloves and doubt fade, his focus shifting to simply the two of them delighting in each other. It's a hedonistic pursuit, one that
Will feels like he's burning up in, but hasn't had enough of. Desire roars in his ears, loud and demanding like a God demanding a sacrifice. As best as he can he rubs his trapped erection against Hannibal.

"I'm here," Will mumbles back. "I'm here with you." (He may be saying this more for himself than Hannibal.)

He obeys, raking his nails along Hannibal's flesh. Will imagines he has talons that could sink into Hannibal's back. For once, Hannibal could be his prey and there would be no escape. Will's mouth brushes against his new marks, painting his lips red before biting again in a new spot. He sucks with purpose after, intent on seeing the colors of his work and also making Hannibal a mess.

But it's not what he truly wants. Will's now returned to a more forgiving and less judgmental headspace. He feels spurred on and needy enough that he can move his mouth closer to Hannibal's ear and *whine*. It's a bit of a manipulation, but it's raw and real. "Please, Hannibal..." Will begins his plea. "Need you touching me. Need it all. Want you - want you to fuck me--" It surprises him, but when it comes down to it, Will just wants to be closer and isn't that the next step? He nuzzles Hannibal's face, affectionately, distantly registering that he feels a bit like a bitch in heat. "Inside me, be inside of me, make me feel it."

There is no doubt the bites will scar. Perhaps the second is shallow enough to fade, but the first one will scar even with proper treatment. Hannibal can feel the sluggish pulse of blood and decides that he's mildly gratified Will's foray into the bar came with alcoholic indulgence. To allow Will to bite so freely is perhaps dangerous, but it seems to be doing what Hannibal had intended. It's bringing him back, reeling him in, taking the wild, frayed edges of Will's mind and sewing them back into place. Will's thoughts aren't spiraling downward; this is an exercise in mindfulness, as reckless as it may seem. Hannibal only intends to ground him in this present, and while coaxing Will into a lustful haze has its own dangers, it's a logical progression. One that will stick. Submission is a slippery headspace that needs careful monitoring; one slip and Will falls apart. Lust and sex and violence are far easier to control.

There's no doubt in Hannibal's mind that blood will stain this shirt. From the collar, or from the scratches that Will is digging into his skin. Either one, he finds he doesn't care. Will is focused, hungry, and obedient as Hannibal requests his attention. The press of Will's hips is proof it's working, and while Hannibal normally draws away from such things, in this moment, he encourages it. He shifts just enough so that his weight isn't keeping Will trapped completely and reaches down with his free hand. Curling his fingers around Will's hip - so often used to keep him still - Hannibal instead draws him closer and pointedly grinds down against him with a soft breath of desire. How he wants this man, but his focus is to find a stable place for Will's mind. At present, despite how badly he wants, Will's safety is still his concern.

Yet Will is making it exceedingly difficult. The bite alone draws another sound from Hannibal's throat and he glance down, able to see the dark of the blood against his skin. His fingers curl in Will's hair again, encouraging, his own breathing rougher. Masochism has rarely appealed to him, but pain at Will's hands is vastly different. Will seems to enjoy the visual proof that he's making a difference, leaving his marks behind, claiming.

No matter the intensity of the moment, no matter how firmly Hannibal's skin is split by Will's nails, he is still left wholly unprepared for Will's mind jumping track. He shivers at the whine, at Will's plea. He sounds desperate and it's like a knife to his mooring, sawing away at Hannibal's own control, already frayed by blood and need. He's already breathing soft sounds of reassurance, soft utterances of, "I know," and, "I am." But he's not expecting what Will says. The pleas are one thing.
Asking Hannibal to *fuck* him? Hannibal stills like Will has pressed a knife to his throat, and the sound he makes is guttural, grinding, his grip in Will's hair painful as he clutches Will closer through the blinding heat that follows.

He wants to. The soft breath that sounds punched out of him says as much. There isn't a part of him that doesn't want to have Will spread out underneath him, feeling him cling, listening to his cries. He impulsively grinds down against Will again, though already he knows he can't. Much as he wants to have Will like that, to sink into his heat and bring him to bliss, Will is too impatient, too reckless. His pendulum keeps swinging and Hannibal won't risk taking advantage of his stability. When he has this man, it will be carefully, not rushed, not an afterthought. He wants Will a present and mindful participant, an experience to share, not use as a crutch. Yet as he rests over Will and feels the throb from the bites and from Will's nails and the scratch of Will's beard against his cheek, it is exceedingly difficult to remain firm.

"Will," Hannibal grinds out, and there is nothing elegant about his voice. It's tight and tense, affected. It's clear Will has made an impact. "One day, if you desire it still, I will. But... I will not hurt you." Hannibal shifts then, rolling his hips against Will's, as if simulating precisely how he wishes to move. "When I take you apart, I intend to take my time. I want to," he adds, with an edge of frustration to his tone, but he curls his fingers in Will's hair harder and bends down, brushing a scraping, biting kiss along the column of Will's throat. "But not like this. I can continue this," another roll of his hips, pointed, "or, if you'd prefer, I would gladly use my mouth. May I?" Hannibal's voice is lower, rough, and while he's not begging, the edge of desire is clear. He wants this man.

Closer. They need to be closer. Hannibal needs to be inside of him. Will needs to feel it. (He's not even sure how it all works, but surely Hannibal knows, he must.) Their minds have blurred, but now their bodies need to as well. Crack open his chest cavity and make room for Hannibal's heart somehow. He wants to carry it with him, let the organs synchronize, their ventricles contract at the same time, valves opening and closing in unison. Blood moving in and out like how Hannibal would slide-- Oh, he'll give it back, Will's just lost in the idea of it having Hannibal's heart in every way.

For once, the hand on his hip, isn't holding him still. Hannibal makes another lovely sound - is mentioning sex all it takes for such a thing to become more customary? (If that's the case...) Will's not at all thinking practically, that after a night of emotional highs and lows, adding sex into the equation would be unwise. The urge for more pounds in his veins.

But he's effectively told no - told that it will happen at a later date if he wishes it and Will *whines* again. But the words that follow - *When I take you apart, I intend to take my time* - have Will's eyes fluttering shut. He used to shy away from those intense eyes, but he now wants Hannibal's complete focus on him. Let him be observed, dissected under the doctor's gaze. Splayed open, palpated everywhere, swallowed whole and devoured. He wants the attention, wants to squirm and give himself up this enigmatic force. (No more fighting.)

Another roll of Hannibal's hips and Will meets it, enthusiastically thrusting into the motion. Hannibal's *mouth* is mentioned and Will's eyes snap open and he pulls against the grip on his hair to feel the sting. That mouth... It's bitten him bloody and kissed him breathless. It's torn a man's throat open and whispered words that had brought destruction on those he's loved. And now Hannibal is offering to suck him off?


Ultimately, this is the best course of action. Hannibal hadn't anticipated Will's desires climbing quite so high so quickly. As much as he wants this man, wants to take him apart slowly, he will not risk
damage by being impulsive. He'd not expected there to be a need for lubrication quite so soon (a lapse of judgement he intends to rectify even if Will withdraws again in the morning) and while there is plenty to make due with in the house, all pose their own risks. Plus drawing back from Will at this point in time is not a smart idea. He'd almost shaken apart when Hannibal had only been a few inches away. Going downstairs to find something haphazard and makeshift would be disastrous. So this shift - this suggestion - is a fair compromise.

Will is so caught up in his own world - his own pleasure - that it takes a moment for Hannibal's request to break past his defenses. Hannibal shudders at the grind of Will's hips in turn; they could both come like this, but Hannibal wants more. If Will only wants this, he'll be satisfied, but the urge to have Will in some way is nearly blinding. His hand grips his companion's hip to pull him close and he feels the way Will pulls against the grip in his hair, but when Hannibal's request finally breaks through, he draws back just enough to catch the look on Will's face.

He looks stunned, but pleasantly so. A heady curl of desire slides through his chest and when Will curses, Hannibal reluctantly releases his hold on Will's hip and instead slides his hand over to cup the tented front of Will's slacks. "Good." Hannibal breathes the word like a curse, and there's no disguising that he wants this as well. He takes a moment to wet his lips, propping himself up enough to look down at Will, taking him in. "You may stay laying down or you may sit up. If you would like to hold - or pull - my hair, you're welcome to," Hannibal says, covering the bases that could lead Will to uncertainty as he frees his hand from Will's hair and then moves down.

Hannibal eases himself back, easing down the bed to rest over Will's lap as his hands drop to the thick leather of his belt. There is a thrill in this; Will has always come to him mostly undressed and he mourns that he cannot take his time with this the way he would were Will not so frantic. Now isn't a good time to tarry, though. Not with Will a mere pendulum-swing away from beginning to fray at the edges again. Hannibal finds a delicate balance - efficient but somewhat lingering. He allows himself one simple indulgence. Leaning in, he presses his lips to the outline of Will's cock through his slacks, feeling the heat and rubbing his cheek against it only once. Then he unbuckles Will's belt and pops the button on his slacks, his fingers swift. At first he merely plans to ease Will from the confines of his clothing, but the thick scent of sweat and sex reminds him of the sweat that had been dripping from Will's hair earlier. Hannibal hesitates, then rolls to the side and instead of merely easing Will's sex from his slacks, he hooks his fingers in the waistband and tugs.

"Lift," he instructs lightly, and allows Will a moment to decide. Only when the clothing has been kicked off does Hannibal reclaim his position, blatantly breathing in the scent of arousal so close. Were this any other moment, he'd have taken his time, but he suspects that after such a long time held on the edge, it won't take much for Will to come. He doubts it will for himself at this point. Not when his senses are so awash in Will Graham. Hannibal shifts just enough to stroke his hands down the length of Will's thighs - lingering to touch the mark he'd bitten only a few days ago - and the fingers of one hand find one of Will's calves as he presses his cheek to the hot, near-velvet skin of Will's cock. "Allow me a moment to acclimate myself, but then you may take as you wish."

Later, he intends to take his time. To truly savor that this is something Will has asked of him. But in those next few seconds, Hannibal merely takes a moment to lick a pointed path from base to tip, another to shield Will from his teeth, and then the final to take the head of Will's cock into his mouth with a soft moan. He sucks, savoring the burst of flavor over his tongue, but doesn't linger beyond that. Hannibal works his way down, slow at first to get used to the new sensation, and then quicker. He fully intends to see and hear Will Graham fall apart at his touch.

Hannibal's hand brushes over his still trapped cock and Will make a surprised sound. Whatever escapes his mouth is undignified, but god dammit, he hasn't been properly touched all night. There's
not much room for shame, not right now. Not when Hannibal is going to give him a blowjob. It seems ridiculous for Hannibal to be undertaking such an activity all dressed up save for a tie and jacket. But the older man seems committed to it, going as far as telling Will that he's free to grip or pull on his hair.

Christ. Just the thought of Hannibal sucking his dick makes him antsy and over eager, like he's seventeen and getting head for the first time. Sure, it had been what, over half a year since Molly had done this for him, but Will definitely has gone far longer. Relationships have never been his forte, after all. He's fantasized about this in the shower far too often, hand moving furiously over his wet cock, somewhat trying to be quiet as his forehead rested against cool tile... but now that it's becoming a reality, he doesn't know what to expect.

Hannibal wastes no further time moving himself down on the bed and his hands coming to the belt. Then the bastard all but nuzzles his tenting erection and Will shakes. Fuck. He really isn't going to last long. He's about to give a snappish retort, but Hannibal doesn't tease him any further than that. He works far too smoothly, belt undone, button popped and zipper dragged down. When prompted, Will lifts his hips and, with Hannibal's help, he all but kicks off his boxers and trousers.

Goosebumps creep up his thighs at the sudden exposure to air, but it's nice. His cock stands fully erect, tip messy with pre-come and Will stays motionless, eyes staring upward and trying in vain to prepare himself.

He's not prepared for the damn phrasing - acclimate himself - and he almost laughs, but then the rest of the statement comes - may take as you wish - and Will lets out a shaky breath. The exhale turns quickly into a sharp inhale as fingers touch his still healing bite on his inner thigh. Hannibal's mouth is so close, Will closes his eyes and wiggles his toes to try and distract himself. Then a tongue introduces itself to his dick and traces up his length. His legs tense and he has to consciously tell himself to relax. (It's difficult, this is Hannibal Lecter, after all.) A moment passes and then the delicious heat of Hannibal's mouth envelops the tip. Will's hands claw at the sheets before he gives up and buries them in Hannibal's hair instead. He strokes through the stands, breathing quick as Hannibal shows no hesitation in taking more.

Will squirms, his hips arching into that welcoming warmth, seeking more. "Oh, my God," he gasps out, fingers curling and now pulling at Hannibal's hair. Knowing that this is Hannibal's first time only adds to the thrill of it. He remembers Hannibal admitting the desire to taste him and the man's voice and words echo in Will's mind. "You - uhh - you're tasting me now," Will rambles. Maybe if he talks he can last longer. "I can't believe you're--" He loses his train of thought.

Hedonistic as Hannibal has always been, there is a different thrill in giving Will pleasure. He's not touching himself, though he could were he so inclined (and the thought does appeal now) and the only pressure against his own trapped erection is the bed he's pressed against, yet the thrill of hearing Will's pleasure goes right to his cock. Hannibal closes his eyes, awash in Will Graham in a way that is far more intimate, his senses overtaken by everything this man is. Will's hands curl in the sheets but soon abandon their attempt and bury in Hannibal's hair, and he shivers, drawing in a sharper breath through his nose that is all Will's scent. Will strokes and grips his hair in equal measure, his breathing quick, almost awed, and the pleasure of his favor settles warmly through him.

Will does admirably to give Hannibal time to adjust to the new sensation. Apart from squirming, he stays as still as he can, and Hannibal quickly finds the best way to hold his jaw and the best way to keep his teeth from pressing against Will's skin unless it's his intention. For a moment he considers reminding Will just who he has between his legs, but the urge dies. Will knows; in this moment, there is nothing on Will Graham's mind but him, and the thought is a heady, thrilling realization. One
that licks sensation and pleasure all through him and focuses Hannibal's attention finally on the task at hand. Will's hands grip into his hair and when his hips finally arch, helpless against the sensation, Hannibal makes a small sound but immediately adjusts to it, doing exactly as he'd said he would: he's allowing Will to take what he wants.

The taste of precome is heavy on his tongue, but Hannibal savors it, moaning softly for this is not a task he can perform distantly. He's active, engaged, awash in the sensory pursuit as he pulls back just enough to clean the slick from Will's tip with his tongue before taking him back in and sucking. He knows precisely what he wants to do, how much he wants to give, and while Hannibal has never done this particular act before, he's a quick study. He knows what feels good, and with Will's breathless gasps and moans, his rambling (that has Hannibal giving an affirmative hum around his cock, showing he's listening) and the fingers tight and guiding in his hair, Will wastes no time in showing him.

Will's cock is heavy and warm, like velvet against his tongue. Hannibal can feel every throb, can taste Will's excitement, and it is immediately apparent that this is something he intends to do again. Being so close to Will, solely responsible for his pleasure, Will's only focus, is far more thrilling than he'd ever imagined. He savors every moment, though doesn't waste time to tease. Will is close; it's clear in the tension in his body, the grip of his hands in Hannibal's hair, and the breathlessness of his gasps. Hannibal finds a rhythm, alternating, sucking while moving one moment, then focusing his attention on the head of Will's cock, tongue flicking the tip. He's careful to control his gag reflex (for when he has warning, it's not a particularly difficult reflex to control...) and quick to adjust to Will's movements. He has every intention to allow Will to take if he so wishes. And as he moves, one of his hands comes to rest between Will's legs, stroking and fondling delicate skin, though his thumb slides behind, pressing carefully against Will's perineum and setting up a careful, pointed massage.

Will is about to give a sound of protest when Hannibal's mouth lifts off, but it's only to lick at his slit - specifically tasting his precome - and the realization of that alone has Will shuddering. The older man is far too good at this and Will really wants to give some sassy remark on the skill being shown to him (was he really a beginner in this?) but it's a lost cause. He strains against the onslaught of pleasure, it coils low in his belly and Will fucking can hear how vocal he's being, gasps and moans falling out freely. A part of him wants to try and decrease the amount of encouragement he's giving, but that urge is quickly dashed as Hannibal finds a working pace and Will starts to lose most rational thought.

"Hannibal... Hann--" Will doesn't even know what's he's trying to say, but his mouth keeps trying while his he keep jerking. "You uhh... Touch yourself too?" That's not what Will had thought he was going to say... "Want you to come in your nice pants... Make a mess -- going to come in your fucking mouth--" Will shuts his own mouth, half embarrassed, half surprised because he's never - until Hannibal - expressed such sentiments. Dirty talk hadn't had much of a role in the bedroom before.

He's momentarily caught off guard by searching fingers and he attempts to twitch away as a thumb slides lower and further back. "What the...?" Will tries to vocalize his confusion, but the sensation that accompanies it isn't bad. No, it's just very different, it holds an edge of of something else. It makes Will feel jittery and he's not sure if he likes it, but he doesn't stop it. If anything, he pushes against it while fucking into Hannibal's willing mouth.

Trying to focus on something else, wanting to desperately postpone his orgasm, Will smooths down Hannibal's hair. "Fuck, fuck, fuck," he grits out. "Please don't stop - please." It's a plea that Hannibal listens to. Hannibal still has him. And when Will comes, he arcs off the bed, his fingers are gentle in Hannibal's hair, petting almost, but shaky.
Hannibal had expected to enjoy this, had expected to delight in being so close to Will, but the reality is much more visceral than he'd anticipated. He has no need to wander off in thought, has no plans beyond this. It is single-minded focus, and every moment of it is fixated on Will: Will's fingers desperately curled in his hair, his broken, beautiful gasps and moans, and the frantic movements of his hips. Hannibal doesn't miss that Will seems to be trying to dial his reactions back, but it only redoubles his efforts to draw Will's voice out. Hannibal is fixated, lost in the physicality of this. The texture, weight, and heat of Will's cock, the sharp bite of Will's fingers in his hair, the glide and taste on his tongue and the rough press of hair against his lips. Then there's the multitude of other senses. The sounds, the scents (God, the scents), and when Hannibal opens his eyes and glances up to watch the stunning picture Will makes - his face flushed and chest heaving, lips parted on each sound - the sight of Will Graham lost in pleasure is nearly overwhelming. He shudders, fighting the urge to twitch his hips against the bed; he's not been touched, but the act of bringing Will pleasure has him close.

It's a dilemma that only increases when Will's hips jerk again, and again. Hannibal needs to take a moment to adjust, to give partial control to Will, but he settles into it with a deeper, desperate sound of satisfaction. He's almost so lost in the act that he misses what Will says, though it takes him only seconds to catch up. There's a vague protest in the back of his mind that wars with the slam of arousal: The slacks will need to be dry-cleaned. Yet just as quickly, he decides he doesn't care. With a rough groan, his tongue pressing harder to the underside of Will's cock, Hannibal does as he'd been told. He slides a hand down to palm himself through his slacks, and the pressure alone has him shivering. He times each press of his hand to his cock to the answering press of his thumb against Will's skin, and the pressure alone has him shivering. He times each press of his hand to his cock to the answering press of his thumb against Will's skin, and silently delights when Will presses back. He may not be aware of what he's feeling, may not be entirely certain he enjoys it, but Hannibal is well aware of what he's doing.

The taste on his tongue becomes more concentrated then. Will's body begins to tense and Hannibal simply presses harder, working Will's body like a living theremin, drawing out curses and gasps instead of notes but finding them far more enjoyable. There's an edge to his own movements, something more frantic. He presses against his palm, close but unwilling to come before he's given Will his pleasure. And when Will's voice begins to break, when his fingers gentle in Hannibal's hair, his hips stuttering and tone fractured, Hannibal does as he's asked. He doesn't stop. He massages firmly as his head bobs, lips wet with saliva and precome, hair a mess under Will's fingers, and blood staining his collar. He leads Will to the edge, and when Will finally arcs off the bed, Hannibal watches him come, shuddering and groaning deeply at the sudden rush. The first streak of come surprises him, almost makes him choke, but he quickly pulls back to simply suck coaxingly at the head of Will's cock, swallowing what he's given. It's painfully intimate, watching Will shudder, watching him fall apart, and Hannibal struggles for a moment to reign himself back in, to latch onto his control. He can't.

With a muffled sound, Hannibal's hips stutter against his hand. His fingers press hard against Will's thigh, thumb stilling in a deep press - for he has no desire to hurt Will - and he comes, breathing hard through his nose and not once relenting in the gentle movement of his lips over Will's cock, swallowing him down and throwing every ounce of his desperation into those final few seconds of Will's orgasm.

It's exquisitely intense. Like a projector flipping through slides, Will sees flashes of images in his mind - the ravenstag standing proud in a stream - Hannibal with a mouth full of blood, lips curved in a snarl - Henri's lifeless form with wide opaque eyes - two disconnected hearts beating in time on a plate and then the chair of antlers from his nightmare, but this time he is seated upon it and it's carved of alabaster.
White hot pleasure scorches through him while his cock pulsates in Hannibal's mouth. Will feels Hannibal initially gag and distantly registers a guilty note for not warning the man (but it also adds an extra thrill). He's usually courteous in this activity, allowing his partners plenty of time to pull away if they wish, but other than the first throat convulsion Hannibal doesn't seem to protest. Nor does he pull away or spit out. Through the rush of his orgasm, Will is moaning softly, his fingers lightly caressing the silky strands of Hannibal's hair. It's both a relief and a shock to his system. Hannibal keeps sucking him lightly until the over-stimulation becomes too much and Will is pushing his head away.

He breathes in quick gasps, blinking in a daze as he sits up and looks down at Hannibal who has a hand between his own legs. "You..." Will starts, but has no idea what to say. It's clear that Hannibal has swallowed and he's a little flabbergasted by the realization. He lets go of Hannibal's hair to yank off the jacket and sweater, far too hot to be wearing anything. Once they're on the floor, he regards Hannibal and urges him up by pulling on his shoulders. A bit sluggishly, Hannibal gets to his knees. Will mimics the position, his hands coming to cup Hannibal's face. "Fuck, that was..." He starts placing sloppy rushed kisses all over Hannibal's face, starting at his forehead, moving to his cheek, across his jaw. "You're so," Will tries again. He's shaken up, not at all prepared to quite feel so much during and now after the blowjob. Even Hannibal seems fazed. It's then Will notices the wet patch at Hannibal's crotch. He smashes their mouths together in an awkward kiss. It's wet and the taste of blood lingers as Will licks into Hannibal's mouth and holds his head still.

The unexpected intensity has caught Hannibal off guard. He'd suggested this - his mouth on Will's cock - both because he'd wanted it and because he'd suspected it would be a safe bet to appease Will's desires without going overboard. But he hadn't expected this intensity. That his entire focus would narrow down to Will Graham. He's caught in a daze of sensation and over-stimulation, pleasure wracking his body, yet his focus is still on swallowing, and on almost lovingly working his lips and tongue over Will's cock for as long as he can until Will finally pushes him away. It's unexpected enough that a small string of saliva and come breaks upon the movement, settling filthy across Hannibal's lower lip. He's rather sluggish when he reaches up to wipe it away, focusing far more on dazedly watching Will sit up and catching his breath than how he appears.

The taste of Will's come lingers. It has the makings of an acquired taste, but with Will's harsh breathing and the dazed look in his eyes, Hannibal already knows he's addicted to it. Will starts speaking just as the final wave of pleasure settles over Hannibal's body and he lets out a weak groan, his own muscles trembling following an orgasm he hadn't been able to properly control. It makes his limbs sluggish and uncooperative, and so by the time Will - now divested of his jacket and sweater - eases him up, Hannibaltakes a few seconds longer than strictly necessary to get his knees under him. He has no idea what this is; he merely knows that whatever Will wants in this moment, he'll allow. Hannibal looks at him openly, amazed at what Will had allowed him to do, and when Will's hands cup his face and he leans in, the added affection is almost too much. The evening has been intense in every way physically possible. He's been forced to kill, flown high on a cold rage, taken control, been made to pull Will back from his own destruction, and delved deep into unexpected intimacy. The rushed but gentle kisses are almost physically painful, but Hannibal merely sets one of his hands on Will's shoulder for balance and allows each one, humming his agreement. It seems almost a shame to come back to himself, but he does his best to try. "You were perfect, Will," Hannibal says - or tries to. He surprises himself with the roughness to his voice, how it sounds almost broken. For a moment he's confused, and then he remembers: Friction.

Yet before he can say anything on the matter, Will's gaze dips. Hannibal doesn't realize why Will moves until he's already done so, and a clipped sound of surprise muffles itself against Will's lips as
Will is just suddenly there. Hannibal shivers as Will kisses him, as his mouth is coaxed open and Will's tongue flicks inside. He can taste his own blood on Will's lips and he kisses back freely, if sluggishly. After a moment, Hannibal lifts his own hand, gently cupping Will's cheek as his other hand strokes his fingers back through Will's sweat-damp hair. There's a vague irritation - a petulant wish that Will had brushed his teeth before kissing him, as the memory of Will against the car - Will allowing another to kiss him - continues to burn. Hannibal refrains from pointing it out just then. He feels somewhat high on the closeness, on the taste of his blood on Will's tongue and the knowledge that Will can taste himself on Hannibal's lips. Hannibal kisses him deeply and when the kiss breaks, he presses his forehead to Will's, wetting his lips and attempting to catch his breath. The wet patch at the front of his slacks will undoubtedly become irritating shortly. "Would you allow me to see to you?" Hannibal clears his throat and swallows, attempting to rectify his voice. "Your legs…"

Will isn't exactly sure how the events of the evening have added up to bring them to this point. His hands hold Hannibal's face tenderly and their tongues slide against each other. Will can taste himself - bitter and unpleasant - but he doesn't really care to pull away. His bottom lip stings slightly as the kiss continues, but it's just another reminder of Hannibal. (Pleasure and pain.) He had been backhanded earlier. It doesn't even bother him, he doesn't consider it abuse or anything blasé like that. He'd witnessed perhaps only a fraction of Hannibal's anger, but enough disappointment that it had almost shattered him.

But Hannibal had grounded him. Quieted his mind. He'd drawn out and showcased a peculiar submissive side Will hadn't even been fully cognizant of. And when Will had almost lost it again, Hannibal had been able to divert him from hysterics and possibly give him the best oral sex he'd ever received. (Should it unsettle him to know that Hannibal is able to manage him so well?)

Tomorrow there will be dialogue concerning Will's manipulation. It will undoubtedly be uncomfortable. He's not looking forward to it. Hannibal will want to talk about Will's rather strong reaction regarding disappointing him. Maybe they'll talk about the other fucked up stuff, the tapping... How he feels about taking a life (because it's not a cut-and-dry topic). He's not looking forward to any of it, but that's for tomorrow. So, he lets his eyes slid shut and hums happily in the kiss when Hannibal's fingers find their way into his hair. It's entirely impractical, but he wants to pull Hannibal down onto the bed and keep kissing until he's exhausted, until he pulls away with a sigh and sleep claims him a moment later.

But it does end, Hannibal breaking away.

"My legs are still there," Will mumbles in response and wishes his heart didn't feel so fucking full. "They're fine. For once don't play doctor when you don't need to." But he's not annoyed or embarrassed, just endeared. "Go clean up. M'tired. Just want to sleep." With that stated, he lets go of Hannibal's face and flops back down on the bed. They're both a mess - Hannibal and his bloody bites and sticky slacks and him with all of his god awful twitchy sweat and dried tears. He smiles a bit stupidly to himself, choosing instead to focus on a messy disheveled Hannibal - entirely his own making.

Tonight he plans on sleeping on Hannibal's side. There are damp spots on the sheets from him so Will feels like it's the least he can do... Or maybe he wants to nuzzle his face into Hannibal's pillow and inhale the other man's scent.

There is much they'll need to talk about tomorrow. The scope of it is nearly daunting, but the lingering memory of the kiss - of feeling Will arch underneath him - is enough to quiet the concern. Hannibal feels sluggish, shaken at his core, but not unpleasantly so. He's never allowed himself to be
quite as much as he had tonight, in so many different ways. It should be daunting, should threaten to
suffocate, but it doesn't. For once, he's content to bask in this new version of himself. Intimacy will
fade, Will likely won't wake up as pliant as he is now, but it's a problem for tomorrow, not for now.
For this moment, Hannibal merely swallows back a few choice phrases - far too intimate for now -
and nods, watching as Will flops back onto the bed. "You are welcome to sleep, Will. But I would
still like to ensure your comfort. I'll be back in a moment."

His legs are mildly unsteady when he stands, and the wetness within his slacks is quickly becoming
irritating. Hannibal bends to retrieve Will's discarded clothing - bracing a hand on the bed to keep his
balance - and then retreats to the en suite. He strips carefully, though there's truly no point. One
glance at the collar of his shirt proves it's bloodied beyond repair. The vest had remained untouched
so Hannibal merely sets it aside to clean later, and steps out of the slacks with a vague grimace. He
strips completely, setting the clothing aside to deal with in the morning and takes a moment to wet a
cloth to clean himself up with. It's over-sensitive and somewhat unpleasant, but even as he works to
clean himself, he catches sight of himself in the mirror and his appearance is enough to both shock
and impress.

Will had gotten his wish. He looks a mess, his hair wild from Will's fingers, expression far more
dazed, but it's the bite marks from his neck to his shoulder that truly draw his attention. Hannibal sets
about cleaning them next, marveling at the depth of the first bite and the lurid colors of those
remaining. For a moment he honestly considers whether or not the first requires stitches, but seeing
as the bleeding has slowed down, he'll leave it for now. Instead he washes the wounds to allow them
to bleed freely again (human bites are not without their risks) and takes his time in sanitizing them.
By the time he's eclipsing the bites with gauze, he does suspect stitches may be required in the
morning, but the thought doesn't irritate. Hannibal merely smiles to himself and completes the
routine, brushing his teeth and wetting another cloth that he wrings out and carries back to the
bedroom.

He settles on Will's side of the bed - for Will has yet to move - and eases himself under the sheets,
nude. And with Will a warm, hedonistic presence at his side, Hannibal gets to work. They'll both
need a shower in the morning, but he cleans the worst of the sweat and residual come from Will's
skin, slower and soothing. "Sleep, Will," Hannibal urges him, gathering him in close. Perhaps in the
morning his boldness will backfire, but for now, he's reckless enough to indulge. He sets the cloth
aside once he's finished and eases down to lay beside Will, one arm wrapped around him as the other
eases down.

His fingers find the muscles of Will's calves, easing him closer bit by bit, and Hannibal presses a
softer kiss to the swell of Will's shoulder as his breathing eases. He'll join Will shortly, but his focus
is on carefully massaging the tension from Will's calves. He goes well beyond the point that Will
finally falls asleep, and when he finally joins Will in the endeavor, it's with a hand pressed
possessively to Will's hip. They'll worry about the morning in a few hours. For now, they need to
rest.
"I am myself," Will replies calmly. "A more collected version of myself, perhaps." His lips curve into a subtle, but vain smile that Will Graham likely never has worn before. "My answers have been truthful. I merely woke today and chose to wear you. It's a good fit, yes?"

As soon as he's lying supine, Will begins to drift. He can hear distant sounds coming from the bathroom - clothes being removed, running water and he pictures Hannibal cleaning himself off as best he can. Hannibal with his wet lips, tousled hair and sticky pants. With his bloody bites adorning his neck and shoulder. Will tries to not let it bother him, thinking of the evidence being cleaned away, but he knows he’s already left marks. Eventually Hannibal returns, wiping him with a warm cloth first before slipping into bed - always the caretaker. Will registers that this is the first time they’ve been naked together in bed. Maybe this was their first night in the garden of Eden, wandering around, but instead of marveling at the beauty around them, they only had eyes for each other.

Will sleeps and no dreams or nightmares greet him. When he awakes, he's alone. Hannibal likely has been up for quite some time as the man has always been an early riser. Will's calves do ache a little
and he has a slight headache. It’s a great start to the day. He's next aware that he's very much naked and sprawled out on Hannibal's side of the bed. Glancing around the room Will observes that his clothes from the night before have been picked up. There's actually no evidence left of what has transpired in the room. He tongues at his bottom lip and finds that it's a bit swollen.

He's not ready for this day.


Murder and a blowjob. It should have seemed more bizarre.

( Beloved... Yes, Will may be able to list off the events, but more transpired during last night then he has words for.)

When Will can't hold it in any longer, he dashes to the bathroom and relieves himself. He stares at himself in the mirror and with the new trimmed hair and the look in his eyes, Will hardly recognizes himself. Cool water is splashed on his face and he watches it drip down onto his chest and shoulders.

If anything was proven to him last night, it was Hannibal's devotion and desperation to do whatever was needed to calm him down. He wets his hands and runs it through his hair, somewhat smoothing it back. He stands up taller and his lips form a smile.

Hannibal wakes two hours before Will the next morning, and while a part of him hesitates in leaving - in abandoning the comforting closeness - he knows he needs to. He rises, finds clothing, and sneaks out in silence to once again check on his injuries and wash up. He also decides to think, and to give Will the freedom of waking with his own thoughts and to not feel pressured. Hannibal knows the conversation they need to have is not one Will wishes to have. He's inclined to give Will time to settle and find his footing without needing to worry about Hannibal looming over him. So while he aches to remain in bed with Will, he's unwilling to risk allowing Will to feel cornered. He simply walks to the bathroom and sets about cleaning up. Hannibal showers quickly and quietly; he'll not pressure Will into joining him, and he intends to be put together for this conversation, if only for his own sake.

The memory of being surrounded by Will's heat, of feeling fingers in his hair, and of being unable to keep his own orgasm at bay flickers on the edges of his consciousness but Hannibal waves it away, lips tugging into a frown. He has... much to think about. He's never lost control before, but more than that, he's never been willing to lose control. Last night had done more than simply surprise Will. Hannibal hadn't been expecting his own reaction either. Submission is not a state that generally comes naturally to him; the only times he can recall allowing such a thing had been under Will's hand - intentional or otherwise.

It's a topic to think on later. There's much more at stake than Hannibal's comfort. Will had made him kill, and had almost fallen apart after. He decides to allow that to take precedence.

Hannibal dries off gingerly, eyeing the dark patchwork of bruises from his neck to his shoulder. The wounds are sluggishly bleeding again and he considers stitches once more, but sets the urge aside. He wants these to scar. Instead Hannibal merely disinfects and treats the wounds again before
bandaging them up, then gets dressed in nothing more than a simple white dress shirt and slacks. Then he gets to work.

By the time Will rises, Hannibal has done what he can for the clothing from the night before. Will's clothes he manages to salvage and carefully put in the wash, but his own are another matter. The shirt is ruined but the suit is... a possibility. He doesn't spend much time on it, though, choosing instead to do something far more impulsive. By the time he hears Will stir upstairs, Hannibal has already been out of the house to run a quick errand and has come back to make breakfast. He hesitates only for a few moments, uncertain of Will's reaction, but in the end he does what he'd set out to do.

Leaving the small bag from his outing on the side-table near the stairs, Hannibal walks upstairs with a loaded tray. While he doesn't generally approve of eating anywhere but at the table, this seems like a concession that is safe to make. He has no guarantee of Will's state of mind, and keeping things calmer and casual will only benefit them both in this situation. Silently - noting that Will has slid into the bathroom - Hannibal merely carries the tray - complete with coffee as well - to the bed and sets up calmly before seating himself on the edge of the bed. "Will?" He calls out, simply to keep Will from walking into an ambush. "I'm here. Breakfast is ready when you wish."

Will decides he ought to shower. Cleanliness is next to Godliness after all, but more importantly he doesn't want Hannibal picking up any lingering traces of Henri. Also, whatever product was put in his hair has started to go crusty. He climbs in and takes a utilitarian shower, scrubbing methodically and washing his hair. Once out, he dries off quickly and eyes his toothbrush. It's funny how he can't recall there ever having been any conversion about bringing his toiletries into Hannibal's bathroom, but here they are. His brush. Razer. Deodorant. He'd just migrated the necessities and while Hannibal had sorted them in a corner sequestered for Will's things, the man hadn't made any comment on their appearance. It wouldn't have been polite, after all.

Will combs back his hair like the barber had done. He doesn't particularly know how he feels about the haircut, but he looks like a man more in control. A man more like Hannibal. Maybe it needs some product to keep it back, but Will has no clue if Hannibal has anything like that and he's not about to go rummaging around. He uses Hannibal's products in the shower, but that's all. Will thinks back to the night before last, they'd been brushing their teeth at the same time. Hannibal had caught Will blatantly watching him and a flicker of amusement had flashed in his eyes. Will had shrugged and spat out the toothpaste, refusing to acknowledge the slight flush in his cheeks. It wasn't his fault that watching Hannibal do such mundane things caught him off guard. The whole scenario had just felt so... domestic. Screamed of a married couple. (Reminded him that he used to do the same with his wife.)

Hannibal's voice interrupts Will mid-brushing and his stomach flutters. He then squashes down whatever feeling that is and finishes the task, not at all in a hurry. Hannibal will wait. His bottom lip looks obviously swollen and Will's tongue swipes over his teeth, slick and clean from brushing them. He can recall the feel of Hannibal's blood in his mouth, the taste... But now it's just minty fresh and Will sighs.

He leaves the bathroom, towel slung low on his hips and he's greeted to a breakfast in bed all set up. (His fucking heart wants to-- No.) "Isn't that sweet," Will remarks calmly, throwing Hannibal a small smile to show he is actually pleased and not being a sarcastic jerk. "Looks good, but..." He goes to move the trays aside because if he doesn't do this now, he may lose his nerve. "I thought we should talk first, don't you?"

Bed cleared, Will takes Hannibal's side again - seems only fitting. "Come here. I want to hold you,"
Will explains, laying himself on his side. "Your back facing me." His tone is firm, but soft.

Thoughts occupied by the upcoming conversation, Hannibal listens to the activity in the bathroom pause (Will has clearly heard him) and then merely allows his thoughts to drift again. He's spent the last two hours wondering at the best way to approach this, for it definitely is a conversation that needs to be had. The man from last night had clearly deserved death, but Will had never actually told him why. He doesn't truly care; Hannibal has no qualms with killing provided it isn't distinctive enough to bring Jack Crawford down on their heads, but that Will had manipulated the situation and forced Hannibal's hand doesn't sit well with him. There needs to be rules if this is something Will plans on revisiting. He needs to make sure Will can handle it and not fall apart. That this isn't an act of a desperate man lashing out. He doesn't dislike the change in Will's focus, but it does concern him. Will is hardly the most stable man to begin with.

With that subject of thought comes the reminder of the way he'd reacted to disappointing Hannibal. He'd rebounded hard the night before, just shy of manic and reckless. The memory is concerning; again, it's something they need to talk about. Will's foray into premeditated murder by proxy, his difficulties with his desires, and his inability to handle disappointing Hannibal. He frowns mildly as he muses on the correct way to broach each topic; he is no longer officially Will's psychiatrist, and while adopting the role again could ease the passage, the intimacy of the night before is something he doesn't wish to lose. He might anyway; there's no way of knowing what state of mind Will is going to have when he exits the bathroom, but this is still a situation that Hannibal intends to maneuver carefully.

When the door to the bathroom opens, Hannibal blinks out of his reflection and looks at Will when he steps out. It's subtle - he's usually careful with overt reactions - but he's momentarily caught by the way Will looks. His throat is a beautiful bouquet of bruises and his lower lip is slightly swollen. Hannibal quickly glances at Will's state of dress and breathes in deep, fighting back the memories that attempt to flood him again. Ridiculous. Stunning as Will has always been, Hannibal's focus has never truly wandered before. He's initially curious over his own mental state, wondering if it's caused by the intimacy or perhaps the sudden return to taking life. Before he can delve too deeply, Will's comment catches his attention and Hannibal begins to frown before he realizes that Will is being genuine.

For a moment Hannibal stills. Then Will surprises him again by suggesting they talk. Thrown again, Hannibal only leans back ever so slightly on the bed and pauses, then nods, wetting his lips. He'd expected to need to drag Will kicking and screaming into the vague possibility of talking about last night. He's unsure if Will being so forthcoming is a benefit or not. "Yes... yes I do," Hannibal replies, watching as Will moves the tray aside. Hannibal's somewhat confused, but it doesn't take long for Will to explain. Or, rather, command. Hannibal looks at him, at the warmer, confident line of Will's body. For an odd moment he wants to withdraw, to step back. After his slip the night before, Hannibal is... reluctant to revisit that level of intimacy. He's never freely and willingly given up control before, and that he had is mildly daunting, but it doesn't take him long to fight past the uncertainty.

Chiding himself on his hypocrisy, Hannibal does as he'd been told. When it comes down to it, Will seems to be in a good, stable mood. That is what is important. Hannibal lays on the bed easing himself down until his back is pressed against Will's shower-warm skin. He wonders at the intelligence of his shirt for a moment but dismisses the thought. But it isn't until he's settled that he feels the slight twist of discomfort at not being able to see Will. It's something Hannibal rectifies simply. He takes Will's hand and silently laces their fingers together, trusting that it isn't too far. "Good morning, Will. How are you feeling?"
Hannibal comes to him, joining him in laying down and doing as Will has instructed - pointedly in a position that doesn't allow their eyes to meet. Likely, Hannibal is cautious, wary of what may come and wanting to placate him in any way possible. Will can't even be upset about such a thing as he knows his reaction to highs and lows hasn't been great. His track record boasts of spectacular displays of instability and it's somewhat aggravating to consider their growing relationship as a depiction of the two steps forward, one step back analogy.

This close, Will has a good view of Hannibal's bandaged neck beneath the collar. He wonders what his bites look like. They both bare each other's touch, bruises blooming on his skin and the wounds on Hannibal's neck and shoulder. Will nuzzles his head closer, fully intending on being able to talk softly into Hannibal's ear. It will be more soothing this way. One of his hands is taken, their fingers interlaced. (Like lovers, yes?) They've slept like this, or in similar positions as usually Hannibal isn't pushy on physical closeness, leaving it up to Will if he decides to seek comfort.

It hadn't really been much of a conscious decision to blur more into Hannibal, but Will remembers last night. Hannibal maintaining an air of control while holding him had felt good. He'd felt secure and been backed away from the edge of a cliff in his mind. Waking up today, Will didn't know how to be. *Who* to be. Deceiver. Killer. Liar. Weak. Desperate. (... *Beloved*? This, too, gets pushed down). Being more Hannibal, however, seems safe, so that's what Will intends to do.

"Morning," Will replies gently, closing his eyes as he gives Hannibal's hand a reassuring squeeze. "I'm alright. Difficult to know for sure as the dust settles, but we're here together, so, that's something." He pauses a moment. He thinks again of Hannibal bending him backward and off balance, hand on his throat. Will finds his own center. "Where do we begin? Chronologically? Or is there a hierarchy of importance you'd like to address?" Cutting right to the point is the equivalent of him being off balance.

Hannibal is as used to being caught off guard by Will as a man can be. Will Graham is the one man he's never been able to entirely predict, and he wears that badge proudly that morning. He still feels vaguely off balance, like there's more to this moment than he knows, but he's unwilling to risk forcing a retreat if Will truly wants to talk. That the behavior is unlike him doesn't truly register; with his back turned and Will's hand gently squeezing his own, Hannibal misses the clear signs that Will has taken on a slightly different set of impulses and actions to guide him through the moment. All he knows is the attention is familiar. The nuzzle closer, the low cadence to Will's voice, and the way he speaks into Hannibal's ear register as things Hannibal has done in the past, but it's not out of the ordinary for them to have adapted certain traits from each other.

Though in Hannibal's defense, he is far less interested in the *why* and far more interested in the *whom*. Thrown off balance is not a state he particularly enjoys, but he's not about to turn his nose up at Will's favor, particularly after having convinced himself of needing to walk on eggshells. Bit by bit, the tension in Hannibal's shoulders eases. Will's attention is enjoyable and this is not the only time they've been in this position. This is merely the first time Will has requested it, particularly with such conviction.

Will is right, though. While Hannibal is gratified to hear that Will's foundation is currently stable despite the events of the night before, Will's immediate stab into the topic at hand has him off-balance. Hannibal frowns, thrown again, and he begins to turn his head in an attempt to look back at Will - to get a read on him - but Will has positioned himself perfectly to make such a thing impossible. Trying not to look or sound visibly caught off balance, Hannibal merely goes quiet for a moment as he assesses the topics they need to discuss. "I was not expecting you to be so... forthcoming," Hannibal admits, "though I'm not complaining. Perhaps... chronologically is best. The man I killed," Hannibal begins, carefully phrasing it so as to remove Will's actions from it for the
"An idea took a hold of me that night... When I called you my Monster and we talked about you killing in my name," Will begins, his free hand comes to the front of Hannibal's neck, unbuttoning the collar to allow him better access to the bandaged expanse of skin that it had been covering. He noses along the gauze, softly pressing into that injured area, wanting to remind Hannibal that, like last night, Hannibal will also allow this. He smells antiseptic, but there's also home underneath: the fresh laundered scent of the shirt, Hannibal's aftershave.

"I became enamored with the idea of you killing for me." It was the truth. "As if a seed had been planted and the more I thought on it, the more it flourished, touching everything in my mind." Now how to breach the why of not being transparent about his desire. That was trickier as Will hadn't really came up with a decisive answer that he liked. "I will admit that I'm unsure as to why I decided to not be open about it. Perhaps old patterns are wanting to resurface." He thinks of trying to position Hannibal into murdering Mason.

"I'm not used to having an ally beside me," Will confesses, placing a kiss on the back of Hannibal's neck. He feels the uncomfortable slide of vulnerability and tries to simply acknowledge it, but not have it take hold.

That Will is speaking at all still comes as a surprise, but Hannibal immediately goes quiet when Will draws a small breath behind him and begins to speak. He talks of that night, of the intensity in the darkness, where Will had ordered him to keep talking or he'd stop. The memory prickles more than one kind of heat over Hannibal's skin but he fights back the more lascivious response to focus his attention. He's shocked, in all honesty, because... Will is being direct. There's no stuttering, no gruffness, no audible uncertainty. It strikes a chord within him, whispers that he's missing something, and the urge to turn in Will's arms rears once again. Before he can, Will's fingers come to rest on the collar of his shirt and Hannibal draws in a slow, steadying breath as his collar is eased aside. The prickling sensation that something is amiss fades then, his attention caught and aching as Will nuzzles against the gauze. Hannibal's breath hitches - from the intimacy, or from the pain - but it's enough to ease his concern.

As off-balance as he feels, Will's attention is grounding. It's his instinct to suspect it, but as Will goes on to explain, Hannibal simply allows his eyes to fall shut and he reaches back to lightly touch Will's hair, threading his fingers into the shorter strands and holding just enough to keep Will where he is: Against his landscape of bites and bruises, covered as they are. Much as Hannibal wants Will to delight in what he'd done, it had been a conscious effort on his part to cover the marks. They are... extensive. With Will so fragile (and he had been last night; right now he's not so certain) Hannibal hadn't wanted to trigger another breakdown. He's thrilled with what Will is capable of. He doubts Will feels the same.

Yet as Will speaks, that creeping doubt begins to work its way back in. It's curious, like an image mirrored with slight imperfections. A face made whole by mirroring only one side. Too perfect. Hannibal frowns as Will speaks, but... no, that's not right. Will isn't speaking. He is, but he isn't. Will doesn't use words like 'flourished', nor does he use phrases like 'I'm unsure as to why'. Hannibal's frown deepens and he's about to bring it up when Will's lips press against the back of his neck. For a
flickering second, it registers as vulnerable, as uncertain, and some of the tension bleeds from Hannibal's back. \textit{That} is Will. He plans to address the rest once he pieces it together, but there is far more that holds importance here. Namely what Will is admitting to, and Hannibal isn't willing to allow his disquiet to distract Will from giving him real answers.

He considers Will's words quietly, examining them from all angles. His fingers tighten in Will's hair, but only to stroke, as reassuringly as he can. "Had you asked - had you simply \textit{told} me to - I would have killed for you without question," Hannibal admits quietly, his voice low in honesty. "Had you pointed someone out on our outings and simply told me to kill them, I would have. Old patterns are... dangerous, Will. You are my equal. You need no fanfare and manipulation to make me prove my loyalty to you. I am your ally, and you are mine. I was... taken aback." The subtext is sheltered, but Hannibal feels the words. \textit{I thought you'd left. I thought the whole thing was a manipulation}. He falls silent for a moment, as if gathering up what registers as most important. "I would like you to tell me why \textit{him}, Will. But I would also like to make a request. If this... happens again. Don't kiss them."

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A hand reaching back to card through his hair has Will sighing softly. He wants to lose himself in holding Hannibal, to curl around this larger form and offer what little shelter he can. To have every inch of him pressed close, to feel when Hannibal's chest rises and falls and for their breathing to sync up. This urge to protect, to hold securely, is this Hannibal or him? Will doesn't know. He felt protective over Molly and Walter - he still does - but it's less in the forefront as Hannibal has promised to leave them be. When they had fallen, Hannibal had acted quickly, had gathered him in closely, like something precious, like a parent who's only thought was to ensure their child remained safe. (Beloved?) Could Will ever feel that deeply. Does he even \textit{want} to?

Will knows that the deception wasn't necessary. He knew it all along. Hannibal would have been fascinated with the desire and obliged him. They would have planned it together, conspired together and yet, he had chosen to be cunning and slithered along. He'd be lying if he said he didn't \textit{enjoy} moving all the pieces. (But he doesn't want this to be his design.)

Before Will can answer \textit{why him}, Hannibal makes a request. It's loaded. It implies that there could be an \textit{again}. It also shows vulnerability on Hannibal's part. \textit{Don't kiss them}. For a moment, Will's constructed image waivers. The mirror begins to show fractured lines of stress. He's \textit{hurt} Hannibal. Betrayed him. Suddenly his feelings are ugly, lesser than Hannibal's surely for he knows Hannibal would \textit{never} do that to him. Will's jealousy has been well cataloged and Hannibal respects it.

He swallows and compartmentalizes. He closes the book on his wretchedness and pushes it aside for later.

Gently, he pulls his hand free of Hannibal's and works the white dress shirt free of Hannibal's pants, slipping his hand underneath. There is a scar to touch - a former bullet wound - but Will completely forgoes it. He pictures his \textit{smile}, and his index and middle finger run along the imagined scar, a journey across Hannibal's abdomen. It's ownership and it's comforting. It always has been to him. "I only ever want to be kissing you," Will murmurs. "It was horrible... You remain my only exception." It feels important that Hannibal knows this.

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Hannibal knows the moment he says it that he's bared his throat to Will. Perhaps the smart thing would have been to simply stick to the facts, but the request had snuck out before he'd been able to hold it back. It's such a small thing in practice but such a large one in principle. The sight of Will kissing that man had nearly taken the feet out from under him. He has no clear designs on Will Graham; much as he \textit{wants} him, Will has only promised to stay. He's made it very clear that he has no plans on giving Hannibal his heart and as agonizing as the knowledge makes these moments
where Will settles close, he's not strong enough to deny this. Nor is he strong enough to not show his hand so plainly. He's... uncomfortable with the vulnerability, though logically it makes sense. He's a man in control of his emotions. He always has been. The only exception to that rule has been around Will. So the comment is out before he can stop it and Hannibal feels Will still behind him. His eyes remain closed.

When Will draws his hand back, Hannibal allows him, though he curls his fingers a little tighter in Will's hair. It borders on petulant (distantly, Hannibal is irritated with himself) but he doesn't want Will to draw back, to recoil. Not because Hannibal has slipped. This dynamic is still off-balance; Hannibal isn't used to allowing Will this level of control. For that's what it is: Will is in control. Despite its newness, he doesn't want it to stop. So when Will's hand merely drops to the hem of his slacks and works his shirt up so he can fit his hand underneath, Hannibal stills and then begins to relax. The relaxation is almost absolute, particularly at what Will says. Tension bleeds from him and Hannibal's sigh is soft in relief he makes no effort to hide. "I would rather not know what I would do were it to happen again. I was... perhaps more reckless than I needed to be. I-..." Hannibal trails off.

It's taken him far too long to notice what should have been plain to see, but the soft, repetitive strokes to his skin finally register. At first he's unsure why it's caught his attention so blatantly. Then the pieces finally click and Hannibal goes very still.

Will's soft commands, his desire to hold, his willingness to talk... all of it is as familiar as his diction, the low tone to his voice, and the familiar stroking of a scar that isn't there. At first he's merely stunned, and then Hannibal feels a little like he's been punched in the stomach. The reality is immediately apparent and bitterness and concern and understanding vie for top position. Hannibal's brow furrows and he looks pained for a simple fraction of a second before the expression clears. Then he reaches down and sets a hand over the one on his abdomen, over top of the dress shirt. He tightens his hold, stilling its exploration. "Will..."

Hannibal is torn. On one hand, the fact that Will has so effortlessly slid into Hannibal's mannerisms is flattering. Mesmerizing, even. Yet on the other... he swallows. "I must ask. How much of this is you? Are these answers genuine, or what you believe I would say?" Hannibal shifts then, trying to turn at least halfway so he can look back at Will over his shoulder. His expression is carefully blank, his tone following suit. "The mask is... uncanny. I am impressed. But I'm also curious... Can you not have this conversation as yourself? Is it so difficult to speak with me?"

The book is shut. He is in control. Will's fingers continue their slow stroking along a path of unmarred skin. Mineminemine. He distantly imagines giving Hannibal his own smile. Twin smiles and it's a lovely thought of having their positions reversed - Hannibal being held and accepting... Just like Hannibal accepts his reply. Will is satisfied. They've only just begun this open line of communication, but thus far it's gone rather smoothly. Will can picture the remainder of the conversation going this well and it pleases him. Hannibal will question him, and Will, with a degree of disconnection, but still honest, will answer each one to the best of his ability. It's perhaps not entirely genuine, but Hannibal deserves answers. It's the least he can do.

But then it's suddenly not alright. The shift is barely there and Will wonders how many times he's done this to Hannibal. How many times had things seemed placid before Will had created a splash? Hannibal's hand stills his hand. Will registers a note of annoyance for he knows Hannibal had enjoyed the touch. Hannibal has, naturally, pieced together this ruse of sorts and when the man attempts to look back at him, Will opens his eyes to a carefully crafted neutral expression facing him. He feels his own - first panicked - ease into mirroring Hannibal's. His muse is right here. Lucky for him.
"I am myself," Will replies calmly. "A more collected version of myself, perhaps." His lips curve into a subtle, but vain smile that Will Graham likely never has worn before. "My answers have been truthful. I merely woke today and chose to wear you. It's a good fit, yes?"

(His hands wrap around the ravenstag's neck, fingers feeling the soft feathers as he buries his head in its warmth. It smells of blood and burning parchment. Hold it together--)

"I bet you would also be curious how it would feel to kneel before yourself," Will purposefully lets his voice trail off as he closes the distance between their mouths and brushes a soft kiss against Hannibal's lips. He's aroused thinking of it, a small shiver felt. "Thoughts of relinquishing control have been bothering you, but know that I will take care of you, Beloved."

He can picture it so vividly in his mind: Hannibal sliding to his knees on the floor, his eyes focused only on him, cast upward, his hands petting Hannibal's hair, 'there's a good boy' -- but then, no, it's Will's on his knees and

(His hand grips at feathers, or tries to--)

No. His hand shakes and he pulls it away from Hannibal's stomach like he's been burnt.

The expression does not belong to Will Graham. In a way, through the mild crush of hurt, Hannibal cannot help but be fascinated. He has watched Will slide on the skin of another before, but never like this. He's seen him pace, has seen the trickle of another persona descend upon him, though not nearly as often as he'd have liked. Once, he had sought to study Will's empathy, to watch the shroud come down over his eyes and transfer him somewhere else. Into some one else. Yet as he looks over his shoulder and sees his own subtle smile on Will's lips, his fascination is not where it would have been had this been planned. There is a feeling of awe on the edges of Hannibal's consciousness, a small swell of pride, for he may not be a narcissist, but he is a prideful man. To see himself reflected in such a way is tempting, but Hannibal's enjoyment of it stops there. He'd not been asking himself these questions. He'd been asking Will. And as much as Will - as he - issues the reassurances, he can't help but wonder at their truth.

Half-truths, riddles, and a checkmate in four moves - that is how Hannibal's mind works. Will has always been much more pliable, much more open. It's startling to note that in this moment, Hannibal is having trouble reading anything in Will's eyes. It's truly a beautiful mask. But it isn't Will Graham.

Yet a part of it is. Will's words fracture. His voice is low and smooth and arousing as he paints his picture. Hannibal kneeling before Will, who is in turn reflecting a part of Hannibal back at him. Worshiping a mirror. The narcissist's ultimate fantasy, perhaps. For a moment, Will is there; the cadence is slightly off, and Hannibal suspects that this is something Will finds appealing. The idea of Hannibal kneeling. He hesitates; if the persona is fracturing, this is no longer safe. "Will," Hannibal prompts softly, but the gentle plea is muffled by the press of Will's lips. It's not the way Will kisses; this is his kiss. It's not unpleasant, but again, it's not Will. Something that is only proven when Will murmurs against his lips, and Hannibal freezes.

For a moment they both freeze, likely for very different reasons. Will's gaze goes blank and Hannibal's tightens in a deliciously pointed agony, for he knows 'Beloved' is a word that Will will never say to him. For a beautifully agonizing moment, they both regard each other. Then something in Will's gaze shatters and he draws his hand back just as Hannibal props an arm on the bed beside him to lever himself up as he turns over.

"Will," Hannibal cuts in roughly, and while the flicker of a wince is present as he leans his weight on his arm (the one that compresses the bites to his neck and shoulder) he reaches out anyway and his
hand finds Will's cheek. Hannibal touches only for a fraction of a second before his hand slides further back and curls in Will's hair, both to grip and reassure and keep him in place as he adjusts. Will is hardly still, recoiling, building himself up again as that agonizing house of cards but Hannibal is too quick to lose control this time. He's not pleased, and the ache of leaving himself vulnerable to a farce still burns, but Will is always going to take precedent.

"Will Graham," Hannibal says again, rougher, enunciating the name perfectly just in case there's any risk of Will's identity being in question. He doesn't wait for more than a moment before he settles, and wraps his arms around Will. He pulls him in close, one hand curled in Will's hair, the other settling firmly on the small of Will's back as Hannibal secures him. Though it still burns, he wastes little time in moving Will closer, pressing his face to the rougher gauze upon his shoulder, keeping him secure. "Easy, Beloved. Easy. Breathe for me," Hannibal instructs lightly. He now has proof Will enjoys the term of endearment, and he's hardly strong enough to resist as he presses his cheek to Will's hair. "Focus on my touch. On my voice. I've got you, Will. You're safe."

'Beloved' has brought their eyes to connect and Will finally sees and reality takes a back seat. Will is caught in the pull of Hannibal, falling into a depth he's purposely avoided. It's cold and sharp like a scalpel, it's overwhelming like he's drowning, it's not his stream, it's the Atlantic--

(Save for a single blaring light that reminds him of an interrogation room, blackness surrounds him. The only other object is mirror that hangs on a set of white antlers. Will looks into it, but the face of Hannibal stares back.)

Will. Distant...

'(I am the storm that's ravaged your life. You tried to contain me, study me, shape me...)

Another splinter cracks across the mirror, segmenting Hannibal's face further. This feels vaguely wrong - invasive - but Will's mouth keeps moving:

'But I beat you down, eroded your defenses, crashed upon your rocky shore and changed you. You thought love was beneath you. You were wrong. You thought you could end me. You were wrong.'

The crack splinters further, tiny paths dissecting the reflected face. He continues giving his report for this is what Will Graham has been trained to do:

'You gave up everything for me when you went to your knees in front of Jack. For the first time in your life you thought yourself crazy. It was Hannibal Lecter's grand gesture for love, after Will Graham's spectacular rejection... But you held out. You hoped ...'

Will frowns, eyebrows drawing in. He doesn't want to keep talking, but the words keep coming:

'You're afraid... You're not used to feeling fear, but you do. You worry I'll leave you. So, you place me high on a pedestal, you'll break your body, your mind, your heart... You'll do whatever it takes to keep me for I'm precious to you. Cherished. Your Beloved. Your equal. The only one you would submit for.'

Will's voice shakes, he feels a tightness in his chest.

'You dare not ask anything of me, you will make no demands, but even you are human. Even you need reassurances. Even you need to be held--)

Will Graham. Hannibal's voice jolts him like a heavy book being dropped in a quiet library. The mirror shatters as the image in his mind breaks. The persona - the intimacy of Hannibal - is shed off
like a second skin. Will blinks rapidly, left scrabbling, hands trying to gather up ripped pages as they sail down around him in a rain of parchment. Like the teacup, it seems impossible that he can ever collect the pages and have it bound into a book. (Could he even handle the complete volume?)

"I'm fine, hey. Hey. Hi," Will mumbles out, his tongue feeling thick in his mouth. He feels like he's been caught napping by a school teacher and he's trying to desperately sort himself out. He relaxes into Hannibal's hold. It is familiar and welcome, why had he been trying to get away? His mind is jittery, his empathic link leaving him disconcerted, but more than ever it seems imperative that he talks, explains himself.

"I'm sorry," Will murmurs, resting the side of his head against the bandages so he's able to speak softly into Hannibal's ear. "I thought... I wanted..." Will bites his lips, cursing his inability to get the fucking words out. He remembers hearing Hannibal asking if it was so difficult to have this conversation as himself. Hannibal thinks he hasn't been telling the truth. Will tries again: "I'm not good at this, but you are. You always have been. You know what to say. You know how to comf-- help me. I just wanted to do the same for you."

Hannibal is left unaware of the sheer depth of Will's assessment, for his focus is not on the tangled web of confusion and darkness that is Will's mind. His focus in that moment is merely Will. Hannibal touches him - his cheek, his hair, his back, as many points of contact as he can - in an effort to ground him, to bring him back. There is a risk of Will losing himself to this, to the ugly fragmented reality becoming his new one. Empathy disorders don't often present like this - the ability to adapt a second personality, to lose oneself inside it. Hannibal wishes not for the first time that Will had given him more information back during their sessions so many years ago. He knows how to ground a man with a dissociative identity, and how to ground one with multiple personalities, but neither truly fit the sheer scope of what Will is doing.

So Hannibal merely holds him, varying his tone, shifting his touch, keeping things in a state of flux that Will cannot possibly adapt to. He holds him securely as Will fights him - for those moments where Will delves deep into his own mind, his body fights, twitches, tries to pull away - and Hannibal merely does what he can to ground Will, wondering at the best way to handle this. He aches from the deception, from allowing himself a shade of vulnerability only to come face to face with himself, but he cannot truly fault Will. At his core, Will can only do what he has to in order to cope. It merely burns that he'd had to hide away to keep from falling apart.

Yet regardless of Hannibal's assumptions, they all come to a startling crash when Will suddenly jolts in his arms following Hannibal's firm repetition of his name. Much to Hannibal's surprise, Will speaks, sounding vaguely drunk, disoriented. Instead of roughly trying to fight and scramble back, he gives pause and then his muscles relax under Hannibal's hands. Thrown off balance - he had anticipated a long few minutes of calming Will down, of grounding him - Hannibal stills. His hands remain secure, firm against Will's body, and with careful coaxing, Will allows himself to be held closer. Hannibal frowns for he'd not anticipated this; once again, Will Graham has surprised him.

"Will..." he says slowly, hesitantly, like he's reaching for a startled animal torn between freezng and bolting. But again Will surprises him. No, he doesn't just surprise him; Hannibal is immediately drawn up short.

I'm sorry. The words are like a leaden weight in his chest. He freezes but Will isn't finished. It doesn't take Hannibal long to realize that while Will's tone is soft and shaken, it's firm. It's him. He's not a fracture of personalities, not a Picasso of himself. Hannibal draws in a careful breath and softens his touch, easing Will closer, his hands careful on the bare stretch of Will's back. As he eases Will closer - still concerned despite himself - he at least has the presence of mind to listen. His fingers
card through Will's hair, as soothing as he can manage. And in the end, the flood of relief over his senses is enough to make him close his eyes against it; he's only grateful Will can't see it. "...were those truths, then?" Hannibal finally asks, and his voice holds a softer edge now; he's not attempting to keep it blank, nor is it serrated and sharp. "Your truths. Not mine. From your retelling of your thoughts, to the moment you slid your hand under my shirt?"

He carefully leaves out the moments after that. He leaves out the Beloved. Hannibal knows that hadn't been Will, and it's far easier to simply section those moments out with surgical precision than sit and have Will haltingly explain that that hadn't been him. At present, Hannibal isn't sure he could handle hearing it. He is... unused to feeling raw. So for a moment Hannibal considers merely staying his tongue, but this is something he needs to have solidified. He draws in a slower breath and curses his own vulnerability. "...I remain your only exception?"

Slipping into another comes with a rush, his mind searching for the dominant feelings, the core essence that makes up the individual. It searches for connection, reaches out like Stammets' mycelium, forms associations, builds bridges. It had never been particularly good for him to empathize with serial killers, to look at crime scenes and let his mind fill up with pollution. Will has always struggled with discerning where his darkness began and what's been left behind from others, what mixed and what lingered. And now he's brushed against Hannibal...

Will doesn't think he's ever apologized to Hannibal for anything meaningful before. In the beginning he'd surely just muttered out the sentiment after turning down a dinner invitation or the like, but nothing that really held any weight, nothing that mattered. Because this does matter. Hannibal matters and for once, because of his twisted gift, he's able to see a more complete picture.

The picture created paints Hannibal in a new light, with angles and shadows Will has never seen or looked for. He likely never wanted to see, hadn't been ready, but now that he has, where does he go from here? Will can't unsee, he can't unfeel. On some level he had been aware of his impact, he'd observed the fallout, but he'd never grasped the true depth and breadth of Hannibal's feelings. At the admission that he'd been the only one that captured Hannibal's heart, Will had felt proud. He hadn't realized how drastic an upheaval that had been for Hannibal. Hannibal who has - until Will - only taken care of himself and Will who has held his heart out of reach...

Hannibal, right now, is soft and vulnerable to Will. His words are hesitant; he’s an abused dog wanting to trust that the outstretched hand is friendly, but there’s always the possibility that Will could strike him down or treat him with indifference. This is a situation in which Will has come across his own wounded bird - he could crush it or try and save the creature. But Will isn't Bedelia and while he can see the potential delight in bringing ruin, he's no simple sadist. Will's arms latch onto Hannibal, skin seeking skin, rubbing, soothing. "It was the truth," Will affirms. "Only you, Hannibal. Only you." He shudders, feeling the gravity of his words, the truth of them. Will kisses underneath Hannibal's ear, inhales the unique and comforting scent. He rubs the tip of his nose against the side of Hannibal's face, inhaling deeply. "You don't have to be afraid, I want you. I want to be here. I want to be with you."

The vulnerability is like a bitter aftertaste on his tongue. For all that Hannibal fosters an open environment for Will, encouraging his weakness, his trust, creating a safe space for him to explore the unpleasant emotions and impulses that have risen up, he has not offered himself the same courtesy. Hannibal is unused to the feeling and it's as unsettling and frustrating as it is curious. There is a desire to grab hold of it and lock it away, to pretend he isn't affected. Weakness and vulnerability are emotions he has only ever felt alongside Will Graham. Each of his betrayals had prompted this ache; this is entirely Will's emotion. Hannibal has felt it only once before, and it isn't a time he wishes
to remember.

Will's attempt on his life had both pleased and hurt him, and he'd sought a bitter, petty solace by taking what Will had desired. Will's deception with Freddie Lounds and Jack Crawford had been the sweetest knife to Hannibal's gut. A favor he'd returned in kind. He'd reacted in rage, in hurt, and with the terrifying numbness of realization that only Will Graham could rip him apart so easily. Will disavowing him that night in the snow, however, had been Hannibal's 'rock bottom'. The vulnerability had culminated into defeat, and a desperate need to not lose this man. He'd given everything up, had shattered his foundation to reach Will, who had slipped beneath. And just the night before, Will's decision to weave such a cunning, careful manipulation after so perfectly keeping Hannibal in the dark had been a return to every one of those moments. It had all come rushing back in a flood of anger and hurt. He'd choked it back, had locked it down, refusing to allow the weakness. He'd decided on control, on strength, had kept himself tightly, bitterly contained, even after Will's truth had come out.

Anger is a secondary emotion. A reaction to injustice, to an unfair reality. Will Graham is the only man alive capable of making Hannibal angry. So Will Graham is therefore the only man alive capable of hurting him.

Hannibal's lapse in control - having Will almost shatter because his attention had drifted - and every moment that had followed had simply been the final nail in the coffin. Once the anger has been burned away, all that remains is the vulnerability. Try as Hannibal might to rise above it, it is a state of being beyond his control. From the moment he had taken charge, had cracked his composure enough to reassure Will and had drawn Will's teeth to his skin, Will had found each crack and wedged it open, laying him bare. That the vulnerability is present is an ache in his chest, a lick of disgust. Yet despite that, it is not something easily reeled in. The moment he had realized Will had hidden himself away and that he'd been baring his vulnerability to someone he hadn't trusted it with, he'd thought the worst.

Yet now... now Hannibal isn't so sure.

Will's touch is hardly the tight, manic grip Hannibal had been expecting. He's not rough, not bitter, and his voice isn't curling around hard consonants and bitten-off admissions the way it normally does. For a split, uncomfortable moment, Hannibal feels as off-balance as he imagines Will had in the shower a few days ago, for he suddenly has no idea how to handle the situation. His preconceived notions have flat-lined, and Hannibal is left shaken by the tightness of Will's arms working under his shirt to press against skin and the sting of the gouges from Will's nails the night before. He's just as shaken by the kiss. But what nearly tips him into falling are Will's words. He'd been anticipating something barked and sharp, but these are... pointed. Will's voice is unnaturally soft, but it's still him, and Hannibal isn't sure why he feels a mutual rush of relief and disquiet until Will inhales his scent and presses closer. His words are gentle, but the tips of them are as barbed as Will's handmade fishing hooks. Perhaps they're not so dissimilar.

Hannibal tenses, for as much as he'd needed to hear this - as much as it threatens to calm and overwhelm him - Will's addition is... unsettling. His frown immediately deepens, and his hands still on Will's skin. "I'm not--" Hannibal begins, but immediately cuts himself off. He won't ever lie to Will. Frustrated, he tries again. "What... makes you believe I'm afraid? I don't recall mentioning anything of the sort. Not... that I'm not grateful for the rest. I am." More than Will can ever know. Or so he'd thought.

Will can't recall ever saying these things to Hannibal with such conviction. Yes, those many months ago Will claimed that he'd chosen Hannibal, but it was more a situation that Will accepted, not the
man himself. Ultimately, Will had been defeated, at a loss of what to do because he hadn't been able to successfully pull off their romantic suicide. Has he ever expressed the sentiment of actually wanting Hannibal completely? Sexually and physically he has, but Will thinks that's where it has begun and ended. He feels like an asshole.

He has put Hannibal into this awful place, a position where he has had the upper hand in nearly everything, for Will has Hannibal's heart and is the one person who could hurt him. For as much as Will may hate being vulnerable, Hannibal detests it further, for Hannibal has never had to truly be vulnerable with anyone. Will, though unstable as he may be, has had friendships and relationships, he's dealt with the doubt and fear of being rejected, the discomfort of intimacy.

In light of Hannibal's state, Will's earlier panic about wrecking everything seems ridiculous now. The only way Will can destroy this - them, Hannibal - is by leaving. And Will, being completely honest with himself, doesn't actually want to. It changed at some point. At some point a switch was flicked and Will was no longer just passively present. (Love?) Yes, Hannibal loves everything about him, all his shades. This is the first time Will believes that he could, if he wanted, open his mouth and spill the closely guarded contents from inside his head. All his dreams, all his nightmares. The hallucinations. His delusional thoughts. His actual fears... His hopes. Will's only shared bits and pieces - scraps, really - but if anyone could handle it, handle more, it would be Hannibal.

His words cause Hannibal to stiffen. Will can feel that larger body tense in confusion, in both wanting and not wanting what the words bring. Will can relate. He's often shied away from the uncomfortable reactions mere words can evoke, from emotions that can be dredged to the surface. He catches Hannibal's almost slip, the temptation to lie is there, but no, Hannibal refrains. Will gently detaches himself to sit up, urging Hannibal to follow suit with a fond, "C'mere." He pulls Hannibal up to mirror his position and begins unbuttoning the dress shirt.

"I didn't mean to," Will begins cautiously. "Didn't mean to look, to see inside... But you know, wasn't exactly myself and I guess the me-wearing-you was curious." It had been a blatant invasion of privacy, far worse than simply channeling Hannibal to get through a conversation.

His hands are steady as he frees Hannibal of the shirt, pointedly laying it across the headboard behind the older man. He's patched up with bandages and Will's eyebrows crease. How crazy had he got last night? Will tilts a pillow against the headboard, sliding against it and motioning for Hannibal to come to him. This is the first time Will has blatantly offered to hold Hannibal, and if the other man accepts it, he'll let him decide the final position.

Hannibal is cautious, leery, for he suspects he knows what has caused this shift, and he's uncertain whether or not he can accept it. Will undoubtedly feels him still, but when he draws back to look at Hannibal, his expression is bordering on gentle and Hannibal has a somewhat reckless urge to defend himself. Ultimately, when Will urges him to rise, he hesitates. Then he slowly braces his arm on the bed and sits up, looking down to watch as Will's fingers move to the buttons of his shirt.

The confirmation is both expected and a mild shock to his system. Hannibal's expression shutters for a fraction of a second before he forces himself to draw in a steadying breath and lets some of it melt away. Had he not ached for someone to see him before? Had he not pined over this very possibility with Will in the past? Yes. But he had not anticipated that Will would see beyond the scope of what Hannibal would allow. For a moment, he feels ripped open and bare in a way that feels ugly, invasive. He lifts his chin, expression hardening. Yet again Hannibal forces himself away from the snarling edge of defensiveness attempting to overtake him. He'd given everything to this man. Much
as it twists and burns, that includes his vulnerability.

That Will has looked into him isn't an invasion. It had been an eventuality, particularly given this situation. Hannibal can fault Will's curiosity no more than he can fault a cat killing a mouse. Will had been wearing him, after all, and Hannibal knows that - if he'd been able - he would have looked too. Will had only been following his nature. Hannibal's nature. He has no one to blame but himself for this situation, and the reality burns but clears some of his bitterness away. Hannibal draws in a deep, slow breath and gingerly eases his arm free of one of the sleeves of his shirt once the fabric lays parted. He says nothing, simply allowing Will to carefully slide his shirt off. He's aware of the bandaging he'd needed and he catches the crease on Will's brow but draws no attention to it. Hannibal isn't bitter over the marks; Hannibal is proud.

But he's left off-balance once more when Will settles back against the headboard. It's immediately apparent what Will is asking for, but Hannibal stills. Really, it would be fascinating were it not him, Hannibal decides. The duality of it. One side of him aches to sink against Will, to accept the hold. The other side of him immediately reminds him of what has happened every other time he's allowed himself to be vulnerable in front of this man. Hannibal doesn't move, his expression mildly pinched, and it's clear he's battling with his indecision. Quite honestly there is a moment where Hannibal considers staying precisely where he is. Yet it's the threat of what Will might feel upon being rejected that finally makes him move.

"I... suppose I cannot fault you that," Hannibal hedges as he eases closer. He considers merely leaning in against Will's side, but that feels too impersonal. Fitting his back to Will's chest leaves him feeling off-center, but the other option - laying on top of him - risks Will's gaze fixating on his back. He doesn't allow himself to consider merely laying his head on Will's lap. Hannibal battles with himself for a moment and then eases himself between Will's legs. He moves in to settle his back to Will's chest, though at an angle that keeps its expanse turned away. The touch of skin is immediately grounding and Hannibal almost expects Will to panic and shove him away, but when nothing happens, he simply settles in against Will's chest. Then he half-turns, shifting enough to tuck his face in against Will's neck, drawing in a breath of his scent. It's concentrated here, and as off-center as Hannibal feels, it is not... unpleasant. "When you looked into me... What did you see?" He finally asks, almost reluctantly. "I would rather you not pity me, Will. I have no use for it."

Hannibal doesn't look especially pleased by the reveal, his features hardening, no doubt warring with both the benefit and cost of this particular incident. To be seen comes with relief and excitement - hope even - the possibility of true acceptance. But also present is the distressing feeling of being known, uncomfortably exposed and vulnerable to attack. To be hurt. There's two sides to the coin, just like them.

For a moment, Will doesn't know if Hannibal will come to him. Hannibal seems resistant, unsure if he will allow this shift, for yes, it is a change of roles. Hannibal hasn't been overly secretive per se, but until now he's had a choice and control over what he's bared to Will. Will is positive he hasn't seen everything, hasn't felt everything that dwells within Hannibal. There's no way he could have. He had simply skimmed the surface, but with a specific focus on himself.

But Hannibal does acquiesce, gradually giving in and drawing nearer. Is it fear of Will's reaction to rejection or Hannibal accepting that even he has needs? Will doesn't know, but he allows Hannibal between his legs. His position is slightly curious and Will gets the distinct feeling that Hannibal wishes to hide his back from him. And though Will is listening, he doesn't let himself be distracted by Hannibal's head coming to rest near his neck and breathing him in. He makes the effort to peer over an elegant shoulder and he spies angry looking gashes that are of his making. Will's unsure how he feels about this, mostly because he hadn't necessarily felt in control when he'd been scratching. He'd
simply been following Hannibal's command. He imagines what lies underneath the bandages would catch him off guard too. Will says nothing. It's not about him right now. He slips his arms underneath Hannibal's own, snugly wrapping them around Hannibal's torso. He's careful to not hold too tightly, lest he agitate the older man's back more. He'll offer his care later if Hannibal will accept it.

"I saw your devotion. I felt it," Will murmurs, nuzzling his head downward in a short caress. "I don't pity you, but I see how hard you've pushed yourself..."

Will understands, he does. He doesn't like it, but he knows why Hannibal has neglected himself in favor of attempting to please him. It's all been to keep him. And all the while Will has been allowed a great deal of freedom to do and say as he wished. It hasn't been healthy for either of them. It's been a terrible situation for Will to abuse and it has the potential to be abused again, for a darker part of Will's mind, even now, is curious as to just what he can get away with.

"I tasted your fear. You're gripped by it. You're afraid I'll leave. I haven't given you any indication to believe otherwise." Will sighs, closing his eyes. He's scared too, stomach in knots, but Will knows he needs to give now. Emboldened by his foray into channeling Hannibal, Will continues softly, "I know it won't be easy to trust me, but I want you. I want this. I want us."

It isn't until Will's arms have slid around him that Hannibal takes note of an interesting truth: He cannot recall anyone holding him like this before. Will has been the only one to attempt this. Perhaps it is part of the reason Hannibal is tempted to draw away from it, but he resists. He knows his true rationale likely has more to do with control and a lack of it than anything else. Even so, it is interesting to note. He's not been involved in many relationships, and in those few he had sought to maintain for longer than a few weeks, he had been in control. The only time Hannibal can recall being held like this, it hadn't been nearly as pleasant, nor aimed to comfort. He can still remember the crush of pressure around his throat as Jack Crawford had sought to kill him. Perhaps that's another reason he is less fond of showing his back, he bitterly muses, but the thought fades when the press of stubble against his skin catches him off guard.

Hannibal doesn't catch the glance Will shoots at his back. He'd seen his skin earlier that morning and while the marks are deep, Hannibal is proud of them. The only issue comes with the tearing of skin over the Verger brand, which had stung against the shirt he'd been wearing. The press of Will's skin against the marks stings as well, but it's a low pain, almost pleasant. Hannibal isn't certain how he feels about it; so much is not what he'd expected. But he's not willing to shut Will out. Not when his entire goal this whole morning had been to talk with this man. Perhaps the fact that he has to bare his own vulnerability in return is fitting. With that in mind, though still reluctant, Hannibal allows himself to begin to relax.

In this, he reasons, Will is at least being honest. While the honesty also burns, Hannibal can't help but listen, breathing in the humid scent of Will's skin fresh from his shower and the hint of mint from his breath. Beyond it all is simply Will, and he focuses on these small realizations as Will speaks. Will speaks of feeling his devotion and Hannibal registers the scratch of Will's beard over his skin. Will speaks of the lengths Hannibal has gone to for him, and Hannibal moves one hand over Will's arms to feel their strength. Will speaks of his fear and Hannibal...

He can't. He tenses without meaning to, defensive, angry, ashamed, uncertain, fearful, yes. Every emotion has its place in his reaction. He shifts slightly and for a split second, the knowledge that Will has looked deep within him and seen his fear is enough that he almost draws away. The words are visceral and true, and he's halfway to attempting to grab another topic from the list they need to talk about when Will's voice dips low and he finishes his thought. Hannibal goes very still.

At first he believes it a cruel joke, but Will's arms are secure around him. Hannibal can feel the
roughness of the calluses on his fingers and they're tight against his skin, as comforting as they're able to be. He frowns, cautiously stunned, and he leans back just enough to glance at Will. It's difficult to see him like this, but Hannibal manages, and when he finally registers that Will is being truthful, he leans back against Will's chest and ducks his head again. The reason is simple: For one moment, Hannibal's expression is creased in a deep, longing agony. But much like Beloved, he wonders if this, too, is something Will really feels.

"Forgive me, Will," Hannibal manages, and he makes no effort to hide the strain in his voice. It's pained, but it's also aching in a different way. He longs for those words to be true. "I am... not certain I can. But I will try." He swallows then and this close, the sound is painfully audible. There's a burning in his chest, unshed emotion, want, aching vulnerability that he still wants to surgically remove, and sentiment for this man. Even if Will isn't being truthful, it's something Hannibal needs to hear. "For you, I will try. I would love nothing more than for you to remain. If... you have been me even for a moment, you know how badly I wish it. Last night, I thought--..." He swallows again and regroups. "... You're you again. Correct?" Hannibal adds, for gently twisting the topic away from his hidden fears regarding Will's continued proximity is far safer than the alternative.

With degrees of varying success, Will's played this role before - a caregiver, someone who could provide comfort. It doesn't come natural to him, but not for a lack of empathy or caring. No, it's always been difficult to insert himself into the actual act. It struck him as horribly presumptuous to believe he could actually help. Will's always cared, but he's not good with words, not comfortable with the necessary interactions that followed the caring portion. So, Will came across as standoffish. Aloof. Unfriendly. It was lonely, but easier that way.

He's not confident that he can help now. Words can cut, can evoke many strong responses, but equally they can be hollow, like lovers spinning lies or whispers containing empty promises. It almost seems cruel... Past action provided proof - evidence - bringing meaning and weight to statements. If that was the case, it doesn't bode particularly well for Will. His loose tongue and impulsive nature have forged him a long rap sheet. That said, words are all he has at the moment. The elusive concept of time and the future would prove him trustworthy or not.

Hannibal relaxes, his hand reaching out to touch Will's arm, but then the mention of fear has rigidity making another appearance. Will is far too used to fear. It's an old friend of his. Will has a profound fear of himself. Of his mind. Of his darkness. His potential. Disappointing others. Rejection. (His own feelings.) But Hannibal is not like him in this regard. Before Will, Hannibal had no need to be fearful, he was the master of his own domain, the world was his oyster and his life had been both pleasant and comfortable. After Will... Hannibal had struggled with trying to break their connection, had been made to feel, to long, to love.

And to experience loss. (Not for the first time, but Will only knows the barest details of Mischa.)

Will holds Hannibal firmly, he understands the gesture to hide - he's done it himself many times. Will leans closer, curls in over as best he can, pressing kisses in to Hannibal's hair. He'll allow Hannibal to not finish the statement; Will can fill in the blank himself now: I thought you had deceived me fully, that your affections had been a duplicitous act. (They hadn't been.)

"Yeah, it's me," Will confirms lightly. "My name's Will Graham and it's..." He glances at the digital clock by the bed. "It's 9:34 in the morning and I'm in your bed." He chuckles before kissing the tip of Hannibal's ear and whispers, "Not drawing you a fucking clock though."

He'll let them slide away from the topic of fear. It's perhaps the least he can do, a show of kindness for a man who deserves it.
Hannibal has his doubts; he has never seen Will take the place of another before, had never gotten to experience him in a state of being not his own. It had been one topic Will had been reluctant to speak about during their sessions. Talk of Hobbs and death, Will's victims, his dubious slide closer to insanity coaxed gently by Hannibal's hand... Hannibal finds himself wishing for a moment that he had focused his attention on Will's empathy in those times. It hadn't been a problem that had needed fixing, merely grounding, so he'd focused on those aspects. Now, caught in the uncomfortable position of needing to ask if Will is truly himself, Hannibal wishes he had done things differently all those years ago. He has seen Will think like another, but he has never seen Will think as another. He's unsure how the process goes.

So when Will's voice softens in gentle reassurance and works himself through the old exercise that Hannibal had given him to ground him all those years ago, Hannibal is caught off guard by the crush of relief that floods him. His breath hitches almost imperceptibly and for a moment he is nearly floored by what else is implied: If Will is himself enough to run through his exercise, enough to joke following it, he had been himself enough to issue his reassurances. They're real. *I want you. I want this. I want us. Real.*

Hannibal lets out a breath he hadn't been aware of holding, though it is painfully shaken and obvious that something has changed. There is the curious sensation of a freefall of relief, not unlike the one he'd felt the moment Will had walked into his office after Tobias had attempted to kill him. Or when he'd found Will at Muskrat Farm. Or when Will had shakily gotten to his feet despite so many wounds on the bluff. It's a visceral relief, one driven by violence and emotions that are not typically violent, but are in Hannibal's hands. He turns ever so slightly, just enough to lift one arm, and his hand settles on the strong, rough line of Will's jaw, touching, delicate, and relieved. The vulnerability doesn't ache quite so violently in this moment, and Hannibal merely guides Will down into a slightly awkward brush of their lips. *You remain my only exception.* Undoubtedly not the reaction Will is likely expecting following the language he'd used. "You have no need to," Hannibal murmurs, and allows himself to settle back against Will's chest as he had before. Save this time he finally allows himself to relax. The positioning is... not what he's used to, but it isn't unpleasant. Far from it. It's something he immediately worries he'll grow too fond of. "Your mind is your own now, in those regards. I have no desire to compromise you."

He considers adding that there is a part of him that does believe Will now, but he chooses to keep that silent. Will is likely aware. He is, admittedly, the only person alive who has ever been able to read Hannibal with any accuracy. And as Hannibal settles back and takes a few moments to attempt to reign himself - his emotions, his vulnerability, everything - back into a place he can handle it, he reaches down for one of the hands on his skin and silently takes it, lacing their fingers together. "Do you believe... you are able to speak with me, as yourself? As you would have while submerged in my persona? You are under no obligation, and you don't need to rush. But this is something I believe... *I need* to be taken through. At your leisure."

Can this be a role he takes on, supporting Hannibal? Offering comfort and care? ... *We still help our families when we can.* At the time, the comment had shaken him up more than he'd wanted to admit, for he actually *had* a family and Hannibal hadn't been included in it; he had Molly and Walter. He'd helped Walter with math homework, helped Molly around the home. Yes, Will had been a good father. A good husband. (And what was he *now*?)

But now that family is forgotten, left behind and Hannibal has taken over. And whatever Will is, he hasn't been particularly good, but he can't allow himself to get into a funk over it. Feeling bad for his shortcomings, over missed opportunities, would simply set him on a path further away from what he wants. For Will *does* care and want to help.
His joke, as it was, seems to hit some mark. Hannibal's breath stuttering for a moment as if coming to a realization. Maybe it's enough to prove that Will has actually been himself. Whatever it is, Hannibal pulls him into a light kiss before finally relaxing against him. The words that follow are meant to reassure him - no meddling with his reality - but they don't quite achieve the desired effect. There's been a truth that Will hasn't wanted to face for a while now: Hannibal lights up his mind, stokes his imagination and enables Will Graham to go further. The closer they get, the more intensely Will feels and thinks. Stress doesn't help either, but Will suspects intimacy is worse in a way.

Their intimacy is dangerous, feelings of power and possession paving the way for Will to orchestrate a murder. And it wasn't even the event that was the whole problem - the crime - it was also his delusional thoughts. Fantasies. He'd fucking thought about Hannibal killing him, embalming him, preparing him... Oh, right, human sacrifices. He'd felt like a God. A part of him, although not fully present, had imagined his hands as talons ripping Hannibal's back... He hadn't been having as many hallucinations in his years spent away from Hannibal - at least, none that had disturbed him. (His ravenstag has never truly abandoned him.) Vivid nightmares and dreams had remained, but certainly more now. There's a wickedness in Will and it's one that can find context within Hannibal's darkness and his hedonistic pull.

But right now, there's softness. Hannibal is warm and here. Will, once again, would try to keep his crazy in check.

At first he thinks Hannibal wants to hear about his empathy, to walk him through how he connected and saw, but the word need makes Will stop and consider. Before his slip up, they were discussing the murder, specifically why Will had chosen Henri. As that's easier to explain, Will chooses to go with it.

"He exploited those vulnerable. He used power and wealth to coerce them. They trusted him. They thought it would be just a fun hook up." Will doesn't know if he wants to explain the details, revulsion threatening to crawl through his stomach. And yes, there's parallels between his old psychiatrist and Henri. Instead, he pushes himself to share more of his reasoning. "I... it seems stupid now, but I thought, in a way, you killing for me would bring us closer."

There are many things that need to be discussed and far too many distractions to properly get through them all, but at least now there is a tentative foundation under their feet. Hannibal's request is uncertain, a clear bid to step out of the deep, inky blackness of Will's empathy (though he intends to revisit that when he does not feel so exposed) and into a safer topic. His words are the equivalent of testing the thickness of cracked ice under his feet, but instead of Will recoiling as Hannibal is familiar with, his companion only seems to give the request real thought and Hannibal can feel some of the tension in Will's body ease. They're both quiet for a heartbeat, and then Will begins.

Hannibal had seen the man only as much as he'd allowed himself to. He'd not seen him as a man. He'd seen him as a target. He had not looked the man over and noticed the cut of his hair or the attractiveness of his features or the fabric of his suit. His focus had been on his posture, whether or not he favored one leg over the other, whether he slouched when he stood, and whether the line of his neck had been padded by muscle. He had looked at the man as a kill despite the jealousy that had clouded his system at the time. So this moment, with Will carefully explaining his reasoning, is important. Hannibal stays silent and squeezes Will's hand at the note of revulsion in his tone, and he does what he can to paint the picture.

He can remember little beyond the rush of cold rage and violence, and the sensation of bone breaking and wrenching under his hands. There's a distant memory of muffling a scream with his gloved hand, and of ducking a flailing arm, but ultimately his focus had been on wounding and
killing, not the man himself. Hannibal doesn't personally care who the man had been, but he knows that Will does. Hearing that he'd been an exploitative creature is surprising though. It's not murder... but perhaps it doesn't have to be. Hannibal frowns, feeling like there's a single piece of a puzzle missing, but it very quickly makes itself apparent when Will continues.

The realization hits him and draws him up short. Hannibal stills, but this time it's without the rigidity in his shoulders. He merely goes silent and frowns slowly, thoughtfully, going back over that night in an attempt to remember what the man had looked like rather than how it had felt to kill him. Hannibal only needs a shade - the suit, the shoes, the tie - and that, coupled with Will's passing of judgment, his stress on the word 'trusted', and his admission that he'd hoped it would bring them closer together immediately brings the puzzle piece into place.

Hannibal's lips pull into a slightly wry smile tinged with pride, and he leans his head back against Will's shoulder. That it pulls on the gauze on his own shoulder it mildly grounding. He could be upset, and perhaps it would make more sense if he were, but he isn't. Instead he merely mulls this information over, picking out the intricacies of it like a sip of aged wine. "You cunning boy," Hannibal says softly, and it sounds like an endearment on his lips. Hannibal gives his head the smallest of shakes, as if impressed, and then he tilts his head enough so that he can look up in Will's direction, even if he's not able to fully see him. Despite the crush of vulnerability of the last few minutes and everything that has happened, Hannibal can appreciate this. "Was it satisfying, Will? To have me kill myself? Or... at least the version of myself you feel did you harm so many years ago."

Hannibal's thumb traces over the back of Will's hand. "To have the man I am now rally to you and strike down who I was... I can see why you believed it would bring us closer. Carve out the painful memories and replace them with those of me at your call. As your ally."

He'd been one of those boys. Vulnerable. Trusting. Naive. Hopeful. (Yes, he had hoped to get better.) There's still a bitterness, a wound, a lasting scar from that initial betrayal, for Will hadn't done anything to deserve it. He'd been interesting. A intriguing a temptation, a toy for Hannibal to play with... But Hannibal Lecter had been the first person to not look at him with a sense of pity, to not shy away from his mind. At the time, Will hadn't even realized what a singular relief it had been to be able to talk frankly and honestly, to wade into his darkness and explore it instead of being simply utilized as a tool (used) or sought after for research purposes.

Will hadn't truly considered the parallels between Hannibal and Henri. He hadn’t had a specific prey in mind while searching, simply one that deserved to be hunted (because Hannibal didn’t do catch and release). When he’d seen into Henri, Will had felt disgust and rage. Another embodiment of grave injustice and exploitation. But also, a version of a past Hannibal. A man in a position of power that Will had trusted, had opened himself up to. It had resonated with him of course, and that had been enough to set him in motion, striding over to the man, and baiting the trap.

Will feels, acts, but... Hannibal understands and his explanation stuns Will. The teacup comes together for a moment, broken pieces fitting together like a delicate puzzle and a fuller, more complete picture is created for Will. The realization is a profound one. Yes, he had had an ally rushing to his aid, striking down and exacting punishment for crimes that had been committed against him years ago. Hannibal had, effectively, killed himself, denouncing that past self.

"At the time I didn't think about it," Will admits slowly and for a few seconds he tightens his hold on Hannibal, reassuring himself that this man in his arms is not like Henri. Not anymore. This man loves him. This man will protect him. (Yes, will kill for him too.)

"I did like it, yeah," Will adds on, and now seems as good as any other time to clarify. "But, I'm not
For Hannibal, once the realization sets in, it's impossible to unsee it. There should be some mild irritation that Will had effectively had him kill himself - had even sought out that man and made the connection in the first place - but there is none. Hannibal does understand Will, and while he cannot predict him, and while he had sought to unearth Will's secrets time and time again, he is a good psychiatrist. He understands the intricate facets of the mind better than most and he can form connections where others cannot. Will is impulsive, acting out of instinct, but Hannibal knows why. He doesn't share Will's empathy, but he knows Will. By times, anyway. The times Will has fooled him stand out as blatantly as looming monuments in the desert, but when it comes to this moment, the connection is obvious.

Sure enough, he can feel Will shift, like he's considering drawing away. Hannibal merely allows one of his hands to drop down. He settles his hand on Will's knee, thumb stroking along the tendons as he brings their laced fingers up. Hannibal presses a kiss to the back of Will's knuckles, his lips lingering so Will can feel the press properly, and then hums to show he's heard. "I would imagine they took it very poorly, but that is simply because they had no way of understanding. I cannot experience your empathy as you can, but I can understand it. You assume the point of view of the person you become. You can no more help your reactions than they can, and I would imagine what you have drawn pleasure from in the past has unsettled you. But it isn't you, Will." Hannibal sets Will's hand back down and draws a slow, steady breath.

"I admit... I do not know your empathy as well as I wish I did. You once claimed you felt like you were becoming Garret Jacob Hobbs... yet you were able to slip me off with relative ease. I would imagine that when your co-workers found you grinning, you had begun to lose yourself. That is not your fault, Will. I don't believe you derive pleasure from killing. I believe you derive power from it. From me," he adds, with a hint of satisfaction in his tone that soon fades to something softer, more serious. "If I led you to believe I thought that of you, I apologize, Will. I was... not in the best frame of mind at the time. Neither of us were. But I do not think so poorly of you. You were merely deriving catharsis from the kill. Power from the knowledge I would kill for you. And relief, I would imagine. Relief that I had not left you to fend for yourself."

It's important to Will that Hannibal sees him correctly. (When did that change?) It had bothered him when the association between his pleasure and violence had been made last night. By now, Will believes he has a grasp on what 'kind' of crazy he is, and he's not the type running around with
murder-boners. At least not yet. His empathy disorder has always set him apart, but it's something he's fiercely guarded as well. He doesn't want to be studied, to be poked and prodded. Whether he was shunned or marveled at, it was all a form of judgment. While Hannibal is undeniably curious about it, Will's never felt pressured to divulge anything. Still, sharing some of the unfortunate and uncomfortable downsides with Hannibal isn't easy.

Knuckles kissed and a bit of tension eases out. Will would rather be kissing Hannibal... have Hannibal's mouth all over him, distracting him, but Will knows they're not done talking. Not even close. Understanding and reason are thrown his way, but Will wants to just drop the whole thing. He's said his peace and now he wishes to move on from it. His headache is back too, or did it not leave?

At hearing the word relief, Will frowns. While short-lived, the panic and wrongness that he had experienced while Henri had been touching and kissing him had been quickly forgotten about, or rather, pushed down. But now it's making a reappearance courtesy of Hannibal. There's a duality that exists within Will for he had deliberately manufactured a situation in which he depended on Hannibal coming to rescue him, but at the same time, he didn't want to be saved.

Why couldn't they just drop it? Like his past forgiveness, like the knife-- Why were they talking about all of this anyway? (You brought it up. Focus, Will.)

There's far too many implications and thoughts that vie for attention in Will's mind surrounding Henri's demise. Should he be bothered that he had chosen someone reminiscent of a past Hannibal? Did he still possess a latent desire to hurt or punish Hannibal for his misdeeds? Despite knowing that Hannibal is proud of him, there's a heaviness that Will doesn't even want to acknowledge, let alone figure out how he fucking feels about it: He facilitated the ending of a life on his own. Will may choose to ignore inconvenient truths at times, but he remembers what he had asserted years ago... That he tolerated, while Hannibal delighted. That statement likely didn't fit now. Does he want to be a killer, for there could be no excuse of self-defense. He'd fantasized about hunting with Hannibal, but he'd essentially gone off on his own and forced the reality into existence.

Unease burns in his throat. *Shame.* Will grips Hannibal's hand tighter and closes his eyes. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean for our first time to be like that. It's not what I really wanted. Things just got messed up in my head. My head's a mess, Hannibal." Will stops talking.

Hannibal has no way of knowing that the relief Will had felt is something he'd sought to hide. He merely observes and sees this man, all his tangled twists and turns, all his uncertainty. Will listens to him and he seems fine at first, but as Hannibal continues, there are small hints that Will's distress has grown. He isn't squirming, but he has pressed closer, a subconscious way to protect himself, possibly? Hannibal takes careful note of it, and focuses as well on the slightly labored breathing he can hear from so close. Most telling, however, is the beat of Will's heart he can feel through the bare touch of their skin. His pulse is faster, and there is a low scent Hannibal can just barely make out past the humid warmth of Will's shower-damp skin. It's a vague scent of distress but Hannibal lets it slide until Will's hold tightens on his hand and he finally speaks.

The apology catches him off guard, as always, but Hannibal is also thrown at the return to the previous topic. For one moment he needs to regroup, to refocus, but Hannibal manages. Will's distress is audible and after a moment in which Hannibal considers how best to respond, he simply turns his head and presses closer, nuzzling carefully under Will's jaw. An act of blatant affection - one that cannot be mistaken - seems the safest way to carefully ease Will back from this new edge. "Will," Hannibal says softly, drawing Will's attention closer to him, not Will's thoughts. "You have no need to apologize. Not to me. But I forgive you, if it's something you need to know for certain."
It's true. He does. The memory still burns and the reality of what he'd been manipulated into doing still hurts, of course, but that is not what forgiveness is. Will has explained, has walked him through the why, and the why him. He'd made a point to tap that his tenderness leading up to last night had not been a lie, not been to lull him into a false sense of security, and while the doubt still lingers on the edges of his mind, Hannibal believes Will. He believes that this had been a manipulation, but not one intended to bleed Hannibal dry. There is much they need to discuss regarding the night before, but Hannibal's forgiveness seems most important to make clear up front.

He squeezes Will's hand a little tighter. "First intentional kills are volatile, Will. Logic very rarely plays a part in them, even if they take time to plan out. Uncertainty and regret and shock are normal reactions even days later. It is... a complicated mix of emotion. The act of killing is deeply uprooting. But killing for killing's sake is far beyond even that. It... doesn't surprise me that you're feeling as you are. But this was necessary, Will." Hannibal allows that to sit for a moment and then lifts Will's hand to his lips again. He kisses his knuckles once more, but makes no move to drop his hand back down. Instead he keeps it closer. Will needs something, and Hannibal will provide as best he can. "This was not so much our first time as it was yours. The fact you chose who you did speaks a great deal to me. You still held resentment, and I don't fault you that. This was your way of... attempting to forgive in your own way. Whether or not your head is a mess doesn't play a part in this. This was... symbolic. An attempt to see me as I am. Not as I was. Knowing that, I'm not disappointed in you, Beloved."

The name is... a risk, perhaps. But Hannibal wants to use it to draw Will in closer, to settle him. Particularly because he hadn't missed the way Will's voice had cut off. That, he believes, is significant. "...Would you like to talk to me, Will? About the... mess in your head? I can promise to listen. Perhaps I can help. We can stay like this."

The urge to simply fade into Hannibal is a strong one. Will wants a break from himself. A break from his head where far too many thoughts want to take root. He's afraid of what could bloom if he lets any of them take hold. He's aware that, presently, he's acting a bit like a child. He'd done what he wanted, what he set out to do, but now he doesn't want any of the consequences, doesn't want to face the music.

Not that Hannibal isn't being completely gracious and caring. Listening to him, reasoning, nuzzling him. Forgiving him. Of course. It's not easy to hear. Not easy to feel. The psychology is sound, but Will doesn't know if he wants to be calmed. A part of him still feels like he deserves a punishment - a scolding at the very least. He knows Hannibal has held back, restrained himself as to not push Will away and maybe he's doing it again now. Sparing him further stress and the like. Will doesn't know if he wants to believe the assertion of him attempting to forgive. But there is a measure of relief that comes from Hannibal claiming that he doesn't consider last night to be their first. (That means they could still...)

I'm not disappointed in you, Beloved. His eyes snap open at the name. Will wants to blurt out, 'Well, I am,' but he refrains.

At the invitation to share more, Will takes a detour. "Would rather make you a mess," he murmurs against Hannibal's ear, his tongue following up the statement by licking up the man's ear. "Although you probably don't want to come in your pants again, do you?" It's a blatant derailment, but he hasn't had time to process the more sexual activities of the last night. Maybe they could talk about that instead. Or, perhaps there could be a compromise of sorts... The hand not currently being held comes to Hannibal's hair, pulling softly and tilting the unmarred side of his neck toward him. Will kisses the warm skin there. "We can keep talking, but I'm going to keep touching you. You ask the questions and I'll answer. Quid pro quo. You like that sort of thing, don't you?" Will's mouth places soft kisses up the expanse of Hannibal's neck. It stands to reason that it could be easier to talk if he's engaged in
activity such as having his way with Hannibal.

The hesitation that had been in Will's voice when he'd mentioned the 'mess in his head' is what prompts Hannibal's offer. Will knows parts of him now, the empathy definitely something they need to talk about as well, but right now all Hannibal can do is prioritize. There's no point of making a list - verbally or in his head - because what he feels is most important and what Will feels most important are definitely different. So he's expecting Will's answer to be hesitant, to be reluctant. He's expecting Will to draw back in a way, or to try and change the subject, but he isn't quite expecting the way Will decides to do just that.

His voice is low in Hannibal's ear and despite the sudden jump in topics, Hannibal is unable to fully help the flicker of heat prompted by Will's words. He swallows, then immediately frowns when he realizes what Will is trying to do. Deflection isn't uncommon in their interactions; Will has always been reluctant to speak about himself. Hannibal can recall many a session of carefully prying information from Will like embedded stones during their first few meetings. He can recall asking questions and having them shot back at him, and can recall needing to use his own take on things to give Will an excuse to open up. ‘Me too,’ and, ‘Same here,’ had become staples of their early conversations. Their sessions had been slow, methodical, sometimes reluctant. There had been a few rare cases where Will had shown up ready to vent, but ultimately, Hannibal had merely settled in for a challenge. He feels that's rather accurate for this situation as well: Will is attempting to be a challenge.

"Will," Hannibal begins, a little hesitantly, but cuts off at the reminder of the way he'd reacted the night before. He falls quiet - a clear indication that Hannibal is still thrown at his own reaction - but it isn't until Will's fingers curl in his hair that Hannibal stills. The suggestion is... dangerous, in a sense. Hannibal observes it silently, though not impassively. He shivers in a way that makes him half-wince at the prickle over the wounds from the night before, but Will's idea holds merit. Oh, it's not the way he wants to do things; he would prefer both of them focused and serious. But Will's touch is not unpleasant, and there is something to be said for giving him something else to focus on. Hannibal had offered him wine during their talks for a reason, or a book to skim; Will has always been most engaged while active with something else. Theoretically this could work.

The risks, though... Hannibal isn't exactly comforted by how simple it could be to misstep. He merely thinks this over in silence and sighs softly as Will's lips press to his neck. It does feel good, which is another issue. "I would prefer we talk candidly," and to not come in his pants, though he doesn't say as much, "but if this makes you more comfortable, it is... acceptable. Though I would ask that you warn me if the topic is something you can't talk about safely. I want to help. Not hinder." Hannibal pauses to wet his lips. He could simply direct Will to breakfast instead to focus on, but he doubts that would be met with approval. Will is a decidedly stubborn man once his mind is made up. "What did you mean when you said your head was a mess, Will?"

Naturally, there's some reluctance on Hannibal's part to agree to Will's terms. They're veering further from traditional therapy or a couple openly talking. They're moving more into something of their own making, but the prospect is exciting to Will. Now that he's at least half focused on tactile senses - on Hannibal - a comfortable and familiar curl of arousal makes itself known. It's actually grounding in this form and Will inhales deeply, wanting to flood his other senses with Hannibal. He purposefully shifts against Hannibal, the thin layer of the towel doing nothing to disguise his growing arousal. Hannibal smells like home and Will knows he's still a bit vulnerable, a bit guarded (and it shouldn't turn him on, but it does). He plans on breaking those barriers down.

Hannibal's first question clearly illustrates that he's not willing to give up the prior subject. Will sighs,
a little irritated, but he can't fault the man. He brought it up, after all. He pulls his hand away from Hannibal's hold, relocating it to his chest and gently rubbing over Hannibal's pectorals. "Feels a bit like it's going to be my first confession," Will huffs out a short laugh, a bit of his nerves bleeding through. Confessing to Hannibal. It's a ridiculous, but appealing idea. He's never shared about these symptoms, not after the bout with the encephalitis where his crazy had got tangled up with an understandable illness.

"Promise me you won't lock me up, doctor?" He nips at Hannibal's neck. He wants to bite, not talk, but that won't do. Will made a deal and he's going to not back out on it. He'll work Hannibal up, touch and give himself a way to channel some of his energy, but in return, he'll answer questions. Quid pro quo. Even Steven.

Will's pulse has jumped. He's aroused, but jittery as he faces the truth of letting Hannibal in more, at baring himself. "I have... hallucinations. Not voices, no. Full blown seeing things. Interacting with them even, if I want. Also..." Will has to pause, letting his mouth alternate between sicking and kissing at Hannibal's neck. He'll at least leave some superficial marks here, too. Lips wet with saliva, he continues, "Delusional and disordered thoughts. Fantasies. Made worse by stress, periods of intense emotions." (You, goes unsaid.)

He could give examples, but he won't unless Hannibal specifically asks.

There is a part of Hannibal that doubts Will plans on honoring this little deal. It seems flimsy, more an excuse to avoid conversation than anything, but despite his hesitation, he cannot turn down Will's touch. His companion is right, after all. The vulnerability may be carefully shielded at this point, but it hasn't vanished. Hannibal still feels the uncertainty lingering in the back of his mind; it's merely been overshadowed by a genuine curiosity and want to help. Admittedly it's also being somewhat distracted by the situation; as fixated on Will's admission as he is, he's not unaffected by Will's touch or presence, and Will's towel is not enough of a barrier to mask his reaction to the situation. Hannibal is reminded of the night before, of the heat and weight on his tongue, of the taste, but he carefully pushes those memories aside. They are undoubtedly what Will had been aiming for.

"Confession is perhaps less accurate... You have not sinned, nor do I intend to absolve you unless it's required," Hannibal says, mildly irritated by the way his attention threatens to split. Will's touch is... distracting, and welcome. Yet if this grounds Will, he won't complain. He merely leans back against him and focuses on his words, his voice, and the quicker beat of his pulse. The rest is still apparent, but Hannibal can tell this is important to Will. 'First' confession implies this is something he's never admitted to before. He won't dismiss something so monumental. Though the nip to his neck and being referred to as 'doctor' does bring a mild quirk of a smile to his lips even as his breath hitches. "And yes. I promise. This is a conversation, Will. Nothing more."

He honestly doesn't expect Will to be forthcoming, and perhaps that speaks poorly about them both. He's expecting Will to bite (a part of him wants him to), to grow bored with the idea of truthfully answering questions, or to joke, but the reality surprises him. Will begins, and Hannibal goes respectfully quiet.

The information is... not what Hannibal had been expecting. It makes sense. Will's empathy is only possible due to an intricacy of imagination rarely recorded in those not on the spectrum. Hannibal stills, and while the touch of Will's fingers is still distracting, this new information carefully feeds into his mental image of Will. Hallucinations are typically markers of instability, and Hannibal wonders idly if the encephalitis really had exacerbated pre-existing conditions as he'd been attempting to imply. The thought is one he decides to visit later. For now, he merely considers this. If Will is having hallucinations - ones large enough to interact with... that does change things. Hannibal frowns
thoughtfully, but it doesn't stop his breath from hitching softly at the suction against his neck. Will's mouth is distracting.

The addition is also telling. Delusional thoughts and fantasies... during periods of intense emotion. Hannibal can read between the lines. "Then you have been inundated by these... hallucinations and intrusive thoughts and fantasies often during our recovery. Arguably now more so than ever." After the kill... Hannibal nods even though he is a little concerned. "Hallucinations are a marker of instability, but you already knew that. Often I would prescribe something were the symptoms of significant impact upon one's life, but there are other ways." Hannibal wets his lips, thoughtful again. Question and answer; he's asked no questions. "Stress management and security are undoubtedly your most worthwhile allies if they're something you wish to control. Tell me, Will... when you are going through an episode, are you aware of it? Despite how real it feels, are you aware of where you are? Who you are? Who you're with?"

Will's unburdened himself, shared his more worrisome symptoms - symptoms that hadn't dissipated despite a course of antibiotics. As he hadn't spoken again about hallucinations, likely Hannibal had thought the stuff with Hobbs had been from his over imaginative brain sampling encephalitis while working under Jack. But no, Will Graham's been plagued with his reality having additions since he was a teenager. Naturally, that was something he had kept to himself. Yes, the 'mess' inside his mind had lessened greatly while he was with Molly and Walter, living much more simply and away from violent delights. He suffered through nightmares, hearing the occasional echoing of hooves in the distance, but nothing like before. (Or like now.)

He can't help but weave in sarcasm with his admissions of truth. Will is fond of his defense mechanisms, after all. But Hannibal handles his comments well, replying to them calmly and forgoing any chiding. The stutter of breath from the older man pleases Will. He wants to hear more, have himself cause more reactions. The urge to only touch, kiss (explore and indulge) is tempting, but once again Will resists. It's an instinctual response to want to lose himself in something else in the face of opening up, but he feels like perhaps this is his penance for his actions. "Instability. That's a nicer word than psychosis," Will replies, but there's no real heat behind his words. He knows he's not psychotic, he has that going for him at least. The questions directed his way are telling. Hannibal wishes to know just how out of touch with reality he gets, whether he's been conscious and consenting throughout their time together. (He has.) "I'm aware enough. I may get caught up with it sometimes, but ultimately I still know where I am, who I am and who I'm with," Will answers softly, canting his hips into Hannibal and sighing from the small amount of friction.

Curiously, Will's fingers brush against Hannibal's nipple, circling it. The differences in gender do, at times, have him stopping to pause and think. Less so than before, but right now he's keenly aware that he's never held a man like this. Hannibal is both larger than Molly and himself, but Will doesn't feel threatened by the fact. There's both strength and grace in Hannibal's physical form. Will wants this scarred body against him, pliant to him and accepting of him. His other hand strokes softly through Hannibal's hair as he bends down and nuzzles his cheek against Hannibal's own.

The question is perhaps not subtle, but Hannibal doubts it needs to be. He's not attempting to trick Will into anything at this point, merely gathering the information he needs to make an informed decision. He wonders for a moment just why Will has never mentioned this to any of the physicians he's undoubtedly seen in the past, but the answer is glaringly simple. He'd asked Hannibal not to lock him up. For a moment, somewhat unkindly, Hannibal considers asking whether or not Will's symptoms abated during his incarceration, but that seems a very unkind question given Will's request. So instead Hannibal merely waits and finds himself less than surprised when Will
immediately sees his concern.

Aware enough is still... worrisome in some ways, but it's honest. Hannibal listens carefully and nods, making a mental note to add reality checks to Will's recovery. Without medication there's little they can fully do, but certain talk therapies and stress management can definitely hold symptoms at bay if they get to be too severe. Will has likely been living with these all his life, so Hannibal is less concerned; if they're a staple for him, it's unlikely there's anything physically wrong, and Hannibal remembers the results of the scan. No lesions, no tumors. Will has no discernible dementia. Brain chemistry over brain physiology, he thinks. But his musing briefly derails when he feels Will press closer, when he leans his hips in against Hannibal's lower back. The press of his heat is evident and Hannibal shivers, hesitating only for a moment before he leans back pointedly, giving Will a little more pressure.

The touch to his nipple is not surprising; Hannibal remembers Will's response to it and he'd wondered when Will would be so bold. It is... an interesting sensation. None of Hannibal's partners have paid attention to his body in this way and while the lick of sensation is different, it's not unpleasant. Though Hannibal does suspect that any attention from Will Graham like this would be pleasurable. He closes his eyes with a soft sound, encouraging, and shivers at the care in the stroke to his hair and the scratch of Will's beard. "I cannot help my transparency, Will," Hannibal breathes. The tentative exploration is doing as Will had intended. This is... distracting, but not insanely so. "Have these hallucinations been with you since before you and I met?" It's a safer way of asking 'before the scan'. He has no desire to remind Will of his initial deception. "Do you have any control over them? Or... I suppose a better question would be: Do they cause you significant distress? There are things I can do to help if so."

Hannibal takes a moment to lift his hand, aware that this topic is likely not one Will wants to linger on. So before Will can answer, he sets his hand over Will's and carefully presses down, moving to Will's fingers to simulate a rougher touch, pinching. Hannibal nuzzles his cheek back against Will's and adds, "Keep going, if you would. It feels good."

This was his idea and still Will wants to throw it to the wayside in favor of diving into Hannibal. It's not been as difficult to talk about as he'd imagined, but he's not really being very personal or in depth about it. It's surface level, really... Unlike if he were to share about how, after being gutted, it had been easier to talk to an imaginary Abigail rather than Hannibal? (But of course the two of them talked about Hannibal.) Or, how, while incarcerated, he struggled with wanting to see the stag and becoming it? Walking along the railway lines, he'd felt like a deranged man chasing after a mirage, his hand reaching out to touch the ravenstag, but never able to...? There were deeper feelings about his hallucinations, loss and disconnection, longing and betrayal, but Will can't open up about those aspects. He won't.

"Since I was a teenager," Will answers easily. It's just another fact, another piece of information that could be added to a growing list Hannibal is keeping. Although, his hallucinations and delusions, at that point, hadn't been rife with symbolism - no, Hannibal had brought that little addition on his own. Significant distress... God, he wants to laugh, but Will holds it back. 'You cause me significant distress' is what Will wants to retort with, but that, too, is denied. He's almost proud of himself for behaving. "I don't want any medication," he states. "Or experimental therapy..." He briefly thinks of the fucking phototherapy and then the hospital with Chilton. "I-I don't know if I want help..." He suddenly worries that, in a way, he's betrayed the ravenstag, the one companion that hadn't deserted him. In opening up about the 'mess' in his head, he's one step closer to exposing the creature's existence...

(It doesn't matter how illogical it is... because surely the stag is a manifestation of Hannibal, but Will
has kept it close to his heart. It's his hidden truth, a secret that has both comforted and tormented him and what would happen if he spills it?)

Hannibal seems to sense him faltering and his hand joins Will's, encouraging him to be rougher - adding to the distraction, but this time for Will's sake. Will obliges once, pinching the nipple between his thumb and index finger experimentally. His touch then softens, returning back to rubbing against the nub lightly. "Let me touch how I want to," Will murmurs, seeming strangely settled. It's far too simple to slip into violence, into the rougher touches. Maybe Hannibal prefers them, maybe it's more comfortable. (Will can relate.) "I have you, yeah?"

Hannibal nods carefully, settling at the knowledge that Will has been struggling with his hallucinations since before the scan. Nothing medically wrong. He files that away, as does he file away the small note of unease in Will's voice when Hannibal suggests that there are methods to control this. It makes sense. Hallucinations are different for different people; many suffer through them, but a few find them comforting. Will has likely lived with these for almost two decades. It honestly isn't surprising that he's uneasy at the thought of losing them. So while Hannibal does wonder at the intelligence of this, he silently takes Will's hand and guides it higher. The distraction seems to work, and while Will's distress doesn't vanish, he does seem redirected. The pinch to Hannibal's nipple is sharp and he draws in a slightly sharper breath at the sensation, the muscles in his stomach shifting at the answering sensation.

It is odd, but pleasant. He swallows, and though the softer touch is less sensation, Hannibal finds himself relaxing under it. He lets out his breath - slightly unsteady and shaking with a gently growing desire - and nods his agreement. "Yes. Yes, you have me," Hannibal promises, and after a pointed moment, he allows his hand to drop back down. Save this time he settles it on Will's knee and strokes his thumb along the edge of his patella. It's not meant to arouse, merely to ground. It's hopefully comforting to them both. This new, settled side of Will is... intriguing, and Hannibal can't help the low thread of arousal between them. Unlike before, it's unhurried and un rushed. He's content to merely bask in this moment.

"If you don't want medication or experimental therapy, Will, I won't force it on you. If the symptoms were to a point that they were impacting your life so viciously that you couldn't function, then I would insist. But ultimately the choice is yours, even in that case," Hannibal promises, leaning his head back against Will's shoulder. It's solid and warm and he can't help but draw comfort from Will's touch even as his hands move, teasing and distracting. Hannibal breathes out slowly, and he's aware his pulse is a little quicker now. "If you don't want help, you might not need help. If you are in control of yourself, or you can discern reality from fantasy, hallucinations may simply be a part of who you are. I have no desire to control them. But if you would be amenable to talking about them with me... perhaps we won't control them, but you can be given the skills to help you if you come across one that is a little more overpowering than you'd like it to be. Your imagination is so vivid... so intricate, and beautiful, I'd hate to tie it down. But perhaps talking about it would help. Would you talk about your hallucinations with me, Will?"

Will's touch shifts between nipples, gentle, but insistent, coaxing the other one to hardness. Hannibal agreeing - that yes, Will does have him - has the younger man pressing kisses along Hannibal's jawline. He's never really been this affectionate before, but after the upheaval of last night and the emotional currents of the morning, he feels compelled to touch and appreciate Hannibal, to make him feel loved--

(No... But?)
Thankfully, Hannibal keeps talking and Will directs his mind away from the L-word. He's not going to open that can of worms up. Nope. No way. He's in control. Right. His hallucinations hadn't caused him to seek out Henri. He hadn't actually killed Abigail. His thoughts, on the other hand, were likely problematic, but they weren't discussing that subject. He knew what was real and what wasn't. He hadn't had any spectacular meltdowns, any psychotic episodes. And Hannibal doesn't seem all too worried and seems to accept that they likely are a part of him and it's a nice thought, one that Will gives a soft moan to, sucking on the bottom lobe of Hannibal's ear.

Would you talk about your hallucinations with me, Will?

As if on cue, his stag snorts its hello, appearing in the room, bending at its limbs and settling down next to the side of the bed. Will pulls off of Hannibal's ear. In this instant, it reminds him of his dogs, clambering to be close, but accepting that they weren't exactly allowed on the bed. Will glances over at it, he has the overpowering urge to once again duck his head into those sleek feathers and wrap his arms around the broad neck. It's so close - within arm's reach... He hasn't often touched it, but it feels volatile now, like if he mentions its existence, gives a name to it, it could vanish into smoke and slip through his fingers. His eyes keep darting to the side, trying to get a better look at the creature, figure out what it wants, why it's here in this moment.

He's not ready to give it up yet. So, Will chooses his manifestation of the Ripper, of Hannibal's darkness, to bring to the alter instead. "One is a completely black wendigo. Ribs protruding, black antlers, long claw-like fingers. A despicable ravenous thing," Will shares, his voice is calm, but slightly distracted. Large oval eyes are regarding him from the side. He doesn't stop touching Hannibal, not embarrassed or ashamed that the creature is watching him. He tugs a little harder on a nipple to vary the sensations, to try and pull him away from regarding the stag, from possibly opening up about it.

(It's his. What if Hannibal doesn't understand its importance, its significance? It wasn't like an imaginary friend. It, too, had laid on the kitchen floor bleeding out.)

While the sensation had started out curious and uncertain, the gentle slide of Will's fingers is edging beautifully towards arousing. It's a lighter, more indulgent pleasure than Hannibal is used to, but one he finds himself enjoying. He's as focused as he can manage given the distractions, but just because this is a conversation he intends to keep going doesn't mean he's not also focusing on Will's touch. It's careful, bordering on sweet, and Hannibal finds himself subconsciously leaning into it, tilting his head to let Will kiss his jaw and idly watching Will's fingers play over his nipples. The arousal is slower, deeper. It had been sharper after the pinch, but this is beginning to feel just as enjoyable. Focused as he is on Will's words - on his admissions about his hallucinations - Hannibal can't help a few soft sighs and almost-moans when Will's fingers press just right.

By the time Will sucks at his ear, he's half-hard, but his focus is still present. He doesn't miss the way Will stills behind him for a curious moment, but he also doesn't comment, figuring it's a way for him to cope with the question. Hannibal just waits, though even as Will's fingers move and his breathing deepens ever so slightly, he can't help but notice the way Will's tendons bunch behind his head. He's looking away, and that is enough to curiously catch Hannibal's eye. He glances to the side as well, but he sees nothing. There's merely a bedside table, an ornate lamp, and a soft rug on the hardwood floor. Visually nothing else is there, but Hannibal does wonder at something less physical, especially considering the topic of conversation.

He's quickly distracted by the answer Will gives. Blinking, Hannibal looks back ahead and attempts to picture what Will is saying. He has... suspicions immediately just given what a wendigo is. But it is entirely Will's choice whether or not to divulge that information. "The legends of such a creature
are well documented by the Algonquin-speaking people. The Cree, the Ojibwe, and a few others.
Given what you have surrounded yourself with these past few years, that you see such a creature is
not shocking. Tell me, Will, does it--" Hannibal begins, but he winds up cutting himself off on a
sudden, sharper breath as Will's fingers tug harder, sending a low prickle of heat all the way down to
pool in his lower stomach. Hannibal wets his lips. "Uh...does it... does it bother you? This wendigo
of yours? Does it frighten you? Is it here?"

The question is asked carefully, kindly, and Hannibal glances to the side where Will had been
looking before. Somehow he doubts it; Will seems confused but not afraid. Whatever is here - if
anything is - Will doesn't find it terrifying.

While Will still remains on the fence about whether or not he enjoys his nipples being played with,
Hannibal seems to be enjoying it. The man is a little more responsive and Will continues his
ministrations, his other hand joining in. He wants to change positions, to be able to fully see and
concentrate on Hannibal's expressions. Instead, Will is side eyeing the stag while his fingers learn
what kind of touches evoke a particular reaction. He flicks, rubs, varies the pressure. It's a class Will
likes being enrolled in.

With cannibalism being inherently involved in a wendigo's folklore, it doesn't take much of a leap to
connect Hannibal and the Chesapeake Ripper to Will's own imagined creature. Undoubtedly, the
doctor is curious, but he doesn't press Will into divulging more specifics about the symbolism and
any possible connection. Maybe later, maybe never.

The sudden change to roughness brings a telling sharper intake of breath from Hannibal and words
being repeated. "You like that, don't you?" He asks rhetorically, delight evident in his tone. Will
pinches the other hardened nub, wanting to pull out another sound. Hannibal's reactions are obvious
and encouraging. Will remembers the feel of Hannibal's mouth on his own, the scrape of teeth, and
he wants to return the favor, to see how Hannibal finds the sensations. (The stag watches
impassively.)

"It doesn't bother me anymore," Will says. He's made peace with Hannibal's darkness. It's no longer
a separate ominous monster looming in the shadows. It wasn't an insidious entity looking to trap him.
It's actually been years since Will has seen it outside of nightmares. So caught up in his pursuit of
drawing out pleasure, Will answers in between kissing Hannibal's face, "Just you watching us." He
doesn't catch the slip.

There is plenty of evidence towards the sensitivity of various places on the body, nipples included,
yet Hannibal still finds himself mildly surprised at his own reaction. He's rarely given this thought
before and the few times he'd explored this option himself, it had hardly felt worthy of continuing.
He wonders if this is merely the benefit of a partner (unlikely, as he's had one or two express vague
interest before that never went anywhere) or simply that it's Will. As Will's other hand comes into
play and a light shiver works its way down Hannibal's spine, he decides this explanation is more
likely. It's Will's attention, his favor. He's fostered an open environment where Hannibal feels
comfortable relaxing despite the events of the night before. There's no reason to remain tense or
uncertain, and he suspects by now that his questions will be answered when he asks them. Perhaps
it's Will's touch and curiosity mixed with the comfort inherent in this position. Whatever the reason,
it's something Hannibal finds he enjoys more than he'd been expecting.

Will's exploration borders on maddening by times. The flicks draw occasional hitches of his breath,
and he wants to move into a great number of the touches, but he remembers Will's earlier words
clearly: 'Let me touch how I want to.' Whenever the desire to move - to lift a hand and guide Will's
hand to do something again - hits, Hannibal merely allows those words to play again and eventually relaxes into this. In a way, it's decadent, a hedonistic pursuit, and not being in charge of the moment is... different. Pleasant. Though he knows this is something he would only ever entrust to Will. It means when the first tug comes, he's wholly unprepared, and Will's delight is evident. Hannibal swallows and while the question had been rhetoric, he nods anyway, his pulse a little quicker and breathing mildly hitched. "Yes. I was... unaware I would."

It only stands to reason that Will takes this information and runs with it, and he does. The second pinch sends a small lance of heat through him and Hannibal hisses softly and begins to move into the touch before remembering to simply let this happen. His breathing is a little unsteadier, but he's content to allow it, to allow Will this moment. Yet as wrapped in this new pleasure as he is, he's still aware enough to listen, to think. Will's reassurance is settling, but the comment he tacks on at the end is enough to draw Hannibal up short. He blinks through the mild haze of teasing pleasure and frowns curiously.

"What?" He asks, and his voice is admittedly a little rougher. The scratch of Will's stubble between kisses is pleasant, distracting in and of itself, but Will doesn't seem to be aware that he's said anything else. It means the comment is unguarded and real, and Hannibal glances to the side uselessly. He can see nothing there, but clearly something should be catching his attention. "What do you mean I'm watching us? Do you hallucinate me, Will?" Hannibal asks. He doesn't sound upset or suspicious, merely curious.

Only after Hannibal's question does Will realize what he's admitted. His hands stop what they are doing, pull away and come to rest on Hannibal's shoulders. He's prepared to push him away and escape. Will's eyes dart between Hannibal and the stag. The stag regards him calmly, seemingly not startled by his obvious agitation in the least. It blinks, its dark eyes remind Will of bottomless pools of water, intriguing and dangerous, for who knew what lurked below.

"Um..." Will begins. If it had been two weeks ago he may have actually gone through with it and pushed Hannibal away, haughtily ending their discussion with whatever I'm done with this' phrase came out of his mouth. But it's not two weeks ago. They're much closer now; things have changed. He's not entirely sure what's all different, but there's been some tectonic shift, at least within himself. Will doesn't want to throw a tantrum, giving more power to his well documented instability. Will doesn't want to run and hide from Hannibal. Hannibal deserves better. (Wait. What?)

"No? Not exactly," Will mumbles out. His fingers fidget against Hannibal's shoulders, tapping nervously, stopping and then gripping. He tries to tell himself to get it together. This is hardly the biggest thing to-- but maybe it is? The stag has been with him for years, since Cassie Boyle had been impaled and left for him in a field, through Hannibal winding him up, while he was on trial... It's the only hallucination, save for Abigail, that didn't upset him on some level. The arm closest to the side of the bed reaches out, Will's hand coming to lay on top of the stag's head, fingers stroking at silky smooth fur. "It's a stag," Will whispers reverently, his mouth pressed to Hannibal's ear. "But not your everyday variety. It's beautiful. Jet black. It has raven feathers. Magnificent antlers... It's majestic. Dangerous, but watches over me..."

Will's other hand runs down Hannibal's arm. The touch may be to reassure himself more than Hannibal. "It's been with me since... Since you." He's excited still, nerves bleeding into his arousal. It's another confession he's making, but this feels much more significant.

Hannibal is expecting Will to hesitate, but he's not quite expecting Will to stop. His hands draw away so quickly that Hannibal is left somewhat shocked by their removal, still breathing a little harder.
Despite his confusion, but it takes only moments to realize that this question had not been a smart one. Hannibal fights the urge to close his eyes, to lean his head back against Will's shoulder in a small thread of frustrated defeat. He's not surprised when Will's hands settle on his shoulders, braced just so, as if he's planning on shoving Hannibal away. But he is surprised when Will's touch simply remains, making no move to push him away or one to pull him closer.

He stills. Despite his quicker pulse and the arousal still in his system, he dares not breathe too hard lest he break Will's peace. To his hesitant pleasure, Will doesn't push him away. He simply keeps his hands there, fidgeting, but after a tense moment of uncertainty, Will finally speaks. His voice is low, uncertain, and while one of his hands presses harder against the bandages on Hannibal's shoulder, he doesn't move. He doesn't react. It stings, but his focus is on Will. When one of Will's hands moves, easing from his shoulder, Hannibal finally allows himself to relax a little, cautiously leaning back against Will's chest again. He watches, curious, as Will reaches a hand out and flattens it midair. At first Hannibal has no idea what he's seeing, but all it takes are those three words - it's a stag - for him to understand.

There's nothing that Hannibal can see. This is, after all, a hallucination. Yet the height of Will's hand does give him certain hints. The beast - a stag - is clearly kneeling on the floor, perhaps at rest. Hannibal stares at the stretch of carpet and wonders idly if Will has placed this creature upon it. The mention of feathers does give Hannibal pause, but he quickly works beyond that. This is so much more than a stilted vision. Will's voice against his ear - the hesitation and nerves he can hear - makes it very apparent that this is important. Hannibal falls quiet for a moment, simply regarding the empty space and wishing for an odd moment that he could see what Will can. "Your guardian," he translates finally, hesitantly, like he's somewhat worried about saying the wrong thing. "That isn't surprising. The stag has been a symbol of protection through countless centuries and many religions. Some deem them guardians of the forest. Others view them as deeply spiritual. The shedding and regrowing of antlers akin to being born anew."

Hannibal wets his lips and, after only a single moment of hesitation, he leans back against Will and then reaches out. He's careful, not getting too close to Will's hand, but hovering beneath it, approximately where he believes the muzzle would be on a real stag of accurate size. Aware this is a risk, Hannibal merely draws in a small breath. Will doesn't want to lose this creature, so clearly it's significant. A part of him. Even if Hannibal can't see it, he wishes to understand it. "If... I may? Would you guide my hand, Will?"

Despite the fact that there had been crows at the crime scene and the Minnesota Shrike had been his active case, Will has always thought of his stag as part raven. As a carrion bird, ravens were often seen as ill omens and attached to death, yet for some indigenous mythology, the raven could be both the Creator and a trickster god. It seemed to fit his stag better, for Hannibal both created and was a keeper of secrets. The portrayal of Native American tricksters could vary between stories - a hero or wise in one, and then villain or fool in another. For as cunning as Hannibal Lecter was, he'd been a fool for love. (A fool for Will Graham.)

But right now Hannibal is listening and not judging. He's seeking the possible meaning and importance of this imagined beast. This realization has Will's apprehension lessening but his chest feeling tight. (This might be another tectonic shift.) Will likes the idea of the ravenstag as a guardian. His silent companion throughout the craziness that was his life. Despite it being his life and having gone through and lived the events, sometimes Will still feels disconnected from his story. (But the stag had remained a constant.)

At the mention of antlers regrowing and being born anew, Will shudders, his hand clenching at fur for how many times did he envision antlers sprouting forth from his own head or his back?
His own reverie is shaken as Hannibal, too, reaches out in a show of faith.

Would you guide my hand, Will?

Taken back, Will's mouth parts in a silent gasp. This is recognition. Acceptance. More than that, it's Hannibal entering his world with only Will to guide him. Trembling, Will's hand lets go of the fur he was previously clutching to place it over top of Hannibal's hand. Slowly, he moves their hands together until it rests against the side of the stag's head. Of course, Hannibal sees and feels nothing, but Will knows this is for him. His heart is hammering away in his chest as he gently slides Hannibal's hand upward toward the ear. The stag's ears twitch at the stroke and it gives a soft snort. "I... You..." Will shuts his mouth. There's no words he can hope to find.

This is easily a risk. Will's hesitance in mentioning the creature, his distraction in looking its way, and the fact he had pointedly led with another hallucination first speaks volumes to Hannibal. People react to others responding to hallucinations differently. Generally as a practice it's frowned upon; enforcing the idea of the reality of a hallucination can be damaging to those already in distress, but Will isn't in distress. This is merely his life, his reality. After a long moment, Hannibal had simply decided that - like any other attempt to respect culture - he could make this effort for Will. The only question is whether or not Will wants him to. And when he asks, he's uncertain if the way Will breathes in deep behind him is positive.

He watches Will's hand move and at first he assumes he'll be pushed away, but instead Will merely reaches for his hand and takes it. Hannibal stays still, stays silent, though he does dart a quick glance back at Will even if he can't truly see him like this. It's impulsive, the need to know he's not pushed too far, but before he can truly concern himself with Will's state of mind, he's being guided.

Will stops him and Hannibal immediately looks at the way Will's keeping their hands. His fingers have been allowed to curl - over antlers? No, his hand is lower than Will's had been before. Perhaps the side of the stag's head, Hannibal decides, and he allows his breathing to ease. Despite the curl of earlier arousal, he's focused on this moment even if he can't see it. For Will, he takes a moment to imagine. To picture old eyes and a great head topped with multiple points. To envision dark feathers. The image hitches slightly when he wonders if the beast has wings, but Will hadn't indicated as much. Feathers then, turning its coat from a black that almost absorbs light to one that merely reflects it. One day, perhaps he'll ask Will to describe the creature for him, if just so he has a frame of reference. But for that moment, if he focuses hard enough, he imagines he can feel the cool glide of silken feathers over his hand.

The moment is quiet, almost intimate. The only sensation Hannibal feels is the warmth of Will's hand and body and the strong beat of Will's heart against his back. It's solid but steady. Aroused, or merely enraptured. Not afraid. Hannibal settles a little more at the knowledge and he allows Will to guide his hand higher. Perhaps towards an ear. The way Will's holding his hand seems to say as much and so Hannibal merely curls his fingers, unknowingly running them through inky-black warmth and the soft velvet edge of the stag's ear closest to him. Perhaps he can't see the stag, but he can see Will. Can see the slight tremble in his fingers, and that's enough for him. "If it has watched over you in my stead, I owe it a great deal of gratitude," Hannibal says softly, smoothing over Will's soft stutter of attempted speech with his own. "I assume you have seen it here many times. A loyal companion as well. Guiding and guarding."

Will's aware of the multitude of responses Hannibal could have chosen to go with when faced with Will's admittance of the stag's existence. He could have been dismissive, replying with a safe, 'I see...' and moving on. He could have taken a more clinical approach, attempting to logic away the
creature and ground Will in his reality. Or Hannibal could have quizzed Will on specifics. Instead, Hannibal has shown both interest and respect for this revealed secret; Will hadn't known what reaction to really expect, but he's more than awed by what he's received.

(He's affected deeply, cracks appearing in the foundation a long standing and isolated fort.)

Both meeting and touching his stag together is an act of intimacy that's threatening to overwhelm him. It's far more personal than Will had been prepared for. Hannibal's hand is warm and pliant. They're conjoined at this point, Will's hand leading Hannibal's own, Hannibal trusting, perhaps imagining it, perhaps not. Will could ask, but still, he can't find words. Or maybe he's afraid of shattering this moment with them. He stays silent, but rapt.

Hannibal goes a step further, his fingers actually moving - petting - and Will has to swallow past a lump.

*If it has watched over you on my stead, I owe it a great deal of gratitude.*

(The crack becomes a fissure - it hurts, but Will knows it's necessary, like the cleansing of a wound. Hannibal has tended to many of his wounds, but this is different.)

"Fuck," Will hisses, squeezing Hannibal's hand tightly. He can't take it anymore. "Get your pants off. Take off everything," he then instructs hurriedly, pulling their hands away. The stag grunts, settling its head down, content to be near, but not needing to necessarily observe them. "Get on your stomach for me, Hannibal." He needs to be closer to this man, needs more direct skin contact.

The both of them have indulged in intimacy before, but Will has never gone so silent. Hannibal can't help a mild concern, but Will's touch is gentle and guiding, not violently shaking or rough with paranoia or anger. While he has little to go on, he chooses simply to allow this moment. Will is quiet but at least seems stable, and Hannibal cannot deny the intimacy of this moment. He can see nothing, feel nothing, but for a second he wishes he could. Wishes he could see this creature, that for a moment, could see through Will Graham's eyes. This is all he can do. He can ask Will to guide him, can try, but he will always be trying. It's still worth it. If Hannibal's interest gives Will peace, if his interest loosens Will's tongue, allows Will to realize he has no desire to rid him of these hallucinations if he needs them, it's worth it.

For a moment, Hannibal's attention wanes away from Will and more to their hands, gently clasped. It's intimacy, plain and simple, and Hannibal finds himself wishing to shift and lace their fingers together, but he resists the urge. Not a second later he feels the shift behind him, hears Will's soft curse and the way Will's hand suddenly grips tightly. Hannibal blinks and glances back at Will, curious, but not alarmed. Even so, he's not exactly expecting the commands as they come. He stills for a moment as he takes his hand back, but it becomes immediately apparent that while the words are phrased as commands, there's a thread of desperation under the surface. They're desperate requests, and while Hannibal is reluctant to end this, to stop gathering information, he's unwilling to deny Will.

"Of course, Will," Hannibal says softly, and he leans back against Will's chest for just a moment. Reaching down, Hannibal undoes his belt and the button on his slacks, then simply lifts his hips to do as requested. He doesn't dare swing his legs over the side of the bed with the stag apparently there, so this is the safest option. A soft breath escapes him as his cock - still fairly hard despite their divergence - is exposed to the open air, but Hannibal hardly pays it any attention. He merely settles his slacks over the back of the headboard next to his dress shirt and, bare to Will's eyes in a way he's rarely been before, Hannibal eases away from him and shifts.
He moves to lay next to Will on his stomach, shivering slightly at the press of the sheets against him, against slightly reddened nipples and his cock, but his focus is entirely on Will. He's aware of the extent of the scratches on his back - intersecting the raised edges of the Verger brand - and worries for a moment that Will is going to draw back out of concern. Hannibal merely eases the pillow closer so that he can lay his head on it and looks at Will warmly. "Do you need me to do anything else? What do you need, Will?" He asks calmly, more as a distraction for Will's gaze if the scratches do bother him. They don't bother Hannibal. He quite enjoys them.

There's still a thrill in issuing commands and having Hannibal obey them. Likely, Hannibal submitting to him in any form would be exciting. The blurring and exchange of power and control is something Will never thought Hannibal would give up willingly, yet alone repeatedly. But they move between these roles and Will knows it's he who dictates these transitions. Will doesn't necessarily like admitting that there's a measure of security and peace in letting Hannibal take control at times (but there is). He doesn't know if it's the same for Hannibal or if Hannibal is simply doing what Will needs at the time.

Will's hands come to the bunched up towel, his hands taking in the soft texture as he watches Hannibal - possessing a stupid amount of calm - working on removing the remainder of his clothing. Other than being naked in the shower, Hannibal hasn't been nude in front of Will before. This realization isn't lost on Will and he unwraps the disheveled towel from his waist, chucking it on the floor as Hannibal, of course, lays his own pants on the headboard.

As Hannibal settles in the middle of the bed Will regards the damaged back laid on display for him now. It's mildly worrisome, Will hadn't been aware of the scope of the scratches, they definitely ought to be cleaned, but right now Will doesn't care about offering some rudimentary first aid. He's not feeling practical right now, definitely not sensible. They need to be closer. He needs to be touching Hannibal. So, Will shuffles closer, drawn to Hannibal and he exhales a shuddering breath. "Together," Will answers, his hands urging Hannibal to push his legs closer. Will then climbs on top, straddling the thighs beneath him and purposefully edging closer to Hannibal's ass. Will's hand comes to rest over top his cock, pushing it down at the part before him. Will makes an excited sound. The image is perverse, the insinuation far greater. (He remembers Hannibal say he'd allow Will to 'have him'... Christ. He wants that more than he should.) He has to force his eyes to look at Hannibal's back, to allow himself a breather.

"You'd really let me tear you apart, wouldn't you?" Another rhetorical question. Will's voice sounds breathless. His other hand reaches down and runs over the now somewhat mutilated Verger brand.

It strikes Hannibal as he rests there, looking back over his shoulder at Will, that this is one of the first times that the two of them have been naked together. Will's towel is on the floor, so while Hannibal can't see more than the line of Will's shoulder and part of his chest from this angle, he knows Will is nude. It sends a small thrill through him, a rush, though he's not certain why Will wants him like this. For whatever the reason, Hannibal is content to merely watch, to look back at Will mildly, surrounded by the scent of Will's arousal and the bed that smells like them both.

The single instruction makes Hannibal frown curiously but it isn't long before Will's hands show him what he wants. Hannibal does as told, pressing his thighs together with a soft breath as it shifts him against the sheets ever so slightly, but it isn't until Will climbs on top of him that Hannibal understands. He closes his eyes with a soft, unsteady breath, and while the lazy arousal from before does flare, he allows it to relax again. Slowly Hannibal's shoulders relax; he merely settles himself against the pillow and looks back at Will as best as he can from this angle, as Will has not told him otherwise. The intimacy of this position is clear, and when Hannibal feels the hot press of skin
against his, he lets out another breath, far more punched-out than its predecessors. It's drowned in part by Will's sound, and a shiver races down Hannibal's spine, caught by how much he enjoys bringing that sound out of Will's throat.

It isn't until Will's hand reaches out and settles on the brand that Hannibal actually allows himself a sound that registers as more than a breath. Will's palm settles and runs over the intersecting scratches, his calluses catching on the raised edges of the Verger brand. There are places Hannibal can feel and many he cannot, but the nerves that are still alive and compensating have him hissing softly in a way that almost immediately fades into a soft moan. The position is all sexuality and temptation and Will's touch is a marked reminder. "Yes, Will, I would," Hannibal breathes; he doesn't need to know the context behind the question. He has proven many a time that he would gladly be torn apart by this man. For him. His fingers silently clench in the edges of the pillow and Hannibal wets his lips. "You know you need only say. I enjoy your marks," he adds, just in case Will's mind is lingering on the scratches. They're sore, but they're a good, satisfied sore. Much like the bandages on his shoulder, though they're more sore than the others.

There's a small, lingering voice in the back of his mind that wonders at how far he's gone, at how willingly he's allowed Will to settle in and monopolize control, but the voice dies quickly. Hannibal merely breathes through a small sound and shifts carefully, canting his hips just enough to press back. This isn't anything he's done before, but he has no qualms about Will's position. He'd not made his offer freely. Were Will to ask, Hannibal would allow him this and so much more.

The position holds new sensations, new possibilities and a potential for the elusive more that Will wants... It's blatantly sexual and far more forward than Will has ever been to date. He remembers his lack of interest at the gay bar, how he felt like the insider, an imposter, and now he's purposefully pressing his cock into the cleft of Hannibal's ass. (It shouldn't excite him, but it does, it fucking does.) And Hannibal allows this all, gazing back at him the best he can. Will is completely hard, far harder than he should be for as little attention as his dick has had so far this morning.

Hannibal's responses to the touching of his brand have always been telling. It's undoubtedly sensitive in some areas, more so with the violent scratches Will has marked him up with. Hannibal needn't have answered for Will knows all too well what lengths Hannibal would go to for him. (Getting on his knees for Jack Crawford, carrying him out of an ocean, encouraging the violence against himself to calm Will down...)

He remains mostly still, taking in the criss cross of angry lines down Hannibal's back and vaguely at a loss as what to do. This changes when Hannibal pushes back against him. Will says a few select curse words before his hand is off of his dick and coming up to his lips. He purposefully collects saliva in his mouth before spitting on his hand and slicking himself up. The sound is loud and pornographic. He repeats the process a few times, spit dripping down on Hannibal as well. Will leans forward, his hand snaking in to nestle his cock between Hannibal's ass cheeks firmly before settling himself on Hannibal's back. He braces himself on his forearms, mouth hovering close to Hannibal's ear. He's panting mostly from excitement as his dick has had so far this morning.

Spit isn't good lubricant, but Will doesn't want to have to fucking ask if they have any or where it is. The moment is charged, he's committed to it, committed to being close and personal and intimate in this new manner. "God, Hannibal," Will hisses, tongue licking at his lips afterward. "I can't. Can't fucking even figure out what I... It's your fault." It's not what Will thought he was going to say. "You keep surprising me... Keep getting closer and I don't want--" Will decides to moan instead.

This is far more blatantly sexual than Will has been to date. Arguably - barring the night before -
more so than even Hannibal has been, but Will seems to need it. He's fumbling, the scent of his
arousal strong on the air, and Hannibal basks in it, in the press of his skin, the slight hitching to Will's
breathing, all the sounds and feelings that tell him Will wants this. He's content to let Will call the
shots, though he cannot deny a wish to touch, to kiss, to study the rare moment of emotional intimacy
Will had let slip the moment before he'd given the command. Hannibal is reluctant to see it go, but
Will has been more than forthcoming. There's much they still need to discuss, but Hannibal will let it
wait. He suspects, after all, that this isn't so much as an attempt to distract him from asking about the
stag further as it is a sudden need.

Will has been seen. Parts of him that have never been acknowledged before have been bared for the
first time, and met with curiosity and acceptance. Will's response isn't surprising; he's grateful,
overwhelmed, likely filled with a need he can't process. Given how sexual a man Will Graham is,
this is welcome. It's much better than being shoved away, as Hannibal had expected at first. But Will
pauses, seeming torn, perhaps at a loss, so Hannibal makes a point to move under him and it does as
intended. It prompts Will into action. The curses are enough to draw a small, nearly-indulgent quirk
of a smile to Hannibal's lips. He even murmurs a soft, "Language," as a reminder, but hardly expects
it to be obeyed. He enjoys Will's profanity, particularly in moments like these.

Even so, Hannibal isn't quite expecting what Will does. People don't spit around him (or if they do,
they don't do so for long; it's hard to spit with no lips) and they most definitely do not spit on him.
Granted, that's likely not Will's intent, but it still earns him a small frown. Admittedly it dies when
Hannibal realizes what Will is doing, and when Will settles against him and Hannibal feels the length
of his cock pressing so close, he decides that Will is once again the exception to the rule. He
suddenly doesn't care about the saliva on his skin. He merely cares about the press of Will's body
against his back, the feeling of being contained, and the sharp spike of arousal that races through him
at how close Will is. His voice is low in Hannibal's ear, soft and thick with arousal, and Hannibal
swallows.

The position is beyond simply intimate. He can feel a sharp sting to his back with Will laying on top
of him, but he doesn't care. Instead he listens to Will's soft panting and when Will's hips move,
Hannibal lets out a soft groan. His cock is trapped between his stomach and the sheets, and while
there is some friction, it's hardly enough to draw the sound from him. No, the arousal is
psychological, emotional. Will is taking, and Hannibal wishes to give. He can only imagine how
they look, and the thought of Will over him, hips rocking, has a shiver prickling over his skin.
"Will," Hannibal murmurs back, a plea, a comment, whatever it needs to be. "It's all right. There...
there is nothing you need to figure out right now. I simply want you to enjoy yourself, Beloved."

It feels appropriate like this. With Will Graham literally his reality. Hannibal is surrounded in him:
The scent of his hair, the heat of his skin, the slickness of his cock (against sensitive skin that implies
a lot for a possible future) and the sound of his voice. Hannibal can do little but praise. He's
breathless, swept up in the arousal of having Will so close, having him stoke the fire in his wounds
and move against the brand. It's far too sensitive and yet Will's voice is an equal distraction. He
focuses on it when he needs to. And while the positioning is awkward for him to truly do much, he
does what he can to push back, to attempt to find a rhythm as he reaches for Will's hand. "Just focus
on this. I have you, Will. And you have me."

Closer. More. These concepts have spurred Will on, pushed him and nagged at his mind. But it
wasn't just sex and pleasure that he desired. (God, it would have been so much easier and simpler if it
was...) Sex was a biological need, physical, cause and effect basically. But whatever was happening
between Hannibal and him... Will couldn't fully comprehend it. It was like a painting he was trying
to look at, but he could only see parts of it, never the sum of all those parts and never the complete
picture. Did he even want to glimpse the full image? (What if he couldn't handle it, he couldn't unsee
Nevertheless, Will ruts against Hannibal, his cock wet with his own split, pressed tight and sliding against Hannibal's crack. The sensation and heat are delicious. There's a voice of protest in his mind, taken back that he could be really doing this - doing something so gay - but who really cared? Last night Hannibal had sucked him off. A week ago he touched Hannibal. It's been proven that Hannibal is his exception, because Will still feels distinctly uncomfortable and turned off at the thought of himself with any other man.

This position can't be good for Hannibal's back, nor all that rewarding for the older man, but the, 'I simply want you to enjoy yourself, Beloved' encourages Will to continue. Will knows that Hannibal finds delight in his pleasure, in experiencing it and having a part in it, so Will doesn't stop himself. (He also knows Hannibal does, truly, love all of him). He breathes harshly while his hips move and seek out a pace. One of Will's hands is taken and he grips back firmly. It's another way to be connected.

"I have you, yeah," Will confirms. "I have you. Want you... Want you so much, Hannibal. Want this..." He's almost babbling, echoing his earlier sentiments from before. He nuzzles the side of Hannibal's face, shaking slightly as he slows his pace some, not wanting to come yet. Will's hot, sweating and yes, despite their position, he wants them to be closer. "You want this, want me in you, don't you?" Will groans at the thought, his hand squeezing hard. "You need me to make love to you, tear you apart some more. I would for you, I would do it for you, Hannibal." Emotion is surging, intimacy that’s threatening to consume him. Will's tongue keeps moving, his mind spinning dark prospects without his consent. "You want to taste my flesh, Hannibal? Taste more of me? I'd let you... I'd let you kill me. Just you. Only you."

Listening to Will's harsh breaths, being surrounded in his presence and pleasure, Hannibal presses his cheek to the pillow he's drawn close and closes his eyes. He's aware of every point of contact, of the roughness of Will's stubble against his skin, and the answering points of contact where Will's legs touch him. This is all new to Hannibal, but he's long ago accepted it. Will Graham, in whatever shape he's in, is someone Hannibal will always desire. He shivers at the slick slide over his skin, and while Will's sweat against the wounds on his back stings, Hannibal merely presses into it, the pain shifting and mixing into something completely different. He is a sadist, but with Will, perhaps he has a leaning towards masochism as well, for the sting in his back and the pinch to the wounds in his shoulder from this position go straight to his cock. He breathes harder and delights in the movement of Will's hips, in the sounds of Will's pleasure. Like this, Hannibal only wishes he could do more.

Will's grip on his hand tightens as he finds a steady pace, and Hannibal breathes out a soft sound of pleasure at the thought alone. He doesn't care that he's not touching himself, that Will isn't. The intimacy and Will's words - strained with pleasure and shock and desperation - have every point of contact feeling intense. Hannibal squeezes Will's hand as he does what he can to move, using his arms to help push back considering he has little leverage. He does take care to ease up when Will slows, his breathing harder, a telling lilt to his voice that tells Hannibal he's trying to draw this out, to make it last. This is all new to Will as well, or Hannibal is going to guess as much. The thought has a curl of pleasure working through him.

Yet he's not expecting what Will says, or the answering lance of heat that shoots through him. Hannibal's eyes snap open. The thought of having Will over him one day, exactly like this, only inside of him has him groaning. He's made no secret of it, but hearing it from Will's lips adds another layer to it, something far more intense. "Will," Hannibal breathes, tight, on the edge of desperate, "Yes. I do." He does want it. He wants Will to take, wants to feel him closer when he's ready for it. But he's understandably only assumed Will would want something hard, rough. He is not a patient
man; Will Graham takes. So the mention of something else - of making love - hits Hannibal low. Something clenches in a beautiful agony inside and the breath he lets out seems punched-out, if soft. His fingers curl in the sheets and for a single moment, he allows himself to move, to rub against the sheets, for the thought is arousing and sharp.

He's so caught up in the thought that he almost misses the sudden darkness to Will's thoughts. In truth, it isn't surprising that Will's mind is capable of it, but it is surprising that he would allow Hannibal to go that far. Under the darkness, Hannibal reads this for what it is. It's intimacy. It's Will's darkness playing its own part, and he moans softly under his breath at being trusted to hear this. But even awash in intimacy and the desire for more, Hannibal can't simply let it slide. He takes Will's hand and eases it closer, pressing his lips to the delicate skin against Will's wrist. "Your life is mine... as much as mine is yours, mylimasis. I decide when - and if - you die. And it will not be on the table." Hannibal's teeth scrape Will's inner-wrist, feeling the fluttering pulse against his lips. It's threat as much as it is reassurance. "You are my equal, Will. You have no place on my table. Only by my side, enjoying what we deem truly unworthy. I will have you. I will hurt you when you wish, but I will not kill you. Not unless necessary."

It's a promise. It's raw, and aching, and Hannibal bites hard enough to leave indents against Will's skin. Admonishment, perhaps, or absolution. He merely holds Will's hand tighter and after a moment, he purposefully bows his spine in order to push back. It is a risk, perhaps, blatant, but Hannibal doubts it will be unwelcome. He changes the angle, and though he's expecting it, not even he can hold back a hiss at the slide of Will's cock lower over his hole. It's not close enough to risk anything, but the promise is simple. If Will asks, he will one day allow this and so much more. He will not kill this man, but he will give him everything.

It's debauched and it's perfect. Once again Will let's himself go, lets his mind wander away, thinking of how much closer they could be. Making love, feeling loved, being consumed by the one who loves all of him... Will's never let himself truly think on his feelings regarding cannibalism. It was far easier to turn up his nose and judge Hannibal around others (he knew and understood society's taboo on it). But time and time again Will had came back to Hannibal Lecter's table knowing full well what he was being served. It should have caused revulsion, any normal person would have found ways around being a dinner guest, but it hadn't, not really. He had met Hannibal's eyes, saw that flicker of knowing delight at the first forkful Will took of whatever sumptuous creation was plated before him. And they had talked around in circles, their eyes saying more than their mouths ever could.

They could have their own Last Supper, a covenant made between the two of them. Instead of bread and wine symbolizing his body and blood, Hannibal could have the real thing. Skillful and dangerous hands could reach deep into his body, touch what's never been touched, his actual heart even (because the man has been worming his way toward it, taking up too much space in his chest cavity). He could be impaled by his stag, drained completely--

But thoughts of their own twisted Eucharist bleed away as Hannibal moves his hand, mouth connecting to Will's wrist. The possessive words he's told cause Will to shudder, an anguished sound leaving his own mouth. As of late it's been him asserting his claim as seen in his unhealthy jealousy being explored while in the shower under the context of Alana. Will has rarely heard Hannibal state his claim so plainly. A word is said, a name of some kind Will assumes, but he's unsure of the language, but it's something distinctly European. He wants Hannibal to keep talking - the language doesn't matter - because if Will was listening it would stop him from speaking, stop him from possibly losing it. "Your equal," Will repeats, agreeing. What a staggering thought...

(He doesn't really want to die, but if he had to, he'd want it to be by Hannibal's hand closing around his throat, tighter and tighter, getting light headed, awash with his presence, but being held through it
Hannibal arcing has the angle shifting, Will's dick rubbing against the heated opening of Hannibal's body. It sends a perverse lash of heat through him to even consider that one day he could - would - push inside and claim Hannibal in this new way. (He wants to in every way.) Unlike the first time he'd been pressed against Hannibal's back, Will doesn't want to make a mess over Hannibal unless the other man wants it as well. So, Will takes a few deep breaths trying to reign himself in, to pull back from the edge. "Hanni-- Hannibal, can I.. Do you want me to come?" He grits out, his hips thrusting in short jerky motions.

There's something vulnerable under the surface. Something achingly hesitant in the agonized sound Will lets out, and it makes Hannibal press his lips to the indents on Will's wrist, as soothing as he can manage. There is so much more to this man than anyone has ever realized, and not for the first time, Hannibal is struck with how much trust Will has for even opening up this much. He's shaking open and exposed and simply enhancing it with sexuality, but that's not all this is. Hannibal holds Will's hand tightly as Will shakily repeats his phrase and he nods as best as he can as the words seem to finally register. Will Graham is the only one Hannibal has ever given up anything for. Will is his equal; he would let no other person in this position, give no one else this freedom and trust in return.

He can tell that Will is close to shaking apart, that his thoughts of intimacy have edged beyond a level Will is going to find comfort in later, so Hannibal chooses that moment to angle his hips. It's not selfish, though the hot press against his opening has his breath hitching in pleasure of his own, but this moment is for Will. Hannibal moves with him as best as he can, slowly drawing Will back out of his own mind. Thoughts of cannibalism and death are not surprising, but they're not what Hannibal wants him focusing on right now. Yet even as he moves, as he feels the tendons in Will's hand bunch and catches the strained hitch of pleasure in Will's voice, he knows he has never seen Will Graham so raw and open as he is in this moment. It's beautiful.

"Good. That's it, Will," Hannibal murmurs back, his tone low, encouraging. He can almost feel the vicarious pleasure as Will climbs towards his goal, but just as he's convinced Will is close enough to tip himself over the edge, he's surprised by the visible effort Will makes to draw back. He breathes deep, desperate, and when he speaks, his voice is edged with need, but genuine. It threatens to unearth Hannibal, for the question - while cut off - is blatantly asking for permission, and the thought has heat running deep within him, spreading out through his body and making him wish their positions were different so that he could draw Will in against his chest and touch him. He breathes a little rougher, caught off guard, but there's no question to it. Hannibal wants.

"Yes, Beloved," he says, just shy of breathless, and he presses another kiss to Will's wrist and then reaches up and back, enough to stroke his fingers through Will's hair and then tug lightly. He lets go the next moment, but only to touch again. "Would you come for me? I want you to. Breathe deeply, Will, it will make it better." Hannibal wets his lips and allows his hand to drop back down, pushing back as best he can. "I would like you to feel good."

Last night he'd put off his own orgasm, giving the control over to Hannibal with little fuss, but this is different. This is almost an apology for the morning after he'd first fallen asleep with Hannibal. He'd been startled into his actions by waking up with an erection and not knowing how to exactly deal with it. He'd been his old, usual reckless self, pushing the boundaries and masturbating against Hannibal's back with no real permission given - selfishly taking and using Hannibal's body blatantly. Will's not exactly looking for permission now, per se, (although his phrasing may have said otherwise), but he wants Hannibal to want it. He wants Hannibal to both acknowledge and allow what's going to happen.
Even now, Hannibal manages to be tender for a moment, another kiss brushed against his wrist before the hand goes to his hair. Will shakes with the restraint it takes to hold himself back. He can't remember closing his eyes, but they're being tightly squeezed shut. Hannibal is hot and firm beneath him, receptive and his. As often as Will's asked or stated, seeing and looking into Hannibal had been what solidified this belief. (Still... he remembers Gideon describing the Ripper as smoke, elusive and unable to be caught. But he had caught him. Now, can Will keep him?)

"F-fuck," Will spits out before listening to Hannibal's instructions and attempting to breathe deeper. It shouldn't be this difficult to get his lungs to work, but the word 'Beloved' echoes in his mind, along with Hannibal's desire that he wants Will to finish. Will opens his eyes, throws a quick glance over to the stag to see it's remained resting peacefully beside the bed, seemingly uninterested in their activities. He thinks of Hannibal reaching out to the creature and his hips rut against Hannibal purposefully, his stomach tightening with knowing and when Hannibal pushes back into him, meeting his greedy thrusts, Will comes with an almost pained sounding moan. It's exquisite, almost too intense and his limbs shake as his cock shoots his load between Hannibal's asscheeks, falling over Hannibal's hole and lower back. Will all but collapses onto Hannibal after, his sticky mess rubbing against his own crotch and stomach, but he's far too blissed out to care about it.

Chest heaving, he presses a weak kiss to Hannibal's shoulder blade before resting his head. "Thanks... Thank you," he's mumbling, a bit dazed and not entirely sure what all he's thanking Hannibal for. It's certainly more than just gratification from getting off.

There's something achingly precious in these moments. The times where Will's desperation climbs and eclipses his doubt, throwing his need to the wind for Hannibal to carefully collect and manage. Will is beautiful so close, his breaths labored, his muscles tight and trembling, and as Hannibal looks back at him as best as he can, the raw desperation and need on Will's face is mesmerizing and humbling in equal measure. He watches Will look to the side - the stag, then - but hardly reacts beyond simply looking at Will and doing what he can to push back. Each short, quick thrust of Will's hips is hot and needy, slicked with saliva long dried, sweat, and precome. He's so close and from this position where his own arousal is sharp but less demanding, Hannibal watches the intricate play of emotions over Will's face. He calculates every moment, and when Will's expression finally tightens and his breath hitchs, Hannibal merely hums and pushes back, curling his fingers again into Will's hair to merely touch. "Please, Will."

Whether or not Will hears the words, he still reacts. Hannibal shivers and his cock throbs, trapped as it is between his stomach and the sheets. He watches, awed, as Will comes, drinking in his moans and biting back one of his own at the sudden, slick slide of come against his skin. It has him pushing back, and it hardly matters when a streak hits one of the lower scratches; the scent almost dizzying with how much it makes Hannibal want, but he's careful to allow Will time to come down, to collapse, and Hannibal's soft murmurs don't relent as Will pants. "You needn't thank me, Will," he says softly, shivering at how closely Will is pressed against him and the slick slide of heat where he hadn't expected it. It's not an unpleasant feeling.

Hannibal allows Will time enough to catch his breath before moving. Much as this position is comfortable, the desire to see Will, to gather him up in his arms, is far stronger. Taking care to brace him, Hannibal carefully shifts up and eases to allow Will to roll free of him, feeling the loss of his touch immediately. With a spare thought to the sheets, Hannibal dismisses them; they would have been changed anyway. He simply moves his pillow out of the way and eases up onto his hands and knees, cock bobbing hard and flushed but not his priority. No, Hannibal shifts until he can turn around and sit up, reclining back against the headboard of the bed in a way that he doubts will press
the worst of the come into the fabric (and even if it does, so what? Will's scent will be decadent). Hannibal allows himself one single moment to look down at Will, at how debauched he looks, and then he leans forward.

He pulls Will to him with laughably little effort - a reminder that had he wished to escape, he could have - and gathers him in against his chest. Will's front is a mess of his own come but Hannibal merely lifts a hand to stroke through Will's hair, to touch his face. He leans in, kissing Will's forehead, his cheek, leading down to his jaw and chin, and then finally up to his lips. "You did beautifully, Will," Hannibal murmurs, breathing in the heady scent of Will Graham - all come and sweat and sex - and loops an arm around him, cradling him in closer so that Will can nestle in against his chest, hear his heart and come down like this. "You are remarkable." Hannibal trails off then, and murmurs other soft praises against Will's skin in languages he doesn't know. It affords Hannibal the freedom to be tender without risk to Will's uncertainty.

For some time Will rests on top of Hannibal, pressed close, hot and sweaty. They both will need another shower. His breathing and pulse steadily slow and he watches his stag with clear eyes. The stag blinks lazily at him, content and quiet. He feels a sense of a perfect, but hazy calm and when Will realizes that it might be an afterglow, he almost chuckles. Does he do afterglows now? Was that a thing for him? Orgasms obviously always felt good, but he'd never quite managed to feel this right.

(Maybe things would be okay. Maybe they are okay... But Will knows hope is a dangerous sentiment, for if he did give in, he would open himself up to be hurt, to be let down. Hannibal hadn't let him down yet, no, but Hannibal was still human...)

When it's evident that Hannibal wishes to move, Will stops being a dead fish and rolls off. Despite the movement, the spell isn't broken. Will still feels good and maybe even... content? It's not a word he often associates with himself so it seems entirely bizarre to be doing so now, but he definitely thinks he's happy or nearing the emotional state. Fuck. Content because of Hannibal? Content with Hannibal? Both? It was scary. Unsettling. But for once Will doesn't let himself get caught up in his head about it. He's pulled back, back to Hannibal, back to home.

Cradled to the older man, Will thinks back to when their positions were reversed and he was reflecting how it was akin to how a parent would shelter their child. Hannibal is many things, he effortlessly switches between roles for Will - lover, friend, mentor, psychiatrist, and yes, a parent at times, too. He simply does what Will needs. Will, on the other hand doesn't know what he’s doing, exactly... And what does Hannibal need? Hannibal had told him those many months ago, that just his company was all that's required, but Will doesn't want that to be the case. (He can hope to be more, to be needed...)

He's essentially soothed, kissed, touched and loved. The happiness hurts a bit more. It's sharp. Intense. But it doesn't cut. He's a sponge, soaking up Hannibal's attention. His affection. (Parasitic! He ignores that exclamation in his head.) Will's right hand drifts down to Hannibal's still hard cock, fingers grazing curiously over foreskin. He stays nestled to Hannibal's chest. "Going to touch you," Will says softly, making his intent known as he watches his fingers work the foreskin down. "I know I don't have to. I want to." It's the truth.

In the daylight, he sees a lot more now. Will doesn't care. It's a dick. He's not especially attracted to it by any means, it's just genitalia, but it's Hannibal's. A part of Hannibal. Will pulls his hand away and spits on it again, wetting Hannibal's cock now. It's hot and hard, but smooth. He pumps up and down slowly. "I'll keep talking... Like before," Will adds, but he decides to offer up information instead of having to be asked for it. "It really... Bothered me last night when I thought I messed everything up
between us."

Will hasn't been much of a giver before, but things can change.

Hannibal isn't expecting anything. He doesn't need to come to enjoy Will's touch, to justify the enjoyment of being held and teased, of being pinned and gifted with Will's pleasure. While he aches, it's distant, detached, so inconsequential when compared to Will. His skin is warm and slick with sweat and he smells like pure temptation and sex, and yet Hannibal merely gathers him close. Will's presence behind him had been pleasant. It had been humbling to allow Will to explore, to take charge and to give him a way to answer the questions Hannibal had asked. As he pulls Will closer and allows him to settle against his chest, though, Hannibal carefully takes on the role Will requires. Will needs him to be stable, unwavering, and Hannibal manages it. That he also allows himself to be kind and comforting is merely for his own benefit, though Will doesn't seem ready to object.

Will soaks up the attention, still trembling slightly in the afterglow of his pleasure, but there's a heaviness to him, a relaxation that Hannibal silently drinks down. He cards his fingers back through Will's shorter hair and holds him, all the while murmuring those soft, near-mindless praises.

He has no designs on the moment, nor any plans to ask for more, so when Will suddenly shifts enough to reach down and gives his warning, Hannibal's breath hitches in mild surprise and pleasure. Will's touch is soft, tentative, exploring, and Hannibal feels a twist of pleasure settle low in his stomach. Even so, he's already drawn a breath to tell Will he doesn't need to do this when Will cuts him off quite effectively. He doesn't have to. He wants to, and the knowledge is enough to draw a shiver over his skin. Hannibal hesitates only for a moment and then nods, keeping Will close but shifting just enough to make it easier for Will to reach.

The touch of Will's spit-slick hand makes him close his eyes. That Will is touching him makes it immediately more, but he's careful to merely breathe through the fire of pleasure. Wetting his lips and fighting the urge to move his hips, Hannibal allows himself a soft moan, pressing his lips to Will's forehead, then to his hair, keeping him close as Will's hand strokes him. Yet despite the pleasure, Hannibal isn't expecting more, so Will's admission catches him off guard.

He'd expected to carefully turn the conversation back around, to foster a safe environment where Will would have hopefully felt comfortable enough to speak. That he's doing so of his own volition means something, and Hannibal listens, the touch of Will's hand a welcome distraction.

"Will," Hannibal breathes, almost a prayer. "That... that does not surprise me. Your foundation had shifted. It threatened to crack. I... regret that I responded the way I did. I should not have shut you out." Even shivering with a gentle pleasure, awash in sensation drawn out so sweetly by Will's hand, Hannibal is not above admitting his own faults. He breathes in, keeping his hips still even as his hand settles on Will's back, gently running along the length of it. "What about it bothered you the most?"

The reactions are small, but meaningful to Will. Hannibal makes a soft sound and the corners of Will's lips twitch in an incomplete smile. He wants to become overly familiar with all these reactions, to catalog each unique one, from the hitched breathing to the barely there moans, they're all for him. Will watches his hand slide up and down Hannibal's shaft, journey made slightly smoother from his own spit. He's only done this once to Hannibal, but he'd been more rushed at the time. Now Will is going to draw this all out, there was need to rush. It's Hannibal's turn to be indulged.

Maybe this would become a regular occurrence for them - Will talking while touching, his mind only half focused on what he was opening up about with the other half basking in Hannibal, in the pursuit
of learning and pleasure. Will had always been the type who was far too often stuck in his own head making the distraction more than welcome. Likely it could be seen as rude - the lack of eye contact, the split focus - but they've moved far past conventional expectations. If it worked, it worked, and as Will opens up again, it would seem that it is an effective method.

Hannibal is pleased that Will is talking at all, let alone of his own doing. Will would rather not be talking - no matter how much Hannibal may love and accept him, vulnerability remains distinctly uncomfortable. It's been months of Will not being all that forthcoming and keeping his cards close to his chest. But as hapless as Will may act in this relationship, he's not stupid. He knows talking is important. So, that's what he'll do, even if it's about subjects that he'd rather pointedly avoid.

He doesn't want to remember the despair of being dismissed and even ignored. Because it's also been months of Hannibal always being there for him. Being completely reliable, dependable and available. The drastic change had been like whiplash to Will's system, more shocking than the backhand that had connected with his face. But Will knew he deserved it, his actions had to have consequences, and yet he hadn't been abandoned in the face of his manipulation.

What about it bothered him the most? Will's hand stops, just simply squeezing and relaxing at the base of Hannibal's cock. "Disappointing you... The thought of losing you because of it and the fact that it would have been completely my doing." His answer is said in a slightly detached voice. Will turns his head and eyes a nipple - another distraction awaiting him. He moves his mouth over and curiously licks at it, flicking the tip of his tongue against it.

There is nothing hurried in Will's touch and Hannibal is left merely basking in this new reality. Will has never been the type to take his time unless carefully prompted into doing so. He's reckless, impulsive, impatient, and yet Hannibal has accepted these qualities as merely part of Will. That he has tentatively decided to branch out now is enough to warm him, for while Will may be doing so as a distraction for himself, he is also doing it for him, to learn him. His touch is languid and almost curious. Despite Will's earlier need, the frantic clutch of his hands and movements of his hips, he's taking this slow and Hannibal both wishes for more as well as appreciates the attention.

He breathes deeply and silently works out his need for more immediately. He could push, could ask, but he is far more intrigued by what Will wants to do. It takes him a few moments to push past the urge to reach down and guide Will's hand, but he soon allows some of the tension to drain from his shoulders. It's a silent release of control, for even while Will is pulled in close to his chest, Hannibal is allowing Will to take control. He leans back a little more against the headboard and strokes his hand along Will's back, from shoulder to hip and back again, encouraging and tactile and reassuring. Despite Will's curiosity, Hannibal is still aware that this conversation is not one that Will wants to have. That he's still pushing himself despite this sends a different kind of heat through Hannibal's stomach.

Hannibal makes a small sound in the back of his throat when Will's hand comes to a stop. The small squeezes have his breath hitching but the lack of sensation borders on maddening. Even so, Hannibal doesn't complain. He merely enjoys handing Will the power over his pleasure and swallows, listening. "I would not have left," Hannibal says, and while his voice is a little breathless, it's still clear, still firm. "My disappointment was dependent on a belief that turned out to be un-unfounded." The slight stutter is clear, drawn out by Will's divergence. His tongue is hot and Hannibal isn't expecting the attention paid to his nipple, but with Will's hand around his cock, it's markedly more sensitive than it had been before. After only a moments' hesitation, Hannibal slides his fingers up and gently tangles them in Will's hair. He doesn't force, doesn't ask. He merely keeps his hand there, encouraging, carefully stroking Will's hair both to soothe and to permit him what he wants to do. His cock throbs in Will's hand; allowing Will to decide is thrilling and relaxing in one.
He wets his lips again and though Will cannot see the look Hannibal sends him, it's both fond and heated. "It feels good, Will. Very," he says, simply so Will is aware, and then he backtracks to pick up the dropped conversation. "I... expected the worst. Perhaps you should have gone about it differently, consulted with me first, but I do not fault you the reasoning behind what you did. One day, if you wish it, we can try again. Together. I merely wish you safe."

Hannibal's touch along Will's back achieves what it set out to do - a familiar reminder of comfort and reassurance. Will knows that his sudden shift into being more forthcoming is not taken lightly. Likely, it's why he feels okay trying - his efforts wouldn't be belittled, but appreciated. It may have been illogical to think that Hannibal would have all out left him (he's done it before, Will left abandoned and bleeding out on a kitchen floor), but emotions, in the heat of the moment, are often not rational. Last night, Will had, for a period of time, thought he had crossed too big of a line, taken too large of a misstep.

But no, the bulk of Hannibal's disappointment had been the belief that Will had been using affection and intimacy to manipulate as well, to lull Hannibal into complacency as it were. At the time Will had felt a great indignity toward that assumption, but he'd tapped twice for no, and the truth had been out in the open. Will did enjoy surprising Hannibal and there would probably always be a part of him that delighted in pulling the wool over the man's eyes because of the lingering bitterness from that first betrayal. But he hadn't started sleeping in the same bed and reaching out to further his plan of facilitated killing. He honestly had enjoyed being closer. After months of tip toeing around attraction and affection, it had felt like they had been moving into a new phase, one where they were more closely aligned.

At his actions being approved of, Will licks at the peaked nipple again using more than the tip of his tongue. Knowing that Hannibal likes this has Will enjoying his explorations more. He's experienced enough with female anatomy, but there's something kind of cute about Hannibal's nipples (not that he'd ever admit it). Pulling away, Will replies, "Obviously I should have gone about it differently." Bitterness creeps into his voice slightly. It's hard not to regret his fuck up, but his list of regrets was lengthy enough. "But I suppose it's brought us closer." That counted for something.

Will strokes upward once before bringing his hand to his mouth and licking his palm and spitting on it again. He can taste Hannibal and it's really not that bad. He smears his saliva on the tip of Hannibal's cock, fingertips brushing purposefully over the slit. Will won't be able to get hard so soon, but there is something vaguely arousing about this all. Without warning, he directs his attention back to the nipple and letting his teeth graze over the nub before pinching it between his teeth and pulling slightly.

The touch of Will's tongue is a different feeling than before. His fingers - rougher and callused - had been a sharper sensation, teasing his skin into hardness and they had been both sharp and not enough at the same time. This is markedly different. The heat of Will's mouth is teasing and intense in its own way and Hannibal's fingers stroke slowly through his hair. The urge to grip Will's hair, to pull him in closer and keep him exactly where he is almost overwhelms him, but Hannibal merely looks down, watching in an awed sort of fascination that's only broken by Will drawing away enough to answer. Hannibal swallows, his pulse quicker and the haze of arousal all through him that much deeper. He wants, but he wants Will's attention far more.

"It has," Hannibal's nails gently run over Will's scalp, both in encouragement and an attempt to soothe as best as he can. The bitterness in Will's voice is not something he wishes to have remain. "I... appreciate the effort, Will. I appreciate that you're speaking to me about this. I'm aware it isn't easy. That you're doing it anyway is..." Hannibal pauses, though not for emphasis. The pass of Will's
palm over his cock cuts him off, but the sight of Will licking his palm strikes Hannibal fully silent. He's aware of the slight slick beading at the tip of his cock, and aware that Will has already stroked some of it down in the process. The knowledge that Will has inadvertently tasted him nearly winds him, his breath stuttering for a pointed moment before Will's hand is back and Hannibal breathes in sharply between his teeth, almost a hiss.

It's significantly more difficult to remain still now. The focused attention - Will's fingertips over his slit - has him almost closing his eyes. It's sensitive, and Will's fingers are rougher and callused. The sensation is so sharp that it borders on painful, but Hannibal merely basks in it, breathing through the urge he has to lift his hips, to prompt Will into doing more. This is good.

He's already thinking back, trying to pick up the thought he'd abandoned when Will had touched him again, but before he can say a thing, Will is suddenly moving. The graze of teeth over his nipple is startling; Hannibal's breath catches, but it's his muscles that give him away, twitching at the sudden shock and the mix of pleasure and pain. Hannibal's fingers reflexively tighten in Will's hair and he does what he can to remain still, but the slight pull of Will's teeth has him arching his back ever so slightly and groaning softly under his breath. It's a sharp, pointed pleasure that goes straight to his cock. "Cunning boy," Hannibal breathes, tugging ever so slightly at Will's hair without forcing him still. Will can still move as he wishes to.

Will used to be so up in arms over the idea of touching Hannibal, romantic or otherwise. In their friendship, it had been Hannibal reaching out and initiating touch, mostly in subtle reassuring or re-focusing gestures - a hand clasping him on his shoulder, a brush to his arm. At the time Will hadn't thought much on them - he probably should have as no one else really touched him (Alana on occasion, but her attention had been mostly out of pity.) Even back then, there had been something oddly comforting about having Hannibal make the effort to connect on another level with him.

After finding himself alive and hiding out with Hannibal, Will actually had to figure out their relationship and just how far his feelings went. Physical closeness had been seen as a daunting concept. Will hadn't been able to even picture them together, surely not like how Molly and he had... but it's been months since he first voiced the unease he felt surrounding Hannibal's gender and the differences and similarities are much more welcome and appreciated. Will knew he wasn't a homosexual, he didn't even think bisexual was appropriate - it was just Hannibal that he wanted. And Hannibal's cock is hard and leaking in his hand - aroused because of him - and it spurs Will on.

It didn't matter if Hannibal was missing certain familiar curves and softness, Will was beginning to find himself tempted in other ways.

The taste of Hannibal on his tongue is bitter, but it's Hannibal. It's from him and it's new, intimate - it's more. He's touched his own cock enough, but Hannibal's is different and offers another perspective. Will thinks he could watch himself play with Hannibal for quite some time (and what a thought that was). It's almost like a new toy that Will wants to indulge in, but it was a complete body. Despite how intimate Will's touch is, the older man restrains himself, keeping his hips still and Will has to begrudgingly admit he's impressed by the show of self-control.

But it's when his teeth make their introduction to Hannibal's nipple that the doctor moves, grip tightening in Will's hair, a lovely sound being made and his body moving into the touch. Will receives the message and grates his teeth against the pebbled hardness in his mouth. He eases up with his teeth only to follow it up with sucking hard on the nipple. He pulls off with an obscene pop , rubbing his bottom lip against it.

Will's fingers lightly tap against the underside of Hannibal's cock as Will moves his head back to look at Hannibal's face. "I think I could do this for hours. Touching you, playing with you, all the
while not letting you come," Will murmurs, eyes bright and focused.

Chapter End Notes

I HOPE YOU ALL APPRECIATE THAT I HAD TO EDIT THIS WITH MY STRAIGHT PARTNER AND HE READ WILL’S POSTS AND IT WAS KIND OF HILARIOUS AND AWKWARD AT THE SAME TIME. TY GAVIN. ♥D:
Closer

Chapter Summary

When he'd dared Will to keep him on edge, he'd not anticipated this.

Chapter Notes

So happy to be posting this. °˖✧◝⁰▿⁰◜✧˖° It's been a lovely journey to explore these two beautiful and complex characters and we hope you enjoy the finish to this installment!

Huge massive ♥s to my co-writer, my Hanniguru, who is a shy introverted thing that I stressed out because I wanted to share our shit with the world. TY for indulging me and quickly becoming one of my bestfriends, no lie. Ʉ(밲�인)&

A heartfelt thank-you to all the readers who left comments and tolerated the format (I know it's not always easy!), and a special shout out to: werewolf6780, GhostGurlGamer, Miryam, Tamaneko, Beahart & DaydreamScribe for their comments throughout!

(Pssttt, we started a new story and have the first chapter posted. Give it a try? It's Mizumono divergent darker!Will with lotsa introspection & much more smut ☺)

As for the sequel, we have the first chapter written thus far but we won't be posting again with a set in stone schedule as that's a bit stressful. Follow me on tumblr or subscribe to the series to get notified. :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes
Once, Hannibal had remained still under Will's touch simply out of a desire to not frighten him away. He'd treated Will like a small creature - a rabbit tentatively nosing its way out from under a bush - instead of the man he is. There is a residual impulse to stay still in order to not frighten Will away, but it's vastly overshadowed by the desire to remain still simply because he's curious as to what Will plans on doing. His touch is no longer tentative and hesitant the way it had once been. It's gentle, but not out of uncertainty. No, this is intentional, and as maddening as Hannibal finds it, it's also thrilling. This is Will carefully testing his own desires, his own boundaries, and despite everything that Hannibal wishes to ask him, his focus in that moment narrows down to the sharp sting from Will's teeth and the press of his fingers.

Were Hannibal less controlled, he'd have cursed in the moment Will's teeth scrape pointedly against his nipple, already clearly abused, yet the sharp pain only makes him want more. It mingles somewhere along the line. Sharp sensation becomes something else by the time it settles low in his stomach, and Hannibal's muscles twitch and tremble slightly as he struggles to remain still. This close, Will can undoubtedly feel his pulse, and Hannibal merely lets out a soft breath between his teeth. It comes out as a hiss without his say-so, but he recalls Will pushing for noise, for sound, for talking. He doubts Will is going to object to this. Which is something quickly confirmed as Will decides biting isn't enough.

The suction is sharp and sudden and Hannibal's fingers curl in Will's hair, far tighter than he intends. His cock twitches, leaking against Will's fingers as Hannibal murmurs something in a language not English. It's said with the sharpness of a curse, but none of the sting. A second later he seems to remember himself and loosens his grip in Will's hair with a softer, rougher breath.

"My... my apologies," Hannibal says. He looks as composed as he can, but his gaze is dark with desire and his skin holds a light flush. His fingers - once still - stroke through Will's hair again, rhythmically, using the sensation as a way to wear off energy he can't otherwise.

He's breathless when Will draws back to speak, and what is said is enough to have Hannibal's eyes sliding closed on a deep shudder of desire.

'I think I could do this for hours. Touching you, playing with you, all the while not letting you come.'

It's not entirely what he wants, but he can think of nothing more fitting. His body wants to come, yet Will has had the power over that for quite some time. Regardless of what he wants, there is a certain elegance and thrill in handing the decision to Will. When he comes. If he comes. The thought has him swallowing thickly and clearly struggling for control. When he opens his eyes again, finally, it's
to meet Will's gaze levelly. "Then do it."

Perhaps it's the answer Will wants, but Hannibal suspects it's not the one he'd expected. He pointedly makes himself relax back against the headboard again and draws another steadying breath.

"I would allow you. I would allow you a great many things, Will. I merely ask that we still talk, if you are amenable to that, and if you're not otherwise occupied," Hannibal adds wryly, casting a slightly amused glance down at his own chest, where one nipple is more pebbled and swollen than the other from Will's assault.

Will doesn't mind when Hannibal lapses into other languages as it's been attributed to the fact that it's often for him, to spare him from something too intimate. This time, however, it sounds like a curse and this is genuinely thrilling. He still has the urge to hear Hannibal swear, granted, in English so he can fully appreciate it. For the first time, Will believes that he can actually undo Hannibal as well.

Gazing at Hannibal, Will feels a strange jolt shoot through him. He realizes that Hannibal looks positively ravishing. His defined cheekbones are accented with color and his eyes are half lidded with obvious desire. But yet Hannibal is still holding himself back, only his fingers raking through Will's hair. He's been behaving, patient - trusting - and Will feels another stirring of arousal. (What about this man shakes him so?)

His words have Hannibal's eyes closing and Will can see the flicker of struggle play out. (It's absolutely exquisite.) He's never been this much of a tease before, never wanted to string someone's pleasure out (or deny them an orgasm for that matter), but this isn't just anyone; this is Hannibal - Hannibal who has coaxed out so many varied sensations, who has given Will pleasure and also let Will find pleasure. When their eyes meet, Will isn't expecting the simple dare: 'then do it.'

But oh, he's so interested and up for the challenge.

The next comment has his hand pausing. It's a sliver of humor from Hannibal and it's somewhat rare. (He understands why he's not seen much of it, of course.) Will grins, tongue darting out to wet his lips.

"I'm sure I can manage," he replies simply. While it's tempting to show the other nipple some attention, Will plans on cleaning them up a bit. "On your stomach again, Hannibal," he says, pulling away completely and reaching for his discarded towel. His stag is gone, but Will isn't bothered by the observation. He dries himself off as Hannibal listens and settles once again on his stomach, showing that he will, naturally, comply with Will's orders.

Will sits on his knees beside the supine man's ass and dabs at whatever come has leaked down to the back of his thighs. Instead of continuing his task, Will's hands abandon the towel and lets his hands come to rest on Hannibal’s buttocks. The skin is warm and smooth. Curiosity piqued, he once again spreads Hannibal open. His release is sticky against Hannibal's skin, and Will let's go of one cheek, thumb gravitating to the trail of come and smearing it upward. Will gasps when the pad of that digit encounters a puckered hole and stops.

"I felt panicked while he was kissing and touching me," Will confesses quickly, needing a distraction from what he's doing.

The quick flash of a grin over Will's lips settles something deep within Hannibal's chest. The sight of it is thrilling, for while the two of them have been carefully orbiting and circling one another with varying degrees of success, he hasn't been gifted with Will's genuine amusement often. He's been
wryly amused, or bitterly so. This is different. This is Will genuinely amused with the situation and Hannibal's comment, and the sight of it cuts through Hannibal's arousal and settles something within. Some of the tension bleeds from his shoulders. Oh, he wants so much, and quite viciously, but he is willing to do a great many things and withstand even more if it means he can see Will smile like that. Smiles from Will Graham are valuable and rare.

In truth, given his reactions, Hannibal is expecting Will to lean in and pay attention to his other nipple, to make it match the first. Therefore the instruction given is enough to draw him up short. He hesitates only for a second, curious and somewhat reluctant to lose the touch of Will's fingers but he still nods. "Of course, Will," Hannibal murmurs, and allows Will to draw away with some reluctance. The distance makes him ache but he does as he's been told, slipping back down the bed and turning over to lay back down on his stomach. The press of the sheets to his cock is maddening, but the gentle throb through his nipple from Will's attention makes him shiver. Cunning boy indeed.

He pulls the pillow back over so that he can rest his cheek against it and glances back curiously, watching as Will settles back on his heels and cleans himself off. Will gives him the same treatment, cleaning the remnants of his come from where it had dripped down, but when Will pauses, Hannibal's breathing also stills. There's a look in his eye, and it's almost immediately followed by the touch of Will's hands to his skin. Stilling, Hannibal watches as best as he can, but when Will's hands spread him wider so that he can see, Hannibal winces at the lance of desire that twists hot through him. He breathes out sharply through his teeth, but replaces the breath with a sudden gasp when Will's thumb presses low. Hannibal shivers; he wonders for a moment if Will is aware of the threat of pleasure. So when Will's thumb finds his hole and stops, it's all Hannibal can do to keep his hips still.

A soft breath punches out of him - a twist of Will's name - and he can't help the smallest twitch of his hips, nor the reflexive clench of his muscles. He's not a stranger to stimulation, and in a way it's far worse to know what could happen in this situation. Will likely has no idea what he's teasing, and Hannibal's hands clench in the sheets as a solid reminder to stay still. It's bordering on impossible, particularly with Will's earlier words flooding his mind. 'You want this, want me in you, don't you?'

When he'd dared Will to keep him on edge, he'd not anticipated this.

It's only Will's voice that draws him back, that eases his fixation on the press of Will's thumb to sensitive skin. Hannibal breathes deep again in an attempt to focus, but it's difficult. Perhaps it's all the better for it, though. He'll remember everything Will says, and perhaps Will feels more at ease in sharing with the knowledge that Hannibal is partly distracted.

"That... is not surprising," he manages, breathing slow and deep in an effort to throw his attention in Will's direction. He wets his lips. "Often the reality of a situation is markedly different from a plan. You... intended to distract him," Hannibal adds, and while his tone is thick with remaining pleasure, there is a sharpness to it: jealousy, and possessiveness. "In the moment, I assume you had to improvise. I admit... breaking his leg and dislocating his arm were not necessary to the kill. I was... perhaps reckless. Not thinking as clearly. I only saw him touching you and... disliked it," Hannibal finishes delicately, with an undercurrent of sharpness.

This is entirely new for Will Graham. Of course anything involving anal isn't specifically a homosexual thing, but he's never ventured into this area before, or at least nothing further than an appreciative ass squeeze or two. But here he is, spreading Hannibal open before him, the evidence of his release smeared by his thumb that is gently pressed against heated delicate skin. The implication isn't lost on him. This is risky; Hannibal would call it 'bold.' But it's also closer and hasn't Will been
craving and seeking such a thing? From Hannibal's reactions, the man is okay with it, possibly even likes it...

Hannibal's reply may be delicately phrased, only showing the barest hint of his previous jealousy and possessiveness, but it's still present. Hannibal admitting to being reckless and prolonging the kill speaks more to the actual depths of those feelings. Will can't even fathom if their positions had been reversed. He can easily recall his bitterness in the shower concerning Alana and her involvement with Hannibal had been years ago.

It's tempting to lock up, to become swayed by the guilt of his deception again, by his own hypocrisy, but instead, Will repeats his earlier words, "Only you, Hannibal. I only want you." His voice is tight with emotion.

Hannibal is his anomaly, transcending logic and common sense, both salvation and a curse. Hannibal saved him from the Dragon, from the Fall, and from himself. Will doesn't want any other. Not to kiss. Not to touch. Not to hold. He doesn't know how much room he has in his heart - maybe only a dusty dilapidated room by now - but Hannibal's clearing space, surely. (It was inevitable, wasn't it? An inescapable fate... but Will thinks maybe, this time, he doesn't want to escape from it.) He'd thought that his heart was safe, locked away and placed high up on a shelf away from Hannibal's reach, but despite Will's insistence that Hannibal would never have it, Will's apparently left the key out.

His thumb rubs lightly, millimeter movements up and down against what feels far too tight for anything to enter, but he's intrigued. Obviously there's a method to stretch it and it required lubricant and patience.

"You, um..." Will tries to begin, but stops, feeling a flare of nerves and shaking his head at himself to get over it. He doesn't want to stop, so he has to spit it out. "If I want to... Do you have any lube?" Will's blushing and he focuses on his thumb, circling the rim, before gripping a little harder onto Hannibal's ass with his other hand.

It takes a long few seconds to properly get himself back under control. He doubts he can fully be blamed. He had expected Will to touch him, to tease him, perhaps to touch the scratches along his back or rub the come into his skin simply as he'd known how Hannibal would react to such a thing, but this is not what he'd expected. The touch is light, gentle, hardly enough to feel when Will is still, but Hannibal feels briefly pulled apart by the possibility of sensation. It's a tease toward the future; if and when Will allows this, allows himself freedom to take, it will be a new experience. Hannibal has found pleasure at his own touch before, but never by another's hand. Not in that way. Will's the first to touch him like this, and Hannibal shivers at the thought, immediately chiding himself for it. Will is apparently skilled enough to test his control. He doesn't need his own mind assisting.

Hannibal's breathing is deeper, steady, an attempt to maintain his own control. It's easier with Will remaining still, so of course he decides to move his thumb. It's mild but the sensation is distracting. Yet despite the struggle to hold still, Hannibal is not so far gone as to miss when Will speaks, his voice tight with emotion. The words wash over him and Hannibal breathes out a little sharper, his grip easing in the sheets as he allows himself to relax once more, warmed by the honesty in Will's voice. 'Only you, Hannibal. I only want you.'

"And I you, Will," he breathes out, allowing some of the weight of emotion to infect his tone. It's honest, meaningful, and likely all the safer for Will because of how simple it is to split Hannibal's focus. This time it's not Will's thumb that does it, but the sudden note of hesitance in Will's voice. Still dazed by Will's boldness and his admission, Hannibal again makes an effort to look back at him, curious for all of two seconds before the words register. The response is immediate. Hannibal's eyes
close and while he bites back a sound, it's clear by the mild pinch to his brow and the slight twitch of his muscles that he's deeply affected. The breath he lets out is sharper and Hannibal allows himself a few moments to merely find his control again. At this point, he needs it.

"You... you do not have to..." Hannibal begins, but trails off. Wetting his lips, he opens his eyes again and there's no disguising the desire in them as he looks back at Will. "But if it is something you... you want, then... yes. I do. it's-

Hannibal cuts off, shuddering with a heavier exhale as Will moves. The grip of Will's hand is sharp and oddly pleasurable, but the teasing of Will's thumb threatens to almost rob him of breath. He should have known that Will's nerves would get the better of him. In this, he hardly minds, though he has to remind himself anew not to push back and to allow Will to move as he wishes. Hannibal draws in another breath and tries again.

"It's... it's downstairs. On the table by the stairs. I had planned on putting it away, but... but I had no desire to wake you up. Are you... are you certain this is what you want, Will? Again, you are under no obligation."

This is the most uncertain Will has heard Hannibal, the older man taking deep breaths and repeating himself more than a few times. It actually helps relax Will. He exhales loudly and thankfully some tension abates. "I wouldn't ask if I didn't want to," Will replies bluntly. "You're hardly twisting my arm." There isn't much of an edge to his voice. Not now. As turned on as Hannibal may be, he's still Hannibal and that means checking in with Will and, Will, for once, maybe is a little endeared by it. (No, he wouldn't admit that either.)

"Okay..." Will's hands cease their actions and he wipes his thumb off on the towel before climbing off the bed, limbs a little unsteady and his legs a little sore from the strain from last night. "You uh... Clean up if you want?" He looks at the slick wetness that's been smeared around on his lower back from the headboard. "And. Um. You know, get into whatever position you want... Whatever would be best?"

He feels like an idiot and this is his cue to take his leave. Will says nothing else as he turns. He can hardly believe his feet are taking him down the stairs and to the kitchen. He doesn't trip and it feels like a success. And there, on the table, he finds a plastic bag waiting for him. His heart is hammering away when he reaches inside to pull out a bottle of lube and a box of condoms. Will blinks at the objects, holding one in each hand.

"Christ," Will exclaims, disbelief evident in his voice. Hannibal had seriously just bought these items *this morning*. Were *they* really doing this?

(Was *he* really doing this?)

Yes.

Maybe he wouldn't fuck Hannibal, but he was going to at least finger him. His stomach twists, slightly sick with anticipation. He's not grossed out by the prospect; Will's truthfully curious and interested in going *further* - becoming *closer*. Before he leaves the kitchen, Will drinks half a glass of water. He returns upstairs, stopping at 'his' bathroom to splash some cool water on his face. He gives himself an incredulous look before staring hard at the gathered items. He can back out still, but this is his last chance because Will knows that as soon as he walks through their bedroom door and he sees Hannibal, he's going for it. He hasn't been blind to the subtle hints that his light touching has been a tease and teasing meant something very good was on the horizon. Will has the idea that this isn't completely new to Hannibal, but...
Will would be new and that would change the experience for Hannibal. He collects the items again and exits the bathroom, walking with purpose back to the bedroom.

"So, you're going to have to walk me through this," Will states as nonchalantly as he can manage upon entering the bedroom (he’s not very successful).

The reassurance is actually welcome, for this is not a situation Hannibal had expected to find himself in. Will's words wash over him and he considers each one, levering himself up on his elbows so that he can look back at Will properly. He looks a little nervous perhaps, somewhat awkward, but Hannibal finds nothing uncertain or uncomfortable written on his expression. Quiet, Hannibal searches Will's eyes, his posture, and silently watches him even as he stands up. He notes the mild tremble in Will's legs and makes a mental note to revisit them later in the hopes of clearing up any lingering damage done from the night before. Will leaves, appearing somewhat awkward but Hannibal honestly just finds the sight endearing.

It's entirely possible that leaving the room will change Will's mind, and Hannibal takes a few moments to attempt to calm himself back down. He breathes deeply and slowly, louder now that he can hear Will on the stairs. Carefully he eases himself up to his knees and winces slightly in pleasure at the drag of his cock over the sheets under him. They'll definitely need to be changed later on. Hannibal wets his lips and sits back on his heels, wondering whether this is a good idea or not. Will hadn't seemed disgusted or uncomfortable. Hannibal silently gathers the towel and reaches around, cleaning up his lower back on autopilot and, after a moment, he eases the towel down on the bed in front of him. It's difficult to tell whether or not this is too fast, or too much too soon. After a moment, Hannibal reluctantly decides to leave this up to Will. Stepping out of the room and making his way back upstairs has the capacity to change his mind. If he returns and still wants this, Hannibal isn't selfless enough to change his mind.

He focuses on his breathing, on relaxing, on the sound of Will moving around downstairs. For a few moments he allows himself to think clinically, glancing down at the space on the bed in front of him. The best position for this, perhaps, would be the one he'd been in, but the thought of not being able to see Will has something twisting inside. Being on his back means being more exposed, but it also means being able to see Will's expression. On his back, were anything to change, Hannibal would be able to pick out the discomfort or uncertainty immediately. It is... admittedly not as dignified a position, but he's comfortable with less dignity around Will. Wetting his lips again, listening to Will on the stairs, Hannibal makes his decision and takes his pillow, settling it lower on the bed. He moves Will's over so that he can lay back against it (and silently takes comfort in his scent so close).

By the time Will returns, Hannibal is laid back on the bed, hips slightly supported by the pillow under them and legs not quite spread; he has no desire to push if Will has decided against this. As it turns out, he doesn't need to worry. Will's attempt at nonchalance doesn't necessarily work, but it does settle something in Hannibal's chest. He takes note of the slightly damp ends of Will's bangs and understands why he'd detoured into the bathroom. If Will has had time to attempt to talk himself out of this and he hadn't, he's certain. Hannibal allows himself to relax a little more and nods.

"I know. I have no issue in doing so. How familiar are you with the practice? Have you ever explored it with partners, or by yourself? Are you familiar with the prostate?"

Hannibal's tone is nonjudgmental, open. He waits for Will to come closer, to get himself settled, and then shifts, setting his feet flat on the bed, knees bent, and spreads his legs wide on either side of Will to give him the access he needs. The positioning is vulnerable and puts him at a mild disadvantage, but Will can see and touch as he needs to.
Will doesn't know if he'd rather have Hannibal on his back or stomach again. The former is more intimate, enabling Hannibal to see him and likewise for Will, but the latter is what he's just had experience with. But the position he finds Hannibal in is on his back, pillow wedged under his hips, cock still erect and pre-come beading on the tip. He looks lovely, marginally more composed, but still a bit in disarray from Will's doing. It's funny thinking on how often he's fantasized about messing up Hannibal, but now that he could, it hardly seems that important. He's crossed the threshold into the room and Will knows his resolve will remain. Somehow, the pieces have all arranged into place and he's drawn to Hannibal like a magnet. He's tired of fighting, being resistant; he wants and he will have.

Will makes his way over and onto the bed. He leaves the box of condoms on the foot of the bed and Hannibal's legs spread invitingly for him. A shiver creeps down his spine at the sight. It's very intimate, very vulnerable. With a substantial amount of jitters, Will licks his lips and comes to rest in between the now available space, perched on his knees.

Hannibal's fucking straightforward reply throws him for a loop. He should have probably expected it to be blunt, the man was a doctor after all. Will directs his attention on the bottle of lubricant, flicking the cap open and staring down at it.

"I'm... not familiar at all," Will replies truthfully. He almost tells Hannibal he hasn't even had a prostate exam, but fuck, the man isn't his doctor. "With any of it..." He adds on. Will sees the expanse of Hannibal's inner thigh and he ducks his head down, mouth kissing at the delicate skin. It's partly as a distraction and partly from the desire to continue touching Hannibal and making him feel good. He nips sharply along the heated skin, working closer to Hannibal's crotch.

There's something endearing in the nerves written across Will's face, but that something is equally mesmerizing. Hannibal watches as Will settles on the bed and he can't deny a small thrill at the look on Will's face when he spreads his legs in invitation. Hannibal has been on the receiving end of such a gesture before, but never the one enacting it. Though he has no desire to connect this moment with any in his past, Will's expression and the quick dart of his tongue say everything. Even before Hannibal asks his question, he knows the answer, but he feels it safer not to assume. Yet he is not surprised to hear that he'd been correct. This is truly new ground for Will.

There's a small chiding note in Hannibal's mind that approaching this while aroused and filled with desire is not conducive to teaching properly, but he dismisses the thought. Will's answer had been truthful and open, and while he looks nervous, he's not uncomfortable. The way Will leans down only confirms this, and Hannibal soon cares very little about maintaining a mindset conducive to teaching. Will's mouth is hot on his inner thigh and the muscles under Will's lips tense and shift in surprise before Hannibal relaxes back into it. The nip is enough to draw a flinch out of him, immediately followed by a low moan. He's not forgotten the bite mark on Will's thigh, and for a moment he considers pushing for Will to bite harder, but... no. Another time, perhaps, when Will's focus is not so uncertain. Hannibal wets his lips and swallows, struggling to maintain his own focus. It is markedly easier said than done, especially considering the proximity of Will's lips to his cock.

"Then I will instruct you," Hannibal says softly, like this is a common offer. His tone is edged and somewhat breathless; Will's mouth is quite distracting. "You are... are allowed to use one of the condoms over your fingers as you wish, but you might find it difficult to work with. If you wish to simply use your fingers, ensure your nails aren't rough. You'll be starting with one finger and likely more lubrication than you strictly feel you need. I would suggest you do as you were doing before. Simply touch. Familiarize yourself." Hannibal doesn't add that it gives Will time to decide if he truly wants to do this or not. It's implied.
Mouth on Hannibal's thigh and Will can't help but remember when, a week ago, their positions had been reversed, his leg over Hannibal's shoulder and teeth sinking into his thigh. God, it had hurt. Hannibal hadn't lied. The wound is now a mottled array of colors that Will likes to look at when he's alone and able to, pressing down on it to feel a lingering soreness. He had asked and Hannibal had given. (Hannibal is giving now too.)

The closer he gets to Hannibal's pelvis, he can smell a particular musk - it's not bad, just different. The soft moan he receives is gratifying and Will nips another expanse of skin for good measure before pulling away. He's not going to ask how Hannibal knows about this all. Will's saving that line of questioning for later; he doesn't want to think about Hannibal being intimate with anyone else, especially when this is completely new for him. This is their moment, their chapter being written together and Will won't sully it with his jealousy.

Will glances back at the package of condoms, considering Hannibal's words. It seems more like a hassle to use one over his fingers, so he decides to forgo it. Besides, he wants to feel Hannibal as closely as possible. He then glances down at his right hand, examining his nails - they looked alright to him. So. Step one: lots of lube and familiarize himself. Seems simple enough...

Will squirts what he thinks is a fair amount of product onto the fingers of his right hand and swallows. "Okay, here it goes," he murmurs more to himself, closing the bottle and dropping it nearby. His other hand comes to spread one side of Hannibal's cheeks open and Will reaches out with his slick fingers, rubbing the lubricant over Hannibal's hole as carefully as he can. His index finger circles around the tight ring of muscle and Will's eyes flick upward, taking in Hannibal's responses with interest.

Yes, there's still a fraction of him that feels shocked that he's not only touching an asshole, but a man's (and getting excited about it). But it's a rather small part and one that Hannibal easily overpowers. Will continues, his touch growing more confident, more insistent as he changes between rubbing up and down, side to side and then tapping against it. Will presses a little more firmly until the tip of his finger accidentally slips in and he freezes. His first instinct is to pull it out immediately, but he doesn't. Instead, Will looks to Hannibal as he begins to very slowly move just the tip of his pointer finger in and out. Will's half hard and his eyes are wide.

"It's... Is this okay?"

Hannibal watches as Will silently considers everything he'd told him. It's encouraging to see that his suggestions are being followed. Will glances back at the box of condoms but ultimately decides against it, and something about his eagerness to follow instruction stirs something warm and pleased in Hannibal's chest. It's attractive, but it's endearing, and slowly the tension begins to leave him. If Will is willing to touch directly, he's clearly more eager for this than Hannibal had expected. He wonders briefly if this has something to do with Will's desire to see him a mess, for his composure to break. Much as he would like to dismiss such a notion, Hannibal fears he may get exactly what he wants. Wetting his lips, he takes a second to carefully shift his position, spreading his legs just a little wider and watching as Will gets himself ready.

The first touch to his skin is cold, but aside from a slight hitch to his breathing, Hannibal doesn't react. He knows, logically, that this is happening, but there's a part of him that's only just now registering that this is happening. Will's touch is teasing and light, though not out of a desire to tease. He does what he can to keep his breathing steady, but even he knows it's a lost cause. Besides, Will soon glances at him and Hannibal reminds himself that this is the first time Will has done anything like this. Holding back and muting his reactions likely isn't helpful. Drawing in a slower breath, he loosens his grip on control enough to breathe out a soft sound, encouraging.
Will's touch is hesitant and tentative at first, but he soon grows a little more bold. Their combined heat soon warms up the lubrication on Will's fingers and with the chill lessened, Hannibal can focus on the nuances of Will's exploration. He does exactly as he should; he takes his time to explore, to rub slowly and spread the lube around. The tapping comes as a bit of a surprise, and Hannibal's breath hitches again before letting out on a softer, almost amused sounding sigh of pleasure. This is one area where Will is actually at an advantage; he's not limited by technique. His exploration is genuine, fueled only by his own imagination. It feels good, sending dual waves of pleasure and relaxation through him, his muscles relaxing under Will's touch.

It should, therefore, not entirely be surprising when Will presses just a bit more and the tip of his finger slips in. It is anyway. Hannibal gasps softly, his eyes sliding closed and body clenching reflexively. Will freezes; for a moment, Hannibal almost expects him to apologize, but to his credit, he resists. Apparently deeming it something he enjoys, Will tentatively repeats this, and Hannibal cannot help the soft groan he lets out under his breath, brow pinched and tongue quickly wetting his lips.

"Yes." His voice doesn't sound pained, at all. After a moment, he opens his eyes halfway and looks over at Will, shivering and trying (and failing) to completely keep his hips still.

"Y-yes. It's more than okay, Will. It's good. It is... difficult to find skin more receptive of sensation than this." He wets his lips again and doesn't even realize he's moved his leg enough for the back of his heel and calf to touch Will's side until he feels the contact. It's clear he's more than affected by this, if only by the wetness at the tip of his cock. The pleasure is sharper, going straight to it; the calluses on Will's finger feel good.

"You... you may continue that. Spread the lubrication around and work your way into pressing harder. You will find a point before your first knuckle that feels resistant, tighter. Don't... don't be concerned with pushing past. You won't hurt me. Keep your palm facing the ceiling. Once... once you are inside, when you desire, you will curl your finger."

Hannibal lifts one of his hands so that Will can see and demonstrates the action he's talking about. Will might not need the information for a while, but Hannibal feels it important to give it now, before he's more swept up in this.

"Like this. Take your time. A little over an inch inside, you will feel something smoother; that's the prostate. You'll know when you find it."

Will really doesn't know what he's doing. On a structural level, he's completely out of his element. This body's entrance is quite a bit different than a vagina. It clings to him tightly, hot and smooth, but the lube eases the intrusion of his finger tip. With keen interest, he watches Hannibal's eyes slip shut and a sound leave his mouth. (Will wants more of this.) Initially, Hannibal's body clenched around his finger, as if in defense, but has since begun to ease. His question - his seeking of reassurance - has Hannibal opening his eyes and staring back at him.

Will shudders, just a slight wave travelling through his body as his pulse picks up. He's always thought that their positions would be reversed during their first time - that Hannibal would take and Will would be exposing and giving this part of himself away, but no... He's been shortsighted in thinking like that. Foolish even. It probably couldn't be happening any either way. It has to be Hannibal willing to lay himself bare for Will, to allow Will to open him - both literally and figuratively. And Will is absorbed in this task, in this moment that's barely begun, but feels like it's been far too intimate.

He doesn't take it lightly and while Hannibal comments on it feeling good (it must, his hips are
moving a bit and it has Will curious--), he has to look away quickly and presses a kiss into Hannibal's knee. When further instructions are being given, Will glances back to Hannibal, paying attention because Will doesn't want to mess this up. He nods, worrying his bottom lip with his teeth. It's still swollen from Hannibal's hand connecting with it last night, but the small flare of pain is a grounding thing for Will.

Without warning, he pushes his finger in further, watching it disappear inside of Hannibal's body. He tries to remember to look at Hannibal's face, for their eyes to connect and hold each other's gaze during this. (He knows this is important.) He works his finger in as delicately as he can, sliding into the enveloping channel. Will's other hand abandons its previous position and wraps around Hannibal's cock, giving it a stilted pump. He doesn't worry about curling his finger or trying to find the prostate yet, focusing on just growing comfortable with the knowledge that his entire finger is in Hannibal's ass.

Taking a deep breath, Will admits, "The tapping thing... Last night... It helped." He pulls his finger halfway out before pushing in again and repeating the action.

There could never have been another way for them to do this. With Will so guarded and uncertain, this makes the most sense. Though he has found a taste for allowing Hannibal to take control, this would be control during intimacy of a higher caliber. Will has vowed to never give Hannibal his heart, and being laid open, so bare and vulnerable... Hannibal can understand why the idea might make Will cautious. Yet while vulnerability still leaves a bitter taste in his own mouth, he has few problems with this. He's already given it all up for Will; he has no desire to hold anything back right now. This is as new to him as it is to Will - at least partnered - but he doesn't care. Hannibal would let no one else do this; in this, as with many things, Will Graham is his exception. Will doesn't squander the gift either, watching Hannibal with wide eyes, a beautiful flush to his skin. Hannibal's senses are occupied, but through the scent of his own arousal and the mix between them, he's reasonably certain that Will is also growing hard again. The thought draws another soft sound from his throat.

The kiss to his knee is painfully intimate, catching and holding Hannibal's attention enough that he isn't prepared for Will pushing beyond. He should have been, in retrospect; once Will's mind is made up, he rarely tarries for long. Even so, the sudden press of Will's finger deeper has him gasping lowly and his eyes very nearly fall shut again. He only resists as he can feel Will looking at him, and despite the plain, raw vulnerability being shown, Hannibal swallows and makes a point to meet Will's eyes as his finger slides in deeper and deeper. Nerves alight and control so frayed that he can practically feel the tatters tickling his senses, Hannibal breathes in as deeply as he can, struggling to find a few more scraps of control as the intensity settles low.

He's close when Will finally stops, and Hannibal lets out a breath he hadn't been aware of holding, rough and trembling with the hope to forestall his orgasm. Will hasn't given him permission, and this isn't something Hannibal is willing to compromise on. Will had staked his claim months ago. Breathless, somewhat overwhelmed with the intensity of sensation after so long without, Hannibal does what he can to focus. So when Will shifts, his other hand loosely wrapping around Hannibal's cock, he clenches involuntarily again and hisses at the spike of pleasure.

"Will--" Hannibal begins, and while he does listen to what Will has to say (and is gratified to hear that he'd remembered to continue speaking) his focus is suddenly sharper and more desperate. He wrenches a hand away from the sheets and reaches down with urgency to take Will's hand, drawing it away from his cock and squeezing Will's fingers with his own.

"Wait," he instructs, but the word is breathless enough to sound like a plea.
He can feel the rough drag of Will's skin around his rim, slick with lube and feeling good. Breathing harder (and distantly aware that Will can probably feel it intimately) Hannibal merely twines their fingers together and squeezes again, stroking over the back of Will's hand with his thumb.

"You're... you're doing well," he hastens to reassure, when he has the breath to. "Too well. I need a moment, or I'm going to come." If the words don't make it obvious, the telltale pulse through his body does. His cock lays flushed against his abdomen, precome pooling slightly as visible proof of how close he is. Hannibal fights the urge to merely move his hips and allows his head to rest back against the pillow, breathing and focusing to wrench himself back from that sharp edge.

"Why... why did the tapping help last night, Will?" He asks, his voice rough as he eases Will's hand over to press against his side, silently encouraging him to touch in the hope different sensations will help.

"Was it because it... removed some of the responsibility? All you were required to do was answer simply. I asked the questions. I decided what was expected of you. Did that make it easier?"

At first Will visibly flinches when his hand is abruptly grabbed away by Hannibal's own. He's thinking he's screwed up something, but no, Hannibal had just been close. He smiles at Hannibal's breathless admission. While he wants Hannibal to come, to feel good, Will isn't ready to have things be over just yet. He doesn't know his partner well enough to know the signs - not yet. One day, Will hopes to. He hopes to be able to read and understand Hannibal's body, to see the visual cues of impending climaxes and be able to manage them. The fact that Hannibal is warning him and holding back is enthralling and goes right to his own cock. He squeezes Hannibal's hand back in an appreciative gesture.

His hand is then placed on Hannibal's waist. Will runs it over a hip bone, skating across the the gunshot scar, over his stomach, just needing to touch Hannibal more - anywhere, everywhere. It lifts off to smooth down the thigh he'd previously nipped at. It's difficult to extrapolate on the topic, even though it's Will who has brought it up. He remembers Hannibal holding him off balance (but firmly), Will straining on the tips of his toes, wanting to please him.

"Yeah... Yes," he mumbles, his eyes focusing on how his slick finger disappears inside of Hannibal's body. It's almost mesmerizing. "It helps when you hold me tightly. Keeping my pieces together... Quieting the scream."

Will glances up, suddenly feeling emotional. "God, Hannibal, baby, you look amazing," Will grits out. He doesn't catch the term of endearment that's snuck in. He drinks in the debauched image of this man trusting him, spreading his legs, letting him inside in another way.

"You feel amazing." His finger moves a little faster and Will's surprised to feel the tightness easing some. It's an intriguing accomplishment, one that emboldens him to curl his finger whilst inside, searching for this infamous prostate.

Hannibal needs the distraction of Will's information at this point. He has not indulged in this particular activity in a long time, and has never been with a partner while doing so. The intensity is startling, and Will's inexperience is not a negative factor. He's curious, pushing, testing and exploring, and Hannibal is achingly grateful that Will takes silent instruction so well. Hannibal places Will's hand on his side and Will almost immediately starts to touch. It's just varying enough - just distracting enough - to ease the edge away from Hannibal's impending pleasure, though definitely not unpleasant. It merely shifts the focus from sharper, indulgent pleasure to something nearing care. Care in itself can be arousing, particularly between them, but Hannibal throws all of his focus into it.
then carefully splits it between the line of questioning and Will's soft, careful touches.

Breathing rough still, slowly drawing himself back from that edge of pleasure, Hannibal wets his lips and tilts his head back on the pillow. There's a light sheen of sweat over his skin and he's quite certain Will is enjoying his appearance. He's always so delighted to have him a mess, after all. But slowly, bit by bit, with Will's hand trailing over Hannibal's abdomen, the scar, even down to his thigh, he begins to relax. It takes awhile for the tingling edge to ease, but the sharp focus on Will's psychology helps.

"If you require that again... holding you to quiet the scream, you need only say so," Hannibal says. His voice is still strained, but it's a little better. He thinks harder on last night, on the twist of emotions, on the way he'd held Will. The arousal doesn't vanish, but it quickly hits a more manageable level. Thoughts of the kill don't arouse him. Thoughts of Will do. "I was uncertain as to whether or not it would help. I'm glad it did."

There's silence as Will's finger continues moving, but he blessedly makes no move to push harder. Slowly Hannibal grows accustomed to the sensation - as much as he can - and he soon finds a grip on his control once again. Of course, it's just in time for Will to dash it again. The term of endearment is hidden within the other words but Hannibal hears it with a small jolt. He's stunned, but thankfully the pleasure from the term doesn't throw him back into more dangerous territory. He's averted that outcome and has a better grip on himself. Unfortunately Will doesn't seem to catch his slip and Hannibal is left to merely breathe a little harder when Will moves quicker.

"Will..." Not even he is sure what he means to say, but he doesn't need to worry about that. Hannibal feels the shift; feels the stretch that tells him that Will is doing as he'd been instructed. Hannibal stills, and after a moment he finds the end to his previous statement, "just... a little deeper." Much as he wants to focus on the pet name, he feels this is a conversation for later.

Hannibal pushes his hips back just a little. He isn't sure if it's his doing or if Will follows his instruction in the end. One moment he's making himself relax, and the next Hannibal's hips give a sudden abortive twitch of surprise, punctuated by a sharp inhale and a telltale tightening of his fist in the sheets.

"The-there," Hannibal manages sloppily, immediately, before Will's finger can move for a different pass. The pleasure is quick; Will had only just glanced the gland. Yet Hannibal finds new appreciation for the calluses on Will's fingers, fighting the urge to press back again.

"Try to... try to locate the center and rub around it. Direct pressure is..." Hannibal swallows. "Perhaps intense if you intend to keep me on edge. If... if you would like to use another finger, you may, but one will be enough."

There's still a part of Will that wants to avert his eyes, that wants to shy away from this overly intimate moment - cut and run, as it were - but Will remains as he is. This is a step forward, this is taking a risk, but Will wants to trust that these changes, this shift, will be for the best and that it won't blow up in his face later. Hannibal may be allowing this very intimate act to take place, but Will asking in the first place and carrying it out? Will being present? It's also a distinct display of intimacy and it's one that he's positive Hannibal has taken note of.

The talking about other things is difficult, both in that it's difficult to open up and freely share, and that Will has to divide his attention between this task. However, the distraction and split focus probably helps Hannibal. There's more Will could say on the whole tapping situation because as much as it had helped, there was also a level of discomfort to the whole thing. It felt like they had been moving into something Will didn't fully understand and the unknown always held some unease.
As best as he can, Will heeds the instructions and pushes his searching finger in deeper, curling it in the 'come hither' motion Hannibal had demonstrated to him earlier. He must have some small measure of success as Hannibal shudders. Will listens to next set of instructions - avoid direct pressure, rub around it - and he does his best. He vaguely wonders what's easier to find, the clitoris or the prostate... Not wanting to give Hannibal too much stimulation, he ceases his actions a moment later pulling out his finger completely and having his middle finger now join and rub at the slightly loosened hole.

"Want to open you up more... Want to be inside of you, Hannibal," Will murmurs in a low voice, pushing two fingers inside carefully as he smooths up and down the prone man's thigh. Once his fingers are fully sheathed, Will catches Hannibal's eyes. He'll give him a moment to adjust.

"Are you going to let me? You want that too?" Will knows the answer, but right now he wants to hear it.

This moment is painfully intimate. There's no other way to look at it. Will is here. He hasn't gotten up to leave, has made no excuses. He's staying, he's involved, and with the term of endearment still lingering in the back of Hannibal's mind, it's all he can do to focus on the current moment without falling apart. Every touch is still intense, but Hannibal drinks it all in. The slide of Will's hand over his skin is soothing and calming, serving as a more tactile distraction against the urge to curl into that sharp, aching pleasure from before. There is much they'll need to talk about when Hannibal can focus, but for that moment he feels painfully single-minded. While he's no longer right on the edge, that first brush of Will's finger had left him breathing harder, his skin flushed and cock leaking. He watches as Will watches him, and the attention sends a low thrum of pleasure through him.

It's soon to become a sharper one, as Will wastes little time in following Hannibal's instructions. He rubs slowly and Hannibal breathes harder, his head tipping back at the deeper flare of pleasure. It's good - not too intense, and not a mere tease - which is why Hannibal is somewhat reluctant to feel it go. Will draws back, sliding his fingers free for more lubrication and Hannibal breathes out a soft sigh, focusing on the brief pause in order to calm down. It's a good idea, giving him a few moments to recover before Will returns, his fingers careful and rubbing, but it's his voice that truly catches Hannibal's attention even at that first slow, careful push that has him struggling to relax. Will's hand on his thigh is blessedly gentle and soothing, but ultimately it's what Will is implying that cuts through the mild burn and sends another lance of pleasure through him. Surely he doesn't mean... but yes. He could. Hannibal bites the inside of his lower lip and tilts his head back, baring his throat and focusing on breathing steadily as Will moves.

"Yes," he manages, his voice rough. If Will means what he believes he means by 'inside of you', it is somewhat ill-advised, but Hannibal hardly cares. The thought has him pushing back, easing past a bit of the burn as Will's fingers work in. Hannibal pushes enough for it to almost hurt but Will is gentle and coaxing, the stretch pleasant and leaving him feeling full. The slight twist of discomfort actually helps him ease away from the edge even more and Hannibal wets his lips even though by now it's a lost cause. Will's fingers take a long few moments to fully seat themselves, and once he stops, Hannibal lets out a breathless groan, chest rising and falling faster as he focuses on the stretch and mild discomfort. Will doesn't move, allowing Hannibal to adjust, and Hannibal immediately reaches down for the hand on his thigh, taking it to give a small squeeze as he struggles to adjust.

"Yes... I want it. And I'm going to let you. You're already inside, Will," Hannibal adds, though the look he sends Will - low with heat and desire - says that he knows what Will is actually saying. "But... something tells me that isn't what you're implying. And... and in that case, your answer is still yes." Hannibal trails off, careful to breathe and relax, his fingers stroking the backs of Will's knuckles.
Slowly, bit by bit, the edge of discomfort from Will's fingers begins to ease. There's still a stretch but it's pleasant and full, and Hannibal can feel it every time he breathes. Shifting slightly and shivering, after he's deemed it safe - long moments later - he finally presses back against Will's hand.

"You can... you can move now," Hannibal prompts with a soft breath of a sound. "Tell me...what do you want, Will?"

Hannibal looks blissfully submissive, spread open and receptive and it's stokes a desire deep in Will to want to explore this more. He's not quite sure how they seem to effortlessly float between these poles, how he can need Hannibal to hold him tight and exert control one night, yet clearly being the one to call the shots the next day thrills him. Perhaps it's just them and this is the dynamic they've created - flexible and interchangeable - intense and perfect. It works for Will and it appears to do the same for Hannibal who has been on the receiving end most of the morning with no complaints voiced.

He remembers dreading the idea of time... Time to get used to Hannibal, time to forget, time to heal, but now the prospect of time is exhilarating. All they have is time and Will, for once, is glad that it can be spent with Hannibal - his equal. He will learn this body, unravel its secrets and experience every aspect of Hannibal. Didn't Will say he wanted it all? Gentle and rough. Dark and light. Will is a converted man, he's found his faith, a sanctuary in Hannibal.

(But such things, can they last? Is it safe? Humans are fallible, mistakes are inevitable and the more Will trusts, the more Hannibal takes up residence in his heart, the harder the fall surely will be.)

The body before him accepts the addition of another finger and it has Will getting even more excited. What he's not prepared for is Hannibal reaching down for his hand and holding it, a little squeeze following. The jolt this simple action brings causes a nervous smile to flit on Will's face. He holds Hannibal's hand back - another point of connection - and it somehow feels more meaningful than his fingers buried deep inside of Hannibal's body.

'And I'm going to let you. You're already inside, Will.'

Will bites down on his bottom lip to hold back a moan. A part of him wants to smirk at the obvious statement Hannibal has given him, but the look and words that follow have Will's eyes widening in acknowledgement. His answer is yes. They're going to be closer. Hannibal would let him. Hannibal wants it too. When he's given the go ahead to move, Will retracts his fingers before pumping them back in fluidly. His pace he keeps is steady.

"Going to fuck you, Hannibal... Going to fill you up, going to push all the way inside of you... Going to make you feel me," Will murmurs, licking his lips as he entwines their fingers again.

Will's little smile is full of nerves but it stands out to Hannibal in stark contrast. It's uncertain and wanting and nervous, and he wishes nothing more than to pull Will down into a kiss and taste the smile, but this is one desire he resists. This angle and situation is delicate and Will's concentration is not above breaking or bending and right now, Hannibal is allowing himself to be selfish. He's given his consent without too many words, and as his statement registers - as Will's eyes widen following Hannibal's yes - he delights in the feeling of Will inside of him. The stretch is not something he's used to but it's something he can imagine growing to crave in time. And they have time. They have little but time at this point. Time to learn and explore, to experiment and delight.

The heat in Will's eyes is nearly physical. It burns with an intensity that feels like fire along Hannibal's skin as Will allows Hannibal's words to sink in. They've been talking around it, but he
clearly understands, for there is a fresh intensity to his expression when he slowly eases his fingers back and then pushes them back in, drawing a soft, hitched breath from Hannibal. The sensation is all-encompassing even without direct pressure to his prostate, and while Will is unpracticed, his touch is already much better than Hannibal's own fingers had been so many years ago. There is extra pleasure in not being able to predict the movements, and what Will lacks in technical skill, he makes up for in other ways.

He is not shy in voicing his thoughts aloud. Hannibal has never been with anyone who speaks the way Will does, and the words are like a hand wrapped around him, wrenching his pleasure higher and drawing a deeper flush to his skin. His entire focus is centered on the feeling of Will's fingers and the sound of Will's voice. And, after a moment, the feeling of their fingers entwining. It's this that punches a soft sound out of him, a soft groan as he tips his head back on the pillow, bangs sticking to his forehead and a his hand tight on Will's.

"Yes," he breathes, and arches his hips ever so slightly, only to bite back a small sound at a brush teasingly close to his prostate. Breathing a little harder, Hannibal presses the back of his calf insistently against Will's hip in an attempt to keep him as close as he can. This close, with Will's fingers inside of him and Will's single-minded focus, Hannibal feels intoxicated on him.

"Yes, I will. I... I wish to feel you. To have you inside. To have you find your pleasure inside of me."

Will's pace doesn't relent and Hannibal gives himself over to the sensation. Though impatience wrenches at him, he doesn't push himself beyond what he knows he can handle, and only when he feels that the slide of Will's fingers is easier does he instruct Will to spread them, and then to go beyond.

"Another, Will," Hannibal instructs, his voice breathless, "and then... then you may have me." Hannibal squeezes Will's hand, tighter, drawing comfort from the simple touch. Will's fingers leave him for a moment but easily sink back into his body with yet more lube. Hannibal groans deeply, sensitive, but not even the sudden added burn of Will's third finger calms his arousal this time. It's perfectly sharp but the discomfort lingers longer. It's to be expected; sex of this nature is not something to simply leap into, yet he wishes nothing more than to feel Will lean over him, to feel his weight, to allow him what he has never allowed another.

"Move, Will. I wish you to... please."

Like Will's personality, his 'dirty talk' is a bit rough around the edges, his phrasing blunt and straightforward. Will wonders what Hannibal is used to hearing in the bedroom, if it's anything like him, or something more delicate and distinctively feminine. (He pointedly ignores thinking more on Alana.) Will doesn't spend too long on it because Hannibal responds beautifully to the interlocking of their fingers - making a quiet, but lovely sound, head tilted back and hips jerking a bit. Will has to swallow when Hannibal responds, the man's words striking a chord. 'To have you find your pleasure in me…' Fuck. What was Will supposed to say to that?

He says nothing, but obeys Hannibal's request, adding another finger into the equation. Hannibal's body is tight around the intrusion, but it accepts the addition as he slowly works three fingers all the way in. Will had been uncertain on the logistics of this all, but it seems like patience and copious amounts of lube pave the way.

He is going to fuck Hannibal. The thought elicits a heated sigh from Will as he is, once again instructed when to start moving his fingers.
"Baby, you look amazing, you feel..." Will can't even finish his sentence, too overcome with a giddy desire as he pumps his fingers in and out, trying for different angles this time. Minutes pass as he works on preparing Hannibal, wanting to ensure he's thoroughly stretched and ready.

Giving Hannibal's hand a reassuring squeeze, Will unclasps their hands to reach for the condoms. It's somewhat awkward opening them with one hand and he eventually gives up, having to pull out of Hannibal's body, wiping his slick hand on the towel. He feels like a teenager again, excitedly fumbling to open the wrapper and roll a condom on his dick. Thankfully Will somehow manages it. He applies lube, his hand stroking over his erection as he watches Hannibal closely for any signs that he may want to back out. When he sees none, Will moves in closer, hand holding his cock still as he positions it against Hannibal's hole. With as much care as possible, Will edges forward, pressing inside, and with awe, he watches as Hannibal's body accepts him. It's smooth and scorching, far tighter than he's used to and almost too good as he bottoms out.

"Oh my God, Hannibal, fuck," Will hisses before leaning over and settling on top of Hannibal, hands burying in sweaty hair as uncoordinated kisses are placed on the man beneath him.

Again, the name. Hannibal's breath hitches on a soft moan that can easily be written off by what Will is doing. Later, perhaps, he will bring it up; he wonders if Will is even aware of having said it. Likely not. It's one reason its existence hits Hannibal so hard; the term of endearment is low and soft, breathless and completely genuine as Will does as he'd asked and eases his fingers out before sliding them back in. It's uncomfortable for a minute or so, but the fixed, focused pass of Will's fingers over his skin, inside of him soon has his breathing deeper. He feels close to lightheaded, a strange euphoria of being the sole focus of Will's attention, and Hannibal basks in the unique hedonism of it. Will doesn't rush this, and he shows admirable restraint given the state of his arousal. He's fixated, caught in the wonder of being allowed this, and Hannibal almost wants to laugh at the notion that he could ever have denied Will this intimacy. It's a raw and slow, intimate, sharing of heavy, desperate breaths as Hannibal's body welcomes Will's touch. It varies, never the same, and a few times as Will pumps his fingers in deeper, Hannibal's body jerks in pleasure, soft sounds bitten-off as pleasure is stoked and soothed.

By the time Will's hand slides away from his own, Hannibal is close to demanding more, his own tolerance be damned. Will either notices this or has simply reached his own limit, for it takes him only a moment to reach back for the condoms. A low shiver of pleasure slides through him and his focus sharpens, watching as Will fumbles and he bites back any sound of regret when Will withdraws his fingers in order to open the condom. Like this, Will is stunning, his skin flushed beautifully, his eyes dark with arousal. At first Hannibal finds his gaze drawn to Will's fingers working the condom over his cock, but then he finds himself far more interested in Will, in the sight of his need etched into every line of his body.

When Will shifts closer, lube slick over the condom, he sends Hannibal a look. It's careful, wary, as if he's looking for signs of doubt or uncertainty. Hannibal simply presses his calf to Will's hip, easing him closer, and wets his lips in anticipation.

"Yes, Will. I said yes. I want you, exactly like this." It seems to be enough. Will looks almost shaken, like the foundation beneath his feet is beginning to give way, but he does as he'd been wanting to. No matter how open Hannibal's body is to this, it was never going to be fully simple. The press of Will's cock is unfamiliar and the sensation of the condom feels odd, but Hannibal's attention is on Will's face, on his expression. Slowly, with care he hadn't been expecting, Will presses inside, looking suddenly, painfully unprepared for the depth of sensation. Hannibal can relate. It hurts, but it's a sharp, welcome sensation, feeling like it passes the point of too much by a few noticeable moments and yet he's unwilling to ask Will to stop. It's sensation unlike anything he's experienced, a
mix of pain and fullness and connection that almost makes him feel above himself. And when the head of Will's cock slips in and he presses deeper, Hannibal can't hold back a low, hitched groan as his head tips back on the pillow, breathing heavier and eyes wider in a different kind of surprise.

"Will," he breathes, and for a sharp moment, he feels almost feral, uncertain why or what he needs until Will is leaning over him and then he understands. Hannibal reaches up and locks his arms around Will, his fingers digging hard into his back, sharp enough that there is no way Will won't be bruised later. The swell of violence settles into Hannibal's fingers, and his legs, as he lifts them to clutch around Will, and in his lips and teeth as Will finally eases close enough to kiss. Hannibal's fingers slide into his hair and through an overwhelming crash of sensation, he jerks Will into a kiss, biting harder than he intends to at his upper lip and sucking at the swollen bruise to the lower one. He licks into Will's mouth, attempting to kiss the breath from his lungs as his body aches and adjusts to a different, full pleasure. His senses are full of this man and through the discomfort and overwhelming stretch as his body struggles to adjust, he merely kisses Will, touches him, pulls him close and breathes him in.

He's not certain how much time has passed, seconds or minutes, but discomfort eases slowly to intensity and pain to need. Hannibal breaks the kiss, his fingers sliding through Will's hair, and his voice is nearly wrecked when he curiously rolls his hips and finds his need far outshines the pain.

"Move. You may... you can move. I want you to; please, Beloved."

Will has been thinking and desiring the concept of closer and more for quite some time and now he's pretty sure this is the epitome of it. Sliding into Hannibal's tight channel was intense, but fully slotted inside? It's overwhelming and perfect. In this moment he's as close to Hannibal as possible, draped over him and Hannibal responds quickly, latching on with his limbs - arms and legs wrapping around and yanking him closer. Will has the realization that Hannibal is all but clinging to him. (His heart beats faster at the thought.) The kiss is sloppy on his part and rough on Hannibal's. Teeth bite and take and Will gasps at the small painful sensation. It's a welcome distraction.

He knows he isn't going to last long. Hannibal's body feels like a vice around his cock. Even with the condom, the sensation is exquisite. Tight. Hot. Clenching. Almost too much. Will is panting from the exertion it takes to hold as still as possible, assuming there is also a period of adjustment for this as well. His hands grab at the pillow on either side of Hannibal's head, clutching at the edges as he, too, adjusts to the new intensity that's threatening to swallow him. They're both too hot, a sheen of sweat covering Hannibal's face as well as his body and Will can feel it against his own skin. Hannibal's cock, hot and hard, is trapped between their stomachs. He hopes this more good than bad for his partner.

They say nothing for minutes, just kissing, both breathing harshly and dazed in this moment of extreme intimacy. When Hannibal pulls away to give his blessing for Will to move, Will stares back at him, seemingly stunned by the concept. (Beloved... Yes, Will had heard it and still wants to hear it again.) It makes sense. Intercourse involved more than being inside. He gives a short nod, hips pulling back a bit before experimentally pushing back in. He repeats the motion, barely pulling his cock out before thrusting in gently. Will moans, wide-eyed and flushed, gazing down at Hannibal.

"Love..." He starts mid-thrust, but has to stop to gasp at the flood of pleasure when he snaps in a little quicker. "Love being inside of you, baby. Goddammit, you feel... This is so..." He's babbling, losing track of his words as he fucks into Hannibal with a soft roll of his hips. The urge to go faster - to push - is there, but it doesn't seem so important. He wants to savor this. It's new. Not rushing is what's important.

"You're all I want, Hannibal. Never leave me. I couldn't-- Never leave..." Will bites down on his lip
This is intensity far beyond anything Hannibal had expected and it seems immediately fitting that the sensation is being gifted to him by Will Graham. Desperation and sensation war and mix, intertwining within him with a single-minded intensity. It feels vaguely like a sustained adrenaline rush, a natural high that eases into something curiously euphoric, a sensation that Hannibal has never experienced before. He has not asked regarding Will's experiences these last three years, but given the hot, desperate way Will returns each kiss and the tremble in his muscles as he fights to stay perfectly still, Hannibal guesses that Will is not accustomed to this type of sex either. They ride out the intensity together, Will's pleasure fading to something controlled and Hannibal's pain fading to need and a lack of control. When he makes his request, Will looks at him, beautiful and dazed, skin shining with sweat and each breath so deep that Hannibal swears he can feel it in his core.

So close that each breath feels thin and shared, Hannibal's fingers curl rhythmically in Will's hair. One hand slides down to the damp, warm skin of Will's back and he grips tightly. In that moment, Hannibal believes he is ready, and that belief is not shattered, but he is also wholly unprepared for the sensation of Will's hips inching back and then pressing back inside. The angle is nearly perfect, for Hannibal feels the hot lick of pleasure through him, his lips parting on a breathless sound as Will's voice breaks on a moan. Each rock of Will's hips is good, but the burn and stretch is still there under the surface. It's uncomfortable at first, a distraction from something otherwise wholly intimate. Then Hannibal shifts, tightening his hold - a selfish attempt to get closer - and Will's hips snap forward. The distraction fades to absolutely nothing in an instant. Hannibal's fingers claw and his next breath punches out of him on a startled, soft cry, a deep, aching pleasure curling through him almost lazily. It's not insistent and sharp, but it does make precome bead at the head of his cock where it's trapped between their bellies.

"Will," Hannibal breathes, both a plea and a prayer. Will looks achingly stunned and beautiful like this, caught in his own intensity. Hannibal presses their cheeks together, breathing deeper, and despite the crush of need and the new, deeper pleasure on every gentle thrust of Will's hips, he forces his way past the haze in his mind to focus on what Will says. He finds himself caught immediately in an entirely different way. Hannibal's breath leaves him on a soft rush that threatens to ruffle Will's hair, but all he does is tighten his hold on Will. His fingers bury in Will's hair, and the grip to Will's shoulder when Hannibal wraps an arm around him is kissed with the bite of his nails.

"I won't." It's a promise, though the words don't follow. Hannibal's lips press a hot path over the swell of Will's cheek, leading to his ear, where he bites and sucks at the lobe, releasing it only to speak again. "What an... an achingly curious creature you are, Will." Another kiss, this time under Will's jaw, and Hannibal groans, deep and hot, as one particular thrust glances off of his prostate, the roll of Will's hips is enough to give him friction as well. It's intense, but it's a different kind of intensity, one he feels could throw him to the edge of pleasure without warning him it's even coming. His limbs feel sluggish and heavy, his breathing ragged, and the way his nails dig into Will's sweat-slick skin is bordering on feral, yet his tone is warm. It's hitched, strained with pleasure, but even in this, Hannibal aches to reassure.

"H-how... could I leave now that I finally have you? I will never let you go," he adds, warm, but there's a curl of ferocity under the surface, the implication that he will make sure to keep this man.

It feels like a transcendent experience, far greater and more acute than anything Will has ever experienced before. Will has fucked, but he's also made love. This is closer to the latter and still the emotions invested in the single moment outweigh and are more significant than the entirety of his past experiences combined. (It's a realization he can't even begin to fathom.) His heart stampedes in
his chest and Will grips the edge of the pillow tighter; it doesn't help with the intensity. He remembers when Bedelia had asserted that he'd just found religion when informing her that they'd decided to use Hannibal as bait. It had been a lie, for this morning - in all of it's bizarre twists and turns - has lead to something that feels divine. How would anything be the same after this?

Will has never really believed in people. There's too much evidence depicting humanity choosing to simply repeat their failures rather than learn. That said, Hannibal, now, is threatening him, threatening to give Will no other choice but to believe in him. To trust him. To hope for some future. To maybe even plan for one. Together. It should be frightening, but right now Will can't be bothered to feel antsy about it.

Hannibal has listened to Will and forgiven him. Hannibal has allowed himself be held, be touched, has reached out to the stag and shown both curiosity and interest in it. Hannibal has obeyed and laid on his stomach, has let Will get off on him (again). Hannibal has allowed Will to experiment and touch a fiercely private and intimate place. And now Will is inside of him, being welcomed into Hannibal's heat, cock squeezed tightly and each thrust bringing a flood of thinking 'this is too good' and 'this has to be too much.'

He's never been the type to get emotional over sex, but here he is, biting his lip to try and stop himself from babbling on about his insecurities. Humans were also fragile. Will has seen and felt how much Hannibal feels toward him - how much he loves - but still Will fears abandonment of some kind. Both Hannibal's words and touch seek to reassure him - kisses placed on his face, his earlobe sucked - and Will lets himself be reassured. 'I will never let you go.' (He'll trust. He'll believe.)

Feeling like he ought to say something in response to the comfort directed his way, he replies with an, "Okay... Good." His thrusts are slow and careful, Will concentrating on not wanting to rush or hurt Hannibal. "Can I... Can I do anything better? Do anything different that would help you?" Will's voice is shaky, his limbs shaky from holding himself back, but Will is determined to take things easy unless otherwise instructed. He continues to push into Hannibal with self-restraint Will normally doesn't find himself utilizing.

In a way, it feels like they were always going to end up this way. Intensity, betrayal, kindness, rage... all of it has mixed and melted into something unique. The emotions have not blended together so well that each one cannot be picked out individually, yet in places they have formed together, mixing, indistinguishable. Will's anger, Hannibal's betrayal, all of it is mixed together with the rest. Like this, connected, Will deep inside of him and all around him, Hannibal's limbs tangled with Will's, his nails sharp on Will's back, it hardly matters who belongs to each emotion. Hannibal's breathing is rougher, ragged, and while each roll of Will's hips is careful and slow, he still grips at Will's shoulders like there is a deep intensity behind every movement. For him, there is.

He has desired this man for years, has endured great things in Will's name. This feels like a culmination of it all. In this moment, with Will's fears bared to him - like he'd willingly allowed Hannibal to section his ribs apart and bare his heart - Hannibal knows that while Will may not love him, he does need him. Are obsession and love really so different? A deep need, a deep want and desire. Love can fade in time. Obsession rarely does. Of the two of them, Hannibal knows which he would prefer, and he feels both for Will Graham.

Will's shaky question draws Hannibal back to the moment and with a rush, intensity ramps back up enough to wrench a small gasp from his lungs. His grip - having faded for a moment - tightens again and once again he focuses on the slow shift of Will's hips. It's good, that edge of pain and discomfort present, but it's nowhere near severe enough to affect his enjoyment. It blends into the background, only serving to heighten his pleasure. The slow, careful roll of Will's hips is good, exactly what it
needs to be as Hannibal adjusts to the movement, but the more his body adjusts and the easier it
becomes, the more a restless energy bordering on greed wells up inside him. He groans low, nails
biting into Will's shoulders as he focuses on what he wants. Will is the only answer that makes any
sense, but from a physical standpoint...

"Move... move closer," Hannibal manages, his voice heavy with intensity. "Move your knees under
the pillow, under my hips. You can... you don't have to hold back as much, Will. I don't want you
to."

Is it reckless? Perhaps. Hannibal cares little. The adjusted angle should bleed the pain away entirely.
Something that is confirmed when Hannibal pulls Will down against him just enough for that shift in
angle and the next slow roll of Will's hips has Hannibal groaning without shame. He slowly
scratches down Will's back, not enough to break the skin, but enough to leave temporary welts
behind.

"There," he breathes against Will's shoulder, shuddering and clutching him closely, grip like a vice.
"Right- right there. Will, Beloved..." Hannibal wets his lips, tasting the salt of Will's sweat in the
process. "Please."

For the first time in his sexual interactions with Hannibal, Will feels completely focused on the man.
He doesn't want to selfishly take or to use, no. He wants to be completely present for Hannibal, he
wants them to feel and be connected and he wants this to feel good for Hannibal as well. Will
remembers their first night together, his soft, but sure words - I'm already leaving a mark - and he
knows it's true once more. He doesn't need to bite and claw at Hannibal to change him, to affect him.
They both become undone by kindness, by gentle and lingering touches that consume and soothe in
equal measure. The events of this morning have taught him this.

He feels how Hannibal clings to him, nails digging into his shoulders, a hint of sharpness that helps
him keep grounded. Will hears Hannibal's harsh breathing and the occasional exquisite sounds he
pushes out of him as he pushes into Hannibal a particular way. Hannibal is open to him, not just in
the physical sense, his masks and safe, guarded expressions having fallen away - stripped away by
Will. Sunlight streams in and for once everything is out in the open, revealed and basked in. There's
no need to hide in the shadows or to be ashamed. The intimacy is staggering and Will didn't think
such a thing was possible for him to feel without the roar of violence and emotional highs (which
typically caused whiplash afterward). But this morning has been a slow build up instead of the usual
avalanche and he's caught up in it all of it completely. (Maybe Hannibal finding the key isn't so bad.)

His question is met with Hannibal pulling him closer and Will slides in even deeper. He's left panting
and closing his eyes tightly at the onslaught of exquisite bliss.

"I'm not... Can't..." Will is babbling again, not quite sure of what he's attempting to communicate, but
likely that he's going to come soon. Nails traveling down his back have Will opening his eyes and
refocusing. His name with Beloved following... And Will shudders, taking a deep breath as he
momentarily rests his weight on top of Hannibal, reaching back behind him to grasp Hannibal's
hands. He interlocks their fingers and pins each of Hannibal's hands on either side of his head. It's
not done as a show of power, but to emphasize to Hannibal that he has him.

Will pushes back to look down at Hannibal. He's a vision. Will swallows, wanting to burn this image
into his mind, to remember each and every detail like the fall of Hannibal's hair over his forehead, the
way his eyes look warm in the light and the feel of the body underneath his own. It's almost too
much, it really is. Will begins thrusting again, gasping as he clenches Hannibal's hands tightly.
(Connected)
"You're all I see... All I feel," Will somehow gets out, voice shaky. (It's true.)

"You're all I need, Hannibal..." He starts to move faster, pushing in harder with quick short thrusts. "You're mine -- ahh -- and I... I probably do--" Will cuts himself off with a desperate moan. (He can't say it, not yet.) "Want you to come for me, baby," is what he says instead.

Hannibal both feels and sees the difference in Will, and the knowledge is breathtaking. Gone is the selfish, single-minded focus Will is used to. If it exists, it's well-hidden, shrouded, leaving nothing behind but the intensity of his gaze and the way he looks down at Hannibal as if attempting to read him. Will is a vision, his skin flushed, his hair a dark tangle, skin shining with sweat and his eyes dark and blown wide in desire. Yet despite this, Will is slow and careful, tentative, not wishing to injure or to push too quickly. It's painfully telling for Hannibal can feel - intimately - how hard he is, how desperately he wishes to move. There is power and control under Hannibal's hands, with Will holding himself back. Even being given permission has him resisting, for Will - in this moment - is not focusing on his own pleasure. He's focusing on Hannibal's, and the thought sends a low twist of heat through him that mixes with startling awe. Will has never done this before, and it's a heady thrill to be the center of Will's focus.

His request and the pointed shift in position has him groaning and Will closing his eyes and panting, and the knowledge that this is equally intense for Will sends something warm and satisfied twisting through him. Hannibal's nails dig in just a little harder, but before he can consider scratching again, Will carefully leans forward. Hannibal's breath catches at the press of Will's body against his own, as he slides in impossibly deep and punches a soft sound from his lungs. He distantly registers Will's hands moving and he releases his hold on Will's back with gentle prompting. Their fingers entwining is a different kind of intensity and Hannibal shivers as he allows Will to move his hands down to the pillow he's resting on. There he's pinned and he only tests the strength of Will's hold once before allowing it, giving in. He squeezes Will's hands and looks up at him, the added vulnerability is staggering. Hannibal's breathing deepens and he looks up at Will with a rapt, fixed awe. There is no hiding his face like this, no shielding himself, no moving to adjust his position. His hips are kept in place only by the press of Will's knees under the pillow and the first thrust in this new position has a sharper pleasure tearing the breath from his lungs.

Will's hands squeeze his own as he leans over him, and Hannibal's strength moves to his arms as he allows himself to become Will's foundation. It's intimacy that borders on overwhelming - Will's grip, his expression, his words - and the new angle no longer just hints at pleasure. Will's cock strikes and rubs over his prostate with every stroke and Hannibal's breathing hitches noticeably, his eyes almost closing in bliss before he forces himself to keep them open. He hides nothing from Will. Not like this. Not now. Hannibal has ached to be seen for so long, and as uncomfortable and terrifying a notion as it might be, he needs it. As does Will. ('You're all I need, Hannibal.') Hannibal's voice skitters across a sound that is half Will's name and half a moan, lower and curled, desperate. He looks up at Will, brow pinched, gazing or awed or pleading, not even he knows, but Will seems to. His thrusts shift, no longer as deep but instead glancing and quick, and Hannibal's grip on Will's hands pales the skin around his fingers. It's too tight, likely bordering on painful for Will, but the way the muscles of Hannibal's abdomen flex, the way his head tips back to bare his throat, and the way he arches into every thrust, his breathing hitched and wrecked likely says it all for him. He's close.

"Will," Hannibal says, half-prayer, half-warning, his voice rough and tight, unsteady, desperate. Between them, his cock leaks freely, untouched, precome mixing with sweat, and it's all too much. His eyes burn, both with emotion and overwhelming sensation, and for a split second, Hannibal isn't certain if he can come just from this, isn't certain what his body is wrenching him toward. Before he can slide too deep into uncertainty, however, Will's voice breaks through the din ('Want you to come for me, baby,') and Hannibal groans, so rough it sounds almost pained. It's permission. It's the last
hurdle, in a sense, and Hannibal allows himself to give in, to force himself to relax, and the pleasure shifts from sharp and threatening to deep and vast. He feels a familiar warmth spread through him and allows himself to feel, to push back, to tighten his legs around Will's hips. Each thrust is close and sharp, intense. It's unlike anything he's felt before and Hannibal rides it, breathless, until sensation reaches a sudden, heavy peak.

When he comes, the first shock of it rips the breath from his lungs, eyes wide and almost startled as he looks at Will before the intensity takes over. Hannibal leans his head back, baring his throat, pulse pounding as his lips part on a silent cry he doesn't have the breath to vocalize, but he doesn't need to. His cock pulses, untouched, and come streaks over the scar on Will's abdomen, Hannibal's muscles tight and twitching deeply. It's intense, far more intense than he'd expected, and that intensity only increases when Will's hips move, his cock all but grinding against that spot within. It's bordering on raw, on too much, and yet Hannibal encourages it, finding his voice on tight, wrecked sounds as Will effortlessly and beautifully takes him apart.

He hadn't chosen Hannibal before. Not really. On the bluff, painted in blood and wounded like some feral animal after a scrap, Will had reached out to him. Of course, Hannibal had taken his hand and helped him up. There had been awe and love locked away in those eyes as they regarded Will. It had been the start, another seed planted, but this time in Will's heart. He'd been defeated by Hannibal - no, by himself - and by their profound connection. They had an inescapable fate to end up together. Written in the stars. Shit that Will hadn't ever thought he'd believe in, but how could he not? Through the years, the bloodshed, the hurt and anger and the fucking games, they had found themselves embracing each other. How could Will have known that the awkward brush against each other in Jack's office would lead to such an outcome?

They'd been victorious, yes, but Will had also been beaten down. Weary and exhausted, tired of fighting Hannibal, of his own denial, of the ache... he'd held onto Hannibal and Hannibal had held onto him. But the moment was too sharp. High on violence and relief, seeing each other - powerful and dangerous, two hunters side by side - and Will had chosen to plunge them into the sea. The notion of living with his choice, living next to Hannibal, had been far too daunting. Will had believed death the better alternative. The sea could swallow them up, two less monsters in the world to worry about. Hannibal had not felt the same way.

And so Will's new life had began, bitterness and frustration more difficult to deal with than healing wounds and the pull of stitches. Hannibal's patience had first surprised Will, his care and insistence speaking of a dedication and devotion that bordered on the unhealthy. But through their trials, his antics, Hannibal's insufferable calm and resolve, Will had been won over, truly. Barriers chipped away, forts broken down, and his heart not as locked up as Will had originally claimed. At one point he'd felt cursed to have caught Hannibal's eye, but now... Will feels almost grateful. He's loved. Loved completely. Seen fully, but more than that, he's accepted. Their darkness is not identical, nor does it have to be (he had once falsely thought Hannibal required that). They blend together, complementary, like paints mixed on a palette and together they create a color entirely unique. Entirely them. Hannibal may be smoke, but Will now curls with him, they're wisps that rise into the sky.

Will's never been good with words, not like Hannibal who is well spoken and versed in many languages, but Will gives what he can. He stares into Hannibal's eyes, he feels their connection, sees the depth of emotion reflected back at him. It's intimate and despite the quicker pace, this to him, is still not fucking. Will doesn't look away. On top of Hannibal, pushing into him, their fingers interlaced while Hannibal's hands are pinned down, Will is completely present; he has Hannibal. Hannibal is expressive and wrecked in his pleasure as he arches into each of Will's thrusts. The desire to stop and simply look at what he's wrought out of Hannibal is strangely tempting.
Much has transpired between them; they've done so much to each other... What happens after this moment?

He both feels and sees Hannibal climax. Throat elongated before him and Will groans as he feels spurts of come shoot between their body. Hannibal clenches around him and when he hears Hannibal's ruined sounds, it doesn't take long for Will to follow. (Left bleeding out on a kitchen floor, he sailed across an ocean to find Hannibal. Pushed off of a moving train, he followed the stag along tracks. Incarceration, betrayal, distance, time, the law - would could truly keep them apart?)

So, Will follows. His eyes close as heat and bliss overtake everything. It's almost agonizing as he drives forward and sinks all the way inside, coming loudly with a gasp. He shakes and grips Hannibal's hands tightly. Will's head lowers and he peppers kisses up Hannibal's throat as best as he can manage.

He doesn't need Hannibal on his knees, doesn't need proof or a show of possessive violence. He just needs Hannibal.

Though Hannibal's focus has narrowed down to a single point in this vast singularity of sensation and closeness, it doesn't mean he's blind to the rest. Pleasure feels carved out of him, too intense, too sharp, too intimate. For a moment he feels this must surely be Will's revenge for carving him open, for Will has done the same, aiming his blade for Hannibal's chest and wrenching it open to claim what has always been his. Sex is nothing new. Pleasure is as it always has been, but in this moment there's simple pleasure - different, sharper, almost painful from its origin - yet there's so much more. As pleasure and intimacy eclipse the rest, as Hannibal rides on something so visceral, he finds it is painfully easy to hone in on that more.

He feels it in the way Will looks at him in that moment, intense and open, naked and vulnerable in a different way than just physically. He looks at Hannibal as Hannibal has so often looked at him in secret: like the sky could fall to ash and the world could burn around them, but like he'd dare not so much as blink for fear of changing the moment. This is more than sex, but more importantly it is entirely Will's doing. Will is the one to look at him like he'd rather dive from the bluff again than risk looking away. Will is the one holding his hands down so tightly that it feels like he's trying to forcibly push past their very molecules and sink together. And Will is the one fixated on his breaths, his twitching, his soft sounds with such focus that he could very well imprint Hannibal upon his mind permanently.

Pleasure rises and falls, beginning to settle, leaving Hannibal's body strung high on sensitivity in the seconds following his orgasm, but every movement of Will's hips is one he still arches into. Though his breathing is ragged and aftershocks of pleasure burst sharply through him, his focus is on Will. His hands tighten in sharp counterpoint to Will's grip and he watches, feeling torn apart and awed, as Will's rhythm falters. There's a final snap of Will's hips that drives in deep enough to punch a soft sound from Hannibal's throat, but he merely holds Will close, legs tight around him, keeping him secure as Will's expression careens through agonized pleasure.

In that split moment, Hannibal feels the bones in his hands protest under the force of Will's grip but he hardly pays it any attention. His focus is on Will, on his gasp, on the shuddering of his body, and Hannibal feels each of Will's kisses along his throat like a bite of flame. Just as Will's teeth had torn into him the night before, so too does each kiss feel as violent and Hannibal is left hanging on each one, breathing ragged, sated and sore, exhausted to his core, and much more.

I intend to watch him change you.

As Will's weight settles firmly upon him, Hannibal slowly frees one of his hands. It shakes almost
imperceptibly as he buries it in Will's hair, holding him close, feeling the rapid beat of Will's heart through his own chest. There he cradles Will like he is something achingly precious, the only sound between them their ragged breathing, and when Hannibal looks down and meets Will's eyes - wide and stunned and achingly vulnerable as he looks at Hannibal in shock - he realizes this is not a state he's entered into alone. Will had intended him changed that night on the bluff. Here, in this moment, Will's vulnerability tears away his shields and Hannibal can see that the heart Will had so viciously locked away all those months ago is perhaps not as guarded as he had believed. They are both changed. For better or worse.

Hannibal's hand slides down to delicately cup Will's jaw. He looks at him, sees him. Perhaps it had started as sex. It isn't how it had ended. Hannibal tilts his head enough to press a kiss to Will's forehead, breath ruffling Will's bangs as he holds him.

There is no coming back from this moment. Once again Will has wrenched him from the edge of a cliff, this time of his own making.

There is no need for Will to say the words. Hannibal is a patient man, and he's proven countless times that he is willing to wait for this man. And if he never says them, it hardly matters.

"I know," he says softly, and it's all that needs to be said.

Chapter End Notes

Merry's tumblr!
Dapperscript's tumblr!

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