Many Hands Lighten the Load

by sawbones

Summary

All of Skyhold can see the way Blackwall looks at the Inquisitor, even if the Inquisitor himself can't. Dorian comes to realise there are better ways to handle such a situation than petty jealousy.

Notes

Happy Valentines Day to me! I always thought my Quiz would have been a better fit for Blackwall than Dorian - and then I thought, why not both? I wrote this self-indulgent piece with my custom Inquisitor in mind, but he doesn't have an over-bearing personality, so feel free to insert your own Quiz!

See the end of the work for more notes

“Must you do that while—“ Dorian paused, the bitterness in his voice surprising even himself. He wished he didn’t sound like a petulant child, hated the way his breath caught on the last word. The Inquisitor’s hand froze on Blackwall’s chest where he’d been idly pulling at loose threads on his tabard as they talked; he blinked at Dorian, the very picture of innocence. Blackwall, on the other hand, looked as guilty as a scolded dog, and it was because he surely knew the next words were supposed to be while I’m here, “—we have a camp to set up? Strapping though we are, you can’t expect Cole and I to do all the heavy lifting.”
“Of course. Forgive me, Dorian,” Lavellan said. He patted Blackwall’s chest and smiled, “Idle chatter can be kept for when we’re all a little warmer and a little drier.”

He left to help the rogue wrestle canvas sheets out of bags, cheerfully oblivious of Blackwall watching him and Dorian watching Blackwall. Cheerfully oblivious of the ache in Dorian’s jaw as he bit down on hurt, snide comments, or the way Blackwall rolled his shoulders stiffly and couldn’t look him in the eye. The air between them was a taut as a bowstring for a few long heavy seconds, and then it crumpled into nothing; Dorian set about drying the ground of the little clearing as best as he could before the tents went up, and Blackwall—well, he didn’t really care what Blackwall left to do.

Or so he told himself. The annoying fact was that he cared very much what Blackwall left to do, he cared very much about what Blackwall was doing in general and he hated it. He hated the great hairy oaf, he hated himself for letting him get under his skin, and he came dangerously close to hating the Inquisitor for making him feel like this. Of course he had known they were good friends before he and the Inquisitor had been together, a fact Dorian had never really leant much thought to at the time. The Warden had simply been a feature, barely a mark on his map beyond the times they sniped at each other on expeditions, all quiet and gruff at the back of the party. The extent of his concern was hearing the phrase *odd couple* skitter around the tavern more than once, and boredly wondering which couple they meant.

That was before Blackwall was revealed to be Thom Rainier; a murderer, a liar, and yet somehow still the closest confidant of the most powerful man in Southern Thedas. Enansal had been heartbroken by the betrayal, yet still risked the reputation of the Inquisition on springing him from prison and putting him right back to work, forgiven and pardoned without so much as a second thought. If anything the revelation had managed to bring them closer together, much to the confusion of Dorian and the rest of Skyhold. As was the nature of these things, it wasn’t long before the gossip began; stablehands swearing they heard something in the hay loft late at night, rattling bursts of laughter from soldiers in the tavern, serving girls sharing knowing looks as they walked by.

Dorian wanted to say he was above that sort of pettiness, that he was used to it by then, but the familiar stares and whispers and disapproving clicks of the tongue took on a distinctly humiliating flavour that sat poorly with him. He couldn’t stop thinking about it. Each time he saw Enansal and Blackwall together, he found himself scrutinizing every gesture, every conversation, every glance. Had they always been so familiar? Did he look at Dorian like that? Did he touch everyone like that? He tried to broach the subject about why he kept a traitor so close and was met with the same blunt answer as everyone else was: *I trust him.*

Dorian whispered the words to himself as he worked, his fingers hot and tingling from the dry heat. *I trust him.* They left an unpleasant taste in his mouth and a heaviness in his chest he wished he could chase away. He did trust the Inquisitor. He trusted him completely, and loved him too, and he was quite sure that he was loved back. He had only hoped that might have changed how he felt, but somehow it served to amplify his petty jealousy. No matter how slim, the possibility of losing him to another—even just the idea of it threw everything off balance. It made him restless, ill tempered, the ugliness of his possessiveness making a fool of himself more than once.
And that Blackwall knew—ah, well, that really topped the whole thing off with a cherry. One look at the man’s face and it was quite obvious he was seven shades of smitten with the Inquisitor, or so the nasty little voice at the back of Dorian’s head said. He was so gentle with Enansal, so attentive and patient in a way that was somehow similar and completely different to the way he was with Sera and Cole and all his other little favourites. It wasn’t unusual in its own right - the Inquisitor’s sweet nature brought that out in people - but was it the admiration of a soldier for his leader, or was it the affection of a lover? A hand on his elbow made Dorian jump; he almost swore.

“I think it’s dry enough for now, Dorian,” the Inquisitor said. The patch of grass at his feet was wilted and brown at the tips, almost scorched from his absent-mindedness, but there was no mockery in Enansal’s voice. He squeezed Dorian’s arm lightly and smiled up at him; he could tell something was off, and Dorian wished that smile made his heart swell instead of sink.

“Of course. Are the tents ready to be put up yet?” he asked breezily, extracting his arm from the reassuring touch and watching Enansal’s smile leave with it. He mutely nodded his brassy little head, gesturing to the heaped canvas and poles on the other side of the clearing. Maker, did he have to be so cruel? Did he have to be such a small man?

“Let’s get on with it then.”

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It wasn’t until after they had returned to Skyhold that Blackwall found out Enansal had been with him every step of his journey. He’d been on his heels all the way to Val Royeaux from the moment he was given the letter. Rumour had it he killed his horse trying to make it in time, ran it to death terrified he’d find him in the gallows and not in a cell, but Blackwall never gave much stock to hear-say. He couldn’t imagine Sal ever being that cruel either, not the man who had reached skinny hands through iron bars and took his own hilt-calloused paws in them, not when after everything he had heard he looked him in the eyes and said I forgive you.

The after effect of his revelation had been completely predictable, embodied in the way Dennett looked at him - or rather the way he didn’t, his mouth twisted in distaste as he brushed down the bay with more force than necessary. He hadn’t had a message delivered by person in days; whispers followed him through crowds and down corridors like waves washing up on a beach. Liar, murderer, traitor; he’d heard each one more than he could count since they had brought him back from Val Royeaux, most from strangers, some from friends - or rather from people he had once called friends. He had no right to complain. Blackwall had been ready to forfeit his very life, only to find it handed back to him by gentle hands. What other judgement could compare to that?

Enansal came to visit him in his barn almost every day when they weren’t on expeditions, and the lies swirled in his wake like leaves caught on the breeze. He had noticed where perhaps the Inquisitor had not, comments hidden behind hands and up sleeves about the real reason he had been pardoned, or what they did in their hours together. Those words prickled more than any insult, half because they were spiteful and false. It put him on edge and coloured their friendship in shades
unworthy of it, soiled one of the few good and true things he had left in his life. It also complicated matters with Dorian. While Blackwall himself had never cared much for the man, he knew the Inquisitor did and that meant something to him. He had made some effort on his behalf to cool the childish bickering between them, and it had been working well enough before he had went to Val Royeaux, but when he had returned—it seemed that the rumours put the Tevinter’s handsome nose out of joint far more than the truth of Thom Rainier did.

Dorian flashed as hot and cold as a fever. Blackwall bore the brunt of the fire; the forced arguments, the constant picking at old wounds. He could live with that, was used to it from better men than him, but Sal faced the cold front alone. It made Blackwall’s teeth ache to see him reach for Dorian’s hand only for it to be pulled away. His fingers curled in empty air, his bright laugh slipping into something small and sad: he didn’t understand. To the Inquisitor, there was nothing to hide, there was no sordid truth. If he had heard the rumours, they had washed off him like water off a duck and he gave no indication that he had noticed them at all. Blackwall was his friend, Dorian was his lover, and anything beyond that was beyond thinking.

The other half that bothered Blackwall – perhaps even more than the lie itself – was that he wished it wasn’t beyond thinking. He wished, deep in some hungry, selfish part of him that it wasn’t a lie at all. What had started as respect had grown to admiration, and from admiration: desire. It shamed him that he could look at his leader, look at the man who had spared and redeemed him, and feel lust - but Maker’s breath he was as pretty as any lass he’d known and twice as sweet. He was graceful and kind, soft spoken, soft hearted, sometimes soft in the head too but it was so easy to forgive him that when he leaned into every touch with lips parted and eyes bright. He was impossible to turn away.

"Inquisitor, a word please," Blackwall said quietly, because he had to try before things got out of hand. Startling green eyes met him over a small shoulder, then creased in a genuine smile; Blackwall couldn’t hold that gaze. He focused instead on the slender hand resting on the carved griffon’s head, how delicate the touch was that traced each roughhewn line. There it was again, that sinking expression of something’s wrong and I don’t know what.

"Is everything alright?"

A flutter of lashes, a crease between his brows. How could he tell him? What could he say? You can’t come here anymore. You can’t talk to me anymore. We can’t be friends anymore, because they see the way I look at you even if you don’t.

"I was thinking--," Blackwall began after a long moment. He knew that if he looked to his right, he’d see cold faces in the courtyard, tongues pressed to teeth hiding behind tight-drawn lips, but Sal turned towards him and the look on his face was like sunlight on snow; warm, bright, blinding, “—about the colours for this. You’re probably better at this sort of thing than me. Got any ideas?”

His hand joined Enansal’s on the griffon’s head, lightly gripping an ear. If he slid it down an inch or two, he could have entwined their fingers so easily. The Inquisitor inspected the carved beast carefully, “Blue, I think. Blue and red. or maybe yellow and red? Something happy. We could use a little cheer around here lately.”
“Something happy,” Blackwall echoed. He nodded slowly, “Aye, we might manage that.”

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Dorian stared intently into the fire, trying to focus on the dancing flames and not the tightness in his throat and chest. A book lay forgotten on his lap, fingers trapped between pages he’d read and re-read but hadn’t taken in. He let it close and sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

“Nearly done for today,” Enansal said cheerfully from behind a mountain of parchment at his desk, evidently hearing him sigh and mistaking it for boredom. His fingers were blue-black from fumbling with his quill as he signed off more documents than he could read in a thousand years; he’d managed to get a smudge of it on his chin. Dorian didn’t respond. He put his head in his hand and watched the Inquisitor work, or at least what passed as work. The man didn’t actually have to look at anything he was putting his name on – that much Cullen, Josephine and Leliana had made sure of. Still, figurehead or not, he seemed to take his duties just as seriously as they took theirs.

“I was your first, was I not?”

The Inquisitor glanced up from his work and smiled thoughtfully, “Yes, you were.”

“First kiss, first lover,” Dorian went on, winding his wrist as he avoided the point he was trying to make, “First love.”

His fond smile faded, replaced by mild confusion, “And only thus far. Why, what’s this about?”

Dorian frowned, his tongue pressed against the back of his teeth as he hesitated, not sure how to phrase his concerns, “Are you happy with that situation?”

“Of course.”

“I mean, I have seen so much, experienced so much, and you so little - have I been cruel in keeping you to myself? You are, after all, technically in the prime of your life.”

This time the Inquisitor set his quill down proper and looked at Dorian expectantly, waiting for him to explain.

“I am, of course, referring to this—situation with Blackwall,” the mage explained tightly. He could feel a headache coming on but he was trying not to be cruel about it.
“I don’t understand,” Lavellan said. Of course he didn’t. Nothing could ever be that simple.

“Allow me to be perfectly clear,” Dorian began, wishing he could be quite literal about it and disappear altogether because Maker, he wanted to do anything in the world but talk about this. There was no escaping it. It had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the light where Enansal could no longer ignore it, then beaten and hopefully exorcised, “I am quite positive Blackwall is in love with you, and everyone believes your friendship to have taken a distinctly intimate nature as in; sex, as in, you and he rutting in his shed like dogs.”

Enansal sat back in his armchair. He pursed his lips, a little crease of concern between his thick brows, “Is that what you believe?”

Dorian almost did a double take but managed to keep his countenance carefully neutral; he had expected surprise, or anger, a denial at least. Those he could deal with, those he had a whole barrage of quips and daggers prepared from his mental rehearsal of this conversation. Trust the Inquisitor to pull the rug from under him, “That doesn’t matter right now—“

“That’s the only thing that matters right now,” he said, softly but insistently. He stood up from his desk and Dorian found himself rising to meet him. He was not a tall man but the elf still had to look up to meet his eye. Smalls hands found his and he held them loosely, “Do you think I’m going behind your back to dally with Blackwall?”

“No, I don’t. Of course I don’t,” Dorian said, and Enansal smiled at him so sweetly it made his stomach clench. He leaned into Dorian, resting his head against his chest, his arms linked around his waist. Dorian smoothed his hands across his narrow shoulders, took a breath and counted to five, “But I think you want to.”

The Inquisitor blinked up at Dorian owlishly. Ugly red blotches of embarrassment bloomed on his cheeks like unfortunate flowers, “That’s not true.”

“You want him almost as much as he wants you.”

“No, I want you. I’ve always wanted you.”

“You want me too,” Dorian corrected lightly. He cocked his head, “You want us both in different ways. Or perhaps similar ways? It’s not entirely unthinkable. Love is a fickle creature, lust more fickle still.”

The Inquisitor tried to pull away but warm hands caught him by the wrists, “You don’t trust me? I would never—I wouldn’t do that to you.”

“This isn’t about trust, Inquisitor, it’s about desire,” he dropped his voice an octave, barely more than a murmur. He was surprised he had managed to keep himself so calm through the discussion
so far. The instinct to go off on it, to snark and jab and shout was almost overwhelming, “I’m not angry, I just want you to be honest with me – for my vanity’s sake, if nothing else.”

“Dorian, it’s you,” there was a long moment of silence, strung out, unravelling slowly. Enansal couldn’t look him in the eyes, so he stared intently at a spot just above his right shoulder. When he spoke, his voice was surprisingly resolved, “And-- and Blackwall, alright? Maybe Blackwall too, but I would never betray you.”

Dorian nodded jerkily, as though it wasn’t the answer he had expected or forced from the Inquisitor. If he was quite honest with himself, he didn’t even know why he intended to do with the information now that he had it. It seemed the whole conversation had been little more than a reason to torment Enansal, as though he deserved to be punished for his own jealousy. Dorian flushed with the familiar feeling of shame.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly. Enansal pushed his arms open to embrace him anyway, and he reluctantly pressed his mouth to the top of the elf’s head, “This was unfair of me. I don’t know what I expected to gain from this.”

He attempted to detangle himself from his lover, but the Inquisitor caught his sleeve and looked at him imploringly, “Will you stay with me tonight? We should to talk about this. I think you need to.”

Dorian studied the man’s face for a moment, then glanced away. He took a small step back, pulling his sleeve free from his grasp, “I’m afraid you have already given me much to think about, and it is perhaps best I think on it alone. For tonight, at least.”

The Inquisitor didn’t say anything but simply nodded, and somehow that was worse than any temper he could have thrown. Dorian leaned in to kiss his cheek almost apologetically before he excused himself and left the lofty living quarters for his own modest room.

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Blackwall had been somewhat dreading it when the Inquisitor came to him and cheerfully announced he was to accompany him on an expedition to the Hissing Wastes. It wasn’t the prospect of a near endless sea of sand that set his teeth on edge, nor even the hordes of night-shrouded Venatori – no, it was the idea of spending Maker knew how long in close quarters with Dorian and Enansal and the headache-inducing atmosphere they had brewing between them. If he was lucky, Cole would be there to helpfully announce every ugly thought and ill feeling he picked up on – which, inevitably, seemed to be just about all of them.

The previous expedition to the Emerald Graves had been nothing short of insufferable at the best of it, and to make matters worse the Inquisitor had begun acting strangely shortly after they had arrived back at Skyhold. He still came for his daily visits, of course – seemed to enjoy them as much as he ever did – but something was different. Something had changed.
Upon arriving in the Hissing Wastes – and indeed during the lengthy journey it took to get there – the reality of the situation was baffling to say the least. For a start, the near permanent fixture of Cole had been passed over in favour of the good Lady Cassandra, which was odd in that Enansal had been near inseparable from the lad while out in the field since he first decided he could stay. Said he liked the insight he couldn’t get from the others, or something to that effect, and if anyone on the party roster was swapped out for whatever reason, it was almost invariably Blackwall himself.

The second unusual thing – and in its own right, perhaps the most unsettling – was the sudden shift in atmosphere. He had expected the loaded looks and strained silences that had become the norm on half their outings, but had instead been met with…nothing, or near enough. Enansal had been as quietly cheerful as ever, but on the rare occasions Dorian had to talk to him he done so with polite indifference instead of spitting fire and venom. The biggest change came when they were together, though; they were more like newlyweds than anything else, like a completely different couple. They were all but joined at the hip, hand in hand, talking and laughing like they should have been all along – like perhaps they had been before Blackwall managed to spoil things. He couldn’t say he wasn’t pleased to see that they’d apparently resolved the issue, but he also couldn’t shake the feeling he was being left out of something.

When they eventually set up camp, Blackwall offered to take first watch in the hopes that the others would be asleep by the time he came back from patrol. They weren’t; when he passed his watch onto Cassandra and then settled down by the fire with whatever he’d managed to scrape off the bottom of the dinner pot, Dorian and the Inquisitor were curled up cosily together just opposite – Enansal settled between Dorian’s legs, back to chest with the mage’s arms wrapped loosely around his waist, their hands entwined in knots. He knew Dorian was not usually one for cuddling nor such public displays of affection, but even when he felt the other man’s eyes on him he kept his head down and his attention on his food. The Inquisitor himself hadn’t said anything, and if it wasn’t for the fact he kept yawning every few moments Blackwall might have thought he was already asleep.

“You ought to retire if you’re so tired,” Dorian said quietly. Enansal gave a hum of agreement but didn’t actually make a move until Dorian began to untangle himself.

“Are you coming?” he asked, voice raspy as he got to his feet.

“I’ll be right behind you, amatus.”

Blackwall’s spoon clicked against the lip of his bowl and he paused for a split second before he continued eating. He supposed that meant Dorian wanted to have a quiet word with him, out of the Inquisitor’s earshot. He couldn’t say he hadn’t seen it coming but it didn’t mean he had to look forward to it. Once Enansal sleepily bid them both goodnight and retired to his tent, the only sound between them was the crackle of the fire and the occasional tap of his spoon. Blackwall risked a glance up; Dorian was deep in thought and appeared to be trying very hard to look like he wasn’t, but still hadn’t said anything. Several long moments passed before Dorian stood up and made as though he was returning to his tent after all, but just when Blackwall thought he had lost his nerve, he sharply crossed his arms and turned to face him.
“If we were to invite you to our bed, would you accept?”

This time, the spoon didn’t even make it to his mouth. He stared at Dorian, studying his face for any sign or tell he could pick up but because it had to be some sort of test or joke, it had to be. His expression, however, was nothing but very carefully composed. Blackwall tried his best to replicate it.

“Is this invitation coming from you, or him?”

Dorian shifted from foot to foot, the buckles on his ridiculous robes glinting distractingly in the firelight, “It’s coming from me, on his behalf.”

Blackwall snorted, provoking a frown from the mage. Spoken like a true noble, “When?”

“Not tonight, obviously. I’ve already got more sand in my smalls than I really care to,” Dorian sniffed, “This is simply a proposition. When the time is right, I will find you at Skyhold and we will come to some sort of arrangement that will suit Enansal.”

“We will if I agree, you mean.”

“Blackwall, really,” Dorian said archly.

“I’ll think about it,” he bristled, and even in the cool night air his armour suddenly felt too hot, too tight. Dorian lingered by the fire and elegantly raised an eyebrow at him as though he already knew the answer - and despite his knee-jerk reaction to say no, Blackwall didn’t doubt that for a second. He could think about it all night and all day if he wanted to, but they both knew there was only one answer.

Dorian had been counting on it.

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Dorian braced a hand against the mantle of the fireplace, leaning into the heat of the flames. To the left of him, Blackwall was perched on the edge of the desk the Inquisitor regularly sat at to file through his paperwork. Neither of them had spoken in several long, drawn-out minutes; Dorian shifted from foot to foot.

“I suppose we should talk about this,” Blackwall said, presumably noticing Dorian’s fidgeting, “Set some rules. Boundaries.”
Dorian pushed off from the fireplace and turned to face the warrior; he folded his arms across his chest, studying him for a moment. The effort he’d made was commendable, if not somewhat misguided: he wore a shirt he’d obviously bought for the occasion, crisp, white, utterly not his style. He had probably asked the shop clerk for advice, an image that was borderline endearing. His hair was still damp from a recent bath, combed within an inch of its life, and Dorian could practically taste whatever cheap spicy perfume he’d splashed on by the bucket. He tugged on his moustache, “I suppose we should.”

Blackwall hesitated for a moment, expecting Dorian to continue, but Dorian was more interested in seeing what sort of boundaries he had in mind, “Can I touch him? Kiss him?”

“That would be entirely up to Enansal, but I have no…real objection to it,” Dorian said, trying to sound far more casual than he felt. He gave a turn of the wrist, “I would prefer if you abstained from further, at least for the time being. I’m sure even you can understand that.”

Blackwall gave a single nod, but didn’t say anything. Dorian felt the man’s gaze linger on the neckline of his robe before it found his face again, “What about you?”

“Me? Well again, that’s up to Enansal but I can’t say he’s objected so far. I might think he even enjoys it,” Dorian said dryly. Blackwall gave a snort.

“That’s not what I meant, Dorian.”

“I know what you meant. We shall see where the night takes us – for his sake, at least. Noting quite kills the mood like two people flinching every time their fingers touch,” Dorian looked away pointedly, and hated the way his cheeks threatened to burn at the slightest suggestion of being in any way intimate with Blackwall. Maker, he’d be lying if he said he hadn’t thought of it, but he’d rather bite off his own tongue than admit that. He sniffed a little, resenting how completely unflustered Blackwall seemed with the half-confession, “I never realised I was your type. You have better taste than I give you credit for.”

That jibe was enough to pull a proper laugh from Blackwall this time, “I don’t have a type. I want who I want.”

“And you want me,” Dorian said, “You don’t even like me.”

“As you implied, this whole thing might go a bit easier if we can get along. No-one said anything about like,” Blackwall retorted. Dorian narrowed his eyes at him and exhaled through his nose, turning back to face the fireplace again. As interesting as that little interlude had been, this wasn’t about stroking his own ego, or who Blackwall thought about when he stroked his own: it was about Enansal.

“I hope you like the Inquisitor a little better then, or else we are wasting our time here,” Dorian
said. He felt Blackwall bristle at that, and it gave him some sort of satisfaction.

“Sal’s different,” he said, “He’s—“

“I know what he is.”

There was a beat, a moment of silence, then a small voice from the mouth of the stairs announced the Inquisitor’s presence, “Well, don’t keep me waiting: what am I?”

Dorian stood a little straighter as Enansal appeared, all in beige and brass as usual. Behind him, Blackwall leaned off the desk with a light cough to cover his embarrassment, “You’re here.”

“Yes, I am—and so are both of you,” the Inquisitor said, a touch dryly; clearly Dorian’s influence. There was a question hidden in that observation. He had a bottle wrapped in brown paper tucked in the crook of his elbow, and when he crossed his arms it gave the illusion he was cradling it like a child, “Do you mind telling me what this is about? Creators, don’t tell me you’ve been arguing again. You’ve both been getting along so well recently.”

“No, not arguing,” Dorian said, adding more like negotiating in his mind but he didn’t say it out loud. He looked expectantly at Blackwall – he might have been the instigator in this, but he wasn’t going to do all the work. The warrior was stoutly silent; if Dorian didn’t know any better, he would have thought he saw a hint of a blush on the part of his cheeks not hidden by fur. He rolled his eyes a little, “Go to him.”

Blackwall slowly approached the Inquisitor like a man might approach a horse than hadn’t been broken in yet: his posture deliberately soft, his hands held a few degrees in front of him. Enansal watched him with a curious expression, but he only shied away when those hands reached out for him. He looked to Dorian, eyes wide in appeal; Dorian held his panicked gaze, and then nodded once. It’s alright.

He didn’t know if it really was alright personally, but to Dorian the way Enansal accepted that nod without question and leaned ever so lightly toward Blackwall spoke more of the implicit trust between himself and Dorian than between himself and the warrior. One of Blackwall’s hands came to rest on the Inquisitor’s neat waist; the other hovered near his cheek, uncertain, like he was afraid to mar him. His fingertips brushed along Enansal’s jaw with an impossible gentleness Dorian had never seen from the big man.

“May I?” Blackwall asked quietly. Enansal’s response was a slow smile and a rush of blood to his cheeks, turning them a similar colour of red as his hair. Their lips met each other half way, a kiss just a few shades shy of chaste, an awkward back and forth of wanting more and not daring to take it. Dorian noted that Enansal didn’t have to rock onto his tiptoes to kiss Blackwall the way he did during their first embrace in the library, and very nearly chalked it up as some small victory before he reminded himself he needed to see this more like a dance and less like a fight.
The bottle the Inquisitor had been cradling hit the carpet with a dull thud; it didn’t smash, instead rolling harmlessly under the nearby sofa, but it was enough to break the kiss and with it the atmosphere. It felt as though someone had opened a window and all the air came rushing back into the room, pulling them all back into the here and now. Dorian approached the couple, entwined as they still were; he slipped behind Enansal and fished the bottle from under the sofa, sitting it on the small table beside it instead. He then turned and reached for Blackwall’s broad hand where it was still curled in the fabric of the Inquisitor’s uniform, using it to pull himself closer and trap the smaller man between them. The elf gave a little burr of pleasure as Dorian dipped down to lick a wet strip along his ear, his eyes locked onto Blackwall the entire time.

“To bed, I think,” Dorian instructed with a little step forward, forcing Blackwall to match him with a step backwards or risk crushing the Inquisitor entirely. It was an ungainly waltz but it worked, and all the while Dorian focused on deftly divulging the Inquisitor of his clothes. He was familiar enough with the little buckles and buttons that he could manage it even from behind, not that either of his partners were aware enough to be impressed. They held onto each other like they were afraid of getting lost in a crowd, but still tunics came off and trou were dropped, belts and boots and whatever else hit the floor and were kicked aside.

Blackwall got on the bed first. While Dorian and Enansal were naked as babes, he kept his smallclothes on, presumably because of Dorian's request. It did little to preserve his modesty, but Dorian found he could not object - on the contrary, he could scarcely look away. Strong in limb and round in belly, his broad chest (and every other inch of him) thicketed in blackish hair and crossed with pink and well healed scars, Blackwall was a shock of-- of, well, something Dorian had not realised he had been craving until then.

Of course, that was not to say Enansal did not satisfy him - indeed, his lover made a beautiful contrast against the warrior as he tentatively knelt on the edge of the bed, lithe and compact, long copper hair twisted into an intricate braid, his pale skin kissed by the sun and freckles (and Dorian, a hundred times over), not traditionally masculine but still beautifully and undeniably male.

Maybe it was the Tevinter in him, but he was a man of appetites, and in that moment he wanted them both.

The Inquisitor turned to him, eyes bright, lips wet, "How should we--?"

He was the the conductor, it seemed; the guide, the lead. He didn't admit this was virgin territory for him too, in a manner of speaking. He didn't think it was prudent to let them know he had about as much idea as what they were doing and how it worked as they did. Oh, he had been with his fair share of partners before, of course - but never more than one at a time, not even in the weeks and months he'd spent haunting the finest alienage brothels he could find in Minrathos, when he was too young to ask and too drunk to get it up.

"Get on top of him," Dorian settled on finally, "As you would a beast of burden."

Blackwall made a grunt of protest at the comparison, but it was half-hearted at best in light of
Enansal carefully straddling his hips. Dorian could see the way the warrior's fingers clenched on empty air in desperation of paw at him - and really, Dorian could not blame him for that. He ran his own hands down the Inquisitor's back until his thumbs came to rest in the marvellous little dimples just above his ass, and as if on instinct, Enansal leaned forward, all but presenting himself to Dorian.

Dorian swore. He had been intending to play the long game but how could he with a view like that? The Inquisitor glanced back over his shoulder at him and bit his lip.

"Blackwall," Dorian said, not breaking eyecontact with Enansal, "I need you to reach into the set of drawers beside the bed and pass me any bottle of oil that you might find."

The expression on the Inquisitor's face was worth any slight fumbling from Blackwall, since he had to stretch to reach the drawer without unseating Sal - and in doing so ground against him against in a way that Dorian was not entirely sure was accidental. His hands were warm and dry as they passed the bottle to Dorian, and his legs were strong as they pressed up alongside his own.

"Kiss him," Dorian said. He pressed his hand to Enansal's back, urging him forward, but he was speaking to either of them, both of them. They moved together so easily, lips finding lips, smile to smile, Blackwall's hand brushing over Dorian's on Enansal's back - and Dorian realised then that he already no longer felt any jealousy, instead only a strange sort of pride, a depth of affection, and most curiously of all, a sort of security.

He opened the oil and poured a little onto his fingers, and ran the pad of his thumb slowly over the Inquisitor's entrance. Enansal's moan was swallowed by Blackwall who tightened his grip on him, holding him in place as Dorian slid a slick finger inside - two fingers, and Blackwall seemed dazed by the sweet, soft noises they pulled from him. Dorian knew Enansal, knew his limits and his likes, and all the ways to drive him half-mad. He took his time to open him up, moving his fingers in an easy rolling rhythm until his hips were twitching, pushing back against his hand.

"Dorian," Enansal gasped. It was praise, and a plea. He wanted him to keep doing what he was doing, but he also wanted more. Dorian was happy to oblige. With a final twist, he withdrew his fingers and poured more oil onto his palm; he slicked his cock with a careless stroke and positioned himself, the blunt head dragging over Enansal's entrance, a gentle pressure and no further, "Dorian, please."

Dorian could easily spin teasing out over several hours, finding the building anticipation every bit as delicious as the final act, but there was a sense of urgency between them he had never known before, like he could not get enough soon enough. His eyes fluttered shut as he pushed into Enansal, bottom lip worried between teeth, thumbs pressed into the dimples on the small of his back. The Inquisitor tensed around him, luxurious heat and slick softness, forcing out bitten-off little moans that made Dorian want to take and take and take.

It was easy to fuck him like that, when he arched his back and angled his hips, so beautifully pliant under Dorian's rolling rhythm. He was at his loveliest then, red-faced and wet-mouthed, but when
Dorian looked up again, Blackwall wasn't looking at the faces Enansal made: he was watching Dorian. His eyes were dark and the hair at his temples already damp with sweat, and his expression was-- was what, hunger? A challenge? Something heavy and intense Dorian found he could not pull away from; he would not be the first to look away. As though answering the challenge, Dorian picked up the pace, and with each sharp, punctual thrust Enansal was ground against Blackwall's aching cock, still trapped in his smalls. The warrior's face softened, lost focus; one of Enansal's desperate hands sought his cheek and turned him into a kiss, and just like that, the spell between them was broken.

Dorian folded himself over Enansal to lick and gently bite at his swept-back ear and carried along his jaw until, as if by accident, his mouth brushed against the seam of their kiss. He could feel Blackwall's beard against one cheek, the fluttering of Enansal's lashes against the other; they turned to him instinctively, like flowers to the sun, each trying to draw him in, to eat him up. It was a mess of crushed noses and bad angles, but it was divine. He balanced himself by holding onto Blackwall's roped bicep, fingers gripping hard enough to mark, and he could suppress the full body shiver that wracked him with teeth grazed his lips.

Dorian was close. So was Enansal. He could tell by the way he tightened around him, his head tipped back, neck exposed. Dorian sat up and took Ensansal with him so they were kneeling instead of on hands and knees, holding him tightly with his arms around his chest as he drove into him. "Touch him," Dorian demanded.

Enansal's little pink cock bobbed with each thrust, and Blackwall's bear-paw of a hand seemed to swallow it whole when he took ahold of him and began to stroke. Dorian watched over the Inquisitor's slim shoulder, utterly enamoured by the sight as Ensansal writhed and gasped, hands scrabbling for purchase on the arms wrapped around him. It only took a few strokes for him to cum over Blackwall's stomach and chest, pearly strings caught in the hair; some ever made it to his beard, leaving him looking utterly debauched.

Dorian came shortly after, his face buried in the crook of Enansal's neck as they both rode out their peaks. He slowly loosened his grip, letting the Inquisitor keel forward face down into the space beside Blackwall, his shoulders shaking as he tried to catch his breath. Dorian stayed kneeling for a moment before he crawled to the other side of Enansal and flopped down on his side, propped up on his elbow. There was no shortage of space on the bed, even for three people, but they were still packed closely together.

Dorian reached over and brushed his fingers across Blackwall's arm; the warrior had been staring at the ceiling with eyes unfocused, as if in a torpor, but he looked over at the touch. It was an unspoken question, a declaration of intent or a request for permission. Blackwall blinked and looked away again with the slightest inclination of his head. Dorian lean over and slipped his hand beneath Blackwall's britches and wrapped his fingers around his hard, neglected cock, drawing a hiss between teeth as he began to stroke him off.

Maybe it wasn't supposed to be that way, but Dorian was nothing if not a considerate bedmate and- well, he wanted to. He didn't know if he was being petty, but the weighty heft of Blackwall's cock
in his hand was perfect, just like the crease on his brow, and the way his lips parted silently around Dorian's name. He grabbed Dorian's wrist but not to stop him, and came in hot streaks across his own stomach, seed mixing with Enansal's to make an unholy mess.

Dorian's cock gave an ambitious - if not futile - twitch at the sight of it. Skin sweat slicked, face flushed, lips bitten, rugged chest splattered with cum - oh, it was a good look. A very good look. Dorian tucked him back into his smalls and pulled his wrist free so he could lie down again. Enansal was still face-down in the pillow but Dorian could tell he was awake by his breathing and the tension in his shoulders. The only sound between them was heavy breaths. The silence pulled on until it became unbearable.

"Oh for pity's sake, will someone say something already?" Dorian said with a heavy sigh, "Yes? No? Should I throw myself out of the mage tower now or later?"

"Thank you," Blackwall said. He seemed as though he didn't quite know what to do with himself, like he was considering leaping out of bed and making a break for it at any moment. Still, he sounded earnest, "For letting me be a part of this, I mean."

"I didn't--" Dorian began, then stopped. He was about to say it hadn't been his decision to make, but he supposed it a way it had been. He looked down at Enansal, who was starting to show more signs of life, "Are you alright?"

Enansal turned his head to peek at Dorian over the arm he was lying on. He nodded, and though Dorian couldn't see his mouth but could tell he was smiling.

"Well," Dorian said, and let himself lie back properly on the heaped pillows, "That's that then."

"For now," Enansal said, voice muffled.

"For now," Blackwall echoed.

Dorian was silent for a moment, then laughed. They'd make it work. Of course they would.

End Notes

Catch me on tumblr on my queer Dragon Age writing blog [the-brooding-rose](http://the-brooding-rose.tumblr.com) for more LGBT+ only fic and rarepairs, or come say hi at my main, [brood-mother](http://brood-mother.tumblr.com)
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