Eames's Tutor

by CQueen

Summary

Tom Eames is not having a good year what with the car accident, subsequent injuries, and the need to repeat his last term of high school so that he can graduate and get on with his life. And just when he didn't things could get much worse, Eames finds out that his new tutor is none other than Arthur Cobb, the boy he's been crushing on since the other teen transferred to his school.

But the longer he's around his mysterious crush and the teen's two siblings, the more Eames thinks maybe the year won't end so badly after all.
Worst Year Ever

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Worst Year Ever

2013 was the worst year of Tom Eames's existence. It wasn't over yet, unfortunately, but Eames saw absolutely no way in bloody hell things wouldn't stay equally crappy, especially when school started again. And that was a pisser, especially since he'd always thought that nothing could be worse that the year he'd turned fifteen, when he'd not only had to accept that he was gay and going to have to come out sooner as opposed to latter, but his mum had decided that the two of them were moving back to her hometown and his dad could come there to see them when he wasn't in the Middle East as she was damn sick of moving all the time from base to base. Yup, he'd pretty much thought his life was over then, gay and moving to a small town after years of travel, excitement and new adventures.

And then May third, twenty-thirteen happened, and his life had nearly been over. Permanently.

It was supposed to be his last year in high school, the end so close they'd all been able to taste it. He'd expected to graduate and leave the sleepy little town in the fall, his only regret the fact that he had yet to even talk to the incredibly hot and mysterious Arthur Cobb, who'd transferred to his school that winter and who he'd been madly crushing on ever since. And even then he'd told himself he had until the end of the summer to maybe make a move or at least talk to the guy, thinking that right up until he hadn't been able to think at all, period.

He and some of his mates had gone out that Saturday night to celebrate Matt's birthday, the plan being to camp out on the edge of town and drink themselves silly until they'd passed out in their sleeping bags with what had promised to be epic hangovers the following morning. And that's exactly what they'd started doing upon arrival, and how the night should have ended.

That night he'd fumbled his way into his sleeping bag thoroughly pissed, his tolerance for alcohol sadly low in comparison to some of the others who were still drinking even after he'd passed out. The rest of what happened was all hearsay, he'd slept through it, but apparently Nash and Matt had gotten into an argument as to whose truck was better, especially since Matt's was a birthday present, aka new and untested. And in their drunken state they'd decided that the extra camping equipment stowed in Matt's truck made them uneven, and that equal weight had to be put in Nash's truck bed to be fair.

They'd picked him up, sleeping bag and all, and put him in the back of the pickup truck along with another passed out friend and Ty, who'd been drunk enough to think this was a great idea.

He hadn't woken up when they drove off to a nearby stretch of flat, straight road, nor had he so much as stirred as the two trucks had sped down said road at dangerous speeds that had come to an end when Nash had lost control and rolled them, Matt crashing his own truck when he attempted to pull over to the side. He'd still been in his sleeping bag when help arrived, the broken bones and internal bleeding playing second fiddle to the brain injuries that had kept him in a coma for over a month. But he'd woken up, and all the pain the alcohol and consequent coma had dimmed had rebounded to hit him full force for the rest of the summer. Pain was now his constant friend, and you didn't even want to get him started on the tortures of physiotherapy. But he was alive and that was more than Alex could say, Eames acknowledged grimly. And he would, with time, be able to walk unaided permanently, and Nash was never going to walk again.
And staring out the van window as his mum drove them towards the outskirts of town in the hot August air, Eames thought to himself that it was just added insult to his injuries that the person his principal had advised his mum to hire to tutor him was none other than the crush he'd been mentally sighing over that stupid, life changing night.

The whole thing had come as a total shock to him, especially since the classes Cobb had taken last term had mostly been bird courses that had done nothing to suggest that Arthur was in fact someone of extreme intelligence. Not that he'd thought the man seemed dumb, far from it, but he had not been expecting to hear that the reason the other teenager wasn't taking the AP courses was because Arthur had already graduated from some genius, brainiac school for the gifted and was only taking what would amount to a year's worth of classes at their high school because Arthur's father thought it would be good for his son to have to attend regular school and deal with normal people. The guy had apparently dated the principal and talked her into it.

According to Principal Carter Arthur was more than qualified to tutor him, and on top of that Arthur didn't have to worry about his test scores or studying for his final term because he already had every top university in the country vying for his attendance. He was perfect in other words.

Which was the truth, especially when it came to the man's tight little arse, but he really, really didn't want the man as his tutor. He most definitely did not want to look weak, much less stupid in front of Arthur even if the guy was or wasn't dating his friend Ariadne. She said they weren't, and she wasn't a liar, but his best mate Yusuf claimed she'd dumped him for Arthur so either way that was one more reason not to want to do this. And yet, unfortunately, he couldn't argue about his mum about this because the woman had been through hell and back this summer and he would be damned if he added to her worries by bitching about this. Especially when he had to do well academically this term in order to make the money she'd be giving him for university well worth it.

He'd driven past Arthur's house before, and when they pulled into the driveway a part of him was excited at the idea of finally seeing inside, maybe finally meeting the other teen's father, who no one ever seemed to see. Arthur's mum was dead apparently, and he had two much younger siblings he always seemed to have with him when he wasn't in school. That was something that had always appealed to him actually, the fact that Arthur seemed so mature and aloof at school, but so devoted to taking care of his siblings who adored him according to the grapevine.

Once parked his mum got out and retrieved his chair, bringing it around so that he had to move as little as possible as he transferred over to the only wheels he drove these days. His legs had been relatively undamaged but his spine had taken some hard knocks that meant he couldn't stand straight for very long before the back pains got to be too much. He could walk short distances now though, thank God, if he had to.

With his mum pushing his chair they headed for the front door, almost there when they heard the sound of childish shrieks and a sprinkler from the backyard, the wild barking of a dog punctuating the sounds. Sharing a look Eames's mum changed their direction, both very thankfully that there was a paved path that was just wide enough to accommodate his chair and led towards the back. And then they had reached the back and Eames forgot everything, including his own name, at the sight of Arthur Cobb in a swimsuit. A short, Daniel Craig as Bond swim suit that hung low enough on the man's hips that he could see part of the lines where leg met the rest of that incredible, wet, sexy, mouth wateringly yummy body he wanted to lick up like a melting fucking ice lolly.

And then those dark eyes met his and Eames forgot even that, especially when Arthur started towards them, dripping water and gaze piercingly direct while the two children and a very wet dog
followed at a cautious, curious pace.

"Dr. Eames. Eames. What brings you by?"

He knows my name, Eames inwardly crowed, though that was probably only because of the publicity from the accident and the fact that everyone knew everyone in this town.

Thankfully his mum wasn't as star struck, and could answer for them. "We're sorry to interrupt, but we were hoping to have a few minutes of your time, Arthur."

A raised eyebrow was Arthur's only show of surprise, the teenager focusing on his mum now as he told her that they could talk on the patio, asking if they would like some lemonade as he'd been about to get some anyway for the kids. When she said yes Arthur excused himself and then turned to the two children, speaking to them in rapid fire French that had the boy following him into the house and the girl leading them over to the patio furniture, pulling a chair away from the table for Eames.

Now that Arthur was gone and his mind had cleared somewhat, Eames smiled at the girl who was watching him with open curiosity, fairly sure she was about eight but unsure of the name. "Thanks, Kiddo. And you are?"

"I'm Phillipa, though you can call me Phil. This is Sorry." She added, motioning towards the dog sitting patiently at her side, watching the new guests with equal interest.

"Why Sorry?" Eames's mum asked as she wheeled her son into place and then took a seat beside him.

Smiling, Phillipa explained how, when they'd gone to the pound to get a dog for her brother, who'd always wanted a dog, Sorry had been on his way to another room but had broken loose, charging James and giving him lots of kisses while the vet assistant said 'sorry' over and over again as she tried to get him back under control. James had thought that that was the dog's name and it had stuck once they'd brought him home. And following her explanation the girl offered to show them the tricks Sorry could do, entertaining them until Arthur returned, which naturally distracted Eames immediately.

The other man carried a tray with a pitcher of lemonade and some glasses, the little boy carrying a plate that held cookies that turned out to be oatmeal chocolate chip. In his highly efficient manner Arthur had the drinks and cookies handed out in short order, Phillipa taking a seat beside Eames which meant Arthur took the one directly across from him with James easily balanced on his knee with one of Arthur's arms wrapped around the boy's waist for balance.

Polite chitchat was made between Arthur and his mum, and then his mum got down to business, explaining that they were hoping that the teenager would be interested in tutoring him through his last term at school in math primarily, but also with some history and maybe English. He normally did well in the latter two, but they had yet to test out how capable he was at writing essays and such. She couldn't pay a lot, but she hoped they could work something out if he was interested.

Sipping his drink Arthur seemed to consider the idea while the kids ate their cookies and ignored their drinks for the moment, the debate a surprisingly short one that led to an even more surprising question when Arthur brought up Eames's grandmother, asking for confirmation that she was the woman who'd donated a number of knitted stuffed animals to the fundraiser that had been held that summer to collect money for the families of those injured in the accident and hadn't had the army's financial help the way he had through his father.

While Phillipa excited exclaimed that she'd bought four of those animals, Eames's mum confirmed
that yes, those had been her mother's work.

"As Phillipa just stated she bought some of your mother's creations, and they rekindled her interest in learning how to knit. I lack the knowledge to teach her myself, so instead of you paying me to tutor Eames would your mother perhaps be willing to teach Phil in trade? I watch them after school, so they'd have to be with me either way, and coming to your house for the tutoring makes sense anyway."

Shrieking in excitement and bouncing in her seat Phillipa's feelings on the matter were clear, Eames's mum surprised but looking very pleased with this change as she asked for a moment to confer with her mother about it.

While she did so Eames forced himself to finally speak, praying like mad that he wouldn't stutter or say something completely stupid. "Thanks, for this. I know Ari says you've been helping her a lot with learning French." Those lessons were indirectly what had caused his two friends to break up, which sucked of course, but it seemed like neutral enough ground.

The small smile that crossed Arthur's lips seriously screwed with Eames's ability to concentrate on what the man said next. "Then I'm going to assume she's told you that I expect absolute dedication from my students. I'm a hard taskmaster, Mr. Eames, and I will work you hard if I have to to see you graduate with what I deem acceptable marks. If you're looking for someone sympathetic, who will take it easy on you and carry you through this term, you're looking in the wrong direction."

You can work me as hard as you want, Eames almost said, but was thankfully interrupted by his mum who announced that his grandmother would be pleased as pie to teach Phil to knit.

And that, as it turned out, was that.

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Much later that night Arthur did his last circuit around the house, checking all the doors and windows to make sure everything was locked up and in order. Intellectually he knew that there was probably no need, they lived in a sleepy little town where pretty much nothing ever happened, but since he'd essentially become the guardian of his siblings he'd become more than a little paranoid.

Heading upstairs when he was done looking over the main level, Arthur absently adjusted a picture frame before continuing up and then turning right, stopping at Phil's room. Opening the door a little he checked to make sure she was still tucked in for the night and not bouncing around excitedly over her upcoming lessons with Eames's grandmother. She was asleep, or doing a damn good impression of it, and he was smiling as he closed the door and moved on to James's room. His brother wasn't nearly as thrilled about the fact that they'd be paying visits to Eames's house as their sister, but then James was horribly shy and slow to warm up to people. Thanks to the few months the two had lived with their grand-mere after Maman had died…James hardly talked at all.

Jaw clenching painfully, as it always did when he thought of the scars their other family members had left on his innocent siblings, intentional or not, Arthur had to take a moment to compose himself and remember that that was in the past and was not going to be repeated. They were with him now, and except for the occasional visit from their father to make sure no one called Child Services on them the three of them and Sorry were living together as a family and the better for it.

Letting out a calming breath Arthur forced his thoughts to turn to the fact that he'd agreed to tutor the
very popular and handsome Tom Eames. It would certainly be interesting, he thought with a grin, especially since it was glaringly obvious, at least to him, that the former football player had a huge crush on him. Or at least wanted to have sex with him, given the too numerous to count times he’d caught the senior drooling over him when he thought no one was looking. That no one else seemed to notice was just one more bit of proof that he was currently living in a town and attending a high school populated by people who’d had their brains destroyed by television, junk food, and far too much inbreeding given the fact that many of them all had the same last names.

Which was why his father had exiled them here and demanded that he actually attend high school for a year, Arthur thought with a small grimace, punishment for daring to suggest that he could raise Phillipa and James on his own and better than their parents ever had.

That he was doing precisely that were slaps to his father and grand-mère's faces, which suited him just fine as it happened. Though he couldn't wait until this last term was over and he could stop taking university classes covertly online so that his brains didn't leak out of his ears due to the classes his father had especially picked out just for him at the high school.

Just one more term and he could start attending a university again. The commute would be a bit of a bitch, but he wasn't about to uproot the kids again and this was, for better or for worst, home now.

Having to deal with Eames's crush and the no doubt interesting and entertaining situations that would arise as a result would make the coming few months interesting though, something to look forward to. If Eames were older and not in the closet Arthur had to admit he might have been tempted to see just what would happen if he were to put the moves on him…but those were the facts, and he was hell on details.

As his maman would have said, 'cest la vie.'
First Study Date

Eames felt as eager and nervous as a little kid on his first day of school. Or at least how he figured he had felt way back then, and his mum's video recording of the event would suggest he wasn't wrong to think so. Either way he couldn't wait for Arthur to get to his house even as he worried that this was all going to blow up in his face and the other teenager would throw his hands up in the air, declare him far too stupid to waste his time on, and go. Logically he knew that he wasn't stupid, and that Arthur wasn't the type who would give up that easily, but being rational wasn't easy when the guy you'd fancied for months was coming over to your house to spend an hour and a half with you, just the two of them.

Well, sort of.

They'd decided that he and Arthur would work in the dining room, which led into the parlor where his grandmother and Arthur's little sister would have their first knitting lesson. That way the girl would be able to see that her brother was close by if she got nervous being in a strange place with a stranger, and Arthur would know she was okay too. Where the little boy would go would be up to him and Arthur, they'd decided, especially since James was obviously very shy. And while normally Eames would have liked the privacy of his own room, especially now that he as sleeping in his own bed again, the idea of being in his bedroom with Arthur was a little more than he could handle at the moment.

"They're here." His grandmother called out, having been keeping a lookout. "So are they just half siblings then? I mean with the age difference and all. The oldest one certainly doesn't look like his daddy." Not that she'd known Dominic Cobb's well, her only child being seven years older, but she'd known the man's mama back in the day.

"Mom, don't spy on them." Not that she expected her mother to listen. "And from what I understand they're full siblings but don't badger Arthur about it, he's doing us a major favor not charging us for this, knitting lessons or not. We looked up what a tutor costs, remember?"

Ignoring her daughter Mimi stayed right where she was, frowning when she commented that the boy was in some sort of booster seat, which made no sense to her given that he was six years old, wasn't he?

"It's the law." Dr. Eames reminded her, due to the boy's age and small stature. Personally she thought it spoke well of Arthur that he obeyed that law instead of ignoring it because people were too relaxed about car safety in this town.

The tension and oppressive memories descended on them all like a ton of bricks, the silence deafening until Eames's grandmother recovered enough to launch into an approving tirade about the fact that her future student didn't look like a mini hooker. The disgraceful way young girls dressed these days was one of her favorite rants and she was more reassured to see that the girl's stomach wasn't showing than she was that Arthur had had James in a booster seat. So far she approved of the Cobb siblings, she announced as she finally moved away from the window, adding that the oldest one was certainly a handsome one, even if he wasn't in his father's league. Pity about the ears.

"His ears are bloody adorable." Eames blurted out before he could stop himself.

Turning her head as her lips shaped into a wide grin, Eames's grandmother looked like the cat that
got the canary as she inquired if she would be correct in assuming that this Arthur Cobb was her grandson's type.

"Mimi..." Eames began warningly, cheeks flushing a little pink as he squirmed tellingly.

"Oh, Sweetie, why didn't you tell me you have a crush on him?"

"MUM!"

The sound of the doorbell going off canceled the conversation, thank God, but Eames had no doubt that it would be brought up as soon as their guests were gone, dammit. Yup, crappiest year of his life, Eames silently muttered as he followed the women towards the front door, hanging back a little since there wasn't room for all of them and his chair.

"Hello, Dr. Eames." Phillipa said as soon as she was inside. "Thanks for having us. Hello, Mrs. Pegg, I'm Phillipa but you can call me Phil if you want to. Thanks very much for agreeing to teach me how to knit, I promise I'll work really hard. We went to the store and bought all the stuff the websites said I might need." The little girl motioned to her bright pink satchel, the strap across her chest. "These are my brothers, Arthur and James."

Arthur greeted everyone with his usual, impeccable manners, while James clutched his big brother's hand and nodded in everyone's direction.

"Well you three can just call me Mimi." Mimi announced, explaining that whenever anyone called for Mrs. Pegg she thought they meant her former mother in law. She and the woman had gotten along about as well as two wet cats in a sack, so the thought of her being around was never a pleasant one. "Now you three come on in and we'll get started, shall we?"

In short order Mimi had everyone where they were supposed to be, James curled up in a chair near his sister with a book in his hand to read while the lessons were going on. Eames and Arthur were stationed at the dining room table, the former trying not to freak out a little as he watched the latter take out two thick math textbooks, a binder that was already full, and sheets of lined paper from the elegant leather satchel he'd seen the other teen use at school all the time.

For his part Arthur had his ear cocked to pick up the noise from the parlor, reassured by the sound of his sister's happy chatter as she and Eames's grandmother got acquainted and Phil showed off her knitting supplies. There wasn't a peep coming from James, naturally, but Phillipa would watch over him and call out if they needed him.

"We're going to start with the most basic and work our way up." Arthur began once everything was where he wanted it to be. "This isn't meant as an insult to you, it's simple common sense since I have no idea what your injuries might have caused you to forget or have problems understanding. Today's students also have a deplorable dependency on calculators and you need to be broken of the habit if we're going to work together. Without the foundation that mathematics is built on there's nothing to build on, and cheating with a machine isn't learning. So we'll start with these samplers I've put together and we'll see how far you can get before we need to give you a refresher."

Accepting the pieces of paper he was handed Eames saw that the other man wasn't kidding about the starting from the bottom, the first questions dealing with adding and subtracting. He should probably be glad that they were all in the hundreds.

And not about to argue he got to work, breezing through the adding and subtracting and nearly done
the multiplication and division when Arthur spoke, interrupting his mental calculations with a question.

"Why do you do that with your fingers?"

"Do what?"

"You mutter the math under your breath as you're doing it, and whenever you're dealing with the nine times tables you move one of your fingers and then put in the correct answer. Why?"

Eames knew he tended to mutter during tests and such, he learned better verbally and it helped him problem solve if he heard it even though teachers were constantly telling him not to because it distracted people. He was surprised that Arthur had been able to understand him, not to mention a little worried that Arthur would consider what he'd been doing as cheating now that he thought about it. But he'd been caught in the act so Eames fessed up that he always used his fingers to do the nine times tables.

"I don't understand." Arthur's voice made it clear that he didn't like that one little bit.

Holding his hands out in front of him like he was going to push someone Eames explained that by lowering the finger that represented whatever number the nine was being multiplied by you got the answer to the math question by putting the number on the one side alongside the number on the other side. For instances if you lowered the forth finger you had three fingers on your left and six on the right, making thirty-six which was what nine times four was.

Catching on Arthur immediately brought up his own hands and quickly lowered each finger in turn, noting the truth of Eames's statement. "It works. Who taught you this?"

"My dad."

"I see. I'll teach this to Phillipa and James as a way to double check their answer, thank you. Now back to it."

Turning his attention back to his work Eames finished his multiplication and division, grimacing over the need to use BEDMAS and deal with exponents and then fractions, which he'd always hated and struggled with. Rather than admit to that Eames decided to claim foggy memory due to brain injury as opposed to fraction stupidity, and asked Arthur for help with those, applying himself to the best of his ability and ridiculously grateful that Arthur was the sort who broke things down easily and had the knowledge to explain things in a variety of ways until the concept was grasped.

For his part Arthur was pleased that the other man was doing reasonably well, especially considering the fact that he'd hypothesized that Eames might have trouble with him as a tutor given his crush on him. But then again he'd watched a few of the football games and been impressed by the single-minded focus Eames had shown when it came to that white and black ball, so perhaps this was similar.

Actually, he might be just as likely to lose his focus, Arthur acknowledged, his eyes drawn once again to the tattoos that were just visibly under Eames's T-shirt sleeves. He'd seen the same hints at school, but had never had a chance to see any of them properly. He'd never been good at not having his curiosity appeased. Plus it had been quite a while since he'd been this close to a male he would, under different circumstances, be interested in sexually, and that was a factor he couldn't ignore either.

Concentrate on the math and the man's oddly sweet muttering, Arthur ordered himself, pulling his
attention back to the work with a single-minded focus to mirror Eames's.

The two were nearing area and diameters when Phillipa loudly stating the really long word from Mary Poppins interrupted their work, Arthur looking up and over in her direction with a look of amusement that had his dimples flashing sexily.

Wanting to keep those dimples there Eames asked Arthur if the girl was a fan of the books as well as the movie.

"I don't believe she's read them, we don't have them at home."

From the parlor the two could hear Mimi ask the girl why she'd said that word so suddenly, Phillipa explaining that Arthur had told her that 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious' was the closest thing to a swear word she was allowed to say. Any other bad word and she got sent to her papa's room to read the dictionary until Arthur said she could stop.

"He sends you to your father's room instead of your own?"

"Well it's not a punishment if he sends me to MY room." The little girl stated in her best impression of her big brother. "All my stuff is there. There's NOTHING to do in my papa's room BUT read the dictionary. I like learning big words that none of my friends know though."

"And what's your punishment, James?" Mimi asked, obviously trying to include the boy in their discussion, amusement in the older woman's voice.

"The same thing, though he hardly ever gets in trouble." Phillipa told her as she obviously, to her brothers anyway, cut off Mimi's attempt to talk to James. Older women unnerved James most of all, and even though Mimi was just trying to be nice James wouldn't see it that way until he got used to her.

"He can read the dictionary?"

No response was heard so both Eames and Arthur assumed one of the children had nodded, Phillipa shifting Eames's grandmother's attention back to her by claiming she needed the woman's help because she'd made a mess of her latest row.

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Both lessons continued on after that until it was ten minutes before the scheduled end of the lesson, James coming into the dining room to remind Arthur of the time just in case. Nodding Arthur assured his brother that he was aware of the time and that he'd made sure they would have plenty of time to get to the restaurant before Ariadne started to wonder what was keeping them. Satisfied with that answer James went back into the parlor while Arthur turned his attention back to Eames, who was looking at him in a way that had him quirking an eyebrow in question. "What?"

"Nothing. You and the kids are hanging with Ari tonight?" Not that it was any of his business…he was just curious.

"We're having dinner with her at Delia's and then we're driving to the drive-in to see a movie with Himiko Makino and two of her siblings."

Eames didn't know Himiko well, just that she had a heavy accent, was seriously brilliant, and had eaten lunch with Arthur regularly last term, enough that people had speculated the two were dating before the rumors about him and Ariadne came to light. Oh, and her parents owned a Japanese restaurant. That Arthur was going to the movies with both girls…well he could only assume a lot of
the speculation had just been rumors.

"So what movie are you seeing?" He asked, just to say something.

"'The Secret World of Arrietty' by Studio Ghibli. We've seen it before, but never on a large screen.
Have you seen any of Hayao Miyazaki's work?"

Judging by the name Eames shook his head, assuming that they were going to see some foreign movie with subtitles. Poor kids. Though there was something about the name…where did he know the name Arrietty from?

"Being half British you might know the books the movie was based on. 'The Borrowers' by Mary Norton?"

Eyes widening Eames snapped his fingers, lighting up as he made the connection. "The stories about little people who live inside houses and borrow stuff from regular people, who they call 'beans'?"

When Arthur nodded Eames expressed the sentiment that he couldn't believe that no one had told him there was now another version besides the one with the actor who'd played Draco Malfoy in the Harry Potter movies. He'd loved those books as a child, his Gran had read them to him all the time. He'd searched her house high and low whenever he'd visited her in England because she'd convinced him there might be Borrowers living with her.

"I'll have to look it up on Netflix tonight, even if I do hate subtitles."

"It was translated by Disney, most Studio Ghibli's works are, so there's an English version which is what we're going to see. James is too young for subtitles yet." A pause. "And if you like you could just come with us tonight, if you think you're up to it. I can bring you back afterwards."

Stunned by the offer Eames didn't know what to say. He'd dreamed about Arthur asking him out of course, which really wasn't what this was but still…it was certainly a step in a positive direction. On the other hand the idea of going out wasn't terribly appealing, especially since he could never be sure when his body would decide to throw him for a very painful loop. He wouldn't want to ruin the night for the rest after all, especially the kids. And if Arthur really was dating one of the girls in question…he really didn't want to see the other man snuggling with some girl instead of him.

"The kids will stretch out on a blanket while the rest of us are sitting in lawn chairs anyway. And I'm stronger than I look, if you need help with your chair."

"I'd hate to be a fifth wheel." Eames hedged, trying to figure out how to back out convincingly when he actually really did want to go.

Arthur's lips curved into a smile that hinted at his dimples, which were like kryptonite as far as Eames was concerned. "No one is ever left out of a conversation with Phil, she'll probably talk your ears off since she doesn't know you. And we'll only be five until the movie, when you'll even our numbers out."

"Well I suppose-if you're sure it wouldn't be a bother…I'll just have to clear it with my mum."

Eames mother, as it turned out, was thrilled with the idea of Eames getting out of the house and was more than willing to come and pick him up wherever they were if Eames's body decided to revolt badly enough that his pain killers couldn't deal with it. He hadn't hung out with Ariadne in forever after all, and she'd heard nothing but good things about Arthur when she'd called the girl about the boy's tutoring abilities. Ariadne had also stated that she was most definitely not dating Arthur, they were just friends, which meant that maybe her baby had a chance with him?
Mentally cursing her lack of gaydar, she hadn't even known her son was gay until he'd told her, Eames's mother could only cross her fingers for luck a short while later after seeing her son safely into Arthur's car, waving the four off from the front porch.
Dinner proved to be an interesting affair. As Eames had feared he'd instantly become the center of attention as soon as they arrived at Delia’s, all eyes on him even before he'd settled into the chair that was currently his constant companion. That Ariadne was obviously happy to see him and had all but suffocated him with affection was okay, they were best mates after all, but as soon as she and Arthur had headed inside the restaurant to get everyone food while he stayed outside with the kids… everyone else had taken that as their cue that they could come over and fuss over him too. It wasn't like he didn't appreciate the fact that they'd worried about him and were glad to see him out and about, he did, but he didn't like being reminded of the accident or his injuries either. And every time the person talking to him changed it seemed that someone had to mention the others who'd been injured, and from there segue into how sad they still were about Alex and had he spoken to his friend's family lately, and did he know how they were doing?

It was after the fourth person had asked that that his knight in braided pigtails had stood up on her seat and loudly ordered people to leave him alone. Phillipa had pointed out that it was very obvious their questions were hurting him and why did they want to make him hurt even more? Hadn't their parents ever taught them that that wasn't nice?

Sheer embarrassment and unease had had most everyone backing off then, the force of the little girl's glare surprisingly effective. And though he knew he should be assuring them that Phillipa was exaggerating or apologize for her, Eames had found himself softly thanking her before raising his own voice to say that he'd appreciate it if everyone didn't make a fuss over him. He was doing okay, thanks.

Awkward silence had still been heavy when Arthur and Ariadne came back to join them with the trays laden with food, Ariadne naturally asking right away what the heck had happened while they'd been inside getting the grub.

"They were making Eames sad so I made them stop." Phillipa had announced proudly as she stuck her straw into her cup. "He was making the faces Papa always makes when someone asks him about Maman."

No one missed the look of understanding that crossed Arthur's face as he'd handed Eames his change, the teenager's next words an inquiry as to whether he needed to apologize to anyone for Phillipa's behavior or word choices. Once Eames had told him that no, that wasn't the case, Arthur had nodded and then turned his attention to distributing the rest of the food like nothing had happened.

At that point Eames and Ariadne had shared a look, but neither had asked the question that lay on the tips of their tongue out of ingrained politeness and the recognition that it was neither the time nor the place to ask.

How Arthur's mother had died had been a hot topic of conversation when the three Cobb siblings had first come to live in their little town, no one wanting to ask the younger children for obvious reasons. The question had been posed to Arthur of course, as tactfully as the busybodies could manage, but thus far all anyone had been able to get out of him was that she'd died from a long-term illness. What that illness had been was unknown, as was the strangeness of it being termed long-term when friends of Arthur's paternal grandmother, who'd passed away a couple months before her daughter in law, had never mentioned Mal Cobb being sick.
Thankfully Arthur's prediction about Phillipa had proven to be true, with Eames finding himself bombarded by questions by the little girl who wanted to know all about him between bites of her burger and fries. She knew all about Ariadne already apparently, and even if she hadn't Ariadne had already been busy chatting with James. It had been a shock at first, to hear that the boy was capable of speaking full sentences, but it had also become pretty obvious pretty quickly that the six year old had a huge crush on the girl and thought she was the greatest thing since the invention of dogs and crayons.

So in the end Arthur had been the fifth wheel so to speak, though the teenager had seemed quite happy to fill that role as he occasionally entered one of the two conversations before leaving it again to simply observe. It was Arthur who eventually had to remind them that they were on a schedule too, which had the kids reluctantly going quiet so that they and their conversation partners could finish eating.

Once they were done eating they cleared off their table, Eames amused to hear Arthur mutter over the lack of recycling receptacles, before everyone was herded over to the other teenager's vehicle. Ariadne was put in charge of getting James all buckled in while Phillipa handled her own seat belt, Arthur opening the front passenger door for Eames but making no move to force his help on him, which Eames appreciated more than words could say as he gritted his teeth and made the move from his chair to his seat. After that Arthur stashed the folded up wheelchair in his trunk and then off they went with Ariadne thankfully insisting that they not listen to the classical music Arthur had subjected them to on the way to the diner.

Not that the soundtrack from the most recent film version of 'The Phantom of the Opera' was that big an improvement in Eames's books.

It was just getting dark enough when they arrived at the drive in, a fair amount of cars already in place. Most of the real action would be in two hours when the teenagers came here to use the cover of darkness to put the moves on their dates, often paying very little attention to whatever double feature they'd paid to see. Technically speaking what they were seeing was a kid's movie, a tradition at this particular drive in so that it appealed to all audiences, so the lack of people wasn't that much of a surprise and a major relief to Eames who didn't want to run into his peers anyway.

In fact the only person Eames had to talk to about his condition and the accident was the guy who ran the place, and Mr. Toppin was more self-aware than most. All he said was that it was good to see Eames out and about, took their money for the tickets, and then pointed them in the direction of the group they were joining so Arthur wouldn't have to drive around looking for them.

"Oh, yeah, Eames, if Himiko's a little uneasy around you at first it's nothing personal. She gets teased by a lot of the jocks because of her heavy accent and she's self-conscious about it. She did tell me that you were the one who told Nash to lay off her though, so I think it will be okay."

"I like Himiko's accent." Phillipa piped up. "Though Eames's is a lot prettier."

Laughing, Eames thanked her and then assured Ariadne that he'd be his most charming self.

"The lure of an English accent." Arthur commented with a small smile, shaking his head in amusement. "How easy you girls fall for it."

"Accent jealousy, Arthur?" Eames quipped, determined to act normal around Arthur, especially since Ariadne was with them and would definitely pick up on it if he treated the other man differently. That she hadn't figured out he fancied her French tutor was a miracle at this point.
Parking the car Arthur turned to look at Eames, a hint of those dimples showing before he spoke in a perfect British accent that had Eames's and Ariadne's jaws dropping. "For your information, Mr. Eames, I lived in England for nearly two years, and am just as capable of employing that accent as you if I want to. I simply don't need to, to get my way."

And just when he thought Arthur couldn't get that much hotter with his clothes still on…

Unknowingly Ariadne saved Eames from saying something telling by speaking up herself. "I didn't know you could do that! I mean you said you could speak a lot of languages, and you're always harassing me on how important it is to get the accent right…but still…wow! You almost sound as sexy as Eames does."

"Thank you, Ariadne."

On that note Arthur got out of the car and headed to the trunk to retrieve Eames's chair, giving the item's owner a chance to get his head on straight as Eames unbuckled his seat belt and opened his door in preparation for leaving his current seat. His body was holding up relatively well at the moment, and as an afterthought he pulled out his cell and sent a quick text to his mum telling her so.

"Who are you texting?"

Talking as he finished the message Eames informed Phillipa, who was standing in front of his open door, that he was texting his mum to let her know he was okay. She worried, he explained as he sent the text off, looking up to give the girl a smile.

"I like your maman so far too."

"She'll be happy to hear that as she likes you already too."

Obviously pleased by his words Phillipa smiled widely at Eames before bouncing off to greet and join her friends on the blanket that had already been set up for them, Ariadne and James following after her once Arthur had assured her that he and Eames didn't need her help.

When his chair was in reach Eames carefully got into it and then asked Arthur whereabouts he'd lived in England, the short conversation about London and the mutual places they knew of and had visited lasting long enough for Eames to settle in his chair and then follow Arthur back to the truck to retrieve the two lawn chairs still there. And while he mentally cursed the fact that he couldn't offer to help carry anything Eames resigned himself to talking about this bakery they both knew of and hadn't they made the best blueberry muffins ever.

"They were fairly spectacular." Arthur agreed as he leaned the chairs against the bumper and then pulled out two thin, children's coats. "Do you mind carrying these on your lap? Save me a trip?"

"No problem." Taking them Eames grinned, blurting out what he was thinking. "I can't tell you how much I bloody appreciate the fact that you aren't babying me."

"You aren't a baby." Was Arthur's simple response, the rest of the possible conversation cut off as Himiko came over to ask if there was anything they needed help with, her hello to Eames's shy but welcoming.

"Hi. Sorry to crash your movie night."

In response Himiko's eyebrows furrowed thoughtfully before clearing. "Ah, you mean joining us, yes? That's not a problem. I'm glad you were well enough to come."
"Thanks."

Pleasantries exchanged the three teenagers made their way to the spot behind the blankets where Himiko had already set up her chair, Arthur setting a chair beside his friend's before telling Eames that if he liked he could sit beside him. He'd brought the extra chair for Ariadne just in case, but she usually preferred to lie on the blanket with the kids.

He would have liked it more if it was just the two of them, but beggars couldn't be choosers and Eames rolled his chair into place beside Arthur's chair with the thought that at least they'd be side by side. Not to mention the fact that the greeting he'd just seen between his tutor and Himiko had not suggested a romantic relationship, which made him hopefully that there wasn't one.

Further thoughts on that were cut off by Arthur leaning in to retrieve the jackets from his lap, the decidedly salacious thoughts that came to mind blanking Eames to everything else even as Arthur walked over to hand the correct coat to each of his siblings with the edict that they were to put them on if it got chilly.

And then Arthur was taking his seat, bringing with him the delicious scents Eames had quickly come to associate with the other man, messing with his head all over again.

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"My father wishes to know when you'll be coming to the restaurant again." Himiko told Arthur with a bright smile as she played with her hair, a tell Arthur knew meant she was still feeling a little shy about Eames's presence but didn't really mind the addition to their group. "He has been experimenting in the kitchen again and now that we've all tried the finished product he wishes to see how they appeal to a knowledgeable, non-Asian palate."

Mentally reviewing his mental calendar Arthur stated that they could come for lunch in a couple of days. Did any of the experiments involve sushi?

When she said that a couple of them were Eames piped up before Arthur could comment on that by asking if Arthur liked sushi.

Understanding the other teenager's surprise, they were currently living in a state that subsisted on meat and potatoes as much as possible, Arthur smiled a little. "I don't like what Americans call sushi, no. But Himiko's father makes authentic Japanese sushi and that I do enjoy, quite a bit."

The look that came over Eames's face was adorably comical. "Wait...are you saying her dad makes the real thing? Not that crap they sometimes sell at mall stalls and in convenience stores?" When they both nodded Eames's face only got that much cuter as he demanded to know why this was the first time he'd heard about this?! When he'd been thirteen his father had been stationed in Japan and he and his mum had gotten hooked on sushi and had never found anywhere this side of the ocean that could make anything remotely similar.

"My father believes that a Japanese restaurant should sell Japanese food, not Asian-American hybrids that taste like neither." They did less business than a lot of the restaurants that did sell that kind of food, but her father was a purist.

Pause. "My mum and I are so coming to your restaurant tomorrow. What time do you open and where is it? Do you guys do delivery?"

Since Himiko seemed a little dumbfounded by Eames's enthusiasm Arthur offered to email the info and directions to him later, unable not to smile when Eames announced that that would be brilliant
and thanked him again before turning his attention to Himiko, the two beginning an in-depth discussion about what her family's restaurant all offered on a daily basis.

They'd forgotten all about him, Arthur thought with a continued smile, not insulted in the least. He preferred to be an observer whenever possible anyway, knowing that you learned a lot more by listening than you did talking. And besides that Eames was obviously more comfortable talking to Himiko than him, the crush the man had on him no doubt the major factor there. He certainly hadn't missed that quick smolder Eames had no doubt accidentally given him when he'd retrieved the jackets from the other teenager's lap.

That look had certainly tempted him to replace the jackets on Eames's lap, Arthur admitted to himself ruefully, the months he'd spent with only his own hand for relief coming back to bite him on the ass hard. He hadn't been on one date since moving to this town and teenage hormones were a powerful thing. His control was better than most, naturally, but it was going to be more difficult than he'd originally thought to tutor Eames if the other man continued to let his interest and availability slip.

Actually...Eames might be even worse off than him, Arthur realized, automatically sympathetic. He'd been in this town long enough to know that the very few gay individuals in their high school were either deep in the closet, quiet about it to the point where they often faded into the school's background, and a thoroughly out lesbian pair that wouldn't appeal to Eames for obvious reasons. Had Eames ever had sexual contact with another man? None of Eames's fellow jock friends were gay as far as he'd been able to tell and Eames didn't really branch out from there friend wise. Of course there was always the curious, who wondered what it was like to bat for the same team so to speak, but Eames generally did a good job at hiding his true nature so the curious ones wouldn't necessarily know to look in that direction.

Personally Arthur didn't give a damn who knew that he was gay, that no one in this small town knew of his sexual preference was partially due to the fact that they'd assumed from the start he was straight, and the fact that they'd mistaken Himiko for his girlfriend early on even though they were only friends had sealed the idea in their heads so to speak. He hadn't gone out of his way to correct that misconception because he didn't care, she didn't care, and because he knew enough about dealing with small minded, bigoted people to know that there were those in the town who'd express their opinion of his sexuality to his siblings, who didn't deserve to be picked on because of him. They knew he was gay, had hung out with him and his ex-boyfriend plenty before they'd moved to this town, but many of their peers wouldn't see that as normal the way Phillipa and James did. He would not stand for them being bullied on top of everything else they'd had to go through in their short lives.

Still...maybe he should tell Eames that he was gay as well, help him if need be to accept who he was and not the role he seemed determined to play.

It was something to think about, anyway.
Men Being Men

Men Being Men

Eames thoroughly enjoyed the movie, absorbed enough in the animation and story that he hardly noticed the twinges in his body and the fact that Arthur was right beside him. And that was saying something. When it was over and he didn't have the movie to concentrate on anymore Eames realized that he was, pathetically enough, totally worn out and ready to go home to bed. Not to mention the fact that if Arthur hadn't reminded him to take his pain pills three quarters of the way through the movie he'd probably be even more sore and that was just depressing. Thankfully Phillipa and Ariadne wanted to talk about the movie the whole way back to the diner and that kept him awake and distracted, unlike James who nodded off within five minutes of being put into his car seat. Once they'd dropped Ariadne off by her car it was just him and Phil talking, though Arthur added his two cents here and there when he felt like it as Arthur competently and responsibly drove through the streets to Eames's house.

So before Eames knew it they were pulling into his driveway, Phillipa saying good bye to him with genuine regret, offering to loan him some of her Studio Ghibli movies if he wanted the next time she came to his house for a lesson. Gladly accepting the offer, he'd really liked this Hayao Miyazaki's stuff so far, Eames very gravely thanked her in advance. The weird version of 'The Little Mermaid' she'd described sounded pretty boss to him.

Arthur bringing up his wheelchair had Eames saying one last goodbye to his new buddy Phil and then he carefully exited the door, grateful for the darkness that hopefully masked the pain that etched itself onto his face as he transferred himself into his chair with a low, bitten off groan. Such was the pain that he didn't even object when Arthur started to steer him towards his front door instead of letting him do it himself.

"Thanks again for coming." Arthur was saying, Eames struggling to concentrate on the man's words instead of his body's renewed complaints. "Phillipa really likes you, and you made Himiko's night telling her you'd do your best to drum up business for her dad's place. They aren't doing as badly as they were when they first started, but they could use the business; especially with university looming for her."

Eames worked at putting a smile in his voice, though he didn't bother faking one. "I like them both, and I'm getting real sushi out of the deal so I'll consider myself paid in full tomorrow."

The small sound of amusement Arthur made had Eames grinning in spite of himself then, too pleased to have been the cause to think about how ready he was to collapse in his bed.

"Speaking of Himiko…she asked me to talk to you about something before we left. She told me to be subtle about it but that's not my style and I figure it will go over better if I'm blunt."

"You mean when she was talking in Japanese? It's really brilliant that you can speak that by the way, especially since you speak French as well as English. What did she want you to ask me?" Eames could only pray it wasn't for his phone number or something like that. He'd genuinely liked her after all, but obviously couldn't return her feelings when he was lusting after her male friend. Plus the idea that he might end up being banned from her family's restaurant for not returning her interest, after only just discovering its existence, was too depressing to think about.

"I speak several languages. One of my previous schools hosted students from all over the world and the sharing of languages was expected. And she asked me to talk you into going to see your friend
Matt soon. They're neighbors and she thinks he really wants to see you, but feels too guilty to come and visit. She's worried about him."

"Oh. Okay." That was completely unexpected. He hadn't even realized the two were neighbors.

Having reached their destination, aka the porch, Arthur stopped in front of Eames's front door. "I'll tell her I told you, or you can speak to her when you visit the restaurant." Moving around the chair so that he was standing beside Eames instead of behind him Arthur's next inquiry was if there was anything he needed to know before their next tutoring session in two days' time.

Normally he'd want to stall, draw this time out as much as possible because they were finally, sorta alone and it was dark and...yeah, body killing him, brain threatening to shut down at any moment. Not a good combination, Eames reminded himself sternly.

"No, I think we're good. And thanks for tonight again as well. Uhm...maybe sometime, when I'm not so laid up, we could go get some sushi together, since you like it too." Eames just barely managed not to add some sort of 'just as friends' statement, some working part of his still working brain knowing that that would be a huge tip off to Arthur that he actually wanted to ask the man out on a date.

"Sure, I'd like that. Can you get in okay?"

"No problem."

"Then good night."

Returning the words Eames turned his chair around so that he could watch Arthur as the other teenager headed back to his car, belatedly realizing when Arthur didn't get into the vehicle immediately that Arthur was waiting for him to get inside safely before leaving. Which sort of made him feel like a chick, admittedly, but was also kinda nice too, Eames decided with another grin.

So lifting a hand in final farewell Eames forced himself to turn back around and opening the front door wheeled himself into the house, closing the door behind him and then shifting to lock it up for the night.

"So...how'd it go?"

"Mum!" Grin turning to grimace Eames turned his chair around to face her.

"Oh just spill already." Mimi ordered, having left the living room where they'd been waiting up for him, both women dressed for bed and giving him looks that said they hadn't been waiting up so that they could make sure he got in all right. No, now that they knew there was a boy in town he fancied they wanted all the details he'd been holding out on them.

Cheeks flushing with color, Eames tried and failed to distract his mother by telling her that he'd found out that there was a restaurant within driving distance that sold genuine Japanese cuisine including sushi, the news only distracting her for a few precious moments since she had Mimi to keep her on track. The sushi could be talked about later, right now they wanted to know how his date with Arthur had gone.

"It wasn't a bloody date! There were kids and two other teenagers there as well, you know. Not to mention the fact that he's straight as far as I know and I don't fancy losing my tutor because he's worried about me hitting on him."

"That is a good point." Eames's mother agreed, while Mimi told him he should get the lowdown
from Ariadne about what side the Cobb's boy was playing for.

Since Ariadne was his friend Eames knew she wasn't the type to gossip or spill secrets, the fact that he'd never explicitly told her he was gay more about privacy than trust. Even if Arthur was gay or bisexual and had told her, Ariadne would never say so without Arthur's permission. But he could ask her if Arthur was actually seeing someone, that wouldn't be crossing a line, especially if he didn't ask for a name or anything. So he told Mimi he would and then stated that he really did need to get upstairs before he was too sore to get out of his chair and up them without their help.

Thank God they believed him, the inquiries about his crush shelved, at least for the night.

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It was a couple days afterwards, at their next tutoring session, that it happened. James yell of warning and call for help had Arthur stopping in mid-sentence and moving with a speed that made him all but a blur as he ran and then vaulted himself part way over the edge of a table to get him to his destination as quick as possible, Phillipa having already sprang into action. Following behind as quickly as he could in his chair, Eames could hear his grandmother and mother rushing over too, as well as Phillipa's loud announcement that the cause of James's yelling was, "That stupid, jerky ex of Ari's is here!".

And it was indeed Yusuf in their front hallway, having let himself in as per usual, his intention to ream Eames out having only just heard that his bastard of a friend had been hanging out with the assehole who'd stolen Ariadne from him. He had not expected to encounter James in said hallway, the boy having been asked to go upstairs to the second floor to retrieve something Mimi had left there that was needed for Phillipa's lesson.

Yusuf certainly hadn't expected the kid to scream bloody murder and bring his sister running into the hallway too, the kid brandishing a knitting needle in her hand, which she threatened to stab him with if he didn't get away from her baby brother NOW.

Then everyone who could run on two legs was in the hallway, making it very cramped before Eames rolled up as well to demand to know, along with the other adults in the room, what he'd done to James.

"I didn't do anything to him! I just walked in the door and he started yelling!" Insult plain Yusuf alternated between glaring at Eames and his hated rival. And the fact that Cobb was here in front of him reminded Yusuf why he was here and he focused his glare solely on Eames as he demanded to know how he could betray him this way, making friends with that bastard, pointing at Arthur to make it clear who he meant.

"Yusuf, language." The tone of her voice, combined with the look in Eames's mother's eyes, had Yusuf apologizing for his language with red cheeks.

"I sent you text messages to call me and you never did! And how the heck are you just finding out that he's my tutor now? Everyone's been talking about it in town, Mum says."

"I've been busy! Some of my experiments are very time sensitive, you know. Plus I started a 'Doctor Who' marathon and I didn't notice you'd sent me any texts. And I don't think you have my new number." He added grudgingly, just now recalling that he'd had to change it recently. It was too similar to a phone sex company apparently, and he'd been getting some very disturbing phone calls as a result.

Knowing the problems his friend had been having Eames didn't ask about that, stating instead that it
was Yusuf's own fault he didn't know that Arthur was tutoring him.

"Hah, I heard about the drive in and the diner, going out with Ari together. How is that tutoring, you bast-bad friend."

While the two men traded insults over Eames's perceived betrayal, Mimi tapped Phillipa on the shoulder and asked why James had been so upset to see Yusuf.

"He came to our house drunk and tried to challenge Arthur to a fight. He said some really bad words and then he killed one of our garden gnomes when he fell off our porch. James really liked that gnome."

Eames gave his friend an increased stare. "You killed a little kid's gnome?"

"I didn't do it on purpose!" The flush was back in Yusuf's cheeks, the teenager feeling genuinely bad now that he knew that the gnome that had turned his back black and blue had belonged to the little kid. It wasn't the boy's fault his brother was a girlfriend stealing bastard. "I'm sorry I killed your gnome." He told James awkwardly. "I'll, uhm...buy you a new one."

James glared back. "I don't want one from you. You made Ari cry! I hate you!"

While Mimi and Eames's mother marveled over the fact that James had just spoken loudly, not to mention in sentences, Yusuf sputtered unintelligibly for a bit before getting out some understandable sentences.

"I didn't make her cry! Your brother probably did! He's the one dating her now!"

"He and Ariadne aren't dating." Phillipa gave him a look that said she thought he was completely bananas to think otherwise.

"They are too."

Phillipa's hands went to her hips. "Are not. She dumped you cause you were a jerk. She said so. She throws darts at pictures of you!"

"She's still doing that?" Because of his accident and confinement to his chair Eames hadn't seen Ariadne's room in a while. But he did remember that the dartboard on her bedroom door had been plastered with pictures of Yusuf last time he'd been by. Pictures with a LOT of holes in them.

Arthur's voice was wry as he stated that she was working her way through her photo albums. And since Ariadne had been very into photography for a while, well there were a lot of photos to maim apparently.

While the two shared looks that transmitted their amusement over Ariadne's dart targets Yusuf and Phillipa engaged in a very childish exercise of "Are not! Are too!" that went back and forth so that those paying attention to them weren't sure whether to laugh or tell Yusuf to act his age, for Christ sakes.

And then James had had enough, unable to stand what Yusuf was say, acting like Ariadne was his brother's girlfriend. He'd already decided that she was going to be his girlfriend when he got bigger and he wasn't as smart or good looking or amazing as his big brother, so if Ariadne liked Arthur he wouldn't stand a chance. But he knew they weren't dating and so he made that very clear in a very loud voice that shut up everyone.

"She not Arthur's girlfriend! He only dates other men!"
Outed by a six year old. Now how many men could say that, Arthur thought ruefully, not surprised to feel everyone's eyes on him save for James, who was still glaring at Yusuf and hopping mad. Feeling a small hand slide into his Arthur looked down to meet Phil's gaze, the look on his sister's face making it clear that while she might not understand all the ramifications of what James's had just revealed, she was aware of some of them and was worried that he'd be angry with James. He smiled to let her know that that wasn't the case, giving her hand a little squeeze for added reassurance.

"You're-he's-your brother's not gay! Ariadne would have told me!"

"He is too!" James shot back hotly. "I'll prove it!"

And on that note the boy marched over to where Eames, Arthur and Mimi were standing, politely asking to be let through. When Mimi moved for him the boy thanked her and then proceeded into the other room to retrieve whatever proof he'd gone to get.

None of the adults knew what to say so they just waited for James to come back while trying not to stare too obviously at Arthur, who wore a poker face that revealed none of his thoughts or how he felt about possibly being pushed out of the closet by his brother.

Thankfully James was pack in no time with an iPad in his hands, the boy moving his finger across the screen as he obviously sought out the picture or site he was looking for. And then he found what he was looking for, making a sound of triumph before turning the machine around in his hands and holding it out to Yusuf so that the teenager could get a look at the picture.

Eyes wide Yusuf took the iPad and stared at the picture on the screen and then over to Arthur, repeating the action about six times before it apparently sunk in that he was indeed looking at proof that Arthur was, at the very least, bi-sexual.

"Fuck me, you are gay!"

"Yusuf Patel!"

"Sorry, Mrs. E., but-but-he actually is gay!"

"And that's an excuse to use that sort of language in front of two children?"

Happy to let Eames's mother lecture the moron for him Arthur walked over to neatly nip the iPad out of the other teenager's hands, not wanting him to drop it or more pictures to be viewed. Not that there was anything R rated on the machine, he looked it over regularly to make sure the kids hadn't been accessing anything online that they shouldn't be, but he was private enough not to like the idea of his pictures with Hikaru being studied and dissected. Especially given how the two adults in the room would react upon getting a look at his former boyfriend.

Handing the iPad over to Phillipa Arthur told her to put it back in her bag and then suggested James return to the living room as well, the two could wait in there while the adults talked.

Reading between the lines Phillipa took her little brother's hand and started to pull him behind her towards the living room, James turning his head to glare at Yusuf the whole time until he'd been dragged out of sight.

That taken care of Arthur turned his attention to Eames, who was looking at him like he'd just grown two additional heads. Normally that would have amused him, but this was not the way he'd wanted the other teenager to find out he was gay. Nothing about this situation was ideal, really.
"So shall we get back to your tutoring or do you want to talk to him some more once your mother is done reaming him for his use of profanity?"
In some corner of his mind Eames knew he'd been asked a question and should really answer, but the majority of his brain was too busy freaking out over the fact that Arthur was gay to give a damn about manners. Naturally he'd imagined and hoped, how could he not, but to actually know he might stand a chance in hell with the guy he'd been fantasizing about for months was—did Arthur know he was gay too? And was the picture of Arthur with some other guy, hopefully doing nothing more than a bit of snogging, still in Arthur's life and were they dating? And what was Arthur's type, damn but he'd wished that he'd gotten a look at the—

"ARTHUR!"

Everyone jumped a little at Mimi's tone of voice, which had carried very well from the living room where she'd gone as soon as the children had left the hallway. And then she was back in the hallway with them, waving the iPad around too fast for anyone to see as she demanded to know how old his boyfriend was.

All eyes went to Arthur now, who was wearing one hell of a poker face as he stated that he wasn't currently dating anyone.

Mentally Eames did a happy dance.

"Then how old is the man you're kissing in this picture? How old are both of you in it for that matter? You look thirteen!"

Now Arthur's lips twitched just a bit. "I tend to look quite a bit younger than I am if I don't present myself the right way. I'm about three months short of my sixteenth birthday in that photograph. Hikaru was twenty four at that time. I prefer older men."

Happy dance paused, Eames pretty sure that one year older wasn't nearly old enough to meet Arthur's age preference in men. That…and holy shit Arthur had dated, possibly slash probably had sex with a guy eight or nine years older than him! And…wait a sec… "Britain's age of consent is sixteen."

All eyes on him Eames flushed with color, wishing he could take the words back.

Thankfully his mum and grandmother were all over that in a heartbeat, suddenly looking at Arthur like he was an abuse victim, which technically, legally he would have been viewed as given the age difference back then.

Obviously getting what they were thinking as well Arthur held up a quelling hand. "One moment please. Phillipa, James, come here a second."

Both kids came running in right away, Arthur telling his sister to go stand in front of Dr. Eames while he asked James to stand in front of him. When both had done so he informed them that he and Eames's mother were going to put their hands over their ears so that they couldn't hear what was being said. Neither was pleased but both nodded anyway, Eames's mom copying Arthur.

Once he seemed fairly sure neither child would overhear something they weren't supposed to Arthur quickly moved to explain. "Before you start asking questions or misunderstanding things, let me make something clear. Hikaru is the son of a very prominent Japanese businessman and is on his
way to becoming just as highly respected and feared as his father. His family has plenty of enemies, and they would have used my age against Hikaru's family if given the chance. So while I don't deny that there was a sexual element to my relationship with Hikaru, I give you my word that he was very aware of my age, the law, and no penetrative sex took place. That was planned for after I turned sixteen, but we broke up before that."

Never had Eames been so glad for his chair. He'd have fallen on his arse otherwise as he and everyone else tried to absorb what had just been said. And insinuated. And just holy shit in general!

Everyone appeared equally dumbstruck, Arthur's amusement in that fact clear as he shook his head over the looks he was getting. "Alright, I believe I'm judging the situation well enough to say that nothing constructive is going to happen today, so I think it would be best to call the tutoring sessions to a close for today. Any last questions before we turn my siblings loose and we head home for the day? We can pick up where we left off on our next scheduled session."

"Does, does Ariadne know you're gay?" Yusuf's voice was decidedly more cowed now.

"Yes. We both share a love of certain British actors, particularly when they're running around half naked."

He was half British, that was good news, Eames thought dimly.

"Arthur…since this is the first I've heard of it, any of us have heard of it…would I be correct in assuming that you'd like us to keep this information to ourselves?" It was obvious from her tone that there was a lot about that she didn't like, but Eames was terribly thankful his mum had asked the question since he would have had his brains been working enough to formulate that question.

"I'm out, Dr. Eames, to my family and the majority of my friends. I don't introduce myself as a gay man because I don't think my sexuality is anyone's business but my own. As to keeping it to yourself-you know your neighbors better than I do. If you think they won't in any way, shape or form cause problems for my siblings because of it, then go ahead and tell them. That's my only concern, as I could care less what the inhabitants of this town think of me."

On that note Arthur removed his hands from his brother's ears and told both his siblings to pack up for the day. They were heading home.

James nodded, but he'd also picked up on the fact that something was wrong and asked if he'd done something bad, having put two and two together that everyone was upset about what he'd shown Yusuf on the iPad. Arthur had explained to him that some people didn't like the idea of boys kissing other boys, but he'd been so mad he forgot. He didn't want Arthur to be mad at him.

Arthur picked James up for a quick hug before setting him back down on his feet. "No, you didn't do anything wrong. This is grownup stuff, and has nothing to do with you. I promise."

The grin of relief on the little boy's face was huge. "Okay."

Having been set free as well Phillipa went over to Mimi to ask for the iPad back, the older woman handing it over automatically. Thanking her politely Phillipa hurried back into the living room to pack up all her stuff, deliberately putting the iPad on the bottom and piling everything on top of it.

Likewise Arthur excused himself and headed in to collect up his tutoring supplies, leaving Eames, his family members, and Yusuf in the hallway, the four sharing looks but not saying a word about what they'd just learned.

But Eames's mum came over and gave her son's shoulder a squeeze, the look in her eyes when he
tilted his head up to meet her gaze conveying her thoughts without words.

'You have a chance, Baby'

Yes, Eames thought as he smiled up at her widely. Yes he did. Maybe.

) 

Needless to say Arthur was front and center of pretty much every thought Eames had for the rest of the day. It was the main conversation at dinner, where his chances had been hotly debated until he'd begged them to stop it. Begged because as far as he knew the only thing he had going for him when it came to possible having a chance in hell with Arthur was the fact that he was half English, and that wasn't much to pin his hopes on now that the initial euphoria over Arthur's sexual orientation had started to wear off. The fact that he'd googled the name Hikaru Saito and had been presented with images and data that suggested that Arthur's ex-boyfriend was the Asian equivalent of James Bond was not reassuring. According to the articles he'd read the guy was super smart, super rich, and came from a family with rumored ties to the Japanese Underworld for an added splash of badass-ness. How the bloody hell was he supposed to compete with that?! 

Naturally his mum and Mimi had assured him that he was the greatest thing since slice bread and Arthur would be lucky to have him, but they were just a tad biased where he was concerned.

There was also the fact that Arthur didn't know he was gay too, the idea of cluing Arthur into that fact had him feel more nauseated than the last time he'd had a concussion. Not to mention the fact that he didn't even know if Arthur would be willing to go out with him given that there were people in town who would have plenty to say about it if it got out. As it stood now Yusuf and the rest of them were going to keep quiet about what they knew, his friend deciding that that was the least he could do given that he had killed James's gnome. Well except for Ariadne apparently, he'd gotten a call from her detailing how Yusuf had come around to try and talk to her about Arthur being gay earlier. She'd apparently thrown a glass of ice tea in her former boyfriend's face and was only sorry she'd had to clean up the mess afterwards. As for the rest of them they were taking their cues from Arthur, not wanting anything to happen to him or the kids because they'd said something to the wrong person. Not that he thought his neighbors would suddenly go homophobic on Arthur's fine arse or the kids, but better safe than sorry in this case.

And when, at about ten that night, his phone went off Eames would have ignored it if not for the fact that the ringtone was the one he'd picked out for Arthur, which had him scrambling to grab his cell off his bedside table to answer it.

"Hello. Am I interrupting anything?"

"No. No I'm just hanging out in my room. What's up?"

A short pause. "I don't know how to say this, so I'm just going to be blunt. I didn't want you to find out I was gay the way you did, mainly because I'm aware you're interested in me and I'd planned to talk to you about that once we'd gotten to know each other better."

"Uhm…"

There was amusement in Arthur's voice now. "You stare at my rear like you think it should be hung in the Louvre, Eames. Our current peers haven't noticed because they're still stuck in the mindset that all gay men are effeminate, and that you most definitely aren't except for your mouth. So as far as I know, no one else does. I didn't say anything to Ari and won't. It's no one's business."
Thanking him for that automatically, Eames ran a nervous hand through his hair, mushing it good as he tried to think of what else to say. He'd been working up to the idea of asking Arthur out in his head, but this—he'd thought he'd been hiding his interest so well. Apparently not well enough.

"Eames, just to be clear…you aren't old enough to be my type, and even if I were to overlook that you're not out. That might sound hypocritical of me, given that I haven't advertised my own status, but I don't have any interest in getting involved with someone in the closet when he doesn't have to be."

"What if I wasn't?" It was blurted out, but this time he wasn't sorry as he ran with it instead. "If I was out, to everyone, would you be interested in going out with me? Maybe?"

The pause that greeted that statement lasted a lot longer than the first before Arthur asked if he was serious.

"I am." His heart was pounding hard enough that he could see a possible heart attack in his future, but if there was even a chance Arthur would go out with him he'd risk it. At least he'd die happy, if Arthur said yes.

"You'd come out to your friends, peers, and community…just to date me?"

His yes was a little shaky, but he meant it and hoped that came across loud and clear.

"Alright…I'll think about it."

"Really?"

The amused chuckle that came over the line gave Eames the best kind of goose bumps. "You're mother and grandmother have enough clot in town that a direct attack against you for being gay wouldn't have been likely before you were injured, much less now. Tormenting someone in a wheelchair is too low for even the likes of Nash to stoop to. Probably. If we were to date my siblings would be protected through my connection to you so that wouldn't be an issue. Therefore the only issue is your age and the fact that I don't know if we'd be compatible. That I need to think about."

"Oh, okay then, right." He desperately wanted to ask what Arthur was looking for in a guy besides age and the experience that usually went along with that, but to ask that would probably make him seem even more immature than Arthur possibly thought him to be.

"I'd be correct in assuming you haven't dated much, wouldn't I?"

It was like Arthur could read his mind. "Ah, no, I haven't. Which can be seen as a good thing, really, if you consider the fact that I don't have any crazy exes that might come after you the way Yusuf did."

Another chuckle. "I'm fairly sure Phil could have taken him down all on her own if necessary."

"True, he is a nerd, not a fighter."

"So I gathered. And I'm going to have to cut this off prematurely, James needs me."

"Good night then, tell him the same."

"I will, thank you. Good night to you as well."

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Ending the call Arthur set his cell phone onto his bedside table and then turned his attention to his little brother, who was still in the doorway, waiting for the okay to come in. Given the hour and the look on James's face he had a pretty good idea why the boy was out of bed, so he didn't bother to ask him why he wasn't where he was supposed to be. Instead he motioned James in, pulling back his own covers so that his brother would know he was welcome to join him.

Hurrying over with his favorite stuffed animal in his arms, James quickly got up on the bed and under the covers, thrilled as always that he was allowed to sleep with his big brother when he had nightmares. It had always upset Maman when he had bad dreams so he'd had to pretend before, that he didn't have them so she would be okay. Phillipa would have let him sleep with her, but she always took up most of the bed and kicked him in her sleep. Arthur hardly moved at all when he was sleeping, and never got upset with him even if he was sort of a baby, to have nightmares so often. He just couldn't help it.

"Who were you talking to?"

"Eames. He wanted me to wish you good night for him."

"Oh." Eames looked at Arthur weird sometimes, but he seemed nice enough. Even if he was friends with that meanie Yusuf. Hurting Ari's feelings and breaking his gnome…boy but he really, really didn't like that guy!

"Do you like him?"

His mind on his hated enemy, James had no idea who Arthur was talking about and said so.

"Eames. I want to know if you like him. I might go out with him."

"You mean on dates? Like you did with Hikaru?" When Arthur nodded James considered the question, his face scrunching up at the idea of his brother dating someone other than Hikaru. He really liked Hikaru, even though seeing him and his brother kiss and stuff had been sorta gross. Arthur said he'd think differently when he was older, but he didn't think so. Unless it was Ari, then maybe he would like it.

"Is that a no?"

A shrug seemed the best answer.

Given how slow James was to warm up to people Arthur wasn't really surprised. Hikaru had outright bribed his way into James's good books when they'd been dating. Actually, now that he thought about it that was one good thing about Eames's age and maturity level. Or lack thereof. Eames would be better able to relate to Phillipa and James because he wasn't as old and mature as Hikaru.

"Well for now you aren't to tell anyone he and I might go out together, okay? I need your word as a man."

Looking at the hand he was being offered James knew that this was serious. Arthur said you never shook on something unless you planned to keep your promise or you weren't a good person. They'd shook on it before, when Arthur had promised to do everything he could to take care of them right when they'd come to live here. Arthur always kept his promises and shakes.

Taking the hand James very solemnly shook it. "I promise not to tell. Not even Phil."

"That's okay, I'll talk to Phillipa about this tomorrow too. She gets a say in who I date, just like you. And if for some reason you guys don't like him later on then you just tell me and I won't see him
anymore." He wasn't so desperate that he'd bring someone further into their lives that would upset them. They'd had enough emotional upheaval in their lives because people had put their own wants and needs before theirs.

Yawning his agreement James rubbed his eyes, a cue to Arthur that it wouldn't be long before the boy conked out on him. And with that in mind Arthur dropped the subject of Eames for the time being and asked if James would like him to sing to him.

Snuggling in James nodded that he would.
A Little Fantasy

With a triumphant war whoop Eames pumped a fist into the air while he watched the scene play out in front of him that signaled the fact that he had finally beaten the second last level of Final Fantasy 11, and was therefore well on his way to completing his goal of playing and completing every Final Fantasy game currently available. Not the best summer goal, especially since his usual summer aims involved activities best suited for the outdoors, but since he was laid up anyway and sitting on his arse was for the best…well it was the first time in his life his mum wasn't harassing him about spending more than an hour on his video games. Usually he'd hear non-stop nagging about how there were better things he could be doing until he did something else.

All in all his day was going fairly, which was a nice change in pace as far as Eames was concerned. It had been two days since Arthur had said he'd think about dating him, and though the lack of response thus far was a little annoying, they had a tutoring session planned for tomorrow which meant he'd see the other teenager then. Plus he'd talked with Matt after breakfast, having belatedly recalled after all the drama that he'd yet to do so, and while they hadn't chatted for very long they had talked and he had gotten the sense that Himiko was right to think that Matt had been feeling too guilty to see him or call, as opposed to just not wanting to talk to him because he was in chair now. He'd also got the vibe that maybe Matt liked Himiko, because there had definitely been a hint of jealousy in the other man's voice when he'd mentioned that he'd gone to the movies with her and the others. That had been interesting, and he figured he'd pass the word on to Ariadne, see if she thought they should try to play matchmakers or something. Could be fun, and he liked Himiko, her family's sushi was too boss for words. He owed her, if she was interested.

Turning his attention back to the screen Eames studied it, mentally debating whether to keep going or maybe hunt up some of his arm weights, work out a little. He wasn't sure what his chances were with Arthur, but just in case he wanted to at least look good with his shirt off. The lack of physical activity was doing the most damage below the belt, his legs not getting the workout they were used to getting and all the weaker for it. There wasn't a hell of a lot he could do there, and a lot of exercises were out of the question because of his back, but having really well defined arms was definitely possible at the very least. He'd looked up pictures online of Arthur's ex, and the guy had been pretty average in build overall, so at least there he could surpass the guy. Of course Arthur might not find muscles overly attractive, but the man had said he shared Ariadne's love of British actors. And the majority of Ari's favorites, he knew, were very nice without their clothes on in the build department.

He'd about decided to head upstairs to find the weights, game saved and his body braced to transfer his arse from the couch to his chair, when Eames heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs. They weren't Mimi's either, and she was the only one besides him who was home since mum was at-oh. Arthur came into view, looking sexy as hell in a fitted back T-shirt and dark brown trousers that Eames recognized and knew for a fact hugged Arthur's rear quite lovingly.

"Hi."

"Eames. Mimi said you were having a Final Fantasy marathon, I'm sorry to interrupt."

Shaking his head Eames immediately reassured him that that wasn't the case, he'd actually just finished his level and had been about to head upstairs anyway. Belatedly it occurred to him to offer Arthur a seat on the couch beside him.
"Thank you. I just need a few minutes of your time; I'm due to pick Phillipa and James up at the library in half an hour."

"They part of the summer reading club?" He hadn't lived here when he was young, but he'd come with his friends to the library a few times as a boy, when he'd come to visit his grandparents. As he recalled Mrs. Stubbens, the head librarian, kept a strict timetable when it came to planned events in her building.

Arthur nodded. "They enjoy it, and it gives me a little free time to get errands and such done."

"And visiting me is one of your errands today? To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"I said I would consider going out with you, and it occurred to me that there's an important area to consider, which wouldn't be best explored while your grandmother, mother, and my siblings were around to observe and add their own commentary. Hence my decision to drop by on the chance I could catch you alone for a few minutes."

"Uhm, okay."

The hint of a gleam that came into Arthur's eyes had Eames swallowing hard reflexively even before the other teen asked him if he'd ever kissed another man before.

"Yeah. Been a while, but I have." He'd also snogged-kissed a number of girls, his stupid younger self hoping to find one that turned him on as much as guys did, but he left that out. He was just grateful for the experience they'd given him, however un thrilling it had been, because in his gut he knew why Arthur had come by.

"Good."

Eames prayed to God that he wasn't making faces that in any way conveyed his nerves or elation when Arthur lifted a hand and reaching out glided his fingers through his hair, cupping the back of his head to gently pull him closer while Arthur leaned in.

Turns out neither of them were that rusty.

Letting Arthur control the kiss at first, the man had serious skills and he wanted to enjoy them to the fullest, Eames forgot everything else but the lips pressed against his and the hand placed at the back of his head, holding him in place while Arthur sampled his lips with extreme thoroughness before sliding his tongue between them in an obvious hint to open up.

Happy to comply Eames opened his mouth and welcomed Arthur's tongue, groaning his appreciation for it as he brought his own into play, keeping things slow and easy because this was their first kiss, and he wasn't about to rush it and have it end anytime soon. Especially when it felt so right, so easy and better not to rush. Not to mention Arthur's kisses were a high he couldn't get enough of, Eames seeing himself getting very addicted to the other man's taste very soon, to the point where enough would never be enough.

When Arthur pulled his head away, Eames was willing to admit a rather pathetic whine escaped his lips.

Looking pleased, not to mention thoroughly kissed, Arthur gave Eames's hair a stroke to pacify him a little as he spoke. "I don't think chemistry will be a problem for us."

"It's...it's always a good idea to double, triple check your results. Especially when it comes to chemistry."
Arthur laughed, his dimples showing. "It's odd, being with someone whose face is so open, so easy to read. I'm not used to that when it comes to the men in my life. Everyone always seems to only want to show me what they want me to see. But you...I can read you. Most of the time." Another caress. "I like that about you."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

And then Arthur was kissing the hell out of him and Eames forgot about finding out what other men Arthur had been referring to, far too busy giving as good as he got as the kisses became quick and hot and designed to hit all their hormone buttons all at once so that, being teenage boys, all they could think about was how many different ways they'd like to get off in the other's company, preferably while naked.

The images were vivid enough, hazed their minds enough that neither could say later, not that they discussed it, how Arthur came to be straddling Eames lap while they continued to devour each other's mouths, Arthur's hands cupping Eames's head while Eames hands found their way under Arthur's shirt, fingers splaying over the warm and getting warmer skin there, gliding over the flesh and then digging in reflexively.

Their hips had begun to move, to rub in against each other's in a way that had them both panting and kissing that much deeper and harder, when the sound of a cell going off managed to snag their attention, particularly Arthur's since it was his phone and he knew that tune all too well.

) Forcing himself to sit back up, and how the hell had he gotten on Eames's lap, exactly, Arthur was torn between amusement and extreme horniness as he pulled his cell out of his trouser pocket, apologizing for having to take the call before he was accepting it, putting it up to his ear as he mentally cursed, as always, his father's timing. "Hello, Father. To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"In two weeks I'll be coming to the house, staying for a week. I thought you'd appreciate a heads up."

"I'll let Phillipa and James know that you're coming, though you could have just texted me."

"Why, did I interrupt you doing something important?"

"As a matter of fact I was making out with a sexy football player, and talking to you is eating up what time I have to do that before I have to go pick the kids up from the library."

Arthur was hard pressed to say which man's reaction he preferred more, his father's unintelligible mumblings he could hear through his phone's speaker, or the surprised pleasure that had come over Eames's face. The other teenager really did have the most beautiful eyes, Arthur marveled absently, shifting a little so that he could run the fingers of his free hand over Eames's face, tracing the dips and curves, those luscious, made for sin lips. Oh the plans he had for that mouth.

"Arthur! Answer me!"

"You weren't speaking a language I recognize. What did you say?"

"I said I won't let you keep James and Phil with you if you're going to be spending your time having sex with some brainless jock whose only hope of getting a higher education lies in his ability to throw a ball around."
"I think one's ability to kick the ball is more important than his ability to throw one." Arthur pointed out, allowing his amusement to coat his words. "Because while you Americans might think you own everything worth having, and can call it what you like, the fact remains that Europe's owned the sport of football centuries before you Yanks ever heard of it. Calling it soccer doesn't make it so. And we aren't having sex. Yet."

Oh yes, Arthur thought as he saw the way Eames had darkened as his meaning had hit home, the man had stunningly gorgeous eyes, particular when aroused. He liked what he was feeling against his own erection too.

When his father said his name threateningly Arthur restrained himself from rolling his eyes. "I won't have sex in front of the kids, Father. That would be a mood killer of epic proportions. And they always come first with me. I don't believe having a social life was on your list of deal breakers unless I neglect them as a result."

"And what are you doing now?"

"Preparing to end this call so that I can go pick them up from the library. Unless you want me to be late?"

That they'd discuss this in two weeks was his father's response to that before hanging up without a proper good bye, not that Arthur gave a damn about that. He'd grown up knowing that expecting his father to be like other fathers was a futile effort. He was better than some, but certainly never Father of the Year material. Though he did love James and Philippa, he'd give the man that.

Tucking his phone back into his pocket Arthur turned his attention solely back to the man whose lap he was still sitting on. "Sorry to kiss and run, but that ate up what time I had left. The kids are expecting me."

"No problem, glad you dropped by."

Deliberately Arthur swiveled his hips just a little, tormenting them both at the contact. "I can tell."

"Damn." Eames's groaned. "You're sexy as hell too."

"Thank you."

With real reluctance Arthur slid off Eames's lap to stand in front of the teenager, thinking that he needed to get Eames hot and bothered more often. The way he looked now, sprawled on the couch with his hair all mushed from his fingers, lips swollen even bigger, and eyes that promised wicked things to come...oh yes, he was definitely leaning towards giving the other man a shot, date wise.

"I'll see you tomorrow."

Eames nodded and then bit his bottom lip, which Arthur found strangely attractive. "Uhm, I just wanted to say, I couldn't help but overhear some-I like Phil and James. I don't mind hanging out with them a lot, if we start dating. I know you look after them when your dad's not around."

"Thanks. Philippa gave you her seal of approval, James hasn't gotten used to you yet." Bracing his hands on either side of Eames's head Arthur leaned forward for one last, quick taste of Eames's lips and then he pulled back. "Bye."

"Bye."
After he was sure Arthur was gone, no sound of footsteps reaching his ears, Eames hopped to his feet and did a little dance in front of the couch, not caring at the twinges he felt as he celebrated not only the hottest kisses he'd ever got, but the fact that he was pretty damn sure now that at the very least, Arthur was going to give him a shot. If for no other reason than it would piss off his dad, Eames mused, since he'd gotten the distinct impression Arthur and his old man didn't get along remotely. He was thinking he wasn't going to like Arthur's dad much either, if they met up.

Of course the twinges soon became outright pain, and he had to collapse back onto the couch, but he did so with a stupid grin on his face.

Hearing footsteps again Eames turned to watch his grandmother come down the stairs, her smile widening when she no doubt accurately interpreted his own grinning to mean that things had gone very well with Arthur.

"Well?"

"I think the odds are in my favor for the moment."

Beaming, his grandmother came over to give him a careful hug and kiss, pleased as punch by this turn of events as she took a seat beside him. Then she asked him if the boy was a good kisser, just for the pleasure of seeing Eames blush and squirm like a little boy who'd been caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

"No, he's not a good kisser." Eames let the statement hang for a moment. "He's a bloody excellent kisser."

Laughing in delight Mimi gave his knee an appreciative pat. "Good to hear."

"Mimi…you said you didn't know his dad that well, but knowing you you've been asking around more now that you've met Arthur and the kids, especially since I'm interested in dating his son and that would guarantee your interest in his family. What have you heard?" He wanted to know more about the older man, sensing that he'd get a much better sense of Arthur if he knew something about the father. Well that and he was just super curious by nature, more so that actually, in all honesty.

Settling into gossip mode Mimi blew out a thoughtful breath, mulling over where to start. "From what I hear he was quite the golden boy in his youth. Only child, and a complete surprise to his older than most parents, who spoiled him rotten. A natural charmer apparently, who was very good at talking his way in and out of trouble, not a bully, but not above using those 'beneath' him either. Student body president, decent at sports, and very good with the ladies, or so I hear. Lit out of town as soon as he graduated, originally just to backpack around Europe for the summer, but he met up with Arthur's mother and that was that, it seems. He got a degree in architecture over there, and traveled all over the world with his wife and children designing what often went on to become fairly famous buildings in that world."

She'd also heard that Arthur's father had hardly visited his parents or extended family, and that he'd only brought Arthur here once that anyone seems to remember, to see his grandparents. The other two more, though only a couple times a year. Word was Arthur's mother had looked like an Old Hollywood actress, very femme fatale and French. Judging from the descriptions she'd got, Arthur took after her side for looks.

"He does have a very European vibe to him, called his dad an American on the phone and said it like anyone from Europe would. He even knows the proper name for football."

Amused by him Mimi just shook her head. "Which of course would be a make or break thing with
Actually he was pretty sure that he would have been willing to commit the utterly sacrilegious sin of calling his beloved football soccer if that would help his chances with Arthur, but Eames didn't say so in case he jinxed himself.

Continuing with her story Mimi told him that there wasn't much more to tell since the family hadn't made a habit of coming to visit Arthur's grandparents and even those closest to said grandparents didn't know much beyond the basics. The general consensus was that in the eyes of his parents Dominick Cobb had all but walked on water, and that they hadn't said much because he didn't keep in close enough contact with his parents for them to have much to talk about other than his work.

"In short, you and your mother are much better when it comes to respecting your elders."

"Like you wouldn't have come all the way to Europe to ream us out if we hadn't come to see you regularly."

"Damn right."
Looking Good

Looking Good

It was nearly dinner time and Eames was somewhat anxiously awaiting the arrival of Arthur and the kids. Normally their tutoring sessions were in the early afternoon, but today Arthur had arranged to take Phil and James into the city to see a theater production of Peter Pan. So rather then put the meeting off until the next day Eames's mum had suggested they simply come by the house for dinner after the show and have the usual lessons afterwards. Arthur had agreed to the idea and so now they were simply waiting for the three to arrive.

When the knock on the door came Eames's mum went to welcome them in, Eames hearing her exclaim at how handsome the 'men' looked and how stunning Philipa was from the hallway before he got his own look, falling head over heels in lust with the look Arthur was currently sporting on sight.

Dressed in a three piece black suit, as well as sporting a fedora and fancy dress shoes, Arthur looked like he'd just walked off the set of a Prohibition era gangster movie, his slick back hair and the knowing little grin he aimed in Eames's direction completing the look and insuring that Eames would be dreaming them into an X rated, gangster themed porno in his dreams that night.

It was going to be sooooooo good.

Thankfully Phillipa and his mum were busy discussing how Arthur and James were wearing Hugo Boss and she was wearing a French designer he'd never heard of, so Eames was hopeful that the topic of clothes would distract both girls long enough that they didn't notice the fact that he was seriously eye fucking his 'tutor', who was well aware of what he was doing and didn't mind at all judging from the look Arthur was aiming in his direction.

And then Arthur was striding over to him with a sexy swagger that went straight to Eames's groin even before the other teenager braced his hands on either side of his wheelchair and then leaned in close so that they were nearly nose to nose.

"Good evening, Mr. Eames."

When he said Arthur's name in return it came out a croak, but then Arthur was pressing their lips together in a quick but definite kiss, and that held all his attention until their lips parted again and Arthur had straightened up and was smiling at him knowingly once more.

The sexiness of the moment was somewhat hindered by Phillipa's giggling and James's groaning over the whole 'yucky kissing thing', but Eames had never had a problem focusing all his attention solely on Arthur either.

"Well you three must be hungry, let's head into the dining room, shall we?" Amusement in her voice Eames's mum was kind enough not to comment on what they'd just done, though there was a look in her eyes that said she'd have a thing or two to say about it once their guests were gone for the evening.

"Yay!" Jumping up and down in delight as the kiss was forgotten in favor of dinner, Phillipa held up the bag she'd been carrying and announced that it contained the strawberry shortcake they'd promised to bring for dessert from a famous bakery in the city. They'd have to stand in line forever to get it.
"Wow, that certainly is a long time. No wonder you're famished." Grinning, Eames's mother gave Phillipa a wink. "You kids head in and I'll put that in the fridge until it's time for dessert."

After handing the bag over Phillipa grabbed her little brother's hand and started leading him towards the dining room while Eames's mum headed for the kitchen, leaving the two teenagers to bring up the rear so to speak.

Mentally praying for more of his blood to head up instead of down, Eames carefully turned his wheelchair around and started after the kids at a very slow roll as he asked Arthur how the play had been in a hopefully pretty casual tone of voice.

"It would have been better if certain members of the cast hadn't tried to unsuccessfully imitate British accents, but other than that it was a fairly well done production. James and Phillipa enjoyed it, anyway. How about you? How did you spend your day?"

He'd spent a great deal of his time waiting impatiently for Arthur to arrive, but since that was too embarrassing to say Eames settled for the other truth, grimacing as he admitted that he'd spent a large portion of his day in the kitchen with Mimi, helping her with her canning.

"Canning?"

"Yeah. Beets, beans, and pickles. Or they will be."

Arthur blinked at him in surprise. "People fully immersed in first world technology still do that?"

Laughing at the way the other teenager had phrased his question Eames grinned as he confirmed the fact that yes, people other than the Amish and hippies still canned food in the United States. It was getting rarer, yes, but there was still enough of the older generations around that the skills were still being passed down so to speak.

"Huh." A considering look came over Arthur's face. "That could be educational for the children. Particularly the cucumbers and how they've changed into pickles."

Not even surprised that Arthur would see it that way, Eames just smiled and continued to lead the way into the dining room and up to the spot cleared for him. Right beside Arthur's seat.

As was his habit Arthur allowed the others at the table to monopolize the dinner conversation once it started, the fact that he didn't need to participate providing him with a better opportunity to learn more about the individual members of Eames's family, as well as get a sense of the family in general. Families always interested him because he'd had such a limited understanding of the concept before taking over guardianship of his siblings. Since then he'd learned a great deal about what it meant to be a 'real' family, but he was aware that his was still unorthodox in comparison to many other family out there. Of course the increase in divorce, teen pregnancy, and the general decay of Western society in the last sixty odd years had damaged the idea of 'family' in many ways, so the fact that he couldn't give his siblings the ideal didn't differentiate them too much from their peers.

Instinct had him glancing out of the corner of his eye, Arthur smiling a little when he caught the other teenager once again watching him. Eames response to being caught was to flush and study the contents of his plate studiously, which he found oddly cute.

It also explained the phrase puppy love to him, which he'd never really gotten since why would anyone think it was remotely complimentary to compare their feelings for someone with what one could feel for a pet? Now that Eames wasn't trying to hide his feelings for him, and was in fact being
very obvious in his interest, Arthur couldn't help but be reminded of Sorry and the way his brother's dog could look at him and make him put aside far more important tasks to pet the affection seeking canine and play endless games of fetch and tug of war. Eames made him want to stroke and play with him too, when he looked at him so adorably.

Shaking his head at the thought, it was so very unlike him after all, Arthur wasn't even aware of what he'd done until he was asked by Eames's grandmother as to why he'd shaken his head. Answering somewhat honestly, he said that he'd been thinking about Sorry.

"He's our dog." Phillipa added, in case Mimi didn't know that. It was, after all, an unusual name for a pet.

"I see. I would have taken you as more of a cat person, Arthur."

"I suppose when it comes to the personality traits often attributed to felines and canines I would have more in common with a cat. They would certainly require less care and attention than Sorry, but I'm not sorry with James's choice in pet."

"Sorry's the first pet we've ever had." Phillipa put in. "Though Arthur did have some animals at his school that he helped take care of while studying them and stuff."

When Mimi and Eames grimaced Arthur guessed that they were thinking of what often happened to the animals used in science classes, something his siblings didn't know about at the moment except when it came to those horribly manipulating service announcements PETA and groups of that ilk liked to put on the TV to make people want to give them money just so they'd stop. He always flipped the channel when those things came on as his siblings knew too much about pain and suffering as it was.

Plus they'd come close to getting him to send money too many times to count, and he did not take kindly to being manipulated by anyone. Even for a good cause.

"So caring for those animals didn't make you want a pet of your own when you were younger, Arthur? Or did your parents feel it was best not to have one given how much you all apparently traveled?"

Arthur shook his head in answer to Mimi's question. "Some of my roommates had pets, they were allowed at the Institute, but I can't say I ever had a particular desire to have one of my own. But the constant travel was the reason our parents gave James and Phillipa as to why they couldn't have one before now."

"What's the Institute?" This was Eames.

"It's a really special school where special kids go to school cause regular school would be too easy and boring for them. That's where Arthur lived till he graduated and went to live with Grandfather in England."

"You...we're in a boarding school?"

Arthur confirmed that yes, Eames was right in that regard.

"It's a really neat place." Phillipa told them, gesturing with the fork in her hand to further punctuate her love of her brother's former school. "It had a pool, and a big gym, and there were greenhouses and a conservatory, and Arthur's friend Naveen could lie on his chest and bring his feet all the way around to touch his head!"
Everyone had to chuckle at that last part, even James.

"Did you like Arthur's school too, James?"

In explanation when his brother just shrugged, Arthur explained to Eames's mother that he'd graduated from the Institute when he was fourteen. James had been too young to remember his brief visits.

"Arthur, Phillipa said you were living with your grandfather after you finished your schooling at the Institute…why didn't you live with your parents, if you don't mind me asking."

Ah, he'd wondered if anyone would catch on to that little tidbit of information. He wasn't surprised that it had been Eames's mother either. She was a sharp one. "After graduating from the Institute I moved in with my grandfather permanently so that I could continue my education at Oxford, my grandfather's alma mater. I was there for a little over a year and a half before I moved here with James and Phillipa."

"Cause grandfather didn't want us to live with him too."

"Our grandfather doesn't have much patience when it comes to children." Arthur added on to explain his sister's statement before the others could ask about it.

"James and I aren't special like Arthur, so he didn't want us around."

"You are special." Arthur immediately shot back, his tone slightly harsher than he'd meant it to be. Adjusting that problem Arthur gave both his siblings reassuring looks as he reminded them yet again that their grandfather was simply too narrow minded and short sighted to appreciate that they were special too. Just in a different way than him.

The looks they gave him made it clear they still weren't buying it.

Thankfully Mimi came to the rescue so to speak by asking if they'd all lived with their grandfather after their mother's death. Not the most cheerful of topics either, but an easy question to answer.

"Nope. We lived with Grandmere at first, but we didn't like that and so I called Arthur and he borrowed one of Hikaru's jets and came to get us. Grandfather was super mad, Arthur missed two exams at school, but Arthur yelled right back and he can yell really loud when he wants to. That's why we came here, cause grandfather didn't want us and Papa's always working and we were in the way." Phillipa's face lit up. "But we love living here, specially with Arthur. Right, James?"

"Uh huh."

"Arthur's the bestest big brother in the whole wide world."

"And I'd rather have you two than a Nobel Peace Prize." Arthur told them in return, knowing that they'd understand the significance of that. Or Phillipa would, anyway.

Phillipa beamed and then told the others that Arthur and his friends had almost won one of those things before because of a school project they'd done, but the judges had failed to realize the scoop of the boys' brilliance and given the prize to someone else. Or at least that's what Arthur said. He got a really dark look on his face when he talked about it, the little girl making a face to try and replicate the look her brother wore at such times.

Still smarting over that loss, he did not take that sort of thing well, Arthur couldn't help but make a quick scowl that actually did look a fair amount like the face his sister had just made before he
adopted a more acceptable expression seeing as Eames and his family were looking at him like he'd grown an extra head.

In the silence James's voice seemed particularly loud, though he spoke in his usual soft voice. "Peas, please."

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Hours later Eames sat on his bed, still reeling from everything he'd learned about Arthur earlier at dinner. He was possibly dating someone who was so smart he'd almost won a Nobel Peace Prize. He'd looked it up online and everything, and though he hadn't really been able to make heads or tails of whatever it was their project had been it had gained a fair amount of press for Arthur and his classmates. Arthur had only been twelve at the time for fuck sakes! The mind boggled. His in particular, Eames admitted with a grimace. It sure as hell begged the question of why someone as brilliant as Arthur would want to date him in the first place, but then again the other teenager had been hired to tutor him so it wasn't like Arthur hadn't had a good handle on his mental acuity beforehand. Still…it was a little depressing and troubling to know how huge the intelligence gap actually was.

On the A side though, it was obvious Arthur loved his siblings and they weren't super geniuses either. How close they were was even more surprising now that he knew Arthur had been in a boarding school for at least some of his childhood. Given the age gap between the teenager and his younger siblings it stood to reason that they hadn't really grown up together, yet it was obvious both kids thought the world revolved around Arthur. They adored him and Arthur had blown off exams at Oxford for Christ sakes because they'd called him to come get them, just because they didn't want to stay with their grandmother any longer.

That Arthur was the sort of guy that would do that…well just when he thought the other teenager couldn't be any more attractive to him. Wow.

Unfortunately his thoughts drifted from there to the fact that Arthur's former boyfriend, Mr Rich and Famous Saito, was, according to the articles he'd read, pretty damn smart on top of being able to loan his teenage boyfriend a jet so that he could fly across the ocean at a moment's notice. But yeah, thinking about Saito on top of Arthur being an out of his league genius was only going to mess with his brain that much more.

Positive things. He definitely needed to focus on the good aspects of tonight.

With that thought in mind, especially since he did have some really good stuff to think about thanks to his pretty brilliant night, Eames opted to focus on the fact that after they'd had their tutoring session they'd all headed downstairs to watch Phillipa's copy of 'Ponyo', which she'd promised to loan him after they'd gone to the movies together before. The kids had headed down first and Arthur had made them both get off the couch so that he could stretch out on it. Ever observant, Arthur had noticed that his back had started to bother him even though he'd done his best to hide it from them all. That Arthur had been paying enough attention to him to notice…well he'd grinned like an idiot even as he'd pointed out that they were technically guests and the kids were welcome to the couch if they wanted it. Not that Arthur had gone along with that argument, no siree. Said arguing with Arthur hadn't done him any good, especially since he hadn't wanted to argue once he realized Arthur intended to let him put his head on his lap. He was pretty sure that had been a bribe to get him to stop arguing, and a fucking fantastic one at that.

In the end Phillipa had curled up in his old bean bag chair, and James had sat on the floor beside Arthur's legs which had probably been a good thing since it meant that the two kids had pretty much killed any chance there would have been of him and Arthur doing anything over G rated. As it was
Arthur had simply stroked his hair absently as the movie played, the touch soothing instead of sexual. He’d loved it.

Arthur could pet and stroke him any time.

And on that note he had a sexy, X-rated dream involving Arthur and that erotic as hell suit and fedora to get to.

Yay.
A Real First Date

Due to the fact that he'd never had a boyfriend before Eames had gotten used to the idea that he was probably doomed to wait until college before he could find someone who would not only want that position, but would want to get naked with him as often as possible. The fact that he now had a guy who was at least possibly interested in the latter, but couldn't get naked with him, was a major pisser on par with being stuck in his damn wheelchair. Of course it was partially the injuries that had put him the chair in the first place that were cockblocking him, though more than that was the simple fact that he and Arthur couldn't seem to find time alone together no matter how much energy he put into trying to come up with ways to manage it. The fact that Arthur's life seem to revolve around his siblings didn't help, not to mention his own mum and grandmother's habit of sticking their noses in, being far too interested in what he and Arthur got up to for them to actually get up to anything good. If the fates had been kind he could have at least insisted that he and Arthur be able to have their tutoring sessions in his room, but Arthur, being Arthur, took his tutoring far too seriously to do anything but actually tutor him.

So yeah, by the end of their first week as a sort of couple Eames was deeply bitter that those first experimental kisses and touches when Arthur had been debating whether to get involved with him or not were the furthest they'd gone physically. Telling himself that he was too obsessed with the whole thing didn't work at all, teenage hormones long denied overriding his common sense on the matter. The fact that his obvious frustration amused Arthur was just icing on the crappy cake Eames couldn't help but bake and try to stomach.

And it was because of his hormones that Eames was tempted to do the Snoopy dance when he got a text from Arthur asking if he was free the following evening. Apparently both James and Phil had been invited to go to a magic show being hosted in the city with some school friends, the original ticket holders having been grounded for breaking their mother's favorite lamp it seemed. The parents of the friends would be picking up and dropping James and Phillipa off, which meant that for close to five hours Arthur would have the house completely to himself and apparently wouldn't mind some company.

Eames couldn't type his enthusiastic 'Yes' quickly enough, that text quickly followed by the question of when he should show up. He'd roll his wheelchair all the way there if need be, not that he said so. He hadn't taken complete leave of his senses yet, though it had been tough and go at times.

The return text offered to pick him up at a quarter after five, and that Arthur could get him back home a half an hour before the kids were due back so that he'd be there when James and Phil got back from the show.

As much as he would have liked to state that he could get there easily on his own, Eames didn't want to bug his mum or Mimi for a ride when they already had to play chauffeur enough when it came to his doctor and therapist appointments. Not to mention it was just sad to be dropped off by a family member at his age, though being picked up, needing to be, was frustrating as hell too. God but he wanted his old, able to handle anything he dished out spine back so much there were no words. How he was supposed to make Arthur see him as a man after all, when he didn't feel like one half the time, stuck in a chair, so dependant on others?

Scowling himself for being a whiny baby even as he thought such stupid thoughts, Eames shook his head and told his ego to grow a set. He was just as much a man now as he had been before the crash, more so really really since the surgeries, therapy, and just plain facing his own mortality head-
on had made him grow up pretty damn fast. And for that matter he wouldn't always have to be in the chair, while there were plenty of other real men out there who were stuck in a chair for life or worse. Being a man wasn't about whether your limbs worked or not, but how you lived your life and contributed to the world around you, no matter what hand you'd been dealt in life. Or at least that was what he'd believed before he'd ended up in the chair and he refused not to believe now.

"Eames, I'm going to get groceries, anything you want that isn't on the list?"

Shaking off his pep talk thoughts for the moment, Eames mentally reviewed what he'd already put on the list, called out a request for Sunny D, and then added that he'd be going over to Arthur's tomorrow so she didn't have to worry about him for supper.

Popping her head into the doorway, Eames's mum raised an eyebrow and asked if she'd known about this before now.

And showing that he was done being an idiot for the moment Eames didn't point out that he was technically an adult and didn't have to tell her these things, instead explaining that Arthur had just texted him, offering to pick him up and drop him off so that wouldn't be a problem. They'd just be hanging out, not going anywhere or anything.

"Will Phil and James be there?"

"Mum."

"Tom." She shot back, the use of his actual first name a sure sign that she was serious about this. "I'm not blind, young man, as much as I might wish it when it comes to you two sometimes. And I was a teenager once too, with plenty of teenage boys around to remind me that the blood meant for their brains rarely left their pants. Just because you can't knock each other up doesn't mean I can just skip the be smart and safe speech. As much as we both wish I could."

Groaning, Eames covered his face with his hands. "Wasn't the other sex talks enough?!"

One of the biggest downsides of having a father who was a soldier was the fact that the majority of the big man to man talks every boy was supposed to have with his father had actually been with his mother. As a result a number of those talks had left them both with bad memories, even though his mum was a doctor and so she was used to talking about sex more than most parents. The worst was when she'd tried watching the Yank version of 'Queer As Folk' to better understand his homosexuality. Those had been dark days in their household.

The grudge he held for the thoughts that show had put into his mum's head, which had resulted in numerous questions on her part that he really hadn't wanted to talk or think about, would follow him to the grave.

"Unfortunately no, the others weren't enough, Sweetie." Coming further into the room it was obvious his mum meant business from the look in her eyes, much less her 'you better listen, mister' body language. "You're to use protection, understand?"

Nodding, Eames saw no point in arguing that particular point.

"And keep in mind that he seems to be the only one taking care of Phil and James, which means you two have to both be adult enough to keep it in your pants when they're in the vicinity." Railroading over his sputtered reaction to that Eames's mum kept going. "And you need to keep in mind that Arthur seems to have a lot more experience when it comes to sex and relationships than you, and you need to make sure that you both take it slow because you're in enough physical pain already without"
that boy breaking your heart because he was thinking with his dick and not his heart too."

Eames almost asked if they could please leave Arthur's dick out of the discussion, but his brain realized how that would sound and stopped him. Thank God. He settled for nodding and groaning some more, having no idea what to say at the moment that wouldn't make it a hundred times worse. If that was possible. Which it probably wasn't at this point without Arthur actually being present, but better safe than sorry.

"Tom, I'm serious. Don't make me have to have a talk with Arthur too. For all our sakes."

Paling at the very idea Eames goggled at his mum like she'd just threatened to castrate him. Though if she caused Arthur to lose interest in him Eames was pretty sure that his balls might shrivel up and die as it was. "Mum, please, I'm literally begging you. Do not have this conversation with Arthur. Please!"

"Then be smart about things, and I won't have to."

"You have my word, I swear!"

He got a narrow eyed stare in response, but she seemed to believe whatever she saw on his face because she nodded and then told him that they'd leave it at that unless she thought otherwise.

Eames was never so glad to see his mum leave a room in his life.

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Pulling up to the driveway Arthur continued a short distance and then parked the car behind the other vehicle there before turning the engine off. Taking a brief glance at his reflection Arthur confirmed that his hair was in place and he hadn't gotten some mysterious substance on his person on the drive over which was the main thing. One never knew when you had kids crawling around in your car after all. Assured that he looked good Arthur got out of the car, curious as to whether or not he would be treated to the once over he understood parents often gave to people who wanted to date their children. Given Hikaru's age he'd never had to worry about his ex's father, but he knew how protective Eames's grandmother and mother were where Eames was concerned. In all honesty he wasn't worried about being lectured either, if nothing else it would be a good learning experience for when he needed to properly scare any of Phillipa's future dates into line.

He supposed it said something about mankind's inborn primitive nature that he was sort of looking forward to that day.

After walking over to the front passenger side to open that door up for Eames's convenience, Arthur made his way to the front door and rang the bell, waiting patiently and not surprised when it was Eames's mother who opened the door for him, though he'd expected Mimi to ambush him as well. "Dr. Eames."

"Hello, Arthur, come on in. Ariadne called Eames on the land line a few minutes ago and he's in the kitchen talking to her. Given that he heard the doorbell he'll probably be out any minute." What went unsaid, though they both knew it, was that Eames wouldn't want the two to be left alone together for longer then they had to be.

"No problem. I'm in no rush." Good manners had Arthur asking Eames's mother if she'd been having a good day, listening as she described a day spent dealing with a family of six who were all dealing with food poisoning due to the matriarch of the family's refusal to accept that she needed glasses. She'd misread an expiry date with explosive results so to speak.
Wincing, Arthur gave her his sympathies, especially since he had learned the perils of dealing with sick children since he'd taken over guardianship of his siblings. He pitied everyone facing that sort of scenario.

The sound of Eames's wheelchair on the hardwood floors reached both their ears then, the teenager obviously moving faster than normal in a rush to get to them both. Whatever he saw on their faces had relief washing away the worry from Eames's face, Arthur interpreting the grateful look Eames aimed in his mother's direction to mean Eames had been expecting his mother to do something to embarrass him and was very thankful she hadn't.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Arthur. Ari was determined to talk my ear off no matter what I told her."

"No problem. Ready to go?"

"Yeah. I'll see you later tonight then, Mum."

Looking amused now she agreed with that and wished them both a good evening.

Returning the sentiment Arthur nodded and then headed over to open the door for Eames, sharing an amused look with the other teenager's mother at the speed with which Eames went through the doorway before Arthur turned and headed out as well, following Eames over to the passenger side of his car, where Eames was already in the process of shifting from his chair to the seat.

"Are you just really anxious to be alone with me, or away from your mother?"

"Honestly? Both."

Chuckling in response Arthur waited until Eames was in his seat before moving to compact the chair so that it would fit in the backseat.

"Oh, hell, sorry. I should have done that. I was just-"

"In a hurry to leave. I got that." Waving away his apologies Arthur soon had the chair stowed away and then headed back around to the driver's side, opening the door up and sliding behind the wheel with a smile on his face. "Were you worried she was going to lecture me?" Putting his sunglasses on since the sun was brutal at the moment, Arthur looked over at Eames as he started up the car. "I was sort of hoping she would just so that I could pick up some pointers when Phillipa is old enough to date."

Now it was Eames's turn to chuckle. "There's a big difference between how men greet would-be dates and how mums do it. Of course my mum would be tougher than most, come to that, if I'd had a sister for her to be all protective about. I'd be worse though, unless she was a right pain in my arse that I was hoping to unload on some poor unsuspecting bloke."

"Your English is up."

"Happens sometimes." Mostly when he was nervous, but Eames didn't say that. "So I bet Phil and James were excited about the magic show. I always enjoyed them, except when it's bloody obvious how they did the tricks. It's believing, if only for a bit, that the magic is real, that makes the shows worth seeing."

Generally he'd never had much of a problem figuring out how the various 'magic' tricks worked, but then he had never been the sort to shut down his brain and just enjoy something for entertainment's sake. To him figuring out the magician's tricks was the fun part. But Arthur understood Eames's point of view as well, in the sense that he knew that he was in the minority while those who enjoyed
magic shows for their spectacles alone were far more prevalent.

So instead of belittling Eames's comment Arthur simply nodded and stated that James and Phil had been wired since they'd been offered the chance to go to the show, and that he pitied the parents who were now in charge of five very hyper kids all under the age of ten. He'd barely survived Phillipa's birthday party at the beginning of the summer.

"I can imagine."

"The reality was worse than what you can imagine without experiencing it, but Phillipa was happy which was the main thing. Though I'm very thankful that I have a year to recover since James will want something much more low key."

As it happened Eames had done a fair amount of babysitting in his day, parents seemed to assume that the son of a doctor would know how to take care of kids in a medical emergency, so the two were able to discuss the hells that came with being in charge of children, or even one particular devil child in Eames's case, all the way to Arthur's house without any awkward silences or pauses.

By the time he'd pulled into his own driveway Arthur was even willing to admit that Eames had had it worse than him when it came to being exposed to kid related trauma.

"Oh yeah. That one kid is one of the reasons the idea that I'll never have biological children never bugged me as much as it does my mum. Though I promised her I'd think about adopting provided I had a partner to share the insanity with. I bow before competent single parents."

Since he was a single parent of sorts Arthur would have possibly suggested that Eames could bow to him all he wanted if not for the pain that would undoubtedly cause. Instead he simply agreed that they didn't get enough credit before getting out of the car, not surprised when Eames didn't wait for him to come around but instead carefully got out of the passenger side and walked the short distance to the backseat door to open it up to retrieve his chair. He trusted that Eames wanted to get physical with him enough that he wouldn't risk doing something his body couldn't handle so Arthur didn't try to interfere or help.

Once Eames was in his chair Arthur simply moved into position to walk alongside, walking ahead only once they were close enough to the door that he needed to get it for them both. Unlocking it Arthur opened it up and then headed inside, motioning for Eames to follow after him.

Locking up behind them Arthur smiled when he heard Eames pointing out that there was no need to lock from behind him. "I haven't lived around here long enough to be comfortable not locking them. Do you always leave your doors unlocked?"

"Not during the day, just at night."

"I suppose I'm a better safe than sorry type." Turning around Arthur joined Eames, who'd moved further into the front hallway area to study the three large picture frames that led the way up the stairs to the upper level. "That was Phil's idea. She liked the idea of making new ones for every season." Currently there were two letters in every frame to spell 'Summer', and the drawings all around the letters depicted what he and his siblings looked forward to when it came to that particular season.

"You're really good. Like seriously good. I can barely do stick figures."

"I'm good at reproducing something faithfully, but I lack any real artist ability according to my more honest art teachers. Being creative isn't one of my strong suits, at least not in the artistic sense. My father says that I take after his side of the family in that way, his artistic abilities came as a complete
surprise there. My maman was into interior design, she had an eye for it from what I've seen of her work, and she always looked put together and perfect style wise. Phillipa and James are like them, or at least when it comes to that sort of thing.

And reading the look Eames was giving him easily enough Arthur shook his head. "It doesn't bother me, that I'm so different from my parents. I'm glad to be me, and not like them." Not wanting to talk about them either, that would be quite the mood killer in his books, Arthur motioned towards the doorway that led into the living room. "I thought that we'd hang out in there for a bit, if it suits you."

"Sure. Sounds good to me."
Also, the readership seems to be pretty small for this fanfic in comparison to some of my others, which is why it's sort of on the backburner when it comes to being updated. Sorry.

Eager to see more of the other man's house, especially since Arthur wasn't big on letting people see the personal side of him, Eames rolled himself into the living room, taking in the light, airy feeling to it. It was also ruthlessly clean with everything in its place and everything obviously having a place, which struck him as rather miraculous given that he'd actually met Arthur's younger siblings and knew that at least Phil wasn't the orderly and neatest of children. It did look comfortable and welcome though, especially the oversized brown leather couch that was shaped like an L and featured several pillows placed where the two lengths connected, which immediately caught his interest since it was the only 'flaw' in the look of the room as far as he could tell.

"I thought the pillows would help with your back."

"Ah." Appreciating the thought Eames was just about to point out that the couch was overstuffed enough that he could probably sit on it easily when it occurred to him that Arthur would know that and perhaps…if his hormones weren't clouding his thinking, this was a clue that Arthur wanted him lying down?

Blinking several times as his mind processed that possibility Eames's pornographic thoughts splintered a little at the feel of Arthur's hand running over his T-shirt covered shoulders before lightly cupping the back of his neck. And the look Arthur gave him when their eyes met said that yes, Hell yes, that was exactly why Arthur had set up the pillows that way.

"Oh thank God."

Loving the delighted rumble of amusement Arthur made in response Eames wheeled himself over to the couch and carefully quickly shifted over to settle against the incredibly comfy pillows that he imagined the kids used to sprawl out on when they wanted to be closer to the television. Once settled Eames watched Arthur put the chair out of the way but still within his reach before returning to him, Eames's eyes widening big time as Arthur moved to straddle him without a hint of hesitation. Again. And though he hated to think about it Eames couldn't help but suddenly remember his mother's words and wonder if maybe his mum had a point about Arthur being more interested in them using their dicks together than a real relationship. And while he wanted sex as much as any teenage boy, Eames was also aware enough to know that he wanted Arthur to the point where just being the teenager's sex toy would, eventually, break his heart.

But then Arthur was kissing him and it was hard to think beyond the need for shagging and getting off given that the position they were in made it very clear that he wasn't the only one sporting an erection or having a keen interest in using his or his partner's. He loved the way Arthur was putting his weight on him too, those beautiful hands he fancied so much stroking over his head and face as opposed to propping Arthur up which would have denied them the full body contact they both craved. Arthur was trusting him to tell him if it was too much and that was as much an aphrodisiacs at this point as the taste of Arthur's mouth and the sexy scents of very nice cologne and plain Arthur.

Not that there was anything remotely plain about Arthur.
It was the feel of those fingers touching him so possessively and with such care that reminded Eames that he could likely touch as well, which led him to wrapping one arm around Arthur's waist to keep him right where he wanted him while he lifted the other to gently stroke his fingers through Arthur's hair. He didn't care for the product keeping it in place in all honesty, but it was enough that he was allowed to touch and even encouraged judging by the small, pleased sound that escaped from between their locked lips.

Much making out was had for the next little while, Eames easily able to ignore the occasional twinge in his back as their tongues and mouths stayed very busy while Arthur's hips occasionally rolled in a way guaranteed to remind his lower half that this was more than just another quick make out session. They had HOURS before the kids were due back home and Eames was willing to bet that Arthur had no intention of wasting one second of that.

So when Arthur did sit up again Eames wasn't terribly worried, the sight of Arthur reaching down and pulling up the hem of his shirt to remove it a most welcome one as the shirt was tossed aside. Reaching up with both hands it was Eames's turn to make a somewhat embarrassing sound of pleasure as he ran his hands over all the smooth, lightly tanned skin that was being offered to him, loving that Arthur was just letting him touch while watching him with such dark, aware eyes.

"You have surprising control for an average teenage boy. Especially given how long you've wanted to get your hands on me."

Opting not to address the fact that Arthur had been aware of his embarrassingly long crush, Eames concentrated on running his hands sideways along Arthur's sides, half his last finger on either side just under the top of Arthur's jeans. "I've had quite a while to plan what I'd like to do if I ever got you even half naked, Darling."

"Darling?"

Flushing a little at both the slip and the raised eyebrow he was getting, Eames didn't try and defend the slip but simply asking instead if it was alright, mentally praying that Arthur's answer would be yes since he wanted to be able to call his darling 'Darling'.

Arthur, being Arthur, took a few moments to consider the nickname before nodding. "I'll allow it."

"Thank you."

A little disappointed when Arthur leaned back down and therefore hiding that beautiful chest from view, Eames's disappointment did a complete turnaround when Arthur started carefully biting the side of his neck while rolling his hips far more aggressively and without pause now, the steady rhythm of both Arthur's hips and the suction of the other teenager's mouth making Eames a very happy man which he was quick to verbalize. That he was groaning like a porn star- hell, he didn't care so long as Arthur didn't stop doing what he was doing.

Running his hands rather frantically over Arthur's back now, as well as moving on instinct to piston his own hips so that he could meet every roll of Arthur's to drag their erections together, Eames loved making his darling moan and groan with him even though the other man was much more restrained about it which just made Eames that much more determined.

But it was hard to have any goal but getting off when you were making out with someone of Arthur's sexiness, and finally Eames had to alert the other boy to the fact that he was very close to getting off, not wanting to get off without some warning. That was more mortifying than admitting that Arthur had more control than he did.
"Good."

Pleased that Arthur thought that was a good thing, since short of stopping what they were doing he was barely holding on here, Eames about swallowed his tongue when Arthur's hands moved between them to start undoing his jeans, opening them up before those clever fingers left him groaning from lack of contact. Then Arthur's fingers were doing the same to the jeans he was wearing and Eames could do nothing but watch, hungry to see and touch more.

Arthur didn't show the least bit of shyness in sliding his jeans and underwear down enough that his erection was on full display, Eames's already irregular breathing stopping entirely when Arthur reached behind him to withdraw a condom from his back pocket, his boyfriend ripping it open neatly before fitting it over his sizable, to Eames's getting wider by the minute eyes, erection.

Oh fuck a duck. Arthur was going to…Arthur wanted to…and he'd be the one taking it and…

"Calm down, Mr. Eames." Sounding affectionately amused Arthur leaned down to brush their lips together in a reassuring, if brief kiss before straightening up again. "I don't have any intention of penetrating you tonight. You wouldn't be up to enjoying that even if your back were up to it. This is merely to save on clean up."

Slightly disappointed, but much more relieved because yeah, he wasn't up to that possibility both physically or mentally currently, Eames had to clear his voice so that he wouldn't squeak as he asked what they were going to do.

"Using the more crude teenage terminology you're probably used to I intend to blow you. I believe that's the correct term for fellatio in American society, is it not?"

Eames couldn't help it, his jaw dropped open like he was a landed fish.

A smile on his face Arthur traced a finger over Eames's lips teasingly. "And yes, I have very high hopes that you'll return the favor eventually. You aren't the only one who's been planning. But for now…does my current plan suit you?"

Nodding was the best Eames could manage, words beyond him at the moment.

Inclining his head in pleased acknowledgement Arthur shifted further down Eames's body and then Arthur's fingers were pushing Eames jeans further apart, pulling down the underwear underneath those jeans. And then all Eames could see was Arthur's bowed dark hair. All he could feel was hot breath against his aching flesh, followed by the all-consuming wet pleasure of Arthur's mouth closing around the head of his penis.

Giving up on trying to hold back the porn noises, Arthur didn't seem to mind and his brain wasn't working enough to even think of putting his hand over his mouth or something, Eames tried and completely failed to try and pay attention to what Arthur was doing to him so that he could return the favor properly later. Instead he was pretty much reduced to a swearing, begging mess who didn't last nearly as long as he would have hoped to and ended up being so caught off guard by the wave of it that he didn't even have time to warn Arthur that he was coming. He didn't even have time or the inclination to worry about that as the pleasure exploded in his brain and body, Eames hardly aware of the fact that Arthur had moved until the other man's lips were on his and they were kissing again.

Dimly Eames heard the sounds Arthur was making that escaped their lips, registering that they were getting louder and the kisses more messy and frantic. Moving his hands to stroke down Arthur's back as he did his best to return the kisses as his brain slowly came back online Eames was very grateful when he finally managed to focus on the source of Arthur's pleasure just in time to watch the other teenager jerk himself off. And watching that, the way Arthur's body was moving into his hand and
how good it was obviously making him feel, Eames couldn't help but stroke his hands all over the upper half of Arthur's body while telling Arthur how gorgeous he was, how sexy and skilled and perfect he was.

The reward or being able to watch when Arthur's orgasm wash across his boyfriend's beautiful face had Eames grinning like a fool, especially when Arthur collapsed against his chest and just let him hold him tight while they both just let themselves feel.

Oh yeah, best first real date EVER.

A couple hours later Arthur was feeling very loose and relaxed as he and Eames ate pizza while watching 'Holes', which was a favorite movie of James's and one Eames apparently liked quite a lot as well. Personally Arthur didn't see the point in watching movies repeatedly when you'd already seen it several times, but since he was snuggled up against Eames's side after having had two very satisfying orgasms Arthur wasn't in the mood to say a bad word about anything.

Being cuddled by someone hadn't been a part of his life since he'd been sent away to school. He cuddled his siblings because they needed the physical contact and reinforcement that they weren't alone and that he loved them, but they weren't big enough to return the gesture the way Eames was now. Hikaru was not the cuddling sort by any stretch of the word.

He liked this though.

"Penny for your thoughts?"

Feeling a touch sassy, Arthur deliberately added some purr to his voice. "My thoughts are always worth more than a per penny, Eames. Much more."

"Of course, how silly of me. One million pounds for your thoughts is much fairer."

"You haven't got a million dollars, much less pounds." Arthur couldn't help but point out. "But since you asked, I was thinking I like you cuddling me."

The look Eames shot in his direction said he was both surprised and pleased to hear that.

Finding himself more and more fascinated by this boyfriend he'd acquired, Arthur set his third slice of pizza down so that he would have his hands free to frame Eames's face as he stole another kiss, enjoying the faint spiciness from the pizza sauce as he took a few appreciative swipes with his tongue before pulling back again to pick up his ginger ale to take a swallow.

Amused when Eames put aside his own slice in a copy of him, Arthur held his drink out of the way as he tipped his head to the side, letting Eames have control of the kiss completely this time around so that he could simply enjoy the other man's frankly sexual lips and very dexterous tongue. There was certainly room for improvement when it came to Eames's kissing ability, but considering how little practice he had had when it came to this sort of thing Arthur was fairly certain that with time and proper training Eames would be a force to be reckoned with sexually.

And all his, he thought smugly, though the possessive thought took Arthur completely by surprise since while it was in his nature to be very…territorial and protective of things he considered his, people were generally another story. They came in and out of his life and with the exception of his siblings and that was just fine with him. Phillipa and James were stuck with him until they were both over eighteen because he was their parental figure right now and they were his responsibility, but Eames was…Eames would be going away to college soon enough and would eventually move on to
someone else because that's just what people did so getting attached…

The thought that someone might try and steal Eames from him when he'd only just gotten a real taste of the other teenager's potential had Arthur thinking some rather violent thoughts. This was also unusual and to try and ignore his feelings in general Arthur opted to pull away long enough to set his drink aside and then pounced on the boyfriend in question to insure that he wasn't someone any potential Eames stealers could live up to.

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Eames wasn't really sure why Arthur was suddenly in the mood to try and devour him as completely as they had the pizza after working up one hell of an appetite earlier but he was all for it, especially since Arthur was coming off as being needy as hell this time around. The lack of control and the hands roughly sliding under his shirt were just fine with him, especially since Arthur didn't seem to mind the fact that his own hands had somehow found their way to his sexy as hell boyfriend's arse and had started kneading the heck out of it while Arthur did all sorts of wonderfully wicked things with him with their mouths.

This continuing on for several very enjoyable minutes of intense making out, to the point where they were both thinking they needed to remove some clothing or at least get it out of the way when Arthur suddenly stiffened in a not good way above him.

Thinking he might have crossed a line since he'd slid his hands under Arthur's jeans and had started stroking a couple fingers against the inner cheeks of Arthur's arse, Eames prepared to apologize but the words died when, thanks to the change in atmosphere, he too finally sensed that there was someone else in the room.

Oh shite.

The man standing just in the room was about their height, maybe a little taller, with what he thought was light brown hair given they only had a couple lamps on at the moment. And like Arthur their visitor had one of those faces that made age hard to pinpoint without close examination, but given the luck he was having this year Eames's mind made the natural leap to who this must be.

"You came early without telling me."

"I thought I'd surprise you all. Care to introduce me to the boy you're currently mauling?"

Wincing at the identically cold voices, though the voices themselves were different with this man's voice more American somehow, Eames wasn't the least surprised to be introduced to Dominic Cobb, Arthur's father.

"Sir."

"The football player." Seeming to dismiss him and his importance, which Eames was actually grateful for given their present circumstances, Dom turned his attention to focus solely on Arthur. "Where are James and Phillipa?"

"They were invited to go see a magic show with friends." Arthur glanced down at the watch he was wearing. "They'll be back in about forty minutes depending on traffic."

"James isn't old enough to be up this late."

"James took a nap beforehand so that he would last and I fully expect he'll have passed out in the car by the time they get here. We have nothing planned for tomorrow morning that would prevent him
from sleeping in a little if need be. You should go upstairs and unpack until they get here, we'll finish eating and then I need to drive Eames home."

The look on the older man's face said he had plenty more to say on the matter, but the quick glances he shot in Eames's direction made it clear that despite not speaking to him Arthur's father was still aware of Eames's presence and didn't want the fight he and Arthur obviously intended to have while Eames was around to witness it.

So instead Dom simply nodded his head in acknowledgement, stating in a very cold voice that he was sure he'd be seeing Eames again, and then off he went to retrieve his bags and head up the stairs. Very loudly.
What An Evening

In the grand scheme of things Eames knew their present predicament could be worse, especially since there was nothing he wanted more than to get naked with Arthur, but still…this was not a good way to end the evening or meet his boyfriend's dad. Listening to those feet stomp up the stairs, knowing that odds were Arthur was going to get it as soon as he came back from dropping him off…yeah, not the way he'd wanted the night to end at all. Not to mention…talk about a mood killer. He'd been on full alert before but now, not even a naked Arthur could have gotten him up.

Well…maybe if Arthur was completely naked, but that was beside the point as they were both fully dressed at the moment and doomed to stay that way.

And belatedly realizing that he should probably say something, but having no idea really what to say having never been in this situation before, Eames opted to cover a lot of ground and just say that he was sorry.

"Sorry for what?"

Crap. "I mean sorry for…for the fact that your dad is going to be all over you once I'm gone. Maybe you should get him to come down, that way he can tear into both of us instead of just you. I mean we're both responsible for uhm…what he walked in on."

Making an amused sound Arthur glided a hand over Eames's hair in a gesture Eames's instinctively nuzzled into. "There's no need. Really. If we weren't fighting about this it would be about something else entirely. Fighting is what we do. Plus the kids will be home by the time I get back and he'll behave as long as they're around to hear him. He'll wait until they're asleep or off somewhere with friends."

"I don't know…if I don't take my licks then he's not going to think much of me, is he?" And he wanted to get along with Arthur's dad even if the two didn't get along at all from the sounds of it. He just didn't want to risk being banned from seeing the man's oldest son while Arthur's father was in town.

"Eames, he was just being an ass. Remembered how much older my last boyfriend was? He didn't care. He probably only said something now because we're fighting and because he knows a real dad would comment on what we were doing and wants you to see him that way. It's fine, I promise." So saying Arthur leaned in to brush their lips together. "Now do you want to continue what we were doing, eat more pizza, or I could take you home now instead of fifteen minutes from now since he's damaged the mood?"

"You…while your dad is in the house?" In some corner of his mind Eames knew he sounded downright priggish, but he was too stunned to really care.

"Have I said something to make you think I give a damn what he thinks?"

"No, but…nevermind. Let's finish eating then." That at least wouldn't get them into any trouble. And hopefully wouldn't make him seem like an absolute twit.

But he wasn't hungry anymore either, and that was obvious, so when Arthur nipped the barely nibbled on slice Eames had been holding for a good five minutes out of his hand and suggested that they head out Eames didn't see the point in arguing. Instead he was sort of relieved, though he felt
bad about that even though Arthur had said there was nothing to worry about. He couldn't help worry, it was just genetically encoded in him since fights with his own father, however rare, were the stuff of nightmares for him. He couldn't stand disappointing him, though ironically enough Eames imagined that most parents would kill to have a son as smart, good looking, and well behaved as Arthur. Of course Arthur wasn't at all fond of his father either so that probably didn't help matters.

Either way he slid back into his chair and helped Arthur clean up as best he could before following him out of the house, noting but saying nothing about the fact that Arthur didn't bother to tell his father that they were leaving.

The ride home was spent discussing the movie they hadn't really been watching, both having seen it enough times to comment on the acting and plot. Eames was well aware that Arthur was sticking to the topic for his sake and had no real interest, and while he appreciated that it just made him feel more juvenile. That being the case…

"I could come by tomorrow, talk to him, your dad, man to man."

Since they'd been talking about the curiosity that someone who looked like Jon Voight could have a daughter as gorgeous as Angelina Jolie Arthur blinked once in confusion before stating that his father was not a man. Not a real one. And talking to him wouldn't do him any good. Though it was sweet of him to offer.

"I just…"

"You don't want me to think less of you, and I don't. He's my cross to bear so to speak."

"Well I think less of me."

A long pause greeted that statement, then a chuckle. "I've never had a protector before."

Horrified that that might be true, though he believed it which was even worse, Eames reached over and placed a hand over Arthur's nearest hand on the steering wheel. Giving it a brief squeeze Eames parlayed the girlie action by stating that he was a pretty useless as a protector at the moment, but he'd give it his best shot in this case.

"I know you would. You're the type."

Not quite sure what to think about that, though he was pretty sure Arthur meant it in a positive way, Eames opted not to ask, the last few streets passed in companionable silence before they were pulling into his driveway, Arthur parking as close to the house as possible before turning off the engine and undoing his seatbelt.

"So am I getting a kiss good night, Mr. Eames? Now would be the time given the difference in height when you're in your chair."

Looking over Eames grinned, undoing his own belt as he leaned in to give Arthur that kiss, enjoying it quite a lot since there was no chance of them being seen given how dark it was in the car and outside. Of course there was a small voice in the back of his mind that said his mum and possibly Mimi were currently timing how long they were spending in the parked car, but Eames mentally bitchslapped that voice quiet for the time being. Concentrating on what Arthur's tongue was doing inside his mouth, and returning the favor, those were far more important thoughts to be having.

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Pulling into his own driveway twenty minutes after seeing Eames to his door like a proper
gentleman, Arthur thought that he couldn't have timed his arrival home any better as he watched a familiar car pull in behind him. Getting out of his own car Arthur could see through the other vehicle's windshield that his brother and a boy named Luke were passed out in the back, his sister not yet in view but sure to either be asleep already or well on her way to getting there given the time. Exchanging greetings with Mrs. Holden, the mother of the kids his siblings were friends with, Arthur walked over to the door she'd just opened, Phillipa jumping out though she wobbled a little when her feet hit the ground.

"Did you enjoy the show?"

"Uh huh." Big yawn. "Arthur, I'm really tired."

"I can see that. Dad's here, he came early. Why don't you head inside and get him to tuck you in. I'll being James in and take care of him."

"Papa's here? Inside?" Eyes widening a little Phillipa looked from him to the house, too tired to really think clearly about the trouble her father's early visit would bring. Instead she headed towards the house to go see what her father had brought her while Arthur turned his attention to taking his thoroughly unconscious brother from Mrs. Holden.

"Thank you. From the sounds of it they had a great time."

"Oh the kids definitely did." Was her wry response. "I on the other hand need an ibuprofen like you wouldn't believe."

Wincing in sympathy Arthur offered to run in and get her one.

"Thanks, but I'll survive the two blocks home. Good night, Arthur."

"Good night, Mrs. Holden. Good luck with the headache."

"Thanks, I'll need it."

Waving her off as she got back into the car and then drove away Arthur headed back towards the house with James slung over his shoulder in a fireman's hold. Opening the door he let them in and then locked up behind them, from there heading up the stairs while ignoring the sounds of his sister and father talking in Phillipa's room as he headed straight for James's. Once there he settled the boy on the bed and then retrieved some pajamas to put him in. James didn't stir as he was undressed and put into the pajamas decorated with characters from SpongeBob Squarepants, Arthur getting him under the covers in record time before heading out towards his sister's room to say good night to her before he either turned in for the night or was pulled off to the side to get lectured or yelled at.

But as soon as he'd reached Phillipa's doorway he saw that his sister was already passed out under her covers, clutching a new stuffed animal and looking like an angel as she always did in her sleep. Their father was just sitting on the side of the bed, stroking her hair, and the poignancy of it all had Arthur choosing to slip away unnoticed rather than draw attention to himself.

Changing into his own sleeping attire once in his room, Arthur picked up his copy of 'Les Miserables' in its original French and then stretched out on his bed to read a bit before turning in for the night. He didn't get far into the chapter when he sensed his father's presence.

Reaching for the bookmark he'd left at his side Arthur marked his place and then twisted over to place the book back on his nightstand before turning to give his father his full attention with a raised eyebrow that wordless inquired as to the reason behind the interruption.
"Exactly why are you dating some alcoholic, frat boy in the making soccer player?"

"He's not an alcoholic, and last time I checked fraternities aren't generally friendly towards gay men, even athletic ones. And he plays football, not soccer. We've been over that already. Or is your memory already going?"

The twitch under his eye was the only indication of Dom Cobb's annoyance. For the moment. "No sex in the house, understood?"

"No deal. Unless we spring for a hotel room, which wouldn't be logical and decidedly costly on his end since he'd insist on paying as well, here would be the most ideal location. I will however give you my word that if Phillipa and James are also on the premises said sex will take place in here with the door locked. That's the best you're getting." Arthur added, pointing a finger in his father's direction for emphasis.

"I'm the parent here, you will do as I say."

"One, you aren't around enough to enforce that rule, two, you've never been my parent and we both know it. Above and beyond that you can't tell me you and Maman didn't have sexual relations while Phillipa and James were in the same household, and as for cause for 'parental' concern, we're both clean and it's not like either of us can follow our present family tradition and knock the other up before we hit twenty."

Watching the blow hit Arthur was pleased, though didn't show it. "We'll use protection regardless."

Giving his son a look that suggested he'd really, really like to hit him, Dom took several calming breaths before he lashed out with what he intended to be an equal blow.

"Sometimes I think you must have been switched at birth, seriously."

Arthur watched his father wait for a reaction, not giving him one both because he'd often felt like maybe he had been switched at birth, and because this was far from the first time one of his parents had expressed that sentiment. Instead he simply returned the other man's gaze until his father gave up and grabbing the door handle slammed the door closed behind him. Only then did Arthur say anything.

"If only, if only, the woodpecker sighs."

And so saying Arthur picked up his book again and went back to reading, refusing to think of anything besides the story the book told.

If only, if only.

Eames spent most of the morning wondering if he should either call or drop by Arthur's place to make sure that everything was okay and that he'd been right to let Arthur convince him to go home without talking to his boyfriend's dad. Plus if he were to drop by he could bring something from the downtown bakery to try and bribe Arthur's father into thinking better of him, though that might piss Arthur off royally since it was plain as day the two didn't get along. Hell, the way it had looked to him, he might be more attractive to Arthur simply because his dad didn't like him.

Opting for middle ground Eames forced himself to wait until after lunch before texting Arthur a message asking how his day was going. That should be okay.
'My day would get significantly better if you're not busy for the next few hours'

Smiling automatically Eames quickly typed back that no, he wasn't busy.

'I'll be by to get you in twenty minutes if that works for you.'

'It most definitely does, Darling.'

Grinning as he sent the return message Eames pocketed his phone and then steered his chair in the direction of the living room where Mimi was currently working on piecing together a quilt she was making for one of his second cousins' upcoming wedding.

Mimi took one look at him and smirked. "Well you're in a good mood now, Mr. Worrywort. Arthur text you?"

"Yeah. He's coming by in twenty minutes to get me. Not sure where we're going exactly but I'll have my phone on me if you need me to come home early."

"Are the kids going with you two?"

"Don't know, but I doubt it since Arthur would have probably mentioned that. I'm guessing that the little ones are hanging out with their berk of a father and Arthur isn't being included. Not that that's probably not for the best given their relationship or lack thereof." He'd filled his grandmother in on some of what had happened the night before, wanting her opinion on whether he should call Arthur's house or not. She'd told him to hold off on that, which had turned out to be good advice.

Shaking her head Mimi made a face. "With most teenagers I'd just assume that it's the normal drama boys Arthur's age have with their parents when hormones run high and the kid start's chaffing at the bit to be in control of his life. But Arthur acts as old as me most of the time, and he's got a better head on his shoulders than most. Seems his daddy doesn't know what he has with those kids he can't seem to find any time for. Least not that anyone in this town's noticed with Arthur being the only one taking care of the little ones."

"Well I'll be sure to tell him you think he's a level-headed bloke."

"Sure, and while you're at it see if you can't remind the boy that he is in fact a boy still. It would do him good, I bet, to act like a teenager too. Consider that part of your job as his boyfriend."

With a wink Eames gave his grandmother a snappy salute before heading out to change his shirt and make sure that he looked as dashing handsome as he could before Arthur arrived. He didn't doubt for one moment that Arthur would arrive exactly when he said he would, and when he did Eames wanted to be outside and waiting so that he too would look far more prompt than he normally was.

And just as he'd thought Eames had only just wheeled himself out and onto the porch to wait when Arthur pulled up, the other teenager alone in the car which Eames took to mean that he'd been correct thinking that the kids wouldn't be joining them. Waving in greeting Eames headed down and steered over to the passenger side, Arthur having come around to help him maneuver the chair into the backseat.

"No sprogs today?"

"Sprogs? Oh right, you mean Phil and James. I'd forgotten that English expression for a moment. And no, they won't be joining us today. My father's taking them to the zoo and then dinner in the city." Arthur's lips quirked a little as he closed the back door once the chair was in place. "Apparently I'm getting a break."
Wondering if Arthur had even been asked if he wanted to go with his family to the city, he doubted it, Eames opted to change the subject and ask what they’d be doing instead.

Arthur shrugged at him. "I thought you might have a suggestion, which I'm open to. If I'd known I'd have the time free I would have planned something in advance, but I didn't. You also know the area better than I do, so I thought you might be aware of a worthwhile activity or place to visit that I wasn't aware existed. Though I did research the area thoroughly before we moved here so that Phillipa and James would get the most out of their time here."

"I'll bet you did." Settling into the passenger seat Eames waited until Arthur had settled into the driver's spot before suggesting what they could do with their afternoon.

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So…suggestions on what they should do?
Playing Games

Arthur had been surprised when Eames asked him if he liked watching football, he would have thought watching that sort of thing would only depress the other teen given his current physical limitations. But trusting Eames to know himself and his emotional limits, Arthur had told him that he enjoyed watching it more than most sports, and he'd be happy to go and see a game with Eames if he wanted to. So that was how they ended up getting ice cream from a place near the park before heading into said park, pulling into the lot closest to the football pitches.

He would have liked to have found a spot where they could watch the game from the car, but the game was well underway and all the good parking spaces had been taken long ago. As it was they couldn't even see the pitch from where they were, Arthur noted, glancing in Eames's direction to see the man focused on licking his ice cream, which was three scoops and threatening to fall off the cone at any moment. The girl who'd made it had definitely been more interested in checking Eames out than doing her job.

Remembering his annoyance at the time, Arthur recalled wryly how he'd shaken his head when Ariadne had confessed to him that she'd once call in to a restaurant to complain when one of the waitresses wrote her number on the check for Ariadne's then boyfriend. His friend had pretended to be an outraged wife, and even two years later Ariadne hadn't sounded remotely repentant that she'd gotten the waitress in trouble. At the time Arthur had thought her reaction rather immature and childish, but now it sounded like a very clever punishment for some bitch trying to take a man who was already taken.

"What's with the face?"

"Just remembering something Ariadne told me."

"Ah. I love her dearly, but she is an odd duck at times." Eames grinned in fond amusement. "What did she tell you?"

Smiling a little in deprecation, Arthur told him what he'd been thinking, his ears burning a little red when Eames beamed at him in such obvious pleasure. Apparently Eames really liked the idea that he'd been a little green eyed over him.

"I didn't even notice she was flirting with me, Darling. Hardly." Eames tacked on, smart enough to know that he could only protest so much. The way the girl had given Eames as good a view of her breasts as possible had been pretty obvious.

"Right." Smirking at the thought Arthur cocked his head in the direction of the game. "You know people are going to be more interested in watching and talking to you than they'll be in the game, right? It will be worse than whatever happened at Delia's when Ari and I were getting the food. Not that I can't be rude enough to keep them away if need be, but I'd rather they didn't all report to your mother that I have no manners."

"I'd defend your honor, Darling."

"I can defend it myself, thanks."

"True. And if need be I'll tell them to sod off politely. Most of them will wait until the match is over before converging on us though. Parents tend to get very…involved with matches and their children.
They're rather scary in their intensity sometimes, actually. You'd think it was life or death the way some of them carry on."

"So it will be two shows in one?"

"Quite possibly." Eames grinned. "Shall we go then?"

It took some juggling thanks to the ice cream, but in short order Eames was in his chair with their treats in his hands while Arthur pushed the chair across the parking lot and up beside the nearest set of short bleachers since there was room for him there too. Numerous eyes shifted from the pitch and onto them as Arthur put on the brakes once Eames was in position, which he ignored as he walked around the chair to take a seat on the lowest level so that he and Eames were almost side by side.

Taking his ice cream when Eames offered it, the simple heavenly hash two scoop melting more than a little now too, Arthur smiled at his boyfriend and then deliberately got creative with his tongue just to be a little mean before gesturing to the field, asking Eames if he knew the players since he'd known there would be a game playing to begin with.

It took a moment, Eames obviously hadn't expected him to tease him sexually so publically, but he recovered relatively quickly, Eames shooting back a response meant for his ears only. "You're going to pay for that one, FYI."

Arthur just smiled back as he asked if that was a promise.

Eames mimed crossing his heart, the gleam in his eyes saying it all. But he didn't try anything, apparently opting to bid his time instead as he answered Arthur's question, which was that he knew the majority of the tweens currently on the field. He'd helped coach them a little a couple years back when their main coach had broken a leg and asked him to help him out with them since his skills were well known and the kids were liable to listen to him for that reason. Running herd on kids that age was hard enough without a broken leg, so the man had needed all the help he could get and it had actually been a lot of fun. Exhausting, but fun.

"Makes sense. You're good with kids."

"Thanks."

It was while they were smiling at each other that the first two mothers came down from their spots on the bleachers to say hi to Eames, exclaiming over how excited their boys would be to see him and how great it was to see him out and about. From there it segued into how his physical therapy was going, and finally an apology for basically ignoring the fact that Arthur was obviously with Eames but they hadn't so much as asked for an introduction.

"My fault entirely." Eames assured them, though he hadn't had a chance in hell of steering the conversation the way they'd kept lobbing questions at him. "This is my boyfriend, Arthur. Arthur, this is Mrs. Thomas and Ms. Platt."

Arthur watched with interest as the eyes of the two women nearly bugged out of their heads as he said hello. They had obviously not seen that coming, and in all honesty he hadn't expected Eames to introduce him that way so smoothly. He'd have to reward the other man for that well later.

"Oh, I didn't know that you were-dating anyone." Mrs. Thomas caught herself just in time, her cheeks flushing red at her near slip up. "It's nice to meet you, Arthur."

"The pleasure's mine." He assured them, and it was since they were amusing him.
"How long have you two been dating?" Ms. Platt wanted to know, the gleam in her eyes saying that she smelled juicy gossip and wanted all the details so that she could be the first to pass them on to everyone in town.

"Not long. It took me a while to convince him to give me a shot." Eames winked in Arthur's direction, amusing him that much more.

Shaking his head Arthur neatly sidestepped or answered the questions both women aimed at them, glad when the kinder Mrs. Thomas finally dragged her friend away to return to their seats. He wasn't remotely surprised though, to look over his shoulder moments later to see both women deep in conversation with some of the other moms, the darting glances in their direction making it clear who they were talking about.

And so it was for the next twenty minutes or so, their game watching opportunities coming in spurts in between not terribly subtle attempts to get as much information about his and Eames's relationship once their 'visitors' learned that there was more interesting gossip to be gathered aside from an update on Eames's injuries. For the most part Arthur did his best to direct their questions and such towards him, so that Eames could enjoy the game. He enjoyed watching the football nut get sucked into the match, complete with Eames calling the ref a few highly uncomplimentary names which led to him being warned that he'd be asked to leave if he didn't watch it.

Then it was time for a midgame break, and all the kids swarmed Eames and Arthur didn't have to talk at all as he listened to Eames compliment each kid in turn, his boyfriend finding something worth mentioning that had each of the boys puffing out their chests and beam with pride. And it was probably helping Eames's ego too, the way the boys so obviously worshipped Eames, wheelchair bound or not.

It would do Eames good to be here after all.

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If Eames was being completely honest with himself, his suggestion that they come by to catch part of the match had been a test for himself. A way to make him face not only the bombardment of nosey questions he didn't have to face when he stayed at home, because he needed to start building a tougher skin there, but also to face the pain of watching the game he loved being played and being unable to join in. He'd told himself that at least in this case he'd be on the sidelines even if he had been up to playing…plus with Arthur around Eames had known that even if it was all too much to handle, odds were he'd do his sodding best to appear cool with everything just because he didn’t want to look bad in front of his boyfriend.

It wasn't too bad though, Arthur's presence helping in more ways than one. Having him around did make him want to put up a solid front, but his boyfriend was also running interference too, shifting attention onto himself whenever he could so that that Eames could just enjoy being out on a beautiful day with a fine game of football to watch.

The fact that Arthur was throwing his father to the female wolves every chance he got had Eames smiling too. There were a lot of divorced mothers in the crowd who were probably going to be dropping in at the Cobb house in the coming week, hoping to reacquaint themselves with their former high school heartthrob.

"Have I mentioned how lovely you are when you're conspiring?"

Looking incredibly sexy, Arthur raised one eyebrow as he stated that he didn't know what Eames was talking about.
Mindful of the eyes that were on them more than they were on the pitch, Eames mentally said to hell with them and reaching over grabbed Arthur's hand to bring it up to his lips so that he could kiss the back of it. "Sure you don't, Darling."

"Not being terribly subtly about our relationship, are you?"

"Did you want me to be?" Eames blurted out, suddenly very worried that he'd completely misunderstood Arthur's statement that he wouldn't date someone who was in the closet. After all, you could be out and very discreet about-

Okay, not mad, Eames thought as Arthur moved in to steal a quick but firm kiss. Yay.

"You two make a lovely couple."

Recognizing the voice Eames was smiling when he turned his head, his thanks dying in his throat as he saw that Himiko wasn't alone, Matt was beside the girl, and his friend was looking like he'd just been smacked upside the head. Really hard.

He'd dropped by Matt's house since Arthur had told him that Himiko had told him to do so, and he'd texted his friend a few times too, but things were still awkward between them and Eames hated that. He got that Matt blamed himself for how bad he'd gotten messed up in the car wreck, and that him just telling Matt he didn't blame him wasn't going to magically fix things. Unfortunately neither of them knew how to fix things, staring at each other's awkwardly like idiots, while Himiko looked completely composed as she smiled at Eames before walking around him to take a seat beside Arthur, greeting her friend warmly before asking what the score was, they'd only just arrived.

"Why aren't you upset?" Matt finally asked, his voice full of shock and his full attention on his neighbor since getting upset over the fact that Himiko had been dumped for Eames was way easier than dealing with his own problems. "Your boyfriend's gay and kissing Eames in front of everyone!"

"My boyfriend?" Himiko repeated, confusion furling her brows before she turned to look questioningly at Arthur. "Why does everyone think we are dating? I asked Matt to bring me with him to pick up Lucas because a girl I did a project with called me just to tell me that my boyfriend is cheating on me. She is not even my friend, but she thought I should know. If he was my boyfriend I would not let Eames steal him so easily."

"Unfortunately he's worth losing your father's sushi for." Eames informed Himiko, grinning at her rakishly.

Arthur rolled his eyes at Eames. "Glad to know that I'm more appealing to you than sushi."

"Way more. I'd rather nibble on you any day."

Staring at them Matt didn't say anything, though he kept opening and closing his mouth like he wanted to comment but couldn't come up with a single, utterable word.

"I don't understand why you are so surprise, Eames is one of your closest friends. How could you be around him so much and not realize that he is gay? I could tell right away, even before Arthur came and Eames started looking at him like he was whatever big award one gets for winning the FIFA thing."

While Eames and Arthur laughed, Matt gave Himiko an insulted look.

"Well excuse me for not having your gaydar. It's not like I read those perverted gay comics you read!"
Himiko gasped in outrage, her hands going to her hips. "They are not comics, they are yaoi graphic novels! And stop teasing me about them or I will start telling Eames all sorts of things about you that you wouldn't want him to know. Like what you were watching yesterday on your television."

Naturally both Eames and Arthur wanted to know what Matt had been watching, especially since the teenager was blushing.

"You're evil, you know that?" Matt gave Himiko a dark look, though the other two males noted that Matt wasn't really upset, and was in fact looking at the girl rather fondly.

Giving Arthur a questioning look Eames raised an eyebrow at the knowing smile he got in response. Huh, interesting. Not to mention something to tease Matt about later, when Himiko wasn't around to be teased by association.

But since Himiko was his sushi supplier, and Arthur wouldn't appreciate him teasing her, Eames restrained himself and told Matt that there was another ten minutes or so before the game was over, so he might as well take a seat. They were winning by one but the other team was being pretty dogged thus far. They might end up going into a shoot out yet.

Pointedly Himiko shifted over on the bench, Arthur following suit so that there was room for Matt right beside Eames if he was willing to take it.

And though he hesitated for a moment Matt did walk around to take the seat, Eames giving him a friendly arm punch before telling him that he needed to work with Lucas on his bicycle kicks. They needed some serious work.

Agreeing with that one hundred percent, Matt went into a rant about his brother and what a little shit he'd been recently, not to mention lazy when it came to practicing. Little brat thought he'd just improve through sheer will, the idiot.

Leaving the two to their discussion Arthur and Himiko smiled at each other and then turned their attention to the game, since technically that was what they were all supposed to be watching at the moment rather than the boys awkwardly working through emotional stuff.

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In the end their team managed to hold onto their one goal advantage, everyone in the bleachers giving the boys a standing ovation for their hard won victory before stepping down to collect their teenagers and head out for whatever plans they had for the rest of the day. Arthur and Eames ended up being two of the last to go, since they were again bombarded with questions and greetings from those who hadn't had a chance to talk to them earlier. Plus the coach wanted to catch up with Eames too, and that took some time as well. But finally they were free to leave, Arthur walking back towards the car with Eames maneuvering his chair across the gravel.

"So Matt and Himiko, hmmm?"

"Possibly. If the idiot ever makes a move."

Feeling that he should defend his friend Eames pointed out that it really wasn't Matt or Yusuf's fault that they both thought the girls they were interested in were dating Arthur. What guy wouldn't feel terribly inadequate when compared to someone like Arthur after all?

The fact that Arthur's ear had gone red when he glanced in the other teen's direction had Eames grinning like a complete idiot, especially since it was so obvious he'd embarrassed Arthur with his praise.
"You're going to pay for that when we get to our next stop."

Intrigued, Arthur hadn't mentioned any other plans for them, Eames inquired as to just where they were going now.

"You'll see."

Very intrigued now, especially since Arthur was trying to distract him with a very sexy and predatory smile in his direction, which worked very well, Eames tried to get a hint about what Arthur was up to without any luck at all.

"You'll see." Was all Arthur was willing to say on the matter.
Keenly interested in where they were going, especially since Arthur was being all sexy and mysterious about it, Eames kept his eyes peeled as he tried to guess where they were headed by the direction they were headed in. Questioning Arthur would get him nowhere, Eames was pretty sure, and his boyfriend was made of stern stuff and clearly enjoyed keeping him in suspense. Or at least that was the way he was interpreting the brief flash of dimples he got every time he looked questioningly in Arthur's direction. So yeah, paying attention to his surroundings was pretty much the only way he was going to figure out their destination before they actually arrive, though surprises were good too.

When they left the town Eames wondered if maybe they were headed to the city, but no, one turn onto a dirt road and Eames knew exactly where they were going, though he'd never had cause to visit it before.

"You do know what's at the end of this road, don't you?"

"I do."

Jealousy welling up a little, Eames tried not to sound pouty as he asked if Arthur had visited the place before.

"Once, out of curiosity, by myself. It's a nice spot, though it seems pointless to continue to use it when generations of teenagers have used it over the decades. The whole point of a make out destination is to get away from ones parents and/or guardians, right? I mean we can agree that sex in a bed is not only more comfortable, but more sanitary and with less chance of being interrupted by someone not related to you. So originally this place would have been seen as providing privacy from authority figures while being sure that their peers knew that they were sexually active. But given that said parents and members of the police department once used this, they have to know that this is a good place to start when looking for misbehaving teenagers. So…I fail to see why another destination hasn't been found at this point. The town is in the middle of nowhere, there has to be other possibilities."

"Nostalgia and tradition, I suppose?"

"Illogical is what it is. It's almost as baffling as why teenagers today post their sexual exploits all over the internet. It's like they don't realize that people other than their friends and peers they want to impress can see the posts."

"Teenagers are strange creatures, yes."

A sidelong glance from Arthur conveyed quite a bit even before Arthur informed him that if he were to discover Eames was talking about their sex life on any form of social media, or even just bragging to friends, he would not be pleased.

What went unsaid, but Eames heard loud and clear, was that he could expect his punishment to result in a need for medical attention.

"Understood." Eames threw in a salute for emphasis, since crossing his heart struck him as too childish at the moment.
"Good."

That settled they continued to drive in companionable silence for a couple of minutes before the end was in sight so to speak, which prompted Eames to ask why, if Arthur thought that teens were stupid to use this make out point, they were driving there. He'd never been, but he'd heard enough descriptions to know that there wasn't much in the way of scenery. The spot's appeal was the trees that encircled the small glade and the fact that the bugs weren't too bad even at the height of summer heat.

"Four reasons."

"Four? Now that's killing a lot of birds with one stone. Though I've never liked that saying so much because really, who wants to kill birds? Birds are lovely creatures generally, unless they're shitting on you or trying to steal your food. Of course hitting any animal with a rock is wrong but –nevermind. Rambling. What are the four reasons?"

"One, it's what normal teenagers do, which you are. Two, I enjoy making out with you, and would like to do that now. Three would be the fact that I am curious about how one would successfully make out in a vehicle of this size, and finally…it's in the middle of the afternoon. I doubt most of the teenagers we attend school with have the sense to realize the place would be deserted at this time and the cops aren't likely to drop by."

Eames grinned. "Have I told you how sexy it is, how brilliant you are, Darling?"

"You can show your appreciate in a minute."

Liking the sound of that, a lot, Eames smiled wide and leaned back in his seat, appreciating the fact that Arthur chose to pull up under a tree that would provide them plenty of shade from the glaring sun above them. And it really was a lovely enough spot, now that he was seeing it, and all theirs which made it that much better.

Turning off the engine Arthur left his key in the ignition as he reached down to undo his seatbelt. "You're going to want to take yours off too and lower your chair."

Happy to comply Eames undid his seatbelt as well, and then lowered his chair as far as it would go. He'd have rather been the one on top for once, it was always Arthur thanks to his back needing the support, but his need to know what it felt like to have Arthur pinned under him was definitely more motivation to get better, Eames thought with a wicked grin. Not that he needed any more reasons at this point.

Still, there was much to appreciate as Arthur carefully maneuvered over to his side of the car, Eames grabbing him by the hips so that he could steady him if need be.

"This actually isn't that bad." Arthur noted as he shifted around a little to get more comfortable once he was straddling Eames's hips. "Logistically it would be better if you were a little smaller, but I enjoy your current bulk personally."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

And on that note Arthur leaned in to slate their lips together, Eames shifting up as best he could to meet him halfway.

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It was surprisingly natural, Eames discovered, to make out in a car. Not that it wasn't a little cramped and crowded, it was, but there was something to be said for it as well. It downsized their world to this little space, with the sun's rays dappling over them through the leaves above them, and his rolled down window letting in a hint of breeze made of the smells of summer. Above and beyond that was Arthur and more Arthur, which Eames absolutely could not get enough of. And having him wasn't easy considering that they were both fully clothed and neither wanted to stop snogging the other long enough to remedy that fact. It helped though, that after some failed attempts to get more heated failed, both teenagers settled on just easy, long kisses that went on for minutes that felt like hours, the only real touching Eames's hands under Arthur's shirt, fingers splaying out to stroke over sun warmed skin. And when he wanted more skin Eames just broke off the kissing long enough to ask Arthur to shift up a little, the kisses he placed along the other teenager's neck and under Arthur's oh so firm jaw just as sweet and gentle as the other kisses they'd been exchanging.

"That feels really good." Arthur murmured, sounding utterly relaxed and blissed out at the moment. An unusual tone for him to say the least, and one Eames wanted to hear over and over again.

"That would be the point, Darling."

"And I like that you call me Darling. I thought it would get incredibly annoying quickly, but I actually like it."

Nuzzling his face against his darling's neck, God he loved the way Arthur smelled so classy and sexy all the time, Eames settled for making a happy sound since he was very happy at the moment, and words seemed like a waste to him when he could be tasting all of Arthur's lovely, soft skin instead. From the happy sounds Arthur was making in return, Eames figured his boyfriend agreed with him.

"Keep stroking my back like this and I'll fall asleep. I didn't get enough sleep last night."

"Why not? Your Dad give you a hard time? You said you hardly spoke at all." The thought that that might be the case had Eames stop what he was doing, using his hands to draw Arthur's head into a position where he could see his boyfriend's face. To him Arthur looked well pleased, but that could just be a distraction since that look just made him want to stroke and pet his sexy as hell boyfriend that much more.

Shrugging, Arthur's lazy expression was reassuring. "No. I just don't like having him around. He throws everything out of whack, and then leaves and does it all over again. Plus I had to get up really early to make breakfast so that he wouldn't. He's even worse than I am in the kitchen, but he tries to be perfect dad for James and Phillipa when he's around."

"Why doesn't he try for you?"

Arthur gave him an unimpressed look. "You really want to talk about my dad when we could be making out instead?"

"Honestly, no. But I'm a very curious person and I don't get it. You're gorgeous and brilliant, you aren't into drugs, alcohol, or have any other vices that parents freak out over. Is it just a personality difference thing?"

Sighing, Arthur tugged away Eames's fingers and then shifted down so that he could lay his head on Eames's shoulder. It was not the most comfortable position to be in, but Arthur showed no discomfort as he just rested there for several moments before speaking.

"It's that, the fact that we never bonded, and maman's death. I warned him it could happen but he didn't believe me. It happened…and I'm a reminder of that. That if he'd listened to me maybe things
could have been different. Probably not, because she wouldn't listen either, but in the blame game my father knows some of the weight falls on his shoulders and he can't handle that so he shifts the blame whenever possible."

Long silence, Eames's hands continuing to stroke up and down Arthur's back since he didn't know what else to do or say to that. He didn't know what had happened to Arthur's mum after all, and it was obviously a delicate subject or people would know what had happened to the woman instead of speculating like mad about it behind Arthur's back.

"You aren't going to ask what happened to Maman? It was a thing when we came to town, people trying to slyly suss out what happened from me or the kids. James just shuts down when people try to talk to him about it, and Phillipa and I go with the standard she died after a long illness, which is the truth, to an extent."

"I hope you'll tell me when you're ready."

Making a small, slightly amused sound, Arthur's tone was wry as he pointed out that was a rather tired line.

"True. Sorry. I just…don't want to fuck it up by saying the wrong thing. And did anyway." Eames tacked on, his tone self-deprecating.

"It's okay. I know you don't have a vicious bond in your body. It's sweet, really."

"Okay, I get that my comment was stupid, but insulting me by calling me sweet is not going to earn you any kisses."

An actual laugh. "I think I could talk you into it."

"I am horribly easy when it comes to you, yes." Eames agreed with a smile, relieved that Arthur wasn't mad at him. "But I can be vicious, just so we're bloody well clear. I just have to have decent motivation to be."

"My mistake."

Lapsing into quiet silence again, it was easier, Eames continued to stroke Arthur's back, almost forgetting what they'd been talking about as he started to get a little sleepy himself, the warmth of Arthur's body and the contentment of the moment lulling him into closing his eyes.

"I'll tell you what happened to her when I drop you off back at your place. I don't want to ruin this."

Surprised, but pleased, Eames agreed with that one hundred percent. And they should nap now, since they were both in the mood anyway. Did that sound good?

"Sounds good." Arthur agreed.

Arthur figured that they were both going to be sore, Eames in particular, but the whole idea to take a little nap wasn't a decision he thought he'd regret any time soon, especially since he rather liked waking up with Eames. Even if the beeping sound his cell had made to signal the time did kill the mood a little. Getting back into the driver's seat wasn't all that fun either, but Arthur managed it well enough and then turned to make sure Eames was okay. He'd worried about sleeping on top of him, but Eames had talked him into it.
"I'm fine, Darling, no need to look worried." The way Eames shifted around and obviously tried to hide some wincing said otherwise, but Arthur didn't argue with him since there wasn't much point.

"Just checking. Ready to go?"

"If we must."

Since he needed a bit of time to think Arthur told Eames that he could pick a radio station for the ride back. Thankfully what came out of his car's speakers moments later was old school rock and roll and not rap crap, Arthur smiling a little in gratitude. Not his type of music normally, but it didn't make him want to bash his head against a solid surface which was always appreciated.

He didn't like talking about his maman. Hell, he hadn't liked talking about her when she was alive. Most people had seen only what she'd wanted them to see, which was why people he'd described her to had usually assumed he was being an assehole teenager and just didn't appreciate how amazing his mother was after meeting her. Eames had never known maman, would never know maman, so really, not wanting to explain to the other teenager how she'd died was probably more habit than real discomfort on his part. It would be fine, Arthur decided. Well, except for Eames's reaction. The man was very close to this own mother after all.

They were almost in town when Eames's cell went off, Eames pulling it out to read the text message he'd just been sent while Arthur started to slow down a little to comply with the speed limit.

"Bloody hell."

"Bad news?"

"Not necessarily. My dad's come to town, surprise visit. Guess it's a week for fathers visiting."

Arthur knew little about Eames's father that he considered concrete fact, though there was plenty of gossip about the man and Eames's mother. He knew that the two weren't divorced, but had seen each other rarely over the past few years which generally didn't bode well for a marriage. Not that Arthur considered himself an expert on such things, but unless a world war was going on he didn't see a reason why the man in question wasn't around more often.

"So you're wanted home ASAP, I'm guessing."

"Yeah. Mum's not done her shift yet and he and Mimi have issues."

Lips twitching at Eames's tone of voice, Arthur inclined his head as he headed down the town's main street. "All right then. I guess our own heart to heart will have to wait as it were. Not the sort of thing to discuss right before I meet your father. Unless you want to wait on that."

"I'd be pleased to introduce you to my dad."

"I'll try to make a good impression."

After sharing a smile the two lapsed into shared silence, about two blocks away from Eames's street when the music suddenly went from normal to little more than background music. Glancing down in surprise for a moment Arthur then turned his gaze in Eames's direction, surprised at how thoughtful and solemn the teen's expression was.

"Darling…if I'm stepping out of bounds, say so, but…was your mum addicted to something, or mentally ill?"
Surprised, Arthur broke one of his regular rules and looked over in Eames's direction longer than he should have given that he was driving in town where plenty of unsupervised kids, pets, and town idiots could decide to suddenly bolt into traffic because they didn't have the sense God gave other sensible creatures. "Why would you guess that?"

"If it was a regular disease you'd have just said so, and you wouldn't be squeamish either. Add in long term illness, with a high chance of people not seeing it...I'm an army brat. I've seen plenty of blokes who tried to block what they'd seen and done with stuff, or suffer mentally for it."

Impressed by the teenager's reasoning, most people either didn't have the nerve to ask those sorts of questions or thought of them period, Arthur inclined his head before turning his attention back to the road before answering.

"She was mentally ill. An exact diagnosis isn't something I can give you, I wasn't around her enough and she was never tested as far as I know. Depression, for sure...she lost touch with reality. She jumped out of a hotel room window on their wedding anniversary."

Reaching over Eames set a hand on Arthur's thigh. "That would be horrible, for all of you. I'm sorry that happened."

"Like I said, I wasn't around her much. I didn't really suffer a loss because I never had her to begin with. James and Phillipa had that connection, my father obviously, but for myself, I mostly feel bad for them. So being motherless is something you don't have to worry about me crying on your shoulder about."

"Because you're very much the stuff upper lip type. You and my dad will get along fabulously."

Arthur thought about asking if that meant Eames's lips hadn't come from his father's side of the family like he supposed, but he recognized the would be crack as a defense technique and instead stated that he hoped he would get along with Eames's dad. Especially since they already had his own father to deal with.

"Yeah...if your dad were to say bad things about me in front of my dad things would not end well."

"My dad would be lousy in a fight. But I'd pay to see it."

Leaning over Eames placed a kiss against Arthur's throat, which Arthur really liked. And was probably Eames's way of making it clear that he knew Arthur wanted the subject changed and was letting him. At least for the time being.

And that being the case Arthur gave Eames a short but heated kiss of thanks once they'd pulled into the driveway behind the rental car both assumed belonged to Eames's dad currently.
Meeting Eames’s Father

In all honesty Eames had been so caught up in Arthur and what the other teenager had revealed about his mother earlier that the hugeness of introducing Arthur to his father didn't occur to him until his boyfriend was holding his front door open for him so that he could wheel himself inside, some dim light in the back of his brain finally getting the jolt it needed to properly turn on and make him realize that he was about to introduce his first boyfriend ever to his father.

His dad wasn't a homophobe, and thank all the stars in the sky for that, and Eames was out to him, and had been for a while now, so that wasn't an issue either. No, the problem Eames now faced was the fact that while his father was aware and accepting of his sexuality, his dad was also uncomfortable with the idea and it showed if you paid attention, which Arthur did. And Eames desperately didn't want Arthur to be offended by his father's sure to be cool reception of him, particularly when his boyfriend's own father was a bastard to begin with.

But apparently his dad had been listening for their arrival, or just had military superpowers, because Eames had barely opened his mouth to warn Arthur about his father's possible reaction to meeting him when the man in question appeared before them, effectively making that a no go.

"Hello, Sir. It's good to see you."

"Tom." Coming over Captain Thomas Eames, never Tom or Tommy if you wanted to live, gave his son a small smile when he reached him, holding out his hand for the manly handshake Eames had known was coming. "Your grandmother stepped out a few minutes ago to get some groceries for dinner. She wanted me to tell you."

And knowing his manners, Eames took a hopefully not too noticeable calming breath before making the introductions. "Thanks. And Dad, this is Arthur Cobb. My boyfriend. Arthur, this is my father, Captain Thomas Eames."

"Sir. It's a pleasure to meet you."

"And you. My wife speaks highly of you." Taking the hand Arthur had offered Eames's father shook it, Arthur's handshaking abilities apparently meeting his father's standards since the man shook back properly before letting go. "Thank you for the work you've been doing preparing Tom for his last term, he's always been a good student when he applies himself."

Thanks, Dad.

"That is the crux of the problem with teaching anyone anything, especially in this day and age." Arthur agreed, the hand he set on Eames's shoulder a small show of support that had Eames smiling up at him. "If students paid as much attention to their teachers as they did their phones and other electronic devices one can only imagine what our race would be capable of now. Not to mention how much the world in general would improve with more intelligent people in charge."

"Quite right." Eames's father nodded in complete approval. "And kids today don't know how to work anymore. They think things should just be handed to them or should be available with just a push of a button. The Western world has gotten fat, stupid, and lazy, and the rest of the world more hungry and willing to do anything to survive."

"Eames mentioned that you recently visited Russia." The look Arthur aimed in his father's direction
made it clear that he didn't doubt that the man's time there had further cemented his opinions about the world in general.

"Fucking Putin."

"Language, Tom. But yes, it wasn't an enjoyable trip. Especially since the individuals my team were overseeing wanted to visit Ekaterinburg."

Since he'd never heard of the place, and talking about his father recent travels meant they weren't talking about his relationship with Arthur and his father's feelings on the matter, Eames asked what was special about Ekaterinburg and where was it, anyway.

Arthur surprised him by being the one to answer. "It's where the FUBAR that was the execution of the Romanovs took place. Many people visit the area, which is in the Urals, for that reason. The house no longer stands, but tourist can visit the site as well as the original burial sites."

Knowing his father would be fine with the FUBAR statement since it was a military term even if it did stand for 'Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition', Eames focused instead on satisfying his own curiosity. "How was it that bad? I mean didn't the revolution blokes just shoot them and dump their bodies in shallow graves on the side of a road somewhere?"

"No, Tom."

"The Bolsheviks were beyond incompetent in all things, Eames. What would have taken trained marksmen to accomplish in approximately thirty seconds took the Romanovs' executioners twenty minutes. And while the Tsar and Tsaritsa did die fairly quickly, their children and servants were made to suffer inhumanely, especially since the jewelry they'd sewn into their clothes prevented many of the bullets and bayonets from finishing them off. And afterwards their bodies were thrown into a mineshaft that wasn't deep enough, so the bodies had to be brought back up, after being soaked in water, and they were eventually buried in shallow graves in a fit of desperation after all their other disposal plans failed. And that's just a brief summary of how many mistakes were made from start to finish."

"Well that's just fucked up."

Eames's father agreed enough not to censor him this time for using the F word, thought it helped that Arthur asked what other parts of Russia Eames's father had visited, this leading to his father suggestion that they head into the front parlor to sit while they talked. He'd seen quite a lot while he was there apparently, and liked Arthur well enough to want to talk about it in some detail.

Which was A okay with Eames, especially since he didn't have to talk much at all as the two got into a discussion about Russia that had them both occupied and meant that he could just enjoy being around them without having to referee or redirect questions to head off disasters. Excellent.

) Over the course of the next couple hours Arthur and Eames's father because fast friends, which amused Eames quite a bit while Arthur had lost a few points with Mimi since she was currently not on the best of terms with her son in law. But the two in question were highly intelligent, well-traveled and read men who enjoyed talking about politics, history, and the world in general, but didn't have nearly enough opportunities to discuss those topics with people who were as knowledgeable as themselves. Arthur, in particular, was probably a bit starved for that sort of mental stimulation, Eames figured, and so he was glad his boyfriend was having fun with his dad, especially since Arthur had been left out of his own family get-together earlier.
Though he was a tad jealous, Eames was willing to admit, but the sexiness that was a lit up and engaged Arthur helped push back those less than appealing thoughts. Not to mention the fact that it wasn't like he and his dad could go outside and kick around a football while catching up on each other's lives the way they had always done in the past. They would again, when he got out of his bloody chair for good, but until then, well hopefully his father was planning to hang around long enough for them to work in some bonding time.

And when the sounds of his mum's car pulling in reached their ears, Mimi had returned with groceries and then headed outside to garden a while ago, Eames's father excused him to go out and see her, Eames wishing his father luck while Arthur settled for a small wave.

"She didn't know he was coming, so they'll have 'words' outside where I can't hear them."

"Do they fight a lot?"

"Yeah, though not in a bad way, really. They're just both really stubborn and bullheaded. Plus he just doesn't know how to grovel, which is what he really needs to start doing or he'll dig himself into a hole he can't get out of with her." Eames didn't like the idea of his parents divorcing, of course, since they did really love each other, but at the end of the day his father had been overseas or away on missions all his life. So yeah, it wasn't like not living with the man was anything new. Plus he'd be out of the house for good soon, which was one of the reasons why he'd prefer they stay together. He didn't like the idea of his mum not having someone to grow old with.

"It's good to fight sometimes. My parents were too obsessed with being perfect and ignoring their problems to fight. At least to the best of my knowledge."

Thinking to lighten the mood a little, Eames asked Arthur what he thought they'd argue about.

Arthur's lips quirked a little in amusement. "I'm sure we'll find out sooner rather than later." A slight wrinkling of his brows. "And my apologies, by the way, for monopolizing your father's attention like that. I didn't realize until we'd stopped talking that we were sort of leaving you out. It wasn't intentional."

"No worries, I didn't know much about what you were talking about anyway. And he had a lot of fun talking to you."

"Still, he's your father, who you haven't seen in a while. I shouldn't have monopolized his attention."

"Darling, as my boyfriend I really want him to like you. Which he obviously does, so it's all good."

The way Arthur studied Eames's face made it clear his boyfriend wasn't just going to take his word for it, though his sincerity must have shone through because Arthur relaxed and asked him what he and his dad did like to talk about.

"Football, definitely, and we both read a lot. You'd never know it to look at him, but he loves videogames as well, and oh, I'll definitely have to take him to Himiko's dad's restaurant soon. He'll love it there. We could take mum and..." Eames trailed off at the sound of the front door being opened again, Eames's father rejoining them moments later while Eames's mum just stuck her head in the room long enough to tell them she'd be back in ten, after she'd showered. It had been one of those days.

"So what were you two talking about, then?" Eames's father asked once she was gone from sight, Eames getting the hint that his father could use a distraction from whatever words his parents had had in the driveway.
But Arthur got there before he could. "Football. Eames was just reminding me that his favorite team will be playing in a couple of days. Are you a fan as well?"

His face lighting up, Eames's father immediately launched into a speech about how not only was he as much a football fan as Eames was, and Eames's father congratulated his son for finding someone of American parentage who knew the right name to use, but also how completely and utterly their shared favorite team was going to decimate the Spanish team they'd be up against.

And because Eames was literally incapable of not talking about football when the opportunity presented itself he too jumped in explaining how their team was so much better than the other team, disagreeing with his father only when it came to who was the best player on their team, which led to a long discussion of stats, past injuries, and the seasoning of their favored player while Arthur asked the occasional question that seemed designed to start them off on another rant.

Which it probably was, Eames realized at one point, remembering Arthur's worry that he was being left out. And now they were talking about something Arthur knew he knew more about, and that his father and he could talk about for hours.

Looking away from his father to smile at his awesome boyfriend in thanks, Eames reached over to take Arthur's hand and bring it to his lips to kiss the back of it, since a real kiss would be weird with his father watching. Well that and the inherit awkwardness of trying to give Arthur a kiss while in his chair.

The pleased smile he got in turn had Eames grinning back.

A series of beeps that Eames recognized from 'Kim Possible' interrupted them all from saying something more.

"My apologies. That's my sister's ringtone. I need to take this." Pulling his cellphone out of his pocket Arthur rose from the chair and started walking towards the hallway as he answered and asked his sister why she was calling.

"We're sick."

Arthur's hope that his sister was just calling to check on how he was or tell him that they were going to be late getting home and their father hadn't wanted to talk or message Arthur himself bit the dust as Phillipa's words registered. Especially since even over the phone he could hear enough in her voice to know that she was serious. They'd been fine at breakfast though.

"What kind of sick? All three of you?"

"Just me and James. We threw up."

Wincing, Arthur reached up with his free hand to pinch the bridge of his nose, already knowing in his gut what she was going to say to his next question. "Did Dad let you have a lot of snacks today?"

Silence, then a very mumbled and reluctant 'yes' came over the line.

"What have you two had to eat since breakfast?"

The list that followed had Arthur calling his father some very not nice things in Russian, since they had been talking about Russia earlier.
Every friggin time his father did this, spoiling the kids rotten while he was around like that could make up for not being a proper father to them the rest of the time. Like buying them toys, candy, and fattening food was the right way to show that he loved them.

And while it was tempting to remind his sister that he'd told both of them to politely refuse, or at least insist on rationing out the treats so that the sugar and crap wouldn't all hit their systems at once, Arthur held his tongue and instead asked if Phillipa had the ginger candies he kept in the car for when James's got an upset stomach, since James's stomach could be finicky even when he wasn't eating processed crap.

"Uh uh. And Papa got us ginger ale. James's tummy still hurts though. Mine too. Are you at home? James wants you." Phillipa's voice hinted that she wanted her big brother too, but didn't want to say so in her papa's hearing.

"How much longer till you get home?"

"I'll ask Papa." A pause, and then she was back on the line to tell him they'd be home in about twenty minutes.

"Okay. I'm at Eames's but I'll leave now and be there when you get home. Tell Dad to put on the CD labelled 'Help James Sleep'. It might help him nap a little until you get home."

"Okay, Arthur."

Saying goodbye Arthur waited until she'd hung up before pocketing his phone, indulging in a few more choice swear words before heading back into the living room to say goodbye. And his face betrayed his frustration and anger apparently, Arthur realized, since Eames took one look at him and immediately asked if Phil and James were all right, Arthur appreciating the genuine worry on his boyfriend's face.

"Just upset stomachs. My father never listens to me when it comes to not feeding them crap when he's taking 'care' of them. He'll just say that kids should be allowed to have candy and eat fast food and that I'm a food Nazi for depriving them the way I do. Which I don't, I just make them eat that crap in moderation. I mean seriously, did you know that in the United States the percentage of children aged six to eleven years old who are obese increased from seven percent in 1980 to nearly eighteen percent last year? And that if that wasn't bad enough, the percentage of teenagers who were obese increased from five percent to nearly twenty-one percent over the same period? So the odds are just getting higher the older they get. In 2012, more than one third of children and adolescents were overweight or obese. Did you know that?"

"Ahhhh…I'm sure Mum's said something along those lines."

"Of course she has, she's a doctor and would agree with me one hundred percent if she was here. I am not a food Nazi. I just want them to be healthy and not grow up with diabetes, high cholesterol, and all the other health problems they could develop." And realizing that he was about to start ranting Arthur winced all over again, knowing that it wasn't fair to rant at them when the person he wanted to rant at was his father. Who he knew wouldn't listen to him. Again. "Sorry. Just frustrated. And now I have to get home to take care of them."

"Sounds like it's your father who should be taking care of them." Eames father commented.

"My father can't take care of himself, much less anyone else. And sorry to leave on a bad note."

And mentally saying to hell with what Eames's father might think, he needed it, Arthur walked over
to share a quick kiss with Eames, wishing he could linger but knowing that he needed to get moving. "Thanks for a fun evening. I'll text you later."

"Count on it, Darling."

Shaking the hand Eames's father held out to him, Arthur returned the statement that it had been a pleasure to meet him and that he hoped they could talk again soon. Arthur suggested that maybe they could watch the football game together if he was still in town, which Eames's father thought was a great idea.

Saying goodbye to both of them Arthur quickly hunted up Mimi and Eames's mother to say good night to them and to apologize for not being able to stay for dinner before heading out and driving home.

As the saying went, all good things had to come to an end.
Being A Parent

After Arthur's car had pulled out of the street Eames turned to his father, expecting that the older man would have plenty to say now that he had met his boyfriend in person. Or at least would have a comment or two that good manners had kept his very British father from expressing within Arthur's hearing. Not that the two hadn't seemed to get along, they'd gotten on amazingly well, but Eames wasn't about to count his chickens before they hatched. So he waited…only his father just continued to sit there with a thoughtful look on his face.

"So…that was Arthur…"

The response he got was laced with amusement. "I did get that, yes."

All but vibrating in his chair, and how could he not, with his dad suddenly going all quiet on him, Eames left like he was on pins and needles, wondering if he was wrong about the two of them having hit it off. "So aren't you going to tell me what you think of him? I've never known you not to have an opinion, Dad. And this is the first boyfriend I've ever had, so really, you should have opinions. A bloody boat load of opinions. Which you should be sharing with me now."

"So what? If I don't like the lad you'll just give him up?"

"Of course not!" He wanted the two to get along, but it wasn't a deal breaker. Heck, Arthur's dad had made it clear he didn't like him already. Though Arthur's dad was a way bigger arse than Eames's own dad, Eames mentally panicked over, so maybe it would matter to Arthur. Then again Arthur didn't seem to really give a fuck what anyone thought of him so maybe not. He was a hard man to figure out at the best of times.

"Teenagers."

His dad laughing at him did not help Eames's mood one little bit. Though in the spirit of being a teenager Eames rolled his eyes at his father. He ignored the urge to stick out his tongue, though. That would have not helped his case, so to speak.

"Fine, fine." The way Eames's father grinned at him made it clear he was enjoying winding him up. "Whether it matters or not, he has my seal of approval, Tom. He seems an intelligent, mature young man. And one who is quite fond of you, which is really what's most important. Not the sort I thought you'd bring home one day, so he's a pleasant surprise there, actually. You have good taste."

"What kind of bloke did ya think I'd be bringing round?" How insulted should he be here?

His father laughed. "Oi. I didn't mean it like that. Mostly. I just meant that I thought you'd bring home a man more like you. An athlete perhaps, but someone easygoing and highly social like you are. Arthur strikes me as more mature and…serious, than would appeal to you."

Okay, that wasn't that bad. And true, come to that. Eames had always seen himself with someone like that right up until he'd laid eyes on Arthur.

"My only concern, Tom, is the fact that from I've been told, he's essentially a single parent with two small children. Which means if you're dating that boy, then you're taking on those children as well. They'd be a package deal."
"I know they come first. Believe me, Arthur's made that clear. And he takes good care of them."
Eames bristled, prepared to defend Arthur's parenting skills until he was blue in the face.

"So you're ready to be a parent too, now? Because if you think you can-"

"I don't know." Interrupting before his father could get started, it wasn't like he didn't know what his father was going to say after all, Eames straightened his shoulders and looked his father dead in the eye. "I doubt it. I don't think really anyone is every ready to be a parent until they are one. And even then way too many are shite at it from what I've seen. I just know that I like them, don't mind spending time with them, and I'm okay with sharing Arthur with them...well it will probably be annoying as hell sometimes, but I'll suck it up. Because he's important to me. And like you said, they're a package deal."

A moment to let that sink in, and then Eames asked if his father had any advice while they were on the topic.

When his father sighed and shook his head, Eames suddenly thought that his father looked a lot older to him all of a sudden. "I think we can agree I'm not exactly father of the year material, Son. Just ask your mum."

Rolling his chair closer so that his father was in reaching distance, Eames leaned forward to place a hand on top of his father's, giving the hand beneath his a squeeze.

"She's right pissed at you, Dad." Eames always felt and sounded more British around his father. "She's not gonna be saying anything nice about you until you grovel your arse off. And you aren't a bad dad. You just aren't around as much as we'd like. And we get it, it's part of the army life, but we're still allowed to be pissed about it from time to time. And you should probably look into retiring soon if you want to keep Mum, by the way. You ain't getting any younger either, ya know."

"Oh, she's made that clear."

"Good."

"I did like him. Arthur."

"Well that's good too. Cause his dad sure doesn't fancy me for Arthur one little bit."

Immediately puffing up like the protective father that he was, Eames's father demanded to know what this stupid Yank had against his boy.

"Just being Arthur's boyfriend is apparently reason enough."

"Ah. Well it is normal for parents not to think anyone could possibly be good enough for their child."

"Yeah. I don't think that's it. Unfortunately."

"Some people should just not have children. Dominic Cobb's is one of them." Was Mimi's decree as she came strolling into the room to take a seat across from them, pick up her knitting from where she'd left it. "No good ever comes from spoiling a child, and that boy's parents did it in spades, bless their hearts."

"Who turned her into such a brat?/Who are the culprits?/Who did that?/The guilty ones (and this is sad), dear old Mom and loving Dad." Eames sang, grinning at the two until he realized they were both looking at him like he'd lost his mind. "Ah...'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'? Mimi's line about spoiling a child, Grandpa Joe...nevermind. And you, British, Dad. Really."
"It's been a while since I've brushed up on my Roald Dahl."

Eames let it go for the moment, but only so he could ask Mimi why she was so sure Arthur's father wasn't cut out to be a father. She'd yet to meet the man.

"Yes, well, while you're making calf eyes at their brother-"

"Oi, Mimi."

Mimi gave him the 'don't interrupt me' look that had Eames sheepishly apologizing.

"Forgiven. For now. But as I was saying, I do spend a lot of time with your young man's siblings while you're having your tutoring sessions. And Phillipa and I do talk while we have her lesson. And from what she's said I've got a pretty clear picture of how life was even before her mother passed away. Not that sticking Arthur in a boarding school when he was only a boy didn't make it clear already that they didn't know how to be proper parents." Mimi sniffed. "And what's worse is the firstborn is the one you're supposed to learn from so you don't mess up as badly with the other ones. The two of them skipped that by passing off Arthur's care to others, and paid for it later."

Both only children, Eames and his father shared a rueful look.

"From what I gather the two of them just dragged their children all over the globe like they were constantly on a holiday. Arthur had to tutor Phillipa to get her ready for school here, she spent so little time in any one school."

Eames appreciated the fact that Mimi didn't take this opportunity to point out that Eames's parents had 'dragged' him around the world for the first part of his life too, before his mother had decided that enough was enough, and come here to live permanently. Instead, she launched into a monologue about what she'd gleaned from conversations from Phillipa concerning Arthur's parents.

She had quite a lot to say on the matter.

Arthur would have much rather read a book in his bedroom or fooled around on his laptop until his brain caught up with his physical exhaustion and let him sleep for the night, but he knew better than to think that was a good idea before he hunted up his father and made sure the older man wasn't doing something stupid. Aside from possibly still sulking like a child, that is. And if that was the case he would leave his father to it because he had already spent hours dealing with two sick, cranky children, and he was done. Unless they woke up again, and wouldn't that be fun?

Swiping a hand through his hair Arthur headed downstairs since he knew his father hadn't come up to the second floor, a quick glance into the living room confirming its emptiness. As was the kitchen, though the window revealed that the back porch lights were on, which clued him in to checking outside next.

Bingo.

His father sat on one of the patio chairs, the small table beside it the current resting place for a bottle that Arthur was going to bet was alcoholic in nature. Great.

Unfortunately, losing one parent to suicide had conditioned him to expect such things from the adults in his life, so rather than turn around and leave the old man to drink himself into a stupor, Arthur walked over and took a seat on the chair that bookended the table. He didn't recline though, sitting on the side instead with his legs turned towards his father as his gaze swept over the bottle before
lifting up to study his father's profile, since he was being ignored at the moment.

"Was that bottle full before you started tonight?" There wasn't that much missing, but from what little Arthur knew about that brand, even a little could pack a serious punch. Which was probably why his father was drinking it in the first place.

Silence greeted his question, but thankfully Dom Cobb had never been able to pull off the silent treatment for long, the man only lasting a couple minutes of Arthur staring at him in equal silence before breaking.

"Go to bed, Arthur. You should be inside."

"So should you."

"They want you with them. Not me."

Weighing his father's tone, Arthur concluded that his father was in pity party mode and not just drunk enough that he was being honest for once. So to speak.

"They do want you. You're their father. The only one they have. And I get that you don't know a lot about the whole parenting thing, but you can learn. So how about instead of sitting around drinking, you do what I did and do some research and spend time with them just being a parent, and not the fun person who comes around once in a while to spoil them rotten?"

The patio chair screeched in response to the older man's whole body jerk. "You do not get to talk to me like that!"

"Well who else is going to? Seriously. Because if there's someone out there who can straighten you out I'd welcome their help. I might be perfectly prepared to raise those children to adulthood because someone has to, it would be really nice if you would work with me rather than against me when you're actually around."

"They can go back to living with-"

"Don't even think of finishing that sentence." Arthur made sure his voice accurately conveyed the amount of damage he'd do if his father even thought about sending the children to live with their maternal grandmother again. "If you try I will take this to court. And I will talk. A lot. About you and her, and Maman."

"I know." The softness of the statement took Arthur complete by surprise. "I didn't mean…I shouldn't have said that. I wouldn't do that. I actually…I went to see her before coming here. I know she isn't in any shape to look after them. And that you…you are doing a great job…taking care of them."

Arthur waited for the 'but', but it didn't come.

Swiping a hand through his hair, Dom Cobb's sighed. "I don't want to fight with you, Arthur. Just go inside and get some sleep. I'll turn in soon. And leave before the week's over."

In all honesty Arthur didn't like having his father around. It wasn't just that he was used to being in charge and the man of house, or the fact that they had very opposing personalities, which they did. There was also the bone deep anger he had for the man in front of him who just could not seem to grow up and be the sort of father Arthur wanted him to be for the sake of his siblings. And for himself. Because sometimes love really just wasn't enough.
It wasn't enough for their father to love them if he couldn't love them enough to be what they needed him to be.

So he didn't encourage his father to stay, or protest that things would get better. He was a realist.

It was late, and Eames had been debating about turning in for the night, but the sound of Arthur’s ringtone snapped him into wakefulness as he jerked, cursed, and then carefully shifted closer to the edge of his bed so that he could grab his cell off his bedside table and accept the call. Leaning against his headboard Eames smiled as he said hello. He hadn't expected him to call, and how were the sprogs?

"Sleeping. And they don't have anything left in their stomachs to throw up."

"Ugh."

"You have no idea." Arthur's voice sounded worn out and tired. "I didn't wake you, did I?"

"No. My day wasn't nearly as tiring as yours. I'm surprised you didn't pass out along with them."

"Tempting. But I can't. My father...I've given up on him. I don't expect anything from him anymore and that just...just fucking infuriates me! I hate it! And I feel terrible because I know I should hope, that I should encourage him to do better or shit like that, but I don't. I can't." More angry sounds. "I KNOW that he loves us. He does. Even me. But his love is so fucking stunted and tied into all his bullshit that it's more a string he can yank us around with than anything else. And that's not how it's supposed to be!"

Not knowing what else to say Eames settled for making a sound of agreement. Thankfully Arthur didn't need commentary from him.

"He's leaving at the end of the week and I...should I be trying to get him to stay? He won't, but maybe I should try so he knows I don't hate him. Or at least...argh! I fucking hate this!" A short pause. "You know, I always tell them that as long as they do their best that's all that matters. That being the best isn't everything, and really it all but kills me to say that because this is me we're talking about, and being the best is what I strive for. But this is my father's best and maybe I need to accept that. Because there are things I can't do even if I devoted myself to trying for the rest of my life. We all have limitations and maybe expecting my father to be a proper father is like thinking that if I try hard enough I could...could give birth."

Jaw dropping, Eames was torn between amusement at Arthur's high opinion of himself, to think that that was the best example of things he couldn't do, and...no. He was just amused and trying not to laugh since this was a serious conversation.

"Eames? Are you still there?"

"Yeah, sorry, Darling. The idea of MPreg distracted me there for a mo."

"MPreg?"

"What they call male pregnancy on fanfiction. Don't judge me." He was a diehard Albus/Scorpius fan. So sue him.
"I forgot that term. And no, I'm not judging. That would be hypocritical of me, though it's been a long time since I've read any."

"Darling! You like fanfiction? What are your ships?" Eames winced as the words left his mouth. God, between talking about his mother, having to meet Eames's dad, dealing with his own father and the sprogs, Arthur had had a pretty awful fucking day overall. "Fuck. Sorry. We're having a serious conversation here and I...My bad."

"It's fine. I'm smiling, and I didn't figure on doing that tonight. So thanks for that."

"I wish I was there." And not even because he thought Arthur was likely in his bedroom. He just wanted to give Arthur a hug. He had a feeling his boyfriend really needed one.

"If not for the fuss my father would raise I'd say the same. Hence me calling you. I didn't mean to vent on you."

"One of the bennies of having a boyfriend, Darling. Someone to bitch and complain to when the wankers in the world make us wish that we could lock them in a room with wallscreens that only play 'Teletubbies' and 'Barney'."

"That's harsh."

"True. Death would be quicker and more humane. But I'd rather not go to jail for murder."

"You would still be charged with kidnapping, forced imprisonment, and any competent lawyer could argue torture as well."

"I would be fucked if the majority of the jury were parents." Eames had to agree. "Especially if they were made to watch some of it so that the prosecutor could prove just how evil my revenge really was. Would you visit me in prison, Arthur?"

"Are you asking me to be your conjugal, Mr. Eames?"

"Ah...hadn't quite meant it that way...but yes, that would be lovely too if you're offering."

The laughter that came through the phone had Eames grinning widely as well. Good.
Showing Some Imagination

Disclaimer: As always I own nothing but the original ideas and characters. Thank for reading and please review so I know what you think.

Dedicated to the 'Guest' who got me thinking about this again. I'll try to do more with it, or at least finish it, sometime this year. My original plans for it aren't going to work anymore so it's very much in the air at the moment. Les sigh.

Showing Some Imagination

Drifting between sleep and wakefulness Eames mentally cursed the fact that he was just awake enough to know that he really should stop napping and get his arse out of bed before he passed out again. Or at least try to get up again. Actually moving more than one muscle at a time might be a little overly ambitious of him since the whole reason he'd gone to bed in the first place was thanks to the physio visit from hell. Aka trying to move even a limb at this point was going to hurt like a bitch no matter how careful he was. Especially since the drugs he'd loaded up on as soon as his mother had handed them over wouldn't be working at peak efficiency at this point.

No good fucking deed went unpunished.

Long had Eames known that the woman who worked the front desk at the physio clinic he went to was dead useless. And that was being kind. She was always fucking up schedules and such, and Eames had decided after her first two screwups that she had to be related to or screwing around with whoever owned the place. It was the only possible reason why she hadn't been tossed out on her arse years ago. Instead she continued to fuck up scheduling which had led to her calling his mum this morning to ask if he could come in today instead of tomorrow for his actual appointment. AND have a different therapist as his usual had the day off.

Damn Mother, saying that of course they could.

But on the A side this could only improve his relationship with his usual therapist, Eames thought darkly. He'd never call Chris a goddamn sadist again. Or at least not outloud. And at least Chris didn't talk like he was being paid by the fucking word rather than with the aim of helping Eames regain the ability to walk unaided. The new guy Corey hadn't shut the fuck up once during the whole bloody session and it wasn't even about Eames's condition for the most part. No, Corey was one of those people who thought everyone wanted to hear their entire life story while that person was in PAIN as he struggled to do the exercises designed to insure he didn't spend the rest of his life using a chair or cane.

Fucking A.

And who really wanted to talk to a nearly middle aged guy who'd bought his long term girlfriend a puppy because she wanted a baby and he saw this as a compromise. Right. Like that was going to work long term. The gobshite hadn't even let her name the damn dog because apparently all of her picks were too lame in his opinion. Hopefully she dumped the gobshite soon and took the puppy with her. Some people were just not supposed to breed. Survival of the fittest, right?

Crap. The more he thought about it the more aware Eames was that he wasn't really sleeping and should just open his eyes at least to get a look at the time. If he slept the damn afternoon away he wouldn't get any bloody sleep that night unless he took something. And right now being able to take the painkillers was far more important.
Sighing over his fate Eames slowly lifted his lashes, knowing the room would be too bright even with his curtains in the way, and then blinked in surprise at the sight that greeted him.

What the fuck?!

Not that he was complaining, Eames silently tacked on as he stared at his boyfriend, who was currently fast asleep beside him. In his bed. Under his covers.

Blinking rapidly to clear up any lingering blurriness Eames struggled to figure out how this had all come to pass. Because Arthur sure as hell hadn't been next to him the last time he'd been awake and at least somewhat aware of his surroundings. He'd have thought he was still dreaming since his earlier napping musing had included thinking about Arthur a LOT, but Eames reasoned that there was no way he'd be this sore if he was dreaming. And they sure as fuck wouldn't just be sleeping if this was a product of his very perverted and imaginative mind. As his dreams could regularly attest.

Arthur was lying on his side and facing Eames while Eames was on his back, wishing he was up to moving in to wake his darling with a kiss. But Eames knew his back wasn't up to being without support at the moment, he was painfully aware of that fact, actually, and so all he could do was be glad he'd fallen asleep with his head facing in Arthur's direction so he didn't have to struggle to at least look at him.

Goddamn but he was so beautiful.

He'd never really been able to just look at Arthur, Eames mused as he did exactly that. Not that he hadn't wanted to stare like a creeper, but that would have been seriously fucking ha ha creepy, but here was his chance and Eames was taking it. Every faint freckle and eyelash, the beautiful shade of Arthur's skin as it continued to soak in the summer's rays despite how careful Eames knew his boyfriend was when it came to applying sunscreen. And damn but the man's bone structure…it made him wish Eames was a sculptor. Arthur's face deserved to be carved into marble.

Compelled to touch after several minutes of creepy staring Eames foolishly told himself that he could at least shuffle a little closer to his sleeping boyfriend to make that easier on his body.

Yeah. No.

Closing his eyes like he only wished he could close out the pain burning through his body, Eames opened his eyes moments later to see Arthur looking back at him with brown eyes focused and concerned as he asked in a sleep roughened voice if Eames was all right.

"Been better."

So it was Arthur who moved in closer instead, his touch cool and welcome on Eames's cheek. "Do you need something for the pain? And don't try to shrug the pain off either. Not that you can probably shrug at the moment." There was definitely a hint of a smirk on Arthur's face.

Unfortunately Arthur was dead to rights about the whole not being able to shrug thing.

"Wot time is it?"

Lifting up his arm and bringing it up to his face, because of course Arthur wore a watch rather than rely on his phone like most people these days, Eames's boyfriend informed him that it was a little after three.

"Can't take anything for another hour then." Shit.
"Ouch."

"Word." But when your mum was a doctor you didn't take chances with your meds. She'd bloody well verbally skin him alive if he dared to risk it, Eames silently acknowledged with a sigh before asking what Arthur was doing in his bed. Not that he was complaining in the slightest.

It was also a serious testament to how much pain he was in that he didn't suggest that Arthur might try and take his mind off his pain. It would hurt too much.

"We went to the farmers' market this morning. You Know Who has to be seen out and about with us to keep Child Services out of the picture after all." Arthur rolled his eyes for emphasis. "Anyway one of the stalls was having a really good sale on strawberries. I know they're your favorite fruit, so I picked you up some and came by to drop them off about one thirty. When your mom found out I was kid free until dinner time she said I could obviously use a nap and suggested I join you."

Arthur's lips curved into a smirk again. "She said you were in such bad shape she knew we wouldn't get up to anything besides sleeping. I tried not to be insulted."

"Fraid she was right, Darling. Just the thought of moving hurts at the moment." Which was bloody lowering to admit, especially since he was always physically weaker than Arthur. "Though thanks for the berries. Seriously."

"Really, Mr. Eames. Where's your imagination."

Shit. That wicked smile…well ordinarily Eames would have been fucking chuffed to see it, but he hadn't been kidding. He COULDN'T move.

"Oh don't look so worried. All you have to do is NOT move. You can do that, right?"

And so saying Arthur slid under the covers and shifted up until he was on his hands and knees and could move over so that his knees were on either side of Eames's hips and his hands bracketed Eames's head. For a moment Arthur straightened up a little, which was disappointing, but it turned out that Arthur had moved away just so that he could reach down and very gently turn Eames's head for him so that he was looking straight up at him. None of Arthur's weight was on him to distract him, and Eames found himself looking up at Arthur in anticipation as his boyfriend lowered first his hands and then his head down to press their lips together as soon as his were in reach.

Eames stayed as still as he could-but it was bloody difficult when your boyfriend was snogging your brains out. Though less so as the minutes ticked by and Eames found himself all but melting into the bed as Arthur proved just how good of a kisser he was. Not to mention the fact that there was something both intimate and relaxing about knowing that they couldn't do more than this. Sex of any sort wasn't going to happen. All they could have was the pleasure of mouths and tongues. Just this and being surrounded by Arthur's scent and body.

And who knew that there was so many ways to kiss? He'd had no idea.

But he was happy to learn each and every one of them.

Much later, when teenage hormones made it impossible to kiss anymore without taking it further, Arthur regretfully and very carefully returned to his earlier position of lying on his side beside Eames, who turned his head on his own to smile at him with such a big, goofy smile that Arthur had to lean forward and give him one more kiss. He couldn't help himself. It actually pained him to pull away to ask Eames exactly what time he could take his meds again. All that kissing must have taken
a decent bite out of that hour deadline.

Consulting his watch after Eames answered Arthur frowned at how much longer they had to wait before deciding that another course of distraction was called for. Namely asking Eames how the hell he'd gotten into this situation in the first place. Yes Eames had said that his therapist Chris was a sadistic drill sergeant, but he'd thought he was just exaggerating.

"I don't even know where to begin." Eames informed him, though that uncertainty lasted for about three seconds before his boyfriend launched into his tale about the grossly incompetent Corey, the therapist's less than intelligent girlfriend given that she was dating the bloke, and a poor puppy that was now dependant on the two for proper care. And had been stuck with a god-awful name to boot.

"Who names their puppy that?" Eames demanded to know. "Americans, that's who."

"You do realize you're half American, right?"

"I was born in England." Eames outrage was palatable as he argued that that meant that he was English, and would be a Brit until the day he died. He'd lived there longer than any other country, and his accent alone made it clear where his allegiances lay.

"So if a cat has babies in an oven they're muffins, not kittens?"

"Wot?"

"Nothing." He really was too adorable, Arthur mused as he stole another kiss just because.

Scowling adorably Eames muttered some more about being English before asking just where the sprogs were. Had his dad taken them off somewhere without Arthur again? And was that wise?

"I was invited this time. I just declined. The independent theater in town is having a Disney Movie week and I did not want to watch 'Cars' again. Owen Wilson annoys me on visceral level."

"Like Will Ferrell."

"Exactly." Thank God Eames got it.

"'Stranger Than Fiction'." They both said in perfect tandem.

"I know, right?" Eames.

"The genius of the premise, if they'd just gotten someone else to play his character."

"Exactly. And I bloody well love Emma Thompson-"

"Who doesn't love Emma Thompson?"

"Ignorant wankers." Eames proclaimed. "And I was super psyched to see it. The movie. I thought not even he could ruin it, especially since I adore Maggie Gyllenhaal as well, but I just couldn't get into it. And he wasn't even that bad in it, in all honesty. It was all the shite he'd done previously that I couldn't forget."

Arthur nodded his head in absolute agreement. "And it's not even that actors who've played frat boy idiot types can't overcome that stereotype. I thought Adam Sandler did an excellent job in 'Spanglish'. But-there are just some roles you can't take on without them haunting you for the rest of your career."
"I've never seen 'Spanglish'. It's worth seeing?"

Their discussion of 'Spanglish' was slightly derailed when the question of whether Penelope Cruz had been in it or not came up. Arthur thought yes but they looked it up on his phone and it turned out to be another Spanish actress who resembled the other actress. This led to a listing of famous actors and actresses who looked like each other like Amy Adams and Isla Fisher, and Henry Cavill and Matt Bomer.

"And did you know that Keira Knightley played one of Natalie Portman's handmaids in the first 'Star Wars'? Well not the first-you know what I mean, right?"

Yeah, Arthur knew what he meant. "I'm aware that she was the one who impersonated the Queen at one point so that the actual Queen could go off with the Jedis, yes. Though I will admit that I've only seen bits of the second prequel and none of the third aside from clips. They just didn't appeal to me."

"Can't say I blame you." Eames agreed with a sigh.

A knock on the door had Arthur calling out for whoever it was to enter, Eames very slowly turning his head in that direction as well.

The door opened to reveal Eames's mother who leaned against the door jamb as she looked them over with a thoroughness that made Arthur think she somehow knew that they'd been making out earlier. Even though there really was no way…but still…

"I see you're both awake. How are you feeling, Sweetie?"

"Could be worse."

She smirked at them. "As medicinal as I'm sure Arthur's kisses were, you can take another round of meds if you need them."

What the?

"Mum!"

Her smirk just got that much better. "What? Your lips didn't get that red and swollen all on their own."

Ah. She wasn't wrong either. And Arthur wasn't sorry.

"Seriously, Mum!"

Eames's mom winked at her son and then looked over at Arthur. "I thought you'd want to know that your father is downstairs with the kids. He said he wanted to meet Mimi and thank her for the lessons she's been giving Phil. He noticed your car out front."

"Of course he did."

Throwing off the covers Arthur slid off the bed and then turned around to straighten the sheets and make sure they covered Eames properly. Which was hindered by Eames's groan as his boyfriend not only turned his head to look at him, but actually reached out to grab his wrist.

"Help me into my chair."

"What? No." He appreciated the sentiment of course, but no. Eames seemed determined to try and be his knight in shining armor for reasons that-maybe because he was British? They were big on knights
there. But then again in all the time he'd lived there before no one had tried to be his protector either. It was probably just Eames.

"He's right, Kiddo. You aren't in any condition to go anywhere. And Arthur's dad is on his best behavior at the moment. As it is he's pretty busy trying and failing to win over your grandmother. It's bugging the hell out of him." Eames's mother laughed as she said that.

"But-"

"No buts." Bracing his free hand on the bed, along with one knee, Arthur stretched over to give Eames a last quick kiss. "It'll be fine. Really. He behaves around the kids. And we haven't fought once today either." Not yet, anyway. Arthur wasn't holding his breath there.

Eames's scowling was unexpectedly adorable.

"I'll keep your boy safe, Tom. And your dad's downstairs too."

Okay, this treating him like a damsel in distress needed to stop now.

"I am capable of taking care of myself, you know. I've been doing it pretty much since birth."

Great. Now they were both giving him pitying looks.

So done with that Arthur told Eames he'd text him later and then got off the bed, waving an added goodbye before walking over to the door with a look in his eyes that hopefully conveyed to Eames's mother that he had this and any suggestion that he didn't was going to piss him off.

"Men." Was all she said before moving off to the side, gesturing for him to walk through.

"Arthur."

Looking over his shoulder Arthur raised an eyebrow in Eames's direction.

"Thanks again. For coming by. And the strawberries."

"You're welcome. Get better soon."
Eames's Pick Up

"And you promise to never, ever leave me again, right? I don't think I can handle it if you left me again. You can't begin to imagine the pain and agony I suffered before. No, I mean it! I could hardly drag my arse out of bed afterwards, it was so bad. Like just after the accident bad. You're the only one I trust with my body at this point, and I don't think I can-"

"Eames. I promise. You were assigned to me, remember?" Chris's lips twitched with amusement, which Eames didn't think was fair given that this was no laughing matter. "Calm down."

He was prepared to believe Chris would be a man of his word, but Eames needed to make sure. "And I never have to see Corey again?"

"Since Corey works here there is a chance you'll see him, Eames. But he is not your therapist. I am. And I've already talked to your mother and to Michelle about the fact that you don't want anyone but me working with you. You've made that very clear."

"Michelle's the devil too."

Lips twitching that much more, Chris didn't disagree. Which just went to prove that he was smart therapist to Corey's very dumb one.

And telling himself that they were both too old to pinky swear on the deal, more the pity, Eames settled for promising Chris that he would do his at home exercises as ordered. So long as Chris was the one assigning them to him. Otherwise he wouldn't, and wouldn't that be a shame?

"I'm getting the feeling that if I want my patients to be more cooperative I should just assign them to someone else for a day so they'll appreciate me more."

"Or run away ta Mexico to get away from them. It was considered." Eames quickly informed him, dead serious about it. "Unfortunately my lovely boyfriend wouldn't have been able to come too seeing as he has two siblings to look after. Getting them across the border with us would have been more trouble than even we can handle. Plus our parents wouldn't have liked it. And Arthur wouldn't have either, since I doubt they have a lot of the amenities in Mexico that he would consider essential to his happiness."

"Yeah. Plus the lack of rain would be a problem for you seeing as you're half English. I was sorta disappointed to find out that all that rain hadn't given you webbed feet."

"Someone's been watching 'Wimbledon'."

As it turned out Chris hadn't seen the movie, which was a bloody shame, and so as Chris wheeled him down the corridor to the front waiting room Eames told him all about the movie, which was British and had Paul Bettany, Kirsten Dunst, and James McAvoy in it. Oh, and the guy from 'Game of Thrones'. The one shagging his sister. He was the one who made the comment about how the English would someday develop webbed feet.

Eames had just opened his mouth to tell Chris that the guy who played Happy in the 'Iron Man' movies was also in it when he caught sight of a very familiar and sexy form at the end of the hallway, the teenager in question leaning against a wall and working away at his phone. "Arthur."
"That's your boyfriend? Very nice."

"I know, right? And I only had to end up in a wheelchair with him as my tutor to get him to notice me. It was easier to catch him while on wheels." Eames confided, wiggling his eyebrows for emphasis.

"I'm impressed your clothes didn't give him enough of a head start. They're usually eye catching enough."

Eames good naturedly laughed at that as he stated that Arthur was as much a fashion horse as Chris was. Chris's clothes were always perfectly coordinated and put together too.

"Smart man."

"Brilliant, actually. Arthur!"

Looking up from his phone Arthur smiled at him and then looked down to turn off his phone before pocketing it. "You're alive."

"No thanks to Corey. This is Chris, by the way. The not evil and incompetent one. Chris, this is Arthur."

"Nice to meet you." Coming over Arthur held out a hand for Chris to shake.

"Same. Eames has mentioned you a lot recently."

"Only good things." Eames promised with a wink before asking the next logical question. "So what are you doing here? Not that I don't love seeing you, Darling." Though actually he'd prefer Arthur not see him in a chair while he was utterly wasted from his physio. Chris had really worked him hard to make up for Corey's crappiness. Or at least Eames was hoping that was the reason and Chris wasn't just stepping up his torturing ways.

"Your mom called and asked if I could come pick you up for her. Apparently her car up and died on her just outside of town. Your dad was on his way to pick her up when she called, so don't worry about her being stranded."

"Shit. Did she say how bad it was?"

"No idea. But she seemed to think that your dad could probably fix it. Or at least figure out what was wrong and take it to the garage so that she doesn't have to deal with Lewis. According to her five minutes around him and she wants to say to hell with having taken the Hippocratic Oath."

"Yeah. She can never decide if she just wants to drop a car on him or beat him to death with a tire iron. Calling him a chauvinistic pig is being too kind." Eames added, to explain his mom's deep hatred for the town's chief mechanic.

"Ah. Gotcha."

"So where are the sprogs?"

Arthur shook his head, possibly at Eames's habit of calling his siblings 'sprogs'.

"James and Phil are at their dentist appointments. I left Dad in charge, which is probably a mistake...but I told the receptionist to call if I needed to come rescue them."

"No, thankfully. Just their usual checkups. Though if they were to have any cavities it would probably be his fault so really it's only fair that he be there. They've had more junk to eat this week than they usual do in at least two months."

"Well I'd love to stay and talk about how dentists are the real sadist bastards, not physiotherapists, but I need to head back to meet with my next client. So, Eames, follow the instructions, do the exercises, and I'll see you in three days. Nice to meet you again, Arthur."

"Thanks for everything you've done for Eames."

Eames inwardly awwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwed over that. But manfully kept it inside his head.

"Bye, Chris. Remember your promise."

Chris gave them a salute and a wink and then off he went back down the hallway to torture someone else. Which suited Eames just fine.

"So do we need to do anything else here before we go?"

"Normally I'm supposed to check out and get my next appointment from Michelle, but for both our sakes let's just go."

"Both your sakes?"

"You wouldn't last five minutes in a room with her. Trust me. It's best to keep contact with her to a minimum."

"Fair enough."

Walking around to get behind the chair, Arthur started pushing it in the direction of the front doors.

"I can-"

"Hush. Let me push it. You look like you'd keel over if you were standing."

"I could stand."

Probably. Or at least he was going to have to for a moment or two while he went from this chair into the passenger seat of Arthur's car.

The chair suddenly coming to a stop, Eames felt Arthur lean over him. And before he could ask why he felt a pressure on his head that suggested that maybe Arthur had just kissed the top of his head.

Had Arthur just kissed the top of his head? There were other places that he'd much rather Arthur kiss but-

"Relax. Remember what happens when you let me be in charge?"

Well fuck. He needed a blanket to put over his lap now.

Arthur's laughter was low and sexy, which didn't help Eames's 'problem' one little bit but did distract him enough that they were out the door moments later, Michelle's overly perky 'Goodbye' following them out the automated doors.

Thankfully Arthur had gotten a parking space near the building and the space beside the car empty, which was an added bonus. It meant less walking for him.

"I pulled the seat back as far as it could go and reclined it. I thought that might help."

"Thanks. It should." And even if it didn't he'd grin and bear it.
Coming around Arthur got the passenger door open and then came back over to stand at Eames's side. "Will you let me help you in or would you rather go it alone and hope you don't end up on the pavement or bashing your head against the car?"

Well when he put it that way...

"Help would be appreciated."

Carefully Eames used the armrests to slowly get to his feet, Arthur's arm there to wrap around Eames's waist in support. Sliding an arm over Arthur's shoulder Eames very carefully took the last couple of steps and then bent to slide onto the seat. He couldn't help but curse the entire time through clenched teeth, but at least he made it without falling on his arse. Which was the main thing. And now he could lie back with a sigh of relief that the worst was over. Until he got home and had to get out again. Though he felt a little unmanned when Arthur leaned in to buckle him like a kid. Or he did until Arthur twisted around to smile at him, dimples on full, adorable display.

"I love the shirt, by the way."

Preening a little, Arthur NEVER complimented him on his clothes, Eames looked down with pleasure at the shirt in question. It was a 'Notorious RBG' shirt that he'd bought online along with one for his mum and Mimi for Mother's Day. They'd been a big hit and he wore his 'You Can't Spell Truth Without Ruth' shirt proudly. The woman was a serious badass.

"I can get you one if you want."

"I've got one. So do the kids. I consider her an excellent role model for Phillipa and James likes us all having shirts that match. Even if he thinks she's a little scary looking."

Eames laughed. "She sorta does, doesn't she?"

Arthur inclined his head in agreement.

"And you have one of the shirts despite your usual clothing style. And here I thought you couldn't get any more attractive."

That called for some more kissing. Lots and lots of kissing.

)

Eventually the snogging had to come to an end, les sigh, and Arthur closed the passenger door behind him and then walked around to the driver's side. Getting in Arthur buckled up, retrieved his designer shades from their place on the dash, and then started the car. And looked sexy as fuck doing it too, Eames thought with a 'I have one fine man' grin on his face. And damn if Arthur didn't have a similar smile on his face when he glanced in his direction to ask if he wanted some shades too.

"Nah, I'm good."

"Queen good with you music wise?"

"Queen is always the right answer." Eames would have done a little head banging to prove it, but that would not end well for him given his present condition. Though when 'Bohemian Rhapsody' came on it wouldn't be easy to resist.

Of course that was the first song on the CD.
"Can we skip this song? It's sacrilegious for an Englishman not to head bang to this. And I'm liable to need a neck brace if I try it now."

"'Another One Bites The Dust' is next."

Eames took a moment to consider that. "That doesn't require that much movement. I can appreciate it while being mostly still."

So Arthur skipped over the first and they both did little head nods in time with the beat of the second. 'Killer Queen' was next, and he was fond of it too, but not so fond that Eames felt bad for talking over it as he asked Arthur if his dad was still planning to leave the following morning.

Arthur nodded. "Thankfully the kids are used to it at this point. I think. It's hard to tell with James sometimes. Phil...if she's upset she'll let it be known."

"That is my experience with females, yes. Which reminds me...I should call my mum."

Reaching over Arthur turned down the volume so that Eames would be able to hear his mother clearly.

Eames mouthed a 'Thank you' as he pulled out his phone and carefully brought it up to his ear after speed dialing his mum. She didn't answer. Nor did his father when he tried him instead.

"Maybe they're working together to fix the problem and they didn't want to get grease or whatever on their phones by answer."

"Or are arguing so loudly they couldn't hear me calling."

"He still hasn't figured out the need to grovel?"

"I told him to! He thinks he shouldn't have to and that she should be 'reasonable'. You can tell he works and lives in a male centric world. My father...he doesn't get women at all. I get them better, and I'm as gay as Freddie. At this point I'm more optimistic about my chances of getting Ariadne and Yusuf back together again."

"Why would you want that? She could do so much better."

"He loves her!"

"So? He's also a mad scientist geek with an unhealthy obsession with 'Doctor Who' and 'Star Trek'. And don't even get me started on his complete lack of fashion sense and horrible facial hair."

"Ari's not perfect either, you know."

"True. Her French accent is still atrocious."

"I know, right? Bloody painful is what it is. Right up there with how miserable she is without Yusuf. Even if she is hiding it under a lot of anger and homicidal threats."

The sunglasses hid it, but Eames sensed Arthur rolling his eyes at him. The smirk he could see.

"What?"

"Just marveling at how my world's changed since I moved here. I'm trying to imagine what pre-parent Arthur would have thought of you. I think you would have irritated the hell out of him."
Eames said 'thanks' with every bit of sarcasm his body possessed. Which was a hell of a fucking lot, thank you very much.

"And that would have been his loss."

Oh.

"My world was always very structured. Everything fitting into my neatly labeled boxes with room to spare. I had my life mapped out to within an inch of my life, and I liked it that way. Then I became the sole guardian of two minor children and all those plans were shredded, tossed in a trash can, and set on fire. Repeatedly until not even ash existed. Often daily."

"They'll do that."

"Constantly. And so do you." Arthur smirk grew. "And perversely enough...I'm actually starting to enjoy that. Trying to figure us out might just be one of the most complicated equations I've ever tried to puzzle out."

"You think so?"

"Eames...you're way too young for me. You dress like you're color blind half the time, willing watch reality TV, AND you say the most ridiculous things like just saying them makes them so. And you call me pet names which always used to piss me off when other people did it, but somehow you make them charming. Though if you ever call me something really stupid like 'Cupcake' or 'Sweetie Pie' I will sucker punch you."

"Understood." And he wasn't that stupid, thank you very much. As for the rest...

"If you buy me clothes I'll wear them. That's the deal I have with Mum and Mimi."

"Does it count if I take you shopping and you pay for it?"

"Darling, I adore you. Which is why it would probably be for the best if we never go clothes shopping together. At least when I'm the one we're buying for."

"Where DO you get your clothes from?"

"The thrift store. And online." Eames gestured towards his shirt proudly.

"I see. Well I can tolerate that so long as you don't try and grow your hair out or grow a beard. I will shave you bald while you sleep."

"I could pull off a beard."

"No. You couldn't."

He'd never actually tried to grow a beard, it was really only recently that his facial hair started to look good when coming in instead of a little on the patchy side, but Eames was sure that he could pull the look off if he really, really tried and said so.

"Shave you bald."

"And then I could do the same to you." Eames shot back just because.

Arthur said nothing until they pulled up to the next set of lights. Which was when he pushed his shades down his nose so that he could give Eames a look that had his blood literally going cold.
"Not if you value your life."

His mummy hadn't raised no fool.

"Understood."

"Good."

And apparently considering the topic closed Arthur pushed his sunglasses back into place and asked if Eames wanted to stop for ice cream on the way to Eames's house. He'd even treat.

"Okay."

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